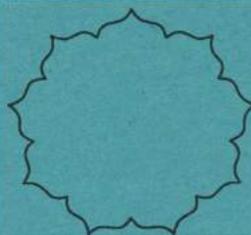


# Alaskan Bahá'í Community:

## Its Growth and Development

The Formative Years:

To 156 B. E. (1999)



Compiled and Written by

John E. Kolstoe

**Dedicated to:**

**The dauntless pioneers and  
builders of the Alaskan  
Bahá'í Community. Those  
unsung ordinary folks,  
heroines and heroes, saints  
and sinners, on whose  
shoulders stand the present  
and future generations of  
Alaskan Bahá'ís.**

## How it Happened and Acknowledgments

It was a rainy day in Palmer around 1970 when I was trying to remember who had served on the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska and when. This was probably motivated by an inconclusive conversation with either Pat Moul or Janet Stout. Anyway, I sat down and made a chart. Every year or two I would update it. The latest version of the chart, using the original format, appears in part V of this work.

In preparation for pioneering to St. Lucia, I wondered what to do with it. Janet Stout, that master record keeper, once showed me a little notebook she had with the names of all the Bahá'ís who had served on the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly. She had a brief description of each. I thought, "Why not do that for the National Spiritual Assembly as a going away gift?" So, I wrote 42 short biographical sketches, put them in a notebook with my chart and gave it to the body during my last meeting in 1985.

On two subsequent occasions, the National Spiritual Assembly asked me to update the biographies. I demurred because I knew it would be a lot of work. It would mean not just adding the new, but revising the old.

After the series of articles, "A Glance in the Rearview Mirror" in the *Alaska Bahá'í News* was completed, someone suggested that they be gathered in a single volume. The suggestion made me think of the number of wonderful references, long buried in seldom opened books, that have such valuable information about what has happened in Alaska. There were also a lot of stories about the people who made it happen. These were in forgotten issues of the *Alaska Bahá'í News*. So, rather than just updating a few biographical sketches, I decided on this larger collection.

Special gratitude is owed to the Universal House of Justice and National Spiritual Assembly of the United States for the use of copyright materials, the staff at the National Bahá'í Office of Alaska for hunting up bits of information I've requested, perhaps too often. The archives office of the United States National Spiritual Assembly has been most helpful, allowing me to rummage through their material. Louis Walker gave valuable, direct assistance while I was in the reading room. Much appreciation goes to Nancy Hutcheon, who stimulated the idea of putting this together, coordinated the work, and proof read the manuscript. Janet Smith, who frequently has come to my rescue, continued her valued contribution by editing this work. Eileen Van Zanten, Terry Reed, and Jetta Brewer Huber have served as a wonderful production team.

To all, I give a special thanks. And, to you, dear reader. I do hope you enjoy this. I have had fun putting it together. But, I'm glad its finished and I'll let someone else do the sequel.

John E. Kolstoe, Ridván 156 (1999)



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Introduction

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# Alaska Bahá'í Community: Its Growth and Development

## Introduction

Three significant events heralded the coming of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh to Alaska. The first was in 1905. The young Agnes Alexander, who had recently embraced the Cause, was on her way to her home in Hawaii. Writing to her parents, she spoke of a trip into Southeast Alaska and the stops she made. While no mention was made of the Faith in that letter—after all, she was writing to her Christian missionary family—it is likely that she either mentioned the Faith, or said prayers, or both, at each of those stops.

On the wind-swept and overcast first day of May of 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá laid the corner stone for the Mother Temple of the West. Bahá'ís from far and near eagerly dedicated shovels full of dirt in the name of various parts of the globe. Charlotte Gillen, from the Seattle area, stepped forward and dedicated a shovel full of the rich, fertile soil in the name of Alaska. That may have been the first public mention of Alaska at a Bahá'í event.

Four years later, on April 8, 1916, the Center of the Covenant secured the relationship of Alaska to the Cause of God. It was the first locality mentioned in the first of the four general letters contained in the Tablets of the Divine Plan. At that time Alaska had a population of about 64,000. There was one believer living in Juneau, Margaret Green, who was alluded to in the Tablet as the "librarian in the public library."

Who, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá, could envision the future greatness of the land on which He focused attention and that He referred to as "vast" and "spacious"? For the next quarter century, there was intermittent Bahá'í activity, based on those Tablets. Among the most notable was the nine-month, 6,000 mile teaching trip of Emogene Hoag and Marion Jack in 1919-1920 and the three-year pioneering of Orcella Rexford from 1922-25.

Following 14 years of no known activity, there were two decades of accelerating liveliness starting with the arrival of Honor Kempton and Betty Becker and the enrollment of Janet Whiteneck (Stout) in 1939. The crowning achievement of this period was the election of the National Spiritual Assembly in April of 1957—just six months prior to the passing of the beloved Guardian.

The years since then have witnessed the uneven processes of expansion, consolidation, and the maturation of the Divine Institutions. The following pages view some of the notable events of the more than 90 years of development and the people who were the players—many of whom were only dimly aware of the significance of what they were doing.

These pages provide an opportunity to see the past in order to better understand what is happening today. Responding to the present in the context of the past is a solid foundation for facing the arduous and unsuspected challenges that still lie ahead on the long and tortuous road of building the Kingdom of God on earth.



Alaskan Bahá'í Community:  
Its  
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To 156 B. E. (1999)

Part I

It was Written

From the Tablets of Bahá'í Writings

From the letter dated April 2, 1916

To a God

Dear Bahá'í

*Behold the world, my hope for you is that each one may give love to the neighbor, that you be the center of the world and the center of the Bahá'í world, producing a new and glorious civilization.*

*Therefore I direct you to that which is essential to your national development and advancement in the Kingdom of God!*

*It is this: Alaska is a vast country, almost one of the major parts of the world. It has abundant natural parts, serving as a library in the public library, and accordingly to my ability is not failing in teaching the masses, yet the will of the Bahá'í world is that it be not left in that situation.*



**Alaska Bahá'í Community:  
Its Growth and Development: The Formative Years  
I - It was Written**

Following are some of the materials which have been published concerning the Bahá'í Faith in Alaska. Far from being exhaustive, these are just some of the more significant items which have appeared in various books. This work does not include letters found in High Endeavours, which stands by itself as the peerless collection of letters from the beloved Guardian to this fledgling community of the north. Also, significant by their absence, are the letters from the Hands of the Cause during the Interregnum and the prodigious correspondence from the Universal House of Justice since its inception. Those documents must await a future, fuller treatment.

The intent of the present text is to put together a few major writings. This makes it possible for the interested observer to get a significant taste of the development of the Faith in Alaska during the formative years in a single volume.

**From the Tablets of the Divine Plan**

**From the letter dated April 8, 1916**

*He is God!*

*O ye blessed souls:*

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

*Therefore I direct you to that which is conducive to your heavenly confirmation and illumination in the Kingdom of God!*

*It is this: Alaska is a vast country; although one of the maidservants of the merciful has hastened to those parts, serving as a librarian in the public library, and according to her ability is not failing in teaching the Cause, yet the call of the Kingdom of God is not yet raised through that spacious territory.*

*His Holiness Christ says: Travel ye to the East and to the West of the world and summon the people to the Kingdom of God. Hence the mercy of God must encompass all humanity. Therefore do ye not think it permissible to leave that region deprived of the breezes of the Morn of Guidance. Consequently, strive as far as ye are able to send to those parts fluent speakers, who are detached from aught else save God, attracted with the fragrances of God, and sanctified and purified from all desires and temptations. Their sustenance and food must consist of the teachings of God. First they must themselves live in accordance with those principles, then guide the people. Perchance, God willing, the lights of the Most Great Guidance will illuminate that country, and the breezes of the rose garden of the love of God will perfume the nostrils of the inhabitants of **Alaska**. Should you be aided to render such a service, rest ye assured that your heads shall be crowned with the diadem of everlasting sovereignty, and at the threshold of oneness you will become the favored and accepted servants.*

(Tablets of the Divine Plan, Pages: 31-32)

### **From the letter dated March 8, 1917**

*Therefore, O ye believers of God in the United States and Canada! Select ye important personages, or else they by themselves, becoming severed from rest and composure of the world, may arise and travel throughout **Alaska**, the republic of Mexico, and south of Mexico in the Central American republic ....*

(Tablets of the Divine Plan, Page: 104)

### **Letters from the Guardian**

#### **1933 April 21**

Forsaking home, kindred, friends and position a handful of men and women, fired with a zeal and confidence which no human agency can kindle, arose to carry out the mandate which Abdu'l-Baha had issued. Sailing northward as far as **Alaska**, pushing on to the West Indies, penetrating the South American continent to the banks of the Amazon and across the Andes to the southernmost ends of the Argentine Republic,... these intrepid heralds of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh have succeeded by their very acts in setting to the present generation of their fellow-believers throughout the East an example which they may well emulate.

(World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, Pages: 87-88)

#### **1939 January 28**

Recent swift progress of Temple ornamentation prompts me entreat American Community to focus immediate attention and center energies upon corresponding acceleration in the Teaching enterprise formulated in Seven Year Plan...End of First Century rapidly approaching. **Alaska**, Delaware, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, Manitoba and Nova Scotia still unsettled....The Concourse on high expectantly await, ready to assist and acclaim the nine holy souls who, independently or as deputies, will promptly, fearlessly volunteer to forsake their homes, cast away their attachments and definitely settle in these territories to lay firm anchorage of the Administrative Order of this undefeatable Faith...<sup>1</sup>

(Messages to America, Page: 16)

#### **1942 April 26:**

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<sup>1</sup> This is the message that prompted Honor Kempton and Betty Becker to pioneer to Alaska.

Last phase of Seven Year Plan so auspiciously begun, so vigorously prosecuted, is opening. The first Bahá'í Century is fast running out... From **Alaska** to Chile, the Americas are astir with the leavening influences of the rising Order of the newborn Revelation. The great Republic of the West is inescapably swept into the swelling tide of the world tribulations, presaging the assumption of a preponderating share in the establishment of the anticipated Lesser Peace. Invisible hosts are marshalled, eager to rush forth and crown every effort, however humble, however belated, exerted to speed the unfinished tasks. Again I renew plea for closer communion with the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh, for more passionate resolve, for more abundant flow of material resources, and for wider dispersion, intenser concentration, by a still greater number of pioneers, settlers and itinerant teachers to insure for the Plan a termination commensurate with and wondrous as the exploits marking the opening decade of first Bahá'í Century. Myself deprived of personal participation in the task allotted to the prosecutors of the epoch-making Plan, I am impelled to depute five members of the American Bahá'í community to help fulfill in my behalf whatsoever pioneer field is most vital to its urgent requirements. Pledging five thousand dollars for accomplishment of this purpose. Cablegram April 26, 1942

(Shoghi Effendi: Messages to America, Page: 55)

### **1943 August 2**

The American believers' seven year enterprise consecrated to the service of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, deriving direct inspiration from Abdu'l-Baha's Divine Plan, launched on the eve of the world catastrophic conflict, recognized as the greatest collective undertaking in the annals of the first Bahá'í Century, is rapidly culminating.... Total victory is within sight but the six remaining virgin areas of **Alaska**, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, South Carolina, North Dakota and South Dakota, as well as the inadequately reinforced Republics of Nicaragua, San Domingo, Paraguay, Bolivia, Venezuela and Peru still demand the concentrated and sustained attention of the National representatives of the American Bahá'í community, the speedy assistance of the National Teaching and Inter-America Committees, and the systematic support of all subsidiary agencies both regional and local.

(Messages to America, Pages: 64-65)

### **1944 from God Passes By:**

Pages 330-331:

No sooner had the provisions of that Divine Charter, delineating the features of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh been disclosed to His followers than they set about erecting, upon the foundations which the lives of the heroes, the saints and martyrs of that Faith had laid, the first stage of the framework of its administrative institutions. Conscious of the necessity of constructing, as a first step, a broad and solid base upon which the pillars of that mighty structure could subsequently be raised;... undertook, in complete unison, and despite the great diversity in their outlook, customs and languages, the double task of establishing and of consolidating their local councils, elected by the rank and file of the believers, and designed to direct, coordinate and extend the activities of the followers of a far-flung Faith. In Persia, in the United States of America, in the Dominion of Canada, in the British Isles, in France, in Germany, in Austria, in India, in Burma, in Egypt, in Iraq, in Russian Turkistan, in the Caucasus, in Australia, in New Zealand, in South Africa, in Turkey, in Syria, in Palestine, in Bulgaria, in Mexico, in the Philippine Islands, in Jamaica, in Costa Rica, in Guatemala, in Honduras, in San

Salvador, in Argentina, in Uruguay, in Chile, in Brazil, in Ecuador, in Colombia, in Paraguay, in Peru, in **Alaska**, in Cuba, in Haiti, in Japan, in the Hawaiian Islands, in Tunisia, in Puerto Rico, in Baluchistan, in Russia, in Transjordan, in Lebanon, and in Abyssinia such councils, constituting the basis of the rising Order of a long-persecuted Faith, were gradually established.

Pages 378-379:

The light of the Faith...was now to be carried to, and illuminate, ere the termination of the first Bahá'í century, no less than thirty-four independent nations, as well as several dependencies situated in the American, the Asiatic and African continents, in the Persian Gulf, and in the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans...the structural basis of the Administrative Order of His Faith, in many of them, already established. In several dependencies, moreover, in both the East and the West, including Alaska,...the bearers of the new born Gospel have established their residence, and are bending every effort to lay an impregnable basis for its institutions.

Pages 379-380:

Nor can we fail to notice the special endeavors that have been exerted by individuals as well as Assemblies for the purpose of establishing contact with minority groups and races in various parts of the world, such as the Jews and Negroes in the United States of America, the **Eskimos** in **Alaska**....

#### **1944 April 15**

The greatest collective enterprise ever launched by the Western followers of Bahá'u'lláh and indeed ever undertaken by any Bahá'í community in the course of an entire century, has been gloriously consummated....The exploits that have marked the progress of this prodigious, this three-fold enterprise, covering a field stretching from **Alaska** in the North to the extremity of Chile in the South, affecting the destinies of so great a variety of peoples and nations,...

(Messages to America, Pages: 69-70)

#### **1946 April 25**

The two-year respite, well-earned after the expenditure of such a colossal effort, covering such a tremendous range, during so dark a period, is now ended. The prosecutors of the Plan who in the course of six war-ridden years achieved such prodigies of service in the Western Hemisphere from **Alaska** to Magallanes are now collectively summoned to assume in the course of the peaceful years ahead still weightier responsibilities for the opening decade of the Second Century....

(Messages to America, Pages: 87-88)

#### **1946 June 15**

The first Seven Year Plan, ushered in on the eve of the greatest conflict that has ever shaken the human race, has, despite six years of chaos and tribulation, been crowned with a success far exceeding the most sanguine hopes of its ardent promoters....the outposts of the Faith, in the Western Hemisphere, were pushed as far north as **Anchorage** in **Alaska**, in the vicinity of the **Arctic Circle**, and as far as the extremity of Chile, to Magallanes, the world's southernmost city.

(Messages to America, Page: 97)

**1947 June 5**

Nor should the "spacious territory of **Alaska**," particularly mentioned by Abdu'l-Baha in His Tablets of the Divine Plan, and at present the northern outpost of the Faith in the Western Hemisphere, be ignored, or its vital requirements neglected. The maintenance and consolidation of the first historic spiritual assembly in **Anchorage**, the northernmost administrative center of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the world; the multiplication of Bahá'í centers in that territory; the propagation of the teachings among the **Eskimos**, emphasized by Abdu'l-Baha's pen in those same Tablets; the translation and publication of selected passages from Bahá'í literature in their native language; the extension of the limits of the Faith beyond **Fairbanks** and nearer to the **Arctic Circle** - these constitute the urgent tasks facing the prosecutors of the present Plan in the years immediately ahead.

(Citadel of Faith, Pages: 9-10)

**1950 April 25**

Review of World Progress of the Faith

Hail the valiant acts during the course of the last twelve months of members of firmly knit, world embracing, divinely propelled Bahá'í Community, singly, collectively, both sexes, all ages laboring in near, and distant fields, in Eastern and Western hemispheres, gathered from diverse classes, creeds and colors; as administrators, in the respective home lands or as settlers or itinerant teachers overseas; whether serving in private capacity or in official association with authorities....

Number of centers in Australasia now exceeds sixty; Canadian Community nearing ninety centers already established; **Alaskan** territory eleven centers; European goal countries thirty-five, number of newly declared believers almost doubled during course of past year.

Bahá'í literature enriched by translation into Welsh, **Eskimo**, Swahili, Hausa, Chinyanja, raising the total number of languages to sixty-three....

Bahá'í marriage contract legalized by attorney general throughout the territory of **Alaska**....

The process of extension of Bahá'í endowments accelerated through the donation of twenty acre property near **Anchorage, Alaska**; purchase of twenty-two acres in neighborhood of Auckland, site of projected New Zealand summer school; grant of burial ground by Egyptian authorities to Port Said Bahá'í Community.

(Messages to the Bahá'í World, Pages: 3-4)

**1952 May**

With a heart overflowing with joy and thankfulness I acclaim, at this hour marking the climax of the world-wide festivities of this Holy Year, the convocation, in the heart of the North American continent and under the shadow of the newly consecrated Mother Temple of the West, of the second and, without doubt, the most distinguished of the four Intercontinental Teaching Conferences commemorating the Centenary of the inception of the Mission of Bahá'u'lláh. On the occasion of the opening of this epoch-making conference, at which members of the United States, the Canadian, the Central American and South American National Spiritual Assemblies, as well as representatives of the Bahá'í communities in the states of the American Union, in the

provinces of the Dominion of Canada, in **Alaska**, and in the republics of Latin America, are assembled,...

(Messages to the Bahá'í World, Pages: 142-143)

The task, at once arduous, thrilling and challenging, which now confronts these four Bahá'í communities involves: First, the formation, under the aegis of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, and in collaboration with the two existing national assemblies in Latin America, of one national spiritual assembly in each of the twenty Latin American republics as well as the establishment of a national spiritual assembly in **Alaska** under the aegis of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States of America....

Sixth, the consolidation of Greenland, Mackenzie and Newfoundland, allocated to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada; of **Alaska**, the Hawaiian Islands and Puerto Rico allocated to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States of America; of Bermuda, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama allocated to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Central America; and of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, allocated to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South America....

Ninth, the establishment of a national Hazíratu'l-Quds in the capital city of each of the aforementioned republics, as well as one in **Anchorage, Alaska**....

(Messages to the Bahá'í World, Page: 144-145)

### 1952 October 8

Current Bahá'í history must henceforth, as second decade of second Bahá'í century opens, move rapidly and majestically as it has never moved before since the inception of the Faith over a century ago. Earthly symbols of Bahá'u'lláh's unearthly Sovereignty must needs, ere the decade separating the two memorable Jubilees draws to a close, be raised as far north as Franklin beyond the Arctic Circle and as far south as the Falkland Islands, marking the southern extremity of the western hemisphere, amidst the remote, lonely, inhospitable islands of the archipelagos of the South Pacific, the Indian and Atlantic oceans, the mountain fastnesses of Tibet, the jungles of Africa, the deserts of Arabia, the steppes of Russia, the Indian Reservations of North America, the wastelands of Siberia and Mongolia, amongst the Eşkimos of Greenland and **Alaska**, the Negroes of Africa, Buddhist strongholds in the heart of Asia, amongst Lapps of Finland, the Polynesians of the South Sea Islands, Negritos of the archipelagos of the South Pacific Ocean.

(Messages to the Bahá'í World, Pages: 43-44)

### 1953 April 29

The Ten Year Plan, constituting the third and final stage of the initial epoch in the evolution of Abdu'l-Baha's Master Plan, which, God willing, will raise to greater heights the fame of the stalwart American Bahá'í Community, and seat it upon "the throne of an everlasting dominion," envisaged by the Author of the Tablets of this same Plan, involves:

First, the opening of the following virgin territories, eleven in Africa...; eight in Asia...; six in Europe...; and four in America: **Aleutian Islands**, Falkland Islands, Key West and **Kodiak Island**....

Second, the consolidation of the Faith in the following territories, six in Asia...; two in Africa...; twelve in Europe...; three in America: the Hawaiian Islands, **Alaska** and Puerto Rico....

Sixth, the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of **Alaska**....

Eighth, the incorporation of each of the fourteen above-mentioned national spiritual assemblies.

Ninth, the establishment of national Bahá'í endowments by these same national spiritual assemblies.

Tenth, the establishment of a national Hazíratu'l-Quds in the capital city of each of the eleven of the aforementioned countries, as well as one in **Anchorage**, one in Suva, and one in Johannesburg....

Nineteenth, the conversion to the Faith of members of the leading **Indian tribes**....

(Citadel of Faith, Pages: 107-108)

### **1954 April**

The institutions of Bahá'í National Hazíratu'l-Quds in East and West, already reaching an estimated value of over a million and a half dollars, have been enhanced through the purchase and formal opening of the Hazíratu'l-Quds of the Bahá'ís of Paris, destined to evolve into the national administrative headquarters of the French Bahá'í Community, and through the inauguration of National Hazíratu'l-Quds Funds in **Anchorage, Alaska**, as well as in the capital cities of Italy and of Switzerland.

(Messages to the Bahá'í World, Page: 65)

### **1954 July 28**

Yet another task, of extreme urgency and of great spiritual significance, is the selection and purchase of the site of the future Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Sweden, as well as the appropriation of sufficient funds during the coming two years, for the establishment, on however modest a scale, of a national Hazíratu'l-Quds in Anchorage, **Alaska**....

(Citadel of Faith, Page: 129)

### **1955 April**

Furthermore, the sum of fifty thousand dollars has been contributed by the Hand of the Cause, Amelia Collins, as yet another evidence of her munificence, for the purpose of establishing Bahá'í national endowments in no less than fifty countries, situated in all five continents of the globe. A plot has, moreover, been purchased in South Africa, a property offered in the **Aleutian Islands** and a fund initiated for the same purpose in **Alaska** and Finland.

(Messages to the Bahá'í World, Page: 81)

These National Spiritual Assemblies, representing no less than forty-two territories will be established in four continents of the globe. Four will be in Asia....Three will be in Europe....Five will be in America...and the fifth in **Alaska**....

I call upon the following Hands of the Cause to act as my representatives at these thirteen historic conventions, that are to pave the way for the erection, in four continents of the globe, of the pillars destined to support, in varying measure, the Universal House of Justice, the final unit in

the construction of the edifice of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh:...Paul Haney at the **Alaska** Convention, to be held in Anchorage;...

(Messages to the Bahá'í World, Page: 83)

### 1955 August 20

A wider dispersal throughout the length and breadth of its homeland;...and a closer collaboration with the administrative agencies functioning in Europe, Latin America, Africa, Japan and **Alaska** for the forthcoming formation of the European, Latin American, Southwest African, Japanese and **Alaskan** national spiritual assemblies

(Citadel of Faith, Pages: 136-137)

### 1956 April

Nor should mention be omitted in this brief survey of Bahá'í victories and achievements in the course of the closing year of the second phase of the Ten-Year Plan...of the pushing of the northern outpost of the Faith in **Alaska** to **Point Barrow** beyond the Arctic Circle; of the initiation of auxiliary plans for the promotion of the Faith in the Seychelles Islands and in the Sudan; and of the arrival of a pioneer in Praslin Island forming a part of the Seychelles group.

(Messages to the Bahá'í World, Pages: 96-97)

The newly opened territories of the globe must, under no circumstances, be allowed to relapse into the state of spiritual deprivation from which they have so recently and laboriously been rescued...Immediate attention should be focused on the multiplication of such institutions in areas where these National Spiritual Assemblies are to be established in the near future, such as South and Central America, the Arabian Peninsula, Southeast Asia, Pakistan, **Alaska**, Japan, New Zealand, Scandinavia and Finland, the Benelux countries, the Iberian Peninsula and France,...as well as those territories in which national assemblies are to be established at a later stage in the course

(Messages to the Bahá'í World, Pages: 99-100)

### 1957 April

A special tribute, I feel, should be paid in this survey of worldwide Bahá'í achievements, to the heroic band of pioneers, and particularly to the company of the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, who, as a result of their indomitable spirit, courage, steadfastness, and self-abnegation, have achieved in the course of four brief years, in so many of the virgin territories newly opened to His Faith, a measure of success far exceeding the most sanguine expectations....

Nor should reference be omitted in these pages to the surprisingly numerous conferences and institutes which, in the course of the last twelve months, have been organized by the enterprising, the indefatigable and vigilant members of Bahá'í communities in various parts of the world,...the **Alaskan Teaching Conference in Fairbanks**,...

(Messages to the Bahá'í World, Pages: 113-114)

# ALASKA, OUR NEW FRONTIER

BY ORCELLA REXFORD

ALASKA! Our wondrous northland of transcendent surprises, famed in song and story, of gold-rush adventures; hardy pioneers "mushing" over frozen tundras behind dog teams; prospectors from the earth's far-distant places; and strange, primitive peoples. Alaska! Home of the Midnight Sun, the flashing Aurora Borealis and the North Pole where the weather has its hiding place. A land varying in climate from the soft breezes and foggy weather of Southeastern Alaska, where in summer three kinds of wild orchids grow, to the Arctic circle where it may be seventy below.

Nowhere is there more surpassing scenery on such a magnificent scale. Hundreds and hundreds of miles of jagged peaks separated by deep and impassable gorges, down which roar torrents from glaciers eighty miles away. In summer when night takes a holiday, the earth is lush with emerald-tinted vegetation, dotted here and there with rainbow-hued flowers on the terrain, even to the edge of the melting glaciers, or they may float serenely in the little turquoise pools left when the snows retire.

Who can describe its wonders or imagine its vastness? Remote as it seems, yet from Juneau in Southeastern Alaska to Seattle is only eleven hours by air-line. Juneau lies closer to Seattle than does Los Angeles. If Alaska were superimposed on a map of the United States, the tip of the Aleutian islands would reach to Los Angeles, on the Pacific coast, while the southeastern tip would end in Savannah, Georgia. Point Barrow would then be over Duluth, Minnesota. Alaska would cover in all about one-fifth of our country. Incredibly enough, in this vast territory of 590,884 square miles live less than 73,000 people (according to the last census), not quite enough to fill the Yale Bowl. Yet Alaska could support ten or fifteen million inhabitants. Perhaps at the conclusion of the war, the population

will increase more rapidly, as it gives promise of now doing.

Alaska was closely associated with my childhood, since there were relatives in the family who had been in the Gold Rush and never returned, and these stories were told to me along with other tales of adventure. Thus was born within me a peculiar urge to visit that far-away land, which became with the years almost a compulsion, why I was to learn later. It happened then, as a natural course of events, as the years passed, that a time came when I engaged passage on the boat for the Midnight Sun. Thus three years after accepting the Bahá'í Faith, I not only gratified my earlier craving to visit the Northland, but made the trip as a Bahá'í pioneer.

It was the early part of June, 1922, that this decision was made and I boarded the Alaskan Steamship Line and headed north through the Inside Passage. In and out through wooded spruce fiords we wound, through superb scenery reminding me of the coastal waters about British Columbia; and the snow-capped peaks of the interior were similar to those about Lake Louise and Banff. It was daylight most of the twenty-four hours and we slept little lest we miss "something." But enchanting as was the scenery, I was equally engrossed with the passengers, for I hoped that there might be some amongst them with whom I could share, not just the beauties of nature, but those rarer treasures of the spiritual teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. So it was gratifying to me that the Purser arranged for me to give a talk to the passengers on the boat on the "message of the New Day" and to spread the teachings that a new civilization had dawned on the earth. Many were astonished at the news, and to those who requested further information, Bahá'í literature was given, which I had carried with me for this purpose.



*The Bahá'í Message carried to Alaska by Mr. and Mrs. O. R. Gregory.*

Alaskan Bahá'í Community: It Was Written

Leaving Skagway, we passed into British territory travelling by the White Pass Railway over the Saw Tooth Mountains into the Yukon Territory, passing over some of the ground that the Gold Rushers had stained with their blood, fighting the blizzards and freezing winds as they pressed ever onward in their greed for gold. So hazardous was the trip that hundreds lost their lives. We were shown a spot down a precipice where even the horses committed suicide by jumping over rather than to continue on with the privations and suffering involved. How often that is the way in frontier lands! Yet because these pioneers had blazed a trail, today progress has followed in their footsteps and we were able to travel in luxury, while the guide told us of those heroes of 1898.

The trip from White Horse down the Yukon River in a queer wood-burning boat was uneventful except that I was able to give a talk on the Bahá'í Faith coming and going, thus deepening the understanding of those aboard. But tourists are not very promising material, they are not out for serious things. Yet in Lake Atlin at the Inn, on our way back to Skagway while I was giving the Message to the guests, two ladies from Boston who had heard me give it there two years before came to express their pleasure at hearing it again.

While in Dawson, I was invited to be an entertainer at the Festival of the Midnight Sun, given by the Ladies of the Golden North. It is not often they have the opportunity to have professional talent. Through this experience I met the editor of the Dawson Daily News, Mr. Charles Settlementier, who gave me many fine write-ups about the Bahá'í Faith. He had met Mrs. Imogene Hoagg and Miss Jack, the first Alaskan pioneers who had visited there many years before. I met many people who recalled having heard of the Message through them, yet I never met any people in my travels who had embraced the Message, owing to the fact that these teachers could not remain long enough to deepen the consciousness of their listeners. But some day others will follow in the footsteps of the pioneers, and nurture these seeds sown through love and sacrifice.

As a result of the newspaper publicity and the acquaintances made at the Midnight Festival, the door was opened for me to give a Sunday afternoon lecture to 550 people, some of whom walked twenty miles from the Gold Creeks in the Klondike to attend. Though these people had found the wealth lying in its streams, they now seemed equally desirous to mine the real riches lying hidden in the spirit. Could I have remained longer, I would have had a thriving class.

When I reached Juneau, a tea was given for me by the Governor's wife, to whom I had a letter of introduction from a mutual friend in the "States." Many of these ladies attended the series of my private lectures, which were sponsored by a local organization. These were well attended opening the way for me to "give the Message" to several hundred people. Here I learned not only that Mrs. Hoagg and Miss Jack had preceded me, but also that work had been carried on here for a number of years by a Miss Green of Washington, D. C. Thus quite a number in my audience were already familiar with it. I had intended to remain here for the summer, but Destiny willed otherwise. One day I met a passenger from the boat who described another section of Alaska to me in such glowing terms that I decided to continue my journey "westward" and to see the "rest of Alaska." Thus a few days later I was again aboard a boat, heading on a four or five-day journey across the Gulf of Alaska to the Seward Peninsula.

If I had been enraptured with the scenic wonders I had beheld on my trip to date, they were added to in equal measure by the stupendous glacial scenery in Prince William Sound, in the Gulf of Alaska. Here was a glacier three hundred or more feet high, three miles wide extending back into the interior for a hundred miles, a mass of moving, greenish blue ice.

Again I gave the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to the passengers on the boat, and met many people who were later of assistance to me when we arrived in Anchorage. One of these was a friend of Captain Lathrop, one of the most prominent citizens of the territory and owner of a chain of theatres, who engaged me for a week's entertainment at

each of his theatres. The entertainment drew capacity houses. At the conclusion of my week's work I delivered the Bahá'í Message to a crowded theatre of over five hundred people, which was most remarkable considering that the town only had about twenty-eight hundred people at the time.

The Anchorage Times gave me many write-ups and was very helpful. It was a most receptive audience, as I found all these Alaskans to be. They seemed closer to the reality of life, owing to the isolation of the districts where many of them lived and the loneliness of their lives, which gives them ample opportunities to read and meditate. Somehow they seemed shed of superstitions and petty prejudices, and a spirit of brotherhood was in evidence.

Prior to the opening of my entertainments at the theatre I had asked the management to introduce me to some of the prominent ladies of the town. It was after one of the evening shows that I was presented to Mrs. Jack Robarts, who was an Alaskan pioneer, having come to the North during the gold-rush days and had been part of the life of the many mining camps. For many years she had lived in Fairbanks and had played the stellar role in a local stock company. Strangely enough I discovered that I was not unknown to her, that she had read a number of my articles which had been run in a recent magazine, and at that very moment had one of them pinned up in her study, on which was my photograph. We had, therefore, from the start many mutual interests, and she took me for an after-theatre chat to the studio of Sydney Lawrence, Alaska's famous scenic artist, famed for the painting of Indian caches, and Mt. McKinley. Here she planned out the week's entertainment for me which was initiated by my attendance at a large ball, my partner being Dr. Gayne V. Gregory, head of the largest dental clinic in the territory. Next the President of the Women's Club gave a tea for me, and I addressed her club.

During the week of my lectures at the theatre, it became a nightly practice for Dr. Gregory, Mrs. Robarts and myself to meet at Sydney's studio for discussions on subjects, which I felt would lead up to my

giving them the Bahá'í message, reserved for my concluding lecture.

It was after this lecture that Dr. Gayne V. Gregory came to me with a beaming face and told me, "As you were talking, from the platform, I turned to my roommate with: 'That's it, just what I have been seeking, that which puts God into our ideas.' I am so grateful to you for bringing the message of Bahá'u'lláh to me, and I accept Him as the new revelator." My cup of joy was full, for here, amongst the many hundreds to whom I had offered life's greatest gift, was the first one ready to accept it. But God had prepared him over a long period of time for this great privilege. It was a relief to find one who was ready to accept without questioning and argumentation. It was as if one day he looked at the blossom on a plant and later discovered the fruit, as a matter of course. Very shortly after, Victoria Robarts accepted; so they became the first man and woman believers in this part of Alaska, or perhaps in the whole country. (Since I had no way of knowing whether others had accepted at the time Miss Jack and Mrs. Hoagg visited here, I qualify this statement.) Certainly there were no Bahá'ís in Anchorage at this time.

Dr. Gregory was born near Missoula, Montana, of pioneer stock, his grandfather being the first settler of Salem, Oregon, who at one time had as his farm the present city of that name. His mother had come west in covered wagon days, and was one of the first to embrace Christian Science. She studied with one of Mary Baker Eddy's original disciples and therefore was known as one of her "granddaughters." In spite of intense family opposition to these new ideas, she became a practitioner and lecturer and traveled throughout the western country winning converts to the new faith. Her young son was greatly attracted to his mother's teachings and was one of her most ardent disciples. He later was a reader in one of the Churches. Since he had never had an orthodox church training, the new ideas of the Bahá'í faith were easier for him to accept.

In 1904 Dr. Gregory, who had been practicing dentistry with his father in Butte, Montana, moved to Valdez, Alaska, where

he made his home until he moved north into the community which later became Anchorage, the headquarters of the Alaskan Railroad. The town was first called "Ship Creek" but about 1916 was incorporated and the name was changed to Anchorage, because ocean-going vessels came up Cook's Inlet, or Turnagain Arm, and anchored at the docks at the foot of the town. The town was beautifully situated, encircled by high mountains on a high plateau, with a view of Mt. Susitna, an extinct volcano, across the bay; and in the distance the ever white top of Mt. McKinley, 200 miles in the interior, was visible. It had two lakes within easy reach of the town and automobile highways built to them. Because it was protected by the Alaskan range from the coastal storms, the climate was rather equitable here. Here Dr. Gregory, after several years of private practice, finally merged his practice with that of another dentist and a large dental clinic was opened to serve this part of the territory, which is still in existence, although Dr. Gregory sold his interests in 1924, when he retired from active practice.

At the conclusion of my engagement at the theatre in Anchorage I was booked for a similar series at the theatre in Fairbanks, up near the Arctic Circle. I had made many friends during my short stay in this little city of the north and was loath to leave, but as I had carried on some class instruction on the Faith for these two ardent Bahá'í believers, I felt that I was leaving something definite behind me. I had planned to return from Fairbanks over the automobile highway to Valdez and so would not come back this way. Our hearts were sad over the pending separation, as these people seemed to be part of myself, yet it was such a short time ago that we had met. But I was soon to be made aware of the *compulsion* that had urged me to come north, for a few days before my departure I had a dream in which it was revealed to me that I was not going to leave here but was to become the bride of the young doctor, who was Alaska's first Bahá'í believer. So I was prepared the next day when he came to me and told me that he, too, had experienced something similar and asked me to marry him. He had wanted to ask me very early in our ac-

quaintance, but owing to the fact that I was a professional woman and my heart was in the spreading of the Bahá'í Message, he did not think it was expedient to limit my activities to a small town on the top of the world. However, I felt that this problem of my future activities was one that time would take care of; so I left for Fairbanks, with a very happy heart, setting my wedding date a few days after my husband's birthday, November 16, 1922. (It was now the last of August.)

In Fairbanks, I again spoke to crowded houses, and wound up my week's entertainment by giving the Message to about three hundred people. As I could not remain for "follow-up work," I could trace no results to this effort, but many seemed attracted.

Returning to Anchorage I gave another lecture on the Bahá'í Faith, and gathered a few students about me whom I continued to teach about the New Civilization.

Anchorage had many remarkable citizens for so small a community, many of whom later attained fame in the "States." Among these was Dr. Gregory.

We left Anchorage shortly after for our wedding trip to the Pacific Coast, leaving Mrs. Robarts to carry on the Bahá'í instruction in our absence.

In July of 1923 we returned to Alaska where I again took up my Bahá'í work with the view of establishing a center in Anchorage. I gave another lecture in the theatre to a crowded house and started with a class of sixty. Those who had accepted the faith raised \$60 and we sent it to the Temple Fund, as we wished Alaska to have a share in the erection of the Bahá'í House of Worship.

For a month I conducted a daily column in the Anchorage Daily Times on the Bahá'í Teachings. These were read all over Alaska with great interest and I distributed literature to those who wrote in for it.

Since Alaska is a shifting population, I found it rather difficult to establish a center there. Many of those whom I had first attracted had moved away or had passed on. So by the end of 1924 when we were ready to depart for the "States," having sold our interests, the group had dwindled to nineteen students whom I turned over to Mrs.

Robarts to deepen in the faith. But it was not so very long after that she too moved "outside" to the "States" and, with no one capable of carrying on the teaching, the group finally scattered until few of the original group were even living in Alaska.

In the fall of 1925 Dr. Gregory and I longing to visit our Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, decided to go abroad; so motoring to New York we placed our car aboard ship and spent several months touring France, Switzerland, and Italy. I gave several lectures in Paris.

In January of 1926, while we were touring Egypt, the invitation came to visit that blessed spot, Haifa. How overjoyed we were to think that at last the wish of our hearts was to be fulfilled, for I had long felt the need of consulting with our beloved Guardian about our work. We were with him eleven days, during which time there were no other pilgrims present. For this reason it was permissible for Dr. Gregory to have the supreme blessing of an audience with the Greatest Holy Leaf, one which was seldom granted. She expressed her joy at meeting the first Bahá'í pilgrim from Alaska to visit the Holy Land. She remarked, "I hope as you have been a pioneer in Alaska in a material sense, in the future you will pioneer in the spiritual field. It is fine to have your wife to work with you; in this companionship you are like the two wings of a bird and can fly perfectly." She gave him a vial of rose-water. How exalted he felt to be in the presence of the greatest living woman in the world! Those days seemed like days spent in heaven with Shoghi Effendi and the charming ladies of the household. We returned to America with

greater inspiration to carry on our work which was crowned with greater success than ever. When the call came a few years ago for a new set of pioneers to go to Alaska to establish the cause there in the very town where we had labored so indefatigably, there was a great tug at our heart strings. How we longed to return and to finish the work we had begun! What would have been more fitting than that Alaska's first Bahá'í believer should return and harvest the crop of the divine seed sown so long ago! But the way did not open for us to offer ourselves. We felt that our work there was finished and that others could carry on better there now. Our hearts rejoiced when the news came that Janet Whitenack, a New Yorker who had come to Fairbanks, had accepted the Faith. She had met Honor Kempton, and although she had previously heard the Message, was to be confirmed as the first Bahá'í believer in Alaska under the Seven Year Plan. Then when recently the news came that through the efforts of Honor Kempton and Frances Wells, Anchorage now had a Bahá'í community we were overjoyed. Strange how life is! A few months before Mrs. Wells went north, Victoria Robarts who has lived in Los Angeles for many years, assisted her at Big Bear to form a community.

Alaska now has the eyes of the world turned on it as our new frontier, not only in a material sense but as our new Bahá'í frontier. May Bahá'u'lláh continually bless and confirm the efforts of these faithful pioneers. When the war is over, may we again pay a visit to that land of pleasant memories and visit that community of the Greatest Name in Anchorage!

Reprinted from Bahá'í World,  
Vol. XVII, 1976-79, p. 648

Too long have I asked  
The merchant of rubies  
About the price of straw.  
With my eyes about my feet so long  
And the stubble breaking my sandal.  
There is no law  
Against waiting at the blue archway  
And asking all I wish.  
I will price the pale ruby  
And the red, and more—for He who knows  
This subtle stone will know  
The leap of light in others.  
Their sizes, settings, sicclets.  
New-fashioned and old;  
Their studded Mali faces.  
Yemenite-gold;  
Cold-ivoried inlay; tusked ebony,  
Sandal-sweet linings for the senses;  
Diamond-brow for testing true detachment;  
Vein-pearled purity. He knows it.  
Such a merchant knows well  
The price of straw, feathers,  
Things that fall easily to earth,  
All births, the costs of living,  
The taste of the sweet cup taken from our lips,  
The cost of giving  
a Book of Law  
Audrie Reynolds (Unalakleet, Alaska)

Reprinted from Bahá'í World,  
Vol. XIX, 1983-86, p. 804

I

I do not know him whom I love  
But on the wind's breath and the salt spray.  
In the east the dawn brings up his name  
The bird calling in the dune-grass  
Takes his air in its throat.  
The wave combs the driftwood roots  
With his fingers. His touch  
Lit my spirit's single wisp of tinder.  
My sad oil-wick.  
His flames lent a wing  
To fire a tundra  
With the blaze of it.

II

'You! Keep away from my children.  
I want you to promise me  
you will not speak of these things anymore.  
This village is complete without you people.  
It will move you on if you don't fit.  
Join it—it will take you to its heart.'

To join means silence, shouting a Name  
only to the low, tundra trees.  
Creeping, they hear us, some  
no higher than our feet.  
Big tracks link us  
to the great heart of the bear.  
The lagoon ice crackles  
alongside the perfume of spring.  
Surely a heart must listen.  
Somewhere.

Audrie Reynolds from 'Tundra Pioneers',  
poems set in Unalakleet, Alaska

The "In Memoriam" article for Emogene Hoag covers her eventful life, including information about her historic 8 month, 6000 mile trip from Nome up the Yukon River to Dawson, down to Fairbanks and Anchorage, ending up in Southeast Alaska. Following are excerpts from pages 522 and 523 of that article.

No doubt the most unique of her many teaching endeavors was this one made with Miss Marian Elizabeth Jack of New Brunswick. From San Francisco, in July, 1919, they took steamer to Nome and St. Michael, reaching those ports on the 26th, thence up the Yukon River to Fairbanks, on to Dawson and Whitehorse in Canada, down to Skagway and Juneau in Alaska. Then Miss Jack remained in Juneau while Emogene alone, in September, made the circuit by water over to Cordova, Valdez, Seward and Anchorage, all of which places gave her excellent newspaper publicity.

The long, leisurely trip up the Yukon aboard the "Julia B" was filled with amusing happenings as well as excitement. To begin with, all of Emogene's baggage, except one suitcase, had been accidentally left behind in Seattle, but, as noted in her diary:

"Extra wraps and even Indian moccasins will be loaned by the Captain, sweaters by the Purser, and all sorts of things are convertible into necessary robes for the night. The freedom from worry about baggage is a noticeable feature of our travels; in fact, this is a splendid region in which to practice not thinking about what one wears and what one eats."

Everywhere along the route Emogene and Miss Jack had met the dwellers in the towns and Indian villages, either on the pier if the stop were a short one or, if longer, in the hotel lobbies, dining-rooms, lodge halls or movie theaters, which latter would sometimes run slides announcing a Bahá'í talk. Miss Jack would set up her easel anywhere and begin sketching. She made friends through her smiles and merry quips, and Emogene would soon introduce the subject of the Bahá'í Revelation. Where public lectures were given pamphlets would be distributed, and usually an ice cream "party" would follow at the drug store or in a private home.

At Ruby they held an impromptu meeting on the sidewalk.

At Tenana the Message was given to a Chinese who owned the restaurant where they had their meals. Mr. Lee asked for literature, and to every patron he would hand a pamphlet, saying: "This is very good. You read. Do you lot of good."

At Cordova Emogene wrote in her diary: "While I gave only one public talk, the whole town was astir with the Message. . . . It really rejoices one to know that the hearts are being prepared so opportunely, and that all we have to do is to lend our services."

"Some of the women at Anchorage helped to arrange talks at the Women's Club, the City Club, before the Pioneers (women and men), also at the picture show, and the High School Auditorium. They thought it was wonderful to travel and teach without taking pay, and that it was a privilege to hear the addresses. I stand in awe at the power of the Spirit that will provide these means and opportunities."

Emogene returned to Juneau December 21st. Notwithstanding the Christmas holidays, a series of dinner and teaching engagements ensued at many private homes and, on the evening of the 30th, she spoke at a public meeting in Odd Fellows Hall. On New Year's Eve she and Miss Jack attended the reception given by Governor and Mrs. Riggs.

Late that same evening Mrs. Georgia Grayson Ralston, of San Francisco, arrived from New York in order to accompany Emogene on some short trips out of Juneau. After a hurried jaunt to Sitka, Wrangell and Ketchikan, fraught with near disaster due to inclement weather and severe storms, they retraced their steps to Juneau, and at the invitation of the Mayor held one public meeting in the City Council Chambers.

During their stay in Sitka it was the Greek holiday season, with a dance every evening. Since they could, therefore, not obtain a hall, Mrs. Ralston wondered what they could do. Nothing daunted, Emogene replied: "Well, if we cannot get a hall on account of a masked ball, we will go to the ball. There we are sure to see everyone, and some may be willing to listen to us." Not

only did they go to the ball, but they did interest a number of persons and, moreover, they were invited to be two of the five judges of the best sustained character of the evening.

At Wrangell they had two meetings in Van Atta's Barber Shop. The proprietor was a devout Bible student and offered his shop for meetings "any evening after 8:30 and on Sunday afternoons."

As they were about to leave Wrangell, Judge Thomas presented to each of them a little pin made of Alaska gold, at the same time thanking them for having "brought much to him in the Teachings."

In a letter from Wrangell to a friend in Washington, D. C., dated January 15, 1920, Emogene wrote:

"One must adapt the way to the needs, and the main thing is to have the people learn about the Faith. . . . I know I shall miss the pioneer spirit of Alaska. I certainly like it here."

From Juneau Emogene and Mrs. Ralston began the homeward journey, sailing February 24th from Vancouver for San Francisco.

Though Emogene was not the first Bahá'í teacher to visit Alaska and spend some time there, she was truly a pioneer in the sense that she opened new territory and sowed the seed for future garnerers.

Her entire tour of Alaska, by boat and rail, covered eight months and a total of more than six thousand miles, not including the sea voyage from San Francisco to Nome.

TO GATHER JEWELS<sup>1</sup>

BY HONOR KEMPTON

IT WAS a never-failing source of excitement to walk up the hill to the Book Cache, my shop in Anchorage, Alaska. On this particular winter's morning I left the house early, wondering what colored dress the "Sleeping Lady" would be wearing. As I reached the top of the hill all excitement left me. It was as if a hand had been laid upon me and I was still. Only a quiet awe remained. Never had my mountain looked so beautiful. She lay wrapped in a pure white robe of glistening snow. Beneath her lapped the living blue waters of Cook Inlet. Across the valley stood the sentinel peaks of the Chugach Mountains paying tribute as the rising sun behind them softly touched my "lady's dress."

Whatever hardships one may endure in Alaska they are more than compensated by the majestic grandeur and beauty of the country. God must have loved this land when He created it—this land of a thousand lakes, of snowy mountain peaks, of green forests, of rare and delicate mosses, and gorgeous flowers. But God desired this lovely

land to be still more brilliantly illuminated and blessed.

These were the thoughts of a Bahá'í pioneer going to work on a winter's morning.

'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us in *America's Spiritual Mission*: "Alaska is a vast country . . . yet the call of the Kingdom is not yet raised through that spacious territory. Consequently strive as far as ye are able to send to those parts fluent speakers, who are detached from aught else save God, attracted with the fragrances of God, and sanctified and purified from all desires and temptations. Their sustenance and food must consist of the teachings of God. First they must themselves live in accordance with those principles, then guide the people. Perchance, God willing, the lights of the most great guidance may illumine that country and the breezes of the rose garden of the love of God may perfume the nostrils of the inhabitants of Alaska."

"Oh God, if it is Thy Will, give me an opportunity to speak of Thy Cause this day. Help me to spread Thy Faith



Anniversary of the Birth of the Báb celebrated in Anchorage, Alaska, October 19, 1947.

over this vast and spacious country. Help me to 'become like unto a regiment and conquer these countries through the love of God and the illuminations of divine teachings.'" Such was my earnest supplication before a busy day at the Book Cache.

Later that day, as always after the weekly broadcast of the Bahá'í teachings, I left the radio station in a state of utter happiness, almost of ecstasy. Such elation comes because something great has happened. One feels a vibrant power as the name of Bahá'u'lláh goes out over the ether, and with the knowledge of that power comes a sense of humility and of tremendous responsibility.

The word of God is sent out far into the wilderness, to the tiny cabins of the sourdoughs, to the trappers' lonely homes, the prospectors' log cabins, the Ranger's lookout at the foot of Mt. McKinley, the old trading posts in Canada; to places like Dawson Creek, Whitehorse, Skagway; to Matanuska Valley, nestling under towering mountains, with its cluster of red roofed farmhouses, its school and its hospital. It goes up north to the native villages of Nome, Point Hope, Wainright, King Island; still farther north to the

lonely outpost of Point Barrow with its valiant band of nurses and teachers, who, under terrific hardships, serve these happy people, the Eskimos. It goes west to Kodiak, Dutch Harbor, and still farther west down to the lonely wastes of the Aleutian Islands, to the villages of the Aleuts, as far down as the windswept island of Atka, where there lives a radiant Bahá'í, Ethel Oliver, and her talented husband Simeon. (In their home in this desolate yet strangely beautiful village there hangs a picture of the Bahá'í House of Worship, and the little native children when they pass before this picture look up and say, in their quaint Aleutian dialect, "The Temple of Light.")

The Word goes out to the sturdy little planes of the "bush pilots," to the majestic planes on their way to and from the Orient, down to the ships plying the waters of the Bering Sea, and across that sea to the wastelands of Siberia, to the Alaskan Gulf and the Arctic Ocean.

To the sea, the earth, and the sky goes out the creative Word of God and the name of His Manifestation, Bahá'u'lláh.

Later that same winter day, when I was back again in the Book Cache with

its constant, exciting activity, the telephone rang. It seemed an unusually insistent ring. I picked up the receiver. A quiet voice asked, "Will you please tell me about this Bahá'í Faith? I listened to your program for the first time three weeks ago and thought, 'That is good.' I listened the next week and said to myself, 'That is very good. I must do something about it.' I heard you again today and I cannot stand it any longer. I must know more." Our invitation to dinner was immediately given and accepted.

That evening, as we were putting the finishing touches to the dinner table, there was a knock at the door. There stood a beautiful woman. Her regal bearing and glowing face marked her as a leader of her race. In the soft tones heard often among the Negro people she introduced herself as Grace Bahovec from Baranof Island, Alaska.

Her story is a fascinating one. She and her husband, who is postmaster, live on this remote island. During the long summer evenings they would walk along the edge of the water searching for semiprecious stones, petrified pearls, and the like. After a while they found that they had a valuable collection. Then Mr. Bahovec began to carve the stones for setting into rings, bracelets, locketts. He came to have a strong desire to possess some Alaskan jade. This jade comes from the interior of Alaska far up north.

One day Mr. Bahovec said to his wife, "You have worked hard this winter with little recreation. I suggest that you go 'outside' for a trip." Grace quickly agreed and made plans for her trip. Instead of going to Seattle she headed for Anchorage to see if she could find the much-coveted jade for her husband. Once in Anchorage she obtained work and quietly began to search for some clue to the whereabouts of the jade, but with no results. It was at this time that she heard the radio talks on the Bahá'í Faith.

Grace told us her story and expressed her keen disappointment at her failure to find the jade. Dagmar Dole looked up at her smilingly and said, "I can tell you where you can get all the jade

you want," and then proceeded to tell her just how she could procure the jade. Later, following Dagmar's instructions, Grace did obtain all the jade she wanted.

That was a memorable night. We talked of the Bahá'í Faith way into the small hours of the morning. Our listener was so deeply interested. When she arose to go, both Dagmar and I felt impelled to give her a Bahá'í book. On the fly-leaf I wrote these words of Bahá'u'lláh:

"To gather jewels have I come to this world. If one speck of a jewel lie hid in a stone and that stone be beyond the seven seas, until I have found and secured that jewel, my hand shall not stay from its search."<sup>1</sup>

Grace came again and again; she asked many questions and read the Bahá'í books. One Sunday night we were holding a fireside and were planning to show pictures of the Bahá'í Temple. There were many young couples present — about thirty-five people in all. There was a knock at the door and there stood Grace with two of her friends. We welcomed them with great joy, and presented them to the rest of the gathering. The graciousness and courtesy of Grace Bahovec won everybody's heart. When after the meeting she thanked each one for the welcome so freely given, every man in the room came forward to shake her hand. For many of the non-Bahá'ís it was a new and wonderful experience.

As time drew near for her to leave Anchorage we decided that we would arrange a farewell dinner. All the Bahá'ís in the community helped. It was to be a very special evening. Just as everything was ready, there came the familiar knock and there stood Grace. Again her face had that illumined look. I stood very still, possessed by a strange feeling of expectation. Again that radiant smile. Then she said: "I am one of Bahá'u'lláh's jewels and He has found me. I came for jade but I have found a priceless jewel."

<sup>1</sup>From "Gems of Nabil translated by Shoghi Effendi and Dr. Esslemont, p. 934, *Bahá'í World*, Vol. VIII.

That night we talked, and read the creative words of Bahá'u'lláh. We read and discussed the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Grace expressed her ardent desire to become a Bahá'í. After she had signed the card of membership, I bent over and kissed her and said, "Now you are my Bahá'í sister."

That was only one of the things that happened in Alaska. A chosen soul, born in Haiti, had found her way to Anchorage and there, out of the ether, came to her the message of Bahá'u'lláh — the Manifestation of God for this day. It is one of my precious memories of the things that happened in the shadow of the "Sleeping Lady."

### Reference Material from The Bahá'í World:

<b>Page</b>	<b>Regarding</b>	<b><u>Bahá'í World</u> Volume and Page</b>
I-9	Photograph of dog sled and Mr. and Mrs. O. R. Gregory.	Vol. I, 1925-26, p. 124
I-9	"Alaska, Our New Frontier", by Orcella Rexford	Vol. IX, 1940-44, pp. 918-922
I-12	A poem by Audrie Reynolds	Vol., XII, 1976-79, p. 648
I-12	from "Tundra Pioneers", poem by Audrie Reynolds	Vol., XIX, 1983-86, p. 804
I-12	Henrietta Emogene Martin Hoag	Vol. X, 1944-46, pp. 520-526
I-14	"To Gather Jewels", by Honor Kempton	Vol., XI, 1946-50, pp. 773-777



Alaskan Bahá'í Community:

Its  
Growth and Development

The Formative Years:

To 156 B. E. (1999)

Part II

Glances in the  
Rearview Mirror



## **Alaska Bahá'í Community: Its Growth and Development: The Formative Years II – Glances in the Rearview Mirror**

It is easy to either glorify or ignore the past. Both are dangerous. Preoccupation with the past often gives a romantic and distorted view and sets impossible and inappropriate standards for today. On the other hand, Americans have been accused of both extremes of forging ahead or drifting along, oblivious of the past and without concern for the future. The phrase "United States of amnesia" was coined to describe this apparent cultural deficiency. How can you know where you are unless you know where you have been? How can anyone learn from a past that is not recalled? How can you talk to or hear the voice of the old ones and ancestors if you don't know who they are? It is well for each generation to know on whose shoulders they are standing. The Guardian honored believers of the West by calling them the "spiritual descendants of the dawnbreakers." This carries with it an implication of living and working in the present with an appreciation of the past coupled to a vision of the future. The following pages provide an opportunity to take a quick look at what has happened within the Bahá'í community of Alaska without forgetting the present or future.

### **Firsts**

The earliest known Bahá'í traveler to Alaska was Agnes Alexander (1875-1971) in 1905. Aseyeh Allen wrote of talks she gave in Southeastern Alaska early in the century. In 1916 Susan Rice traveled to Fairbanks and into the Yukon Territory. Emogene Hoag (1889-1945) and Marion Jack (1866-1954) made a 8 month long, 6,000 mile trip from St. Michael and Nome to Dawson to Juneau during 1919-20 in response to the Tablets of the Divine Plan.

The first known Bahá'í to live in Alaska was Margaret Green (?-1955) of Washington D.C. who lived in Juneau from 16 June 1915 to 6 June 1918. Orcella Rexford (1887-1946) was the first believer to pioneer to Alaska. This was in direct response to the Tablets of the Divine Plan. The first record of enrollments were Dr. Gayne V. Gregory (whom Orcella later married) and Victoria (Mrs. Jack) Robarts.

There is no record of any Bahá'í activity in Alaska for the next decade and a half. On January 26, 1939, the Guardian sent a telegram to the United States requesting "nine holy souls" to pioneer to nine unsettled areas including Alaska. Two Bahá'ís answering that call were Honor Kempton (1892-1981) and Betty Becker (1887-1984) who settled in Anchorage and Juneau respectively and started the beginning of a permanent settlement of Bahá'ís.

Janet B. Whitenack (1907-85) was the first to enroll (1939) during this period. The first Bahá'í marriage was for non-Bahá'ís: Ben and Kay Hitchcock. (Although Kay did become a Bahá'í in 1978 - 35 years after learning of the Faith and just two years before her death.) Verne Stout and Janet Whitenack had the first marriage of Bahá'ís (1945). The first youth enrollment was Donna Mae Robinson (1945) and the first family to enroll was the Brown family, Howard, Lea, Sandra and Boyer (1947).

A Jamaican of African descent, Grace Behovac from Sitka, was the first minority to become a Bahá'í in Alaska (circa. 1941). Melba King (nee Call) (1910-1979) was the first Eskimo from Alaska to embrace the Cause (1943) although she was living in New Mexico at the time. Agnes Harrison (nee Parent) was the first Alaskan Native to enroll in the Faith in Alaska (1949). The first Tlingit Indian from Alaska to become a Bahá'í was Eugene King, (1954) while living in Washington. Joyce Anderson Combs was the first Tlingit to enroll in Alaska (1956). When Jerome Trigg enrolled 1970, he and Martha (1944-1978) became the first Eskimo couple in the world who were Bahá'ís.

## Institutional Growth

By 1943 there were only 7 Bahá'ís in Alaska and they lived in three different places, which were hundreds of miles apart. By having all of them move to Anchorage and by adding two new pioneers, the first local Spiritual Assembly was formed in Anchorage on September 4, 1943, before the end of the first Seven-Year Plan. The second Spiritual Assembly was the Anchorage Recording District (1951). (Later called Spenard, then Oceanview, now merged as a part of Anchorage).

The Ten-Year-Crusade goal (1953) that Alaska was to have its own National Spiritual Assembly spurred on vigorous pioneering and teaching activities and the National Spiritual Assembly was formed in 1957.

The Guardian gave the new National Spiritual Assembly a subsidiary Six-Year-Plan. Most of these goals were completed before his passing six-months later – an accomplishment second only to Uganda.

All nine members of the Alaska National Spiritual Assembly were present for the first election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel (1963). Alphabetical listing of countries placed Alaska in the front row. Howard Brown, who was sitting on the aisle, became the first person in history to cast a ballot for the Supreme Body. Kathryn Alio became the first woman to vote for the House of Justice.

On 23-25 July 1976, more than 1300 Bahá'ís from 36 countries gathered in Anchorage for an International Teaching Conference. The Universal House of Justice was represented by Hand of the Cause of God, Collis Featherstone.

### Growth of the Alaska Bahá'í Community

	Population Alaska *	Number of Believers	Number Locations	Number LSAs	Percent of Gen'l Pop.
1912	64,000	1	1	0	<0.01%
1937	54,742	0	0	0	0.00%
1939	60,000	3	3	0	0.01%
1943	72,524	10	1	1	0.01%
1953	193,800	43	11	2	0.02%
1957	218,600	107	16	6	0.05%
1963	249,400	257	42	13	0.10%
1973	316,900	3200	158	16	1.01%
1979	413,700	3300	200	58	0.80% †
1986	545,200	3947	188	76	0.72%
1993	558,777	3994	167	39‡	0.71%
1998	609,311	4001	165	32	0.66%

\* Statistics and interpolations based on records from the State of Alaska Department of Labor.

† The drop in percentage shows that the general population has been growing faster than the Bahá'í population. Initially, this was due a population influx during the construction of the Alyeska Oil Pipeline.

‡ Prior to this time, great effort had been made to form Spiritual Assemblies anywhere that nine or more adult Bahá'ís were registered. Teams would go out, especially at Ridván, to rural villages for elections and formations. In subsequent years, Spiritual Assemblies were only formed by the initiative of local believers resulting in a decrease in the number of recognized Spiritual Assemblies.

## **Official Recognition**

The Anchorage Independent School District recognized Bahá'í Holy Days as days on which Bahá'í students could be excused from school in 1952. This privilege was granted to all schools under the State Operated School System in 1973.

Bahá'í marriages were recognized in 1953. As of 1999, twenty local Spiritual Assemblies are incorporated. During the crisis in Iran (1979-87) the Alaska State Legislature passed a joint House-Senate Resolution condemning the persecution of the Bahá'ís. Governors and mayors have signed many proclamations for various Bahá'í events over the years.

## **Native Councils**

Since the inception of the teaching work there has been much effort to reach the Natives. There was a demographic study in 1981 that indicated that 42% of the community were Native. Proportionally, that was five times as many Native Bahá'ís (3% of the Native population) as compared with the non-Native population (0.6%). The largest percentage was among the Athabascan (5.3%) and Tlingits (5.1%).

Two Bahá'í Tlingit Indians, Mary Brown and Loretta King, became a nucleus which included many others who were seeking ways to encourage the Native believers. (Loretta is currently [1999] serving as a Counsellor at the International Teaching Centre at the World Centre.)

They requested permission to have a gathering of Native Bahá'ís. The National Spiritual Assembly accepted the idea with the proviso that the success or failure of the program would be on its own merits, that is the National Spiritual Assembly would not intervene.

Native Councils were planned and carried out by Native believers. Non-Natives could observe, but not take part in the discussion. They served as needed for facilities, cooks or transportation. Agendas were developed during the councils. Participants could express anything on their hearts. Many Caucasian Bahá'ís were concerned that having separate meetings for Natives only was divisive. Mary Brown described the value of separate meetings by a comparison to an incubator. In the same way, when the Native believers could gain confidence among themselves in the security of familiar and comfortable settings, they would take their rightful place in the larger community.

The first one, in Haines in 1974 with 50 in attendance, was an astounding success. A flood of ideas and emotions came forth. Even the few who came to complain found a respectful hearing. Ill feelings were dissipated. Other Native Councils were held throughout Alaska. Since these meetings Native Bahá'ís have taken their rightful place in all aspects of Bahá'í community life: teaching, serving on committees, local Spiritual Assemblies, the National Spiritual Assembly, and as assistants, Auxiliary Board members and one, a Counsellor.

## **Mass Teaching**

During the middle years of the Nine-Year-Plan (1964-73) some bold teaching projects called "Proclamation" attracted Bahá'ís from Canada, Hawaii and the United States. Teaching teams traveled from town to town presenting programs of Indian and/or Eskimo dancing, Bahá'í films, music and the Bahá'í message. Enthusiasm mounted and enrollments increased.

During the 1971 National Convention, believers pledged themselves to the "spiritual conquest of Alaska" and "Massive Encounter" was launched. Jenabe Caldwell as the "Field Commander" was in charge of the day-to-day operations under the direction of the National Spiritual Assembly.

Nine-day Institutes prepared people through immersion in the Writings which created the necessary spiritual orientation, zeal and moral courage to carry on the work. A "work force" of dedicated

Nine-day Institutes prepared people through immersion in the Writings, which created the necessary spiritual orientation, zeal and moral courage to carry on the work. A "work force" of dedicated believers contributed their entire earnings to the Fund. A 24 hour "prayer watch" assured constant supplication for the success of the venture. In less than two years progress went from behind schedule to completing all Nine-Year Plan goals early - a feat second only to Fiji.

Not all was smooth with the fever pitch of activity. Radical new methods shook the foundations of established thinking. Continued unity is a tribute to the strength of the Covenant.

### **International**

Alaskan Bahá'ís have taken to heart being citizens of the world. The contribution made in the international field has been way out of proportion to the size of this community. This can be looked at in three broad dimensions: pioneering, individual travel teaching, and institutional participation.

Pioneering. For many believers, Alaska has been a training ground for service elsewhere. This tendency started with the first ones to arrive during the first Seven Year Plan. When the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly was firmly established, Honor Kempton asked the Guardian for permission to pioneer to Europe, a request he granted, with the provision that it would not endanger the gains made in Alaska. Dagmar Dole left for Europe shortly thereafter and Francis Wells wasn't far behind. Three years after the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly, Betty Becker pioneered from the north of Alaska to the south of Chile. Most of the Ten Year Crusade pioneers moved on to serve in other parts of the world. During several of the International Conventions in Haifa, there were "Alaskan Night" dinners. Former Alaskans, serving as delegates from all continents and many islands of the oceans, would gather in a joyous reunion.

Individual Travel Teaching. Go to nearly any community in Alaska and ask who has been travel teaching in some other part of the world and the chance is there will be many with marvelous stories to tell. Or, go to nearly any country and the people will tell you of the travel teaching trip of this one or that one from Alaska. It may have started with Ed Russell, who seemed to be "on the go" constantly during his retirement. He died when his suitcase was half packed for yet another trip. It continues, as one wonders where Alice Porter, Hazel Lovelace or Zarin Malmiri are this year.

Institutional. In 1975, Hand of the Cause William Sears convened an historic "Protection Conference" under the auspices of the Universal House of Justice. This was held under the dome of the Temple in Wilmette and was attended by three Hands of the Cause, the four Counsellors assigned to North America, the 27 members of the three North American National Spiritual Assemblies and all of the Auxiliary Board Members for the United States and Canada. Included were historic first-time meetings between the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska individually with the National Spiritual Assemblies of the United States and Canada, and jointly among all three. Many long-range collaborative projects had their beginnings during that meeting.

During the Five Year Plan the Universal House of Justice called for a series of International Teaching Conferences, one of which was held in Anchorage. Hands of the Cause of God, Collis Featherstone was appointed as the official representative of the Supreme body. On 23-25 July 1976, more than 1300 Bahá'ís from 36 countries gathered in Anchorage for this momentous event.

During the Nine Year Plan (1964-1973) Alaska had won all of its goals with still a year and a half to go. The proclamation and mass teaching programs had included much of the Yukon Territory of Canada, but most of the activity had taken place in Alaska. After the Alaskan goals were fulfilled there was a collaborative venture with the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada. Teaching teams traveled to many parts of Canada and Alaskans were credited with playing a major role in helping

Canada win its goals. There is a large pewter plate given to the Alaskan community by the Canadians in appreciation for the aid that was given. That was not enough. The Alaskan teaching team and musical group, Windflower, went to Europe for direct assistance. One of the Alaskans stopped someone on the streets in Germany and asked him if he had ever heard of the Bahá'í Faith and the man answered, "Yes, when I met you and enrolled in Anchorage." Probably the most ambitious international undertaking on an institutional level came after the Soviet Union opened up. Year after year teaching teams were organized that went to all parts of eastern Russia.

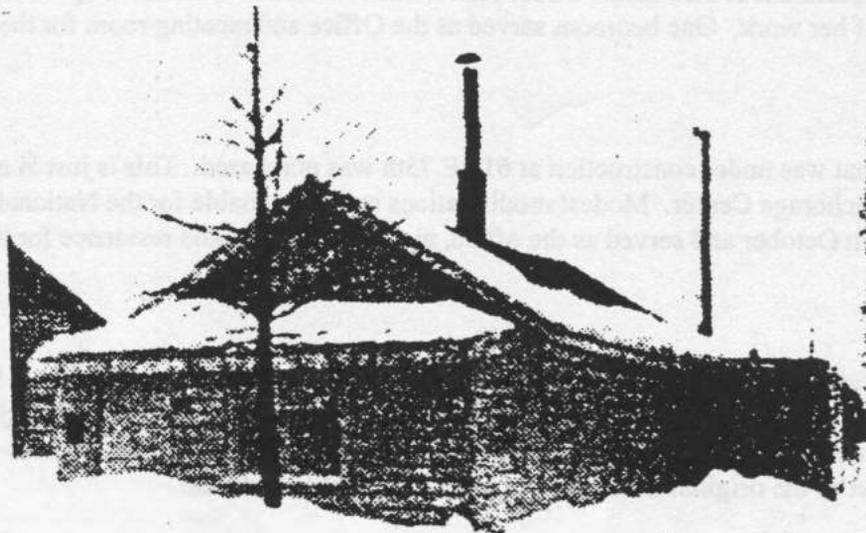
(NOTE: The above information is based on material that was submitted to the Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project. It is neither a part of nor does it represent the Encyclopedia.)

### **National Hazíratu'l-Quds**

Even before the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly there was concern about a National Hazíratu'l-Quds. As the Cause has grown, so has the need for facilities. Therefore, facilities have more or less followed the development of the Bahá'í community of Alaska and the Institution of the National Spiritual Assembly.

### **1953**

Ten-Year Crusade goals for Alaska included the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly and the acquisition of a Hazíratu'l-Quds.



Reprinted from Bahá'í World, Volume XIII, p. 360.

### **1953, October**

Before the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, one delegate would be elected each year to participate in the National Convention of the United States and Canada. The delegate would be elected each year at a Territorial Convention. During the Alaska Bahá'í Territorial Convention in 1953 there was a heated discussion about starting a fund for a National Hazíratu'l-Quds. Some argued that it would be premature to start a fund before there was a National Spiritual Assembly. Questions were raised, "Who could collect and hold the money? "Who could be responsible to administer it?" And, so on. Convention chairman Verne Stout placed a dollar bill on the table and said: "Here is the first dollar for the Hazíratu'l-Quds. Now, tell me it can't be done." The convention rallied around that bold move and the fund was started **1954, January**

The Guardian expressed his pleasure that the fund was started. He contributed \$500 himself. Major funding for the "modest structure" came from Raphael and Mildred Mottahedeh. The Mottahedehs had also assisted Honor Kempton financially when she pioneered to Alaska.

### **1955, August**

The first Hazíratu'l-Quds, a three-room log cabin at 810 8th Avenue, was dedicated by special guest Auxiliary Board Member Florence Mayberry. It had a full-width front storm porch and one room was added on the back for the caretakers' quarters. It was used until the earthquake in 1964 even though the sub-floor was in need of repair. The only damage from the earth quake was destruction of the chimney which rendered the building unusable until repaired. It was decided that the building had so many other problems that needed extensive work, that it would not be cost effective to make even temporary or minor repairs. Therefore, the property was sold and a search began for more suitable facility. The new owners tore down the building and converted the parcel of land into a parking lot. Later a drive-in bank facility was built on it.

### **1964**

While the search for a new Hazíratu'l-Quds was underway, temporary arrangements were made at 212 East 6th Avenue. Janet Smith, the National Secretary, was working for the State of Alaska Health Department at their Eagle Street office. She rented a two-bedroom apartment within walking distance of her work. One bedroom served as the Office and meeting room for the National Spiritual Assembly.

### **1965**

A house that was under construction at 619 E 75th was purchased. This is just ½ mile from the present Anchorage Center. Modest modifications made it suitable for the National Office. It was occupied in October and served as the office, meeting location, and residence for the National Secretary.

### **1974**

It was decided to build a more suitable, permanent Hazíratu'l-Quds. Land owned by the National Spiritual Assembly on Huffman road was selected, but the water table was too high. Several believers worked out an exchange of property to obtain the more than seven acres on this current site. This is part of the original homestead of Vern and Evelyn Huffman.

Walter Stieger, a Bahá'í from Oregon, who had lived in Alaska and made periodic work-related trips to Anchorage, was the chief architect and William (Bill) McKinley, was the general contractor. John Kolstoe was the project manager and official liaison with the National Spiritual Assembly. Extensive testimony had to be given to the Planning and Zoning Commission in order to get a zoning variance to build a religious structure in a residential zone. The presentation included detailed plans for the present structure and future expansion. The Planning and Zoning Commission insisted on

projected plans for future development because of the size of the property. So, projections were made to start construction on several other buildings within 25 years. Since then the rules have changed. It has not been necessary to complete the additional structures within the original time projection. When approval was granted, land clearing began and Bill McKinley made a frame for the Greatest Name from the first tree cut down to make way for construction. Bill donated this to the National Spiritual Assembly and it is in the archives.

There was much excitement among the believers about this development and Alaskan Bahá'í artist, George DeLoach, painted a picture from the architect's plans so the believers could have an idea what the building would look like.

The initial plans were for this structure with the four apartments to be the start. Apartments would be converted to office space as the need arose. Three future buildings, incorporating all the seven functions of a Hazíratu'l-Quds, were to be built behind the present structure. When they were built, the present building was to be converted back to apartments and a maintenance facility.

#### **1975, May**

Construction started. There was a dedication ceremony planned for November 8th in conjunction with an historic first conference put on by the Continental Counsellors. All four Counsellors for North America were present: Lloyd Gardner, Sarah Pereira, Velma Sherrill, and Edna True. Unfortunately, the construction was not completed in time for the scheduled event.

#### **1976, January**

Occupied.

**The Dedication at Rabbit Creek**  
(of the National Hazíratu'l-Quds of Alaska)  
(Reprinted from The Bahá'í World, Vol. XVI, 1973-76, p. 691)

i

The name our Lord  
Is as the sun in summer  
On light morning with wings like razors  
A rustle of gulls strikes the air.  
The thin blood rises like smoke.

The cold beneath the river  
Had darkened the water. The creek  
Had eaten snow all day and gone black.  
It glistened like glazed steel, strong, bent,  
Lifted me seaward. The name of our Lord  
Is as the sun in summer.

At the terminal's edge ice weighted the last  
buttercup.

Summer said to winter: behold,  
I have waited all autumn to bring you  
This five golden-petaled memento.

Already streched aboard the plane  
The crushed and broken fisherman  
Waited his pain. In the air  
I glimpsed the coast of the island  
Stuck by the first cold and bordered with fierce  
lace.

The flight was at night over water.  
The full plane told me nothing.

ii

Lift if it can  
Be lifted the heart weighted  
With fear, the man  
Shriveled to dust who was fated  
For glory. Lift him  
Or is brother who never surrendered  
Yet dropped in defeat,  
Who suffered the ordinary  
Dimness and saw clearly only  
The void in his purpose.

Wed us,

Muse, apothecary, enchantress,  
To something.

"Teach!" she said and called it "Love."  
"Teach!" she said and spoke of "Praise."  
She said to us, "Teach!" and wrote "Protect."  
She said to us, "Teach!"

How did we ever arrive  
Forgetful of ourselves,  
Together intent only on those four walls,  
A roof, a door carved with fire,  
A house grounded in glory.  
All in it are lifted toward Heaven.

iii

The corners of this house are in Klukwan,  
Ft. Yukon, Bethel, Akutan.  
The roof leans over Hydaburg.  
And tips the ragged sea at Diomedea.

Carpets are green islands in this house.  
That has for windows glacial waterfalls,  
And hallways where wide rivers go;  
Rooms dense as forests, deep as coasts;  
Light echoes from both sun and moon.

We cannot praise, we cannot,  
Cannot dedicate, how celebrate?  
This building is a corner of the earth.  
No celebration can exalt its birth,  
This Sacred Fold, this shelter from the wind,  
Beyond the first expression of His mind:

*"exalt your effort and magnify your aims."*

Forever may He bless  
This house without address  
And bless its servants each  
Who love, protect, praise, teach.

*Ray Hudson (Alaska)*

## **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror** **First of a series**

With great enthusiasm a prominent Bahá'í exclaimed: "And, it was the first time ever that...." When I heard this I smiled to myself, said nothing but thought of the times it had happened before. But, for that wonderful Bahá'í, it was the first time.

Each generation greets repeated events as new. While this allows for a freshness of thought and enthusiasm it also risks figuring something out without the benefit of prior experience and repeating the mistakes of others. A fool never learns; some learn from their own mistakes; the wise learn from the experiences of others.

All life is viewed through the prism of one's own experience which often overlooks or distorts the monumental and heroic deeds of those who went before. It is easy to forget that today's vantage point is possible because we stand on the shoulders of un-remembered legions who paid a dear price for our perspective, overcoming obstacles we never knew.

There are, of course, extremes from dwelling on the past with selective and glorified memory to Henry Ford's cryptic, "History is bunk!".

While no purpose is served by trying to relive or unduly revere the past, there is value in an occasional glance backward to better fix our bearings. That is the reason for this series.

Among the questions to be answered are: who was the first Bahá'í to travel to Alaska? the first to live here? Who, in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, made a dedication to Alaska at the Temple Site in Wilmette in 1912 and unwittingly became the spiritual forebear of one of the most well-known Bahá'í families in Alaska? One, and only one believer to enroll in Alaska was granted a rare audience with the Greatest Holy Leaf because she wanted to meet the believer from Alaska. Who made a nine-month, six thousand mile journey proclaiming at the end that now all of Alaska knows about the Bahá'í Faith? Who gave lectures attracting audiences of 500 in Cap Lathrop's theater in Fairbanks and the Anchorage 4th Avenue Theater and had a weekly column in "The Anchorage Times"? Who was the first Native believer to leave the relative luxury of urban life and return as a pioneer among his people in a more primitive setting? Which Alaskan white Bahá'í, raised in the segregated south with all the prejudices of his culture, had a life so transformed by Bahá'u'lláh that he was honored by the NAACP of Fairbanks because of his work among Blacks? What was the occasion when a believer said: "If a cluck like me from New York can do it, anyone can!?" Which two Native believers were among the first of their people to become Bahá'ís and were descendants of two Shamen who had each lead their respective peoples to Christianity in earlier times?

These and other vignettes will be considered.

We are the spiritual descendants of the Dawn-Breakers, but the shrub of which we are the off-shoots has deep roots spanning 9 decades in Alaska. It is time to look at some of those roots for enjoyment, to gain a better appreciation of what we have inherited, and to help us get a better fix on where we have been as we continue to work toward our promised destiny.

## **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror** **Second of a series**

Somehow it's nice that the first known Bahá'í to step foot in Alaska later became a Hand of the Cause. Not long after she embraced the Faith, Agnes Alexander returned to her native Hawaii. Enroute, she took a cruise up Alaska's inside passage. On July 25, 1905 she wrote of the places visited which

included Ketchikan, Juneau, Skagway, Whitehorse, Sitka and Wrangell. She saw canneries and mining operations and learned some things of Tlinget life.

Another early visitor did not achieve her distinction. Mrs. Allen, who assumed the name Aseyeh Allen, wrote of talks she gave in Southeastern Alaska early in the century. She even left a book behind which became the property of the National Spiritual Assembly a few years ago. While she called herself a Bahá'í, many of the ideas she taught were her own. She eventually left the Faith and followed her fancies to India.

So, among the first were both the steadfast, with a firm, life-long relationship with the Covenant, and the mercurial. Alaska gained from the devoted and survived the rest.

Nineteen-twelve was a spectacular year for Bahá'ís of the United States: 'Abdu'l-Bahá was visiting.. When it was learned that He would dedicate the land for the building of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West, people rushed to the tiny village of Wilmette, Illinois, just to be with Him.

Charlotte Gillen, a believer from Seattle, had offered to take care of some Bahá'í children so their parents could attend the dedication. Plans were changed at the last minute and in June the 33-year-old Charlotte found herself and her daughter on a train headed for Illinois. During the long train ride, she thought of how much the importance and new-found wealth of Seattle was owed to Alaska. Fishing, mining and lumber interests from Alaska helped make Seattle a commercial center for the Pacific Northwest.

The first of May was the long awaited day. The weather was windy, cold and overcast. But, the event was all anyone could want: 'Abdu'l-Bahá was there.

He had been given a golden trowel for the event. He looked at it carefully, placed it back in its leather case, picked up a workman's spade, and made the dedication for all mankind.

Speeches were made of the future importance of this structure and this event. Different ones would dedicate a shovel full of earth in the name of this people or that people and this place or that place. Charlotte remembered Alaska and waited for its mention. Since no one else did, she stepped forward, jammed the spade into the ground and turned over a shovel full of earth dedicated to Alaska.

Nineteen-twelve ended with an inconspicuous notice which was a sort of quiet harbinger of great things to come. On December 30, the *Nome Nugget* carried the first known article in Alaska about a Bahá'í, although the Faith itself was not mentioned. It reported that "Ali Kuli Khan and his charming wife..." were visiting the United States.

Little did Alaskans realize what seeds were sown in that auspicious year. The Faith is now firmly planted as the seeds of early days blossom in ever increasing profusion.

### **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Third of a Series**

Last month we met Charlotte Gillen as she mentioned Alaska in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha. But, there is more to Charlotte's story.

It was through Charlotte that Dan Jordan learned of of Baha'u'llah. He, in turn, lead his sister and brother-in-law, Bonnie and Blaine Reed to the Cause.

The next chapter of Charlotte's ties with Alaska was carried out by the Reeds. In 1960 they became the physical presence in Alaska from the spiritual energy she released on that wind-swept day of 1912 in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

In 1961, at the age of 91, she finally fulfilled her dream by personally pioneering to Alaska. Her memorable stay had some difficulties as her candid manner sometimes embarrassed the Baha'is and amused their friends. One said: "Oh, you Baha'is! Every time grandma Gillen says something, you worry about how it's going to effect us!" Whatever else is said, all who met Charlotte Gillen heard about "The Cause".

Her spirit is expressed by a prayer revealed by the Master in 1919 in what might well be the only prayer revealed by Him for someone who would pioneer to this northern land. He said: "*Convey to Mr. and Mrs. Killus, Mrs. Charlotte Gillen and Mr. Hyde Dunn the utmost love and kindness on my behalf. On their behalf I address the following supplication: 'O Thou Omnipotent Lord! These souls have given up their rest, their happiness, their joy, and their comfort, have left their (homes) in order to raise the call of Thy Kingdom upon the seas, the plains and the mountains. They are giving the Glad Tidings of Thy Manifestation, are bestowing sight to the eyes, hearing to the ears. They are unloosing the tongues, vivifying the dead and purifying the unclean. O Divine Providence! Be Thou their companion during their travels, for they are helpless and lonely and they are firm in Thy love. Thou art the Powerful and the Omnipotent.'*"

Alaska is much richer because Charlotte Gillen mentioned it in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha, was responsible for others who came to serve, came in person to consecrate her act of dedication and was a channel for a prayer which so eloquently describes the spirit of service needed today to achieve the next stage of its spiritual destiny which includes a focus on Russia and entry by troops.

Next month we will meet the "librarian in the Public Library" mentioned in the Tablets of the Divine Plan and swat mosquitoes with Emogene Hoag and Marion Jack during their 1919 journey up the Yukon River.

#### **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Fouth of a Series**

In the early 1950's I attended a fireside in Manhattan where Margaret Green was introduced as a guest from Washington D.C. It was she to whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred in the Tablets of the Divine Plan as the "librarian in the Public Library". She had lived in Juneau for three years from June 1915 to June 1918 which includes the time (8 April 1916) when He wrote those words. Although she did not speak of Alaska that night, this attractive and lively, gray-haired lady exuded charm and enthusiasm. It was nearly 40 years since she had lived in Juneau and she was probably in her early 70's when I met her. Most of her life had been spent in Washington D.C. She had written to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and a letter from Him commented favorably on some poetry she had written.

Another Bahá'í at that fireside stated his interest in meeting her since he had accepted Bahá'u'lláh while flying over Anchorage. He had been stationed at Elmendorf and learned of the Faith through the weekly radio programs on KFQD. While he never met any of the local believers, he considered Alaska his spiritual birthplace. Those broadcasts had changed his life.

This memorable evening was before I enrolled in the Faith and long before there was any thought of pioneering to Alaska. Had I realized that over a third of a century would be spent serving the Cause in this northern land, I would have plied them both with endless questions. It was a never-to-return opportunity that I missed. How often we look back and say: "If only I'd realized...!"

While Margaret Green was the only Bahá'í living in Alaska during the second decade of this century, there were other travelers. In 1916 Mrs. Susan Rice spent that entire summer in Alaska and Dawson and Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory. She reported that her trip on the Yukon "was filled with deeply spiritual hours." She spoke of one community, which may have been Eagle, where she "gave the Bahá'í

Message to everyone in town." And made arrangements for her "Message" to get carried as far north as Wiseman.

The *Tablets of the Divine Plan* were featured at the "Convention of the Covenant" held at the Hotel McAlpin in New York on 26-30 April 1919. Emogene Hoag, a wealthy, recently widowed, cultured and socially prominent believer was a woman of literary accomplishments. She was so inspired by these Tablets, especially the references to Alaska that she approached a young Canadian artist, Marion Jack who had recently become a Bahá'í and asked, "Jackie, will you go with me?"

This may have been the first major teaching trip for Marian Jack, whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá teasingly referred to as "General Jack". She is well known for a portrait of Him which is on display at the World Centre as well as her twenty-four years of pioneering in Bulgaria including the terrible years of World War II.

After the 1919 Convention, these two unlikely women made hasty preparations for their epic-making, 6,000 mile, nine-month odyssey throughout Alaska. But, we will have to wait until next month to learn of their adventures and when Emogene's luggage finally caught up with them.

### A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Fifth of a Series

During the "Convention of the Covenant" in April of 1919 in New York City, the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* were unveiled. Imogene Hoagg and Marian Jack were inspired to go to Alaska and made hasty preparations for their trip north.

It is hard to imagine two more unlikely people to take on this challenge. Mrs. Hoagg, a highly cultured and wealthy woman, was used to the salons of Europe. On two occasions she spent a year studying voice in Italy. She was among the early believers to make a pilgrimage to 'Akká. While there, 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged her to go to Port Said where she studied the *Bible* with Mirzá Abú'l-Fadl. Marion Jack was a well-known artist from New Brunswick, Canada, who had recently become a Bahá'í. Travel in the north country was arduous and no place for cultured ladies. But, that did not deter these redoubtable souls.

They first had to travel to San Francisco where they caught the Alaska Steamship "Victoria". It was to be a long trip, so they had several steamer trunks. Luggage, that universal bane of travelers, caused a problem for Emogene, who went much of the way without her badly needed trunks.

After a choppy voyage, they landed in Nome late in July. They disembarked and spent several hours walking around town. A sudden storm made it necessary for all passengers to go back to the ship early. One of the few automobiles in Nome was used to find the ladies so they could be returned to the steamship via a small boat. When they reached the steamer they were asked to climb a rope ladder which had been thrown over on its lea side. But, the ladies, dressed in 1919 clothing, refused. A gang plank was lowered for them, on the stormy side of the ship, but the heaving seas made it impossible to use. They were finally hauled aboard by men reaching over the rails and pulling them up, soaking wet, "looking like drowned rats".

That was the first episode of that first teaching trip to Alaska which resulted directly from the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. From there these intrepid women traveled to St. Michael's. At least they were able to get a room with some heat in it. They relished the luxury.

Five days later they caught the freighter *Julia B* which would take them up the Yukon River at speeds which were sometimes no greater than one mile an hour.

They preferred the freighter to a passenger boat, because freighters stopped at the small communities along the river which our heroines found to be both picturesque and filled with howling dogs. Wherever it stopped, the two women "would hop ashore and leave pamphlets with as many people as they could speak to." They even sent literature further on into the interior. In Tanana there was a Chinese

restaurant owner who became so enthusiastic that he began passing out pamphlets to all his customers saying: "This is very good! You read! Do you a lot of good!"

"Regiments of mosquitos" were also reported by Mrs. Hoagg who said they "take such friendly interest in the passengers and crew...there is one hope, that while we are being attacked, the poor dogs are getting a rest. Never have you seen such mosquitoes. Without joking, they would penetrate the shoe, find the seam and reach in for a nibble."

Their arrival in Dawson was most welcome, because mail caught up with them and they learned that Martha Root had traveled to South America. But, alas, there was no sign of Emogene's luggage. That will have to await another installment.

### A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Sixth of a Series

It was the summer of 1919 when Emogene Hoagg and Marion Jack (Jackie) were in Dawson and Emogene's luggage was in Seattle. This 50-year-old society lady was philosophical: "Extra wraps and even Indian moccasins will be loaned by the Captain, sweaters by the Purser, and all sorts of things are convertible into necessary robes for the night. The freedom from worry about baggage is a noticeable feature of our travels; in fact, this is a splendid region in which to practice not thinking about what one wears and what one eats."

In all their travels, "Jackie" would set up her easel and begin sketching. She made friends through her smiles and merry quips. This would attract attention and she would ask if anyone had heard of the Bahá'í Faith and then direct them to Emogene who was a gifted and eloquent speaker. While in Fairbanks, Jackie painted a portrait of Eve McGowan who was the city's "official hostess" until her death about 10 years ago.

From Dawson our dauntless travelers went south through Whitehorse to Skagway where they met some people who thought the Faith advocated "free love" and spoke out in opposition. From Skagway, they went to Juneau from where Emogene took a steamship up to Southcentral Alaska.

In Cordova she gave one public talk and said: "...the whole town was astir with the Message ... It really rejoices one to know that the hearts are being prepared so opportunely, and that all we have to do is to lend our services."

In Anchorage, some women "...thought it was wonderful to travel and teach without taking pay..." and arranged talks at the Women's Club, the City Club, before the Pioneers, at the movie theater and the High School Auditorium.

Emogene returned to Juneau on December 21st where she and "Jackie" had a series of "dinner and teaching engagements". On New Year's Eve they attended the reception given by Governor and Mrs. Riggs.

Late that same evening Mrs. Georgia Ralston, a Bahá'í from San Francisco, arrived. She traveled with Emogene to a number of places in Southeast Alaska before they returned via Vancouver.

Their stop in Sitka came in the midst of a Greek holiday season with a dance every night and no place where they could get a hall for a Bahá'í talk. Emogene's characteristic response was: "Well, if we cannot get a hall on account of a masked ball, we will go to the ball." They went; talked to a number of people about the Faith and were asked to be two of the five judges for the evening.

In Wrangell they had two meetings in Van Atta's Barber shop. Before they left town, Judge Thomas gave them each a gold pin for "having brought much to him in the Teachings."

Emogene's travels by boat and rail covered six thousand miles during eight months, not counting travel to and from Alaska. She wrote, "One must adapt the way to the needs, and the main thing is to have the people learn about the Faith ... I know I shall miss the pioneer spirit of Alaska. I certainly like it here."

They left in February of 1920 and Emogene was "satisfied that all of Alaska had heard the word Bahá'í."

It was to be two more years before the flamboyant, energetic and redoubtable Orcella Rexford arrived to teach the Faith in Alaska.

### A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Seventh of a Series

In the **Tablets of the Divine Plan**, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "*strive as far as ye are able to send to those parts (Alaska) fluent speakers...*" It is difficult to imagine more eloquent speakers than two of the first to venture into the northland. Imogene Hoagg, whom we already met in this series, was noted world-wide as a gifted speaker. Then, arriving in 1922 to pioneer for three years, was the orator par-excellence, Orcella Rexford. Flamboyant, spell-binding, dramatic and elegant, these adjectives all apply and fail to do justice to the inimitable Rexford.

Orcella, born Louise Cutts-Powell in Minnesota in 1887, had an early ambition to be a college professor. She prepared for this by studying at the University of California at Berkeley. While doing graduate studies in philosophy and psychology, she changed her goals and decided to become a writer and lecturer. Her name was changed based on "a cryptogram, made up of letters ...(symbolizing) her wish to link her personality to cosmic forces for good..."

She embraced the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in 1918-1919, about the time the **Tablets of the Divine Plan** had their formal unveiling in the United States. Her zeal to serve with maximum efficiency lead her to take stock "of her educational equipment and capacities; she even investigated her genealogy, to appraise possible inherited tendencies and thus fully to obey the commandment, 'Know thyself'". This new Bahá'í decided to pioneer, thus following in the footsteps of her second great-grandfather who had served without pay for nine years upon the appointment from President Thomas Jefferson as charge d'affaires to the Court of Lisbon. She selected Alaska because it was mentioned in the Tablets and she could then follow in the footsteps of other forbears who had joined the gold rush to the Yukon.

Her specialty was giving lectures. She had done this professionally in the style of the Chautauquay-lyceum which was the popular lecture-circuit of her day. She would give lectures for an admission fee on four subjects during a week. Topics ranged from nutrition, to fate, to health and other sundry subjects. At the end of the fourth lecture she would announce to her entranced audience that the next night she would give the most important lecture of all. It would be free and cover a subject the audience knew nothing about. Betty Becker reported that she had attended one of Orcella's lecture series in St. Louis in the mid-30's. She heard Orcella's announcement following her 4th lecture and thought "Who does she think she is that she knows something that I don't know anything about." So, to prove her wrong, Betty went back that next night, heard about the Faith, became a Bahá'í and followed the speaker's footsteps by pioneering to Alaska - but, that story comes later.

Next month we will find out about Orcella's Alaskan experiences including travel-teaching by dog-sled (or sledge, as they were known at the time) in the 1920's, the first known enrollments in Alaska and

speaking to audiences of 500 which was more than 20% of the population of Anchorage. That would be more than 25,000 people today!

### A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Eighth of a Series

It was in June of 1922 that the redoubtable Orcella Rexford boarded a steamship for her pioneering venture to Alaska. She was awed by the scenery of the inside passage as she made her way to Skagway. Along the way she gave a ship-board talk on the "Message of the New Day". From Skagway she took the railroad to Whitehorse and thought about her relatives who had gone north during the gold rush, never to return. From Whitehorse, she boarded a wood-burning river-boat to Dawson. During this journey she again gave a talk on the Faith, but found that "...tourists are not very promising material, they are not out for serious things."

In Dawson she met many people who had pleasant memories of Emogene Hoagg and Marion Jack. One Sunday afternoon she gave a lecture on the Faith before 550 people. She entertained at the Festival of the Midnight Sun and had many fine write-ups in the newspaper.

Returning to Juneau, the governor's wife gave her a tea and she gave some more private lectures. Many of those attending were already familiar with the Faith having heard of it either from Margaret Green who had pioneered there from 1915-1918 or from the 1919 visit of Hoagg, Jack and Ralston.

Someone spoke to her in glowing terms of another part of Alaska, so Orcella went westward to see the "rest of Alaska". Another steamer took her from Juneau through Prince William Sound and into the Gulf of Alaska. Again, she was awed by the glaciers and other scenery and she gave more ship-board talks on the Faith. On this trip she met a friend of Captain Lathrop's who arranged for her to speak at the Lathrop theaters.

Her lectures for Cap Lathrop started in Anchorage where she drew capacity crowds. Before her talks she had asked the theater manager if she could meet some of the more prominent women of the town.

She was introduced to Mrs. Jack (Victoria) Robarts "who was an Alaskan pioneer". Victoria had arrived during the gold rush days and lived in Fairbanks. She was a fan of Orcella's and had read many of her magazine articles. She even had a picture of Orcella and a recent article pinned to her wall although they had never met before. Victoria planned a week's entertainment for Orcella which included attending a large ball with Dr. Gayne V. Gregory as her partner. He had the largest dental clinic in Alaska.

Victoria also arranged for the "after the theatre chat" at the studio of Sydney Lawrence. After each lecture, Orcella, Victoria, Dr. Gregory and others would go to the studio and chat. Topics were arranged to lead up to the one on the Faith. "At the conclusion of my week's work I delivered the Bahá'í Message to a crowded theatre of over five hundred people, which was most remarkable considering that the town only had about twenty-eight hundred people at the time."

During this lecture Dr. Gregory accepted Bahá'u'lláh, and became the first known person to embrace the Cause Alaska. Shortly thereafter Victoria Robarts enrolled.

Orcella had planned to go to Fairbanks for more lectures at Cap Lathrop's theaters. From there she had planned to travel to Valdez and leave the territory. However, Cupid intervened.

Orcella had a dream that she would stay in Alaska longer than planned and marry the young dentist. The next day, he came to her reporting a similar dream and asked her to marry him. He had actually wanted to ask her earlier, but was afraid to because of her professional life and her commitment to the Faith. Her plans changed.

At the end of August Orcella left for Fairbanks and gave her lectures which were also well received. She was able to give the message through her lectures to about 300 people. But, she did not stay there long.

Instead, she returned to Anchorage, gave another lecture on the Faith and continued to hold classes. Then, on November 19, Orcella and Dr. Gregory were married. The two of them left for an extended wedding trip, leaving Victoria Robarts to do the follow-up work with a large group of interested seekers.

All that in six months. The next installment will report on the honeymooners after their return.

### **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Ninth in a Series**

It was July 1923 when Orcella Rexford and Dr. Gayne Gregory returned to Alaska from their honeymoon. Victoria Robarts had been keeping the teaching activity alive and there was a small Bahá'í community.

When Orcella returned she gave another well-attended lecture and started a new class of 60 for deeper study. She also wrote daily articles on the Faith which were published in the "Anchorage Daily News".

Page 124 of the very first **Bahá'í Year Book (1925-1926)** has a picture of the Gregorys on a dog sledge in what is now the rail-industrial area (lower A Street) of Anchorage. It is possible that this was just before they mushed to Mt. McKinley on a teaching trip.

Enrollment records were not kept, so it is not possible to say how many believers there were. But, there were enough to raise \$60 as a contribution to the Temple Fund.

Toward the end of 1924, the Gregorys decided it was time to leave. Even then, Alaska had a shifting population and Orcella observed: "I found it rather difficult to establish a center there. Many of those whom I first attracted had moved away or had passed on. So, by the end of 1924 when we were ready to depart for the 'States', . . . the group had dwindled to nineteen students whom I turned over to Mrs. Robarts . . . not so very long after . . . she too moved 'outside' . . . with no one capable of carrying on the teaching, the group finally scattered until few of the original group were even living in Alaska."

In January 1926 the Gregorys received an invitation to Haifa where they were in the presence of the Guardian for 11 days; the only pilgrims at the time. Dr. Gregory had a seldom-granted audience with the Greatest Holy Leaf who wanted to express "her joy at meeting the first pilgrim from Alaska to visit the Holy Land." She said to him: "I hope as you have been a pioneer in Alaska in a material sense, in the future you will pioneer in the spiritual field. It is fine to have your wife to work with you; in this companionship you are like the two wings of a bird and can fly perfectly."

In 1937 Alaska was a goal for settling under the First Seven Year Plan. Orcella lamented: "How we longed to return to finish the work we had begun! . . . But the way did not open for us to offer ourselves. We felt that our work there was finished and that others could carry on better now." She ended by saying: "...may we again pay a visit to that land of pleasant memories and visit that community of the Greatest Name in Anchorage!"

That was not to be. In the 1970's, Dr. Gregory's daughter did come to Alaska and attended a National Convention in behalf of her father. She was able to visit the land of her father's spiritual birth.

Orcella died in 1946 and is laid to rest at the Inglewood Park Cemetery near the grave of Thornton Chase. Of the many tributes received at her passing, one of the most touching was from former Alaskan Victoria Robarts who said: "Orcella Rexford was an outstanding woman, one of the few persons whom I ever met who never said an unkind or critical word of another . . ."

As for Victoria Robarts, when she left Alaska, she became an active member of the Los Angeles Bahá'í community. Hand of the Cause John Robarts was asked if she was a relative. He said he didn't know for sure, but every time a search was done for people with names spelled like that, they were found to be related. So, it may be that a distant cousin of the Hand of the Cause enrolled in Alaska. From Los Angeles, Victoria worked with Frances Wells in order to establish a Spiritual Assembly at Big Bear. That was about a decade and a half after she left Alaska and just months before Frances pioneered to be an active part of the next phase of this northern Bahá'í development. But, her story will have to wait until later.

### **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Tenth in a Series**

And, then came the long years of darkness. Like the sun in winter, the light of the Bahá'í revelation disappeared below the Alaskan horizon until 1939. From 1905 to 1923 eight women had pioneered or traveled to Alaska for the Faith. (Where were the men?) What was the result of their audacious ventures at enormous sacrifice, facing great obstacles and major difficulties?

For those whose travel to this northern land has been recorded, one (Agnes Alexander) became a Hand of the Cause, one (Marian Jack) gained eternal renown as a heroine martyr in Romania, two (Emogene Hoagg and Orcella Rexford) gained enviable reputations of teachers of outstanding ability. Three others remained steadfast maidservants of the Cause. Only one of those early teachers left the Faith.

But, what of those who heard their call? Two of those who embraced the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh (Dr. Gayne Gregory and Victoria Robarts) served the Faith diligently for the rest of their lives. There was a fledgling Bahá'í community in Anchorage and it will never be known how many gained some degree of recognition of the Voice of God for this age, and quietly went on their way. Their lives may have been improved, even though they were never formally a part of the community of the Greatest Name. Others, to be sure, were attracted, but when the initial excitement was over, went on to other things.

Like Lief Erikson's attempt to settle North America or the Jamestown, Va. settlement, it seems that temporary gain and apparent loss are common before a permanent foothold is established.

From the years 1923 until the announcement of the Seven-Year-Plan in 1937, Alaska had no known presence of the Cause of God. There may have been a few who ventured north for business, pleasure or to seek their fortunes, but there is no record of Bahá'í activity.

In the second year of the Seven-Year-Plan, the beloved Guardian sent his immortal telegram to the American Community which read, in part: "Alaska, Delaware, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, Manitoba and Nova Scotia still unsettled... The Concourse on high expectantly await, ready to assist and acclaim the nine holy souls who, independently or as deputies, will promptly, fearlessly volunteer to forsake their homes, cast away their attachments and definitely settle in these territories to lay firm anchorage of the Administrative Order of this undefeatable Faith. I am irresistibly urged and proud of the privilege to pledge nine hundred pounds to facilitate the permanent settlement of pioneers in these States and Provinces whose acts and heroic self-abnegation will mark the conclusion of this shining Epoch in American Bahá'í history."

It was two more women, Betty Becker of St. Louis and Honor Kempton of England and San Francisco, who responded to that call for Alaska. The stories of Betty and Honor are filled with personal sacrifice. They represent both the independence and deputization of the telegram. Their stories come next.



# A Glance in the Rearview Mirror

Eleventh in a Series by John Kolstoe

We have read of some of the early sorties into Alaska followed by a decade and a half of no known Bahá'í activity.

Alaska was a goal for the First Seven-Year Plan (1937-44). No one arose to pioneer during the first 20 months. That is when the beloved Guardian sent his immortal telegram of 26 January 1939 asking for "...nine holy souls...." Hearts were stirred anew. Who would go? It was much discussed. One prominent Bahá'í told me that some people thought that a couple should be recruited to go to Alaska. If a couple could not be found, it should be a man. "Alaska was a rugged, he-man's country. It would be no place for a woman to go alone!" That's what he said.

Fortunately, there were three dynamic, independent women with a different view! One of them was not even a Bahá'í yet.

## BETTY BECKER

The oldest of the three and the first to become a Bahá'í was Betty Becker. She was born in 1887 and raised on her family's German Mennonite farm home in Kansas. Even as a child she felt something was lacking in her religious upbringing. Her life of curiosity and search lead her to a series of lectures given by Orcella Rexford who promised that the last lecture would be free and it would be about something none of them knew anything about. That comment piqued Betty. She went to prove the speaker wrong. It was 1933. Betty was 46. That night she learned about Bahá'u'lláh and her life was changed forever. She enrolled in November of that year, was actively involved with teaching, was instrumental in forming the first Spiritual Assembly of Kansas City by 1935

and was elected its first chairman.

Betty was in her early 50s when she read the Guardian's telegram and was deeply moved. She offered to go to Alaska and the Teaching Committee enthusiastically agreed. They suggested that she wait until summer so she could attend the Geyeserville Bahá'í Summer School before heading north. She did and arrived in Juneau on August 1. In later years she pointed out that if she had gone when she offered, instead of following the suggestion of the Teaching Committee, she, and not, Honor would have been the first to arrive during the Seven-Year Plan.

*[Note— In the last instalment it was incorrectly stated that Betty Becker was from St. Louis. She was from Kansas City.]*

## HONOR KEMPTON

Honor was born in Mothershead England in 1892. As a Red Cross volunteer during World War I, she fell in love with an American doctor and followed him to Chicago. He was killed in an automobile accident before they could marry and Honor was alone, a stranger in a foreign land. She moved to Wilmette to be near an English family which she knew. Her landlord died. His will contained a request for a Bahá'í funeral and his widow turned to Honor for help. She did not know what Bahá'í was but thought it had something to do with the round bunker-looking basement under construction near the lake. She went, found a Bahá'í, made the necessary funeral arrangements and was attracted to the Faith.

Honor decided to see more of America by going West. She did not know anyone on the West Coast, so the Bahá'ís of Wilmette gave her a letter of introduction to Leroy and Sylvia Ioas in San Francisco. She enrolled in the Faith in 1935 and served on the San Francisco Spiritual Assembly. Early in 1939, Leroy returned from a meeting with the copy of the recently received telegram from the Guardian. Honor did not sleep well that night. She tossed and turned, thinking about the telegram. She said: "I was, however, quite sure that Alaska was the place for me. I felt that the Guardian was speaking to me when he sent that message." The next morning she called Leroy to ask if she could go to Alaska, which she did, arriving in Juneau on 18 April.

#### JANET WHITENACK (STOUT)

Janet was the Executive Director of the New York Chapter of the American Birth Control League. (Remember, this was the 1930s. That must have been considered an extremely radical organization then!) She was not a Bahá'í, but her secretary was and the secretary was rather insistent that Janet attend a Bahá'í meeting which she did politely, but with little interest. Then, Janet decided to go to Alaska in search of "a new way of life." The Secretary was excited. She knew of the Seven Year Plan, had heard of the telegram and learned that someone was going. She told Janet there was a Bahá'í either there or on the way; someone from California - a man, she thought - and that Janet should plan to meet him. With great optimism she gave Janet some literature, which Janet placed indifferently in her trunk and discovered much later.

Janet did go to Alaska. She stopped in Juneau to visit a sorority sister. As she walked down the gangplank to Juneau, she must have unwittingly passed by Honor who was walking up that same gangplank heading for Anchorage. They will have to wait until next time to meet. That will be under even stranger circumstances.



**Betty Becker**



**Honor  
Kempton**



**Janet  
Whitenack  
(Stout)**

Photo credits:  
Archives at Bahá'í  
National Office,  
Anchorage, AK

### **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Twelfth in a Series**

With the encouragement of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and the National Teaching Committee, assistance of friends from San Francisco, and financial aid from Raphael and Mildred Mottahedeh, Honor Kempton set sail on the S.S. Alaska. The word "anchorage" appeared in the cable from the Guardian and Honor felt that is where she should go. However, the mayor of Anchorage was on board ship and he told her there were no jobs. He said Juneau offered better possibilities.

Honor arrived in Juneau on April 18, 1939. But, no jobs could be found and she did not care for Juneau. One night she was looking after a bookstore for a friend. "I was putting away the books before closing when I heard a clear voice say, 'Do the same thing in Anchorage.' I looked around to the spot from whence the voice had come but there was no one there. The next day I spoke to the owner of the shop.... She thought it a good idea...showing me the catalogues, and giving me the names of firms..."<sup>i</sup>

Honor moved to Anchorage and opened "The Book Cache". After the rush of settling in, there was a let down. Three months in Alaska. No one interested in the Faith. She was discouraged. She wondered if coming to Alaska had been a mistake. Friends wrote trying to encourage her to expect miracles, but she replied to Leroy Ioas that "'miracles' didn't happen in Alaska."<sup>ii</sup>

Janet Whitenack (Stout) arrived in Juneau on the boat that took Honor north. Janet stopped to visit a sorority sister, Edith Daniels, who later learned of the Faith through her and became a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for the Cook Islands. Janet didn't feel Juneau was the "real Alaska" and moved on.

In Fairbanks, she found what she was looking for, made arrangements to sell books in the lobby of a hotel, ordered books and decided to see more of Alaska while waiting for her order. She heard that someone was opening a book store in Anchorage and wondered if she would have competition. So, she traveled to Anchorage to meet Honor and was relieved that Honor had no plans for Fairbanks.

They met on July 28. Four days later Honor told Janet about the Faith. Five days later, nine days after their first meeting, Janet told Honor that she wanted to become a Bahá'í. They were in Honor's apartment. Honor turned quietly and looked out the window. She said nothing. The silence made Janet wonder if she had said something wrong. Later she learned that Honor was tearfully looking out the window offering a prayer of thanksgiving to P'ih 'u'll h for providing what she regarded as "her miracle".

Janet returned to Fairbanks, on fire with the Faith, even though it meant giving up her beer. Her trunks arrived from New York, and on top were the Bahá'í pamphlets which her secretary had given her. She saw them with much different eyes than when she had placed them there indifferently a few months earlier.

Those were historic days for Alaska. While Honor and Janet were meeting in Anchorage, Betty Becker arrived in Juneau (1 August). Her story is next.

### **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Thirteenth in a Series**

How many women are there who, having been raised in rural Kansas during the turn of the century, would change religion at the age of 46? How many have gone from a narrow and restrictive puritanical view of life to the world embracing Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh? Who was elected chairman of the first local Spiritual Assembly of a Kansas City within memory of the day that American women first had the right to vote? Who is there who would dare leave the security of friends and family and a good job during the depression at the age of 52, and for religious purposes, move to a remote and little known land of the frozen north with no firm prospects in mind? Tell me of someone who, at the tender age of 72, would venture again for her Faith to the forbidding and foreboding extreme south of Punta Arenas,

Chile? How many would spend the final 15 years of life with the primary thought of what could be done to sustain and maintain the Bahá'í Center in that remote southern spot? Meet Matilda (Betty) Becker.

In the summer of 1939 Betty went to the Geyserville Bahá'í school enroute to Alaska. She arrived in Juneau on August 1 and "Found a lovely room at the Baranof - a beautiful modern hotel."

Betty lost no time getting acquainted and telling people about the Bahá'í Faith. But, by January she was discouraged. Her notes say "physical hardships are so easy to bear, but to see a fireside dissolved almost over night that brings anguish of heart and soul." And, she was "Still unable to find employment."

In February she moved to Sitka which impressed her. "Caressed by the mountains and nestled by the sea - Nature's haven of beauty. Who knows, perhaps we may have a temple there some day. Surely no lovelier spot could be found for a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár."

Betty seemed to attract friends. One person she met in Juneau and again in Sitka told her she was teaching a "myth". He said: "The people in Juneau like you personally but they feel sorry for you. Your teaching has no foundation..." Betty then talked to him in earnest about the "myth" and he said it was "beautiful, but would not work in Alaska!"

Unable to find stenographic work in Sitka, Betty left for Anchorage and reveled at being in the presence of another Bahá'í - Honor Kempton. She was so impressed by what Honor was doing that she concluded that "Every Bahá'í going into new fields of endeavor, should have a Book Shop."

Betty was finally able to get employment in the Quartermaster Office at Ladd Field (now Fort Wainwright) in Fairbanks. So, for the third time in her first year in Alaska she moved to another unknown city. It would have been so easy to give up and return to Kansas. There were other Bahá'ís in Fairbanks - Janet Whitenack (Stout) who had recently enrolled and Joy Allen (McCormack) who had pioneered from California.

Betty worked there until March of 1941 when she broke her wrist and felt it best to return to Anchorage where she settled for 18 of her 20 years in Alaska. She got a P.O. Box at the new, now called the old Federal Building. It was box #4 which is still used by the local Spiritual Assembly of Anchorage - only now it is called 100004 - perhaps due to inflation. And, she started her famous Sunday morning waffle breakfasts. It is as if today's Anchorage Bahá'ís pay tribute to her tradition every Sunday morning during the "Gathering".

But, when did the first Spiritual Assembly form? That question is for the next time. And, finally, there is a man on the scene.

It was my privilege to serve with Betty in the Anchorage community when Beverly and I arrived in 1958. She was good for me. Having come straight from graduate studies which emphasized empirical evidence and getting sound, reliable facts, Betty's mystical nature, interest in the metaphysical and being guided by "spiritual promptings" took some getting used to. Yet, it was in the presence of one of Betty's mystical friends that, fully armed with skepticism, I saw water witching in action. It was one of her non-Bahá'í, but spiritually sensitive friends who was with Betty at the famous Box 4 of the Post Office one day when a letter arrived from the Guardian. Betty asked her friend to hold the letter while she got a package at the window. Afterwards the friend thrust the letter back to Betty and said: "Take this back. I feel as if I have the weight of the world on my shoulders as I hold it."

No, I never understood Betty, but I loved her. She taught me that what is different is not of less value; to appreciate other methods of understanding and processing information; not to judge, but to stand in awe of all who will arise to serve, no matter that they see the Cause through very different eyes. Alaska is so much better a place because of her two decades here.

**A Glance in the Rearview Mirror**  
**Fourteenth in a Series**

Verne Stout died just prior the preparation of this article and the entire article was a memorial to him. The article on Verne appears in Section III, Pioneers and Builders, Page III-152

**A Glance in the Rearview Mirror**  
**Fifteenth in a Series**

By the end of 1939 there were three Bahá'ís in Alaska: Betty Becker, Honor Kempton and Janet Whitenack (Stout). During the next decade intense work was done in laying the permanent foundation for the Faith in this newly reopened territory.

In February of 1940 Joy Allen (later McCormick) of San Francisco signed a two-year contract to work with the United States War Department in Fairbanks. She arrived on April 14, 1940 and joined Janet Whitenack in energetic teaching activities. Betty Becker had moved from Juneau to Sitka to Anchorage in unsuccessful attempts to find employment. Joy knew of a position in Fairbanks which was offered to Betty, so she moved north and there were three Bahá'ís in Fairbanks and one in Anchorage.

In August of 1940, Joy was transferred to Anchorage where she took up her duties as the Chief of Personnel at the Anchorage Air Force Base (now Elmendorf). She was in need of competent help, and received permission to wire her friend from San Francisco to join her. That was Myrtle Dodge (later Silva), a Bahá'í. While Joy was Chief of Personnel she was responsible for the hiring of the first Alaskan Native to work on the base, John Goodhope. The rapid build-up for war preparations caused many changes in the governmental organizations. As a result of one of these changes, it was necessary for Joy to leave in February of 1941. Myrtle stayed on.

The three Bahá'í women in Anchorage - Betty, Myrtle and Honor - "...pledged ourselves to the task at hand. It could be done and it must be done! We must have an Assembly in Alaska before the close of the 7-year plan!"<sup>1</sup>

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, the nature of life in Anchorage changed dramatically. The great influx of military personnel and government workers caused much confusion and many shortages. Honor Kempton's Book Cache became a haven for many of the G.I.'s in town. She later learned that a counterintelligence officer of the U.S. Army had looked upon her with great suspicion because she seemed so out of place in this land of military importance. Nonetheless, she had many admirers including Governor Gruening who called her Book Cache the "Cultural oasis of Anchorage."

Frances L. Wells was the next pioneer, arriving on March 22, 1943. It is of interest that Frances had pioneered from Los Angeles with Victoria Robarts to Big Bear Lake, California. Victoria had become a Bahá'í in Alaska in the days of Orcella Rexford and now, two decades, later Frances was to render exemplary service in the land of Victoria's spiritual birth.

The second to enroll - after Janet Whitenack - was Mrs. Jean Van Cleve in September of 1940. She accepted Bahá'u'lláh and moved to Oregon. Seven more enrolled in quick succession, and they too, moved to the States. There was one young G.I. who learned of the Faith while stationed in Alaska and made this his home and permanent pioneering post. That was Arthur Gregory. Most of the others followed the pattern noted by Orcella Rexford. She observed that many were attracted, some embraced the Cause and then would leave Alaska making it difficult to build a stable community. Alaska was said to have four major exports: fish, gold, timber and Bahá'ís.

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<sup>1</sup> Becker, Betty, unpublished commentary on the development of the Faith in Alaska.  
Alaska Bahá'í Community: Glances in the Rearview Mirror, p II-22

As the end of the Seven-Year Plan approached, the challenge to form a Spiritual Assembly proved difficult, because of the revolving Bahá'ís. In the next issue it will be shown how the first Spiritual Assembly was finally formed.

#### **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Sixteenth in a Series**

In 1941 the three Bahá'í women in Anchorage had pledged themselves to have a Spiritual Assembly before the end of the Seven-Year Plan (1944). But how would that be done? There were two regular study classes, lots of interest and some enrollments. But, as noted in the last installment, many people would become interested; some became Bahá'ís; then, most would move.

Housing was such a severe problem. Honor Kempton, had an apartment. Myrtle Dodge rented a room in a private home and Betty Becker slept at the Book Cache. War made Anchorage a boom town with "sky high" prices. Undaunted and determined, the intrepid women pressed on to their objective.

Among their activities was an effort to reach the Native population. Plans were made to approach the superintendent of the Eklutna Vocational School operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to place Bahá'í literature in the library. While they were making these plans, Melba Call (King) was studying the Faith in New Mexico. On the 23rd of May, 1943, Melba became the first Native Alaskan (Yup'ik Eskimo) to become a Bahá'í. She had attended the Eklutna school a few years earlier.

But, what about forming the Spiritual Assembly? Here is how it happened. Myrtle Dodge, was gone at the time and not able to participate. That left two. Seven more were needed.

In March of 1943, Mina Lundquist accepted Bahá'u'lláh and stayed long enough to be part of the Spiritual Assembly. Later that month, a package of jubilation and laughter named Frances Wells pioneered from California. June was the time for men. Verne Stout was the first man to pioneer to Alaska. He arrived in June 1943 to help form the first Spiritual Assembly. (See *Alaska Bahá'í News*, vol 38, # 4; August/September 1995, p. 37.) Also in June, a young service man, Terrell Frazier, embraced the Cause. In August, Florence Green declared her Faith. Janet Whitenack (Stout) was asked to give up her teaching position in Tuluksak in order to pioneer to Anchorage. She arrived early in September. (See *Alaska Bahá'í News* #110, November-December 1968, p. 4 and #289, April 1985, page 4.) September was also when Loraine Been enrolled.

And, those were the nine who were elected to the first Spiritual Assembly of Anchorage on September 8, 1943 - five pioneers and four local enrollments; seven women and two men.

That ratio didn't last long. Soon, the Army transferred Terrell Frazier. A by-election was held and it was the bachelor Verne Stout and eight women!

That was how the Institutions of the Faith in Alaska started. From that beginning, Institutional presence has continued and flourished without interruption. Next time we will meet some of the people who made that possible.

#### **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Seventeenth in a Series**

Ten active years separated the formation of the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly and the launching of the Ten-Year Crusade.

Among the notable events of the decade, Honor Kempton received permission from the Guardian and pioneered to Europe in 1946. Dagmar Dole<sup>iii</sup> arrived in Alaska in 1943. She left Anchorage to work among the Natives of Bristol Bay before she, too, pioneered to Europe, at Naw Rúz 1947.

The first Bahá'í wedding was that of Verne Stout and Janet Whitenack. Verne had been the only man in the Anchorage community with 10 women.

The first letter from the Guardian to a Bahá'í institution in Alaska was received in 1945. He was pleased with the weekly radio broadcasts and made a plea "to reach the Eskimos with the Message." The Annual Reports of those years show a great deal of activity to accomplish this objective.

Helen Robinson arrived from Montana via California. First, she stopped in Sitka and then settled in Anchorage. In November of 1946 Rob embraced the Faith. The Robinson home was the center of much Bahá'í activity until they moved in 1950. Their daughter, Donna Mae, was the first Bahá'í youth and she and Sam Kimura had the first Bahá'í interracial marriage in 1948.

In 1948 the Bahá'ís began a tradition which has lasted nearly 50 years by having a booth at the Matanuska Valley Fair. In 1949 the first gifts of endowment property were deeded by Art and Wilma Gregory and by Vern and Evelyn Huffman. By 1950 the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly requested and received from the Anchorage School District, official recognition for the Bahá'í Holy Days.

The Anchorage Recording Districting formed a Spiritual Assembly in 1951. This was later known as Spenard, then Oceanview before it merged with Anchorage. Vern and Evelyn Huffman, Art and Wilma Gregory, Don and Lucille Donnelly and Howard and Lea Brown were among the members of this second Divine Institution.

There are many other names of note, which appear in the records of those days. Here are a few of them: Margery McCormick; Tony (Mr. Public Relations) and Charlotte Pelle; Thelma Jackson (later an Auxiliary Board member); Betty Jeanne Courtney; Gordon Schuster; Agnes Parent (Harrison) who was the first Native Alaskan to enroll in the Faith in Alaska; and Wally Harrison.

Ben Levy was stationed in Alaska when he became a Bahá'í. He was at the Guardian's table in 1952 and was stunned by an announcement: Alaska was to have its own National Spiritual Assembly. Ben knew the 42 Bahá'ís who were scattered among 11 communities in a land with a total population of only 200,000. The Guardian also said that Alaska would play a major role in opening up Russia as its "back door". It did not seem possible!

Next, the Ten-Year Crusade converts impossible dreams into reality.

#### **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Eighteenth in a Series**

Chicago, April 1953: It was the grandest of events: The 100th anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's experience in Síyáh-Chál; the Jubilee; the Dedication of the Mother-Temple of the West; and the launching of the Ten Year World-Wide Spiritual Crusade. Bahá'ís from all over the world took part; it was the first gathering for many of the newly appointed Hands of the Cause; the Guardian's personal representative, Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum addressed the God-intoxicated throng, delivering Messages from the Guardian and outlining the goals of the Teaching and Consolidation Plan.

All over the city Bahá'ís gathered, talked, laughed, prayed and made pioneering plans. It generated the largest movement of Bahá'í pioneers in history. The question for many was not whether or not to go, but where. Commitment with flexibility was illustrated by Jenabe and Elaine Caldwell. They volunteered for the Solomon Islands, got rid of their winter clothes, purchased tropical supplies and made their plans. Then, they received a call from Dorothy Baker: would they go to the Aleutian Islands instead? The immediate answer was yes. They could find out where it was and restock on winter clothes later.

A goal for Alaska was to form its own National Spiritual Assembly. Three areas of Alaska were the responsibility of others. Canada was to open Sitka and Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Gail Avery (Davis) arose to

fill that goal; the Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee had responsibility for Kodiak Island and the Aleutians: Knights of Bahá'u'lláh Jack Huffman, Rose Perkal (Yarno/Gates) and Ben Gurhke had the distinction of arriving in Kodiak; and Jenabe and Elaine Caldwell and Elinore Putney were named Knights of Bahá'u'lláh for Unalaska (George Putney arrived a little later).

For the rest of Alaska the floodgates were opened and pioneers streamed north. Elmer and Marie Guffy went to Fairbanks. Elmer was raised in the hills of Kentucky with all the prejudices typical of that area. When he became a Bahá'í he said he had harbored so much hate in his heart for so long that he had to do something about it. As a result, this southern white-man became the most effective teacher among Blacks that Alaska has ever known. At one time the Fairbanks Spiritual Assembly had eight Blacks and one Caucasian—much of the credit goes to Elmer's work. Kathryn Alio (the first woman to cast a vote for the Universal House of Justice) and her daughter Marzieh (Miller) as well as Fred and Cora Olson and Warren and Katheryn Rodgers arrived in Fairbanks.

Jane Gardner went to Valdez. Pat and Georgine Moul went to Ketchikan after a brief stay in Anchorage. Ann Ashton went to Ketchikan and Robin Fowler pioneered from Whitehorse to Ketchikan just in time for them to form its Spiritual Assembly in 1956. Gay Stewart went to Juneau. Bob and Karen Leonard gave reinforcements to Kodiak Island.

There were successes in Native teaching. Agnes Parent (Harrison) had enrolled earlier, but during the Ten-Year Crusade things started to move in Ketchikan, first by the enrollment of Joyce Combs followed by many others.

With active teaching and the movement of pioneers three new Spiritual Assemblies were formed by 1956: Fairbanks, Ketchikan and Tanana Valley. Nine delegates to the first National Convention were elected from among the five Spiritual Assemblies. (These three plus Anchorage and Anchorage Recording District.) A sixth Spiritual Assembly, Juneau, was formed on the eve of the Convention by pioneers converging from various parts of Alaska and Tom and Georgia Haisler with their infant son Greg from Wisconsin.

Anchorage, Ridván 1957: Hand of the Cause Paul Haney, who was both the Guardian's personal representative and a representative of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States - Alaska's mother Assembly - opened the proceedings for the first Bahá'í National Convention of Alaska on April 22, 1957.

Pat Moul was elected the Convention Chairman and Evelyn Huffman was Secretary. When the votes for the National Spiritual Assembly were tallied the nine elected were: Howard Brown (Vice Chairman), Evelyn Huffman (Secretary), Lois Lee (Treasurer), Pat Moul (Chairman), Kathy Rodgers, Warren (Rod) Rodgers, Janet Stout, Verne Stout and Rose Yarno. The Alaskan pillar of the Universal House of Justice was erected.

During its first year, five of its members went home-front pioneering: Pat Moul from Ketchikan to Douglas, Warren and Katheryn Rodgers from Fairbanks to Nome and Verne and Janet Stout from Anchorage to the Matanuska Valley.

The new National Community was well launched.

Next month: final installment wrap-up

### **A Glance in the Rearview Mirror Nineteenth and Last in a Series**

The Message from the Guardian, to the first National Bahá'í Convention of Alaska in 1957 included a subsidiary Six-Year Plan. The newly formed National community immediately set about its tasks and

every one of the six provisions was filled within the first six months which was just prior to the passing of the Beloved Guardian. This feat was hailed as an accomplishment second only to Uganda.

Still, there was more to be done and more pioneers arrived. One year after the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly, Tom and Dottie Baumgartner arrived from Miami, via Seattle with their five boys - Ernie, Jim, Mike, David and Robert. Despite having the roof of their station wagon cave in as they drove up the Alcan highway and having to abandon half of their possessions along the side of the road, they got to Anchorage intact. They pulled up to the National office where Evelyn Huffman, the National Secretary, informed them that Tanana Valley was about to lose its Spiritual Assembly. Wasting no time, they turned back up the highway and arrived just in time to save that Institution - even though they had to move into a converted chicken coop. In August, John and Beverly Kolstoe arrived in Anchorage. The following summer the Reeds arrived in Fairbanks: Blaine and Bonnie, Nycki (Saxton), Gavin, Tim (Horn) and Shelly - Dan was born in Alaska. They drove up the Alcan Highway with their flatbed truck, trailer and van. They broke down and had to wait in Canada for six weeks for parts.

In 1963 the Bahá'í World awaited the election of the Universal House of Justice. All nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska attended with Howard Brown casting the first ballot for that Supreme Body. He was followed by Kathryn Alio, who was the first woman to vote for that Divine Institution. The World Congress in London immediately after the election was a time of rejoicing. Rita Blumenstein sat among the indigenous peoples of the world during a special commemoration and Alaskans were united with original pioneers Honor Kempton and Betty Becker.

Soon thereafter, Sitka, Kodiak Island and the Aleutians had their administrative responsibility transferred to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska.

One year after the first election of the Universal House of Justice, the Bahá'í world was given the Nine-Year Plan. Alaska had five virgin goals, which were filled with great sacrifice. Evelyn Huffman resigned as National Secretary so she and Vern could open up Prince of Wales Island, settling in Klawock. Ben and Harriet Guhrke pioneered from Kodiak to the Aleutian Peninsula. Bud Revet overcame great difficulties in order to settle on Nunivak Island. Napoleon Bergamaschi, the first Alaskan Native to arise to pioneer, left the relative comfort of his home in Ketchikan for the land of his forefathers on St. Lawrence Island, which, at that time, did not have such amenities as plumbing and electricity. Rowena Burak (Currington) ignored bureaucratic dictates and moved to the Pribilof Islands. Having lived in big cities all her life, this actress from New York and Hollywood proudly proclaimed: "If a cluck like me from New York can do it, anyone can."

Those were exciting years which included: the Matanuska Valley was the first Spiritual Assembly to form following the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly; Alaska-wide proclamation; mass teaching; deepening institutes; gubernatorial proclamations; intensified efforts to reach the Native population; large scale enrollments; incorporation of strong, well-established Spiritual Assemblies; the Native Councils; the Intercontinental Conference in 1976; and the development of the Hazíratu'l-Quds, summer schools and other properties.

And, the Faith in Alaska continues to move forward, spurred on by both crises and victories.

This series of articles has chronicled the development of the Alaskan Bahá'í National Community from the beginning. The Faith in this great land continues to go through its evolution with some changes coming fast and some slow; some are welcome and some are resisted; some spur on progress and some seem to cause momentary setbacks. Now, the Faith is firmly established and its future is secure. It is time to end this series of glances.

As this chapter on the evolution of the Cause in Alaska closes, the first chapter of a whole new book is being opened. That is the book of fulfillment. Now is the time for active engagement in all aspects of the

Four Year Plan as the Alaska Bahá'í Community focuses all energy on promoting the process of entry by troops , thereby creating new wonders to behold!

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<sup>i</sup> Alaska Baha'i News, May, 1981, p. 6

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> See: Bahá'í World vol, xii, pp. 701-702



# ANCHORAGE CELEBRATES 25th YEAR

## ANCHORAGE CELEBRATES 25th ANNIVERSARY

The Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Anchorage held a very historic meeting on Sunday, September 8, 1968, in the Commodore Room of the Anchorage-Westward Hotel. This date marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of the first Institution of the Baha'i Faith in Alaska—the **Mother Assembly of Alaska**. During the last year of the first Baha'i Century, Local Assemblies could be formed anytime during the year when there were nine adult members resident in the community.

The nine Baha'is who signed the Joint Declaration form during the Feast of Might were: Miss Honor Kempton (chairman), Verne L. Stout (vice-chairman), Mrs. Frances L. Wells, (corresponding secretary), Miss Betty Becker (recording secretary), Miss Janet B. Whitenack (treasurer), and Mrs. Lorraine Been, Pvt. Terrell William A. Frazier, Mrs. Florence B. Green, and Mrs. Mina Lundquist.

The anniversary meeting this year was presided over by Mr. Edgar Russell, who became a Baha'i in Anchorage in 1918, and the speakers were two of the original members, Janet and Verne Stout, who were on the Local Assembly continuously until they pioneered to the Matanuska Valley in 1958.

About fifty attended the meeting and enjoyed refreshments and socializing after the talks. A brief history of the development of the Baha'i Faith in Alaska was given by Janet (Whitenack) Stout and an outline of the Baha'i Principles by Verne.

It was pointed out that a Local Spiritual Assembly is a foundation stone on which the House of Justice must find secure support. "Every Local Assembly is the ordained pivot of a divinely-ordained System . . ." (Shoghi Effendi).

### Early History

So far as records show, the first Baha'i in Alaska was Mrs. Margaret Green, who was Librarian at the Public Library in Juneau from June 1915 to June 1918. She told many people of the Baha'i Teachings in Juneau and Sitka and placed books in the Juneau Library. Then a few other Baha'is ventured to Alaska, inspired by 'Abdu'l-Baha's exhortation to raise the "call of the Kingdom of God . . . through that spacious territory." (*America's Spiritual Mission*, page 9.) They included Mrs. Susan Rice in 1916, and Mrs. Emogene Hoagg and Miss Marion Jack who made an extensive eight months tour of the Territory in 1919-20 (*Baha'i World*, Vol. X, Obituary of Mrs. Hoagg, pages 520-526.)

Next came Orcella Rexford in June 1922, who traveled to Dawson, Juneau, Anchorage and Fairbanks. Orcella was the first of the "fluent speakers" that 'Ab-

du'l-Baha called for in His Tablet to the American believers, April 8, 1916, to come to Alaska. While in Anchorage in August she gave the Baha'i Message to a crowded theatre of over 500 people, which was most remarkable since the town had only about 2,800 population at the time! This resulted in the first man and woman to enroll as Baha'is in Alaska, Dr. Gayne V. Gregory, a leading dentist, and Mrs. Victoria (Jack) Roberts. Dr. Gregory and Orcella were married in Anchorage in November. Later they started classes on the Faith and those who became Baha'is raised \$60 and sent it to the first Temple Fund, as they wished Alaska to have a share in the erection of the Baha'i House of Worship in Wilmette.

However, they found it "rather difficult to establish a center (in Anchorage) since Alaska is a shifting population," and by the end of 1924 the Gregorays had sold their interests in Anchorage and moved to the States, Mrs. Roberts following soon after. Thus ended the first era of the Faith in Alaska. (*Baha'i World*, Vol. IX, pages 918-922, "Alaska, Our New Frontier," by Orcella Rexford.)

### The Guardian's Call For "Nine Holy Sculs"

During the First Seven Year Plan (1937-1944), on January, 26, 1939, the Guardian sent the following cablegram to the Baha'i world:

"Initial stage in the inaugurated Teaching Campaign still untraversed. End of First Century rapidly approaching. Alaska, Delaware, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, Manitoba and Nova Scotia still unsettled. Universal, prolonged intensification in pioneer activity is the crying need of this fateful hour. The establishment of one resident believer in each virgin territory is the precondition to the full launching of the subsequent, eagerly-anticipated stage aiming at the spiritual conquest of the Southern Half of the Western Hemisphere.

"The Concourse on High expectantly await, ready to assist and acclaim the nine holy sculs who, independently or as deputies, will promptly, fearlessly volunteer to forsake their homes, cast away their attachments and definitely settle in these territories to lay firm anchorage of the Administrative Order of this undefeatable Faith." (*Messages from the Guardian*, Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1940, p. 36).

In response to the Guardian's call, Miss Honor Kempton of San Francisco, California and Miss Betty Becker of Kansas City, Missouri chose Alaska. Honor sailed from Seattle on April 15 for Alaska, and Betty, at the suggestion of the National Teaching Committee, visited the Baha'i Summer School at Geyserville before proceeding northward. She sailed

for Alaska on July 27, arriving in Juneau on August first.

Honor went first to Juneau, the Capital of the Territory, and stayed there nearly six weeks, but felt it was not the place she was destined to settle in. The word, "anchorage," in the Guardian's cablegram kept ringing in her ears, and she decided to move on to Alaska's Anchorage and to start a bookstore there.

### The First Believers and More Pioneers

Honor set sail on May 20 on the S. S. Alaska, little realizing that a passenger who got off that boat at Juneau that day would be the first believer to be enrolled in Alaska during the First Seven Year Plan. Although Honor immediately loved Anchorage and had several Firesides, she felt very discouraged on the whole at the lack of interest in the Faith. She wrote to Mr. Leroy Ioas, then chairman of the National Teaching Committee, saying "Miracles don't happen in Alaska."

However, the passenger mentioned above made her way to Anchorage by way of plane north to Fairbanks, then train south to Anchorage. Her name was Janet B. Whitenack and she had heard of the Faith in New York City and had attended several Firesides there. She, too, had decided to start a bookstore, choosing Fairbanks as her spot, and had gone to Anchorage supposedly just to look over that city before settling down and starting her own business farther north. Supposedly, too, through their mutual intentions of starting bookstores, Honor and Janet met, but they felt it was through Divine Guidance and Honor called it her "miracle." For on August 6, just nine days after meeting Honor, and only five days after Honor first mentioned the Baha'i Faith, Janet told her she wanted to be a Baha'i. She then returned to Fairbanks by way of Valdez and the Richardson Highway to take up "a new way of life." (*World Order Magazine*, February 1944, pages 383-388. "In Search of a New Way of Life," by Janet B. Whitenack.)

Betty Becker, too, felt that Juneau was not ready for the Baha'i Message, and went to Sitka and Fairbanks, finally settling in Anchorage, where she became a very stable member of an ever-changing community. Mrs. Joy Allen (now McCormick) was the third pioneer, who came in 1940 from San Francisco to Fairbanks and then Anchorage. Next was Miss Myrtle Dodge (now Silva) who came in August 1940, also from San Francisco. The first Baha'i Group in Anchorage during this period was formed by Honor, Joy, and Myrtle. They had a weekly study class and Mrs. Jean Van Cleve was enrolled in September, but she moved soon afterward to Oregon to live.

Mrs. Frances L. Wells of San Bernar-

dino, California was the next pioneer to come to Alaska and she arrived in Anchorage on March 22, 1943. Then **Mr. Verne L. Stout** of Geneva, New York, the first man to venture for the Faith in Alaska, came in June to work for the Army Engineers and to settle in Anchorage.

Although seven more had become Baha'is after Jean Van Cleve, it was becoming increasingly evident that the condition Orcella Rexford found in 1922 was still true—that Alaska's population was continually shifting like the proverbial sands—new believers and old going back to the States, for by this time Joy and Myrtle had returned to California.

In order to complete the nine needed to establish the Anchorage Assembly, Janet Whitenack, who had sold out her bookstore in Fairbanks after Pearl Harbor, gave up her teaching position with the Alaska Native Service in the Kusko-kwim Village of Tuluksak and hastened to Anchorage early in September. The Local Assembly was then formed with the aid of four new believers whose names are given in the beginning of this article.

Soon after, Miss Dagmar Dole came from Glendale, California, and Mrs. Helen Robinson and her family came from Alhambra, California in January 1944 to insure the continuance of the Assembly.

#### Centenary Commemoration

The culmination of the First Seven Year Teaching Plan initiated by the Guardian was the Dedication of the Baha'i House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois and the Centenary Commemoration of the Declaration of the Bab, May 22, 1944. Alaskan Baha'is felt very much honored to have Honor Kempton, Alaska's first Delegate to the National Convention, chosen to be one of the five readers at the Commemoration in the House of Worship that historic evening.

Another thrill was when the chairman of one of the sessions asked Honor and Artemus Lamb, pioneers to the Far North and to the southernmost tip of Chile in the South, respectively, to step on the platform and shake hands. An indescribable surge of power was felt by all present. The Guardian later put it into words for us: "Alaska—together with Magallanes, Chili may be likened to the extremity of the Baha'i arms stretched out and waiting to embrace the whole world in the order of peace and love which Baha'u'llah has established for the children of men in this day." (*Baha'i News*, No. 173, February 1945, page 2. Message from the Guardian of December 24, 1944.)

#### "Firsts"

Beginning in November, the Alaska Baha'is started chalking up their "firsts." The first baby born to a Baha'i in Alaska was Lynella Faith Green, to Florence Green and her non-Baha'i husband, Maurice. In January, 1945, the first Baha'is to be married in this era of the Faith in Alaska were Janet B. Whitenack and Verne L. Stout, who had a civil ceremony and then a lovely Baha'i service in the apartment of Honor Kempton, Fran-

ces Wells and Dagmar Dole. Their two children later became the first girl and boy born to all-Baha'i parents in Alaska: Dorothy on May 11, 1948, and Richard on January 13, 1950.

The Stouts could not be married without a civil ceremony because it was not until 1947 that an amendment to the Alaska Statutes recognized "marriages performed according to the established ritual or form commonly practiced by any religious organization or congregation" as valid. (Compiled Laws of Alaska 1933, Section 1187 as amended by Session Laws 1947, Chapter 24.) Baha'i services performed by Local Assemblies were then declared valid by the Territorial Attorney General's Office in Juneau in a letter dated April 13, 1949 to the Anchorage Assembly. This was a big milestone in the recognition of the Faith in Alaska by civil authorities. The first legal Baha'i wedding without a civil ceremony was performed for two non-Baha'is in August.

The first believer to be enrolled in the Second Century of the Baha'i Era was **Mrs. Evelyn Huffman**, in February 1945, who later became the first Secretary of the Alaska National Assembly. A very dramatic enrollment was received from **Vernon Huffman**, who signed his declaration card while on a trip and sent it in from Wales, an Eskimo village and the most westerly spot on the North American continent. He was enrolled in December. The Huffmans later endowed ten acres for the National Assembly and three acres for Alaska's Temple site.

Alaska's first declared Youth was **Donna Mae Robinson** in November 1945. The first family to come into the Faith together was the **Brown** family: Howard (now Auxiliary Board member) and Lea and their children Sandra (Humphrey) and Boyer, 1947. The Browns listened to the weekly radio broadcasts by the Anchorage Baha'is while residing at their gold mine in the Matanuska Valley, and when they moved to Anchorage they went to Firesides and accepted the teachings. **Agnes Parent** (Harrison) was the first Alaska Native to be enrolled in the Faith in Alaska. This was on June 23, 1949. However, **Melba Call** (King), an Alaskan Eskimo, was enrolled in the States in May 1943.

#### Second Seven Year Teaching Plan Pioneers to Europe

The Second Seven Year Teaching Plan was launched by the Guardian for the period 1946-1953. It included the European Teaching Project, with a systematic plan to establish the Faith in the capital cities of ten European countries. Important though the work in Alaska was, this call resounded sharply in the ears of three pioneers to Alaska, and **Honor Kempton** and **Dagmar Dole** arose at once to meet the new challenge.

Honor went to Luxembourg and attracted new believers to the Faith. Then she was called to be on the staff of the European Teaching Committee in Geneva, Switzerland. She also was elected re-

cording secretary of the newly formed Italo-Swiss National Spiritual Assembly. She later returned to Luxembourg and was elected to their National Assembly when it was established. Honor is at present living in the goal city of Ettelbruck. **Frances Wells** later went to Luxembourg and died there December 27, 1960. Hand of the Cause Dr. Mulschlagel came from Germany to take part in the funeral service, and the Mayor of Differdange represented the civil authorities. Her funeral clearly demonstrated the Oneness of Mankind. (See *ABN* No. 36, March 1961, p. 3.)

**Dagmar Dole** left Anchorage in March 1947 to pioneer in Copenhagen, Denmark, and later Italy. She served the Faith she loved so well with steadfastness and courage, but ill health finally took its toll. She passed away on Baha'u'llah's Birthday, November 12, 1952 at a sanitarium in Switzerland—the first to give her life for the Cause in the European project. The Guardian termed her a "distinguished, consecrated pioneer . . . outstanding record unforgettable; reward bountiful. She died in battle dress . . . her spiritual station is very high." (*Baha'i News*, No. 262, Dec. 1952; pages 2, 18.)

#### Alaskan Goals

Alaska's urgent tasks during this period were outlined by the Guardian in his **Challenging Requirements of the Present Hour** (June 5, 1947) on page 8 as follows:

1. The maintenance and consolidation of the first historic spiritual assembly in Anchorage, the northernmost administrative center of the Faith of Baha'u'llah in the world.
2. The multiplication of Baha'i centers in that territory.
3. The propagation of the teachings among the Eskimos, emphasized by 'Abdu'l-Baha's pen in His Tablets of the Divine Plan.
4. The translation and publication of selected passages from Baha'i literature in their native language; and
5. The extension of the limits of the Faith beyond Fairbanks and nearer to the Arctic Circle.

Shoghi Effendi referred to 'Abdu'l-Baha's own words, recorded in His Tablets, ". . . Perchance, God willing, the lights of the Most Great Guidance will illuminate that country, and the breezes of the rose-garden of the love of God will perfume the nostrils of the inhabitants of Alaska. Should you be aided to render such a service, rest ye assured that your heads shall be crowned with the diadem of everlasting sovereignty."

#### Maintenance and Consolidation

The first task, to maintain and consolidate the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly, proved to be an ever-present challenge. Baha'is wryly added "Baha'is" to Alaska's well-known "exports" of fish, furs and gold! For in the 13 year period from the formation of the Anchorage Assembly in 1943 to 1956, there were 68 adult

believers resident in the city, yet seldom more than 15 being counted at any one time. One year (1950-51) there were 15 different believers on the Assembly during the year, and another year (1953-54) it took 17 to maintain the membership of nine.

In spite of this condition, this first pivot of the Administrative Order in Alaska was strongly anchored. By February 24, 1948 the **Articles of Incorporation** for the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Anchorage, Alaska were filed in the Office of Auditor, Territory of Alaska, Juneau for "a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the Territory of Alaska." This action made it possible for the Baha'is to legally own property as an organization and to establish endowments to be held in trust for the future National Spiritual Assembly.

In proclaiming Baha'i Holy Days and anniversaries to the public, the Baha'is presented many outstanding meetings, entered prize-winning floats in the large Fourth of July parades, participated in United Nations activities, World Fellowship dinners at the USO, and a series of religious lectures at the USO entitled "Adventures in Understanding." This series was given by ministers of a variety of Christian denominations, a priest and a rabbi, and closed with a talk on the Baha'i Faith.

One of the most dramatic Holy Day observances occurred in 1953 during the noon prayer service commemorating the Martyrdom of the Bab on July ninth. Mt. Spurr, a volcano 80 miles southwest of Anchorage across Cook Inlet erupted, and by noon the wind had carried a black cloud of heavy ash over the Anchorage area, completely blotting out the sun from noon until the middle of the afternoon. A half inch of ash remained, covering everything. The believers, gathered at the residence of Edgar and Dorothy Russell, were strongly reminded of the day 103 years earlier when the Bab was martyred at Tabriz.

According to **The Dawn-Breakers**, Nabii's Narrative of the early days of the Faith in Persia, it is written (page 515): "The very moment the shots (which killed the Bab) were fired, a gale of exceptional severity arose and swept over the whole city. A whirlwind of dust of incredible density obscured the light of the sun and blinded the eyes of the people. The entire city remained enveloped in that darkness from noon till night."

Baha'is in the Anchorage area were very active in community affairs, including the Anchorage Woman's Club which Helen Robinson served as president and Evelyn Huffman as secretary in 1949-50. This organization is affiliated with the General Federation, and the Baha'is broke down the color barrier and were instrumental in having the first Negro (non-Baha'i) enrolled as a member of an Alaskan branch.

Inter-racial work was stressed by the

Anchorage Baha'is from the beginning, and seven members of the Negro race were enrolled in the Faith from 1945-1956. In 1953, Verne Stout was the first white man asked to serve on the Board of the local Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the following year was elected treasurer. He was among eight Anchorage citizens given an award at the First Annual Freedom Awards Banquet held by that organization.

In quite another field, Edgar Russell was vice-president (1949-1950) of the American Federation of Government Employees while working for the Alaska Railroad, and served as negotiator for the union with the management. The negotiations amicably secured a new wage scale and a five day week for the employees. The meetings were opened with Baha'i prayers for guidance. This spirit was in great contrast to former meetings when much bitterness was expressed on both sides. Edgar also wrote articles in 1952-53 for the "Booster," a monthly union paper for Railroad employees. His theme was Industrial Justice.

During this period, Salvatore A. Pelle, then a Captain and Public Information Officer at nearby Ft. Richardson, was the Baha'is' outstanding public speaker. He became a Baha'i in Alaska and made the Baha'i position well known among military and civic circles. (He is now Director of the Public Information Department of the U.S. National Baha'i Headquarters in Wilmette.)

The Alaska Regional Teaching Committee, composed of Anchorage area Baha'is, first took a booth at the Matanuska Valley Fair in Palmer in 1948, and ever since then the Baha'is have maintained a booth at this Fair, now called the Alaska State Fair. Evelyn Huffman and Helen Robinson were in charge of the booth the first two years.

#### Multiplication of Centers

When the number of Baha'is outside the City of Anchorage had increased to the point where a new Community was desirable, boundaries were chosen for a rural area and the Spiritual Assembly for the **Anchorage Recording District** was elected on April 21, 1951. (This is now known as the **Spanard** Assembly.) The members of the first Assembly were: Howard Brown, chairman; Arthur Gregory, vice-chairman; Mrs. Evelyn Huffman, corresponding secretary; Mrs. Jane Wells, recording secretary; Vernon Huffman, treasurer; and Capt. J. L. Davison, Donald Donnelly, Mrs. Caryl Hancock and Corporal Gordon S. Schuster.

**In Other Areas.** In furtherance of the second goal of the Second Year Plan, Baha'is spread rapidly around the Territory, and gradually concentrated on the areas chosen for the formation of Local Spiritual Assemblies to assure the firm foundation necessary for the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska.

#### Reaching the Eskimos

The next two phases of Alaska's goals set by the Guardian—to propagate the Faith among the Eskimos and to translate and publish passages from the Teachings into their native language—were carried forward over a period of time preceding and following the Second Seven Year Plan, as well as during this short span.

'Abdu'l-Baha emphasized the importance of this work in His Tablet to the American Baha'is:

"Perchance, God willing, the call of the Kingdom may reach the ears of the Eskimos . . . Should you display an effort, so that the fragrances of God be diffused amongst the Eskimos, its effect will be very great and far-reaching . . . The continent and the islands of Eskimos are also parts of this earth." (**Tablets of the Divine Plan**, pages 49-50.)

In February 1942, the first opportunity presented itself for a Baha'i to teach in an Eskimo village in Alaska. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Janet Whitenack found it necessary to close out her bookstore in Fairbanks as the Armed Forces took over the hotel where she had her store. She secured a teaching post with the Alaska Native Service, U.S. Office of Indian Affairs, in Tuluksak, an all-Eskimo village of about one hundred, on the Kuskokwim River, about 75 miles north of Bethel. While Federal regulations prohibited teachers from proselytizing, Janet tried by "living the life" to make the Baha'i Faith known indirectly, and she hung the "smiling" photograph of 'Abdu'l-Baha on her living room wall.

When the National Teaching Committee suggested that she come to Anchorage to help form the Local Assembly, she was given the opportunity to tell the Eskimos she had been living among for a year and a half that her "church" had called her to help in Anchorage. At their request, on the Fourth of July, 1943, when the whole village was gathered at their Moravian Church for a special service, she told them briefly about the new Divine Physician who had come to minister to their needs, a native interpreter translating her talk into Eskimo as she gave it. The call of the Kingdom had reached their ears!

Later, other Baha'is from the Anchorage area held similar posts in Eskimo villages but were not able to speak openly of the Faith: Mrs. Ethel Oliver at Atka, 1946-47; and Agnes and Wally Harrison in Alakanuk, 1952-1955.

During the annual Fur Rendezvous in Anchorage, when Eskimos came from Nome, Diomedes Island and King Island to do their native dances and blanket toss, the Anchorage Baha'is offered them hospitality and entertained them in their homes.

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**Translation of Baha'i Passages  
Into Eskimo**

When the Guardian asked the Alaskan Baha'is in 1947 to take steps to translate and publish Baha'i passages into Eskimo, the Alaska Teaching Committee, composed of Anchorage area Baha'is, set to work on this difficult project. A long search was undertaken to find an Eskimo who could help in this task. Finally, Mrs. Hadley Ferguson, a full-blooded Eskimo princess of the Kobuk tribe, told Frances Wells, who was then in Fairbanks, that she would do this. She said: "I want to translate these writings in order to help my people. We are all in need of these teachings." The pamphlet was published in 1954 and carries delightful illustrations by Mrs. Lucille Donnelly (Stettler) of the Anchorage Recording Community. Mrs. Ferguson was able to address the Alaska State Convention in Anchorage in 1954 and meet the assembled friends.

# ANCHORAGE CELEBRATES 25th YEAR

## Part II

In continuation of Alaska's Goals in the Second Seven Year Teaching Plan (1946-1953), as recorded in ABN No. 110, pages 4-6 and 8, we come to "The extension of the limits of the Faith beyond Fairbanks and nearer to the Arctic Circle."

### Extending the Limits of the Faith Northward

Frances Wells went to Fairbanks in 1952 to spread the Faith so that a Local Spiritual Assembly could be formed in that important city. Rose Perkal followed later from the Anchorage Community, and the new Assembly was formed in April 1955 with the aid of Ten Year Crusaders to Alaska and new believers.

The members of that Northern Assembly were: Mrs. Zora Banks, chairman; Mrs. Marie Guffey (Crusader), vice-chairman; Mrs. Rose Perkal (Crusader), corresponding secretary; Mrs. Kathryn Alio (Crusader), recording secretary; Mrs. Ann Ashen (Crusader), treasurer; and Jerome DeBruyn, Elmer Guffey (Crusader), Mrs. Zora Williams, and Mrs. Frances Wells.

That summer, Frances felt inspired to go to Barrow as a pioneer as the Guardian had called this a "highly meritorious field" and stated there was "a great significance to having believers serving so far north." (Letter from the Guardian to the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly, April 23, 1954.) She was joined there by Margaret Pirkey, also formerly of Anchorage.

Mr. Bernard Blumenstein, who came to Alaska from New York City, also was fired with enthusiasm to reach the Eskimos with the Baha'i Teachings, and barely nine months after accepting the Faith himself, moved from Anchorage to Nome at much financial sacrifice. (He later married an Eskimo from the Bristol Bay area, Rita Pitka.)

As the number of Baha'is in the rural area outside the City of Fairbanks was rapidly increasing, the Alaska Teaching Committee set as a goal for 1955-56 the establishment of a second Local Assembly in that area. This Tanana Valley Local Spiritual Assembly became a reality on April 20, 1956 with the aid of two pioneers from Anchorage: Mrs. Rose Perkal (Yarno), who had also helped form the Fairbanks Assembly the year before, and Mrs. Mable Amidon, who later succeeded Frances Wells in the Barrow post.

The members of the second Northern Assembly were: Mrs. Mable Amidon (Crusader), chairman; Anthony Madonia, vice chairman; Mrs. Rose Perkal Yarno (Crusader), secretary; J. Kenneth Yarno, treasurer; and Mrs. Violet Bianchi, Mrs. Betty Clancy, Ernest Gil-

bert, Mrs. Mary McAfee, and Mrs. Agnes Moore.

### TEN YEAR CRUSADE (1953-1963)

In 1953 the Centenary of the Birth of the Baha'i Revelation was observed in the United States with a Jubilee Celebration which included the Forty-Fifth Annual Baha'i Convention, the All-American Intercontinental Teaching Conference, and the Dedication of the Temple in Wilmette for public worship. It was fitting that Alaska's Delegate to the Annual Convention this year was Betty Becker of Anchorage, the believer with the longest residence in the Territory, and one of the original pioneers in 1939.

### Alaska's Goals

At this momentous Jubilee Celebration, the Guardian proclaimed the Ten Year Crusade Plan, stating it constituted "the third and final stage of the initial epoch in the evolution of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Master Plan and that it included the following goals in Alaska:

1. Opening of virgin territories: Aleutian Islands, Kodiak Island, Baranof Island
2. Consolidation of the Faith in Alaska
3. Establishment of the N.S.A. of the Baha'is of Alaska
4. Incorporation of the N.S.A. of the Baha'is of Alaska
5. Establishment of national Baha'i endowments by the N.S.A. of Alaska
6. Establishment of a National Haziratu'l-Quds in Anchorage.

### Virgin Territories

The first to come to Alaska in response to the Guardian's Call was Mrs. Rose Perkal from New York City, and she arrived in Kodiak on July 8, 1953. She found Lois Berry, who had enrolled in Anchorage in February; and Jack Huffman, son of Evelyn and Vernon Huffman who was serving in the Navy at the Naval Base nearby. When Rose had to leave to attend to some business in the East, Bernard Guhrke, also from New York City, took her place. Ben and Harriet Haslett came to Anchorage for a Baha'i wedding in April 1955, returning to Kodiak to make their home and "live the life."

The Caldwell family — Jenabe, Elaine and three small boys (Daniel, David and Mark — Mark being only three weeks old) — left their home, friends and job in Great Falls, Montana to carry the Banner of Baha'u'llah to the far-away Aleutian Islands. They arrived in Unalaska on August 19, 1953. Land was purchased, two buildings 16'x20' were bought for \$2.50 each, and a third was given to them. They started to construct a Center and the property was later deeded to the N.S.A. of Alaska.

The Putneys — George, Elinore, and three small girls (Laural, Kathleen and Georgia) — fired by the same flames of

the Crusade, departed from San Francisco and arrived the following year.

In September 1956, Janet Johnson (now Smith, and National Secretary) became the first person to declare her faith in Baha'u'llah in the Aleutians. She was working on the M. S. Hygiene with the Health Department, and studied with the Caldwells and Putneys.

The third virgin territory in Alaska named by the Guardian as a special goal of the Ten Year Crusade, Baranof Island, was made the responsibility of the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly. However, Mrs. Helen Robinson, pioneer who had come to Anchorage in 1944, responded from her new home in Ada County, Idaho and arrived in Sitka on September 29, 1953. However, she had to return to her family and was replaced by Mrs. Gail Avery (now Davis), who gave up a nursing position in Alabama and hastened to Sitka, arriving February 15, 1954. In September, the Dean Fraser family came from Peoria, Illinois. Dr. Fraser had given up a good dental practice to take a position at Mt. Edgecumbe in this goal area. His wife, Zella, and daughters Deanne and Glory, accompanied him.

Mrs. Grace Bahovec, a native of Haiti, who became a Baha'i in Anchorage, lived on the other side of Baranof Island at Warm Springs. Grace's story is graphically told by Honor Kempton in Volume XI of Baha'i World, "To Gather Jewels."

### Consolidation Anchorage area

In the spring of 1952 the two Local Assemblies in the Anchorage area recorded the Baha'i Holy Days with the Superintendent of Schools of the Anchorage Independent School District and asked that Baha'i children be excused from school on those days. On March 18 the Assemblies were notified by the Superintendent that approval had been given by the Territorial Department of Education, and another important milestone had been reached!

On January 4, 1955 the Anchorage Recording District Spiritual Assembly achieved an important goal of its own by becoming an incorporated body, its final papers having been signed at the Capital in Juneau.

This scattered rural area bounding Anchorage, with scarcely a public meeting place and no newspaper, was both hampered and challenged by these conditions from the beginning. They successfully accepted the challenge and started enrolling new members. They held regular firesides, children's classes, deepening classes, comparative religion classes, and participated in many special teaching projects with the Anchorage Baha'is. They handled much of the

radio work in the Anchorage area, paying at various times for broadcasts of special scripts such as Words for the World. In the summer of 1955 they sponsored five minute tapes to bring attention to the persecution of fellow Baha'is in Iran.

Especially worthy of note was the occasion when a Youth member, Mary Sue Huffman, showed the Baha'i Temple slides to her High School history class during a study period in architecture. The students and teachers were so impressed that by their request the slides were shown to all history classes in the Anchorage High School during the entire day.

#### Ketchikan

In order to build a firm foundation for the future National Assembly, it was important that more Local Spiritual Assemblies be formed, especially in Southeastern Alaska. Therefore, **Robert (Pat) Moul** (now National Chairman) and **Georgine Moul**, who had come to Alaska as Crusaders in 1953 and settled first in Anchorage, arose to fill the vision goal of Ketchikan. They arrived there in February 1954. **Miss Marguerite B. Meyer** of Colorado Springs joined them for a short time, then going on to Juneau. In August, **Mrs. Victoria Jackson** was enrolled — the first new believer to be enrolled in a pioneer area under the Ten Year Crusade.

In September, **Miss Margaret Pirkey** went to Ketchikan from Chicago to assist in building the Baha'i Community in Ketchikan. She had become a Baha'i in Anchorage in 1949 and had moved to Chicago the following year.

Interest in the Faith increased by leaps and bounds when Mrs. Florence V. Mayberry, Member of the Auxiliary Board of the Hands of the Cause of God, visited Ketchikan in August 1955. Her visit was followed by an extensive teaching campaign, and Donald A. Anderson (now National Treasurer) enrolled in April. He was followed soon after by Mrs. Sarah Mary Roberts, 87 years young.

Keeping in mind 'Abdu'l-Baha's exhortation to "attach great importance to the Indians, the original inhabitants of America," (Tablets of the Divine Plan, ADJ, p. 46) the Ketchikan Baha'is started enrolling the indigenous peoples. In the spring of 1956, Mrs. Joyce Anderson Combs, of the Tlingit and Haida tribes, became a Baha'i. A few weeks later, Joyce Campbell (now Baldwin), a Tsimshian, was enrolled.

In the final drive to insure the formation of a Local Assembly in Ketchikan, Crusaders who had gone to the Anchorage area, moved to Ketchikan: **Jay Leo Baldwin**, **Rex King**, and **Robin Fowler**. Robin was the first to become a believer in the Yukon Territory — in Whitehorse. He is now a member of the National Assembly.

The Ketchikan Assembly was elected

April 21, 1956 as follows: Robert (Pat) Moul, chairman; J. Leo Baldwin, vice-chairman; Rex King, secretary; Mrs. Vicki Jackson, treasurer; and Donald A. Anderson, Mrs. Joyce A. Combs, Robin Fowler, Mrs. Georgine Moul, and Miss Margaret Pirkey.

#### Juneau

The last Local Assembly to be formed before the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly was in the Capital city of Juneau, in April 1957. **Mrs. Gladys Stewart**, Crusader, settled in that city in September 1953. She was later joined by **Tom and Georgia Haisler**, Crusaders from Wisconsin; and pioneers from Alaska, including **Charles and Maude Hartline** and **Ann Ashen** from Anchorage, and **Jack and Mary Jane Fowlie** from the Anchorage Recording District; and **Donald A. Anderson** from Ketchikan.

Members of the Assembly were: Thomas Haisler, chairman; Jack Fowlie, vice-chairman; Mrs. Gladys Stewart, corresponding secretary; Mrs. Georgia Haisler, recording secretary; Donald A. Anderson, treasurer; and Mrs. Ann Ashen, Mrs. Mary Jane Fowlie, Mrs. Maudie G. Hartline, and Sam S. Simonarson, the first believer to be enrolled in Juneau (October 1956).

#### Teaching Conferences and Extension

The first All-Alaskan Teaching Conference was held in the Anchorage area in the summer of 1955 with Florence Mayberry and Ted Anderson as principal teachers. This precursor to a Summer School was eminently successful, with over half the believers in the Territory attending. The following July, a second Teaching Conference was held in the Fairbanks area with Mrs. Hazel Mori of Seattle as guest teacher. These two Conferences and two extensive teaching trips throughout Alaska by Mrs. Mayberry in 1955 and 1956 helped to make the Faith better-known and inspired the believers. Anchorage believers arose to form new Centers in Alaskan goals as part of extending the Faith for a firm foundation throughout the Territory. **Edgar and Dorothy Russell** and son **Daniel** moved to Seward in April 1954, and **Mrs. Jane Gardner** moved to Valdez at the same time.

#### National Endowments

The last two goals set by the Guardian for Alaska during the Ten Year Crusade were initiated even before the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly.

At the request of the Guardian, and under the direction of the United States National Assembly, the Anchorage Local Assembly took steps to purchase a **Haziratu'l-Quds** in Anchorage. A modest log cabin, one of the oldest in the city, was acquired at 820 Eighth Avenue on April 15, 1955. This was dedicated August 6, 1955 with Mrs. Florence Mayberry, Auxiliary Board Member, as the representative of the Hands. This property

was used by the Anchorage Community as its Center until the National Assembly was formed. After the **Articles of Incorporation** of the National Assembly were filed September 25, 1957, in Juneau, this property became the **National Haziratu'l-Quds**. It was used for this purpose until it was rendered unsafe by the great Alaska Earthquake in 1964, and a new and modern building was purchased in Spenard.

Endowments were early considered of great importance by members of the **Anchorage Recording District** (now **Spenard**) Community. Ten acres of homestead land were given by each of two of the families in 1949 on Huffman Road — by **Arthur and Wilma Gregory** and **Vernon and Evelyn Huffman**. This prized property was deeded to the Anchorage Assembly as the only incorporated Baha'i body in Alaska at that time, and became part of Alaska's **National Endowment** in 1957.

That summer, the **Huffmans** again displayed their generosity and offered three acres in one of the most beautiful locations in Alaska, overlooking Turnagain Arm, for Alaska's **Temple Site**. This is about eight miles from the city limits of Anchorage on DeArmour Road. The Guardian happily accepted their offer, and additional acreage has since been acquired adjacent to the original gift.

The Baha'i Center and property at **Unalaska**, acquired by the **Caldwells**, was deeded to the United States National Assembly in trust for Alaska's National Assembly and later became part of our National Endowment.

#### Establishment of the National Assembly

Alaska's Third goal under the Ten Year Crusade, the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly, took place in Anchorage on April 23, 1957. **Mr. Paul Haney**, Hand of the Cause, and the Guardian's personal Representative, as well as chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, came to Alaska for the first Alaska National Convention, and to advise the new National Assembly.

Mr. Haney recalled what the Guardian had said about Spiritual Assemblies. "The various Assemblies, local and national, constitute today the bedrock upon the strength of which the Universal House of Justice is . . . firmly established and raised."

Mr. Haney then told the nine assembled Delegates and visitors that "A new Pillar of the Universal House of Justice is about to be born." The Alaska Assembly became the seventeenth Pillar in the whole world; it was the fifth of thirteen to be formed that Ridvan. Alaska thus ranks on a par with the sovereign nations of the world! Today, there are 81 National Spiritual Assemblies — a tremendous growth in eleven years.

The new National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Alaska was formed with two of the original Anchorage Assembly members on it. Robert E. Moul of Ketchikan was elected chairman; Howard K. Brown of the Anchorage Recording District, vice-chairman; Mrs. Evelyn Huffman, secretary; Mrs. Kathy Rodgers of Fairbanks, recording secretary; Mrs. Lois K. Lee of Anchorage, treasurer. The other members were Warren H. Rodgers of Fairbanks, Janet W. and Verne L. Stout of Anchorage, and Mrs. Rose Perkal Yarno of Tanana Valley. In fact, all but Mr. and Mrs. Rodgers were, or had been, members of Alaska's "Mother" Assembly during the preceding twelve years.

At the establishment of the Alaska National Spiritual Assembly, the American Hands of the Cause, in their matchless way, summed up the whole Alaska saga thus:

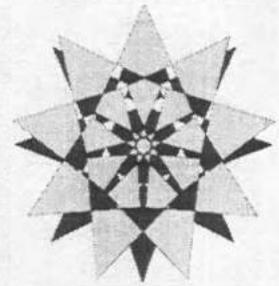
"How brief the time during which Alaska has passed through the pioneer period, the election of local Spiritual Assemblies, the acquiring of administrative experience, and arrival at the fateful period when a National Spiritual Assembly can be brought into existence! Thus, under the beloved Guardian's guidance, has the humanly impossible been undertaken and made possible, and an epochal milestone set up to mark the irresistible progress of the Faith of Baha'u'llah!"

(The foregoing article is based on one requested by *The Baha'i World* and written by Janet W. Stout to cover the period up to the establishment of the National Assembly. Emphasis is on the Ten Year Crusade and the Anchorage area. All figures given are as of May 1, 1956. In addition to the six Local Assemblies named in this History, at Ridvan 1968 there were eleven more: Auke Bay, Beaver, Douglas, Ft. Yukon, Kake, Kodiak, Matanuska Valley, Nenana, Petersburg, Ridgeway and Sitka.)

#### Epilogue

This story of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary meeting of the Anchorage Local Assembly ends on a very happy note, as one of the guests at the meeting, Edgar Mason, became attracted to the Faith, studied with new-found Baha'i friends, and declared his faith in Baha'u'llah about two months later! He then left for his home in California to be enrolled.





## Spiritual Assembly of Anchorage Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Its Incorporation

by Nancy Hutcheon

On 28 February 1998, a typical winter day in Anchorage, a group of around seventy people gathered in the Bahá'í Center at 1270 East 74<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Some, such as the featured speakers for this event, had come from as far away as New York State and Arizona; others, from various points around Alaska. All had some connection with the Anchorage Bahá'í community. The primary purpose was to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first Spiritual Assembly of Alaska in Anchorage, which was formally incorporated on 24 February 1948, although it had been in existence as a Bahá'í institution since its formation on 8 September 1943. [As noted by Janet Stout in her article about the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly that appeared in the November-December 1968 issue of *Alaska Bahá'í News*, during the last year of the first Bahá'í Century, Local Assemblies could be formed anytime during the year when there were nine adult members resident in the community.]

Historic photographs of the first Spiritual Assembly and the first incorporated Spiritual Assembly were on display, newly framed for the occasion,



Incorporators of the Spiritual Assembly of Anchorage, 24 February 1948; seated front row, l. to r.: Helen Robinson, Janet Stout, Frances Wells, Mina Lundquist, Evelyn Huffman; back row, l. to r.: Verne Stout, Wilbur Robinson, Betty Becker, Florence Green. Historic photo from the Anchorage Bahá'í archives, photographer unknown.

together with photos and paintings of people such as Betty Becker, Honor Kempton, and Janet Whitenack Stout who had featured prominently in the development of this fledgling community. The priceless scrapbook prepared by Betty Becker, now housed at the Bahá'í National Office, documenting not only the Anchorage but the Alaskan Bahá'í community in those early years was also on display, as well as archives from the Anchorage files showing the countless newspaper ads and articles so tirelessly prepared and submitted to the local newspaper (the "Anchorage Times," now defunct) by Betty Becker and Evelyn Huffman.

In November of 1997 the Spiritual Assembly of Anchorage received notification from the State of Alaska of a sunset clause in its original Articles of Incorporation that required the dissolution of the corporation at the end of fifty years — which would occur on 24 February 1998. It was this notice, and the need to amend the Articles of Incorporation, which first alerted the Spiritual Assembly of the impending anniversary date. For an event of such significance, the Spiritual Assembly enlisted the aid of some of those who had witnessed and participated in many of the historic events of the preceding fifty years.



Rebequa Getahoun Murphy shares some touching memories of her experiences in the Anchorage Bahá'í community.



John Kolstoe provides an historical overview of the Anchorage community.

Printed invitations were sent to all adult members of the Anchorage Bahá'í community and to surrounding communities. Local officials and dignitaries were also invited, including the Mayor, the City Council, former recipients of the Honor Kempton Award, ministers and members of the Interfaith Council and other organizations with whom the Spiritual Assembly has collaborated in recent years. Additionally, community members were encouraged to invite close friends of the Faith.

Principle elements the Spiritual Assembly wished to incorporate in the anniversary observance were recognition of elders who contributed to the development of the community, and a reflection of the diversity of the Anchorage Bahá'í community. The resulting agenda for the program, which began promptly at 1:00 p.m. and ended at 2:30 p.m., featured young and old, male and female, Yupik, Persian, Ethiopian, European American, Asian American and African American Bahá'ís.

The agenda:  
 Program Prelude: Piano Music by Chavis Newman Keane  
 Welcome by Jim Falconer, Chairman, Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Anchorage  
 Bahá'í Prayer Chanted in Persian by Houshang Movaffagh  
 Greetings from the National

Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska by Steve Ellis, Chairman  
 Classical Guitar Music by Randall Carlson  
 "Anchorage in the Rear View Mirror" by John Kolstoe  
 Vocal Music Selection by Gary Lamar, Lindsay Lamar and Gavin Reed  
 "Unity — The Foundation of an Emerging Civilization" by Rebequa Getahoun Murphy  
 Spirit Song and Drumming by Rita Blumenstein  
 Stories from Early Bahá'ís in

Anchorage, and Recognition of Elders, facilitated by John Kolstoe  
 Step Dance by Anchorage Bahá'í Youth Workshop

The gathering was honored by the presence of two former non-Bahá'í recipients of the Honor Kempton Award: Archbishop Francis T. Hurley and Mahala Ashley Dickerson, both of whom are well known throughout Alaska. Archbishop Hurley touched many hearts in the audience when he



Some of the audience attending the 50th Anniversary observance.

observed after the program that he felt he had been presented the Honor Kempton Award not so much for what he had already done, but for what he still needed to accomplish.

Likewise, Ms. Dickerson, a retired lawyer and co-traveler with many of the people active in the Civil Rights movement in the 1960's and 1970's, expressed her joy in attending the observance. Eric Burkett, the Religion Editor for the "Anchorage Daily News," attended the entire program and stayed afterwards to interview speakers Rebequa Murphy, John Kolstoe and several other Bahá'ís. Excerpts from his half-page article about the anniversary observance follow, offering a non-Bahá'í perspective of the occasion.

A catered reception followed the formal observance, allowing the participants to mingle, share stories, reminisce, and marvel at the growth of the community throughout Alaska in the past fifty years. Later in the evening, the friends gathered again at the Center for a more family-oriented

celebration and dedication of the Anchorage Center, with informal ceremonies of appreciation for some of the friends who have contributed so much of their time, energy and resources to the development of this Center.

With the advent of a new century and the outlines of the Lesser Peace on the horizon, we can only dimly imagine what the next fifty years will witness!

The excellent review written by Janet Whitenack Stout for the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly, reprinted in this issue, provides a fuller background on the history of the Bahá'í Faith in Anchorage and in Alaska. Additional information is available in the series of 19 articles by John Kolstoe, "A Glance in the Rear View Mirror," which appeared in successive issues of *Alaska Bahá'í News* from April 1994 through September 1996, as well as in Betty Becker's scrapbook located at the National Bahá'í Archives in Anchorage.



Eric Burkett, Religion Editor for the "Anchorage Daily News", interviewed several of the program participants. Photo credit: Chris Hoefler

## 50 Years of Unity

Excerpts from an article in the 21 March 1998 issue of "Anchorage Daily News" by Eric Burkett, Staff Reporter

In a plain structure in a neighborhood of garages, light industry and houses, about 60 people sat in the assembly room of the Anchorage Bahá'í Center. They listened to speeches and corny jokes and reminisced, wiping away a tear or two as colleagues and friends recounted decades of memories.

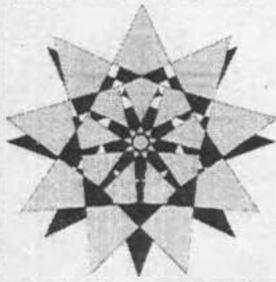
The faces in the room varied. Native, black, white, Hispanic and Middle Eastern Bahá'ís gathered last month to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly of Bahá'ís.

Musicians performed. Children dressed in black T-shirts that read "Unity in Diversity" performed a dance. Eskimo elder Rita Blumenstein sang an Athabaskan prayer as she beat a skin drum with a wooden kitchen spoon — she'd forgotten her drum stick.

"Bahá'ís throughout (the world) believe there is an emerging civilization based upon the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and the unity of



Yupik Elder Rita Blumenstein accompanies her Athabaskan spirit song with her drum..



mankind," Rebequa Getahoun Murphy told the assembly. "Everything Bahá'is do is toward the advancement of that goal. Everything else is secondary."

When she recounted her experiences as a 19-year-old in Alaska for the first time, she began to cry. Here from Ethiopia, where her diplomat father was being held as a political prisoner, she found refuge and family in the Bahá'í community.

Raised nominally as an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian, Murphy was attracted to the Bahá'í faith early on. The attraction was to a faith that teaches all humanity is one, that all religions are paths to the same God, that everyone regardless of race or gender is equal.

After the ceremony, Murphy reflected on her experiences with Anchorage's Bahá'í community. Now a resident of Rochester, N.Y.— she left Alaska in 1988 — she's watched the community with continued affection.

In Ethiopia, "I had been aware of the Bahá'í faith, although I was not myself

a Bahá'í." But when she arrived in Alaska in 1971, she found a particularly vital and energized community of Bahá'ís.

"This tiny community was so globally focused," she said. "The Alaskan Bahá'í community was one of the foremost in the world."

John Kolstoe agreed. In the 1970's, "in the country — and not just Alaska — there was a foment the likes of which we'd never seen before." The state's Bahá'ís seized on that energy, he said. ...

During the next couple of years, the number of Alaska Bahá'ís doubled. Today, at least half of all Bahá'ís in the state are Native, according to the Bahá'í National Office in Anchorage. ...

Bahá'ís disdain the word "missionary" because active proselytizing is discouraged. Instead, believers are encouraged to settle in new communities, to "pioneer" and live as examples of their faith, and to be



Jim Falconer, chairman, representing the Spiritual Assembly of Anchorage.

available should anyone express interest in their religion. ...

In 1995 and 1996, Kolstoe documented the growth of the Bahá'í faith in Alaska in a series of 19 stories that ran in *Alaska Bahá'í News*. In "A Glance in the Rearview Mirror," he detailed the early pioneers who brought the faith, like Agnes Alexander and Aseyah Allen, who arrived in 1905.

Alexander went on to become known as a Hand of the Cause of God. ...

The devoted included women like Betty Becker, Honor Kempton and Janet Whitenack. They each came to the territory in 1939, alone, and went on to lay the foundation for the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly. Verne Stout, who came to Alaska from upstate New York in 1943, met and married Whitenack. The two of them moved to then-remote Palmer, the first Bahá'ís to settle in the Matanuska Valley.



Reception following the 50th anniversary observance. Photo credit: Chris Hoefler



Archbishop Francis T. Hurlley offers his congratulations to the Bahá'í community of Anchorage.

Women have played a significant role in the development of the faith in Alaska and worldwide, Kolstoe said. Bahá'í Faith "was established by a bunch of little old ladies in tennis shoes," he joked.

The 50th anniversary had caught them unaware, said speaker and [Spiritual] Assembly chairman Jim Falconer to those gathered at the celebration. None of the early assembly members knew what they were doing, he said, when they received notice from the faith's national office in the Lower 48 that they should incorporate.

But incorporate they did, and when the state sent the assembly a notice earlier this year reminding that it was time to renew the letter of incorporation, the Alaskans realized they had hit a milestone.\*

Fifty years, Falconer said, seemed "an astronomical length of time."

*\* Editor's Note: As noted in the previous story, the State of Alaska notified the Spiritual Assembly of a sunset clause in the original Articles of Incorporation that required the dissolution of the corporation at the end of fifty years. It was this notice which alerted the Spiritual Assembly of the impending anniversary date.*

**Photo credits: Unless otherwise noted, all photos were adapted by Nicanor Torres from a video taken of this event by Paul Gray.**



FRANCES WELLS



Office—Mead River Coal Mine, Barrow



MARGARET PIRKEY

## BARROW BAHAI HISTORY

The culmination of over 20 years of effort to establish the Faith in the northernmost point of Alaska — Barrow — took place on January 10, 1976 when the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Barrow was formed. It became the northernmost Assembly in the entire Baha'i world.

It has taken three single ladies and a family to plant seeds for this flower, then a dormant period of nine and a half years, then finally fruition.

The first reference to the Barrow area in Alaska's historical records was in a letter dated March 21, 1954 from Margaret D. Green to Gladys Stewart, pioneer during the Ten Year Crusade to Juneau in 1953.

Margaret Green was Librarian in the Juneau Public Library from 1915-1918 and was referred to by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, page 9.

Miss Green wrote Mrs. Stewart that she had talked of the Faith many times in Juneau with Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Hawksworth, who had been stationed in Pt. Barrow with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Alaska Division, Alaska Native School, Medical and Reindeer Service, from 1908-1916. He told Margaret Green that as he was leaving for his post from Eugene, Oregon in 1908 a man who had heard him speak on the work he hoped to accomplish in that far outpost, presented him with a book on the Baha'i Teachings saying he thought he was ready for these Teachings. He studied this book carefully during the eight years he was in Point Barrow. However, he said there were many statements in this book with which he did not agree. (This book was later withdrawn as unaccredited Baha'i literature.)

In August 1920, after Margaret Green had left Juneau, Orcella Rexford gave a public address on the Baha'i Faith at the Elks Club in Juneau, and Mr. and Mrs. Hawksworth attended. He wrote Miss Green that he had found that "something" which his life needed. (We have no record that he enrolled in the Faith).

### Pioneer-Settlers in Barrow

The first Baha'i Pioneer to settle in Barrow was **Mrs. Frances Wells**. In the summer of 1955, after helping to form the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Fairbanks, Frances was inspired to move to Barrow because the Guardian had written the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly, 4/23/54, that this was a "highly meritorious field" and stated there was "a great significance to having believers serving so far north."

**Margaret Pirkey** joined her during her summer vacation to help Frances get settled. When hearing the news that Barrow was settled, the Guardian cabled "DELIGHTED, ASSURE LOVING PRAYERS" Shoghi. (July 5, 1955).

Frances, a very fastidious, highly fashionable person, got a clerical job in the Meade River Coal Mine office and lived under very primitive conditions in the harsh climate for nearly three years. Her big Red Letter Day came on February 7, 1956 when she had the first opportunity to speak openly of the Faith. A customer in the Native Store asked her outright about her "religious work" and she was able to give the Baha'i Eskimo pamphlet to one of the leading Eskimos as a result of the conversation. (In time, the first Eskimo in this Arctic region, Ruth Tazruk, a youth who lived with Frances, declared her belief in Baha'u'llah, (4/29/60), through Tom and Dottie Baumgartner.)

In the fall of 1956 Frances was able to buy a nice four room house and live much more comfortably. She was probably the only white woman to own a house there! The Eskimos named the house **KOUMATIKAVIK**, which means "The house from which comes the Power or the Light." (ABN No. 6, Feb. '58, p. 4)

Margaret Pirkey, who had left at the end of the summer of 1955 to teach school in Ketchikan, returned to Barrow September 4, 1957 to teach for the Alaska Native Service. She and Frances then formed the first Barrow Baha'i Group. However, she soon contracted the Asiatic flu and went Outside for treatment, where she died December 10, 1957 in Illinois.

**Mrs. Mable Amidon** then left her home in Fairbanks and arrived in Barrow to help Frances December 19, 1957. She became the Group's Secretary. A Baha'i Library was established at the Center with 67 books and pamphlets.

Frances and Mable attended the village election of some members of the Council, which must be composed of Eskimos only. They went to observe only, but a teller, when passing around the ballots, asked Frances to vote. As this was most unusual she asked if he would get the verbal approval of the presiding Council. Approval was given with the statement that she had been a resident of the village for more than a year. Frances felt honored to be asked to vote. (ABN No. 6, Feb. '58, p. 4)

### First Proclamation

In January 1958 the first Proclamation of the Faith took place in Barrow when **Mrs. Florence Mayberry**, Auxiliary Board Member, visited the local pioneers. She showed her slides of Europe and the Holy Land to local groups, the children at school, to a full house at the local theatre — 325 managed to squeeze in — and had many informal firesides. January 21-24 were days crammed full of active teaching.

\* \* \*

Frances Wells, after turning over a Bill of Sale for the house to the National Spiritual Assembly, reluctantly left Barrow in early 1958, for reasons of health. Mable Amidon carried on alone for awhile. However, it was recognized that a married couple could cope better in this isolated post and the Hands of the Cause recommended this. In the meantime, Mable kept extremely busy serving the Faith.

In July she started Baha'i Devotional Services on Sundays, and children's classes. Following Summer School in Juneau (1958), **Eunice Braun** made a teaching trip to Barrow, showed her slides of the Temple and of foreign countries, and held a children's fireside, telling them stories of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Eunice stated that in all her travels where she had visited pioneers, Barrow seemed to have the most difficult problems!



MABLE AMIDON



Baumgartner Family 1959: Front row: David, Michael; Rear: Ernest, Dottie and Tom with Robert on his lap, Jim.

The next travel-teacher was **William DeForge**, Auxiliary Board Member and Chairman of the Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee, who visited Barrow March 16-17, 1959. He gave talks to adults and the children. Mable hosted a supper meeting at the Center and 43 came.

After repeated calls for a married couple to aid in Barrow, **Tom and Dottie Baumgartner** responded. Tom arrived in April 1959 to work in the electronics field at the University of Alaska's experimental station, and Dottie and three sons came after school was out. (Mike, David and Robert, Ernie and Jim did not go).

In May, **Jenabe Caldwell** came on a teaching trip, and was especially successful reaching the children. A total of 34 heard him in different groups.

In July, 1959 Mable Amidon left Barrow, since this important post was adequately filled, and for reasons of health, and settled in Green Bay, Wisconsin, a goal area in the United States.

The Baumgartners opened their home in the Center to the residents, and the Eskimos came over to visit a lot. The adults heard about the Faith but didn't want to come to regular classes because of the opposition of the local churches. However, the children's and youth classes were always well attended in this winter of 1959.

Naw-Ruz was observed by the Barrow Group with **Don Stettler** of Spennard as a visitor. The children's party was attended by 25, and 31 of 50 invited adults came to a party for them. It was the "talk of the town," according to village reports.

The Baumgartners' big moment came during the National Convention in 1960 when they wired the news that the first Eskimo youth, Ruth Tazruk, had enrolled in the Faith! This was the first declaration in Barrow. Hattie and Frank Gregory were also reached with the Message and Hattie enrolled 8/12/60, Frank doing so after they moved away.

By the end of a year of service, persecution of the Baumgartner children and opposition of the local churches took their toll. The Baumgartners noti-

fied the National Teaching Committee that prevailing conditions necessitated their moving to a community where a high school was available for the furthering of their boys' education. (**ABN** No. 28, May-June 1969, p. 8). They moved to the goal post of Homer.

#### Pioneers Leave — Center Is Sold

In spite of repeated efforts to get another pioneer to Barrow all attempts were unsuccessful. Finally the National Assembly considered it unwise to allow the Center to remain unattended. Early in 1962 it was sold when a substantial offer was received. The proceeds from the sale enabled the NSA to send an additional \$500 to the German Temple Fund and to spend more in the teaching field.

Three single ladies and a family of seven had been forced to leave this difficult post. For 9½ years this isolated northern outpost was devoid of pioneers.

#### A New Chapter Opens — David and Carolyn Baumgartner Settle in Barrow

One of the Goals of the Nine Year Plan for Alaska was to re-establish the Baha'i center in Barrow. This was accomplished in B.E. 126 when **David and Carolyn Baumgartner** arrived in January 1970. A new chapter for the Faith opened, culminating in the establishment of the First Spiritual Assembly of Barrow on January 10, 1976.

David and Carolyn were in the middle of their senior year at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks when teaching positions became vacant in Barrow. They did not yet have their degrees but had completed student-teaching and they were hired by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

For the first semester they lived in one of the roomy two-bedroom apartments in the school complex, complete with running water. But no one would come over to visit them from town as there was a definite feeling that the teachers isolated themselves from the rest of the community. In order to further Baha'i teaching, David and Carolyn decided they had to move out of their comfortable quarters and locate in town. They found a little 15'x25'

house for sale and bought it. That summer they moved the house across town to Browerville and got it up on its pilings with the aid of Tom Baumgartner, David's father.

During the course of the next year (1970-71) they met Evelyn and Roy Williams and their son Shawn, who had met Dave's oldest brother Ernie when they were living in Roy's home town of Klawock.

From June 1971 to the following summer Dave and Carolyn were away from Barrow, first on Pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Iran, and then on Massive Encounter. When they returned in the summer of 1972 Roy and Evelyn became highly interested in the Faith and enlisted under the Banner of Baha'u'llah in December.

#### A Hand of the Cause Visits Barrow

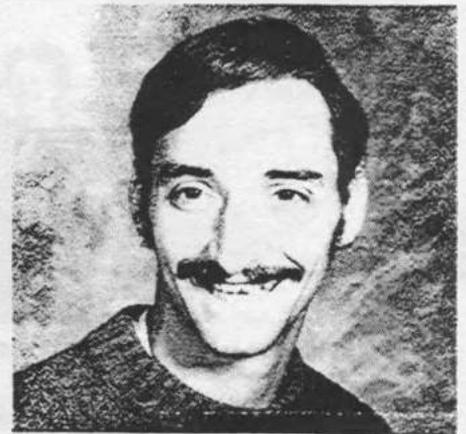
The first visit by a Hand of the Cause of God to the northern outpost of Barrow occurred when 'Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum, and her traveling companion, Nell Golden, came on August 10, 1973. The day was cold and blustery, with new snow that stayed on the ground.

They had lunch at Brower's Cafe and the guests rested for awhile in the Baumgartners' home. Afternoon prayers were enjoyed together, and then a dinner of caribou soup. The public meeting was held in the multi-purpose room of the school and some twenty non-Baha'i adult residents of Barrow came in spite of the cold, windy weather with wet snow falling. One of the guests was a deacon of a local church. Barrow has a population of about 3000 and 70% of them were reached personally with invitations to the meeting, and an additional 20% by a local TV ad. So this was a widespread Proclamation. Some of the people brought food items to share after the meeting, including some pickled maktak and dried seal meat in seal oil. Ruhiiyyih Khanum praised the food saying it was good food, not like some of the foods available in the stores. The honored guests stayed in the Baumgartners' home overnight while the hosts stayed with the Williamses. After prayers the next

(Continued on Page 5)



**RUHIYYIH KHANUM WITH THE FRIENDS IN BARROW** upon her arrival at the airport. Left to right: David Baumgartner, Philip Dunne, Carolyn Baumgartner, Tom, Becky and Dottie Baumgartner. August 10, 1973.



**DAVID BAUMGARTNER**



**CAROLYN BAUMGARTNER**

## BARROW BAHÁ'Í HISTORY

(Continued from Page 4)

morning they left for Juneau and Summer School. (See **ABN** No. 164, January 1974, pp. 6-7).

The next winter (1973-74) through the efforts of travel-teacher **David Hall**, the Baumgartners were invited to a Presbyterian "singspiration" at which they met **Oliver Angashuk, Jr.** He is originally from Wainwright. He came over from time to time to visit, culminating in his enrollment in mid-winter.

**Ray Hudson**, Auxiliary Board Member, visited Barrow during the winter of 1974-75, and there have been many other traveling teachers, especially **Don Anderson**, National Assembly member, who has visited Barrow frequently.

### Assembly Formation

Other Barrow residents who became Baha'is were **Joe Simmonds**, **Alice Itta**, and **Tony Leavitt** who enrolled at Mt. Edgecumbe, and **Johnny Nageak**, who learned of the Faith in Fairbanks.

On January 6, 1976 **John Slone** of the Northern Goals Committee phoned on behalf of the National Teaching Committee with the good news that there were now eleven adult Baha'is listed as residents of Barrow! He said that if the Local Spiritual Assembly could be formed by January 10th, Barrow could elect a Delegate to the National Convention in April.

**Dave** and **Carolyn** notified as many of the eleven people as they could, made sure they were residents, and set the meeting for 3 p.m. Saturday, January 10th. **Roy** and **Evelyn Williams** were on vacation in Klawock and couldn't be reached. When Saturday arrived, **Dave** and **Carolyn Baumgartner** and **Oliver Angashuk, Jr.** were given the great bounty of assisting in the formation of the First Local Spiritual

Assembly of Barrow. The following people were elected:

**Roy Williams**, Tlingit from Klawock  
**Evelyn Williams**, Barrow Eskimo (Inupiaq language)

**Oliver Angashuk, Jr.**, Eskimo from Wainwright (Inupiaq)

**David Baumgartner**, Caucasian from "Alaska"

**Carolyn Baumgartner**, half Eskimo from Fairbanks (Inupiaq)

**Tony Leavitt**, Barrow Eskimo (Inupiaq)

**Alice Itta**, Barrow Eskimo (Inupiaq)

**Joe Simmonds**, Barrow Eskimo (Inupiaq)

**Johnny Nageak**, Barrow Eskimo (Inupiaq)

The other member of the community are **Gordon Matumeak** and **Lottie Evikana**.

All of the members of the new Barrow Assembly are Eskimo, part-Eskimo or Indian except for **David Baumgartner**! The Universal House of Justice cabled the National Spiritual Assembly January 13:

CONGRATULATIONS FORMATION LOCAL ASSEMBLY BARROW NORTHERNMOST ASSEMBLY BAHÁ'Í WORLD STOP ASSURE PRAYERS SHRINES THEIR GUIDANCE CONFIRMATIONS TEACHING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. LOVE

### UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

**Nell Golden**, who is still serving at the World Centre, sent a copy of **Well-springs of Guidance** containing the signatures of the members of the Universal House of Justice. Many warm, loving letters were also received from the friends all over Alaska to this "Northernmost Assembly in the Baha'í World."

Barrow's first Delegate is **Evelyn Williams** and **Carolyn Baumgartner** is Alternate.  
—**Janct W. Stout**

### 'REACH THE EARS OF THE ESKIMOS'

"Perchance, God willing, the call of the Kingdom may reach the ears of the Eskimos . . . Should you display an effort, so that the fragrances of God be diffused amongst the Eskimos, its effect will be very great and far-reaching . . . The continent and the islands of Eskimos are also parts of this earth. They must similarly receive a portion of the bestowals of the most great guidance."—**'Abdu'l-Baha**. April 5, 1916.

**Tablets of The Divine Plan**, pp. 49-50.

### EDGAR RUSSELL MAKES TEACHING TRIP IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA

At the request of the Southeast Goals and Winter Conference Committees, "**Uncle Ed**" visited Juneau, Ketchikan, Meyers Chuck and Sitka, in addition to teaching at the Winter Conference in Petersburg.

Of special interest was his stop in Meyers Chuck, which was named for his grandfather. In Ketchikan and Sitka he found the children very active and enthusiastic. Firesides and deepening took place in each community.

## Klawock Baha'i History

The Universal House of Justice in 1964 designated the **Prince of Wales Island** as one of Alaska's Virgin Goals to be settled during the Nine Year Plan. At the Annual Convention **Vern and Evelyn Huffmann** of Spenard announced that they would fill this important post. At the time, Evelyn was Recording Secretary of the National Assembly.

### The Huffmans Settle

They arrived at their goal on September 18, 1965 and took up residence in **Klawock**. The story of their early pioneer days is recounted in **ABN** No. 78 for October-November 1965. Vern did various electrical jobs needed in the community and Evelyn served as a substitute teacher and helped in the post office.

Evelyn now writes of their stay there: "Briefly, we spent our first year in Klawock in learning to know the people there and gaining their confidence. This we felt we accomplished. The time was then right for more direct teaching, and we began to mention the Faith to those we felt would be receptive, and to hold fire-sides. On one occasion we posted a notice in the Post Office inviting all the ladies in Klawock to an evening of 'coffee and chatter' at our home. Approximately half the women in town came. While not a direct teaching effort, we considered the evening a huge success, particularly as it became a topic of conversation in the village for some time afterward. At a later time Frank Peratrovich, then Alaska Senator and Mayor of Klawock, asked me to say a prayer at the close of a town meeting. We felt this was an indirect recognition of the Faith.

"Two believers were enrolled in Klawock during the time we lived there—one a Caucasian (Dennis Brown) married to a Tlingit Indian girl, the other a Tlingit who was fishing in the area during the summer (Jones Joseph). Neither lives there any longer.

"Despite the almost incessant rain, the absence of electricity except from 3 p.m. to midnight, five moves during our two years there, poor radio reception, lack of many modern conveniences and the lack of many health-giving foods such as fruits and vegetables, Klawock will always remain in our hearts as one of our richest experiences. The area (when one overlooks the poor, deteriorating condition of the village itself) is fantastically beautiful. We lived with and learned to love dearly the Indian people with whom we had had no previous experience, and above all we learned what total reliance on Baha'u'llah meant.

We left our post in August 1967 to attend the Panama Conference, intending to return. But Vern became very ill and we were unable to continue at our post. We returned in May of the following year only to dispose of our personal belongings. It was with deep regret that



**FIRST LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF KLAWOCK** formed Ridvan 1970  
**Front row: Florence Howard, Natalie Baumgartner, Secretary; Joyce Norman, Treasurer; and Vern Wakefield. Back row: Delores Wakefield, James Anniskette, Fred Norman, Vice-chairman; Ernie Baumgartner, Chairman; and Bill Thiemeyer.**

we had to give up this pioneer post."

(For stories on the Huffmans' stay in Klawock, see **ABN's** No. 78, Oct.-Nov., 1965, p. 1; No. 88, Oct. 1966, p. 6 with photo; and No. 89, Nov.-Dec. 1966, p. 5).

### The Ernie Baumgartners Settle

Ernie and Natalie Baumgartner took up residence in Klawock in September 1958 with their three children Tamara, Gary, and Michelle. They arrived with \$20., a small sack of groceries and about 200 lbs. of baggage. After finding a place to live, Ernie went to work temporarily for the U.S. Forest Service.

The Baumgartners then systematically made friends with all strata of the Klawock population. First they got acquainted with the older generation, enjoying their stories; then they reached the teenagers with their motorcycle; then the young adults through joining the basketball team. Another child was born to them, Shana, with Natalie going to Ketchikan for the delivery. (See **ABN** No. 111, Jan. 1969 for their story and photo.)

Nine Sitka Baha'is made a teaching trip to Klawock early this spring and determined that enough of them needed to establish the Local Spiritual Assembly would be forthcoming (**ABN** No. 124, April p. 1, 8) Accordingly, pioneer-settlers Fred and Joyce Norman, Bill Thiemeyer, Delores and Vern Wakefield joined the Baumgartners, Florence Howard and James Anniskette to form the Assembly.

The Klawock Baha'is wish to thank

the many friends who said prayers for teaching efforts and formation of this Assembly. The spiritual impact of these prayers and the many traveling teachers has been the motivating force resulting in the formation of the first Local Assembly on the virgin goal of Prince of Wales Island, and the prospect of many more exciting events in the future months. They hope to hear from traveling teachers who can go to Klawock, Craig and Hydaburg this year.

### NEWS FROM NENANA

Two contacts from Nenana's goal of Minto, Dorothy and Matthew Titus, were on their way to Fairbanks via Nenana and heard that Blu Mundy was speaking at a meeting in Nenana so stopped for the night to attend the meeting. They later came with the Baha'is to the Reed home where they were given something more to eat than cookies, and visited with the Baha'is. Dorothy and Matthew worked at Alaskaland last year with Blu.

Dorothy's father passed away in the new Minto townsite of North Fork a couple weeks later and Bonnie Reed, Titus Bettis, Harrison John and David Esau all attended the funeral and potlatch in North Fork. Bonnie was told later that Dorothy explained to her family and friends in Indian about attending the meeting in Nenana and being in the Reed home and eating there, and that Bonnie was friendly and mixed with the people. Another person told Bonnie that

(Continued on Page 6)

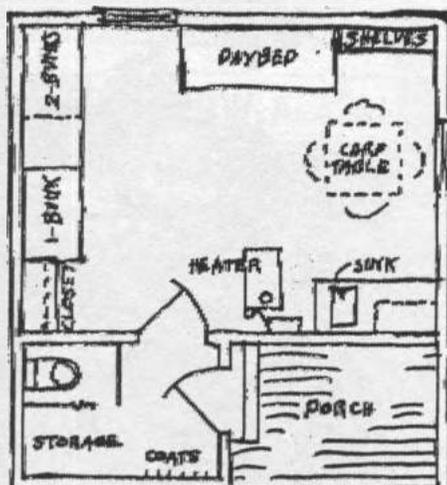
April 1967

**HELP !!****PIONEERS NEEDED BY APRIL 21—  
FIRST PRIORITY****BEAVER**—2 pioneers to **SAVE** this Assembly**KENAI**—2 pioneers to **FORM** this Assembly**House For St.  
Lawrence Pioneers**

"Vast distances . . . insufficient number of capable and experienced teachers . . . necessity of earning their means of livelihood . . . the means at your disposal . . . all these, though insuperable obstacles at present, will, if we stand steadfast and faithful, be one by one removed, and pave the way for the ultimate ascendancy of the Cause and the fruition and triumph of our labors." (Shoghi Effendi, *Baha'i Administration*, p. 72.)

Among the "obstacles" which faced Napoleon Bergamaschi and his three children, pioneering at Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island, was the matter of housing. There was no place to live except in crowded quarters with Napoleon's brother and his family who were not Baha'is. Since there was not "the means at your disposal" to buy or build a house, Napoleon and his family left, hoping to return when the necessary materials could be purchased and shipped to St. Lawrence Island. Two years was estimated as the minimum time needed for this.

At this point the talents of several other Baha'is came forth—builders, an engineer, an architect, those familiar with the problems of shipping and construction in remote places. One ship a year goes to St. Lawrence Island. It must be ready to leave its Seattle dockage by April 15. This year it will carry complete materials (including 3 screws at 17c) for a house which will arrive in St. Lawrence Island early in July. Napoleon, with detailed drawings and his own years of experience in construction, will raise a part of the edifice of the New World Order following the Message from the Universal House of Justice in Ridvan 1964 to "Plant the banner of Baha'u'llah in . . . St. Lawrence Island.

**FUNDS NEEDED FOR  
SAVOONGA CENTER**

Above is the floor plan for a small 18x20 house to be built in July by Napoleon Bergamaschi, to enable him to return to the pioneer post of Savoonga, St. Lawrence Island. It is a simple structure on a creosote pad foundation, fully insulated, with galvanized steel roofing. At the one-eighth-inch-equals-a-foot scale above, the main room measures only 13 feet by 17 feet inside.

Lack of housing was the prime reason Napoleon had to leave Savoonga with his three children after a nine months stay. Now with the financing of the National Spiritual Assembly and the purchasing and expediting help of Seattle Area Baha'is, the material for the house will sail from Seattle 4/16/67 on the MS North Star III, arriving at Savoonga around 7/4/67. The National Spiritual Assembly at its last meeting on 2/11/67 allocated \$2,500.00 to buy 11 tons of materials and \$1,500.00 for freight, launching the project.

Napoleon Bergamaschi agreed to return, and will build the house with the help of relatives and friends there, following the plans prepared by architect Ray Hermann, Baha'i of Douglas. Mr. Doug Harris of the South King County Baha'i Community is heading the buying end of the project and seeing that everything gets to the boat by the 4/1/67 freight-receiving deadline. A full report from him will be in the next issue of the **ABN**.

The cost is estimated at a little less than the amount contributed to the National Fund from the Hogberg estate (**ABN** No. 91, Feb. 1967).

—NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

As National Treasurer my part in the project is to share it with all of you. I want to make you all a part of this daring endeavor to build a pioneer outpost! All of the job isn't done yet. Napoleon isn't a carpenter; maybe one of us can go to Savoonga to help him construct it. Maybe some can visit Savoonga later and stay awhile to help with the teaching. Maybe the rest of us can give a special contribution to the Deputization Fund to fill the huge hole left when \$4,000.00 was sent to Seattle. I think we should show the National Spiritual Assembly our confidence in it and its long range judgment by filling the hole—and piling a mountain of money on top of it so they can be audacious again, and not handcuffed by lack of funds!

This you see, is our part, as the body of believers, to support our Administrative Order, our elected representatives, who are our planners, our designers, our very strength! Napoleon is doing his part; even now working, saving money for the necessary food and clothing he will need. What is **your** part?

I always shudder when I imagine NOT having a "part". It's so cold outside the warmth of the Faith. And I remember what someone once reminded me: "If you won't help, stand aside. The Cause of God will advance in spite of you." I would rather it advance because of me and "my part." Wouldn't you? . . . Send a contribution earmarked "Savoonga Center" and he'll build the only native village Baha'i Center north of Unalaska!

—NATIONAL TREASURER

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A Strategy of the Four Year Plan



## Unalaska Then and Now

by Laural Baumgartner

Unalaska, home to the pioneering families, the Putneys and the Caldwells, during the Ten Year Crusade. What a sacrifice it must have seemed to the rest of the Bahá'í world, for these four adults taking their little children to this isolated island in the Alaskan wilderness. But what a bounty for us, especially for me, the oldest of the Putney kids, to be raised in the freedom of that Aleut world.

Returning for a visit after an absence of 36 years, the heartfelt welcome from my childhood friends (all grown up now, of course) was truly a confirmation of Bahá'u'lláh's grace and bounties. The bonds of our childhood friendship were as strong as ever and our joy at seeing each other was a delight.

Nature is at its best in Unalaska. Real weather (wind, rain and fog) and of course the ocean nearby, the hills, volcanoes and earthquakes brought a rush of nostalgic memories: picnics with

Janet (Johnson) Smith, visits from Florence Mayberry, children's classes with Elaine Caldwell, singing songs at the top of our lungs with Jenabe Caldwell, digging the ditch for the oil line at the Bahá'í Center, being welcome at everyone's home, running around the town, up Haystack and out



Ann Jean Bereskin and Laural Baumgartner, best friends for life.

in the Valley, berry picking and fishing and on and on. What a trip!

The Bahá'í community also made my father and me feel right at home as we spent several evenings with them during our short week there. Visiting the Bahá'í Center, reading some of the

archive scrapbooks, sharing stories with these wonderful people and seeing the fruits of the labor of all the Bahá'ís who have lived in Unalaska, added to the spirit of our visit. It brought to mind Peter Khan's 1996 talk about the mental tests that we are all going through and will have in the future, because we as Bahá'ís are in unique circumstances to assist each other during these trying times – we have the promise of the future. And we have our common love for Bahá'u'lláh to give us the courage to carry on against all odds, strengthening the bonds of love with our Bahá'í brothers and sisters, in spite of the miles that separate us. God bless you all – Julie Hathaway, Sherman Brown, Ben and Suzi Golodoff, Donna Detweiler, Joann Miller and family, Lynn and Robert Stafford, Candy Brown – and thank you for a wonderful visit.

Photo credit: Laural Baumgartner

## THE PIONEERING TRAIL

"Why are you moving to St. Lucia?" This often asked question usually provided a marvelous opening to speak of the Faith. We would say: "It's simple. The Baha'is of Alaska have been asked to help the Baha'is of St. Lucia and we are taking advantage of the opportunity.

It was surprising, though, how often that question was asked by Baha'is who really should have known of this unfilled goal which was given to Alaska by the Universal House of Justice.

The fact that so many Baha'is seemed unaware of this goal and that someone from Alaska had to pioneer there, caused some reflection about pioneering itself and the pioneering spirit.

It was 27 years ago — exactly half of my life time — that Beverly and I made a serious decision. We left graduate school and the highly attractive opportunities which had just opened up for us in the academic world. We decided that working for the success of the beloved Guardian's Ten Year Crusade through international pioneering was the highest priority of the moment. Personal desires and ambitions were secondary. We have never regretted that decision.

About the same time we met Eleanor Wolf — pioneer to Duluth, Minnesota, Dutch Guiana (Surinam), Norway and who knows where else. She said, "Once a pioneer, always a pioneer!" and "Once you have been in the pioneering field, you are always eager to get back into harness." And, most importantly, "No one should deprive himself of the bounty of pioneering."

The mind races over the many wonderful bounties pioneering has provided for us: Alaska itself; Fort Yukon; Palmer; our beautiful children all of whom were a direct result of pioneering; being adopted as a Tlinget; the wonderful people we have met and worked with; etc. The list is really endless. One is also reminded of the words of Hand of the Cause Horace Holley, "Pioneering is not so much moving from an old place to a new place as it is going from an old self to a new self."

"Don't you hate to leave Alaska?" we were asked by both Baha'is and others. Of course, there were many strong, hard tugs on the heart strings. But, the goal had to be filled. Otherwise, the Seven Year Plan for Alaska could not be won. Besides, if we could pull up stakes to pioneer, others might be encouraged to give an extra measure of service.

In addition to St. Lucia, there are many other goals of the Plan which still need attention: No one has settled in Iceland yet; 81 local Spiritual Assemblies are required (that is an unprecedented increase of 27% in one year); the need remains for a vast increase in the number of believers; reaching all strata; mobilizing youth; encouraging families and the devotional life; greater involvement of indigenous believers; consideration of social and economic projects; etc.

It does not matter if one pioneers  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the way around the world — from the arctic to the tropics — as we are doing; or across the State to a new location; or across the street to help form, save or strengthen a struggling local Spiritual Assembly; or makes it possible for someone else to serve; or if one enters the greatest pioneering challenge of all — across the barren waste lands of his own heart. What does matter is that each one, in his own way, in the spirit of pioneering, dedicates him-

self to winning the goals of the Seven Year Plan.

In an as yet unpublished letter to Alaska, the Guardian's secretary wrote in his behalf, "The future of Alaska is very bright; but of course its glory will depend upon the degree to which the friends undertake to fulfill their divine obligations."

Everyone can fulfill his part of those divine obligations by applying the spirit of pioneering to some service of the Seven Year Plan. That will assure victory for Alaska and bring it one step closer to the glorious future envisioned by Shoghi Effendi.

John Kolstoe

Alaskan Bahá'í Community:  
Its  
Growth and Development  
The Formative Years:  
To 156 B. E. (1999)

Part III  
Pioneers and Builders

**Alaska Bahá'í Community:  
Its Growth and Development: The Formative Years  
III - Pioneers and Builders**

Hundreds of Bahá'ís have done much in behalf of the Cause of God in this northern land. It wouldn't be possible to list all those who have been the heart and soul of the growth of the Bahá'í community, as well as the hands and the feet and the tongue.

The members of the Institution of the Learned have made outstanding contributions since the first visit of Auxiliary Board Member (later Counsellor) Florence Mayberry in 1954. There were also the countless pioneers, temporary and long-term, and travel-teachers, many of whom stayed long beyond their projected time. Over half of those listed on the following pages became Bahá'ís in Alaska and remained to serve the Cause in the land of their spiritual – and often physical – birth. All have contributed to the splendid gains made in the eight decades since 'Abdu'l-Bahá raised the call in the Tablets of the Divine Plan.

Fascinating stores about Alaskans have been published in a number of places. Jenabe Caldwell's *Night to Knight* was the first published autobiography by a Bahá'í in Alaska to tell part of the Saga. *The Great Adventure* by Florence Mayberry describes in some detail some of her 18 trips to Alaska. *And the Trees Clapped Their Hands*, compiled by Claire Vreeland, has a number of Alaskan-based stores. Galen Insteness' delightful tales in *Tundra Thunder* will cheer the heart of any reader. Attention is drawn to *Tundra Pioneers*, poems by Audrie Reynolds, and *Tlingit Tales* by Lorle K. Harris. Ted and Joan Anderson completed their story of the Yukon with rich references to Alaska and the Alaskan believers. As of this writing, publication is planned within the next year. There are also some unpublished manuscripts of great interest located in the Alaska Bahá'í Archives, starting with Betty Becker's historical commentary and narrative. The story of the historic Continental Conference in 1976, complete with pictures, is contained in albums in the archives. *Betty Becker; Valiant Servant Pioneer* by Earl Redman is well written and worth the reading. Ten Year Crusade pioneers were asked to submit their stories to the World Centre. This includes those who served in Alaska and many of them submitted their narratives. Some of these are on file in the Alaskan Bahá'í Archives. Others, that are at the Bahá'í World Centre, can provide first-hand accounts that many future readers will enjoy perusing, in an effort to know more about the early years.

The following biographical sketches highlight a few of those intrepid souls who made it all happen. Selections have been made from articles in the *Alaska Bahá'í News* and the "In Memoriam" sections of The Bahá'í World volumes. In addition to reprints of articles of believers who are deceased, articles were reprinted about those who were heading for pioneering posts as well as some feature articles which appeared in the *Alaska Bahá'í News*. Segments were written of National Spiritual Assembly members whose stories do not appear elsewhere. Where more than one source of information was available, the more comprehensive one was generally selected.

It is regrettable that nothing was available for a number of other worthy souls such as Counsellor Loretta King, Auxiliary Board members not otherwise included, as well as Marie Guffey-Van Brunt, Tom and Dotty Baumgartner, Marian Johnson, Jenabe Caldwell.

It is also regrettable that neither space nor time allowed for a description of the international and domestic teaching activity. The many travels of Alaskan Bahá'ís including Ed Russell, Bill McKinley, Hazel Lovelace, Alice Porter, Phil Dunn, Cathy Allen, Jo Dobbert, Nancy Hutcheon and all those who did so much in Eastern Russia would be a book in itself. Mass Encounter, as well as other themes, could be other books and, perhaps, one day they will be written.

Here, however, is an introduction to about 160 of the believers who paved the way for the future of the Cause of God in Alaska. The first stories listed are of believers who were primarily involved with Alaska before the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly. With a few exceptions, later believers are listed alphabetically. These were compiled or written in the interest of providing future generations some understanding of the

people on whose shoulders they stand. They were ordinary individuals who performed an incredibly extraordinary service simply because they served the Faith in Alaska during its early years. While not complete, this parade of majestic souls is a sample and their stories speak for those not mentioned.

I hope you enjoy meeting them as I have enjoyed knowing and working with so many of them.

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CHARLOTTE GILLEN  
1869-1962

Charlotte Thomas ZuTavern was born on July 10, 1869, in Springfield, Ohio. Her early schooling in the Word of God was in the United Lutheran Church. She began the study of music at the age of eight and taught professionally when she was twelve years old. She studied at Boston Conservatory of Music and later headed the music department of Stetson University, Deland, Florida. During that time she played the organ and directed the choir in the Baptist Church, then hurried across the street to do the same for the Presbyterian congregation. These early activities set the pattern for her future.

In 1894 she married Richard Henry Gillen, M.D., and a daughter, Evelyn June, was born. The family moved to Seattle, Washington, in 1901 where Mrs. Gillen opened the Seattle School of Music which she conducted for twenty years and where she became active in civic affairs. It was in Seattle that she learned of the Bahá'í movement from Mrs. Ida Finch, proprietress of an art supply shop, who only recently had been attracted by Mrs. Isabella D. Brittingham, an early itinerant Bahá'í teacher. Mrs. Finch sold her store and joined a party of early believers in San Francisco who came on pilgrimage to the Holy Land to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá in prison. During Mrs. Finch's absence, Charlotte attended an Easter sunrise service on the shores of Lake Washington. She arrived early, praying and thinking of Ida's experiences.

She later related that she felt her mind suddenly illuminated by the presence of the Creator and the unity of Jesus and Bahá'u'lláh. Religion, which had always seemed like music to her, proper and natural, took on a new meaning. She had listened to the sermons of every persuasion with an intellectual interest but she was now flooded with an awareness that the Bahá'í pilgrims were experiencing the reality of living with God through obedience to His Manifestation and His Covenant on earth! God was for them a vital working force in their lives, not a beautiful, vague idea! In that moment, Mrs. Gillen's acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith crystallized and she devoted the rest of her life to teaching its truth.

In 1912 she and her sixteen-year-old daughter traveled to Chicago to experience the fullest moment of their lives in a private interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. As part of the ceremony when the Master laid the foundation stone of the Mother Temple of the West, Charlotte turned a shovelful of earth in the name of Alaska.

After the death of her husband in 1916, Mrs. Gillen divided her time between her Seattle school and an apple orchard the family had planted on Lake Chelan in eastern Washington. The village of Chelan was to be her home for many years. It proved a sterile ground for teaching and the few who were attracted moved on to other places, but it served as a spot to rest and garner resources between teaching trips.

In 1919, in response to the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, Charlotte traveled through Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, financially assisted by Ella Cooper. She stopped in small towns, spoke to women's clubs, penitentiaries, wherever there were listeners. The high point of this trip, she records, was in giving the Message as guest speaker at the community New Year celebration in the rotunda of the new courthouse in Boise, Idaho, and, with characteristic wit, she notes that the low point was country hotel bedbugs.

A Tablet from the Master dated October, 1919, addressed to Helen Goodall and Ella Cooper, reached her on Christmas morning at Douglas, Wyoming:

*"Convey to Mr. and Mrs. Killius, Mrs. Charlotte Gillen and Mr. Hyde Dunn the utmost love and kindness on my behalf. On their behalf I address the following supplication:*

*O Thou Omnipotent Lord! These souls have given up their rest, their happiness, their joy, and their comfort, have left their (homes) in order to raise the call of Thy Kingdom upon the seas, the plains and the mountains. They are giving the Glad Tidings of Thy Manifestation, are bestowing sight to the eyes, hearing to the ears. They are unloosing the tongues, vivifying the dead and purifying the unclean. O Divine Providence! Be Thou their companion during their travels, for they are helpless and lonely and they are firm in Thy love. Thou art the Powerful and the Omnipotent."*

Another Tablet from the Master dated June 21, 1921, was received, addressed "To the Maid-Servant of God, Charlotte Z. Gillen" which said in part:

*"O Thou who art attracted to the Kingdom of God! . . . 'Abdu'l-Bahá's associate, day and night, is the mention and thought of the friends. Praise be to God, thou art striving in service; thou hast a pure heart, and art bestowed with a luminous soul. No matter how much man may be sinful, yet divine pardon and forgiveness is greater than his sinfulness. Be thou confident in the infinite graces. The friends of God in those regions are the recipient of the divine favors and the reflectors of the heavenly bounties. . . ."*

During the long years in the conservative village of Lake Chelan, where she lived from 1916 until 1944, the Tablets of the Master were her solace. During this time she played the organ for the Catholic mass at 9.00 a.m. and for the Episcopal service at 11.00 a.m. In those days women did not run orchards without assistance, nor attend university, nor entertain people of all races, nor discuss international affairs, nor develop friendships with persons from all walks of life, nor drive old rattling cars around dangerous mountain roads. Fortunately, the village's need for an organist was greater than its frustration and bewilderment at her non-conformist ideas and behavior. However, it was a place of deep loneliness. Charlotte missed contact with the Bahá'í world. There were few books, only carefully copied letters and Tablets. At the age of fifty-five she enrolled at the University of Washington where she studied music and gave the Message for three years. She also attended Washington State Agricultural College during

this period. In 1937 and 1938 she held two-day summer schools at her Chelan orchard, which were attended by approximately fifty Bahá'ís. The small Caucasian town had never before witnessed a gathering of different races united in the love of God. To her grandchildren who had often heard of but had not witnessed such a gathering, this scene, so familiar to most Bahá'ís, provided a wonderful, beautiful and lifelong memory. The friends gathered there, later scattered to the corners of the earth as they arose to take their places in history as pioneers in the Seven Year Plans, the Ten Year Crusade or the Nine Year Plan.

In 1942, during the first Seven Year Plan, Charlotte made her first visit to the Mashriq'l-Adhkár since 1912. Two years later she sold her orchard, attended the Centenary Celebration in Chicago and commenced a five-year teaching tour of the United States, remaining awhile in Arlington, Virginia, to maintain the Assembly there. In 1950, in response to a call for home-front pioneers, she settled in Laramie, Wyoming to maintain at nine the membership of the only Assembly in the State. At the age of eighty-one she enrolled at the University of Wyoming in order to establish a Bahá'í College Club and make contact with youth. It was here that she met one of the most beloved friends of a long lifetime, the young music student, Daniel Jordan. She was present at the dedication of the Temple in Chicago in 1953 and, leaving Wyoming, served during the next four years in Wenatchee and Monroe in Washington State where she created Bahá'í centers.

In 1959, sustained by the Tablets addressed to her by the Master forty years earlier assuring her of divine pardon and companionship, urged on by her love of Shoghi Effendi and by the sorrow of his passing, deeply moved by the courage and loving guidance of the Hands of the Cause of God and determined to give every ounce of her own strength to serve the Faith she loved, Charlotte Gillen at ninety years of age attended the National Convention, visited Ohio, Indiana and Michigan to give a last greeting to relatives and set forth to that frontier which had been the object of her love and prayers for many years, Alaska.

An Alaskan friend records: "Charlotte Gillen brought two special gifts to Alaska, a symbolic link with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and an unparalleled example of steadfast, determined

service despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles. She did much to infuse into the consciousness of the Alaskan Bahá'ís the personality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His ever-abiding presence. She lost no opportunity in this endeavor. A Bahá'í teasingly told her once that he knew of one place she had never been, the Abhá Kingdom. 'Oh, yes I have!' was her instant retort. 'The day I saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá!'

"She imparted a measure of the private, intimate feelings of the friends when they lost their beloved Master in 1921. During a meeting commemorating the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, after reading aloud from *God Passes By* about the passing of the Master, she lowered the book, gazed off into the distance and recounted those touching moments: 'I can remember it as if it were yesterday. It was nine o'clock in the morning in San Francisco when the friends first got the word that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had passed.' Then she related in moving terms the shock, the sense of loss and despair which swept over the believers.

"Aware of her unique role as the only Alaskan to have entered the presence of the Master she strived to pass on and preserve this link with the past. She gave gifts of books to babies born of Bahá'í parents so that 'they will have something from someone who knew 'Abdu'l-Bahá'.

"She was candid and forthright and her indomitable spirit and restless energy were always directed to the service of the Cause. The hesitant, inactive or disobedient person was rarely comfortable in her presence. Her candid manner sometimes embarrassed the Bahá'ís and amused their friends, one of whom said, 'Oh, you Bahá'ís! Every time Grandma Gillen says something, you worry about how it's going to affect us!' But her candor disarmed them and brought them closer to the spirit of the Faith.

"From Mrs. Gillen we learned the meaning of constancy. The well-meaning Bahá'í who, out of concern for Charlotte's advanced age suggested that it was no longer obligatory for her to fast, received a scolding: 'Young man, I've been fasting for fifty years and you're not going to stop me!' And he didn't.

"Her Civil War widow's pension was inadequate and her meager savings were being rapidly depleted. It was a trembling delegation that visited her one day to suggest that the expenses and hardships of living in Alaska may be too much for her. Alert to the dilemma of the friends, she eased the tension and soon had everyone laughing. She had pioneered for more than a year in the north. Her life's dream had been fulfilled and the pledge she had made to herself as a young woman to serve 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Alaska had been redeemed. She left contented that she had done her part."

The spirit of Charlotte Gillen's entire life is summed up in the words she used, at the age of ninety, as she played with vitality for a group of singers, urging them to "Wake up! Wake up! Christ has returned! Sing your hearts out!"



ORCELLA REXFORD<sup>1</sup>

Orcella Rexford (Louise Cutts-Powell) was born June 12, 1887 in Tracy, Minnesota. Planning in her youth to become a college professor, she attended the University of California at Berkeley, where she studied four languages and majored in education and domestic science. On receiving her Bachelor of Science degree, she took graduate work in philosophy and psychology, found her interests changing, and became a writer and lecturer.

The name "Orcella Rexford" is a cryptogram, made up of letters chosen for her by an acquaintance in New York City. To Orcella this name symbolized her wish to link her personality to cosmic forces for good, which would give her the greatest impetus for development.

Orcella first heard of the Bahá'í Faith from Mrs. Myrta Sandoz of Cleveland, Ohio, and was later confirmed by Dr. Edward Getsinger in Boston, Massachusetts. She became a believer in 1918-1919.

Since belief and action were inseparable to her, while studying the Faith with Dr. Getsinger she brought along two students from her own classes. These, too, became Bahá'ís. Soon she began to organize classes for Dr. Getsinger. In order to serve the Faith with maximum efficiency, Orcella now took stock of her educational equipment and capacities; she even investigated her genealogy, to appraise possible inherited tendencies and thus fully to obey the commandment, "Know thyself". As a child she had often been told of her second great-grandfather, William Jarvis, appointed by Jefferson as consul and charge d'affaires at Lisbon, who gave his services without cost to the then young and impecunious American Government for nine years (1802-1811). Orcella felt that her tendency to pioneer, and to contribute her services to a righteous Cause, might have come down to her from this ancestor.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's newly-revealed Tablets of the Divine Plan called for pioneers to spread the Faith. In response,

<sup>1</sup>From material furnished by Willard P. Hatch and others.

Orcella set out for Alaska in 1922. Some of her forbears had joined the gold rush to the Yukon; she determined to find the gold of souls receptive to her Message. The first Alaskan to accept the Faith through Orcella was Gayne V. Gregory, who soon became the husband of his teacher and within two years gave up his extensive dental practice at Anchorage to serve as business manager of Orcella's lecture tours. Orcella continued to be a lecturer by profession; while conducting classes on various subjects (among other topics, such as diet, she did much to popularize the use of color in clothing and in household furnishings and utensils, at that time traditionally drab) she would refer her students to a lecture that would follow the paid series of talks, and would bring them a knowledge that was beyond price. This final talk was on the advent of Bahá'u'lláh. Invariably, she left a Bahá'í study class, which was then conducted by other Bahá'í teachers. That her method was successful is proved by the large number of Bahá'ís who first learned of the Faith through Orcella. In Denver, for example, eighteen hundred people attended the Denham Theater on each of two nights to hear Orcella speak on the Cause, and a study class of four hundred and thirty-five people resulted. When, toward the close of her life, a serious accident ended her professional lecture career, giving her the freedom she had longed for, she found that she had been deprived of her best teaching medium.

In 1925 the Gregorys left Alaska for Honolulu, and after teaching there, returned to the mainland where they traveled from west to east and north to south; then crossing the Atlantic and taking their car with them, they motored through Europe. While here (in 1926), they received permission to visit Shoghi Effendi in Haifa. Returning spiritually reinvigorated to the United States, Orcella continued her constant travels; at one time or another she taught in Oakland, Milwaukee, Denver, New York, Omaha, Seattle, Spokane, Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, Flint, Detroit, Butte, Phoenix, St. Paul, Minneapolis,—in Florida, Texas, Okla-

homa, beyond the frontier in Mexico—the list seems endless.

While visiting Phoenix, Orcella was injured in a fall, which ended her professional career as a lecturer. In Hollywood to regain her health, she was active in teaching and administrative work. Then she left California on what was to be the last of so many journeys for the Faith; alone, she attended the thirty-eighth Annual Bahá'í Convention at Wilmette, teaching in various cities and at the Geyserville Bahá'í School on her way home. On Sunday morning, August 11, 1946, she died suddenly in her bath.

Messages soon began to arrive from many parts of the Bahá'í world from the grieving spiritual children of Orcella. Johanne Sorensen Hoeg wrote from Denmark, "It was through hearing her lecture about the Bahá'í Faith that I became a Bahá'í (in Honolulu, 1925) . . . I will always be thankful to Orcella Rexford that she could not keep her great love of Bahá'u'lláh by herself but wanted to bring the loving message of God to her fellow men." And Ophelia B. Crum: "I was among the audience of about a thousand who heard Orcella say: 'I have been teaching you about these outer subjects in which you are interested, but now I will tell you of the greatest truth that you should know today . . . ' The next night we met to form study classes and for three months we would meet . . . At the end of that time some forty students became members of the New York Bahá'í community." Victoria E. Robarts, who introduced Gayne Gregory to Orcella, writes: "Orcella Rexford was an outstanding woman, one of the few persons whom I ever met who never said an unkind or critical word of another . . . her one great desire was to establish the Bahá'í Cause over the world." From Boston, Helen L. Archambault states, "In 1931 . . . she had been holding her Health Lectures whereby many were helped physically and mentally . . . out of that group eleven became declared believers . . . In 1939 Orcella came again to Boston . . . out of this group nine have since declared their belief; . . . my husband Victor Archambault and I

were among the first eleven and are grateful beyond words to our 'spiritual mother.'" Mrs. Wetzel Ingold of Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin: "My life has been deeply blessed by knowing her." Mariam Haney, Washington D.C., early Bahá'í teacher, says, "It was so easy for her to make contacts with her fellow human beings . . . she had a precious and sweet sympathetic understanding of life and people. Orcella was a born optimist. . . . This optimism drew people to her. She had an intense desire to really know the Bahá'í teachings. . . . At one of our annual conventions there were twenty-two believers present who were the spiritual children of Orcella." Mamie L. Seto of San Francisco, one of the Bahá'í teachers who assisted Orcella with follow-up classes, writes of the study group which Orcella left in Honolulu, and adds, "She maintained that we must meet people on the personal plane, help them with their personal problems, and then take them to the universal or world aspect of our Faith . . . she gave one of the most convincing opening talks on the Faith I have ever heard. . . . She could in the shortest time create, and with the greatest ease devise and formulate plans for any project . . . and no task seemed too difficult. . . . She looked forward eagerly to the coming of each day as an opportunity for further development. . . . I can think of few people who loved a new idea as much as Orcella did. . . . She was born to conquer and overcome those obstacles which stand between one and his goal. I have seen her leave a sick bed to speak at a public meeting."

Orcella Rexford was laid to rest August 14 at Inglewood Park Cemetery, near the grave of Thornton Chase. Friends filled the chapel; Paul Schoeny, who learned of the Faith through Orcella, traveled from Phoenix, Arizona to sing at the memorial service, and Mrs. India Haggarty, Mrs. Florence Holsinger, and Mrs. Emily Schiemann spoke. Winston Evans read the prayer at the grave. The Guardian's cable to Dr. Gregory was read: "Deplore loss indefatigable, gifted promoter Faith. Heartfelt sympathy. Fervent prayers. Shoghi."

A letter from the Guardian, through Rúhíyyih Khánúm, to the local Assembly of Los Angeles says in part: "She was one of the most devoted teachers of the Cause in the States, and responsible for bringing it to the attention of a great many people, as well as for the confirmation of many souls. Her radiant devotion will not be forgotten, and her example should certainly be an inspiration to her fellow believers. It is a great pity the Cause should lose her services just as the new Seven Year Plan is getting under way. He asks you to particularly convey to dear Mr. Gregory his profound sympathy for the loss of such a wonderful woman and to assure him he will pray for her happiness in the next world, a world in which she will find many of her old fellow teachers awaiting her. . . ."

A record of Orcella's last day on earth was set down by her friend, Mrs. Edith Weston:

That last morning Mrs. Weston drove Orcella and other friends up from Hollywood to the Fiesta in Santa Barbara. Orcella, true to her love of colors,

was wearing a striped green cotton dress and a dark emerald-green sweater, and her hat and coat were two shades of purple; with her soft hair and fresh skin, she looked radiant and youthful.

They went up by the Coast road; the wind blew, the smell of fish was in the air, the spray stung their faces. In Santa Barbara Orcella guided them to the old Spanish mission—the "Queen of the Missions"—and then took them to call on a resident Bahá'í family, the Mattesons, explaining on the way that Bahá'ís are hospitable and that they could doubtless eat their picnic lunch in the Matteson home. Mrs. Weston discovered that Mr. Matteson had built his house with his own hands, using sections of old buildings, packing cases and new lumber. Above the mantle-piece they saw a green, sculptured square of rosewood, on which was painted the symbol of the Greatest Name. The visitors spread their lunch out on the long dining-room table. When they left, Orcella promised to come and spend a week-end in the little guest house Mr. Matteson was building.

I have missed, and I have always wanted to go."

It got dark and they started for home. This was Orcella's very last journey; she devoted it to teaching her friend:

"She talked Bahá'í, she radiated it; she seemed like some spiritual elf, trying to share with us the ethereal joy of her religion. 'Bahá'ís love peace,' she explained. 'They are hospitable. No one has too much, for all share. Children must get the consent of both parents before they marry. Those who come into the Faith receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This comes always with a new Manifestation. Oh, if I could be your spiritual mother, and bring you into the peace, the happiness, the utter contentment, that the Faith has given me.'

"After awhile she was silent. I asked if she was tired. 'Oh no,' she replied, and once again she became her old alert wonderful self. At 10:30 we said good-by. 'The doctor—my husband—' she said reflectively, 'was my only regret on this perfect day. I wish he could have been with us.'"

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After that they watched the Fiesta parade, which depicts the city's history from Indian times. Orcella and Mrs. Weston sat in the curbing along the line of march; they saw babies in flower-decorated carts, young men and women in the costumes of long ago, Spanish dons on Arab horses—bright colors, shiny harness, tooled-leather saddles heavy with silver. Warner Brothers was taking pictures. The sun was hot, but Orcella did not complain. Later they drove around a bit, started to window shop, ended by shopping in earnest—and Orcella was delighted with her purchases. At six she suggested they go over to the Samarkand, the Persian hotel; here they walked through the long twilight gardens with their light-blue alabaster vases. They looked down across the city. "See, before the Government took over this hotel for the soldiers, water used to flow down this broad decline clear to the bottom of the dell," Orcella said. "This is really Persian, with its sunken gardens, its flowers, its running waters. I'm going to Persia. It is the one place

## ALASKA'S SPIRITUAL MOTHER HAS PASSED ON HONOR KEMPTON 1892 - 1981

The "Mother" of Alaska and Luxembourg is dead. But what wonderful "families" she has left behind! What a legacy she has left! What an inspiration she has been! What a record of achievement!

The cable from the Universal House of Justice to the United States National Spiritual Assembly contains terms like "mother," "outstanding dearly loved maidservant," "dedicated service," "Responding immediately," "pioneer," "great distinction," and finally "advise hold memorial service Mother Temple west..." — a signal honor!

In January of this year she was asked by Alaskan friends who were visiting her if there were any other Baha'is in either Alaska for Luxembourg when she arrived. She replied, "No. I was the first one. Opened two countries. That's pretty good for one lifetime."<sup>1</sup>

Pretty good indeed! How did it all start? According to notes left by Honor for her autobiography she was born September 30, 1892 in Maidenhead, Berkshire, England, four months after the passing of Baha'u'llah.

During World War I Honor served as a Red Cross volunteer and met an American surgeon. They became seriously interested in each other and when he returned to the United States after the war, Honor followed him to the Chicago area. However, he was a race car enthusiast and, a short time before they were to be married, he was killed in an auto accident. His brother got Honor a job as secretary to several doctors in the American Medical Association office of medical records. At this time she moved to Wilmette to live with an English family, Harvey and Florence Dibble and daughter Constance.

One of the members of this family died and in his Will he asked for a Baha'i funeral. Mr. Struven, the caretaker at the Baha'i property in Wilmette, came to make arrangements for the funeral and it was then that Honor first heard of the Baha'i Faith. She asked what it was and was told of Progressive Revelation. This belief pleased her very much because she had always felt there was a definite Plan of God and that He had sent many Messengers — all of whom were true Messengers of God. She met the Wilmette Baha'is and attended lectures by Mr. Vail.

However, Honor did not want to stay in Chicago as she felt it was not the "real America." She decided to go to San Francisco and was given an introduction to Mr. Leroy Ioas, who later was named a Hand of the Cause. This was in 1935. Honor attended meetings and firesides at Leroy and Sylvia Ioas' home and met Joyce Lyon (Dahl), Mrs. Burton, Val and



Honor Kempton 1943

John Allen and others. She became a Baha'i in San Francisco at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Shaw on November 4, 1935. She was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly and immediately started to hold firesides in her home. She also did teaching work with Marion Holley (Hofman) in the Sacramento Valley.

One day during a meeting of the Local Spiritual Assembly, Leroy Ioas, who at that time was serving on both the National Teaching Committee and the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, walked into the meeting with a cablegram from the beloved Guardian dated January 26, 1939. That cable refers to some of the accomplishments of the (first) Seven Year Plan, then says:

"... INITIAL STAGE IN THE INAUGURATED TEACHING CAMPAIGN STILL UNTRAVERSED. END OF FIRST CENTURY RAPIDLY APPROACHING. ALASKA, DELAWARE, NEVADA, SOUTH CAROLINA, UTAH, VERMONT, WEST VIRGINIA, MANITOBA AND NOVA SCOTIA STILL UNSETTLED. UNIVERSAL, PROLONGED INTENSIFICATION IN PIONEER ACTIVITY IS THE CRYING NEED OF THIS FATEFUL HOUR. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ONE RESIDENT BELIEVER IN EACH VIRGIN TERRITORY IS THE PRECONDITION TO THE FULL LAUNCHING OF THE SUBSEQUENT, EAGERLY-ANTICIPATED STAGE AIMING AT THE SPIRITUAL CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHERN HALF OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE. THE CONCOURSE ON HIGH EXPECTANTLY AWAIT, READY TO ASSIST AND ACCLAIM THE NINE HOLY SOULS WHO, INDEPENDENTLY OR AS DEPUTIES, WILL PROMPTLY, FEARLESSLY VOLUNTEER TO FORSAKE THEIR HOMES, CAST AWAY THEIR ATTACHMENTS AND DEFINITELY SETTLE IN THESE TER-

RITORIES TO LAY FIRM ANCHORAGE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER OF THIS UNDEFEATABLE FAITH. I AM IRRESISTIBLY URGED AND PROUD OF THE PRIVILEGE TO PLEDGE NINE HUNDRED POUNDS TO FACILITATE THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT OF PIONEERS IN THESE STATES AND PROVINCES WHOSE ACTS AND HEROIC SELF-ABNEGATION WILL MARK THE CONCLUSION OF THIS SHINING EPOCH IN AMERICAN BAHAI HISTORY."<sup>2</sup>

Honor had been a Baha'i for just three years. She said, "This message affected me deeply. I announced to Leroy Ioas that I would like to go at once to Alaska and open up that 'vast country' to the Faith of Baha'u'llah. Leroy replied that it would not be suitable for me to go alone and suggested that I go to some other place mentioned by the Guardian. I was, however, quite sure that Alaska was the place for me. I felt that the Guardian was speaking to me when he sent that Message."<sup>3</sup>

The Teaching Committee remained adamant. Alaska was such a forbidding, rugged, frontier: no place for a woman alone. They were looking for a couple who could rough it in that far-off land. No couple was found. Honor was unswerving in her resolve.

The National Spiritual Assembly was scheduled to meet in Los Angeles. "Leroy arranged for me to meet with them."<sup>3</sup> She described that meeting with such love. "Each one spoke to me so lovingly. Finally, Dorothy Baker said I should go."<sup>1</sup> "It was one of the happiest moments of my life, when, after questioning and consultation, the National Spiritual Assembly agreed that I should go to Alaska. I specifically chose Anchorage as the Guardian had written that the Cause must have a firm ANCHORAGE in Alaska."<sup>3</sup> So Honor Kempton, who was then in her late 40's, began her spiritual odyssey which was destined to touch six decades.

"I was prepared immediately to go to Alaska. Marion Holley (Hofman) drove me from San Francisco to Geyserville and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bishop drove me to Seattle. Among those who saw me off on the boat were Mark Tobey and the brother-in-law of dear Mrs. Ella Cooper. I sailed April 15th on the S.S. Alaska."<sup>3</sup>

As the S.S. Alaska steamed out into the waters of Puget Sound, Honor looked back and saw them all waving. The first person to whom our Pioneer talked about the Faith was Mr. Keith Roberts, who was on his way to Rampart, north of Fairbanks, as a mining engineer. It then

(Continued on Page 6)

(Continued from Page 5)

developed that Mr. Roberts had worked with his father on the construction of the foundation of the Baha'i Temple, and that his home was in Glencoe, adjacent to Wilmette!

The boat stopped at Ketchikan, the first stop on Alaskan soil, and Honor recited the Tablet of Ahmad and the Greatest Name.<sup>3</sup>

"I disembarked at Juneau, April 18, 1939 — upon the advice of several Alaskans traveling home on the same boat, who told me I would not find work in Anchorage. One day, while in charge of the Book Shop of a friend (Mrs. Stewart) I had made, I had a strange experience. I was putting away the books before closing when I heard a clear voice say, 'Do the same thing in Anchorage.' I looked around to the spot from whence the voice had come but there was no one there. The next day I spoke to the owner of the shop and asked her if I could start a book shop in Anchorage. She thought it a good idea and she helped me tremendously — showing me the catalogues, and giving me the names of firms who would send up their representatives. I took the next boat to (Seward) Anchorage and passed the first soul who would declare herself later in Anchorage — Janet Whitenack, now Janet Stout, as she got off the same ship May 30th to stay in Juneau for awhile.

"Upon arriving in Anchorage June 2nd I found a great scarcity of living accommodations. I heard of an apartment for rent and went to inquire and found a long, long queue waiting for an interview. When my turn came the owner's secretary looked at me very intently and asked, 'What are you doing in Alaska alone?' I told her I had a mission, then explained the Baha'i Faith. She murmured to me to come back when this crowd had gone. I went back and she said, 'You may have the apartment and I will help you all I can!'

"I immediately ordered all the books I needed and began to arrange my affairs for settling in Anchorage. Word had gone around that I was going to open a shop — a rental library and books for sale. Several ladies from the town called and were most interested. They helped me arrange a big 'Opening,' which was advertised in the two papers in Anchorage. It was a great success from that very opening day."<sup>3</sup> Honor called her bookshop "The Book Cache" and it was the first book store in Anchorage. (The Book Caches currently operating in Anchorage were established later and have no relationship to the original one.) Her first location was on Fourth Avenue, the main street, where the Anchorage Times now stands; then to a stationery shop where the F.W. Woolworth Co. is; then to the East side of E Street between Fourth and Fifth Avenues.

During Honor's first four months in



**First Anchorage Local Spiritual Assembly formed September 8, 1943. Front Row: Pvt. Terrell Wm. A. Frazier, Betty Becker, Verne L. Stout. Second Row: Frances L. Wells, Janet B. Whitenack, Loraine Been. Back Row: Mina Lundquist, Honor Kempton, Florence B. Green.**

Alaska she became very discouraged, as she found no real interest in the Faith. She wrote Leroy Ioas that "miracles" didn't happen in Alaska. However, soon after, Janet Whitenack (Stout) came to Anchorage by way of Fairbanks to look it over. When people asked her what she was doing there she said she thought she might open a bookstore. She was told that Honor had already made plans to do this although her shop was not yet open. Janet went to see Honor and said she was going back to Fairbanks to open her bookstore there. They shared what they knew about bookstores. Honor did not mention the Baha'i Faith that day.

They sought out each other daily and had many wonderful walks and talks about the Faith. On August 6th, just nine days after Janet met Honor, and only five days after Honor first mentioned the Baha'i Faith to her, Janet declared her belief in Baha'u'llah.<sup>4</sup> When Honor wrote to Leroy Ioas about this, he referred to Janet as "Honor's miracle." She then became the first enrolled Baha'i in Alaska during the First Seven Year Plan — the first to be part of the growing, permanent Baha'i Community of Alaska.

When World War II broke out, all foreigners were asked to leave Alaska. Honor asked if she could become an American citizen as at that time she was still a British subject. She explained to the judge that she had "a mission" in Alaska and did not wish to leave. She told him of the Baha'i Faith. He was most sympathetic and arranged a special permit and she became an American subject. Honor told her friends that it did not matter to her where she had citizenship as she was a world citizen.

The Book Cache became very popular at this time because "there were few attractions in the city and a black-out every night, so reading became the fashion. This gave me wonderful opportunities to speak of the Faith. I always said it was Baha'u'llah's Bookshop, not mine."<sup>3</sup> Former Governor Gruening called her bookstore the "cultural center of Alaska."<sup>1</sup>

The first Alaskan Local Spiritual Assembly was formed in Anchorage on September 8, 1943, and Honor was elected Chairman. Janet Whitenack returned to Anchorage to help in its establishment, and Verne Stout came from New York State. They were married about a year later.

Honor attended the National Convention in Wilmette in 1944 as Alaska's first Delegate and took part in the Dedication of the House of Worship. Her voice — one of only five — is on the record made of the Temple Service. The Centenary of the Declaration of the Bab was also observed and Baha'is from North, Central and South America were present. When the chairman of one of the sessions asked Honor and Artemus Lamb, pioneers to the Far North and to the southernmost tip of Chile in the South, respectively, to step on the platform and shake hands, an indescribable surge of power was felt by all present. The Guardian later put it into words for us: 'Alaska — together with Magallanes, Chili may be likened to the extremity of the Baha'i arms stretched out and waiting to embrace the whole world in the order of peace and love which Baha'u'llah has established for the children of men in this day.'<sup>5</sup>

In 1946, Honor, who was then in her mid-50's, attended the Geyserville Summer School. "I met Mrs. Amelia Collins who told me I should go to Europe to pioneer for the Second Seven Year Plan because of my European background. I protested, saying I had my mission in Alaska. But Millie was so insistent I finally remarked that perhaps I had better write to the Guardian for permission to leave Alaska. She replied, 'Do that at once.' The Guardian replied, 'If you are absolutely certain that your departure from Alaska will not in any way affect the stability of the Cause there, he approves of your suggestion that you go to Europe and assist the work there. If, on your way, you could visit and do some teaching in England it would help the British Baha'is very much, as they are embarking on a very heavy teaching schedule. He will pray that your family there may become attracted to the Faith.'<sup>6</sup>

Following the instructions of the Guardian, Honor went for an extended teaching trip to England. The thrilling reward of that trip was when her mother at age 99 enrolled in the Faith. A sister, though not formally enrolled, expressed



Anchorage Baha'is, Spring 1945: Left to right: Mina Lundquist, Honor Kempton\*, Myrtle Dodge\*, Florence Green, Betty Becker\*, Verne L. Stout\*, Janet Whitenack Stout, Dagmar Dole\*, Frances L. Wells\*, Evelyn Huffman, Helen Robinson\*  
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her belief in Baha'u'llah just before she died.

Honor arrived in Luxembourg in 1947. In 1948 she was asked to help out with the Baha'i International Bureau in Geneva, Switzerland. This was the Baha'i agency responsible for teaching work on the Continent before the Regional and National Spiritual Assemblies were formed. She served in that capacity with distinction until these Assemblies were formed six years later. Her work took her to Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden. Before returning to Luxembourg she opened up at least three new communities in France. She also served on three different Regional and National Spiritual Assemblies: Italo-Swiss, Benelux and Luxembourg. She was among those who cast their ballots for the first Universal House of Justice in 1963.

When she was nearly 70 she returned to Luxembourg where she continued holding firesides, opening new centers, serving on Assemblies, fulfilling her "mission." During the final years of her life Honor lived with Suzette Hipp, who had first learned of the Faith from Honor and who, years before, had become the first person in Luxembourg to become a Baha'i.

When guests from Alaska visited her this January, the visit had to be fitted into her scheduled fireside "because Tony (a young seeker in his twenties) needs to have his questions answered. He answered a newspaper ad and called in the middle of the night. It is happening just the way the Writings said it would."<sup>1</sup>

In 1976, while in her mid 80's, Honor was able to make a return trip to her much loved Alaska. She attended the International Baha'i Conference in Anchorage that summer. She was presented a copy of *High Endeavours — Messages to Alaska*, which contained letters from the Guardian to her while she was in Alaska. A postscript, written in the

Guardian's own hand, was read which said, "The Concourse on high acclaims your resolve and will richly bless your endeavors. Be happy and confident."<sup>7</sup>

Notably, though unseen by most of the audience in West High Auditorium, when she heard the words read of her Guardian telling her to "be happy," the corners of her mouth raised up ever so slightly and her face seemed to lighten. When she heard the word "confident" her back perceptibly straightened and she stood tall, as if ready for duty. This story was told to Counsellor Edna True, who had worked with her so closely in Europe. Edna immediately commented, "Yes, it's that obedience to the words of the Guardian."

After the Conference, Honor especially wanted to go to Barrow "to see the harvest of dear Frances' (Wells) endeavors." She and Janet Stout were able to go together to visit David and Carolyn Baumgartner at the Barrow Center. She wrote after her return: "Our visit to Barrow was so gratifying to me. It really was the crowning joy as I always felt I had not fully accomplished all the Beloved Guardian had asked of me . . . ! 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke of the necessity of spreading the teachings to the Eskimos. They must not be deprived, he said. But I did not get to visit them before leaving for Europe. Now I feel better and can say to myself 'MISSION ACCOMPLISHED'."

Honor, Alaska's spiritual mother, is dead. Just six weeks before her death she was heard to say, "How I love Alaska! Oh, how I wish I could go back, to my Alaska!" She did, you know. For in 1980 she conceived the idea of "prayer pioneers" and enlisted others in Luxembourg to select places in Alaska for special prayers. She adopted Hoonah. She also had a list of non-Baha'is in Alaska for whom she had been praying. She needed to know of them. Were they getting any closer to the Faith? Should she scratch them from her list? She took

her pioneering seriously whether in person or in prayer. This was her way. This was her "mission." Her sense of "mission" shone through in all that she did.

No wonder the Luxembourg National Spiritual Assembly and the Universal House of Justice — for which she had done so much to help establish a firm foundation — should cable such loving tributes on her passing:

FEBRUARY 24, 1981

WITH BROKEN HEARTS INFORM YOU SUDDEN PASSING LATE THIS MORNING IN HER 90TH YEAR OF MISS HONOR KEMPTON DEARLY BELOVED MOTHER ALASKA BAHAI COMMUNITY. STOP. HER SHINING EXAMPLE WILL ETERNALLY CONTINUE ADORN ANNALS HISTORY BAHAI PIONEERS HER DEDICATED SERVICES ESTABLISH PERMANENT BOND ALASKA LUXEMBOURG BAHAI COMMUNITIES. ASK YOU JOIN US IN OUR PRAYERS PROGRESS HER SOUL ABHA KINGDOM.

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY  
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HAIFA

FEBRUARY 27, 1981

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UNIVERSAL HOUSE JUSTICE

— John E. Kolstoe and Janet W. Stout

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Honor Kempton 1976

## SIDELIGHTS ON HONOR'S PASSING

Suzette Hipp wrote that she "was very privileged to have her as a friend, a great bounty to be able to live with her all these years and have her dying in my arms. Honor had the bounty to pass on as she always had wished and prayed for. It was all over in a few minutes. But what a shock for me! We never expected it. She had breakfast and phoned three people during the morning and was dead before noon.

"She had a beautiful funeral. Lots of friends attended and there were lots of beautiful flowers which she loved so much."

Zarin Malmiri wrote: "On Monday night I called Honor, as I did every night, for a little chat. She was not feeling well but she said she was getting better." Zarin was out the next morning and did not hear the news of Honor's death until after her body had been taken to the funeral parlor.

"There were a number of non-Baha'is at the funeral. After the funeral everybody went to the Baha'i Center for prayers. To whomever I talked to, they said, 'We feel her loss.' All the young ones I saw were crying. Some of the members of the National Spiritual Assembly, when talking about her life, were in tears. The meeting had a very spiritual atmosphere.

"As for me, she was my everybody and is gone."

- <sup>1</sup>"A Visit with Honor Kempton," unpublished notes (John Kolstoe)
- <sup>2</sup>Messages to America, 1932-1946, p. 16.
- <sup>3</sup>"Notes on the Life of Honor Kempton," unpublished paper (Alaska National Archives)
- <sup>4</sup>"In Search of a New Way of Life," by Janet B. Whitenack, World Order Magazine, February 1944, pp. 383-388.
- <sup>5</sup>Message from the Guardian, December 24, 1944; Baha'i News, No. 173, February 1945, p. 2.
- <sup>6</sup>High Endeavours, p. 47
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 4

## HONOR HAS A NAMESAKE

Pete and Judy Boucher of Nenana have named their new daughter Honor Marie. The baby was born February 28, 1981 and weighed six pounds 13 ounces. Judy would like to share her feelings with the friends.

"Honor Kempton passed into the next world the same day (March 24) that I was writing a birth announcement to send her.

"When I met Honor at the 1976 International Baha'i Conference I was pregnant, and I told her that if the baby was a girl I wanted to name her Honor — because I really liked the name and admired the service she gave to the Baha'i Community of Alaska. When the baby was a boy, I kept my resolve in the back of my mind and four years later the second baby is a girl and I named her Honor Marie.

"Well, I'm sure Honor Kempton knows of her little namesake, but I would have liked to send her that birth announcement in the material world. However, it is nice to know there is someone special in the Abha Kingdom to look after the spiritual needs of (my) little Honor."

## PRAYER PIONEER TO HOONAH

When the Auke Bay Assembly planned a proclamation in Hoonah on October 25, 1980, they telegraphed Honor for her prayers. Then an exchange of letters took place. They recently received the following letter, dated February 14, 1981, just ten days before she died.

Dear Nancy,

It was such a lovely surprise to receive your kind letter. I must ask you to excuse me for not answering before this but have been sick with heart trouble and had to let everything go. I'm getting better but still not too right. Having to be quiet in my activities has given me more time to pray for "Hoonah." I'm sure it will be a good strong Assembly before very long.

Thank you very much for the card, the photograph. I shall put them in my Alaska book.

I wish I could go up to Alaska and take care of Hoonah, but alas I cannot travel so far now. However, I shall pray hard to Baha'u'llah that (He) will give special help to that community, so that they will bring the native believers into the beloved Cause of God.

Such tragic things are happening around the world. The Baha'is must unite and work harder than ever to bring in new souls to our beloved Faith, so that we shall be strong when the dark days are upon us.

Again thank you for your kindness in writing me and please do it again.

With deep Baha'i love,  
Honor



FRANCES WELLS  
1906-1960

Frances Wells

Frances Wells, *née* West, was a pioneer whose labors for the spread of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh took her far north to Alaska and then, much later, to Luxembourg in the heart of Europe, where, on December 27, 1960, she passed away and she was buried in her goal city of Differdange. Her determined and dedicated services recall these words of Bahá'u'lláh: *"They who have forsaken their country for the purpose of teaching Our Cause—these shall the Faithful Spirit strengthen through its power. No act, however great can compare with it. . . Such a service is indeed the prince of all goodly deeds."*

Frances was a child of six when 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited Los Angeles. As was His custom, He called the children around Him and Mrs. Hattie Cline brought her nieces to Him. Little Frances, with her flaming red hair and green eyes received her gift of roses from the Master, but secretly, she told us, she wished they had been candy.

All her life Frances served the Faith, first in Los Angeles and in Big Bear and then in 1943 in Alaska where she pioneered for seventeen years. In Anchorage she worked with Honor Kempton helping with her famous "Book Cache", giving radio talks, teaching, visiting many cities, and engaging in many other Bahá'í activities. The beloved

Guardian was particularly pleased with her achievement of being able to take the Faith to Point Barrow above the Arctic Circle, where, under most difficult conditions she worked among the Eskimos for three years, which led to the acceptance by the first Eskimo in that region of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

In 1958 Frances made the Pilgrimage to the World Center in Haifa. Stopping in the Benelux countries on her way back to Alaska, she decided to answer the urgent call to pioneer in a European goal city and on August 3, 1959 she arrived in Luxembourg and settled in the town of Differdange. Although ignorant of the languages and customs, she followed in the steps of other pioneers and was able to gather a group of sincere friends around her. Frances was faced with many tests in her new post and handled them with the same courage and perseverance that she had shown in other adverse circumstances.

After attending the ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone of the Mother Temple of Europe at Frankfurt, Germany, on November 20, the condition of great fatigue which Frances had been feeling suddenly became very acute. On December 7 she entered the hospital at Esch where her ailment was diagnosed as leukemia; she lived only three

more weeks. During that time she was lovingly attended and nursed by the Bahá'í friends until on the night of December 27 she quietly slipped away.

December 31, some seventy Bahá'ís and townspeople assembled to pay Frances homage at the service held in the open air before the casket. The Mayor of Differdange was represented and Mr. Donald Cruz, the secretary of the American Embassy, represented the United States Government. Mr. Ben Levy, of the Benelux National Spiritual Assembly had been chosen as the spokesman of that group as it was through hearing Frances teach the Faith in Alaska that he had become a Bahá'í, and Honor Kempton, whom Frances had followed to Alaska, and who had introduced the Faith in Luxembourg in 1946, read the last prayer.

Frances Wells, pioneer, lies on the slope facing the Holy Land with the fields of flowers that she so loved spreading out in a bright carpet around the area, and the great iron mines toward the rear, symbols, perhaps, of her iron determination serving the softer flowers of spirit.

VIRGINIA ORBISON

## MATILDA (BETTY) BECKER

1887-1974

ASSURE PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS  
SOUL BETTY BECKER VALIANT SERVANT FAITH  
PIONEER ALASKA PUNTA ARENAS CHILE MADE  
VITAL CONTRIBUTION ROOTS CAUSE NORTH  
SOUTH AMERICA STOP SUGGEST MEMORIAL  
MEETING YOUR COMMUNITY. *Universal House  
of Justice*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



*Matilda (Betty) Becker*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Alaskan Pioneer Driving Force for Center Punta Arenas

by Earl Redman

The year was 1959 in Anchorage, Alaska. Betty Becker was about to pioneer. It was nothing new for she had been a pioneer before - she had come to Alaska in 1939 at the same time as Honor Kempton, answering a call from Shoghi Effendi for two pioneers to Alaska. Now Betty was on her way to pioneer in Chile, at the opposite end of the earth. Many Bahá'ís have pioneered to the far corners of the world. Many have gone alone. But how many have undertaken the sacrifice of beginning a completely new life in a totally new cultural setting - at the age of 73?

Because of her pioneering efforts and steadfastness, Betty was one of the early shining stars of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Virtually her whole Bahá'í life was dedicated to God in the service of pioneering. Betty became a Bahá'í when she was 46 and spent 34 of her next 41 years as a pioneer, ultimately leaving her physical remains in Punta Arenas, Chile. And during her whole Bahá'í life, Betty tried to establish Bahá'í Centers wherever she lived, including Kansas City, Anchorage, Valdivia, and ultimately, Punta Arenas.

After 20 years as a pioneer in Alaska, Betty left the Far North to pioneer in Chile late in 1959. Initially, she lived in Valdivia, a city about 500 miles south of the capital, Santiago. With an energetic Chilean pioneer, Enrique Aguirre, Betty helped assure the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Valdivia in January, 1960. With the Local Spiritual Assembly in Valdivia secure, Betty was asked to move to Punta Arenas, at the far southern end of Chile, to aid that community.

First, Betty had to leave Chile to acquire a resident visa. The nearest foreign city from which she could apply for a resident visa was Bariloche,

Argentina. The adventures of the trip to Bariloche began in a Volkswagen bus in the Andes Mountains. It had rained heavily during the night and the travelers found that a bridge near Petrohué had been washed away by a flood. To safely cross the washed-out road, she was put in a large truck. *"Some of the men waded ahead of us to see if it was safe to cross. After crossing the meandering, churning river I gave a big sigh of relief, thinking 'That's over'..."*

*"But I had a surprise in store for me. There were three or four more...Just when (we) again started to relax we came upon a large bus from Puerto Montt which was stuck. After pulling this out and which now followed us we arrived at another washed out bridge. This was the worst of all. There was a very black waterfall from way up high and a very large truck stuck in the middle of the road. It had sunk deeply into the sand. Again we came to the rescue. Some of the passengers immediately waded across the river to the other side where a truck was waiting to pick them up and take them to the boat. I tried a time or two to do likewise but the men told me to stay in the bus.*

*"I was getting very impatient with all this delay. I did not want to miss the boat, all I wanted was my visa and go to Punta Arenas by the date I should be there. While thus musing, I heard something snap and someone in the bus shouted - 'We'll all be drowned.'...Everyone started to scramble for the door. When I got there the water was well over my boot tops and rising very rapidly, so I started back. Our driver came along at that very moment and shouted 'No, no, no,' took me by the hand and I did not know (I) could run so fast. As soon as we outran the deep water I looked back and what a sight. Very dirty water all over,*

Photo:  
Punta Arenas Bahá'í  
Center with Linda  
French and Sharon  
O'Toole



tannish-black pouring down in a wide waterfall, huge and horrible. We started running again and came to an old wooden shack, quite a few others had reached it before me. They had built a fire inside and were trying to dry out their boots and clothes...One Chilean, very kindly found me a seat, knelt down and took off my boots and shoes, emptied the water from them, gave me some rags he found in the shack to dry myself with, talking all the time he was doing this, "Who would think that a Chilean would be privileged to help an American lady in distress"...He was very gallant, making long wide motions with his arms while he talked until he had everyone laughing.

"What happened, a second waterfall formed while we were trying to pull out the truck in the river almost directly over the truck...doubtless the movement of this truck caused a vacuum whenever they tugged on it, loosened the earth and created a mountain slide, unleashing at the same time a lake or reservoir high up in the mountain which flooded down in one big swoop, lasting a half an hour or so. Doubtless that truck will be there through countless ages as quite a tall mountain of debris formed over it from the sand, dirt, water debris...When the water had run off...one of the men helped me across. By now this was quite an ordeal. The water was now much higher than at first and I was splashing wet, my coat soaked up an awful lot of sand and mud and wading was

difficult. The water was well over my knees in most places and I had quite a sloppy ride on the boat that took us to our hotel that night...This incident of sharing a common danger made us all feel very close...and many friendships were formed."

Having survived all the perils of her Andean crossing, Betty ended up in Bariloche on April 6 without her luggage. Betty really enjoyed Bariloche in spite of the interminable waiting for her visa and the anxiety of wanting to reach Punta Arenas in time for Ridván and wrote that, "This delay has completely disrupted my plans, has caused me much mental anxiety, much expense, running into \$4-\$500 if my baggage cannot be found..." She recovered her luggage but not until she returned to Valdivia.

Betty finally reached Punta Arenas on May 12, 1960. Nine days after her departure from Valdivia, the great earthquake of 1960 destroyed much of the city and devastated the region.

One of the first objectives Betty had upon reaching Punta Arenas was to acquire a Center from which teaching activities could radiate. In January, 1963, a four-room house was offered to the Bahá'ís. The proposed purchase could not be effected but Betty did find a suite of rooms to rent about the same time. It took her considerable time and effort to find enough furniture to fill it but she soon had a presentable home she could use for her firesides. Her studio had a large sectional couch that could hold 11 people. The owners of the house where she lived,

however, did not like her having many visitors so, in October she sold the furniture in her studio and moved to a residential hotel. From the hotel, Betty was able to resume her active teaching.

The Bahá'ís of Punta Arenas did manage finally to rent a room they could use as a Center. The room was above the fire station and was large enough for meetings. At first the firemen would not rent to the group because they had a rule against renting to political or religious groups. When the Bahá'ís assured them that the room would not be used as a church, the deal was made. The Center was financed partly by the National Spiritual Assembly of Chile and in part by Lina Smithson, a Chilean Bahá'í, and Betty.

Betty kept working for a permanent Center. In a letter written in May, 1971, she said that she was hoping to buy a Center on time payments. The Punta Arenas Fund had money set aside for this and she hoped that a pioneering couple could live in the Center and make the payments. Betty said that *"When we have a Center, conditions will change in every way. We have to have a place to meet and we need teachers more than lecturers to come only for a few days..."* But nothing happened.

Then on July 10, 1974, the Center Fund received a big boost. Betty had met Jenabe Caldwell in Alaska in early 1956. Jenabe was starting up a crab cannery and selling stock to finance the

venture. Betty purchased her first 25 shares of stock in Jenabe's crab cannery, the Aleutian Development Company, Inc., for \$250. Ultimately, she purchased 154 shares in the company. Eighteen years later, the Aleutian Development Company liquidated its assets and sent Betty a check for \$3,866.94. Betty placed the full amount in the Center Fund with the National Spiritual Assembly.

Betty's dream of a real Center for Punta Arenas came true on September 20, 1974. Her contributions of money and energy resulted in enough for a down payment on a house with money left over for repairs and furniture. With the contract in hand for the first local Hazíratu'l-Quds in Chile, Betty must have decided that she had done all she could in this world.

One week later, on September 27, 1974, at 11 p.m., the spirit of Betty Becker left her withered, 87-year-old body and passed into the Abhá Realm. After her death, her body was anointed with rose water from Persia and three rose petals from the three most Holy Shrines were placed between her fingers. A small envelope of dust from the Tomb of Mullá Husayn on her breast.

On Sunday, September 29, a small service was held where she had lived, then a procession of about 30 friends gathered at the

Photo, below left: Earl Redman with Alaska Bahá'í News from Betty Becker's things.

Photo, below right: Betty Becker upon her arrival in Juneau, August 1, 1939. The following quotation from the Writings was among the three favorites Betty listed in a brief autobiography in the Alaska Bahá'í archives: "As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings be..."



graveside. A flower-like 9-pointed star carved by Rob Seigel and John Caroana served as her headstone. Afterwards, there was a reception at the Bahá'í Center, Betty's center, and, as was Betty's way, fruit salad was served.

Even after her worldly death, Betty continued helping the Punta Arenas Center. She had passed a special Bahá'í ring on to Gwendolyn Willems and asked that, after her death, it be sent to Alaska and sold. Gwendolyn gave the ring to Counsellor Laurretta King in Alaska. There, by auction, the ring was sold to a native Bahá'í for about \$1,000. Money from the sale was to be used for the Center.

The Center today, is on the fairly quiet Mejicana Street a short walk from downtown Punta Arenas. It is not a fancy house, but projects a bright, clean face to the passerby. From its door, one can see the Strait of Magellan and Tierra del Fuego. Within the Center, Betty's furniture decorates the main room and her Bahá'í

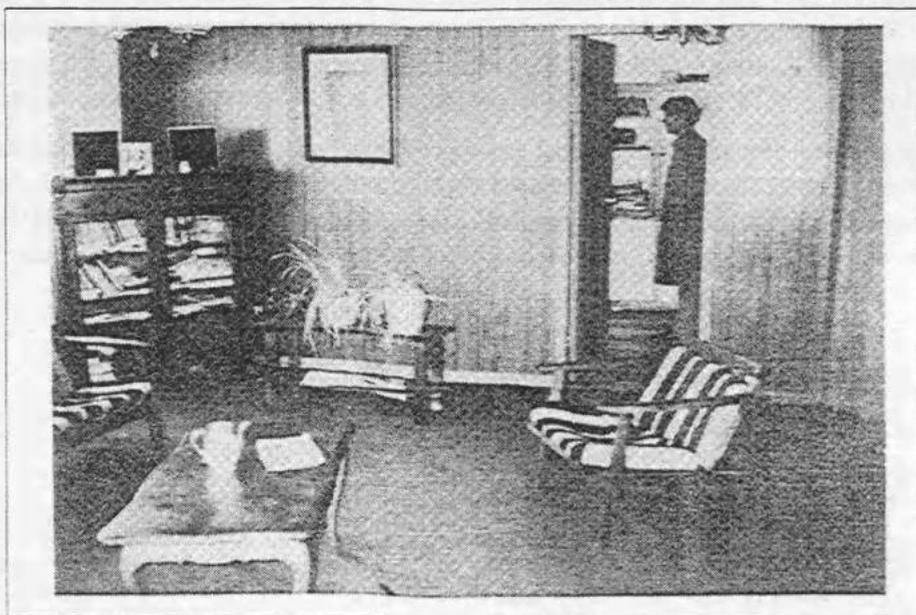
books line the shelves of the library. A box in the attic holds all her issues of the *Alaska Bahá'í News*.

An Alaska pioneer was the driving force behind the Punta Arenas Bahá'í Center. Money from the liquidation of an Alaska crab cannery provided the down payment. And today, several Alaskan Bahá'í communities are helping to support and repair the Punta Arenas Center. This Alaska-Chile bond, according to Shoghi Effendi, is very important to the world.

“ALASKA — TOGETHER WITH MAGALANES, CHILE — MAY BE LIKENED TO THE EXTREMITY OF THE BAHÁ'Í ARMS STRETCHED OUT AND WAITING TO EMBRACE THE WHOLE WORLD IN THE ORDER OF PEACE AND LOVE WHICH BAHÁ'U'LLÁH HAS ESTABLISHED FOR THE CHILDREN OF MEN IN THIS DAY..”

— Shoghi Effendi  
(Message of Dec. 24, 1944)

Photo:  
Punta Arenas Bahá'í  
Center living room



Frances Wells  
1906 - 1960

Frances may well be the only Bahá'í to serve in Alaska who received a rose from the hand of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She was six when He gave a rose to each child in a group she was in. Noted for her enthusiasm and good humor, her lilting laugh was tinged with gold. She served the Faith energetically in Los Angeles and pioneered to Big Bear, California. This first pioneering venture was with Victoria Robarts who had become a Bahá'í in Alaska in 1922, when Orcella Rexford lived in Anchorage.

Frances arrived in Anchorage in March, 1943 and helped form the first Spiritual Assembly in September of that year. She worked with Honor Kempton in The Book Cache and started a buying service, called the Arctic Trails Shopping Service, for people living in the bush.

From the time she first arrived in Alaska, Frances was eager to serve among the Native people. Her love for and work among the Eskimos was quite a change for Frances who was such an elegant lady, always properly coiffured with the sophisticated taste reflected by her favorite magazine, "The New Yorker."

She was instrumental in the enrollment of Agnes Parent (Harrison) in 1949. Agnes was the first Alaskan Native to enroll in the Faith in Alaska. In 1953 she worked with Hadley Ferguson in translating some Bahá'í Writings into Inupiat, the first translation into a Native language in Alaska. The Guardian acknowledged a contribution she made to the World Center "in behalf of the Eskimos of Alaska."

Eager to get closer to the Eskimos, she moved further north with a job at Ladd Air Force Base (now Ft. Wainwright) outside of Fairbanks. By 1954 she wrote to the Guardian for permission to move to a more remote area. He agreed she could go "to Selewik (Selawik) where you can be of greater service to the Faith than in Fairbanks, where there are now a number of Bahá'ís..."

In 1957 she opened Barrow to the Faith and stayed until the summer of 1958 when ill health and fatigue forced her to return to Anchorage. In 1958 she went on pilgrimage and learned of the acute need for teachers in Europe. The last year and four months of her life were spent in Luxembourg. She was once again with Honor Kempton who moved from France to Luxembourg to help with the work there. In her heart Frances remained an Alaskan. She didn't mind the cold of Fairbanks and Barrow, but she hated the constant, cold drizzle of Europe's western low-lands.

Late in 1960 she was diagnosed as having leukemia and was failing fast. She entered the hospital on December 7 and died on the 31st. Honor Kempton provided the following description of her funeral: "There hadn't been any snow all year until the day of her funeral and then fresh snow blanketed the land and the hills as if just for her." In Luxembourg, if a Catholic priest does not officiate at a funeral, it is necessary for the town Mayor to preside. About 75 of Frances' new friends attended, together with the Mayor, who was wearing his tall, plumed hat and Mayoral sash across his chest. Honor continued, "Oh, how Frances would have loved it and laughed. She would have said, 'Look at him standing there in all his finery.'"

Honor went on to describe Frances' passing. "Before she died she would see faces of Eskimos on the wall and tried to point them out to me as if I could see them too. One day while I was sitting by her bed she told me that some Eskimos had come for her in a dog sled. They stopped briefly by her bed, then went away. Just as she was dying she said: 'Look, Honor, the Eskimo dog sled, it's coming again.'"

of whom were born in Hawaii. Dagmar's great uncle, the second son of Daniel, became the head of the Provisional Government and then President of the Republic in 1893. After turning the islands over to the United States, he became the first Governor of Hawaii.

Dagmar's mother was a member of the well-known Dreier family, of Copenhagen, Denmark, whose forebear was the famous young thinker and writer of that name, who died at the age of 30 years, leaving a trail of provocative and constructive thought after him. A monument to his memory now stands in the city of Copenhagen.

It is interesting that Dagmar's father's family should have been missionaries and her mother's family Danish, as these two facts were combined in Dagmar's history of service to God. Her life became consecrated to the work of teaching the Bahá'í Faith and part of this service was done in the land of her mother's forebears—Denmark.

On November 12, while the Bahá'í world was celebrating the anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh, Dagmar passed to the Abhá Kingdom. She had been in ill health for some months. She arrived for the Luxembourg Conference but became too ill to participate. Arrangements were immediately made for her to be sent to the Valmont Clinic, situated in one of the loveliest spots of Switzerland, above Montreux. Here for two months Dagmar rested and received treatment. On November 8 she became very ill, passed into a state of unconsciousness and five days later slipped through the "Open Door" to pioneer in the worlds of God.

#### DAGMAR DOLE

"Grieved passing distinguished, consecrated pioneer Dagmar Dole, outstanding record unforgettable, reward bountiful. Praying progress soul Kingdom."

—SHOGHI

Dagmar Dole was born in San Francisco, California, on June 14, 1902. Her great grandfather Daniel Dole and his wife left Newburyport, Massachusetts, in 1841 to take up their duties as pioneer Protestant missionaries in the Hawaiian Islands. Her grandfather, George Dole, was born in Hawaii and Dagmar's father, Walter Dole, was the oldest son of a family of thirteen, twelve

In California, through her friend Marion Holley Hofman, Dagmar had first heard of the Bahá'í Faith and immediately accepted it. Hers was an active Bahá'í life. Soon after becoming a declared believer she and her close friend, Virginia Orbison, went to Glendale, California, to help maintain Assembly status, under the first "Seven-Year Plan." She then became active in Committee work for Central and South America and served as Chairman of the Inter-American Committee.

Later she journeyed to Alaska, and did valuable work in consolidating the Bahá'í community on that frontier. From Anchorage she went to the Bristol Bay area in the



Dagmar Dole.

Bering Sea, and worked among the Eskimos and Alaskan Indians working in the fishing industry. Her service to these minority people cannot be measured. She won their friendship because she gave them her love and compassion. She served them both materially and spiritually. She was their friend.

Then came the Second Seven-Year Plan and the call for pioneers in the European field, and Dagmar responded. She was assigned to Copenhagen, Denmark. Here again she served the Faith she loved so well with steadfastness and courage. Her record in Denmark is rich. She, along with other pioneers and Johanne Hoeg, was instrumental in bringing forty-seven believers into the Faith in Denmark. Her last pioneer assignment was to Italy, where she served both in Naples and in Milan.

In the village of Glion, high on the slopes of the Swiss Alps, lies Dagmar—where in the springtime the white narcissus pour out their fragrance and the snow-capped mountains eternally stand sentinel.

Snow was softly falling, covering everything in a mantle of white, as members of Dagmar's family, and her Bahá'í friends

from all over Switzerland gathered for the funeral service. During her short stay in Valmont, Dagmar had won the hearts of the entire staff. The doctors, nurses, the maids, all came to pay their last tribute because they, too, loved her.

At the opening words of the funeral service—"From the sweet scented streams of Thine Eternity give me to drink O my God. . . . Within the garden of Thine immortality, before Thy countenance, let me abide forever . . .," a shaft of light pierced the snow-clouds and shone upon that open grave. How could one be sad? How could one be sad at the passing of one who had been obedient to the command of her Lord—"Teach ye the Cause of God," says Bahá'u'lláh. From the moment of her recognition of the Cause of God, Dagmar rose up and carried the banner of Bahá'u'lláh to far off Alaska, back across the American continent, over the Atlantic to the shores of Europe, where she fell in action.

"She died in 'battle dress,'" said the Guardian; "it is wonderful to die in active service."

Looking up at those majestic mountains one was reminded of the qualities of Dagmar—nobility and strength. Thinking of the starry white narcissus that will blossom over those mountain slopes, one saw her innate purity; that delicate shyness and awareness that were hers.

"Her spiritual station is very high." These words of the Guardian gave us a sense of pure joy. "Her grave will be a great blessing to Switzerland—to all Europe. She is the first to give her life for the Cause in the European project. Her resting-place is important." Already evidence of these words of the Guardian has been manifested. One cannot express in words the sense of feeling. One knew the leaven of the Faith was working, cementing those souls standing at that open grave into one unit—each pledging renewed effort in carrying forward the banner that Dagmar laid into our hands.

"Death proffereth unto every confident believer the cup that is life indeed. It bestoweth joy, and is the bearer of gladness. It conferreth the gift of everlasting life." Dagmar is one of those *confident* believers to whom Bahá'u'lláh gave this glorious promise.

—HONOR KEMPTON

## Betty Lou Abel: Bahá'í, Mother, Teacher, Friend

29 January 1932 - 24 December 1997

by William Abel and Sally Caldwell

Betty Lou was born 29 January 1932 to Charles and Isabel Saul. The second of four children, she spent her childhood working on the family farm in East Wenatchee, Washington. After graduating from high

Edward, was born that December, and she somehow found time to earn her baccalaureate degree in nursing from the University of Washington.

In 1962 Bill and Betty became members of the Bahá'í Faith, recognizing that all the Founders of the world's major religions were but Messengers from the same God.

In 1969 the family moved to Corvallis, Oregon, where Betty earned a Masters degree in general studies. Betty was appointed a member of the District Teaching Committee, with whom she traveled extensively teaching the Bahá'í Faith in Oregon. In the same time frame, something piqued her interest in pottery and started her on a road which was to become her passion in the years to come.

Pioneering to Bethel, Alaska in 1984, Betty became an itinerant Public

Health Nurse for the state of Alaska and, in her spare time, she developed her pottery interests into a part-time job. As an itinerant nurse, she spent most of her time in the villages, sleeping on floors, working with health aides and village families.

In addition to being an encouragement to people and doing a lot of parent education, Betty helped with the reformation of some village Spiritual Assemblies. Another relocation brought Bill and Betty to Craig, Alaska, where the pottery business grew even as she continued to travel to towns and villages to do Public Health nursing. Especially

close to her heart was the village of Hooper Bay. Betty looked forward to her trips to all the villages, even when her soreness and illnesses due to aging and the harsh conditions made it physically uncomfortable.

Betty retired from her position with the State of Alaska in 1996 when she and Bill moved to Port Townsend, Washington, to build her dream home and pottery business. Unfortunately, Betty was taken into the realms of high before realizing her pottery business dreams. Her dream home will, however, be completed as she desired.

Betty Lou Abel will be sorely missed, but never forgotten!



Photo: Betty and Bill Able  
Photo credit: Bill Able

school in 1950 she went into one of the few professions that were open to women at that time—nursing. Working at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Miles City, Montana, she met and fell in love with William Abel, who was working at the local radio station. They were married on 10 August 1958 in Los Angeles, California, then went to Fairbanks, Alaska for a time before moving to Seattle.

Betty was working as a nurse at the University of Washington Hospital in 1960 when she developed a passion for photography, in the process becoming a professional photographer. Her only son,

## KATHRYN ALIO: ALASKA TO AFRICA

Many Baha'is from the Greater Anchorage area, and visitors from Seward, Ridgeway and other not-too-far points gathered on September 25 in the attractive multi-purpose room of the Anchorage Natural Gas Company on Spenard Road to honor Mrs. Kathryn Alio. Kathryn, a member of the Anchorage Baha'i Community, was preparing to leave for the Alaskan Overseas goal of Lesotho.

Verne Stout of the Matanuska Valley gave a brief outline of Kathryn's Baha'i history. Of all the Baha'is presently in Alaska, Kathryn had probably been a Baha'i the longest, having joined in 1933 in Dayton, Ohio. She and her daughter, Marzieh (now Mrs. Richard J. Miller), came to Alaska in the summer of 1954 as pioneers in the Ten Year Crusade. They went to Fairbanks and Kathryn helped to establish the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Fairbanks in 1955, and was elected recording secretary. She served on that LSA until after she was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1959, also receiving the post of recording secretary on that assembly. Later in the year, she moved to Anchorage to become the resident in the first Haziratu'l-Quds and to share in the workload of the national secretariat. She also lived in the Spenard community for several years, and then moved back to Anchorage.

Kathryn served on the National Assembly until April 1964 and was one of the Delegates to the first International Baha'i Convention in Haifa in 1963. She thus had the honor of casting one of Alaska's nine votes for the first member of the Universal House of Justice. In fact, Kathryn Alio of Alaska would have been the very first person in the whole world to cast a vote for this august body, as the national assembly members were asked to vote alphabetically by Assembly, and then alphabetically by their own name. However, another member of the Alaska National Assembly cast her ballot before this procedure went into total effect, and Kathryn was the second to cast her ballot in this historic election.

Wherever she has been, Kathryn has worked very loyally and continuously during her 16 years in Alaska in the fields of proclamation, publicity, and speaking at Institutes, public meetings

(Continued on page 2)



MRS. KATHRYN ALIO, PIONEER

and numerous firesides. She was also Editor of the *Alaska Baha'i News* from the Spring of 1962 to November 1964.

### Lesotho Goal

Kathryn gave a brief account of her new goal post, Lesotho, which used to be known as Basutoland. From the Western Hemisphere, you reach Lesotho by air to Johannesburg. Lesotho is an agricultural country, and there are many migrant farmers. They have been suffering a severe drought and there is much hardship among the people. They receive grants from the British Crown for education. The capital city is Maseru, and English and Basuto are the languages spoken. The principal religions are Roman Catholic, French Evangelical, and Anglican Protestant.

Lesotho is in the beginning of Baha'i mass conversion. Last Ridvan they had 24 Local Spiritual Assemblies when the goal was only 15! They really have the spirit. Deepening in the Teachings and administration are now much needed. In 1971 they will elect the first National Spiritual Assembly of Lesotho.

The new Baha'i Chorus, under the direction of Jetta Brewer of Anchorage, next sang several numbers. A purse was collected for Kathryn. The following Saturday, October 3, Kathryn left from the International Airport in Spenard and about 30 of the friends from nearby communities gathered at breakfast and to say good-bye. After visiting friends and relatives in the South 48 states, Kathryn flew to Africa, and the Settlers from Spenard were there to greet her in Johannesburg. It's a small Baha'i world!

—Janet W. Stout

## From Kathryn Alio, Lesotho, Africa

P.O. Box 936  
Maseru, Lesotho  
Africa  
March 1971

N.S.A. of Baha'is of Alaska  
P.O. Box 1361, Anchorage  
Dear Baha'i Friends,

Allah'u'Abha! from the Southern Hemisphere—

We all arrived at this post about the same time in January following the Summer School and dedication of the Leroy Ioas Memorial Teaching Institute in Mbabane, Swaziland, where the Settlers are located. This was a time to remember for many reasons.

When I use the term "we" it is in reference to the three other American pioneers, their children, and myself. They are from the Southwest — New Mexico and Colorado. Lynn Silvers has two young daughters and lives 25 miles from here at a place called Leyateyanang, or L.Y.

The young Roger Carsons, son and daughter, have bought this big, old house here in Maseru, where I have two rooms. This section was added on and is sinking so I have named it Earthquake Park quite fittingly because the walls are cracked from the ceiling down. There is more than one way to get fresh air! The Carsons enjoy my choice of a name. The housing shortage here is very severe, but building is planned.

Continuing in a personal vein, I began working on the 22nd of February for an attorney, a fine person who has done a good bit of legal work for the Baha'is. This kind of work is new to me, but so is the country.

There is much, much work to be done here. These are lovely, spiritual people, but have almost no groundwork in administration, so we have been making trips each weekend anywhere from 25 to 65 miles one way, over some pretty inaccessible roads. On some, we drive as far as possible and then walk or climb. Keeps one fit!

Bahiyyah has designed a lesson in administration which is a visual aid, one of the cleverest yet, which is a great help, and of course I have always been a great believer in visual aids, especially where the people are not highly educated.

Roger and I are on the N.T.C. which acts as the N.S.A. here, and so on weekends we also attend these meetings. We are, of course, in the throes of helping plan the coming Convention, and part of our work has been to go to various localities to see what elections for the delegates were held. Lesotho has 38. This should be a most unique and interesting occasion in many ways. You, of course, must know we will have Dr. Muhlschlegel with us; also Mrs. B. Ford and Helen Wilks, Auxiliary Board Member, who is known to all of you.

This is a lovely country where the terrain is quite spectacular in color and topography. The weather has been warm during the day and cool at night—blanket cool—and I do believe I am getting a tan.

The only wild animal seen here so far was a 4 inch spider stepping carefully down my bedroom window one night, so now the room is inspected before retiring.

Before closing . . . that is very good news coming out of Alaska. The spirit is reaping and part of my heart is there with you all. And if some of the friends find time, their letters would be appreciated.

With Baha'i love,  
Kathryn Alio

(See Kathryn's report of the first Lesotho National Convention which appears in the U.S. **Baha'i News** for September, pages 12-13).

# Kathryn Alio

by Susan Stark Christianson

When Kathryn Alio talks about the growth and change she has witnessed in the Bahá'í Faith since she declared almost sixty years ago her eyes sparkle. She speaks with humility and with great conviction, almost dismissing the role she has played in the history of our Faith while lavishing praise on the many Bahá'ís she has served with during those years — Bahá'ís whose names are intimately connected with the early years of the Bahá'í Faith in the West.

The historic role played by this gracious and humble woman is the story of many firsts. She served on the first Local Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'ís of Dayton, Ohio and Fairbanks, Alaska. She served on the second National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska (serving on that Institution from 1958-1963) and was a member of the first National Assembly of Lesotho. She holds the unique privilege and distinction of being the first woman in the world to cast a ballot in the election of the first Universal House of Justice.

Kathryn first heard about the Bahá'í Faith from her accordion teacher in 1930. Her teacher, Jozef McCoy, owned a studio in Dayton, Ohio

called "The Rizwan." When she asked him the meaning of the intriguing name, Jozef invited her to meet his wife Helen, who would be pleased to talk with her and tell her more. "And so my journey began," stated Kathryn, "with 'Abdu'l-Bahá smiling down on me from the mantel in the McCoy's living room."

Although she was just in her early 20's, Kathryn knew from the beginning that the

Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh was true. "The Dayton area was greatly favored in those early years," wrote Kathryn, "with a constant stream of Bahá'í traveling teachers or visitors who have since become legends in Bahá'í history and we had the bounty and benefit of their knowledge and experience. There was Juliet Thompson, Fannie Knoblock, Horace Holley, Alí-Kuli-Khan and family, Ruth Moffet, Howard Colby Ives, Mamie Seto, Margery McCormick, Louis Gregory and a stream of others. And Dorothy Baker lived only 90 miles from Dayton and was a constant source of inspiration."



Kathryn Alio, one of Alaska's earliest pioneers

Kathryn attended Bahá'í meetings, even attending a convention held in the foundation hall of the as-yet-to-be-constructed House of Worship in Wilmette, a building she described as "a big black mound in the ground." She studied the Faith and attended meetings for two years before her teachers decided to offer her a declaration card. "They were very cautious in those days," she said. "Back in those early years Bahá'ís did not seem so concerned about the signing of declaration cards, they were more concerned that one should be deepened, so that although I attended Feasts and even a national convention, it was not until May of 1933 when Helen McCoy asked Jozef McCoy if he '...thought it would be nice if Kathryn signed a card!' He did and so I did," Kathryn stated.

Kathryn was one of the earliest declared Bahá'ís in Dayton and the youngest member of the community. She went on to help form and to serve on the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Dayton in the late 1930's, serving on that body until 1952 when she pioneered to Springfield, Ohio. Kathryn taught the Faith to her family members. Her mother, Hazel Volz, and her sister, Marguerite Volz Mehaffey, also accepted the teachings. Her husband, Angelo Alio, also became a Bahá'í.

There are many highlights to Kathryn's life as a Bahá'í. One event that stands out, however, was the 1953 National Bahá'í Convention when the 10-Year-Crusade was announced. Rúhíyyih Khánúm attended the convention as the Guardian's representative. "I remember," said Kathryn, "she was so pretty and very gentle. She stood there and shook hands as people went past (after her talk). She was standing there for so long that some Bahá'ís went out and brought in some rugs for her to stand on."

"Rúhíyyih Khánúm spoke first," said Kathryn. She was followed on the program by Dorothy Baker. "I was very close to Dorothy Baker at that time," Kathryn shared. "She lived near to me in Lima, Ohio. She told me that she felt like 'a mouse following a lioness.'"

"There was great excitement at the ...convention," stated Kathryn. "Spirits were high as assembled Bahá'ís discussed possible places where they might pioneer. The contingent from Ohio which included Marie and Elmer Guffey, my daughter Marzieh and myself, talked at great length. Dorothy Baker came by and said, 'Where are you going, Kathryn?' Summing up everything — the necessity to work, the fact that Marzieh still had two years of high school to finish at that time, plus the fact that Alaska had always held a fascination for me, that northerly Great Land was chosen by us, also by the Guffeys. There was much consolidation work needed in Alaska we were told."

Kathryn and her daughter Marzieh began at once to make plans for their trip to their new pioneering post. Daily prayers were said, obstacles were overcome, and on August 24, 1954, they boarded their plane for Fairbanks.

"Every Bahá'í has a moment of moments during his life," stated Kathryn. Taking part in the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, visiting the shrines and holy places, being there at that historic occasion, was that moment for Kathryn. "At no time," she stated, "since my attraction and attachment to the Faith in 1931 did I ever think such a thing as possible. Along the way we talked about the formation of that august Body, but it seemed such a distant happening which did not include (in our thinking) the passing of Shoghi Effendi before it came about, and that we would be saying prayers at his grave in London. So at the time of the World Congress, that awe-inspiring gathering took on a new meaning."

Kathryn Alio has a humorous story to tell about that historic occasion as well. Although the name 'Alio' comes before 'Brown' alphabetically, it was actually Howard Brown who placed the first ballot in the ballot box at the election of the Universal House of Justice. The Alaska delegation was sitting in the first row of the hall. Howard Brown was sitting on the aisle. When Alaska was called Howard jumped up and put his ballot in the box. Kathryn shared that Rúhíyyih Khánúm then suggested the ballots be placed in alphabetical



order. Kathryn placed her ballot in next, thereby becoming the first woman in the world to cast a vote for the members of the House of Justice. "That's how Howard got the nickname 'Elbows Brown'," said Kathryn.

Another highlight in Kathryn Alio's life was attending the International Conference in Chicago in 1967. "It was an intensely spiritual experience," she stated. Not long after that conference Kathryn arose to fill one of Alaska's international pioneering goals. She spent time in Swaziland, before reaching her goal of Lesotho. There she had numerous experiences teaching in towns and villages, helping to form the first National Spiritual Assembly in that land.

"The pioneers were thrust immediately into the work of teaching and consolidation because of the impending formation of the first NSA of Lesotho in April, 1971 as decided by the House," stated Kathryn.

"A number of us were on the National Teaching Committee. It was the end of January, so many trips were made into outlying areas many miles from Maseru (the capitol) over roads the like of which I had never seen. There were many stretches of nothing but rock and great ditches, but we always arrived and returned safely."

"During the time Hand of the Cause Enoch Olinga was in Lesotho there were numerous occasions to enjoy his real sense of humor. One such was on our way out to teach. Driving along he suddenly burst out laughing uproariously. We

had passed a sign on the road warning us to be careful of a cattle crossing. It was on the wrong side of the road, so would have been of very little value!"

"The Bahá'ís being visited had been notified well in advance. However our arrival did not indicate this and no one was at the appointed place. We talked among ourselves a bit. Then Mr. Olinga went off by himself and we knew he was praying. A short time later the friends began to appear from different directions until a sizable group came together and Mr. Olinga began to pour out his love on us. One very shy mother sitting on the ground holding her sleeping child was deeply touched and said she wanted to be a Bahá'í. It was proven there and on many other occasions that where there is a will there is a way, and that way is Bahá'u'lláh."

The chronicle of Kathryn's teaching experiences in Alaska, Africa, the United States and Iceland is filled with exciting confirmations of how one is assisted when one arises to serve Bahá'u'lláh. (It is a great regret of this author that space doesn't allow the sharing of each and every one of those experiences.) "I have had unpleasant experiences in my

life," shared Kathryn, "but I feel like any of the unpleasant periods have been overcome by the good experiences."

"I've had the privilege of watching the faith grow and develop around the world," said Kathryn. Her ties to the early history of our



Kathryn Alio on the 2nd National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska in 1958.

Front row, left to right: Mrs. Lois E. Lee, Mrs. Janet W. Stout, Mrs. Rose P. Yarno, Mrs. Evelyn Huffman, Mrs. Kathryn Alio

Back row, left to right: Verne L. Stout, Howard Brown, Robert E. Moul, Warren Rodgers

(Looking around the corner is Kathryn's friend and spiritual daughter, Marie Guffey Van Brunt, now serving as a pioneer to Easter Island)

SPECIAL SECTION — WOMEN, Continued...

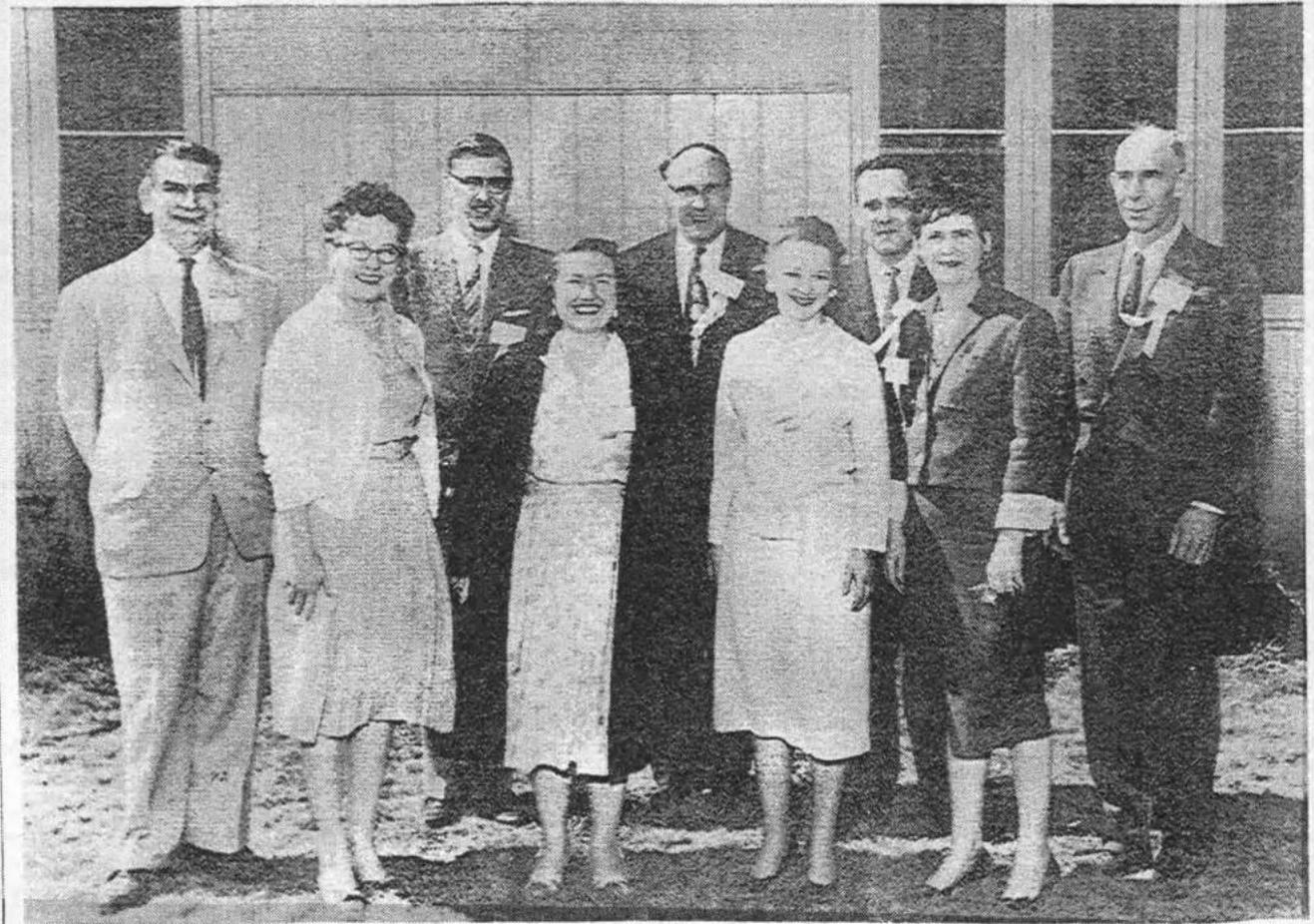
First row, left to right:  
Evelyn Huffman,  
Lois Lee,  
Janet Johnson (Smith),  
Kathryn Alio

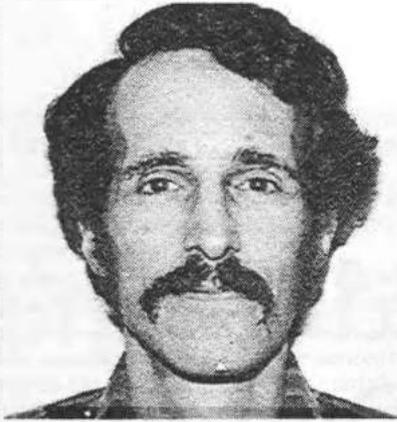
Back row, left to right:  
Verne Stout, Don  
Anderson,  
Karl Stettler,  
Robert Moul,  
Howard Brown

faith have given her a unique vision of the time in which we now live. "I think we need to be very serious," she stated. "We had better listen carefully to the Universal House of Justice and whatever words or directions they give us. We had better look to our inner selves as much as possible. We are told to read the writings and to pray at morning and

at night. We had better build up our inner strength for the days that are coming. (Unless we go back to the basics) we aren't going to have the success we're promised."

Alaska's own Kathryn Alio is indeed a woman of distinction.





Bill Allen

### BILL ALLEN PASSES

On Friday, February 13, 1981 Bill Allen passed to the Abha Kingdom, after suffering from a long illness of Hodgkins Disease, complicated finally by pneumonia. Although this event was expected, it has nevertheless left Douglas Community with a sad loss.

Bill declared his belief in Baha'u'llah on November 17, 1973 in Haines, after first hearing of the Faith from Mike Gordon and then attending firesides. He and Cathie Lawson were married in Juneau and in May 1974 they moved to Douglas to become caretakers of the Bergamaschi Institute. In February 1976 Bill became ill with Hodgkins Disease and they moved to Gig Harbor, Washington where they helped form the first Spiritual Assembly of Pierce County Peninsula. He served there as Treasurer and Librarian. He returned to the Douglas Community in the fall of 1979 and worked for the first time in three years. As a traveling auditor for the State, he was able to visit many of the friends throughout Alaska.

Two Memorial services were held, one for relatives and close friends at Cathie's apartment, and the official memorial on Friday, February 20. Bill had told Eugene King to be sure that his funeral would be a special teaching experience. Thus Eugene gave a heartfelt message on the Teachings and Life after Death, and a tribute to Bill's kindness, sense of humor and tenacity. Afterwards coffee was served at the Gruening Park Recreation Centre where Baha'is and friends discussed the beauty of the service. Many have since requested reading material on the Baha'i Teachings.

The Feast is Better when  
YOU Are There

The ALASKA BAHÁ'Í NEWS is printed by the Native Faith in Alaska. The Committee for 1980-81 is: Mrs. J Beverly Kolstoc, Gary Stone, Charlotte Siverly.



### Milam Barnes

his son Travis Barnes, Travis' Mother, Mary Ellen Petruska

Milam was one of the precious souls who found Bahá'u'lláh during Massive Encounter in Anchorage in 1970. He became an active member of the McGrath Bahá'í community, and also lived in Nikolai, until he had to move to Anchorage and later to Wasilla for medical care. Milam and Travis were returning to McGrath after visiting relatives in Texas and California, when Milam suddenly passed away from a heart attack on September 27, 1998.

He was always happy and smiling, dedicated to his family, generous to a fault in serving others, whether at his job as school bus driver or radio announcer at KSKO RADIO 870AM McGrath. Milam also kept the Faith close to his heart.

In his favorite prayer, the Báb says, "God, in truth, keepeth watch over all things." We know God is watching over our friend, Milam Barnes. Burial was in Marino Valley, California.

Alaska Bahá'í Community:  
Pioneers and Builders, p III-29

# Donald Anderson's Passing Is Deeply Felt by All Alaskans

On August 28, 1989 Don Anderson was working in his normal, reliable and thorough manner when he slipped on the roof he was repairing in Douglas and fell into a ravine. His injuries were very severe, and he was medically evacuated to Seattle. Don did not survive the trip.

The Universal House of Justice sent the following message immediately upon hearing of this tragedy:

*We are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Mr. Donald Anderson who served the Faith for many years in Alaska with great distinction and exemplary dedication. Prayers will be offered in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul. Kindly convey our condolences to the members of his family.*

There was a stunned reaction throughout Alaska as the news of Don's untimely death reached the friends.

One believer reflected the feelings of many when writing, "There are no words to adequately describe the impact that Don had on our lives as a family, even though we only met him personally a half a dozen times. His treasurer's commentary . . . in the *Alaska Bahá'í News*, offered us not only inspiration to greater self-sacrifice on behalf of the Fund, but gave us a glimpse of that unique wit, sense of humor, special dedication to the institution of the Bahá'í Fund and devotion to Bahá'u'lláh's Cause that we grew to love as characteristic of Don Anderson. Don's personal notes which accompanied each receipt gave a hint of his loving, caring nature and provided the inspiration to search for new ways for our family to increase our contribution to the 'lifeblood of the Cause.'" The letter goes on to say that Don understood that their family's contributions

must be modest, "yet he accepted each offering as if it were the most precious gift."

Donald Alan Anderson was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada on December 24, 1930. He was raised and educated in the Everett/Seattle area and moved to Alaska as a young man.

For most of his career he was a mechanical engineer. His work involved a great deal of travel, and he may have visited more Alaskan communities than any other Bahá'í. Go to practically any village and you will meet someone who will say, "Oh yes, I know a Bahá'í - Don Anderson." Then you will hear an unsolicited tribute to a man whose true stature the speaker may only dimly suspect. But, it will be a statement filled with respect and admiration.

By nature Don was a quiet, retiring person who would avoid crowds and much preferred the world of books to that of people. He first heard of the Faith in Ketchikan and would attend firesides with notebook in hand, ask his list of questions, enter into little other conversation and quietly leave. He enrolled in the Faith on April 10, 1956, helping to form the first Spiritual Assembly of Ketchikan. The following year he pioneered to Juneau to help form the first Spiritual Assembly there.

From the outset of his Bahá'í life, Don moved away from his preferred solitary life-style. Over the years he became well known and loved for his open friendliness and readiness to help under all circumstances. He grew into a caring person who was intently interested in other people and how they were getting along. He was never without a notebook in which he jotted down those things that were meaningful to him. It's indicative of Don's tender heart that they contained the names and birth dates of almost every Bahá'í child he met.

In 1962 Don married Sally Jackson from the

Yukon Territory. They had five children: Sean, Kenneth, Kimi, Carol, and Kaylin. The Andersons pioneered to Douglas to help form the first Spiritual Assembly there, and Don and Sally have been sustaining members and the bedrock of the Douglas community ever since.

Don was one of those rare individuals who was a truly independent thinker. In consultation his unique perspective often illuminated a view no one else had considered. While never contentious, antagonistic or confrontational, Don's contribution to consultation was invariably novel and enlightening.

In 1970 Don, as well as the other non-Indian members of the National Spiritual Assembly, was adopted as a Tlingit Indian in a moving ceremony in Petersburg.

Don served as a member of the Alaska National Spiritual Assembly from Ridván 1960 until his fatal accident. That was nearly 30 years - half of his life-span! While his service was always wholehearted, it was not what he would have chosen. However, his sense of dedication was such that he pursued his duties with devotion and energy.

He attended three International Conventions in Haifa, Israel including the historic first one in 1963 which witnessed the formation of the Universal House of Justice. He participated in every election of the supreme body, by mail ballot when he was unable to attend in person.

Don will be greatly missed throughout Alaska. It may take some time to accept the fact that he is really gone. He touched our lives in so many ways. He was a teacher of the Faith and a pioneer. He served on assemblies and committees, local and national. He conducted classes at Summer Schools on subjects as diverse as Hidden Words and Huqúqu'lláh. He regularly visited the sick and the lonely. He expended many days of physical labor to assist in construction of both Bergamaschi and Chilkat Valley Schools. He designed the plumbing and heating systems for the National Hazíratu'l-Quds. Wherever the need, Don was there.

But most people will remember him as the National Treasurer, a post he filled with diligence, grace and humor for more than 20 years. He well understood the privilege of supporting the Bahá'í Fund, and there is no doubt that he did all that was humanly possible to raise the friends to the level of their potential in relation to this privilege. Nor, is there a doubt that now, without human limitations, he will continue to inspire and encourage the friends to know the bounty of giving as a form of service to their Lord.



## Yeganeh Ataian

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 2 years as of 1999. First Elected in 1997

Yeganeh, a sixth generation Bahá'í whose great-great grandfather fought alongside Mullá Husayn and Quddús at Fort Shaykh Tabarsí, was living in Tihrán, prior to the Islámic revolution. She decided on a year of service before continuing her studies leading to a medical career. Yeganeh, and her Sister, Dina, took time off from school to serve the Faith.

They were gone for two years, 1979-80, first to Sri Lanka, then the Philippines. In both places they spent much time going out to the villages, frequently traveling by small boat and on foot to remote areas.

When the girls returned to Iran, the fundamental Islámic forces were in power. The girls finished their secondary school, but felt they should leave the country for further education. By this time, Bahá'ís were no longer permitted to travel freely in and out of the country. In 1984, Yeganeh and Dina left their mother and father and two younger sisters and went as refugees through the desert of southern Iran to Pakistan.

Once in Pakistan, they made contact with the United Nations office for refugees and a Bahá'í from Canada, was working in the office for refugees, in helping get people resettled. She was a great help to the girls and they filled out applications for pioneering to Australia. Of all those who applied at that time, Yeganeh's and Dina's applications were the only ones that got lost. They would have to wait another six months to reapply. They asked the Canadian Bahá'í where else they could go. She mentioned Alaska, which neither girl had ever heard of. Yeganeh does remember when studying Bahá'í laws about the place of the midnight sun, where clocks were needed for times for the obligatory prayers and fasting. She did not know the name of the place, but remembers thinking she must go there some day.

The refugee process involved going to Austria for a year (1984-85) while everything was being processed. They had written to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska seeking sponsorship, and gotten a letter stating that if they wanted to come as pioneers, they were welcome. That was exactly what the two girls wanted to do, because the Universal House of Justice has asked the Bahá'ís to pioneer and not just relocate.

They were given a warm reception by five Alaskan Bahá'í women—including three National Spiritual Assembly members—at the Anchorage airport. Since Yeganeh was over 21, they were asked to settle in Kalifornski (then Kalifonsky Beach) since the Spiritual Assembly was in jeopardy. That is where they went and the two sisters attended school in Soldotna from 1985-87. Then it became necessary for them to move to Anchorage to continue their education.

Yeganeh married Robert Baumgartner, and pioneered to Dillingham from 1991-1994. Then it was back to Anchorage again for more schooling, even though she changed from medicine because it would require her to leave Alaska and her family for awhile. Instead, she is working on a Ph.D. in molecular-cellular-developmental biology.

Especially meaningful for Yeganeh has been meeting five Hands of the Cause; visiting Holy Places in Iran, including the house of the Báb in Shíráz and the Mosque where He announced His mission, two houses of Bahá'u'lláh in Tihrán and Mazandarán, Fort Shaykh Tabarsí where her great-great-grandfather had served; and three pilgrimages to the World Centre.

During the 8<sup>th</sup> International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel, in 1998, she had an unexpected honor. With the name Ataian, coming from Alaska, she cast the very first ballot.

Walter W. Austin

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 6 years as of 1999. First elected in 1986.

Walter had a deep spiritual longing from early childhood. He was raised a Presbyterian, but was not satisfied in the church. Over a ten-year period he became involved with a number of religious expressions in search of something that would be completely satisfying. He became a Mormon, then joined the Salvation Army, then the United Pentecostals, and the Seventh Day Adventists.

In the summer of 1969, he was a janitor at a school where the Bahá'í summer school was being held. He quietly observed what was going on. The school was held in the same facility the following year and Walter witnessed more. Only, this time he started asking questions.

He made a spiritual connection with George Davis, a Bahá'í from Hoonah, and they had many conversations. Walter drew from his Tlingit traditions and realized some of the stories of the Raven related to the return of Christ. He became more curious and started attending firesides. Every week he would walk from his home in Juneau, across the bridge to Douglas to attend firesides at the Moulds. He was impressed that the Bahá'ís advised him that as a Native he should retain his cultural identity. This was so different from what he had heard in the churches.

Walter's religious journey had given him a strong foundation and knowledge of the Bible. He would ply the Bahá'ís with Bible-based questions and patiently await their answers and judge their reaction. Finally, on the first day of January, 1971, Walter enrolled in the Faith.

From the outset he was heavily involved with teaching, especially among Natives. He made many teaching trips throughout Southeast Alaska, flying with Fletcher Bennett. In the early 1980s he was part of the Camino Del Sol teaching project in which Native believers from North America traveled throughout South America.

When Walter moved to the Anchorage area, he became involved with the South Central Foundation and spent a great deal of time at the area prison facilities giving spiritual counsel to Native inmates.

Walter attended the International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in 1988.

# A Tribute to Vivian Ayerst

by John Falconer

*(John Falconer recently graduated from the University of Oregon in journalism and sociology. He and his wife, Zaynab, have been active with the Woodburn project in Oregon.)*

○ My Servant!

*The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.*

—Bahá'u'lláh

There's something unusually wonderful about the relationship between the seasoned craftsman and his trade. Perhaps it's some romantic notion we've assimilated, but we all have

come to respect the shared identity that over time becomes as much a part of a craftsman as it does a part of his craft. It is more than a co-dependency; it's a productive lifestyle that is nourished by love, dedication and commitment.

Anyone who has seen Vivian Gough Ayerst with her violin has seen this relationship personified. A violinist of 80 years, Mrs. Ayerst's existence is animated by her love for music. To see her next to a piano or with a violin in her clutch is to see her in her natural environment.

Her aged body seems to have naturally adapted to her craft. Like the experienced carpenter whose hands tell the story of the buildings he's constructed, Vivian Ayerst's physical frame appears to attest to the thousands of musical pieces she's performed—hours, for her, spent cradling her violin, reconstructing heavenly melodies.

"I feel like it's my life," she says about her music. "I can't always remember people's names," she adds, "but give me the first couple of notes of a piece and I'll play it through. It's always there."

And it has just about always been there. At the age of five it began being there, when she first started playing

Photo:  
Vivian Ayerst, with  
four-year-old student,  
Jennifer Miner, in her  
home studio in  
Anchorage.



violin. By the age of nine she was performing at Washington's Fort Lewis for World War I soldiers waiting to travel to France. The men of the 18th Engineer Regiment were of the first to hear her play publicly, and their response was exuberant—probably a glimmering of what was to come. A local newspaper captured the air of one of the early performances of the Violin Ensemble Club, of which Vivian was the main attraction:

"The huge theater was packed with men in uniform, who showed their appreciation of the beautiful numbers presented by the Club by applauding each selection.... Little Vivian Gough, the talented girl whose playing shows such remarkable artistry and ability, was given a tremendous ovation by the audience, storms of applause, cries and shouts of approval, following her solo number, and she was obliged to return to play again."

Thus began an extraordinary career that has, among other things, included participation in four symphonies—Tacoma, Olympia, Phoenix, and Anchorage—the last of which saw her seated for 30 years in the first violin section initially under conductor Peter Britch.

But the road to Anchorage was a long one that included as a milestone her first pupil, when, at the age of 12, she started teaching the girl next door. After finishing high school and one year of college at the University of Washington, she studied at the Cornish School of Arts in Seattle for four years, then taught there for some time. Later, in 1952, she and her husband Charles Wilder Ayerst both headed off to Ketchikan.

It was during this first period in Alaska that Mrs. Ayerst first heard of and accepted Bahá'u'lláh. The women's clubhouse in Ketchikan was the regular site of deepenings and firesides, with a sizable group of at least twelve attending each meeting. It was at one of those firesides, after a long period of study and reflection, that Vivian accepted the Faith. She received her card not long after signed by Hand of the Cause of God Horace Holley.

In 1959, after moving to Sitka for four years, the Ayersts moved to Anchorage "to be in the music capital of Alaska." And here she proceeded to make a considerable contribution to the

art, at once playing for the symphony orchestra, the Anchorage Opera Company and the Borealis String Quartet (which at one time included Bahá'í Randy Carlson). And all the while she was teaching private lessons.

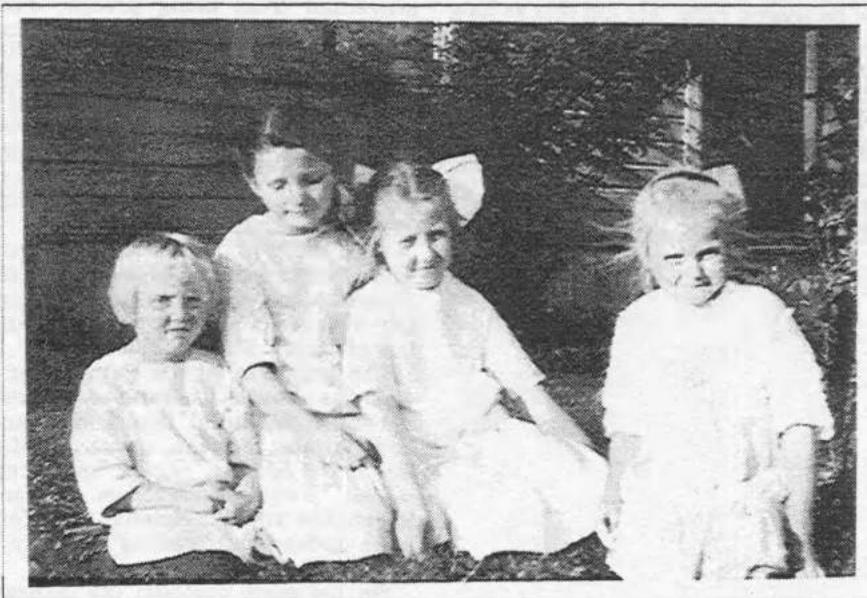
Vivian is a 50 year member of the American Federation of Musicians Local #76 out of Seattle. They have inscribed her name on a bronze plaque which is displayed in the Board room of the Local 76 Union Office in Seattle and they have presented her with a 50 year pin.

Vivian feels strongly about the relation between music and the Bahá'í Faith. "Music is a unifying element, and that's important to Bahá'ís," she says. "Musicians were the first ones to accept other races in their work because it didn't matter what color your skin was, just as long as you could play the music."

Today, despite her near-complete loss of sight, she continues to teach a few students. Her music is her sustenance, both spiritually and materially, but she prefers to give the lessons for free, she says, "to help pay her rent for living on this earth." She will be 85 on January 4.

Recently, after conducting a number of tests and interviews, the Alaska Center for the Blind decided to grant Vivian use of a \$7000 magnifier to help her read music and continue conducting her lessons. She says she is patiently waiting for its arrival.

**Photo:**  
The "Little Helpers Club". Vivian, age 7, second from the left. In 1917-18 this club made joke books and sent them to the soldiers in France.



## DERYL R. "DOC" BARRY

Word has been received of the death of Doc Barry on September 9, after a long struggle with cancer. Doc, who became a Bahá'í in 1950, moved to Kenai in January 1961. He later met Geneva Gibbs and they were married in Seward on July 4, 1964.

Doc spent his working years following the oil industry and working mainly in the area of transportation. He worked in several states and concluded his career in Alaska. He was known to be one of the best at what he did and was praised for his efforts, skill, and dedication to his work and those he worked with. He shared his vast knowledge of transporting oil field equipment by teaching the young men about the work and creating in them a desire to do their very best. Because of his abilities he was offered many positions of authority, but he chose to stay with the men and do the jobs he loved best. Doc was the first man to package an oil rig to be put on an airplane so that it might be flown to the bush country of Alaska. Because of this men were able to load and send oil rigs to all parts of the world. He was one of the first to go to Prudhoe Bay and help set up the first oil field camp and pipe yard there.

After retiring he moved to Idaho, where he renewed an old love he had for horses. He trained a pair of ponies, bought a small wagon and began entering them in the parades and fairs. Some of his greatest moments were taking the children on wagon rides. He did this as long as his health would permit. He won many trophies and ribbons for his efforts.

Doc and Geneva were active Bahá'ís in the Kenai Peninsula and Anchorage areas until his retirement in 1976. Geneva would appreciate hearing from the Friends: Geneva Barry, P.O. Box 76, Indian Valley, Idaho 83632.

Alaska Bahá'í Community  
Pioneers and Builders, p III-36



KAL AND SHANTA MURDAY BASIN (at left) WITH FRIENDS ON FIRST WEDDING ANNIVERSARY, LESOTHO.

## LESOTHO ON THE MOVE Kalman Basin

I can hardly believe that a year and a half have elapsed since I arrived in Lesotho — the beautiful and challenging Mountain Kingdom.

During the time I have been here I have had the great joy of witnessing many victories for our Most Glorious Faith.

I still clearly remember the eve of Ridvan 1973, not long after my arrival, when the goals of the completion of the National Haziratu'l-Quds and Institute and the Incorporation of the Faith were accomplished.

Four months later, I was united to Shanta by the bonds of marriage. We were fortunate to have two counsellors, Mrs. B. Winckler and Mr. S. Appa, attending our wedding. Counsellor Mr. Fat'he-Aazam and his family were prevented from being present due to his daughter's sudden serious illness. They visited us shortly after.

In October 1973 Lesotho had the great bounty of the visit of Hand of the Cause, Dr. Muhajir. An intensive teaching program was planned. Unfortunately, owing to a situation beyond our control, the program had to be interrupted as soon as it started.

This state of unrest in the country lasted until after Ridvan 1974. The friends were prevented from going to the villages and thus only 19 out of the 47 LSA's were re-elected.

The highlight of the Baha'i year 130 was the Youth Conference sponsored by our Continental Board of Counsellors. Almost all the countries of the Southern African region were represented. Youth came from as far as Seychelles and St. Helena. The Youths were indeed outstanding in their behaviour and actions.

On the same occasion the dedication of the Baha'i property was held. Two Ministers from the Government as well as many guests were present. Trees were planted by the dignitaries to mark

the occasion.

Shanta and I, together with other Baha'i friends, visit the Baha'i Communities as often as we can to deepen the believers and encourage them to teach. One of the Communities (Ha Foso), where we hold regular deepening classes, opened the first locality in the Five Year Plan. John Kolstoe will remember this community. We both helped to form that LSA while he was here.

We paid a visit to the chief of a nearby village to invite him to send the children to our Sunday class. We don't yet have Baha'is in that village but from 30 to 50 children attend the classes. They are learning prayers, songs and the history of the Faith.

We are now looking ahead to the accomplishments of the goals of the Five Year Plan. Recently the Counsellors called a conference for NSA members and Auxiliary Board Members to launch the Five Year Plan in this region. The Conference was held in Rhodesia. Mrs. Florence Mayberry represented the International Teaching Centre.

After the Conference we had the pleasure of having Counsellor Mr. Appa and Mrs. Appa. They visited many Baha'i communities and individual Baha'i families. Their visit seems to have instilled a new spirit of dedication and enthusiasm in the friends.

We also regularly receive the visits of Counsellors, Mrs. Winckler and Mr. Fat'he-Aazam. We are so thankful for all the help they give us from their great experiences of long service to our Cause in Africa.

Thus the light of this Mighty Cause is slowly spreading to this part of the world. No doubt soon its splendour will encompass the whole region.

With hearts full of gratitude my wife and myself request the prayers of the Baha'i friends of Alaska, for Lesotho.

Kalman Basin  
P. O. Box 936  
Maseru, Lesotho, S. Africa

Thomas Ernest (Ernie) Baumgartner

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 3+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1995.

When the history of the developmental years of the Alaskan Bahá'í community is finally written, the name Baumgartner will stand out as one of the preeminent Bahá'í families.

Ernie's parents, Tom and Dottie Baumgartner, were living in Dade County, Florida when they decided to pioneer to Alaska. They packed up their five boys—which Dottie said was their only asset—and headed north. The family stayed in Seattle for one year to earn enough money to continue on their objective. They arrived in Anchorage on the eve of Ridván, April 20, 1958, stopped at the National Bahá'í Office where the National Secretary, Evelyn Huffman, told them that Tanana Valley was about to lose its Spiritual Assembly. Without even stopping for a cup of coffee, they headed north, saved the Spiritual Assembly. The only housing they could find was in a converted chicken coop. (See "Glance in the Rearview Mirror # 19).

That was Ernie's introduction to Alaska. As the oldest of the five boys, Ernie was a major help in the difficulties the family faced amidst primitive and spartan conditions. Since then, Baumgartners have served in all parts of Alaska. There is hardly a village anywhere that hasn't had at least a visit by one or more members of the family.

Ernie, and his wife, Natalie (Ayerst) and their seven children have pioneered as far south as Klawock on Prince of Wales Island, but are best known for their work in McGrath. While there, Ernie taught the Faith traveling by small plane or dog team to get to remote areas.

In 1980 he came in third in the grueling Iditarod Dog Sled race and probably could have won except that at the last checkpoint he shared his dog food with the front runner, Joe May, whose supply of food had not arrived. At the award banquet later, winner May announced to all assembled that the real, moral winner was Ernie, "who stands nine feet tall in my estimation." Jonathan and Audrie Reynolds were pioneering in Unalakleet on the Iditarod trail. Audrie reported the special thrill of hearing a loud "Alláh-u-Abhá" ring out as the mushers raced by.

When asked why he became a Bahá'í, Ernie answered, "For the same reason the sun comes up in the morning." He relates that, "A life-time of service, struggle, and confirmation" are the special circumstances for being a Bahá'í.

Many who were Bahá'í youth in Alaska and the Yukon Territory of Canada will be forever grateful to Ernie and Natalie Baumgartner as co-founders and directors of the Alaska-Canada (Alcan) International Youth Training Program from 1991 to 1997.

When Ernie was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly the office of Treasurer was vacant. He was immediately elected to fill that position. While never having had any training or experience with corporate financial management, Ernie took on the duties of the Treasurer with characteristic enthusiasm and vigor. Whether facing a grim financial condition or other seemingly intractable problems, Ernie could be counted on to find some humor in the peril to lighten the burden. It was as if he could create "a light at the end of the tunnel" when none existed.

Ernie attended the Eighth International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa in 1998.

## With Our Pioneers

NEWS FROM KLAWOCK  
Prince of Wales Island

### ERNIE and NATALIE BAUMGARTNER

In September, after attending the Annual Convention in Anchorage, making an exciting trip through Alaska and Canada, and attending the Summer School in Juneau, Ernie and Natalie and their children arrived at their new pioneer post.

Ernie writes as follows:

When we stepped off the plane in Klawock, we had \$20, a small sack of groceries and slightly over 200 lbs. of baggage. I piled all the baggage on one corner of the float and told Natalie to wait there with the kids until I walked over to the cannery, got the key to the house and came back. I hoped that I could hold off paying the rent for a few days until my check arrived. But I took the \$20 along in case of any difficulty, to pay a week's rent if necessary. The man I dealt with was very nice, so we were given some breathing room financially. Our rent was to be \$75 month. The check that was coming was for \$70, so that left us with \$15. We still had to have fuel to heat and cook with, electricity, and what was most important . . . food to eat. So we weren't out of the woods yet.

After I had gotten the key and was heading back to Natalie and the children, one of the Indians that lives in Klawock told me to hop in his car and he would drive me back. We introduced ourselves and started back. When he had dropped me off at the house I was surprised to see Natalie and the children with all of our baggage there by the door. It turned out that the Indian people standing on the float when the plane came in carried our belongings and escorted Nat and the kids to the house and then came after me in the car.

I unlocked the door and we all walked in. The house is large; three bedrooms, bathroom—with an automatic washer, kitchen, large living room and large dining room. It is built on high pilings and is completely over water during high tide. Natalie, the children, and I fell in love with the house, town and the people in about 1 hour. The lights were on, there was fuel in the tank, and love in our hearts. What better homecoming could we have asked for? Baha'u'llah had worked overtime and we were grateful.

Early the next morning I left to report for work with the U.S. Forest Service. For the next 24 days and nights Natalie and the children were left to get acquainted with the people on their own.

We have now passed the 2-month mark that we have lived in Klawock. I am no longer working, so consequently spend all my time with the people here.

Our Indian friends have taken me out and are teaching me, little by little, how to hunt and fish their way. They have taught us how to smoke fish and given

us pointers on canning salmon. They have given us deer, salmon, crab and soon some will take me out in their seine boat to a reef in the ocean to dig for the big clams.

The first generation we were able to get acquainted with was the older one. I just love to listen to stories and joke around. The old ones are great story tellers and have a keen sense of humor, so it didn't take us long to get together. A lot of their stories and legends are fascinating and some are quite humorous. When they speak, they use their whole body to illustrate the important points, and we could sit and listen all night long.

The next ones we got comfortable with were the middle generation. They were very open and friendly right from the start.

The motorcycle created many moments of indecision, because I couldn't decide to sell it or bring it over. It turned out to be worth its weight in gold. Not only has it been a means of transportation, but I have turned it into a work-horse. It was the means whereby I was able to tell one person about the Faith, and it has also created a bond of companionship between the teenagers and me.

That left only the people our own ages that we really hadn't gotten close with. Well, do you think Baha'u'llah would leave these apart? Not on your life! I turned out for and managed to get on the A.N.B. town basketball team. So now we are creating a good relationship with the people our own age.

We have been asked to join the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood, have been invited to people's houses for parties or just for coffee and talk, and have been to a potluck dinner and a meeting. There is nobody in the whole town that won't give us at least a "hello" and smile when we pass on the road.

There are three different families now that feel free about coming to our house and we to their house without any notice. We are just like very close and friendly neighbors. I was able to tell one of these men about the Faith, as I mentioned before. He received it very well, and I feel there is a good contact. There are six others that we are waiting to tell of the Glad Tidings of Baha'u'llah, but are waiting for Baha'u'llah to pick the time and place.

Yes! It's very easy to see why 'Abdu'l-Baha gave such a high and wonderful station to the Indian people of the world. We love them dearly and hope that Baha'u'llah will allow us the undeserved bounty of living among people such as these for the rest of our lives.

We would like to hear from all our friends—so write us at Box 325, Klawock, Alaska 99925.

—Ernie and Nat Baumgartner



ERNIE AND NATALIE AYERST  
BAUMGARTNER and three  
children, summer, 1968.

### VALDEZ PROCLAMATION

The pioneers in Valdez, Don and Marie Van Brunt and Sam Ezi, are quite excited over the results of their Proclamation program. They write that there seems to be a widespread awareness of the Faith in their chosen goal. Beginning with the Birth of Baha'u'llah they plan weekly quarter pages in the "Valdez Breeze" to proclaim the Baha'i Message.

Recently they were asked to tell about the Baha'i Faith at a discussion class called "Faith in Search of Understanding." This is an ecumenical study class of members from the Church of the Epiphany, representing American Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, Methodists and Presbyterians. In addition to the three pioneers, there were nine adults present, including Father Sarles, who invited them, his wife, four school teachers, the mailman and his wife, and a neighbor across the street. The presentation took over an hour, with many questions being asked. The Baha'is were asked to come back every Tuesday to join the group and they said they would when possible, promising to listen to the others instead of talking so so much!

The Valdez pioneers keep in touch with contacts in Glennallen, and go to Cordova to square dance and get acquainted with people, and are in touch with many of the natives from Tatitlek, a small village about 35 miles from Valdez, which they will visit by boat.

### "AS YE HAVE FAITH"

" . . . nothing shall be impossible to you if you have faith . . . As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessing be . . . This is the standard — this is the standard — this is the standard."

—'Abdu'l-Baha. Baha'i Scriptures,  
page 504.

## A TRIBUTE TO NAPOLEON BERGAMASCHI

### NAPOLEON BERGAMASCHI—Pioneer

"Bergamaschi? Why that's an Italian name!" were the words from the lips of Angelina Giachery, wife of Hand of the Cause Ugo Giachery. They were spoken with unconcealed pride while she was being told of this remarkable pioneer.

To "Plant the banner of Baha'u'llah in the as yet unopened areas of . . . St. Lawrence Island." This goal of the Nine-Year Plan given to Alaska by the Universal House of Justice seemed exceedingly difficult. Remote; difficult to reach; a lonely island in the middle of the Bering Sea; closer to Siberia than the Alaskan Mainland; consisting of two Eskimo villages—Savoonga and Gambell; with a language, culture and customs different from other Eskimo communities; no job opportunities to support a pioneer since the economy is basically hunting and fishing—a subsistence living; severe weather, with long, dark cruel winters. It is no wonder that the other virgin goals—Prince of Wales Island, The Alaskan Peninsula, Nunivak Island, and the Pribilof Islands—all had Baha'is at their posts and St. Lawrence Island remained unfilled.

Articles and appeals appeared in the *Alaska Baha'i News*. Baha'is were talking, some were trying to figure out a way to go there. Service had been offered to the National Spiritual Assembly, but no one really seemed able to go.

Then there was Napoleon Bergamaschi. "Nip", or "Bergie" as he was called, was part Eskimo. He was born in Nome, Alaska but lived in Southeast Alaska since he was 12 years old. He was left an orphan at an early age and attended Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools in Wrangell and Sitka. Napoleon adapted well to life in Southeast. He married a girl from Metlakatla, settled in Ketchikan and became a part of the more sophisticated life and cash economy there. His Eskimo heritage seemed remote indeed compared to his new way of life.

In July of 1961 "Bergie" became a Baha'i. He was a quiet, though vital, part of the Ketchikan Baha'i community. As other Alaskan Baha'is, he read about the goal of St. Lawrence Island and he must have wondered who would go. He never thought it would be he. After all, he wasn't free to go since he had so many responsibilities. He had the sole responsibility for the three children. Besides, what would he do there? True, he was an Eskimo, but what did he know of the Eskimo way of life? He had lived in Nome, but never in a village. What about the language? Or hunting and fishing in the Bering Sea? Or survival itself in that inhospitable climate? After all he had made the transition to the white-man's

world. He had never been a part of primitive life; he was not from the old ways, he was a part of the modern, sophisticated world. He was what the sociologist called "acculturated." No, pioneering to St. Lawrence Island didn't enter his thinking when he read of it.

It was at the Petersburg Winter Conference during the New Year weekend in 1966 that the "Call to Pioneering" tape prepared by Hand of the Cause William Sears was played. In fact it was played twice at that conference and "Nip" had heard it once before. (Later he laughingly reported that it was dangerous to listen to that tape three times.) That third time, that was when "Nip" first thought of pioneering to St. Lawrence Island.

He wrote a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly humbly, almost apologetically asking if it would be all right for him to go. Thus, Napoeon and the three children, Napoleon Jr. 10; Ida 8; and Leonard 4 winged their way to a peerless spiritual adventure in time for Ridvan 1966.

The Bergamaschis settled in Savoonga as Napoleon discovered he had a half-brother living there. Since there was no other housing available, they moved in with the half-brother. There they were; two families in a two room cabin. For nearly a year they lived under those crowded conditions. At the end of that time, with no housing to be found, it was necessary for the Bergamaschis to leave their pioneering post. Napoleon had been heroic just in going out to Savoonga and battling unfamiliar conditions. He faced a lot of dangers on the ice. One time he was with a boat of hunters and they met another hunting party—from Russia's Siberia. He faced and met every kind of physical and mental obstacle and overcame them because of his love for Baha'u'llah.

During that year "Nip" became a worthy boatman, learned much of the language, won the love and respect of the people, and they in turn won his heart. Keith Koontz was the only person to be found who showed much interest in the Faith. He was a trapper, hunter and guide in Savoonga for a short time on a special project for the Department of Fish and Game. As Napoleon left he vowed that, God-willing, he would return. But, there simply was no housing to be found.\*

Within the next year a series of events occurred which seemed almost like a fairy story. It showed how simply the Hand of Baha'u'llah makes the impossible possible.

Who can forget the dramatic story of how a house was designed in Juneau, financed from Kodiak, organized from Anchorage, materials gathered in Seattle for the one boat a year to Savoonga, finally put together in Savoonga by "Nip"? By July the Bergamaschis were returning to the land of their heart's desire. (See ABN No. 93, April 1967, p. 1)

Enroute to his rendezvous with his house, "Nip" learned that Keith had embraced the Cause of Baha'u'llah—the first fruit of pioneering in Savoonga. "Yahoo!" was his enthusiastic response as he threw his hat in the air. He could almost fly the rest of the way without an airplane!

"Nip" proceeded to build the Baha'i house which witnessed many wonders. By the next February Velma Pungowiwi had become a Baha'i. She then married Keith Koontz who had returned "To help Napoleon build an Assembly." (ABN's Nos. 103 & 104; April, May 1968).

Two years later, the oldest, Napoleon Jr., was ready for high school and there was no high school in Savoonga. Another decision had to be made. Again, the Bergamaschis reluctantly left. No Assembly had been formed, but a strong nucleus of new Baha'is was left.

Naturally, the Bergamaschis looked for an area where they could pioneer again. This time it was Wrangell and "Bergie" helped form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Wrangell last Ridvan.

On November 7, 1971, Napoleon was driving down an icy street in Wrangell enroute to help a friend who had called him. A sudden crash quickly crushed out the life of 36 year old Napoleon Bergamaschi.

Napoleon Bonaparte was turned back, defeated by Russia's wintry blasts. Another Napoleon, the third, contemptuously threw the words of Baha'u'llah behind him and sank from the pinnacle of glory into ignominious oblivion. Napoleon Bergamaschi restores honor to the name Napoleon as he rises from obscurity because he took the words his namesake had scorned and undeterred by winter storms firmly planted the banner of Baha'u'llah on the very footsteps of the back door of Russia's Siberia.

Napoleon Bergamaschi. A noble soul. Another of the true "treasures" which God promised to Baha'u'llah, "men who will aid Thee . . ." He responded when called and maybe this is the highest tribute we can pay to him—he answered the call. Now his spirit is free to hover over the regions so dear to his heart—the land of his ancestry, birth and pioneering; and Southeast Alaska where he found Baha'u'llah and served Him so well.

(Continued on page 8, col. 2)



### NAPOLEON BERGAMASCHI

There is still more to ponder in this third tragic death within four months. Three diverse, remarkable, valiant and dedicated Baha'is of the north so recently met tragic accidents and winged their flights into the Kingdom of Abha: Caucasian Roberta Christian, 7-30-71; Indian Peter Simple, 8-17-71; Eskimo Napoleon Bergamaschi, 11-7-71. Who knows the sudden need in the Realms on High for such a brilliant mixture of the best, noblest, extraordinary souls from Alaska?

We can thank God for their spirits, be assured of their assistance, remain confident of the role they continue to play, and glory in the prize of victory which their sacrifice will surely yield.

John E. Kolstoe

\*As these words are being penned in a small, plain room facing the Bering Sea in Nome, the land of Napoleon's birth. Nome is caught in the jaws of a fierce Arctic storm. The bitter wind howls a plaintive cry as it hurls its needle-like icy jabs at all who would dare face it. A "white-out" obscures all view in a sea of swirling white and a power failure stops civilization in its tracks. A lonely candle is summoned. In the yellow flicker of its primitive light this story of Napoleon Bergamaschi and his return to a more primitive life for the love of Baha'u'llah continues. Somehow, this interruption of the smooth flow of civilization and the need to revert to the ancient but reliable candle seems a fitting footnote in this tribute to Napoleon the Pioneer.

# ALASKA BAHÁ'Í NEWS

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**BERGAMASCHI PIONEERS to St. Lawrence Island: Napoleon with Napoleon, Jr., Ida and Leonard.**

**They completed their move to Savoonga March 22. See story in March ABN.**

# WITH OUR PIONEERS

## From Savoonga

Napoleon Bergamaschi, endearingly referred to by his friends as "Nip" or "Bergie," wrote from his pioneer post on May 19th that his teaching the Faith up to that time had been to a white man rather than to the Eskimos. This contact was from the Fairbanks area and he knows several Baha'is.

Bergie further wrote: "I did find one thing, that the Eskimos here speak the same language as the Eskimos in Siberia. (Hmm . . . Shoghi Effendi referred to Alaska as the 'back door' to Russia.) The mainland Eskimos and the ones here cannot understand each other, so they speak English. I can't say much more, only that life is quite different than in big towns. I really enjoyed the notes from the Convention . . . made me wish I was there." Bergie's address is simply Savoonga, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, 99769. He would enjoy hearing from the friends.

## From the Pribilofs

Rowena Burack Currington introduced herself to the residents of the Pribilofs in a letter on the front page of the local "Pribilof Breeze" for April 18, by offering children's acting classes for ages 4 years to 16 years at no charge. In her letter she stated:

"Since 1950, I have been a professional actor's writer working on stage, films, radio and television. Two years before I came to Alaska, I was director of my School of Creative Arts for Children in California . . . I was chosen to write a novel of the Aleut people on the Pribilofs—a book with heart, about the customs and ways of the people, and this time to by-pass the sealing industry."

Rowena wrote from St. Paul Island on May 19th about her arrival there on April 6th, the struggle to find housing, and subsequent activities. This is her account:

"I am on St. Paul—the larger of the two islands—which is about 35 square miles. The ground looks like craters on the moon and the wind blows almost constantly although at a slower speed than Cold Bay, I understand. Having arrived without advance permission, but with the prayers of the friends and the Universal House of Justice, and with the news that I was commissioned to write a book about the customs and legends of the Aleuts, I was given indefinite permission to remain on St. Paul.

"When I got off the plane it was raining and there is no shelter. I was worried about my Tiger Baby cat so I stood next to the plane while they unloaded cargo and kept saying the Greatest Name, which I had been repeating to myself over and over again as soon as the stewardess called out that we'd be landing on St. Paul. We had to circle the field four times, low over the icy wa-



Rowena Burack Currington before leaving for pioneer post.

ters, and somehow I called on 'Abdu'l-Baha for help because I wasn't sure we'd make it.

"After a few minutes on land I heard someone say I should wait in a parked car; they handed me Tiger Baby, and we moved over to the waiting car. In a few more minutes I was driven to the administrative office of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, under the Dept. of the Interior. My role as we were driving into the village was cool, calm, innocent, a writer having arrived at her destination. I was interrogated, literally, by the assistant Island Manager, (Howard Euneau, the Manager was in Seattle) and the Public Relations men, perhaps for about one hour—it was like a scene from the play, "Darkness at Noon," which took place in a Russian prison camp. Baha'u'llah, the whole Supreme Concourse, along with the spirits of Eleanora Duse and Sarah Bernhardt, were hovering very closely and when the assistant said at one point, 'I shouldn't have let you get off the plane,' their prayerful assistance was so close, I didn't deter and kept on repeating the Greatest Name. Then I heard them say suddenly they thought it was alright, and didn't I want to have dinner with the public relations man and his wife? And surely it would be alright with the regional office in Seattle but they would send a wire anyway. I was given a room at the Government House, designated for visiting V.I.P. I had 30 minutes to change for dinner, which I felt would be a friendly interrogation over cocktails, and because I was only drinking Seven Up and they were deep in martinis I came out ahead.

"On the 9th, I was informed the Seattle office had given me permission to stay till the 20th but that I could remain

indefinitely if I could find lodgings other than the Government House. But that's where the trouble lay—the Aleuts weren't too sure of me. Actually everyone thought I was a spy for someone else—I almost had one room but they anticipated I was Mrs. Rockefeller and wanted \$200 per month. It didn't seem very just and I knew I was protected so I held out and finally on April 19 I secured a room in the home of a young Aleut widow and her three little children for \$100 per month. At first there was very little hot water and no refrigerator—which didn't bother the widow but after a few weeks it was beginning to reach me. Just when I thought it had gone too far and I really was calling on help, the plumber and electricians arrived on the scene to correct the hot water problem, and tomorrow we get a refrigerator. She has three little boys who have difficulty speaking so they scream and cry instead. One afternoon I thought my nerves were really frizzled and I wondered if I dared pray for a little peace and quiet. I apologized for the prayer but I remember saying I really needed a little quiet. The next day was a new day and has been ever since. No screaming, no shouting, and so it has been, confirmations all the time. I have been invited to the homes of the Aleuts and just yesterday I was asked why I didn't make this Island my permanent home! I said I would if my husband could be here.

"The people are bright and alert but have been so trodden on for so long by the Russian and American governments they have a great disliking for the 'whites'. Everything must be slow and easy with great patience which isn't quite down my alley, having come from the fast pace of New York and Los Angeles. But they seem to enjoy me and the children love the acting classes and ask to attend on Sundays. The difficulty is housing and job opportunities for pioneers on the island. It would be perfect for teachers because wonderfully equipped homes are given to them for \$75 per month, including utilities. There are no jobs for women and only one or two in Civil Service construction for men, but the same men have held the jobs for years. And only with a job can you get an apartment or house.

"If someone had money to open a business like dry cleaning, film developing, or shoe repair—which the Aleuts are not trained at—he would have a pretty good chance, but it would take great diplomacy along with the prayers. You can't come in and take over; it must be done ever so gently. Today I had an idea that 'Canteen', the only enterprise run by the villagers should sell children's books. So at 9 a.m. I was talking with Terrenti Philemonoff and asking

(Continued on page 6)

# With Our Pioneers - - -

(Continued from page 5)

if he didn't think it was a good idea? Perhaps I could write a few letters and find out the least expensive way of doing it? He was most grateful and said I should do it immediately.

"I've got a few people anxious to tell me customs and legends so I've made inquiries about renting a tape recorder (a residual check from an old "Twilight Zone" TV job, 1962, came in the mail yesterday) and within a few days I'll have that down, because I must constantly be on the move with regard to the book I am writing. Sometimes that gets on my nerves and I don't know what to do—but I'll walk about the island saying the prayers and it's really very exciting.

"If I sit at my window I can hear and see the Bering Sea. It's really a charming little island physically — something like a Welsh mining town. Actually it's corrupt, decadent, materialistic, and it reminds me of Persia during the time of the Bab's Declaration, or Russia during the pogrom of the Jews. But after almost two months they are used to me — the BCF (Bureau of Commercial Fisheries), the Aleuts, and the teachers, although each group thought I was a spy for the other!

"It could be a marvelous place, indefinitely, for a couple, or a family with children, who are teachers. The prices are those of Fairbanks and Anchorage, and there is an elementary school, and a doctor. Beachcombing, movies (not the latest), a baseball court and a recreation hall for volley ball and dancing. I think that about covers the news on the Rialto of St. Paul!"

## From Nunivak Island

**Bud Revet** sends a brief resume of events and background in a letter dated May 31st.

"Things have gone well since I arrived at Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island. I got here April 18 and managed to tell one man about some of the principles of the Baha'i Faith the first night. Since then the BIA school teachers have read **God Loves Laughter and Thief in the Night**. One of them is now reading **The Book of Certitude** and has been reading **Hidden Words**. There are two "Vista" volunteers here and they have both read **Thief in the Night** and one has read **Islamic Contributions to Civilization**. There is one man here who knew about the Faith but did not say anything until the other day. He had learned about the Faith from the Blumensteins at Nome.

"The Swedish Covenant Church is very strong here, and it would be easy to alienate the whole village. The minister asked me to speak and I did, on the theme of Micah 4. I said a Baha'i prayer before and after. Since then it has been possible to say something about the Faith to at least a dozen more people.

It has been almost impossible to talk to any of the women but I am going to start taking lessons in Eskimo and this may help. About one third of the people here speak very little English.

"We plan to start a fishing Co-op and have been making trips to Bethel in this regard. While there the Pentecostal Holiness minister was a contact and quite receptive. Without the help and prayers of you all, this goal would have to remain unsettled for a long time to come. It makes one very humble to see how our beloved Baha'u'llah helps even the most unworthy to achieve the impossible."

Bud's address is Mekoryuk, Nunivak Island, Alaska 99630. Letters from the friends would be most welcome.

## BAHÁ'Í RECEIVES GOVERNOR'S AWARD

Rita Pitka Blumenstein, Yup'ik tradition bearer originally from Tununak on Nelson Island, has been awarded the 1987 Governor's Award for the Arts. Rita and five other award recipients traveled to Juneau on April 25 to receive this prestigious honor which is given annually to individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the arts in Alaska.

Rita, a Palmer Bahá'í, is a dedicated teacher who has shared her knowledge of basketry, skin sewing, story telling, and Yup'ik dancing with hundreds of people in Alaska, Europe, Canada, and South America. She is presently teaching in the community college in Palmer and in the Johnson O'Malley (Indian education) programs in the Public Schools.

Rita has been involved in many programs sponsored by the institute of Alaska Native Arts over the past years. In 1981, she was a participant in an Aleut Basketry workshop in Anchorage for the Institute of Alaska Native Arts. As a result of requests from that workshop, IANA published a book by Rita entitled "Earth Dyes," a publication on how the Yup'ik people make dyes for grass basketry from natural materials. In 1985 she was a guest curator for the IANA exhibit of contemporary Alaska Native baskets, "Interwoven Expressions." Rita's most recent activity with IANA was collaborating on an interview which will be published by the San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum in a catalog accompanying their exhibit of Alaskan items made from fish skin and gut.

Accompanying Rita to Juneau were her husband Bernard, her daughter Sandra Palmer, and son Sam. Upon receiving the award from Governor Steve Cowper, Rita, dressed in mukluks and kuspuk, thanked those who had helped her in efforts to keep traditional arts and crafts alive. In

customary Yup'ik fashion, she reciprocated with a gift of a moose and seal skin Eskimo kick ball which she presented to the governor, explaining that whenever he gets frustrated in his job, he should "kick the heck" out of it. That brought down the house, with the governor laughing the loudest.

While in Juneau, Rita and her family stayed at the Bahá'í Center and had the opportunity to meet many of the local Bahá'ís.

Jetta J. A. Brewer-Huber

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 5+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1976.

Jetta was a fourth-generation Mormon from Southern Utah and was very active in her church work. However, there were some basic issues which bothered her, and made her receptive to the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh. When she embraced the Faith on June 19, 1970 she entered with full enthusiasm.

Soon after her enrollment in Anchorage, she began attending deepening classes on God Passes By, which required a round trip of 100 miles each week. She would usually get a carload of Bahá'ís to go with her.

During the Fast a few months after her enrollment, she was meditating on the needs for homefront pioneers. One month later, she was transferred with her employment to a goal area, Kenai, where she continued her work as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, and where her home quickly became the center of Bahá'í activity for the area. She assisted with the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Kenai, in 1973. She continued to live in and around Kenai until 1979.

She was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1976. Then within months she accepted an appointment to the Auxiliary Board for Propagation in Southcentral Alaska. This necessitated her resignation from the National Spiritual Assembly.

In 1979, when Janet Smith accepted a position at the World Centre, the National Spiritual Assembly looked in earnest for someone who could take over the duties of the National Office. There was no one serving on the body at that time, who was in a position to fill that role. A special arrangement was made with the Continental Board of Counsellors, enabling Jetta to serve as an Executive Director of the National Office, while retaining her position on the Auxiliary Board. That continued until Janet actually resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly and left Alaska. Jetta was elected to fill that vacancy and she chose to resign from the Auxiliary Board and accept that election, thus beginning a second term of service on the National Spiritual Assembly.

Robert Putnam had been elected as the National Secretary when Janet Smith resigned from that position; his service in that capacity continued while Jetta continued serving as Executive Director for the balance of that Administrative year. At the following Convention, she was again elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, and was elected Secretary. She continued to serve in that capacity until 1983.

Over the years, it has been her good fortune to meet at least twelve Hands of the Cause, and to have traveled throughout Alaska for the Faith. She has also traveled and taught in Iceland, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Peru. In Taiwan she served for four months as a short-term pioneer, assisting in establishing the Faith in Pung Ho County (Pescadores Islands), as well as travel teaching in several centers on the main island. She has visited the Holy Land twice as a pilgrim, as well as for one International Convention.

She was elected for a third term of service on the National Spiritual Assembly for the administrative year beginning in 1987, and attended the Sixth International Convention for the election of the Universal House of Justice.

Since 1997, Jetta has worked as a volunteer at the Bahá'í National Office. At the National Convention of 1988, she was once again elected as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly.



MRS. JETTA BREWER

### WHY I BECAME A BAHÁ'Í

I was raised a Mormon. My parents and grandparents are second, third and fourth generation Mormons from southern Utah. All were poor but active in their faith. This beautiful heritage is mine: of deep, personal daily-felt and shown "way of life" more than (but also including) Sunday religious activities. I learned and still have a very strong personal appreciation of my forebears' hardships and physical sacrifices and the reason this kind of life was necessary.

Of course I was raised with certain religious-cultural biases:

1. Revelation is Progressive—it will continue forever.
2. Education to the fullest extent of one's ability is most valuable, because each person has to work toward his own goals or to find his own truths himself, and he will succeed according to his own perseverance.
3. Morality is a stage of man's eternal progression. This life is lived in preparation for the one to follow.
4. This earthly body, the temple of an immortal soul, can be defiled by ignoring health rules. Alcohol, drugs, tobacco, etc., are harmful.

Other cultural biases, not questioned when I was younger (because I was a product of the culture):

1. White people are chosen by God as "best."
2. Indians will become white after sev-

eral generations of "good" living, i.e. active Mormon living.

3. Black people bear the mark of God's punishment, therefore one of them may not hold the Mormon priesthood (a privilege of every male member) although he may be a member. White people may not marry black people.

4. Women are subservient to men—they make only those decisions allowed by husband/priesthood bearer.

During college years, the education I believed I must have led me to question the biases which were inconsistent with natural law, (mainly the second list of four, above). However the still rewarding, active practicing of my own religion continued, and I lived for the day the church would change these inequities in favor of another tenet: the fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man.

Time passed: the church didn't change. My life did change. A period of inactivity in church during which my children were born, their father and I were divorced and—finally, I rediscovered the enjoyment of living a religious life.

I decided to move to Alaska, and here, while still an active Mormon, teaching adult teachers and a youth class, I met Baha'is who introduced me to their faith. I continued to investigate it for six months, and I first liked, then loved what I found. No specific solutions to my own personal dilemmas were offered, but a beautiful, clarified, reaffirmation of my earlier teachings was here: I will live my life for the service of God, and my problems will fall into perspective. I will continue to be able to live my life happily, efficiently, and with the practice of unity and brotherhood added to my religious thinking.

Jetta Brewer, August 29, 1970, Anchorage, Alaska.

# Jerry B. Brown

October 30, 1935 - November 4, 1989

*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."*

Sometimes the measure of how well such lofty ideals are met can best be seen from outside the Bahá'í community. Jerry's funeral was held in the community center because many people were expected. Someone who was not a Bahá'í wrote of the large crowd and stated it was "A rich conglomeration of human beings, all kinds, all shapes, all walks of life." Another non-Bahá'í said, "We can ill afford to lose a cheerful person, and he was always so upbeat." Later, it was added, "He touched so many lives." These tributes were from some who saw the true qualities of a Bahá'í in his life.

Jerry and Barbara, both from Iowa, were married in 1957. They moved to Alaska with their three children - Kevin, Joci and Scott - in 1966. Many people remember Jerry as an energetic and enthusiastic music teacher.

Barbara became a Bahá'í in early 1972 and Jerry soon followed. Almost immediately they were beset by a series of tests which would have destroyed lesser people. But, their Faith was galvanized as they endured difficulties with infectious radiance.

Jerry was never happier than when he was doing something in direct service to the Faith. Among his favored activities were teaching trips, conducting Spiritual Transformation workshops, or doing public relations work.

Under the auspices of the Matanuska Valley Spiritual Assembly, Jerry was the editor, and often main supporter, of the "Valley Nasut" (Taken from the Persian word for "the divine aspect of humanity" with the connotation of active service).

In 1980, Jerry and Barbara took two of their children, Joci and Scott and Joci's 18 month-old son, Kristopher, on pilgrimage which was followed by an extended teaching trip to Finland. The experience touched him deeply.

His heart was always with the pioneers. Largely because of Jerry, the Nasut was sent to pioneers in such far-flung places as Europe, Asia and the Caribbean. The financial assistance of the Matanuska Spiritual Assembly has even had a role in helping some pioneers from Norway and Finland in their work in Russia.

In so many ways, it was Jerry who would give the needed helping hand, or word of encouragement at a crucial moment in someone's life. He never had much in the way of material goods, but that too, he shared liberally when he saw a need.

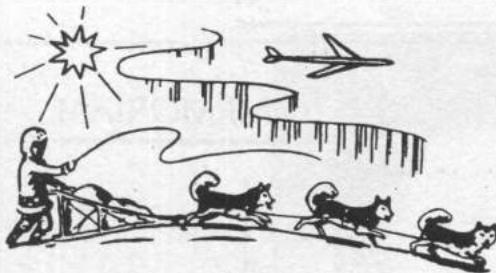
As a member of the advisory school board of the Honor Kempton Bahá'í School, Jerry had been in the forefront of its development.

During a heavy snow storm, on November 4 - the 32nd anniversary of the passing of the beloved Guardian - Jerry was the only casualty of a freak 6-car accident. His days of direct service were over.

In the Persian Bayán, the Báb said that "Nearness to God (is extolled of those) who bring joy to the hearts of the believers." Many, many were at once saddened by his loss, yet remain forever enriched by the privilege of having known him and the storehouse of memories which he left behind. They can take great comfort in recalling the joy which he brought to oh, so very many hearts and contemplating how near to God he must be.



by John Kolstoe



# ALASKA BAHÁ'Í NEWS

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE BAHÁ'IS OF ALASKA

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## HOWARD BROWN RESIGNS FROM AUXILIARY BOARD

High up in the Talkeetna Mountains Howard Brown toiled in his gold mine. Life was not easy. That was the mid 40's, just after the Second World War. But, the Brown family — Howard, Lea, Sandy (Humphrey) and Boyer loved it. The Anchorage radio station — KFQD — was their main link with the outside world. Sunday mornings was the time for religious programs and the Brown children would rush to turn off the radio. There was one exception. **When the Baha'í program, put on by the Spiritual Assembly of Anchorage, was on they did not turn off the radio.**

When the Browns moved to Anchorage, the children started asking questions about God. Lea remembered the experience with the radio at the mine, so she called the Baha'is. They were invited to a public meeting at the Anchorage Hotel.

The meeting was elegant: the ladies wore long dresses and harp music was provided. Howard had been a logger, a seaman, a commercial fisherman, a camp cook and a hard-rock miner. This was not the kind of meeting he was used to. Nonetheless the hearts of the Browns were touched. In 1947 both **Howard and Lea embraced the Cause of Baha'u'llah.** That began a life of uninterrupted service.

The Browns began serving in the Anchorage community. **In 1948 they helped form Alaska's second Spiritual Assembly,** that of the Anchorage Recording District (Spenard/Oceanview).

In 1957 Howard was a delegate to the first National Convention of the Baha'is of Alaska. By the end of that historic event he found himself vice-chairman of the newly-formed National Spiritual

## DATES TO REMEMBER

ALASKA NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY MEETINGS:

February 11-13

March 25-27

INTERNATIONAL BAHÁ'Í CONVENTION, HAIFA

April 29-May 2, 1983

ALASKA NATIONAL CONVENTION  
May 27, 28, 29, 1983

Also, a reminder — ALASKA ELECTION UNIT CONVENTIONS in most areas between February 6 and 14. Check your area for exact date.



HOWARD BROWN

Assembly. He served in that position until he was appointed to the Auxiliary Board eight years later.

In 1969 Howard returned to the mine with two young men making possible the formation of the Spiritual Assembly of the Matanuska Valley. Two years later the Browns were drawn back to Southeastern Alaska. Howard had been a commercial fisherman there in the mid 20's. This time he plied the water as a baker on the Alaska Ferry System. They pioneered to Wrangell first. When Petersburg formed its Spiritual Assembly it was discovered that no one there had ever served on an assembly before, so the Browns moved to Petersburg to help these fledgling Baha'is learn administration. From there, they pioneered to Haines.

In 1963 Howard went to Haifa, together with the other eight members of the Alaska National Spiritual Assembly, for the first election of the Universal House of Justice. The delegation from Alaska was seated in the front of the hall. Howard let the ladies be seated first. He sat in the remaining chair on the isle. Because of this gallantry, he was the first in line to cast his ballot. That was the first vote ever for the Universal House of Justice. (Katherine Alio would have had that honor if the votes had been cast alphabetically within the National Spiritual Assembly as they were for the rest of the balloting.)

(Continued on Page 4)

Page 4

## HOWARD BROWN RESIGNS

(Continued from Page 1)

The Browns were living in Haines in early 1965 when Howard got the surprise of his life. Auxiliary Board Member Ted Anderson called to say that **Hand of the Cause Zikrullah Kahdem had appointed Howard to the Auxiliary Board.**

Howard served that Institution with distinction for 17 years. At first his responsibility covered Alaska, Washington, Idaho and part of Oregon. He could concentrate on a smaller area when more Board Members were added later.

Throughout his years of service, he found his way into the hearts of believers well beyond the area of his responsibility. To so many, he seemed like the kindly grandfather who would give comfort and sooth away all fears and cares.

In 1982 Howard asked the Board of Counsellors if he could be relieved of his duties because of health. Reluctantly, they accepted his resignation.

The Browns, in so many ways, have represented the frontier spirit in this frontier land. But, they are among those few precious and unusual souls who also give their energies to the spiritual frontier of this New Day.

Often, they have found themselves doing what needed to be done in unfamiliar surroundings. With the humble simplicity of those who would rather work with their hands, they have served the Cause superbly because they have unstintingly worked with their hearts.

John E. Kolstoe

Alaska Bahá'í Community  
Pioneers and Builders, p III-46

*In Memoriam***HOWARD J. BROWN****March 27, 1909 – May 27, 1988**

There are many Bahá'ís who are admired, honored, respected and esteemed. However, few have won the degree of deep and genuine love that Howard Brown achieved.

My last meeting with Howard partly illustrates why. He and his dear wife, Lea, were living in the pioneer Home in Palmer. On a trip back to Alaska I stopped by to visit. When he saw me his face broke into that radiant smile for which he was so well known and he gave me a warm, firm, loving embrace.

The thing that made that event remarkable was the fact that I wasn't sure that he knew who I was. All that was certain was that his love was genuine and his radiance came from the depths of his soul. There was no conversation, he just stood there with nothing left by his abiding, unquestioning, and undemanding love.

Howard was born in Buena, Washington, a small town near the Yakima Indian Reservation. Without having finished high school he got his mother's consent to join the United States Marine Corps. When his enlistment was up, the country was in the depths of the Depression. He was fortunate to get an apprenticeship as a baker in Washington. In the mid thirties, he moved to Southeast Alaska. There he worked as a logger, a seaman and a commercial fisherman. During the 1940's he became part owner and operator of a hard rock gold mine in the Talkeetna mountain range near Palmer.

While the Brown family — Howard, Lea, Sandy and Boyer — were living at the mine, they would listen to radio station KFQD, their only link with the outside world. Whenever a religious program would come on, the children would race to turn it off. The single exception was when Bahá'í programs were on.

The Browns moved into Anchorage for the winter and the children started asking questions about God. Lea remembered how they would listen to the Bahá'í programs, so she got in touch with the Bahá'ís of Anchorage.

The Browns attended their first Bahá'í meeting at the Anchorage Hotel. It was an elegant affair. The ladies were dressed in long evening gowns and a harp provided the music. It is difficult to imagine a more unlikely setting for someone with Howard's background.

Nonetheless, something touched their hearts. In 1947 both Howard and Lea embraced the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. That began a life of uninterrupted service. In 1948 they helped form the second Spiritual Assembly in Alaska, which was then called The Anchorage Recording District, now called Oceanview.

In 1957 Howard was a delegate to the



first National Convention of the Bahá'ís of Alaska and was elected vice-chairman of the newly formed National Spiritual Assembly. He served in that position for eight years, until he was appointed to the Auxiliary Board.

In 1960 Howard returned to the mine to help form the first Spiritual Assembly of the Matanuska Valley. The Browns then pioneered to Wrangell, then to Petersburg, and later to Haines. Howard worked as a baker on the Alaska ferry system.

In 1963 Howard traveled to Haifa, Israel for the first election of the Universal House of Justice. All nine members from Alaska were present. Since National Spiritual Assemblies were seated alphabetically, the Alaskans were seated in the first row. Howard, always a gentleman, had stood aside as the ladies took the seats in the middle of the row. He took the aisle seat. As a result of his gallantry he was sitting on the aisle when the balloting started. That is how he became the first person in history to cast a vote for the Universal House of Justice. When other national communities voted the individual members voted alphabetically. Had this applied to Alaska, Kathryn Alio, not Howard Brown, would have been the first to cast a ballot. As a result of this he was sometimes jokingly referred to as "Elbows" Brown. Kathryn has the distinction of being the first woman to cast a ballot for the Universal House of Justice.

While the Browns were living in Haines, Howard got the surprise of his life. Hand of the Cause Zikrullah Khadem appointed him to the Auxiliary Board. He served with distinction for seventeen years.

Howard was the first person from Alaska to be appointed to the Auxiliary Board. Although, he was also responsible for Washington, Idaho and northern Oregon.

There are many qualities which stand out from those years of service. Among

them was his healing presence. It wasn't so much that he would say or do, but when he was there, things would be better; wounded hearts would be healed. Another was his forward looking attitude. After speaking on a particular topic he was fond of ending with "and so forth and so on" as if to say: "Now that that is settled, let's get on with it."

In 1982 Howard asked the Board of Counsellors if he could be relieved of his duties because of deteriorating health. They reluctantly accepted his resignation.

With the humble simplicity of someone who would much rather work with his hands, he is among those unusual and precious souls who serve by doing what needs to be done rather than by doing what they would prefer. Howard served the Cause superbly well because he instinctively worked with his heart.

Howard passed away peacefully on the eve of the 32nd Annual Convention of the Bahá'ís of Alaska.

John Kolstoe

**The National Spiritual Assembly sent the following message to the Bahá'í World Centre:**

Dearly-loved Howard Brown passed to the Abha Kingdom today after an extended illness. His many friends remembered him this evening in prayer at our National Convention. Counsellor King and a member of the National Assembly recalled his devoted and loving service to Alaska as a homefront pioneer, member of the National Spiritual Assembly, and member of the Auxiliary Board. He served on this National Assembly from its formation in 1957 until his appointment as the first Auxiliary Board member from Alaska in 1965.

**The Universal House of Justice replied as follows:**

We are profoundly distressed to learn of the passing of Howard Brown, whose distinguished services to the Cause over many years as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly and of the Auxiliary Board are unforgettable. Through his kindness, dignity and total consecration to the promotion of the Cause he has set a noble example to those who come after him in the Alaskan Bahá'í community. We are offering prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul. Kindly convey our sympathy to his family and friends.

Universal House of Justice

**OPERATION CONCOURSE:**

Thou art He Who changeth through His bidding abasement into glory, and weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty.

(U.S. Bahá'í Prayers, No. 40, pg. 59)

Mary A. Brown

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 7+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1970.

Mary worked for Bob and Charlotte Schwartz in the laundry in Petersburg. When they became Bahá'ís, she would overhear much of their conversation and it intrigued her. Finally, there was direct discussion on the Faith and Mary embraced the Cause on February 20, 1964.

Mary's father was Japanese and her mother was a Tlingit Indian of the Eagle Tribe. Her maternal grandfather used to bounce her on his knee and call her his little Japanese Eagle. Mary thought about that later when she learned how the Guardian loved eagles and when she saw pictures of statues of eagles in the Bahá'í gardens.

Becoming a Bahá'í transformed Mary from a shy, quiet person to one who became on fire to spread the Faith. Shortly after becoming a Bahá'í, she attended a summer school at which Hand of the Cause Dr. and Mrs. Ugo Giachery were in attendance. Mrs. Giachery saw the potential in Mary and the two of them started a long and loving correspondence. It was Mrs. Giachery who encouraged Mary to write to Rúhíyyih Khánum, which she did. Based on their extensive correspondence, Rúhíyyih Khánum decided to write a long, open letter to the Indian and Eskimo believers of America. This was published in 1969 and set the tone for much of the Native teaching during the following years. Mary was among those who had encouraged Rúhíyyih Khánum to come to Alaska, which she did in 1973. During the Summer School in Juneau she was adopted as a Tlingit Indian.

From the time Mary first enrolled she was busy teaching. She was impatient. Every one had to know of the Faith right away. The first ones to learn of her new Faith were her family members, most of whom enrolled. Mary taught the community of Kake by visiting with people from Kake as they came to Petersburg. She would visit with them in a local cafe and they would become Bahá'ís. The Spiritual Assembly of Kake was able to form, largely because of her teaching work. While she loved to be with other Bahá'ís, she would give up those opportunities if, instead, she could be telling someone about her wonderful Faith.

When she wasn't teaching, Mary would be talking with other Bahá'ís about teaching, especially how to reach the Natives. It was in these conversations that the idea of the Native Councils evolved. These Councils did much for the development of Native Teaching during the 70s.

Some Caucasian Bahá'ís were concerned about divisiveness being caused by having separate meetings for Native believers. Mary would carefully explain that when a baby is born which is too delicate to survive in open air, it is placed in an incubator until strong enough to make it on its own. That is the way she saw the Native Council: a necessary, though temporary, step to encourage and give confidence to Native believers. And, that is the way it worked.

Mary was the prime mover in 1970 to arrange for a Minorities Conference in Petersburg attended by Hand-of-the Cause Enoch Olinga on his only trip to Alaska. She arranged for the seven non-Tlingit members of the National Spiritual Assembly to be adopted during that Conference.

Mary was a vital part of securing a beachhead for the Cause among the Tlingits. She gave her all. The frustrations she encountered and some of the personal and family problems that erupted, took their toll. It might almost be said that in some ways Mary was a casualty of the beachhead of Indian teaching. In the winter of 1978 she found it necessary to resign from the National Spiritual Assembly due to health problems.



Elaine and Zarrin Caldwell  
with Gold Pan

### ELAINE AND ZARRIN CALDWELL DEPART FOR WORLD CENTRE

"The essence of faith is fewness of words and abundance of deeds." Few, precious few, are those whose deeds exceed their words. Elaine Caldwell certainly stands tall among that select, and oh so rare group. Jenabe and Elaine enrolled as Baha'is in Washington State in 1949, after Daniel, their first child, was born. Elaine, from the very beginning, chose to serve inconspicuously. From Great Falls, Montana, in 1953 Elaine did the packing, made the arrangements and made it possible for the family, including Daniel, David, and three week old Mark, to proceed to their pioneer post in Unalaska, Alaska.

Elaine hauled water, chopped wood and "made do" when there was precious little food to share with three hungry children. When Elaine became pregnant, Jenabe had no job opportunities, and there was a host of other problems, the family wrote to the Guardian requesting permission to leave their pioneer post. He cabled back that he would prefer they stayed. And stay they did.

Layli, the fourth child, was delivered at home in Unalaska with no doctor available and Jenabe assisting. A cannery operation was built from nothing except some WW II surplus buildings and hard labor. Elaine found sloshing through the cold water, working around the clock, taking care of the children and doing the books a part of her routine life. In her spare time she typed all the corporate papers (letter perfect) so that legal incorporation of the Aleutian Development Corporation (Aldeco) was possible. A shoestring beginning grew to a sizeable operation.

The earthquake of 1964 changed many things. Among the changes was the op-

portunity to lease the cannery. The Caldwells then pioneered to Oaxaca, Mexico. Both Jenabe and Elaine learned Spanish. But the Spanish each learned was different. Jenabe learned "teaching" Spanish as he went out to the nearby villages to teach the Faith, and Elaine learned "business" Spanish so she could do the shopping, run the house and keep things organized. Again it was a support role so necessary, but more filled with routine than glamor. It was while serving in Mexico that the youngest child, Zarrin Taji, was born.

In 1970 it was necessary to return to Alaska and to the cannery at Unalaska. Almost immediately Jenabe started traveling. First he visited remote Baha'is as a newly appointed Auxiliary Board Member. Then he traveled for various "Proclamation" programs, and finally, in the development of the "Nine Day Institute" and the "Massive Encounter." All this time it was Elaine who operated the cannery, raised the children and finally moved the entire family into one room (the dining hall) of the Mathew Kaszab Institute in Spenard until separate facilities could be found. Then she started to work indefatigably at the Baha'i National Office, in 1975 becoming a full-time employee.

In addition to the secretarial duties, Elaine also took over the bookkeeping for the National Spiritual Assembly. Since that wasn't enough, she took over the book sales, and expanded it to the Baha'i Sales Committee. She succeeded in taking a subsidized service committee and making of it not only one of the best Baha'i sales projects in the entire world but a money making venture which has helped the General Fund on numerous occasions. How many were the Conventions, teaching conferences, schools and other functions where Elaine quietly set up the Baha'i sales in the back of the room, efficiently and effectively serving the Alaskan Baha'is.

Devoted. Steadfast. Loyal. These are terms which leap forward as one thinks of Elaine. How familiar the staccato of her typewriter echoing down the hall of the National Hazira! How taken for granted a call to the National Office "to Elaine" and an immediate answer! How expected an order sent in and books by return mail! How often a request to "run these off," which first meant editing and then retyping!

On Wednesday, August 26, Elaine and daughter Zarrin flew to their new home in Haifa, Israel where Elaine is joining the staff of the Finance Department. Zarrin will commute daily, an hour each way, to the American School in Tel Aviv. In Haifa they will join at least seven former Alaskans now working at the World Centre.

Elaine's duties in Alaska will be carried on by others as she goes on to her new service. In the Old Testament we are reminded that "for everything there

is a season." And, this, it seems, is the season for those of us left in Alaska to do for ourselves without relying on Elaine as we had grown so accustomed.

John Kolstoe

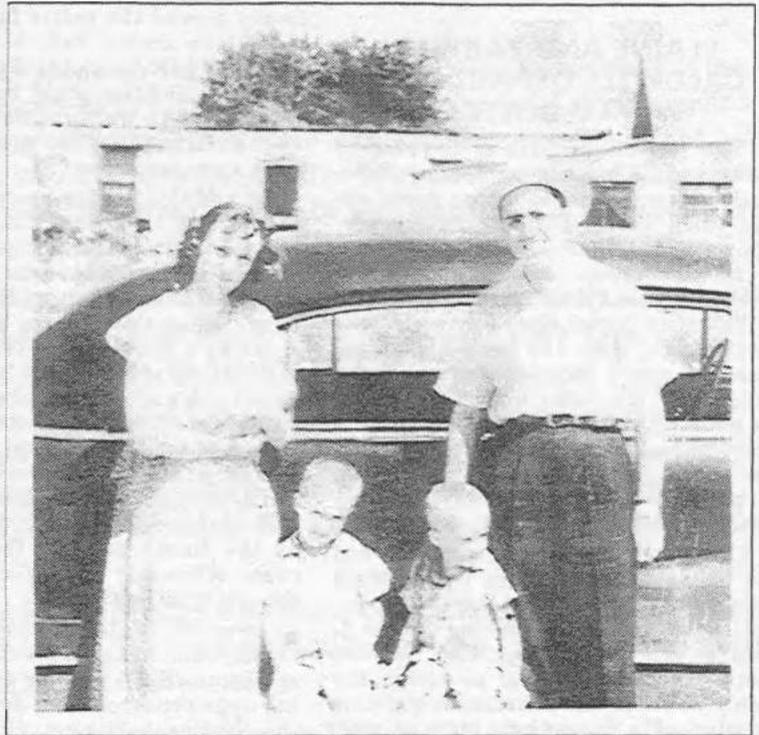
# Elaine Caldwell Knight of Bahá'u'lláh

by Blaine Reed

"July 18, 1953 was the day that Jenabe, myself and our three young sons, Daniel, David and Mark (just four weeks old) left Great Falls, Montana and set out as pioneers for the Aleutian Islands, a goal of the Ten Year Crusade, which we had decided upon as a result of prayers and consultation following the Intercontinental Teaching Conference in Chicago, May 3-6, 1953. Earlier, we had picked out a warm spot in the Pacific and had disposed of everything except summer clothing and anything else which would be appropriate for that region, but after a call from Dorothy Baker from the National Spiritual Assembly we changed our minds and headed up the Alcan Highway, taking only what would fit into and on top of the car." This was Elaine Caldwell's description of the beginning of their 11-year pioneering adventure.

Caldwells soon learned that their car was seriously overloaded so shipped 400 pounds of goods to Alaska by air. They struggled up the highway, encountering one difficulty after another. For several days they couldn't find a spot suitable for pitching their tent so spent nights sleeping in the car; drinking water was hard to find; baby diapers wouldn't dry in the rainy weather; there were roadblocks and the recurring challenge of getting their car out of the ditch and unstuck from mud and sand, but they finally arrived in Anchorage on July 27th, with all tires miraculously intact.

From July 28th to August 2nd was spent in Anchorage attempting unsuccessfully to locate work in the Aleutians and consulting with the Bahá'ís in the area. (Betty Becker, Vern and Evelyn Huffman and Janet and Verne Stout.) Caldwell's learned that the islands were destitute and no jobs were available. Most of the native Aleuts lived on government relief or worked in



the Pribiloff Islands. They were determined to go anyway, and tried to find the best means of getting there. The Guardian did not say which island was the goal, but after inquiry Unalaska was chosen because it had the largest population (about 50 families).

The airlines were discouraging, and also very expensive, so the only remaining alternative was the monthly mailboat which involved a 10-day trip. Verne Stout, who had purchased Caldwell's vehicle, drove the family to Seward to find out about the mailboat and book passage, if possible. Once in Seward they waited for the

Photo:  
Elaine and Jenabe  
Caldwell with sons  
Daniel, David and  
Mark leaving  
Great Falls,  
Montana in 1953.

boat to get in, and then went to see the Captain and told him of their wish to go to Unalaska. His response was "What in God's name do you want to go out there for?" They explained that they were going there just exactly for that—God's name—and Jenabe told him about the Faith. The Captain was rather impressed with their reasoning and said he would take the entire family to Unalaska for \$120 and bring them all back the next month for nothing. However, they didn't return, and eight years later he stopped at the Bahá'í center in Unalaska and asked for literature about the Faith.

They arrived in Unalaska at 6:00 a.m., August 10th, and found that everyone knew they had come for religious purposes since an article about them had appeared in the Anchorage newspapers and they were therefore looked upon with suspicion and hostility.

The first item on Caldwell's agenda was to send a telegram to the Guardian informing him of their arrival. This resulted in total confusion at the Army telegraph office since the military had never sent an international wire, and it took two days to figure out how to accomplish it. They received a reply from the Guardian saying "Loving prayers surrounding you". There never were any telephones during all their time in Unalaska, and cables were sent only through the military.



Photo:  
Elaine and Jenabe  
Caldwell in 1953

Finding housing was a big challenge since it was scarce and expensive but they felt fortunate in finding a pleasant furnished two-bedroom home for \$20 a month. During the winter they discovered that this 'pleasant' home was well ventilated with drafts, and during September the weather became severe and drifting snow covered much of the house as the storm raged unabated for three long months. Jenabe spent much of this time in their unheated living room mending a fishing net he had found, coming into the kitchen periodically to get thawed out. He also built a boat out of scrap material, all of this being particularly difficult for one who had lived most of his life in the mountains. Elaine struggled with homesickness but gradually learned to love the violent weather and the calm beauty of the island. Having very little money, family survival depended heavily on picking and canning salmonberries and blueberries and processing what salmon and other seafood they could catch, with Elaine chopping wood for the stove, doing laundry by hand with water she hauled from the river, and caring for the children. As time went by the boys were sent to pick coal in a nearby field where the Army had bulldozed it into the ground. Elaine relates having a vivid recollection of the first time Jenabe came home and threw a LARGE salmon into the sink.

"I had never done any fishing before", Elaine said, "and did not know what to do with this fish that moved every time I tried to touch it, but since the sink was unusable until the fish was cleaned, I soon had to come to grips with the situation and get it cleaned and out of there."

During that first winter when they were just about out of food and money they prayed and yet did not write the Guardian telling him of their difficulties, but in answer to these prayers a letter came from Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm with a note from Shoghi Effendi, expressing that they should accept assistance from the United States National Assembly. They didn't feel comfortable with this, however, so decided the only way out was for Jenabe and Elaine to go on rations until spring. At this point, Jenabe got a job putting up electrical lines which the storm had taken out on Dutch Harbor, ending their 'starvation' rations. One job led to another and in the spring he had work digging a several mile ditch by hand for burying the power lines.

In December of 1953 they opened a radio repair shop and purchased equipment, attracting more work than they could handle since nearly

every ship which came into the harbor had radio equipment problems, providing not only income but a steady stream of people with nothing else to do but hear about the Bahá'í Faith. During this same month they received letters from the International Bahá'í Council and the Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee which encouraged caution in teaching the Faith. This guidance was providential as they were on the verge of having a public proclamation. Since they could not teach the Faith openly, they concentrated on developing Bahá'í children's classes.

In May of 1954, Mrs. Elinore Putney and her three children arrived, giving the group more community strength. Caldwell's managed to purchase three old Army buildings for \$2.50 each and 'the best lot in town' for \$150, and started the ongoing process of putting the buildings together to provide a Bahá'í center. George Putney arrived in November to join his family, working long and hard hours with the hand canning operation.

In July of 1954 the deed to the center property was conveyed to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, to be held in trust for the Alaska National Assembly when it was established. On August 3, 1954, Horace Holley, secretary of the U.S. National Spiritual Assembly, wrote, "Your action in making this first of gifts to the Alaska National Spiritual Assembly is worthy of high praise and commendation."

Caldwells' first major challenge was to find a way of sustaining themselves on a long term basis and at the same time have it be something which would also benefit others in the community, so they conceived the idea of starting a cannery business. They sold shares to Bahá'ís as well as securing a personal loan and successfully negotiated their way through the paperwork maze to get military withdrawal land opened for homesteading at Captain's Bay where the cannery was built and massive technical problems solved little by little as the business was steadily expanded through the years. Even though they processed 500 cases of salmon in 1955, profits were reinvested in the business so that by the end of this year, they were nearly broke again. This situation along with expecting another baby prompted them to write for permission to accept employment for a year away from Unalaska and then return. The response to this request was that no Knight of Bahá'u'lláh was to leave his post without prior approval from the Guardian, so Caldwell's pledged to hold their post at all costs.



Photo:  
Elaine Caldwell at the  
World Centre

Through the years until his unexpected passing in 1957, they found encouragement in their contact with the Guardian through letters. There were some enrollments by locals through the years but in 1962, their family members were the only Bahá'ís remaining, so they wrote to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land and explained the problems. Their spirits were lifted by a letter from the Hands which said, "You do, however, have the supreme satisfaction of knowing that you are fulfilling the wishes of the beloved Guardian in remaining and carrying on at your difficult post...your selfless spirit of devotion and dedication to the task you have undertaken is exemplary, and it is this spirit and this determination on the part of the pioneers all over the world which have brought the World Crusade to the point where total victory is now within reach."

An earthquake in 1964, in a matter of three minutes, solved their unrelenting financial problems, as several canneries were destroyed in the quake and it was possible to quickly lease their cannery to another company and in the 1970s sell the business in a transaction which returned funds to stockholders with interest. Several of these stockholders signed their shares over to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, to create a fortuitous windfall for this institution.

Hugh B. Chapman  
Died 1982

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 2+ years. First elected in 1973.

Hugh and his wife, Lei, enrolled in the Faith while living in Hawaii. Prior to becoming a Bahá'í, Hugh had been a minister in the United Church of Christ. He projected an evangelical zeal in all that he undertook.

Shortly after becoming a Bahá'í, Hugh was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Hawaii and served as its first Chairman. He resigned from that position when the Chapmans went pioneering to Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati) with their three children. They returned to Hawaii for the education of their children. Hugh became an Air Traffic Controller with the Federal Aviation Administration. He was transferred to King Salmon in Alaska and later to Anchorage.

While living in Anchorage they quickly became highly involved with all Bahá'í activities. The Chapman home was a center of many projects. Both Hugh and Lei became committed to the mass teaching and institute program of the earlier 70s. On many occasions their home was the scene of institutes and living quarters for team members.

Hugh had a wide range of interests. Next to the Faith and his family, Hugh loved sports. He found time to referee basketball games and to train dogs for retrieving contests.

His openness, friendliness and good humor won peoples' hearts wherever he was. He was a master of the one-line quip: that is a quick, short, funny response to a situation. It was frequently his humorous retort which would enable people to laugh and get a clearer perspective on issues. One time when Lei was on the National Spiritual Assembly the two of them had different views on a question under discussion. Hugh quipped: "If you don't shape up, baby, I'm gonna stop bringing you to these meetings." The resulting laughter made it easier for everyone to see the issue more clearly.

Hugh suffered a stroke in 1976. That summer, the family moved from Alaska to a more hospitable climate. He recovered to some extent and resumed activities. However, he died on May 27, 1982.

Rachel Lei A. (Lei) Chapman  
1935-1994

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 2 years. First elected in 1974.

Lei's cultural heritage included Hawaiian, Samoan, and Chinese. Author James Michner referred to multi-cultured Pacific Islanders, such as Lei, as the "Golden Race." She enriched Alaska when she brought nuggets from these cultures with her.

Lei and Hugh became Bahá'ís in Hawaii. Shortly after accepting Bahá'u'lláh, they were both elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Hawaii where Lei served as Corresponding Secretary. Lei was the first Bahá'í of Hawaiian heritage to serve on a National Spiritual Assembly and she ended up serving on two different ones. The Chapmans left Hawaii to pioneer to Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati), with their three children. They returned to Hawaii for the education of their children. Hugh became an Air Traffic Controller with the Federal Aviation Administration. He was transferred to King Salmon in Alaska and later to Anchorage.

Hugh was transferred to Anchorage when mass teaching was in full swing. Lei immediately threw herself into this arduous work. Her beauty and lovely singing voice made her a natural attraction. She used her gifts well in teaching projects under varied circumstances. An example of her dedicated service to the Cause occurred during Massive Encounter in Beaver. It was about 45 degrees below zero and Lei was dancing a hula, garbed with traditional Hawaiian dress—plus long underwear and wool socks. At that temperature, when a door is opened directly to the cold outside-air, a cylinder of frost forms about two feet high and the width of the door. This rolls across the floor much like a tumbleweed, rolling in the wind. Whenever the door opened, the frosted cold air coil would roll into the room where Lei was dancing the hula. She would smile and dance right through it. It was a strange and memorable sight.

She became Secretary of the National Teaching Committee and supervised that important committee during times of dramatic growth. She was also appointed Director of the Institute program and was responsible for significant expansion of that program.

With her election to the National Spiritual Assembly a fuller perspective was added to the consultative process.

In 1976 Lei was the first woman elected Chairman of an Alaskan National Convention. She not only chaired it admirably, but with guitar in hand, she led the assembled delegates and friends in many a delightful song.

The Chapmans found it necessary to leave Alaska in 1976 because of Hugh's ill health. After his passing in 1982, Lei moved back to her native Hawaii where she died.

Roberta Kaley Christian was born March 19, 1913, in central New York state and at the time of her death had been a Bahá'í for about thirty-five years. She married William Kenneth Christian and together they served the Faith, each complementing the other, but functioning independently in their fields of specific interest.

Kenneth was a college professor, lecturer and writer, and he served for five years as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States. Roberta was editor of U.S. *Bahá'í News* for three years. She is the author of *A Bahá'í Child's A.B.C.* and wrote the verses for *A Bahá'í Child's Song Book*, two popular and widely translated books which filled a vital need for children's literature in the Faith.

When the beloved Guardian issued the call for pioneers in the Ten Year Crusade in 1953, Kenneth and Roberta set sail in December for Southern Rhodesia and were named Knights of Bahá'u'lláh by Shoghi Effendi. Frustrated in their efforts to secure employment and unable to teach the Faith openly in the circumstances that then obtained there, they received permission from the Guardian to settle in Greece where they assisted in forming the first Bahá'í group of Athens. On September 1, 1956, the secretary of Shoghi Effendi wrote to Roberta on the Guardian's behalf expressing his pleasure at receiving a photograph of the group and extending a warm welcome to the first believer of Greece who, he prayed, would "become a spiritual guide to his people". Shortly thereafter, Kenneth and Roberta made their pilgrimage to the Holy Land and were showered with words of encouragement and appreciation by Shoghi Effendi.

Soon they were again bound for another pioneer post, and were *en route* to Djakarta, Indonesia when Shoghi Effendi died in November, 1957. This was a crushing blow to them but they had received his assurance that their efforts in the World Crusade were pleasing to him.

Kenneth was always frail and he died suddenly on May 4, 1959, in Djakarta. A moving account of his service to the Cause, written by Roberta, appeared in *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIII, p. 907. Roberta never fully recovered from the emotional shock of her husband's passing in his forty-sixth year, but her work for the Faith continued unabated. She was not only a writer but a very capable secretary,

### ROBERTA K. CHRISTIAN

1913-1971

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh

GRIEVED TRAGIC PASSING KNIGHT BAHALLAH  
ROBERTA CHRISTIAN HER DEVOTED SERVICES  
ALASKA NINE YEAR PLAN WORTHY ADDITION  
LAURELS GARNERED PIONEER EFFORTS RHO-  
DESIA AND GREECE COMPANY LATE HUSBAND  
WILLIAM KENNETH CHRISTIAN DURING WORLD  
CRUSADE CONVEY FAMILY ASSURANCE PRAYERS  
PROGRESS HER SOUL ABHA KINGDOM.

*Universal House of Justice*



Roberta K. Christian

dressmaker and fashion consultant and made her living at various times in these fields. At the time of her death she was employed by the Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska, situated at College, Alaska, in a project described as "pioneering a new field of education for Alaska's bush country".

Roberta first came to Alaska from California in January, 1967, to assist in completing the goals of the Nine Year Plan in that country. She was frequently invited to address Bahá'í conferences and summer schools on the subject of pioneering. Subsequently she went back to California but returned to Alaska in February, 1971, to join her son and his wife who had recently settled in the Fairbanks area. A tragic fire took her life on July 30, 1971. Now, at last, she has gone to rejoin Kenneth in the Abhá Kingdom.

JANET W. STOUT

### ALASKA BAHÁ'Í NEWS



ROBERTA CHRISTIAN —  
Alaska, 1967

Roberta first came to Alaska in January 1967 from California, to aid in the furthering of Alaska's Nine Year Plan. She stopped first at the Petersburg Conference, where she talked on "Pioneering Overseas." (ABN No. 92). In June she conducted a course at the Tenth Alaska Summer School in Juneau on "Prayer and Meditation" (ABN No. 96). The following February, Roberta gave a course on "The Spirit of Pioneering" at the first Matanuska Valley Winter Weekend in Palmer. (ABN No. 102).

Roberta was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Alaska at the 1968 Convention but she immediately resigned in order to return to California to be with her son, Roger, and his wife, Kandie.

Roger and Kandie came to Alaska to make their home in 1970, settling in the Fairbanks area. Roberta returned last February to be with them. A tragic fire took her life July 30, 1971. Now, at last, she has gone to rejoin Kenneth in the Abha Kingdom.

Janet W. Stout

O Son of Being!

Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home, reunion with Me. Enter therein, and tarry not. This is that which hath been destined for thee in Our Kingdom above and Our exalted Dominion. —

Baha'u'llah. Arabic H.W. 6

WILLIAM PAUL COPPOCK  
1933-1972

*Perchance, God willing, the call of the Kingdom may reach the ears of the Eskimos . . . The continent and the islands of the Eskimos are also parts of this earth. They must similarly receive a portion of the bestowals of the most great guidance.*

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

William Paul Coppock, known as "Bill" or "Willy" to those close to him, learned of the Bahá'í Faith through Maynard Eakan and accepted it on July 27, 1969, in the Matanuska Valley. He became a dearly loved member of that community and was deeply missed after he left.

Bill's manner was quiet and thoughtful. He



*William Paul Coppock*

was gentle, sensitive, dependable, honourable and he was responsive to the needs of others. Bill was an Eskimo and proud of his heritage. His love for his people was a deep and beautiful emotion which was reflected in his actions.

When word was received that a teaching team was being formed in Juneau to engage in a project called "Massive Encounter" which was designed to spread the Message of Bahá'u'lláh throughout Alaska, Bill spoke at great length about his longing to be part of the travelling team; yet he recognized the need for the Bahá'í Teachings to be brought to his own home village, Kotzebue. He weighed all the considerations; on one side was his longing, and on the other a need which he could most effectively fulfil. His decision to return to Kotzebue took great courage and a heart full of love. He knew there would be some rejection of the Message he was to give; how much more difficult it is to bear rejection from those who are close and dear to us!

Bill was a man of few words and countless deeds. He was like a fountain, constantly giving of himself, forever doing something for someone. He taught many of the children's Bahá'í classes; it was a heartfelt, sincere teaching effort, with results that will long be felt here in Kotzebue. Bill's greatest happiness was felt when he was teaching. His lifeline was the Faith; he counted the days between the newsletters and issues of *Bahá'í News*. And he was truly thrilled when a letter would arrive proving he was remembered and thought of by a friend.

In his home, Bill taught by action. His love for his family was shown by silent teaching; he taught by his efforts to live the life. The whole village learned by his deeds which far outweighed any words that could be spoken.

On August 5, 1972, Bill was drowned in a boating accident at sea. A small measure of what this village felt for him was perhaps reflected in the large numbers who attended his funeral to pay their respects to a very dear and much loved friend.

William Paul Coppock loved children, his family, his friends and his people. He loved fishing, boating and the sea. Most of all he loved God, and to give the Message of the Cause. If you needed help he was always close at hand. He was a wonderful friend. In lonely hours he was a companion, and when needed he was a chauffeur, a baby-sitter, one to shovel snow, deliver groceries, a janitor—and always he was a servant of God.

LORI EAKAN

Stanley W. (Stan) Corbett

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 6 years as of 1999. First elected in 1993.

When Stan completed his student teaching in England, he returned to his native Gorham, Maine where he rented a room from Wayne Hoover. Wayne, a dynamic and colorful Bahá'í, had been a Christian minister before becoming a Bahá'í and held weekly firesides in his home.

Stan was searching for greater answers to life's open-ended questions. Even though he was a devoted Roman Catholic, he had visited many different churches while he was in England. He also looked into *IALAC* (I am lovable and capable), Transactional Analysis (I'm OK, You're OK), and Transcendental Meditation (TM) before attending his first fireside. That was in December of 1974, one year after taking up residence in Wayne Hoover's home. As soon as he heard the words, "Christ has returned and His new name is Bahá'u'lláh", he knew the reality of the claim. His inner response was, "to leap for joy and say to myself, 'yes!' this is right and there is a great deal of work to do!" It was another year, April 23, 1975, before he enrolled in the Faith.

Stan is service-oriented and he spent six summers as children's program director at the Green Acre Bahá'í school in Eliot, Maine. In 1985 he was awarded the Emmanuel Reimer award for his work at Green Acre.

He pioneered to Alaska in 1987. Bahá'í friends, with whom he had had Montessori training, encouraged him and found a job for him. He had also had a dream about living in Alaska.

His extensive travel teaching trips have taken him to Belize, the United Kingdom, Russia, and Mongolia.

Stan's quiet composure and loving nature make him a natural attraction for children and a trusted friend for adults.

He attended the 1993 and 1998 International Conventions and elections of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel.



**RUTH AND GORDON CRAIG**  
leaving Unalaska to Pioneer in  
Japan.

**ALASKANS PIONEER TO JAPAN**  
Gordon and Ruth Craig

A call for pioneers to settle in Japan was made at the Sapporo Conference in September. Among those who were able to respond to this urgent need were Gordon and Ruth Craig of Unalaska. By the end of February the Craigs were living in the Baha'i Center in Nagasaki and Ruth wrote:

"Jack Davis has been sent by the Universal House of Justice to work in Japan for six months because the growth of the Faith is so slow here and the need so great. He's here to help us set up an Information Center where people can write for information on Baha'i. We had our first public meeting Thursday and 27 people came . . . We were very happy. We had our picture in the local paper. We visited the mayor's office and put books in the public library. We have made a start. We hope to travel to some nearby towns and do the same thing and hold a public meeting with the hope of opening up some new Centers and forming some L.S.A.'s. The time is so short I wish we had gotten here sooner. In all of the island we are on there are only 27 Baha'is and there's a population of 1½ million so you can see how our work is cut out. We can use all the help we can get so remember us in your prayers."

Gordon and Ruth came to Unalaska in the Fall of 1963 with their four children ages 12 to 16 and with Addie Nordstrom, an elderly Baha'i for whom they were caring. Shortly after, they were joined by Ruth's mother, Ruth Perez, and later by their eldest son and his wife and children. Re-enforcing and continuing the work Jeb and Elaine Caldwell had undertaken during the course of the 'Ten Year Crusade, the Craigs steadily promoted the teachings at Unalaska until the goal of a Local Spiritual Assembly was realized in 1969.

The years Gordon and Ruth spent in the Aleutians were filled with events of the greatest happiness and the deepest sorrow. Three of their children were married and several grandchildren were born. Periodic declarations of new Baha'is were always a joy. Their home was the frequent scene of Baha'i functions and neighborly fellowship. Ruth's contagious laughter and Gordon's guitar playing and singing enlivened many a Baha'i event.

Baha'u'llah says: "O Son of Man! For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials." In 1967 their son Lance was shot and killed at Unalaska. The fortitude, the love and patience they displayed at that tragic time were a marvel to the entire village (ABN No. 92, March 1967).

Early in 1970 Ruth and Gordon made their pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This was indeed a memorably vitalizing experience. Gordon served as Treasurer of the Assembly and certainly the fact that the community excelled the contribution goals it set for itself is in part due to the loving talks he gave at each Feast on the joy of supporting the Fund.

In 1971 Proclamation came to Unalaska and Ruth traveled with the team to Nukolski and Akutan. Her acquaintance with and love for the people in those villages and her unrestrained joy in teaching greatly aided the team. Following the Sapporo Conference, Gordon and Ruth were able to spend several weeks with Massive Encounter in Southeastern Alaska. They returned to Unalaska for a short visit with their family and friends before flying to Japan in January 1972.

They would love to hear from any of the Baha'is of Alaska! Their address is:

Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Craig  
86 Nishiyama-Machi  
2 Chome  
Nagasaki, Japan

### IN MEMORIAM

"Those who have ascended have different attributes from those who are still on earth, yet there is no real separation. In prayer there is a mingling of station, a mingling of condition. Pray for them as they pray for you."

—'Abdu'l-Baha

### LANCE CRAIG GIVES LIFE

On Monday, January 2, 1967 (4 Sharaf 123) Lance Craig, 18 year old Baha'i youth of Unalaska, passed to the Abha Kingdom. The following account is taken from reports offered by Ray Hudson of Unalaska and Andriana Corpuz Baumgartner.

Lance had taken the day off from work as he had a slight case of the flu. By evening, he was feeling much better and was at home with his wife, Annajean, his sister, Nanette Choate, and his father-in-law, William Yatchmenoff.

It was then that Johnny Borenin, who lived next door to Lance and Annajean with Annajean's father, knocked on the door. Annajean arose to open the door. When Johnny entered he had a gun. He told everyone to lie on the floor and that he meant business. Lance stood up to him and asked him what he wanted. Johnny pointed the 22 pistol at Lance's stomach and as Lance moved to turn the gun away, Johnny started shooting, hitting Lance at least four times.

The nurse was sent for. She gave him some medication, but said she could do nothing. Later about 10:45 that night, Lance died. Johnny was captured and taken into town. He was not violent, but could give no reason for what he had done. He had been doing some drinking earlier that day.

During that terrible night, Ruth Craig, Lance's mother, evinced a strength which was amazing and which she said was totally the result of her acceptance of the Baha'i Faith. Whether praying over her son and at last giving him up to God and returning to comfort Annajean, or consoling her family and reminding them that Lance was not theirs but God's, whether strengthening them through her confidence in the mercy and wisdom of God, declaring that if someone had to die—if some act of violence was needed to return people to God—better it was her son who was prepared to meet his Creator, who had acknowledged his belief in Baha'u'llah, than someone less prepared, she supported all.

The death of Lance is the first known death of a Baha'i in the Aleutian Islands. A casket was made by his friends. A vial of rose petals from the Shrines and a vial of dust from the vicinity of the Tomb of Baha'u'llah were placed in the casket.

The Baha'i service was held at the Baha'i Center and attracted many people despite a fierce snowstorm—the kind

of snowstorm Lance liked so well. The service began with selections from "Words for the World" followed by a recording of "Allah-u-Abha" and "One Heart Ruby Red." The long prayer for the departed was read followed by readings from "The Open Door" and two other prayers for the departed.

Villagers, formerly cool or antagonistic to the Faith, came to the Baha'i Center. They prayed; they lingered; they returned.

Lance went to Unalaska with his parents as part of a pioneering family. Lance's father, Gordon, had been retained as superintendent of the cannery started by Jeb Caldwell. The Craig family, together with Lance's grandmother, Ruth Perez, and Addie Nordstrom arrived together to serve the Faith in Unalaska (See photograph in ABN No. 85, July, 1966).

It was Lance who, shortly before his death, gave encouragement to all, that the goal of a Local Spiritual Assembly could be met. It was Lance who reminded all that they had to be patient, they had to keep faith that the goal could be won. It was this youth who stressed that only by living the life would the victory be won. It was he who, in giving his life, set in motion a surge which seems destined to carry Unalaska towards the fulfillment of the long cherished goal of a Local Spiritual Assembly.

Since the Baha'i funeral service, four from Unalaska have become Baha'is. The first three were Lance's father-in-law, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law, with an earlier declaration in Anchorage of another man from Unalaska, Simeon Pletnikoff, together with the pending boundary change, the long sought dream of a Local Spiritual Assembly in Unalaska now seems nearing reality.

The beloved Guardian initiated the work in the Aleutian Islands by making it a goal of the Ten Year Crusade. Shortly after the opening of the Crusade, the valiant Knights of Baha'u'llah, the Caldwells and the Putneys, planted the banner of Baha'u'llah in Unalaska. Years of toil and sacrifice have gone into that remote outpost of the Faith of Baha'u'llah to maintain, then to nurture it. The Universal House of Justice established a goal of a Local Spiritual Assembly in the Aleutians. Now that too will be realized.

"Oh God! Increase my astonishment in Thee!"

—NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

### WELL-KNOWN ANCHORAGE AREA BAHÁ'IS PASS ON

Within a short time of each other, three Baha'is from the Greater Anchorage area passed on. **Nick Gray**, well-known throughout the state for his successful efforts to integrate the three basic ethnic groups of Alaska—Eskimo, Aleut and Indian—died November 3 at the Alaska Native Medical Center. He was the first

child born in Council City on the Seward Peninsula (1900). His mother was a Alaskan Eskimo, Mary Kegugnik, and his father Russian Jew, David Gray. Nick identified with his mother's background and always emphasized the heritage of the native and the necessity that he learn to live in a wage economy, rather than the subsistence economy of the past. **ABN** No. 88 for October summarizes his activities.

An impressive funeral service was held for Nick by the Anchorage LSA on November 5 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Hall. Emil Notti, President of the Cook Inlet Native Association, which was founded by Nick, gave a fine eulogy. Then prayers and readings from the Baha'i Teachings were given by Lloyd Sutton, Assembly member, and Don and Marie Van Brunt of the Matanuska Valley.

**Mrs. Evelyn McMurray**, a long-time Alaska resident and a registered music therapist, died in Riverside, California, November 8. Eve learned of the Baha'i Faith in Fairbanks in 1939 and later enrolled in Anchorage. She and her husband, Grant, left Alaska when he retired in 1964.

When Eve knew she was dying of cancer, she asked her husband to contact the nearest Baha'i Assembly, which was in Riverside. Grant reports that she had lots of visitors and was able to assist the local Baha'is by "recruiting" another patient as a new Baha'i. Eve's physician and the lady in charge of the occupational therapy department said they had never seen a patient face forthcoming death with more courage day by day than Eve. The Local Assembly conducted the funeral service, which was attended by her family and many friends.

Eve donated her eyes to the Estelle Doheny Eye Foundation in Los Angeles and wanted her body used for research. In this connection, we reprint the following item from the Alaska National Assembly, which appeared in **ABN** No. 38, May-June 1961:

"In answer to the question asked the Hands in Haifa re: **willing eyes and bodies for scientific investigation**, they answered thusly: 'The beloved Guardian himself said that there was no objection to Baha'is willing their eyes to an eye bank. He also said that Baha'is could will their bodies for scientific investigation, but that they must stipulate that in the end the remains should be buried and not cremated.'

**Mrs. Estella Cheatham**, Anchorage Baha'i, died on December 11 and the Local Assembly conducted services at the Anchorage Funeral Chapel two days later. Estella became a Baha'i several years ago when Florence Mayberry was on a teaching trip to Alaska. Her husband, Ray, who had been a Baha'i for many years, preceded her in death last spring.

## ROWENA BURACK CURRINGTON March 10, 1928 — December 13, 1983

"...and then I called upon Martha Root, Marion Jack, May Maxwell and the whole Heavenly Concourse. Help!, I said, I need help! And, they came! We were able to get that publicity."

Rowena's reliance on assistance from the Concourse on High was real, vivid, dramatic and constant. There was never any doubt in her mind that they were waiting, rank upon rank, to rush to the aid of anyone who would call upon them.

Born in New York City, the hustle and bustle of the big city was her life. She loved and took seriously the traditions with which she was raised. The Passover was one of her favorites. Rowena prevailed upon her father to let her go to the door to look for the angel of the Passover. She expected more. She said: "I believed! I really believed that if I went to that door, one day I would open that door and the Messiah would be there."

As a young girl she developed an interest in dance and drama. She studied under some of the world's best and earned a Master's degree in Speech and Drama from New York University. Eight years were spent in stock company theater on the East Coast before she moved to Hollywood to ply her art.

Persistence, sacrifice and determination were required before she began to get parts and appear regularly in such television shows as "Ben Casey", "Hazel", "The Untouchables", "Dennis the Menace", "Dr. Kildare", and had a speaking part in the film "The Greatest Story Ever Told".

Then one day, late at night, a friend came by, rapped on her window and woke her up. He had the greatest news and he had to share it with her right away. It would not wait until morning. He had been to a meeting — a Baha'i meeting — and he had a book. They stayed up all night reading and talking. She soon realized that she had found the Messiah she had looked for at that door. Her life was never to be the same.

Soon after becoming a Baha'i, Rowena pioneered to Alaska. She had been helping Hand of the Cause William Sears make a study class tape on pioneering when she felt that she, too, must rise to serve as a pioneer.

After a brief stop in Anchorage, Rowena settled in Fairbanks. Her work was cut out for her. The Assembly, had not met for some time and there was much to be done. Rowena, who was not on the Assembly, called for a meeting in her one-room apartment. As soon as there was a quorum, she went out and leaned on her door until they finished their business. This was typical of her refusal to let obstacles stand in the way of the work of the Cause.

Shortly after arriving in Fairbanks she met Dick Currington and the two of them were married. This was at the beginning



of the Nine-Year Plan. Alaska had five very difficult virgin goals to settle. One of these was the Pribilof Islands in the middle of the Bering Sea. Rowena knew nothing of roughing it or village life, yet she offered to go with her customary reliance on the Heavenly Concourse. Of her lack of background for this kind of venture she would only say: "If a cluck like me from New York can go, anyone can do it!" So, she went in spite of the fact that she was recently married, there were no jobs, no housing and the island was controlled by the United States Bureau of Fisheries. No one was even allowed on the island without a permit. Rowena simply bought a one way ticket. When the plane returned she was still there. Then, she set about finding a place to stay and figured out how to deal with the authorities. It was there, on St. Paul Island, that her only child, Paul, was born in 1966.

Rowena left St. Paul after nine months to rejoin her husband in Cold Bay. Later they moved to Nenana then back to Fairbanks and eventually Rowena moved to Anchorage.

Her interest in the Theater continued. She taught as an Instructor in the University of Alaska Drama Department and directed, performed and was otherwise involved with many productions in Fairbanks, Anchorage, Petersburg and Ketchikan. She also became well known for dramatic readings. Favorites among Baha'is were the "Tablet of Carmel", Selections from *Dawn Breakers* and the quotations in which Baha'u'llah speaks of his vision in the *Siyah Chal*.

There was an energy and vitality about Rowena's entire being. She was apt to make things lively, rather than comfor-

table. This was unsettling for some people. Despite her forcefulness, she was deeply loved by the Natives. There was no condescension, no fawning, no patronizing. She was genuine Rowena and they accepted her for what she was.

Her energies were plentiful in all facets of Baha'i life — always adding a touch of class to whatever she did. She disdained sloppy or thoughtless arrangements for things relating to the Cause. Packaged cookies in general and Oreos in particular became world famous as Rowena's example of the epitome of lack of imagination. "Oreo's!? Oreo's!?! No! No! Let's have pheasant under glass!" She would exclaim to make her point that more thought really should go into what is being served for refreshments — befitting of the event and the Cause.

Her services extended to all manner of teaching activities, including using her dramatic talent in superb performances such as the introduction to some of the Light of Baha'u'llah series. Administratively she served on local Spiritual Assemblies in Fairbanks, Nenana and Anchorage as well as numerous committees, both local and national. She was twice elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Alaska.

In the midst of her 20th winter in Alaska, Rowena was found to have cancer. One month and two days later she died.

Her life was one continuous adventure and every new episode was entered with enthusiasm, excitement and energy.

One can almost hear her exclaim of her new existence: "Look, there's Martha Root and Lua Gettsinger, and some of my old friends from the California Days! Everything is going to be Jake, O.K.! It's going to be all right!"

In the minds eye she can be seen gleefully joining ranks with those souls she had relied upon so often in the past. Now, she, too, can be seen poised for action, waiting to be called into service.

On December 15, the following Message was received from the Universal House of Justice.

ASSURE PRAYERS PROGRESS  
SOUL STALWART SERVANT  
BAHA'ULLAH  
ROWENA CURRINGTON  
KINDLY EXTEND DEEPEST SYMPATHY HER SON

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

By: John E. Kolstoe

### O SON OF SPIRIT!

My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.

Hidden Words, from the Arabic#1

# Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Gail Davis

By Laurie Cropley Hill and Susan Stark Christianson

Gail Fiske (Avery) Davis was born in Helena, Montana on September 29, 1903. She became a Bahá'í in 1949 in Great Falls, Montana after hearing about the Faith from her sister, Gretchen Pool.

"My sister became a Bahá'í first," said Gail. "She wrote me letters and sent me pamphlets, but I couldn't be bothered."

"When I went to Great Falls," Gail shared, "the people who had lived across the street from Gretchen lived close to the hospital (where Gail was a nursing student). They invited me over to their house for a study class every week. I agreed with everything, but I thought it didn't have anything to do with me. Then in 1949 they needed one more Bahá'í to form their Assembly." At that time, Gail decided to embrace the Faith.

Gail has three children, Sam Wallace Fiske of Minnesota, Winifred Campbell of Montana, and Alice Machesney of Sitka. Gail has 11 grandchildren, 23 great grandchildren and five great-great grandchildren. When Gail decided to attend school to become a nurse, she was already a grandmother. Gail's children were grown by the time she decided to come to Alaska and did not make the move with her.

Gail attended the National Bahá'í Convention in 1953. She remembers having written to Shoghi Effendi prior to attending that Convention, asking him where she should go to pioneer. "I remember Rúhíyyih said (at that Convention) 'Don't write to the Guardian to ask him where you should go. He's too busy. Write to the committee.'"



Photo:  
"Knight of Bahá'u'lláh"  
Gail Davis, in her  
Alaska Native  
Sisterhood cap and sash.  
Gail is a lifetime  
member of the Alaska  
Native Sisterhood, a  
designation received  
after 25 years of  
membership.

When the goals were announced in the message to the Convention, Gail decided to pioneer to Baranoff Island. Since Baranoff Island was a virgin territory for Bahá'ís and a goal of the plan, by going to Sitka, Gail became a "Knight of Bahá'u'lláh."

Gail shared that she never felt very comfortable with the designation of being a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh. "I didn't suffer any hardship to come up here," she stated. "The hospital here was more sophisticated than the one I left. I'm just now beginning to feel more comfortable with accepting that (title)."

"When I got to my goal," she said, "it wasn't my goal! I was across the channel at a government installation on Kaponski Island. They had to get that straightened out." Gail had gone to Mount Edgumbe Hospital as a nurse. Mount Edgumbe Hospital is actually across the bay from Sitka. After two years at Mount Edgumbe, Gail became an x-ray technician for Sitka Community Hospital.

At the time Gail came to Baranoff Island, the area was officially assigned as a goal of the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly. According to Janet Smith, secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska, when the National Spiritual Assembly was formed here Sitka, Kodiak and the Aleutian Islands were not under the jurisdiction of Alaska.

In 1963 Gail went to London to attend the Great Jubilee. "I had to go to London to get permission (from the Canadian National Assembly) to form a Local Spiritual Assembly in Sitka," said Gail. She remembers consulting with the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly and recalls that Sitka was permitted to form their first Local Assembly before the ninth member actually arrived in Sitka.

Gail married Albert Davis, a Tlingit Indian, in Sitka in 1957. She met him on a boat excursion trip outside Sitka to see sea lions. After marrying Albert, Gail became a member of the Alaska Native Sisterhood. She is now a lifetime member, having been a part of the organization for more than 25 years.

Gail lists among the highlights of her Bahá'í life knowing Dr. Dean Fraser and his wife Zella Fraser, who came to Sitka in the 1950s. For many years they were the only other Bahá'ís in Sitka. Dr. Fraser was a dentist at Mount Edgumbe Hospital. "The Frasers were really wonderful people," shared Gail. "I did a lot of visiting with Dean and Zella."

Another highlight Gail remembers is taking a boat trip around Baranoff Island to visit Grace Bahovec, a Bahá'í living in the village of Baranoff on the other side of the island. "I went on a boat for twelve hours so that I could celebrate the Martyrdom of the Báb with another Bahá'í."

"I am thankful," said Gail, "the world is more tolerant and that it's possible to be a Bahá'í openly! I'm glad that being a Bahá'í doesn't influence whether I get a job anymore."

"Never be afraid to admit you are Bahá'í's," she added.

# Gail F. Avery Davis

September 29, 1903-November 7, 1995

by John Kolstoe

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. She returned to school for nurse's training to better serve the Cause she had recently embraced.

In 1953 she went to the Jubilee in Chicago, which launched the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade, and she decided to pioneer. The Baranof Islands were 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 and married Albert Davis, who was the head of the Coho Clan of Tlingits for Sitka. Theirs was a close and loving relationship and after 38 years of marriage, Albert was separated from Gail by death for only 45 days.

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 STÁLWART SOUL ABHA KINGDOM.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE. ♦

## Poetic Legacy Lives on

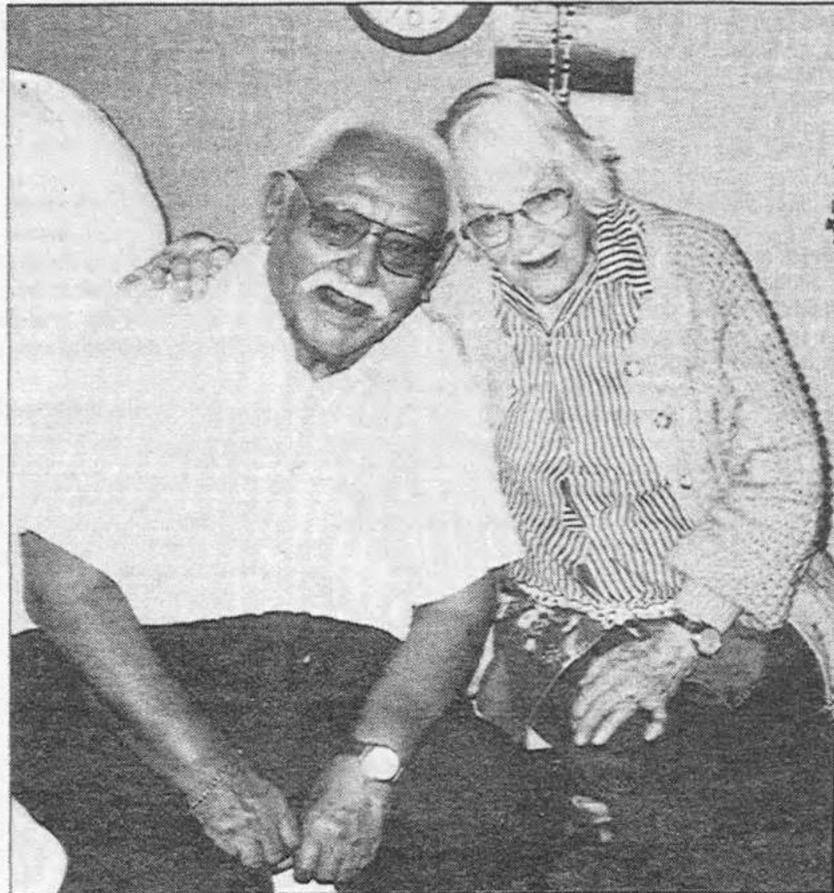
The passing of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh, Gail Davis, is reported in another article. Her love for poetry was not mentioned, even though she often recited her work at various Bahá'í gatherings. A book of her poetry, "More Madness", was given out at her memorial service.

During that service the following poem by Gail's great-granddaughter, Lisa Pollock, was recited. It is not only a charming tribute, but shows that Gail's love of poetry lives on.

## Gramma Gail

by Lisa Pollock

You live the life I wish I could.  
You smile even if you're misunderstood.  
You bring love to all you touch or hold,  
To the good, to the bad, and all the untold.  
You are in truth a guiding light  
To help our footsteps all day and night.  
You've led a life of joy and love  
Which is sure to shine on you up above.  
I wish you the best in all you do.  
Just know GAIL we love you.



Albert and Gail Davis on their 38th anniversary March 21, 1995.

Photo courtesy of Gail's daughter, Alice Machesney.

## Alaska Baha'i News

## BETTY LEE DELOACH

*"From God we come and unto Him we return, severed from all else save Him and dependent upon His Name, the Clement, the Merciful."*

It is not a simple task to try to portray the life of Betty Lee DeLoach, better known to us as "Lee," who passed away December 10 in Caspar, Wyoming. The friends will remember Lee as having a great love of life, of wanting to reach out and grab every second as it passed and use it to the fullest. Her wonderful sense of humor and willingness to serve will also stand clear in our minds. Wife, mother, poetess and friend, the tea pot always on and the heart ever ready to respond, such were Lee's days spent in this world. And if there were a celestial calendar, it would not be the length of her life on earth that she was a believer and a follower of the Light, but HOW she followed that Light in great firmness that would tell her story.

Born in Astoria, Oregon, in 1927, her young life became an unconscious witness to that quickening spirit which Bahá'u'lláh breathed into the world and she responded to, thus preparing her for when she finally found the Faith to take up the torch and carry it to the end. Lee met and married George DeLoach in Astoria. They had three children, Mark, Becky and Jerry. When the military transferred George to Anchorage both Lee and George met Bahá'ís and in February of 1964 both declared their faith in Bahá'u'lláh. Both became very active in the Anchorage area. In April, 1969, along with seven other God-intoxicated souls, the DeLoach family pioneered to Eagle River to form that much needed Local Spiritual Assembly.

Lee applied for and was granted permission to go on pilgrimage in February,

1969. Not only did Lee make the pilgrimage to Haifa but she also attained the Holy places of Pilgrimage in Iran. She always felt doubly blessed because of this bounty and she often mentioned how special she felt to be one of the last Alaskans to live in the pilgrim house during her stay in Haifa.

Lee's worry in these last few years was that because of her illness she could not get out and teach as she was used to. This worry of hers brought to mind words of Keith Ransom-Kehler, ... "I have fallen, though I never faltered. Months of effort with nothing accomplished is the record that confronts me. If anyone in future should be interested in this ... adventure of mine, he alone can say whether near or far from the seemingly impregnable heights of complaisance and indifference my tired old body fell. The smoke and din of battle are ... too dense for me to ascertain whether I moved forward or was slain in my tracks."

After twenty-one years of courage, faithfulness and devoted service to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, Lee went quietly to sleep to awaken in the Holy Presence.

Yá Bahá'u-l-Abhá!

Patricia Talcott



Tom Dopps (on right) with Brendar McNamara and Patrick McArdle in Dundalk, Ireland, June 1977.

## TOM DOPPS TEACHES IN THE FAROE ISLANDS AND IRELAND

Tom has spent the summer travel-teaching in Ireland. He pioneered to the Faroe Islands for the Iceland National Spiritual Assembly and became a member of the Torshavn Local Assembly. He enjoyed being with Knight of Bahá'u'llah Eshil Ljungberg, who is 91 years old and a great inspiration to everyone.

On June 3rd he started teaching in Ireland, filling in for Edgar Russell who had planned to go there last spring. Tom plans to stay until November. He stayed a month in Dundalk where the first of four new Assemblies was formed last August.

Tom said that the teaching in Ireland is low key, with street teaching only in established Assembly areas because of the strength and organization of the Catholic Church. In Ireland, 95% of the people are Catholic. After meeting with the National Teaching Committee he went to Cork for a week and participated in a proclamation and public meeting. This was attended by 35 people and 10 are going to firesides.

Tom met Doris Holley, widow of Hand of the Cause Horace Holley, and visited George Townshend's grave. He also got acquainted with Adib Teherzadeh, Counsellor for Ireland and author of *The Revelation of Bahá'u'llah*. Next he spent a month in Dundalk, where the Baha'is were working to form a new Local Spiritual Assembly. He was privileged to meet Hooper Dunbar and Annalese Bopp, Counsellors, and to attend O. Z. Whitehead's fireside, an Irish institution. Dorothy Ferraby and Adib Teherzadeh were also present.

Tom has now been asked by the National Teaching Committee to be one of four members of a resident teaching team in the second Assembly goal town of Sligo and he went there July 25th with one other team member. He was able to spend a weekend at the Irish Summer School which is two weeks long.

Tom's address, probably until November, is 41 Morehampton Rd., Donnybrook, Dublin 4, Eire.

# Hilda Mary Stepetin Kashevarof deLeon

*-INDIGENOUS BELIEVER IN PETERSBURG PASSES*

Hilda Mary Stepetin Kashevarof deLeon died March 22, 1991, at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage. She was born July 20, 1926, in Unalaska to Logan and Barbara Stepetin. Her parents died before World War II and she was adopted by her older sister Julia Kashevarof.

Hilda endured many hardships when she was evacuated from the Aleutian Islands during World War II and sent to a camp near Juneau, where she married Steve deLeon in 1945. Four of their children were born there, and some time later they settled in Petersburg.

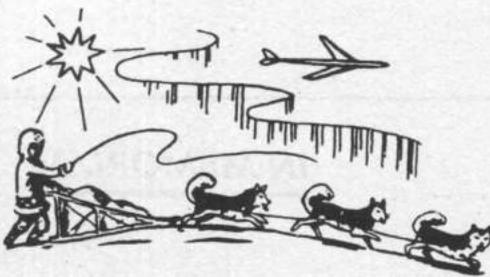
Hilda became a member of the Bahá'í Faith on May 20, 1966, through her good friend, Helen Salpid, Mary Brown's mother. During those early years, she and Steve opened their home for Bahá'í firesides and study classes. She was among the first indigenous believers in this area.

An admirable quality of the deLeons is their strong sense of family unity. They have always powerfully sustained one another. The main principle of the Bahá'í Faith is unity, and the concept of unity must grow from the grassroots. It must start with the unity of the family, and the deLeons are a splendid example of a strong unified family.

Survivors are her husband Steve, three daughters, Marie Patrick and Barbara Parker of Anchorage and Marge Wells of Fairfield, Texas; three sons, Albino, Carlos, and Orlino deLeon of Anchorage; a sister, Julia Kashevarof of Saint Paul; a brother, Michael Stepetin of Portland, Oregon; 15 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

A Bahá'í memorial service was held at 2:00 p.m., April 2, at the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall in Petersburg. Fifteen members of her family and friends traveled down the highway and by ferry to Petersburg to attend.

by Charlotte Schwartz



# ALASKA BAHÁ'Í NEWS

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**INDIAN-ESKIMO TEACHING TEAM.** Left to right: Scott Tyler, Melba Loft, Maynard Eakan, Ida Bergamaschi.

## INDIAN-ESKIMO TEACHING TEAMS TRAVEL TO EUROPE

This summer saw the culmination of two years of planning and collaboration on an indigenous teaching team project to Europe. Several years ago the idea was conceived of a team of Indian and Eskimo believers from the United States, Canada, and Alaska travel-teaching through Europe. The scope of the project was enormous because it involved those three National Assemblies cooperating in selecting and training the team, securing cost estimates, and getting the team to Europe. Then it involved the Continental Pioneer Committee for Europe setting up the itinerary within Europe and coordinating with all the receiving National Spiritual Assemblies. Finally, the International Teaching Centre in Haifa was responsible for financing the project.

The machinery which was finally agreed upon by the three North American National Assemblies was that each would choose its representatives to the team, but that Alaska would have overall coordinating responsibility. This responsibility was delegated to the Inter-

national Goals Committee of Alaska which worked closely with the Continental Pioneer Committee of Europe which is based in London.

The consummation of the two years of collaborative work resulted in a team of four members traveling in some 10 countries of Europe. The team members were Melba Loft, an Ojibway Indian from the Tyendinaga Reserve near Ottawa, Canada; Scott Tyler, a Makah Indian from the Neah Bay reservation in Washington; and two Eskimos from Alaska, Ida Bergamaschi from Anchorage, and Maynard Eakan from Kotzebue.

The team came together for the first time, spending a full week in preparation at the Kolstoe home in Palmer, from July 7 to 14. During that time they spent mornings in spiritual deepening, and afternoons and evenings in preparing programs for presentation in Europe. The teams had costumes and artifacts to display and explain, also native legends and customs to present, and dances and songs to perform.

Due to the high costs involved, it became necessary to split the team in two, and so Scott and Melba, the Indian half of the team, traveled to Ireland and middle European countries,

and Ida and Maynard, the Eskimo half, traveled to the Scandinavian countries. Scott and Melba both had very colorful costumes of their tribes: Melba's a lovely full-length fringed dress of velvet-soft deerskin, and Scott's a richly appliqued cape and large carved wooden headdress. Melba's native specialty is telling stories, and Scott is very proficient in performing the Makah songs and dances. Ida and Maynard wore summer parkas and demonstrated several types of Eskimo dances. They also had many interesting items from their culture: masks, dancing fans, dolls, and mukluks. Both teams also had well prepared talks on the Faith appropriate to many situations.

At this time the teams have finished a very active and rewarding 45 day teaching tour and have arrived home happy but exhausted. A few reports from the countries visited have started coming in, glowing with the successes of the teams. Surely the project will bring long term bounties to Europe, as well as deep satisfaction to the team members and all those who worked on this great project.

Beverly Kolstoe  
International Goals Committee

## THE BAB'S BIRTHDAY October 20

"You are the first Letters that have been generated from the Primal Point (one of the Bab's titles), the first Springs that have welled out from the Source of this Revelation . . . Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His coming. Heed not your weaknesses and frailty; fix your gaze upon the invincible power of the Lord, your God, the Almighty . . . Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory."—From the Bab's Address to the Letters of the Living.

## ASSEMBLY MEMBERS ELECTED

In the recent bi-election to replace Jim Schoppert and George Wang on the National Spiritual Assembly, Maynard Eakan of Kotzebue and Robert Putnam of Anchorage were elected. Out of Alaska's 57 delegates, 41 cast ballots.

## Maynard Eakan

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 2 years as of 1999. First elected in 1978.

Maynard was the first Eskimo to be elected to the National Spiritual Assembly. His home had been in the Kotzebue area.

Before hearing of the Faith, Maynard had totally given up drinking and had been actively involved in a number of alcohol counseling programs. He had also become active in a group promoting "Eskimo Power" as a means to win a better place for the Eskimo people. When he learned of the Faith, Maynard quickly recognized that Bahá'u'lláh, and not militant movements, had the long-term answers for his people.

Shortly after becoming a Bahá'í, Maynard traveled to Ft. Qu'Appelle, Canada where he participated in a Bahá'í Native American teaching conference. He has been a leading voice in many such projects ever since.

Active participation in Bahá'í projects became a way of life for Maynard. He joined the Massive Encounter Teaching Team and traveled extensively throughout Alaska. He traveled to Europe in 1978 with three other Native Americans as a part of an indigenous teaching project sponsored by the National Spiritual Assemblies of Alaska, Canada and the United States. This highly successful trip found him visiting the northern countries of Europe and as far north as among the Sami (Laplanders) of northern Finland.

Maynard, together with other Alaskans, spent the last year of the Five Year Plan in Canada to help them win their goals. He was often among the first to volunteer for travel teaching projects.

## Pat Eckhart passes on to Abhá Kingdom

"It was like stepping out of a dark narrow closet into a brilliantly lit room."

Those were the words of Pat Eckhart when asked about becoming a Bahá'í.

Dorothy Patricia Eckhart passed away April 10th, and was attended in her funeral obsequies by relatives and friends on April 15th.

Pat was a gifted artist and dramatist and lived in a world of beauty, but she also found time to be a school teacher and a successful real estate agent.

A spiritual light, Pat maintained through her Bahá'í life a prayerful attitude in work and deeds, and her devoted service to the Cause has no doubt earned her a high place in the Celestial Garden and I know that her shining love is with us all.

In faith, I know Pat is rejoicing in the presence of the Master and the friends she loved so well, (Gordon Fleming comes to mind), and I know that she is radiant in the Kingdom of God.

Now Pat has stepped from this world of twilight into the brilliant and radiant glory of Bahá'u'lláh.

'Alláh-u-Abhá, dear friend! — Patricia Talcott



Steven E. (Steve) Ellis

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 5 years as of 1999. First elected in 1994.

Those who question the value of advertising the Faith in newspapers need only talk to Steve Ellis. He saw an ad on the Faith, called the number and he and Sue, his wife, went to firesides regularly and attended two winter schools.

It was after reading *Thief in the Night* that Steve became convinced of the reality of Bahá'u'lláh's claim. On December 30, 1973, Steve and Sue formally embraced the Faith. They immediately became vigorously involved with teaching and youth activities. Twice, before moving to Alaska, the Ellises moved for home-front pioneering in Oregon, where he established his chiropractic offices. Changes in the way the state made payments for services severely hampered his practice and the Ellises decided it was time to look elsewhere.

Having been isolated believers, the Ellises wanted to live in a larger Bahá'í community that was clearly committed to teaching, and one where their children could have a Bahá'í peer environment. Steve found an opportunity in Anchorage, and the Ellises moved north.

In an effort to spend as much time as possible for the Faith, Steve found an opportunity at a chiropractic clinic that enabled him to have a reduced schedule.

Among his most cherished memories are attending the youth conference in Hawaii in 1974, pilgrimage in 1985 and meeting six Hands of the Cause. Each of these were life-changing experiences.

Steve is known as the originator and chief promoter of the TEC (Teaching Enrollment and Consolidation) program.

He has also conducted workshops on the issue of unity within the Bahá'í community, and that activity culminated in the publication of his book, Overcoming Barriers to Unity.

In 1998, Steve attended the 8th International Convention in Haifa, Israel for the election of the Universal House of Justice.

Carolyn Fleming

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 5+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1991

When Carolyn was attending the University of Oklahoma, in Tulsa, her aunt, Virginia McCoy, who was a Bahá'í, took her to Bahá'í activities and meetings. She attended firesides in Tulsa, while earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Interior Design. She fell in love with the Writings of Shoghi Effendi and the Bahá'í teachings, leading her to embrace the Faith in 1970.

In 1973, she decided to go to Alaska for three months to take part in the massive Encounter teaching activities. Three months wasn't enough. She stayed and in May, 1974, married Roger Fleming, who had also been involved with Massive Encounter. More than 25 years later, the Flemings were still in Alaska as of Ridván, 156 (1999).

Carolyn's activities have been wide-ranging and energetic. She has pioneered to Dillingham, Valdez and Chena Valley. Her teaching activities within Alaska have taken her to all parts of the state, including many, many of the small villages.

Internationally, she has done a lot too, particularly in Europe, in 1974 and 1993. She also attended the dedication of the Bahá'í Temple in Samoa, the World Congress in New York, and the Women's Conference in Beijing, China.

Carolyn has served on numerous committees and Spiritual Assemblies, holding every office at one time or another. She was Secretary of the National Teaching Committee for many years, and served for three years as Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly.

Whenever and wherever there is something going on, Carolyn is very apt to be in the center of things, most likely on an organizational level, such as the work she did as co-coordinator with Debbie Kloby, on the Cultural Unity Conference in Anchorage in 1986.

In 1993, Carolyn attended the 7th International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel.

John Feller

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 2 years as of 1999. First elected in 1997.

John's sister, Sue Stevens, was a Bahá'í. One time when he was visiting her in Seattle, she invited him to a fireside. It was a nice home, the people were pleasant and he remembers there was a Persian couple there who recently arrived in this country and didn't speak much English. It was an enjoyable evening, but he didn't think too much about it other than having a good time with his sister.

John describes himself at that time in his life, as a commercial fisherman and a heavy drinker. In 1988 he decided to sober up and went to a 28-day treatment program in Mt. Edgecumbe. When he returned to Wrangell, he remembered the Bahá'í teachings against drinking alcohol. He went to a fireside at the home of Tod and Betsy Jones because he thought if he were with Bahá'ís it would minimize the chance of a relapse to drinking.

What he found was some people who were genuinely concerned about him and eager to help. He was ready to join the Faith right then, but knew about independent investigation, so he thought he had better do some more investigating. He started reading as much of the Bahá'í literature as he could.

The one thing that stood out most vividly, and reinforced his desire for sobriety, was reading about the martyrdom of the Báb. That, and the caring of the people confirmed his conviction that this was the religion for him. John enrolled on February 24, 1992. John's new life as a sober, community-minded fisherman was noted by the people of Wrangell and he was elected to the Wrangell Cooperative, an island-wide Native Council which is recognized as a tribal government by the U. S. government. He was soon elected its Chairman and in that position he has been involved with many issues concerning Native rights.

John participated in an archeological dig at a site near Wrangell, and this stimulated his interest in many items. As a result he has gone back to school where he is studying environmental technology, with an emphasis on water/wastewater management.

John had only been a Bahá'í for a few years when he was elected delegate to the National Convention, which he attended for the first time. He was stunned when his name was announced as having been elected to the National Spiritual Assembly. He said that membership on that body presented quite a learning curve for him.

In 1998 he attended the 8th International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice. He said he was in awe the whole time there, and that, "Each day superseded the last." The Shrine of the Báb seemed alive and he was deeply moved by the diversity of the delegates. John was given the opportunity to address the delegates and Continental Board of Counsellors in the great Concourse at the Seat of the Universal House of Justice. A special bounty was being there during the twin Holy Days of the Birth of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, as well as the celebration of the Twelfth Day of Ridván in the Haram-i-Aqdas, Bahjí.

Robin C. Fowler

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 6+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1962

Robin was born and raised in England, and moved to Canada to find greater opportunity. While living in Whitehorse, he learned of the Bahá'í Faith through a theater group. He became the first to enroll in the Faith in Whitehorse. In 1956 there was an urgent need for a pioneer in Ketchikan, in order to form its first Spiritual Assembly. Robin offered his services. That is how he happened to live in Alaska.

He lived first in Ketchikan, then pioneered to Sitka. He then moved to Tanana Valley in order to attend the University of Alaska, where he majored in theater. He quickly developed an enthusiastic following for his theatrical work. After graduation, he continued graduate studies at the University of Hawaii. In 1967, he returned to Alaska as acting Head of the Drama Department at the university, while the regular Department Head was on sabbatical leave.

Next, he answered the pioneering call to Unalaska, where he accepted the position of City Manager. From there he went to serve at the World Centre in 1972, where he served until his retirement in 1994, at which time he moved to New Mexico, to the same community as Ben Guhrke.

In 1970 Robin, as well as the other Caucasian members of the National Spiritual Assembly, was adopted as a Tlingit Indian in a moving ceremony in Petersburg.

Robin was among the nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly to participate in the first election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963.



Gordon

**DR. C. GORDON FLEMING  
DECEMBER 1908-SEPTEMBER 1988**

"Reflect, O friend, upon the mysteries of things! And listen to the summoning of the True One! The sweeping wings of Light are borne upon the breath of love and the springtime of the heart is hidden in His Power. . ."

On Thursday, September 8th at 1:00 p.m., Gordon Fleming slept peacefully and in this manner did he return unto God 'borne upon the breath of love.' Child of both British and Scotch ancestry, Gordon had the inquiring, attentive mind of a student. It lead him to the healing arts, already a life in service to humanity, a life filled with music and the love of living.

Gordon often mentioned to me that he wished he had been a Bahá'í when he and the beloved Master were in Edinburgh, Scotland together, what an experience that would have been! He became a Bahá'í in 1956, and "set about making up for lost time," so he said.

In the years we knew him Gordon was content with a simple life style. Young people sought him out and he loved them dearly. They kept him young and only the youth themselves can tell of the work Gordon has done with them - of the souls won and the lives saved. The youth have lost a teacher in this world but gained an ardent advocate in the Abhá Kingdom.

Salient among the distinguishing characteristics of this dear friend were his faithfulness and his untiring efforts to serve and teach the Faith. He was still full of plans and was working on a book when the end came.

Though ill for these past months, Gordon continued to encourage his family and to deepen and teach all who came to him. His final pilgrimage in "The Valley of the Shadow" was long and painful, but Bahá'í arms upheld him and Bahá'í love

urged him to be strong. A fulfilled life has come to an end. A great soul has gone home.

"The bird beat its wings on the cage, and in the end was not the freedom he thought he was going to have, but the ultimate freedom he received."

Patricia Talcott

*The family of Gordon requests that contributions in his name be given to the ARC Fund at the World Center or the Alaska "To Move the Youth" Fund by Bahá'í friends who wish to remember him with memorial gifts. Bahá'í National Office, 13501 Brayton Drive, Anchorage, Alaska 99516.*



Fannie Friday, of Kake.

**OVER 100 AND  
STILL ACTIVE**

The lady in the above picture is Fannie Friday, of Kake. She was among those who helped form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Kake in 1970. This was the first Tlingit Assembly formed in Southeast Alaska.

Fannie is now over 100 years of age and is still very alert and active. She sews every day in addition to singing and playing her harmonica for visitors, she also tells wonderful stories with wisdom.

In the picture she is sewing miniature Tlingit dance blankets with the help of Erik Larson. The blankets were used to dress puppets that were taken on a travel teaching trip the Larsons made through the U.S. and Canada last summer. Fannie sang Tlingit dance songs that were taped and used with the puppets as they danced their "traditional" dances. It made Fannie extremely happy to know that she was to "sing" for all those people "out there."

One day during a recent visit she cut out a pattern of a double-headed bird. Raven on the left . . . Eagle on the right. They shared one body and she gave them one eye, in the middle, and one heart. They are called "love birds." What a beautiful way to illustrate the spiritual teachings of unity: **to be united in heart and mind.** Separate, yet having a single hearted purpose. Fannie's stories have helped the friends in Kake better understand that the Baha'i teachings and the "old ways" are much the same in spirit.

A birthday party was held in October last year to honor Fannie. The Kake Baha'is are trying not to forget the elders and the important lessons they have to give to mankind.

—Kay Larson



Sarah Frank of Venetie who celebrated her 108th birthday on September 28, 1984.

### SARAH FRANK CELEBRATES 108th BIRTHDAY

Somewhere someone celebrates a birthday every day of the year. Birthdays are fairly ordinary and September 28 this year was no exception, unless you know that on that day six Baha'is traveled hundreds of miles to spend a special day with a very special lady who was celebrating her 108th birthday! Sarah Frank of Venetie (affectionately known as Grandma by residents and the surrounding villages) added yet another candle to her birthday cake with the help of her friends Glenn O'Neal (Chena Valley), Mona Johnson (Tanana Valley), Hassan Shafiee (Tanana Valley), Counsellor Laurretta King and Auxilliary Board Member Fletcher Bennett. Becky Porter baked a huge cake for Sarah and the friends had a huge "open house" party. Children, always delighted with celebrating a birthday, flocked to Grandma's house for cake, jello, apples and juice. A gift was presented to Sarah from the Baha'is, a warm pair of slippers. During the course of the day almost every Venetie resident came to wish Sarah a happy birthday, have refreshments and visit with the out of town Baha'is. Sarah enjoys having Baha'i visitors and loves to have prayers said. We wish her a very happy year.

Alaska Bahá'í Community  
Pioneers and Builders, p III-71

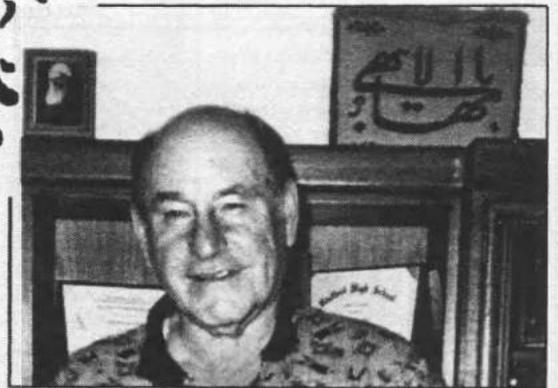


Photo: Arnie Glaz, July 1996. Photo Credit: Bill McKinley

### Arnold J. "Arnie" Glaz

by Bill McKinley

As I recall, Arnie came to Alaska from Wake Island, where he was an isolated Bahá'í. He had a contract with the F.A.A. as a commissary officer and was there two years or more before coming to Anchorage. In 1969 we served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Anchorage together and we traveled to Seward every week to give a fireside. We took turns driving. They let us use the Court Chambers there. One time two policemen were Bahá'ís and the Chief was investigating the Faith. Eventually we had seven people become Bahá'ís in Seward.

At that time the Bahá'ís weren't so busy on weekends. We both were single so we shared an apartment together, and often traveled to Fairbanks, Nenana, Glenallen, Valdez and Tok.

In 1969 some Bahá'ís from An-

chorage moved to Eagle River to form a Spiritual Assembly and in 1971 the friends in Chugiak said they wanted to form a Spiritual Assembly. By this time, Arnie had married a wonderful woman whom he had met in Wake Island, Babs. The three of us decided we would pioneer to Chugiak. Arnie and Babs had a daughter, Sholeh, born in September 1972.

After working for the F.A.A., as well as at Fort Richardson, Alaska, and for the Army in Washington D.C., Arnie bought a condo in Virginia. His mother, sister and family lived in Cleveland, Ohio. After Arnie left Alaska, I visited all of them in Ohio, and whenever I visited my family in North Carolina I always visited Arnie and his daughter Sholeh in Virginia.

Arnie suffered a heart attack on July 26, 1997, and passed on to the Abhá Kingdom.

# Helen Garrett

Helen Garrett was born Helen E. Stine, June 5, 1919 in Peculiar, Missouri, the fourth child of Clyde Stine and Mary Hardin Stine. She married Elzie Dale Garrett in California on December 14, 1942.

Helen moved to Alaska in 1961 with her husband, Elzie Dale, daughter, Carol Ann, son,

Marshall and two nephews, Vic and Van Paul. The family settled on a homestead in Goldstream Valley outside of Fairbanks. Her son, Chuck Garrett, his wife and four children followed to Alaska in 1963. In 1964 Helen and Elzie Dale brought five grandchildren to Alaska. Helen and Elzie's daughter, Loretta and her husband followed the spring of 1965.

Helen and Elzie Dale moved to Hilmar, California in 1973 to care for Elzie Dale's father. Helen declared her faith in Bahá'u'lláh and became a Bahá'í July 29, 1973. Helen was an active member of the Merced J.D. Bahá'í community, Hilmar, California, until she returned to Fairbanks the winter of 1985 where she resided with Janie Garrett. In 1986 she moved to Tok with her daughter, Mary Dale Underwood. Helen was an active member of the Local Spiritual Assembly and Bahá'í librarian.

Helen, no matter where she resided, had an open-door policy. No one was a stranger. Whether to provide a cup of hot coffee, a meal, a place to sleep, or just a pleasant visit, her home and her heart were always open.

Helen died peacefully at her home on January 31, 1990, surrounded by loving friends and family, after a courageous battle with cancer. She is survived by her husband, Elzie Dale Garrett, Hilmar, California; their four children, Chuck Garrett, Fairbanks, Loretta Mae Beaver, Barrow, Mary Dale Underwood, Tok, Carol Ann Haines, Mulino, Oregon; 13 grandchildren she helped raise. Helen will be missed by her family and many friends.

Helen was laid to rest with a private graveside service in Tok Community Cemetery on February 1, 1990. She is the first Bahá'í to be buried in Tok. A memorial service was held February 3, 1990 at 2:00 pm at the VFW Hall in Tok.

— by Debbie Taplin, Mary Underwood,  
Lori Beaver, and Darla Brown



# Adella George

Adella George, a devoted, third generation Native Bahá'í, and young mother of four, passed away very unexpectedly of an aneurism on July 5. Anyone who met or knew Adella was quickly impressed by her willingness to help people. She had a quick wit, her own personal brand of humor that lightened our hearts.

She came from a very large family, represented

wanted them to have a good education, and knew that it had to include the Faith.

She had become active in Sunday morning children's classes. On nice days, she would walk to the Bahá'í Center with her little ones, singing Bahá'í songs together all the way down the hill.

Unaware of the illness that threatened her life, we had shared the following Writing during the coffee time on her last Sunday with us:

"Conditions in the world today place an added burden on the shoulders of everyone, the Bahá'ís included, and the Guardian has the greatest sympathy for their difficulties. However, he feels that each Bahá'í, no matter how tired and overworked he may be or how preoccupied with the cares of every day life, he should constantly bear in mind the great blessings God has bestowed upon him by enabling him to accept His Cause in this day. Everything else is transient; our difficulties will pass away, and our lives too eventually, but this eternal gift of faith in Bahá'u'lláh will never pass away and will be the source of our everlasting happiness."

(From a letter dated May 3, 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Englewood Community, and published in *Canadian Bahá'í News*, No. 206, March 1967, p. 7)

Adella's husband and children have moved to the Juneau area. The pocket of emptiness left by them in our community is filled by gentle assurance, that Adella is now praying for and assisting us from the "other side", as we continue to pray for the progress of her staunch and dedicated soul.

By Kay Larson

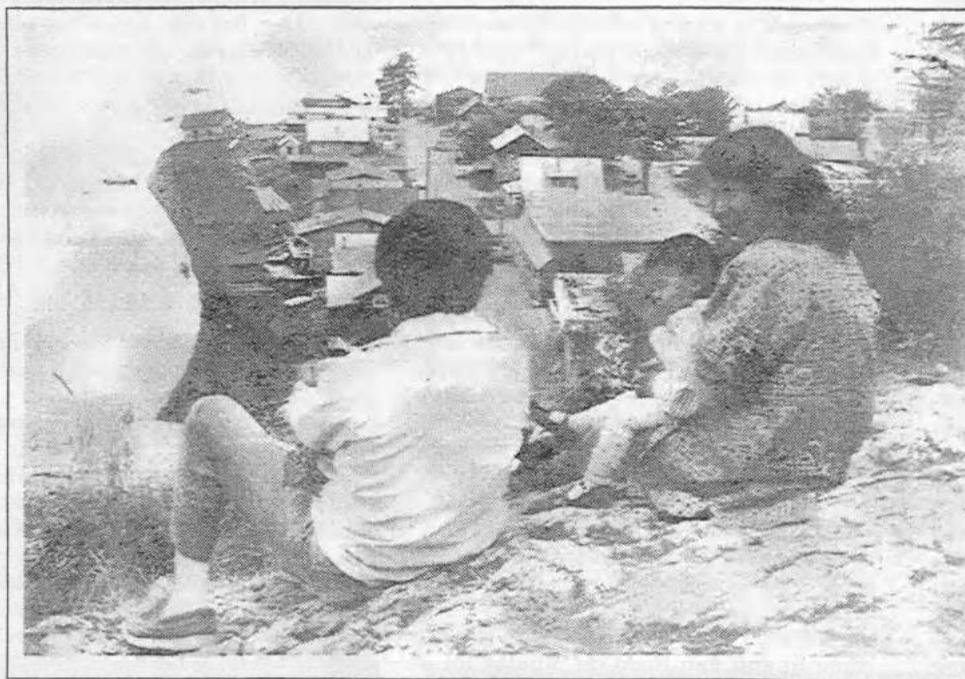


Photo:  
Overlooking the village of Kake: Adella George and Al Williams (former Kake alcoholism counselor) talking about involvement in the Statewide and local movements toward sobriety.

by many religious backgrounds. Out of respect for the diversity within her family, memorial services included Protestant and Catholic as well as Bahá'í portions. More than anything in the world, it was Adella's sincere desire to see her community living and working together in love and unity.

Life was never easy. Struggling with alcoholism, she had gained sobriety and then did whatever she could, to reach out to her fellowman. She carried within her a flame of hope, the bright vision of a strong future for her children. She

## EARLY ALASKAN BAHÁ'ÍS ART AND WILMA GREGORY: LIVES OF SERVICE

Arthur Gregory came to Alaska in 1937. According to his wife, Wilma Gregory, he was "hoping to find a gold mine." Although he didn't strike it rich in gold, Art and Wilma Gregory, of Fritz Creek, found each other and are, themselves, a gold mine of love, spirituality, inspiration and information for the Alaska Bahá'í community.

### Becoming Bahá'ís

The story of how Art Gregory became a Bahá'í reads like a book on the history of the Bahá'í faith in Alaska. Art's journey to the Faith started, however, when he was in high school. At that time Art went to the Methodist Church. He was an usher in the church and eventually became a teacher in the Sunday school classes. As a Sunday school teacher Art was sent a packet of materials to study. According to Art, that packet contained "Lots of confusing stuff that didn't make sense."

"I went to the preacher," continued Art, "and he said that there are lots of things we just have to accept on Faith. I decided that if it didn't make sense, it had to be non-sense and that if my salvation depended on this non-sense I was going to be an atheist."

Luckily for us, Art's decision to become an atheist was changed by a variety of life experiences. Among those experiences was moving to Fairbanks to prospect for gold. "In the meantime, I saw in the paper that this woman Janet Whitenack (Stout) came up to Fairbanks as a Bahá'í missionary. I thought to myself, 'Just what we need up here, another missionary.' But I saw that she had started a bookstore in the lobby of the Pioneer Hotel."

"I was looking for a book on anthropology at the time, and I couldn't get it from one of the big bookstores."

Art decided to try going down to the Pioneer Hotel to see if Janet Whitenack might have the book. What he saw was about a half-dozen books on a card table in the lobby and a few catalogs underneath. He didn't think that he'd have much hope finding his book, but was impressed that Janet Whitenack was willing to order the book for him.



A picture of "One of our Youth-Art Gregory" from the Bahá'í archives.



Art and Wilma Gregory at their wedding in 1947.

"I went in several other times and had Janet order some books for me," said Art. "Then one day, I was walking down the street in my uniform for the National Guard and I saw Janet. She told me that she didn't know that I was in the service. I told her that my guard unit had been mobilized and that we were being sent to Fort Richardson."

"Janet told me, 'I have a friend in Anchorage who has a book store there. Her name is Honor Kempton.'" (Honor Kempton was another of the first Bahá'ís in Alaska) and Janet Whitenack (Stout) suggested that Art visit Honor Kempton in Anchorage if he needed any books and asked him to please give Ms. Kempton her regards were he to see her.

"I came down there," said Art, "and after about six weeks I got a pass. So I decided to look up Honor Kempton's book store and tell her that Janet Whitenack said to say hello."

"When I got there, I was invited to come in and join them on Sunday for a chicken dinner. She said I could stay for dinner and stay for the fireside afterward. Knowing there was nothing to eat on the base on Sunday but cold cuts, peanut butter, and slices of bread, I decided to accept the invitation."

"There were other chicken dinners and other firesides and it (the Bahá'í Faith) made Sense!"

After reading a number of books and investigating the Faith for about a year, Art decided to become a Bahá'í. "Verne Stout gave me a quiz, at that time you had to take a quiz to show you knew enough about the Faith to be a Bahá'í, and he accepted my card when I decided to declare. That was in 1943."

Although Art came to Alaska looking for gold, Wilma came to visit her brother and to look for opportunity. She spent her first two to three weeks in Alaska cleaning for her brother and then found a job working for the Civil Aircraft Administration. "I started working in the office," stated Wilma, at the same time Greg (her name for Art) started working in the warehouse." That was the summer of 1947. We knew each other for six months before we decided to get married.

Wilma wasn't a Bahá'í when she married Art. "I couldn't see anything wrong with it," stated Wilma. "Evelyn Huffman (another of the early Alaskan Bahá'ís) kept trying to get me to sign my card. Our first child was due in November and she said if I became a Bahá'í it would be the second all Bahá'í baby born in Alaska. She finally talked me into it!" The Alaskan archives show that Wilma Gregory became a Bahá'í on Nov. 1, 1948.

### Early Service

Art and Wilma attended the first National Convention held in Alaska in 1957. At that convention Art was one of the nine convention delegates. He was elected to represent the Anchorage Recording District (later Spenard — a Public Utility District and now Oceanview). At that time the Gregory's lived on a homestead seven miles outside of Anchorage. As a delegate, Art was involved in the election of the very first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska. That convention was historic in that it was the only Alaskan convention ever held that received a convention message from Shoghi Effendi. Shoghi Effendi passed away that same year.

Art also served on the very first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Anchorage Recording District. That Assembly was the second Local Spiritual Assembly formed in Alaska. Wilma Gregory also served on that body.

One of the goals given to Alaska by the Guardian was to acquire endowment



Art and Wilma Gregory with Janice and baby Gayle.

property. According to Art, the few Bahá'ís at that time in Alaska wondered how they would ever accomplish this goal. "I got to thinking," said Art, "Why not just give one of those ten acre tracts we had. It would fill the goal and make us feel good to do it as well. We decided to donate ten acres on the S.E. corner of our 160. We talked to Vern and Evelyn Huffman and they agreed they would donate ten acres across the road from it. Before we sold the place we also gave 10 acres to the Spenard Assembly."

Most Bahá'ís in Alaska today know that the Oceanview Assembly is in possession of money in an endowment fund. What most of us don't know, however, is that that money came about because of the absolute obedience of Art and Wilma to the Guardian's instructions to obtain property for Bahá'í centers.

When asked about this obedience and the sacrifice they made, Art and Wilma Gregory are very humble. "At the time," Art once said, "it really didn't seem like a sacrifice."



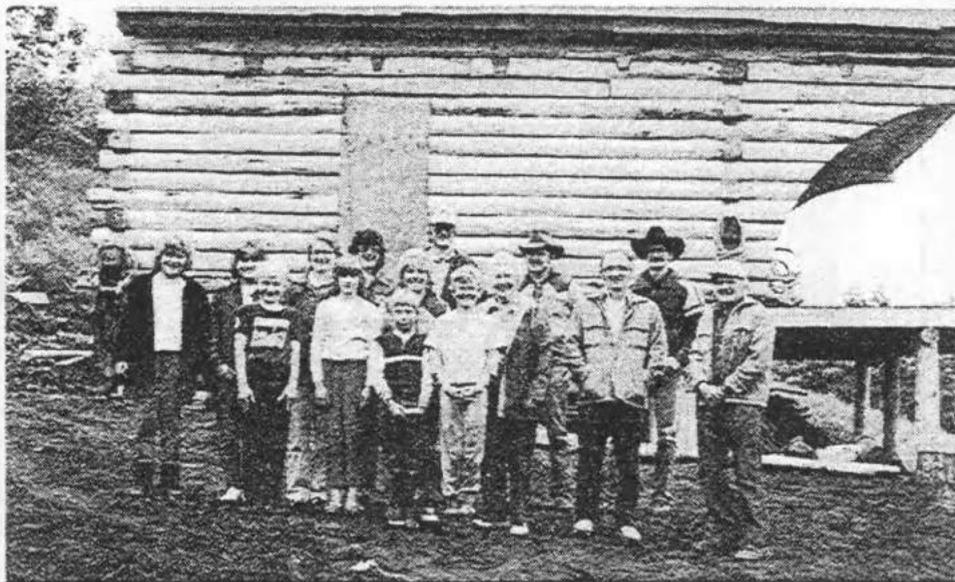
Art and Wilma Gregory in front of their Mendenhall Valley home in 1982

#### "Bahá'í Way"

A road had been put in near the Gregory's homestead and the road commission was trying to get names for the road. "Usually, they took the name of the first person to live on the land, but the road commission said that if they wanted to name a road people living on it could get a petition," said Art. "Betty Becker thought it would be wonderful to name that road 'Bahá'í Way', kind of a pun on highway. So Betty Becker made up a form and asked people to sign it. Vern Huffman's name was first on the list. She took it down to the road commission and the Superintendent said, 'We'd never name a road like that.' So they took the first name on the list and named the road Huffman Road. I'm glad that his name went on that!" Art stated.

#### The Move to Homer

Art and Wilma sold their property near Anchorage in 1958 and moved to Homer. Their five children are Janice Gregory Taylor, of Mendenhall Valley, Gayle Gregory Forrest, of Fritz Creek, Jim Gregory,



The Gregory family reunion at Burt Gregory's home between Homer and Anchor Point.

Steve Gregory, who was killed eleven years ago in a motorcycle accident, and Burt Gregory, of Homer. The Gregory family shared the trials and bounties of being the first Bahá'í family to live in Homer.

Although the Gregory family left Homer and lived in other areas for a while, when Art retired they decided to return to Homer to live. For those who know the Gregory's however, the word "retired" doesn't seem to fit. At the age of 67 Art built the home he and Wilma now live in himself. Wilma, an avid and talented gardener, plants flowers and vegetables each year, cans food, and is always there with a cup of hot cider for anyone who comes to visit. Many Bahá'ís around Homer, including this author, have spent many hours soaking up the spirit of friendliness and love that exists in the Gregory home. Art and Wilma still serve on the Fritz Creek Local Spiritual Assembly and always open their home to Bahá'í activities. Wilma, widely known among Bahá'ís for her incredible pie making ability, and Art

are always ready to lend a hand and share their vast knowledge of how to live in Alaska and their knowledge of the Faith with anyone. There don't seem to be any Bahá'ís around Homer who haven't been helped by the Gregory family. The Gregory's are also active direct teachers of the Faith, often holding firesides and deepenings in their home.

A quote that appears under a description of Art Gregory in a Bahá'í archival account written by Betty Becker applies to both Art and Wilma Gregory. It seems a fitting way to end this sketchy story on the lives of these servants of Bahá'u'lláh:

"To that people in whom God causes love to appear the Supreme Concurrence, the Angels of Heaven and the Hosts of the Kingdom of the Glorious One make salutation. Love is the source of the greatest happiness in the material and the spiritual worlds\*\* Be ye manifestations of the Love of God, shining by the light of love and harmony. How beautiful is the Shining of the Shining." BS-790

"All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for enough good people to do nothing."

Edmund Burke

"Let men and women, youth and children everywhere recognize the eternal merit of this imperative action for all peoples and lift up their voices in willing assent. Indeed, let it be this generation that inaugurates this glorious stage in the evolution of social life on the planet."

Universal House of Justice



# Arthur Hill Gregory

1917-1993

by John Kolstoe

There was a gentle kindness, a soft smile and a quiet dignity that slipped away from Alaska on June 12 when Art Gregory passed on. Forty-seven years ago he accepted Bahá'u'lláh and remained a stalwart pillar of the Alaskan Bahá'í community. We lost a prized link with our origins.

Friendly enthusiasm are words which come easily to mind when thinking of Art. Never one to dwell on the unpleasant things of life, the problems of yesterday or today did not seem worth mentioning. But, the hopes of tomorrow—that was something else! Practical enough to take care of today's needs, he'd tend his ample garden. In his mind's eye he would see the Bahá'í community of tomorrow and look through his binoculars for signs of gold in the hillsides. He would also find and expose the gold found in those souls whose lives he touched.

Art was not a flamboyant teacher. There was no flood of enrollments from his efforts. But, his life calls to mind the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá when He defined "hosts" as "...such righteous deeds, such conduct and character, as are acceptable in His sight." He built a solid reputation for the Faith: Trustworthiness; Honesty; Integrity; Dependability; Uprightness of character. These virtues became identified with the Gregorys and through them with the Faith. Later Bahá'ís were able to expand on this well-built foundation.

The record of his life was remarkable. You can read about that, or reread it in the April 1988 issue of the *Alaska Bahá'í News*. There is an excellent, two-page article under the caption "Early Alaskan Bahá'ís Art and Wilma Gregory:

Lives of Service." Be inspired again. Read of Art's coming to Alaska in 1937 in search of the muck called gold and finding the more precious kind; how Janet Whitenack (Stout) ordered a book on anthropology for him from her tiny bookstore in Fairbanks; how Janet referred him to her friend Honor Kempton who ran a bookstore in Anchorage when Art was transferred to Ft. Richardson with the Alaska National Guard; how the lure of chicken dinner instead of cold cuts and peanut butter pulled him from the edge of atheism to a firm, life-long commitment to Bahá'u'lláh; how he met and wed Wilma; their homesteading and serving on the second Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, called the Anchorage Recording District; his serving as a delegate to the first, historic Convention of the Bahá'ís of Alaska; the Gregorys' response to the beloved Guardian's goal for endowments by donating 10 acres to the newly formed National Spiritual Assembly; of another 10 acres of endowment which continues to benefit the Bahá'ís of Anchorage.

With the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly, homefront goals were set. The sale of their homestead in 1958 enabled them to be in the first wave of home front pioneers as they settled in Homer. The idea was to live off the land as much as possible. His gardening skills and ability to turn trash into treasures went a long way. Cash was still needed and he would work at anything to supplement their meager income—road commission, janitorial—whatever could keep the family at their post.

The record of his services were built over time with each step taken at great sacrifice.

Only Art never thought in those terms. He might use the word sacrifice in talking about others, but never himself. His life was finely tuned to the spirit of the Cause. He gave the routine things of daily life a spiritual and humanitarian touch with the easy grace of second nature. Even in death it was as if he waited until Wilma was out of town for a few days so he could slip away, causing her the least possible fuss.

In death, Art joins his son Steve who preceded him to the 'Abhá kingdom by 17 years. He leaves behind Wilma, his dear wife, confidant and helpmate; their children Janice Taylor of Juneau, Gayle Forrest, James and Burt all of Homer; and six grandchildren. He also leaves behind a life well-lived, countless friends and a grateful Bahá'í community. Thank you, Art, for just being you and sharing your years with us.



#### Mary Gubatayao-Hagen

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 3+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1994.

When Mary was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, it was the first time that a mother (Ruby Lawson-Gubatayao) and daughter had served together.

Mary had pioneered in Eastern Washington and Idaho and was the chairman of all Native Spiritual Assembly on the Nez Percé Reservation. She had been deeply committed to and involved with teaching among Native Americans. She met Charlotte Siverly in Vancouver and Charlotte spoke with her about moving to Alaska since she was a Native of Alaskan heritage. Mary agreed and moved to Juneau.

It was while she was in Alaska that she attended a session on the Core Curriculum and became an arduous promoter of that program. The National Spiritual Assembly Mary as the Director of the Core Curriculum program and later she became the Director of a newly created office: Office of Family, Youth, and Child Development.

Seeing Mary in traditional Tlingit dress, and listening to her drum and chant a Native offering with her vibrant and husky voice, conjures up images of the best of ancient Indian traditions joining the challenges of the new Day with confidence and vigor.

When someone commented on some prayers she had memorized, she replied, "When Ruby is your mother, you have no choice but to memorize prayers."

Mary was among the representatives from Alaska at the World Centre for the 1992 Centenary Anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. She participated in the Eighth International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in 1998.

## Hugh H. Gray

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 1+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1982.

They were among the first residents in one of the apartments above the newly built Haziratu'l-Quds. Laoma worked in the National office, and the Grays were actively involved with all activities in what was then called Spenard. (This area later merged to become a part of the Anchorage Bahá'í community.) Even though Hugh was gone from home a great deal, due to work on the Alyeska Pipeline, he was an energetic supporter of any and all Bahá'í projects between his camp cooking assignments.

When Hugh started working on drilling platforms in the Cook Inlet, the Grays moved to Kenai, where they served a major role in helping to consolidate that entire area.

Among his conspicuous services, Hugh was on the committee which planned the International Youth Conference in 1983 and served as editor of the *Alaska Bahá'í News* for about a year.

After Hugh's retirement, the Grays tried to stay in Alaska, but found the cost prohibitive. They returned to Idaho where they were once again in a pioneering situation.

Hugh participated in the Fifth International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa in 1983.

## Elmer Guffey Passes

Sending the following cable to the Hands in the Holy Land became the sad duty of the NSA after the passing of our dear friend, Elmer Guffey, 49, at Elmendorf AFB Hospital, Anchorage:

*Handsfaith, Haifa, Israel  
Inform Hands (of the) passing (of) Elmer Guffey,  
devoted pioneer to Alaska (during) Ten Year Crusade  
since 1953. Members grieved (at the) loss (of) dedi-  
cated selfless soul. Beseech prayers (at) Holy  
Shrines (for) progress (of) soul and for bereaved wife.  
(signed) Huffman, Secretary  
—National Spiritual Assembly*

The following cable reply was received from the Hands of the Faith in Haifa:

*Deeply regret (the) passing (of) devoted pioneer  
(and) servant (of the) Faith (in) Alaska. Extend sym-  
pathy (to) family. Assure prayers (at the) Shrines.  
(signed) HANDSFAITH*

## Suffered Critical Injuries In Accident Near Sparrevohn

Mr. Guffey was a passenger in a truck which went out of control off a precariously situated mountain road near Sparrevohn military site, and suffered critical injuries from the resulting accident, June 20. He passed to the Abha Kingdom the night of June 25, and was buried in Evergreen Memorial Park Cemetery, Spenard, following Baha'i services at Evergreen Memorial Chapel, June 28. Those attending services besides members of the Alaska community were Elmer's son, Dallas, and a friend, Mrs. Pat Keiser, from the Dayton Baha'i community.

Elmer W. Guffey was born Febr. 10, 1912 in Wayne County, Ky. He and his wife pioneered to Alaska from Dayton, Ohio in 1953 at the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade, moving from Fairbanks to Palmer in April of 1960.

Survivors include his wife, Marie, and a nephew, Ray, of Palmer; a son, Dallar of Dayton; three brothers, Sebe of Fairbanks, James of Windy, Ky., and Joe of Monticello, Ky.; three sisters, Mrs. Bertha Powers and Mrs. Opal Regon, also of Windy, and Mrs. Anna Lee of New Castle, Ind., and two grandchildren.

## Bernard H. (Ben) Guhrke

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 5+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1964.

Ben is on the roll of honor as a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh because he pioneered to Kodiak under the Beloved Guardian's Ten Year Crusade.

Ben learned of the Faith and became a Bahá'í while attending the Palmer School of Chiropractics in Davenport, Iowa. After graduating, he returned to his home in New York City where he began his practice. He attended the Jubilee in Chicago in 1953 that launched the Ten Year Crusade. It was at that time that he decided to pioneer. Kodiak Island was to become his post.

Instead of setting up a chiropractic office, Ben went to work at the local bank. Later he became a partner in a casualty insurance agency. While there he met and married Harriet.

Kodiak, Sitka, and Unalaska were not under the jurisdiction of Alaska until 1963. Specific pioneering goals under the Ten Year Crusade were administered by the Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee. So, even though Ben was living in Alaska, technically he was not a part of the Alaskan Bahá'í community until 1963.

After Ben was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1964, George Putney gave him the nick-name "Allah-ben Guhrk, the terrible Turk," a name that stuck for many years.

In 1964 the Universal House of Justice gave Alaska five virgin goals to open during the Nine Year Plan. One of these was the Alaska Peninsula. Ben and Harriet arose to fill that post. Ben sold his interest in the insurance office and accepted the position of Manager of the recently formed Bristol Bay Borough. While working as Borough Manager, Ben worked closely with Jay Hammond, who later became Governor of Alaska.

Governor Hammond's respect for Ben and the Faith was evident in many dealings with the Faith while he was Governor of Alaska. Ben continued as Borough Manager until he and Harriet were asked to serve at the World Centre in the summer of 1970. Ben worked in the Finance Department. He served there for 24 years, until his retirement in 1994. He then moved to New Mexico, where he is in the same community as Robin Fowler.

## HARRIET GUHRKE PASSES

Harriet Guhrke steadfastly served the Faith from the time of her enrollment in Kodiak in 1962 until her passing in the Holy Land January 30, 1986.

Harriet was born in the Hawaiian Islands of Japanese parents, and came to Alaska in the 1940's. She met Ben Guhrke, who came to Kodiak as a Bahá'í pioneer in 1953. They were married several years later at the Haziratul-Quds in Anchorage. Together they served the Faith, first in Kodiak and then as pioneers in Naknek. While in Naknek Ben and Harriet were invited to serve at the World Centre, and became the first Alaskan believers to do so.

The following messages are tributes to this devoted and much-loved Bahá'í:

**With deep sorrow inform you passing of Harriet Guhrke in Haifa on 30 January, following many months' illness borne with characteristic fortitude and patience evoking our great admiration. Her devoted loving service at the World Centre, undertaken with husband Knight Bah'u'lláh Ben Guhrke since October 1970, has been most meritorious. Befitting funeral conducted, prayers offered progress soul.**

Universal House of Justice

Universal House of Justice  
Dear Bahá'í Friends:

2 February 1986

Your message concerning the passing of beloved Harriet Guhrke has been received. Although the Guhrkes have been gone from Alaska for many years, they have remained an important element of the Alaskan Community. Harriet was much loved by friends throughout the State. She will long be remembered by Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike for her gentle nature and her selfless kindness to all. Her service to Bah'u'lláh, particularly in Kodiak and Naknek, helped establish the Faith in both those communities. Perhaps it is fitting that on 2 February the Assembly in Kodiak was re-established, and it appears that the first Assembly in Naknek may be formed prior to the end of this Plan.

Please convey to Ben our heartfelt sympathy for the loss of his dear wife. Tell him, please, that we are praying for Harriet's progress in the next world and for his solace during this difficult period.

Warm Bahá'í love,  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska.



Harriet Guhrke

Alaska Bahá'í Community  
Pioneers and Builders, p III-79

## GUHRKES TO SERVE AT WORLD CENTER!

"Twice a Knight of Baha'u'llah!" That is the way Hand of the Cause of God, Mr. Khadem spoke of Bernard (Ben) Guhrke at the Alaska Convention of 1965. Ben and Harriet had just announced their plans to pioneer to the Alaska Peninsula to fill a virgin goal called for in the Nine-Year Plan.

In Chicago, in 1953 the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade was launched. Young Dr. Bernard Guhrke went home to New York filled with the spirit of the Jubilee and eager to do his part. He closed his chiropractic practice, travelled to Kodiak, Alaska and worked at anything he could to remain at his pioneering post. For this he was first called a Knight of Baha'u'llah by the beloved Guardian himself. His name was recorded on the Role of Honor and announced on page 57 of *Messages to the Baha'i World*. He stayed at his post in Kodiak through the end of the Ten Year Crusade. While there, he served as the Deputy Collector of Customs for the Port of Kodiak, held various positions with the Bank of Kodiak, and was president of Kodiak Insurance, Inc.

Among the blessings of pioneering, Ben met and married his lovely wife Harriet, who came to Alaska from Hawaii. Together they witnessed the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Kodiak in 1962 (and its loss a year later as one of the victims that year of the earthquake). In 1965 the Assembly was re-formed and greatly strengthened — so much so that Ben and Harriet were among the first to volunteer to pioneer again.

The Universal House of Justice had selected five virgin goals in Alaska as part of the Nine-Year Plan. The Guhrkes decided on the Alaskan Peninsula and promptly pioneered to Naknek in September 1965. By this move, the Alaska Peninsula became one of the first victories won under the Nine-Year Plan. Ben was appointed Borough Manager for the Bristol Bay Borough and has filled that position for the past five years. Harriet has held responsible positions as secretary and bookkeeper for the School Board, Borough Assembly, Bank and City of Kodiak, among others.

Reminiscing about the joy of pioneering, Ben once said to another Baha'i, "Oh! to be able to get out and 'go' again; to grab a job washing dishes or whatever just to be free to teach!" (See ABN's No. 78, Oct.-Nov. 1965; and No. 87, Sept., 1966 for pioneer stories of Naknek.)

Ben has served 17 years in Alaska—5½ recently as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly. Now, Ben and Harriet have been invited to Haifa by the Universal House of Justice to become part of the permanent staff working at the World Center, a well-deserved honor for the Guhrkes and an ornament in the crown of Alaska. The Guhrkes immediately accepted the invitation and their joy is inexpressible; a joy shared by all.

Ben and Harriet will leave Alaska around October 1 to be settled in Haifa by November 1 of this year. They will be greatly missed, but the bounty of their service will be savored by all. As for the Guhrkes, as Ben would say, "Man! It's a whole new ball game!"



Georgia A. Haisler

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 33 years as of 1999. First elected in 1965.

Georgia Halberstadt Haisler was raised as a Bahá'í. Her mother had long been a part of the Kenosha, Wisconsin Bahá'í community and Georgia Halberstadt was a Bahá'í youth when she met and married a newly enrolled young Bahá'í, Tom Haisler. Georgia and Tom decided to pioneer to Alaska as part of the Ten Year Crusade. They arrived in Juneau just in time to help form its first Spiritual Assembly in 1957. Their home was the center of action and they became involved in a vast array of local activities.

Tom developed an early interest in the institution of the Summer School. He started acquiring permanent materials such as cooking and serving equipment long before there was a facility. In 1967, they sold their large, lovely home in Juneau and used the proceeds to acquire a partially completed building and site on Douglas Island for a summer school. It was named the Bergamaschi Bahá'í School in honor of Napoleon Bergamaschi who had recently been killed.

Circumstances often provide opportunities, which are difficult because there are two highly appealing but mutually exclusive options. This happened when Tom was offered a position in Haines. The Haislers asked the National Spiritual Assembly if it was more important to remain in the Juneau area and work on the school or to pioneer to Haines. Both were important. There was much vacillation because it was conceded that if they moved, work on the Bergamaschi school would grind to a halt. The final decision was that pioneering was the greater priority. So, they moved and later purchased the business which became known as the Haisler Hardware.

The move was important. Howard and Lea Brown were already there. Now, with the help of the Haislers and others, a Spiritual Assembly was formed in Haines. As feared, there was very little further development of the Bergamaschi facility.

In 1970 Georgia was adopted as a Tlingit. She was adopted in a moving ceremony in Petersburg, as were the other caucasian members of the National Spiritual Assembly. Tom had been adopted earlier, and was one of the first Bahá'ís so honored. Now Georgia shared that distinction with him.

The Haislers continued to look for summer school sites. A promising facility became available near Haines and once again the Haislers made it possible for a major step to be taken. The Bergamaschi School was sold and with additional funds supplied by the Haislers, the property was acquired which became known as the Chilkat Valley Bahá'í Center. The Haislers moved in as caretakers and within six weeks of purchase, a summer school was held.

Georgia continued to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly from Haines. Meetings often meant a long ferry ride into Juneau, overnighing there, then catching a plane the next day for Anchorage. Sometimes she would fly in a single-engine plane up the Lynn canal to Juneau. Three-day meetings would take five to six days of her time, depending on weather conditions and the ferry schedule.

When Tom was in his 40s he developed cancer. As his strength was ebbing, it became obvious that it would be necessary for Georgia to miss meetings of the National Spiritual Assembly. She offered to resign, but her offer was not accepted. She missed most of that year before her resignation was regretfully accepted in January of 1983 when Georgia and Tom traveled to Arizona so Tom could get some sun. He died there on March 27, 1983 and Georgia returned to Alaska. A month later she attended the National Convention and was again elected on to the National Spiritual Assembly and has been serving ever since. She has also continued on as the caretaker and director of the Chilkat Valley Bahá'í Center .

Georgia participated in the International Conventions and elections of the Universal House of Justice held in Haifa in 1973, 1978, 1988, 1993, and 1998.

## THOMAS E. HAISLER April 13, 1931 - March 27, 1983

In remembering Tom Haisler many qualities come to mind. Oriented, assured, disciplined, practical, hard working, orderly, and constantly alert to opportunities to share the Faith.

I knew him to have wide interests, a lively curiosity, ready wit, keen powers of observation, penetrating intellect, a readiness to share thoughts and excellent ideas for practical application. He liked to size up a situation, figure out what needed to be done and do it.

Tom first heard of the Baha'i Faith in a letter from Arden (Thur) Lee with whom he had been corresponding. He went to the library to find a book on the Faith so as not to appear ignorant before seeing her. Shortly thereafter he became a Baha'i. That was 1955. Lee actually introduced him to the two loves of his life: the Baha'i Faith and Georgia Halberstadt, whom he married in 1955.

The young Haisler family — Tom, Georgia, and year-old son Greg — set on the pioneering trail for Alaska in 1957. They arrived at Ridvan to help form the first Spiritual Assembly in Juneau and Tom found himself its first Chairman. Tom's approach to life was direct and unadorned. They had come to Alaska to serve the Faith and Tom, in his systematic way, wanted to do it right.

The Guardian in his Message to the first Alaska National Convention stressed Native Teaching. Tom read the Message and was one of the first to become involved in carrying out this direction. He developed many enduring friendships among the Tlingets. In 1967 he was adopted and given an Indian name, Taluksha. He was among the first caucasian Baha'i to be so honored.

When Massive Encounter — the monumental Alaskan teaching plan of the 70's — had just started in Fort Yukon someone was needed to cook, to look after supplies and to direct the base camp. That someone was Tom Haisler who saw to the physical need of the 40 members of the Army of Light who went to Ft. Yukon in the chartered C-47. He performed a highly significant service without fanfare.

That was typical. He was neither attracted nor repelled by the limelight; he was indifferent to it. His interest was in getting the job done — the credit belongs to God.

Tom served where there was a need. He went on teaching trips whenever he could. He often helped Assemblies with their formation problems at Ridvan. He was an excellent, though little used, public speaker. His talks were well thought out, sprinkled with humor and apt examples, thought provoking and direct to the heart.

His thinking was usually years ahead of others. Long before mass teaching came to Alaska, Tom wanted to know

more about it. When on pilgrimage in 1966 the Haislers stopped in India to gain first hand experience. A strong advocate of the use of the media, he arranged to attend Alaska's first "Media Conference" held during the Five Year Plan. He was a motivator behind the first conference held for Baha'is in Business" in 1980.

Tom never wasted motions. When going from one place to another he made the trip productive by picking up debris and tidying up along the way. When he made an award winning float for the 4th of July parade in Juneau he made it so it could be easily taken apart, shipped to other locations and used over — which it was. While attending a Nine Day Institute, in addition to prayers and reflections, he found time to fix the lawn mower, mow the grass, trim the hedges and clear a volleyball court at Matthew Kaszab Institute. He was constantly seeking ways to serve the Faith.

Tom will be remembered most for his contribution to the Alaska Baha'i Summer School. He was appointed to the first Summer School Committee in 1957 and served on it for fifteen years. In 1966 he purchased several acres of property at 2½ mile North Douglas with an unfinished house and unused foundation. He finished the house, moved in, and built a center on the foundation. The Haislers contributed the property to the Faith and it was later named the Bergamaschi Baha'i School. As long as the Haislers lived there development continued rapidly. In 1968 Tom was offered a job as manager of the Haines Lumber Company. While the move there would open opportunities for Native teaching in that area it was almost certain to slow down work on the summer school property. Painfully aware of Tom's sacrifices for the summer school project the National Spiritual Assembly advised the Haislers to pioneer to Haines.

The Haislers, with three children, Greg, Jeff and Lisa, moved to Haines. In 1972 they bought the store and changed its name to Haisler Hardware & Supply. They put down roots and helped establish a firm basis for the Faith in the Haines-Klukwan-Skagway areas. As predicted, work on the Bergamaschi school slowed down. While it served the Faith well for conferences, and institutes, and as a local center, it never did get completed for use as a full summer school.

It wasn't until 1979 that Tom found a bargain and an opportunity to get a better summer school facility. Through Tom's efforts the Juneau school was sold and a much better property outside of Haines was bought by the Faith. After construction work and remodeling by Tom this summer school was ready. It was named the Chilkat Valley Baha'i School and held sessions for three years in which Tom participated.

In addition to his direct work for the Faith, Tom felt that service to the community was a vital part of pioneering.

This led him to be involved with the community Little Theater, Cub Scout Master, PTA president, active with the Chamber of Commerce and the Planning and Zoning Commissions (often as presiding officer), and Volunteer Fire Department.

Tom was conscious of his health and took care of himself. He did none of those things which are linked to cancer. It seems almost a cruel irony that he should be struck by cancer, fight it for seven years, and finally succumb to its ravages before his 52nd birthday. Yet, the mark of a man is not the years of his life but the life in his years. And, Tom lived them to the fullest.

Tom is survived by his wife Georgia; their three children: Greg, Jeff and Lisa Pryse; two grandchildren: Amber Lynn and Amy Marie Pryse; a son-in-law, Ted Pryse; and a brother, Ron Haisler of Florida.

For those of us who have been Tom's fellow pilgrims on this homeward journey of the soul, we can only say "Thank you Tom, for making our lives so much richer because you passed this way, for leaving such lasting results of your labors, and for giving us an example of what a life oriented to service can do."

On March 30th the Universal House of Justice sent the following cable:

ARDENT PRAYERS OFFERED HOLY SRHINES PROGRESS SOUL THOMAS HAISLER DEVOTED SERVANT FAITH ALASKA FIELD PIONEERING INDIAN TEACHING DEVELOPMENT SUMMER SCHOOL FACILITIES - STOP - CONVEY FAMILY DEEPEST SYMPATHY AND ASSURANCE PRAYERS THEIR COMFORT.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE  
Don Anderson and John Kolstoe

### THE ALASKA BAHAI NEWS IS FOR BAHAI'S ONLY

### WE WELCOME NEW BELIEVERS

#### DECLARATIONS

Samatha Baker, Kenai, 4/7/83, Child  
Brian Baker, Kenai, 4/7/83, Child  
Ann K. Barri, Whittier, 5/3/83  
Heidi Erickson, Oceanview, 4/23/83, Youth  
Shannon Gallant, Oceanview, 4/4/83  
Sonlla Marie King, Klawock, 4/24/83, Child  
Shelle D. Meyer, Anchorage, 4/19/83, Child  
Eva Smallwood, Anchorage, 4/12/83  
Eric V. Pillin, Port Alexander, 3/27/83

#### MARRIAGES

Danny Rich (non-Baha'i) to Heather Contreras (non-Baha'i) April 20, 1983, Anchorage

#### DECEASED

June Thompson, 4/7/83, Oceanview  
Sigwein Savek, 4/11/83, Selawick  
Agnes Mobeck, reported 4/83, Sand Point

## PIONEERS ARRIVE IN ST. VINCENT

*The following correspondence was received from Tim and Carl Horn, who left Alaska last summer and have been visiting Bahá'ís and relatives on their way to their new pioneer post.*

We finally made it back to the Caribbean after over 1½ years of trying and praying! Carl and I arrived in Kingstown, St. Vincent on Nov. 14 after a 2½-month, 10,500-mile drive from Fairbanks to Florida and a stop-off in St. Lucia to visit John and Bev Kolstoe and granddaughter Terriane.

We drove out of Fairbanks on Aug. 31, exhausted and drained from packing, cleaning our apartment and saying goodbye to friends. The best cure for exhaustion and emotional drainage is to visit the laughter-filled loving home of Rick and Debbie Taplan in Tok, our first stop. A barbecue that night with the Bahá'ís was followed by an early songfest-sourdough pancake breakfast the next morning.

Haines was our next destination. We visited several Bahá'ís and toured the magnificent Chilkat Valley Bahá'í School. On Sept. 3 the ferry took us to Skagway, where we enjoyed an evening of songs and storytelling at John and Bonnie Stevens'.

After leaving Alaska, we drove down the Alcan to begin our cross-country drive, a true family-visit extravaganza — sisters, parents, grandmothers, brothers, nephews, uncles, aunts and cousins. But we were always reminded of beloved Alaska by the many former Alaskans we visited and by the slide show of the Continental Indigenous Council that we shared four times on our journey.

In Portland, we visited former Juneau residents, Carl's sister, her husband and children — Karen and Panch Prasad and sons Sanjeev and Rajeev; and former Fairbanksan Galen Insteness (who enjoys Portland winters because "You don't have to shovel rain"). In crazy Hollywood, California, we visited my sister, Shelly Reed (formerly of Nenana, Fairbanks and Anchorage); in Cottonwood, Arizona were Gloria, Gina and Josh Taylor and Stan, Ann and Robby Schnell (formerly of Fairbanks). And we stopped by Lafayette, Indiana to see Pat and Don Myers' family.

In Mentor, Ohio we visited Carl's mother and stepfather, Donna and Sam Alucho, and their children, small Sam, Mercy and Mary. And in Tampa, Florida, we visited Zarrin Caldwell, now a student at the University of Southern Florida. We also had the bounty to visit the House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois; and WLGJ/Radio Bahá'í and the Louis Gregory Bahá'í Institute in Hemingway, South Carolina.

By the time we finally sold our car in St. Petersburg, we both had a lifetime's worth of big cities — in our journey we had passed through Seattle, Portland, San

Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Denver, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Washington D.C., Jacksonville and Tampa.

It was a breath of fresh air to arrive in Vieux Fort, St. Lucia, where we stayed with the Kolstoos (formerly of Palmer). One of the highlights of our visit was the beach party held on the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, Nov. 12. The Kolstoos compared the beach party to the way the Palmer community usually marks the event — with an annual sledding party. John laughingly figured we were splashing in the tropical waves the same time

the Palmerites were sliding down frozen hills!

Our cross-country visits were wonderful, but we are so happy to be back in St. Vincent! We're still homeless and jobless (we're staying with a wonderful Bahá'í couple), but have some good possibilities. There's a lot of Bahá'í work to do, especially with deepening and strengthening the communities. But people are so friendly, and everyone *loves* to sing!

On Dec. 12 we splurged and celebrated our anniversary with a pizza (a luxury here). As many of you know, we were married here in St. Vincent two years ago.

We'll keep you posted! Prayers are always appreciated, and we love hearing from friends!

Carl and Tim Horn  
P.O. Box 448  
St. Vincent  
West Indies



Raymond L. (Ray) Hudson

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 1 year as of 1999. First elected in 1972.

Of all the early members of the National Spiritual Assembly, Ray was probably the most scholarly. One of his college instructors was Victor deAraujo who later became the Bahá'í representative at the United Nations. Dr. deAraujo asked his students to write a paper on their view of life. In a conference with Ray about the paper, Dr. deAraujo told him that that his ideas were remarkably similar to the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. Ray had never heard of the Faith, but a short time later he became a Bahá'í.

Ray pioneered from Washington to Unalaska where he accepted a teaching position in the elementary school, although his bachelor's degree was in philosophy. Ray quickly became a favorite of the children both in and out of school. For the first several years, he lived in the Bahá'í Centre. Frequently children would come on weekends and ask "Can Ray come out and play?" Ray was drafted into the United States Army, but returned to Unalaska as soon as his tour of duty was over.

He learned the ways of the elders, and seeing that the art of basket-weaving was dying out, he had one of the elders instruct him in the difficult skill of weaving the incredibly tight Aleut baskets. Ray became recognized as one of the finest weavers and his work has been placed on display by museums.

His work in the humanities was recognized when he was given two prestigious awards in 1978. The National Education Association presented him with the Leo Reano Memorial Award for Work with Indigenous People. The National Education Association of Alaska conferred upon him the Willard Bowman Human Rights Award.

Ray resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly in 1973 when accepted an appointment to the Auxiliary Board. This proved to present a serious conflict. He felt guided to Unalaska and committed to it. However, the work of the Auxiliary Board was such that the inaccessibility of Unalaska posed an extreme barrier to serving in the manner which he felt appropriate. He felt it was necessary to choose between the two. In 1983 he resigned from the Auxiliary Board in order to remain at his remote post in Unalaska.

Ray has presented a number of seminars and summer school courses on a variety of subjects. Whatever he has done has been with a standard of excellence rarely matched.

Ray participated in the Third International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa in 1973.

When Ray retired from teaching, he moved to his wife's home area in New York state. The deep love felt for Ray by the people of Unalaska was indicated a year later. He was called upon to be the commencement speaker for the high school graduating class. So, the school district paid for his trip from New York state to Unalaska for that event.

## Serving at the World Centre

By Evelyn Huffman

Fall 1976

Greetings to all the dear friends in Alaska! It was simply wonderful seeing so many of you at the International Conference in Anchorage, while at the same time frustrating that there was so little time for visiting. But wasn't it great?

By now several Conferences are past and the reports from them all are the same — glorious! A number of World Centre personnel have attended the Conferences so we have had first-hand reports from all thus far. How wise our Supreme Body — The Universal House of Justice — is in planning these events! It is so uplifting and inspirational for the friends to gather from the four corners of the globe to consult on their victories, their common problems and plans for achieving the goals of the Five Year Plan . . . and then to return to their homes regenerated and with a new spirit achieve even greater victories for the Faith. Here at the World Centre those travelling through to the Kenya Conference brought great joy and stimulation. It is a two way process benefitting all equally.

The pilgrimage season has again begun, and more and more pilgrims and three day visitors are streaming to 'Akka and to the Mountain of God at this Centre of the Faith. It is very exciting, and as the beloved Guardian said, it is like the lifeblood flowing to the heart which refreshes the heart (this nerve center) and then goes out again taking new life to the world.

As each pilgrimage approaches I find myself scanning the list for any pilgrims from Alaska; it is a rare occasion when there is not at least one from there. The staff have much opportunity to visit with the pilgrims — first after a tea held for them on their first Tuesday here when they meet and hear the members of the Universal House of Justice, and again evenings when many gather at the Pilgrim House for informal sessions at which a Hand of the Cause or a House of Justice member is often on hand to answer questions. At lunch time, too, one can visit with pilgrims there.

It is very difficult to write about life in the Holy Land. The World Centre is in a constant state of evolution and what is said today could be changed tomorrow because the Cause grows very rapidly and adapts to constantly changing conditions. It is interesting that the World Centre is both the spiritual and administrative heart of the planet and serving here one realizes increasingly what the administrative heart means.



EVELYN HUFFMAN

The Departments necessary to handle the incredible amount of work involved at the Centre are numerous. Many of these are located in the building at present serving as the headquarters for the Universal House of Justice while others are scattered in buildings in nearby areas. What a great day it will be when the building now begun to serve as the Seat for the Universal House of Justice is completed!

Perhaps one of the most gratifying aspects of living here is the realization that one's full working hours are devoted directly to the affairs of the Cause. While I miss family and friends in Alaska immensely, the work here is very pleasant. My work is in the Secretariat — specifically in the typing pool mornings and as switchboard operator and receptionist afternoons — which is essentially what the House of Justice suggested I would be doing when they invited me to serve at the World Centre.

As our fall rains begin it is very pleasant here and some trips are in the offing. (Temperatures rise to 28 and 30 degrees Centigrade but humidity is lower, thus the seemingly cooler days — in the 80's Fahrenheit). There is so much of historical, especially religious, significance to see in Israel that one cannot hope to see it all, and surely one never fully appreciates the greatness of this land on which one walks so casually.

The Shrine of the Bab, which can be seen from nearly every quarter of the city of Haifa, lies about half way between where I live high on Mount Carmel and where I work. (I am fortunate in having another staff member live nearby with whom I ride to and from work). Imagine daily seeing this Holy Spot wherein lie the remains of the Bab of whom the Guardian wrote in

### Citadel of the Faith:

"For, just as in the realm of the spirit, the reality of the Bab has been hailed by the Author of the Baha'i Revelation as 'The Point round Whom the realities of the Prophets and Messengers revolve,' so, on this visible plane, His sacred remains constitute the heart and center of what may be regarded as nine concentric circles, paralleling thereby, and adding further emphasis to the central position accorded by the Founder of our Faith to One 'from Whom God hath caused to proceed the knowledge of all that was and shall be,' 'the Primal Point from which have been generated all created things.'"

"The outermost circle in this vast system, the visible counterpart of the pivotal position conferred on the Herald of our Faith, is none other than the entire planet. Within the heart of this planet lies the 'Most Holy Land,' acclaimed by 'Abdu'l-Baha as 'the Nest of the Prophets' and which must be regarded as the center of the world and the Qiblah of the nations. Within this Most Holy Land rises the Mountain of God of immemorial sanctity, the Vineyard of the Lord, the Retreat of Elijah, Whose return the Bab Himself symbolizes. Reposing on the breast of this holy mountain are the extensive properties permanently dedicated to, and constituting the sacred precincts of, the Bab's holy Sepulcher. In the midst of these properties, recognized as the international endowments of the Faith, is situated the most holy court, an enclosure comprising gardens and terraces which at once embellish, and lend a peculiar charm to, these sacred precincts. Embosomed in these lovely and verdant surroundings stands in all its exquisite beauty the mausoleum of the Bab, the shell designed to preserve and adorn the original structure raised by 'Abdu'l-Baha as the tomb of the Martyr-Herald of our Faith. Within this shell is enshrined that Pearl of Great Price, the holy of holies, those chambers which constitute the tomb itself, and which were constructed by 'Abdu'l-Baha. Within the heart of this holy of holies is the tabernacle, the vault wherein reposes the most holy casket. Within this vault rests the alabaster sarcophagus in which is deposited that inestimable jewel, the Bab's holy dust. So precious is this dust that the very earth surrounding the edifice enshrining this dust has been extolled by the Center of Baha'u'llah's Covenant, in one of His Tablets in which He named the five doors belonging to the six chambers which He originally erected after five of the believers associated with the construction of the Shrine, as being endowed with such potency as to have inspired Him in bestowing these names, whilst the

(Continued on Page 4)

## SERVING AT THE WORLD CENTRE

(Continued from Page 3)

tomb itself housing the dust He acclaimed as the spot round which the Concourse on high circle in adoration." (This seems especially appropriate at this time as here at the World Centre we will be commemorating the Bab's birthday by the Lunar calendar on 23rd December.)

Surely a lifetime is not long enough in which to attempt to grasp the significance of these Holy Places. It is interesting that one does not find oneself taking them for granted. Even the friends who have lived in the Holy Land for many years find that the sacred edifices on the mountain of God never pall. Even when caught up in the mundane trivia of everyday living — going to the office, or shopping for groceries — one rounds a corner and catches a glimpse of the golden dome of the Shrine of the Bab, and the heart throbs with excitement and inspiration. It is my hope that all those who can do so will make every effort to come on pilgrimage and find the gift that awaits them here: a sense of having found one's spiritual home. The pilgrimage becomes more meaningful with the years, and in memory this Holy Land is the haven where one can ever transport oneself and find security and peace.

October 1978



Evelyn Huffman

## Evelyn Huffman

1/3/11 - 7/24/78

To look at just the last few weeks in the life of Evelyn Huffman is to find a sample of service to the Cause of Baha'u'llah which shows a devotion, zeal and sense of purpose which was typical of her life.

As part of the National Teaching Committee, Evelyn was busy making arrangements for the ambitious summer teaching project. At age 67, just two weeks before her death, she spent a week in Kotzebue in northwest Alaska to be directly involved in mass teaching in that dynamic community.

As soon as she returned to Anchorage, the National Spiritual Assembly had a new assignment for her. Someone was needed who had vast administrative experience, who knew Alaska, who was perceptive, could give directions without being "pushy," and had that rare, but necessary, ability to be the "servant of the servants." Evelyn was the obvious choice. When the idea was presented to her, she was excited and enthusiastically agreed. The very hour when her response was being reported on July 24, 1978, she suffered a heart attack while driving her car in Anchorage and died.

Born Evelyn Koehn in Pawnee, Kansas on January 3, 1911, she married Vernon Huffman in 1929. In 1940, Vern and Evelyn and their two children, Jack and Mary Sue, moved to Alaska where Vern worked with the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA), forerunner of the present Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Vern and Evelyn lived first in Talkeetna, then Woody Island, Haines, Tin City, and finally Anchorage.

It was in Anchorage that the Huffmans learned of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah through Helen Robinson. Evelyn became a Baha'i in February of 1945 and Vern embraced the Cause in December of that year. Evelyn served on the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly, serving as secretary until they home-steaded in 1946. They became a part of the nucleus of believers who formed the second Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, Anchorage Recording District (Spenard) in 1951.

Prior to the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Alaska, Evelyn was twice Alaska's delegate to the National Baha'i Convention of the United States. In 1957 she was a delegate to the first National Convention in Alaska and was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, serving for 10½ years until she resigned due to Vern's health. She served the first seven years as Secretary. Much of the work of incorporation and other important tasks fell on Evelyn's capable shoulders.

Vern and Evelyn donated three acres of their homestead, which is half of the Temple Site, as well as an additional 10 acres of their homestead as an endowment. (The last three acres of the homestead, where the house was located, was bequeathed to the National Spiritual Assembly in Evelyn's will.)

In 1963, Evelyn was among the delegates participating in the first election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel. Immediately following that historic event she attended the World Congress in London.

When the Nine Year Plan was launched in 1964, the Huffmans once again were ready for action. They left their beloved homestead to pioneer in Klawock, a Tlingit Indian village on Prince of Wales Island in southeastern Alaska.

Two years later it was necessary for them to leave Klawock because of additional heart surgery for Vern. They both continued to serve the Faith actively within the limits imposed upon them by Vern's health.

While very different in nature and temperament, Vern and Evelyn were an unusually close couple. Vern's death in January of 1974 was not unexpected; none-the-less it was a very difficult time for Evelyn. But she resumed Baha'i activity with vigor.

Perhaps the highlight of Evelyn's service to the Faith was the year she spent at the World Centre in Haifa, Israel, beginning in March of 1976 working for the Universal House of Justice.

Shortly after returning to Alaska in 1977, she began planning her next venture. She planned to fulfill Alaska's goals to Japan by pioneering with two of her grandchildren. However, she suffered a stroke, requiring her to change plans. She resumed service to the Faith as fast as her regained strength would allow.

It is the yearning of every sincere Baha'i to teach and serve with distinction right up to the end. Evelyn succeeded. During a recent trip she met a couple from Anchorage who were attracted to the Faith. Evelyn invited them to several meetings. After her death an announcement appeared in the paper concerning Evelyn's memorial service. They attended. He said, "Too bad it took Evelyn's death to get us to a meeting." At the time of this writing, a month later, she is an enrolled Baha'i and he is still actively studying.

Little wonder that the Universal House of Justice would send the following message for one for whom meritorious service to the Cause was an everyday occurrence:

"GRIEVED LEARN PASSING DEVOTED SERVANT CAUSE EVELYN HUFFMAN STOP HER YEARS OF SERVICE AS MEMBER NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY ITS EARLIEST YEARS AND, WITH HUSBAND, AS PIONEER PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND AND DONOR KEY NATIONAL PROPERTIES WILL BE ALWAYS REMEMBERED AS MERITORIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS ANALS FAITH ALASKA STOP CONVEY CONDOLENCES FAMILY ASSURANCE PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER SOUL ABHA KINGDOM STOP ADVISE HOLD MEMORIAL SERVICE." UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

John E. Kolstoe

Alaska Bahá'í Community  
Pioneers and Builders, p III-86



Vernon E. Huffman

### In Memoriam VERNON E. HUFFMAN

January 12, 1974, ended a 10-year-long battle that Vernon E. Huffman had with heart disease. The miracles of heart surgery and modern medicine enabled Vern to serve Baha'u'llah and his fellow man those extra years, culminating in the triumphal conclusion of over 28 years of dedicated service as a Baha'i when he succumbed at the age of 67, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Upon hearing of his passing, the Universal House of Justice sent the following cable:

"ASSURE PRAYERS SHRINES  
PROGRESS SOUL ABHA  
KINGDOM VERN HUFFMAN  
VETERAN ALASKAN PIONEER  
STALWART SUPPORTER FAITH.  
EXPRESS CONDOLENCES  
DEVOTED WIFE FAMILY.  
ADVISE HOLD MEMORIAL  
SERVICES."

It seems fitting that this was the first time the Universal House of Justice specifically requested the holding of a memorial service for an Alaskan Baha'i.

It was while Vern was serving in the United States Navy in 1924 that he first came to Alaska and learned to love it. Returning to his home in Kansas he met Evelyn Koehn and they were married in 1929. The dream of moving to Alaska was finally realized in 1940 when Vern transferred with the CAA (now FAA). Vern, Evelyn and their two children, Jack and Mary Sue, joyfully made their way north to the land destined to become their spiritual birthplace.

A few years later Vern and Evelyn were attracted to the Baha'i Faith. In February of 1945 Evelyn became a Baha'i and in December of that year Vern made his commitment to Baha'u'llah along the lonely, snow-blown, waste-land of the westernmost part of Alaska's mainland near Wales on the Bering Sea.

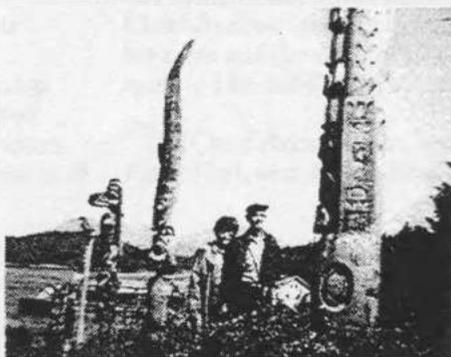
The trip to Wales had been a harrowing one, giving him pause to reflect on the meaning of life and the part he could play in it. He determined that if his life were spared he would no longer delay his formal acceptance of the Faith that had come to mean so much to him.

There are two ways in which devotion to Baha'u'llah can be shown: one is by what one does and the other is by the kind of person one becomes. In both of these—accomplishments and character—Vern stood among the very best.

His accomplishments will immortalize the name Huffman in the annals of Alaska Baha'i history. He gave generously of his time, his talent, his money, his property, his energy, of himself. His service was inextricably linked with the early development of the Faith in Alaska. For over 20 years he served on the Spenard Spiritual Assembly—frequently as treasurer. He was keenly aware of the importance of the fund which he generously supported himself. The Huffmans donated from the valuable land they laborously acquired by homesteading: three acres were given for the Temple Site and another 10 acres were given as endowment property for the newly formed National Spiritual Assembly.

The name Huffman was synonymous with hospitality and service. Communicating throughout the world with his ham radio, he was frequently in touch with the pioneers in remote areas. Countless errands were run to assist them. Who could count the number of traveling Baha'is who stayed at the Huffmans'; or the number of planes they met; or the number of people picked up for this meeting or that; or the number of times "reliable Vern" was the one who got the job done?

For nearly eleven years Evelyn served on the National Spiritual Assembly, seven of these as Secretary. It was Vern whose constant, quiet, unassuming service in the background gave such splendid support, enabling Evelyn to fulfill her many duties for the National Assembly.



Vern and Evelyn Huffman  
in Totem Park, Klawock  
August 1966

In 1963 Vern had his first heart surgery. Yet two years later in 1965 the undaunted Huffmans set off on the pioneering trail. They moved to Klawock, a small Tlingit Indian village on the Prince of Wales Islands, opening up that virgin goal of the Nine-Year-Plan—the first of Alaska's five virgin territories to be opened. Vern's friendly manner and skill as "Mr. Fix-it" quickly won the hearts of many. Two enrollments and a firm foundation for further teaching were the results of these efforts. However, illness in the fall of 1967 and additional heart surgery in 1968 necessitated a move closer to medical services.

The recital of Vern's accomplishments for the Cause could go on. But, mention must be made of the other, subtler, area of devotion to Baha'u'llah—the quality of character. Vern exhibited a rare spirit of service and a quality of humility born of strength. It just seemed that everything was better when Vern was there. His quiet gentle nature seemed to exude a confidence; a sense of well-being; a sense of balance. In the midst of heated discussions it would be Vern who would make some innocent remark about the weather or some such thing which would provide a refreshing pause when the discussion was in danger of becoming overheated. Frequently he would be surrounded with children because they knew he loved them.

When asked if he knew Vern Huffman, a Baha'i replied, "Of course I knew Vern. He and I would stand in the back of the room together while everyone else was up in front making noise." And this perhaps, is the finest tribute that can be paid to that "VETERAN ALASKAN PIONEER STALWART SUPPORTER FAITH": While others would talk he would simply grin and do.

John E. Kolstoe

A fitting Memorial Service, planned by the Spenard Local Spiritual Assembly, was held for Vern Huffman on Sunday afternoon, February 17th, at the Mathew Kaszab Institute in Spenard. Members of the National Spiritual Assembly, which was in session that weekend, joined many of the friends from the surrounding area in paying tribute to Vern and the members of his family who were present.

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THE ALASKA BAHAI NEWS  
IS FOR BAHAI'S ONLY

The ALASKA BAHAI NEWS is printed by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Alaska, through an Editorial Committee of Members of the Baha'i Faith in Alaska. The Committee for 1973-74 is: Mrs. Janet W. Stout, Managing Editor; Mrs. Evelyn Huffman, News Editor; Mrs. Ethel Van Zanten, Special Assignments; and Mr. Blaine Reed, NSA Representative.

Arthur L.(Art) Jess Jr.

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 5+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1969.

Being one quarter American Indian, Art identified very strongly with the Indian community, its problems and projects.

He was working at a construction camp as a heavy equipment operator in the northern part of Alaska when he saw an article in the Fairbanks newspaper about a Bahá'í talk given by Florence Mayberry. He read the article with great interest and was especially attracted to some of the principles of the Faith that were mentioned. He thought that might provide some answers for some of his questions. Bahá'í solutions for the plight of the Indians immediately came to mind.

Upon returning to Anchorage, Art drove to the modest, log cabin that served as the Hazíratu'l-Quds at 810 8th Avenue. He parked, and looked the place over. One day he ventured to the door and the little old woman who was then the caretaker invited him in. She gave him a Bahá'í World volume, a cup of tea and told him that he would like the Bahá'í Faith because it was just like Christian Science and walked away, leaving him alone with this big book and a cup of tea. For a heavy equipment operator who never cared that much about reading and didn't know anything about Christian Science, this was hardly an encouraging introduction!

He did not give up. He learned that Sandy Brown (Humphrey) was a Bahá'í. Instead of approaching the issue directly, he watched Sandy for awhile. She seemed normal enough, so he asked about the Faith. He was invited to a fireside and became an enrolled believer in October of 1957.

Construction work was slow in Alaska, so Art and his family moved to Arizona where he was active in teaching projects on the Navajo Reservation during the 1960s. After his return to Alaska, he again focused his attention on Native Teaching.

In 1970 he was among the members of the National Spiritual Assembly who were adopted as Tlingit Indians in Petersburg. In 1973 he participated in the 3rd International Convention in Haifa where he voted for the members of the Universal House of Justice.

Art remains steadfast and at the forefront of activities, especially those involving Native Americans.

# On the Passing of Chief Andrew Isaac

By Mark Caldwell

As if the heavens were weeping, wet snow and sleet poured down over the interior north. The Northern Lights swept across the night sky as far south as Mexico. A teenage girl questioned her father about the twin falling stars she saw from her village streets. These are some of the events which occurred with the passing of Chief of the Athabascan people, the "Peacemaker", Chief Andrew Isaac.

People from the entire Athabascan nation gathered for three days of potlatching to honor the man and bid farewell to the spirit that had never failed them. Accompanied by my six-year-old daughter Evelynna, Don Stickman, an elder from Galena, and 16-year-old Holly Weaver, our newest family member, I traveled to Tanacross to say farewell to a friend.

Though not a friend I had ever met, Chief Andrew Isaac was someone I knew, just the same. Listening to the speeches made during the traditional memorial potlatch and the funeral service that followed, my thoughts turned to spiritual thoughts.

How close this Chief's life and teachings were to those of Bahá'u'lláh. Chief Andrew Isaac taught about the strength of Athabascan traditions; Bahá'u'lláh affirmed the spirituality of

native traditions and encouraged the promotion of one's culture.

Alcohol and drug use was a grave concern for the Chief; Bahá'u'lláh prohibited their use for the health and safety of humankind. The Athabascan leader longed to see the people united; the pivotal principle of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is unity.

Chief Andrew Isaac realized the importance of education in assuring the advancement of his people; education is so critical in this Revelation that it is called for on a universal scale. And, the Chief encouraged respect for people of any Faith and any culture; Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings on respect for others of different color or belief are so strong that His grandson was moved to say, if religion be the cause of discord then it is no good.

The spirit in which Chief Andrew Isaac lived was, truly the spirit of God, of Bahá'u'lláh. So, though I never had the honor of meeting Chief Andrew Isaac on this physical plane, yet his spirit was the spirit of God and I know his spirit – like Bahá'u'lláh's – is still with us.

(Chief Andrew Isaac became a Bahá'í in April 1984, and died in March 1991)

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*"How close this Chief's life and teachings were to those of Bahá'u'lláh. Chief Andrew Isaac taught about the strength of Athabascan traditions; Bahá'u'lláh affirmed the spirituality of native traditions and encouraged the promotion of one's culture."*

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Ramona M. (Mona) Johnson

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 13+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1985.

William (Bill) Johnson, Mona's husband, became a Bahá'í in Juneau in 1961. But, Mona did not enroll at that time. The Johnsons moved to New York and later to California so Bill could continue his education. Bill founded and was the director of the New Era Bahá'í Chorus which put on many weekend proclamation programs throughout northern California and Nevada. Mona, even though not a Bahá'í, would accompany him on various projects and baby sit for their own two boys and the children of other chorus members.

Over Labor Day weekend in 1967, while on a teaching trip to northern California, their car stalled near Reno, Nevada. They called the Bahá'ís of the area and stayed the weekend with Tom and Marion West in Sparks. Marion promptly sent them on a teaching trip to a nearby Indian reservation. The next day, when they were preparing turkey, Marion asked Mona how long she had been a Bahá'í and when Mona answered that she wasn't, Marion asked, "Why aren't you?" Mona had no good answer. Marion talked about the special blessings when a husband and wife belong to the same Faith. Mona reported, "I broke down and cried in my fruit soup." She signed her enrollment card and Bill and Mona returned to their home community of Palo Alto. Mona was the first from her family (the Booth family – Tsimshian Indians from Metlakatla) to embrace the Faith. About that time there was a vacancy on the Spiritual Assembly and Mona immediately found herself a member of that Divine institution. She started deepening classes with Nancy Carr and has been busy with Bahá'í activities from then on.

When the Johnsons returned to Alaska, Bill worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in Juneau and the Johnson family played a major role in the development of the area. Bill was transferred to Fairbanks and the Johnsons became staunch members of the Tanana Valley community. In 1998, following Bill's retirement from the BIA, the Johnsons moved to Metlakatla, Mona's childhood home.

When Mona was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, she was the first Tsimshian to serve on the body.

Mona has been deeply involved with Bahá'í activities both in Alaska and elsewhere in the world. She attended a Ruhi teacher training institute in Panama when that program was just getting started. She was among the first Alaskans to travel to Siberia with the opening up of travel to the then Soviet Union. She was with the first group to travel to Yakutsk as part of a sister-city exchange program. She was impressed with how eager the Russians were to talk about spiritual matters in general and the Faith in particular.

When Janet Smith returned to the World Centre in December of 1991, Mona was elected National Secretary and served out the remainder of the administrative year.

Mona attended the International Conventions for the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1988, 1993, and 1998. In 1992 she was one of the 19 believers representing Alaska at the 100th anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh at the World Centre.

Tod A. Jones

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 14+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1977.

Diana Tufts, a Bahá'í living in Kodiak, was a volunteer on the Welcome Wagon program, which welcomes new people into the community. Tod and Betsy Jones were new arrivals and that is how they met Diana and heard of the Bahá'í Faith. On April 8, 1973, shortly after learning of Bahá'u'lláh, the Jones' enrolled in the Faith.

Tod was raised a Jehovah's Witness. As such, he had extensive training in the Bible. He left the church because of some serious differences with their teachings. When he majored in biology in college his convictions were reinforced. When the Jones' were introduced to the Bahá'í Faith, it was the first time they found a religion which made sense to them and which they could wholeheartedly accept. Which they did.

After leaving Kodiak, the family lived in Kenai for about a year before moving to Anchorage. While living in Anchorage, Tod became involved with the fishing industry and the family moved to Wrangell where Tod ran a salmon fish hatchery. Tod invented a device to plant fish eggs in stream beds in a highly efficient manner. Because of this unique planting device, eggs were planted upstream for the purpose of harvesting the returning salmon.

When the Soviet Union/Russia opened up, Tod traveled there as part of a trade delegation. The Russians were interested in his hatchery operation and egg-planting device, but were even more eager to hear him talk about the Bahá'í Faith. They could not seem to get enough of that.

When Tod was serving on the National Spiritual Assembly, he would often have to travel from the fish hatchery to Wrangell, usually by boat, then fly to Anchorage. A three-day meeting would cost him at least five days of time, when the weather was good. In 1991, when he was not reelected, he said, "I feel as if I have just had 60 free days added to my year."

When the fish hatchery closed, the Jones' were invited to serve at the World Centre in Haifa.

Tod participated in International Conventions and election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa in 1978 and 1988.

## Eugene (Gene) King

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 13+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1970.

Though blind since early manhood, Eugene demonstrated rare insight and scope of vision. He was probably the first Tlingit Indian to enroll when he became a Bahá'í in November 1954. He was the first full-blooded Indian to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska.

Eugene was of a royal line of Tlingits. In that matrilineal society, the maternal uncle was responsible for training the young men. His uncle had a special station. He was more than a chief, he was the chief of chiefs. By tradition, the uncle was to appoint a successor before his death. The uncle saw the end of the traditional Tlingit ways and decided not to appoint a successor. He did tell a confidant that if he appointed anyone, it would be Eugene.

Gene was a strong and proud man. He was a good athlete and this allowed him to do things and go places which were usually not possible for Tlingit Indians in those days of rampant prejudice and segregation. However, when his eyesight started to deteriorate, he needed to go to Washington for medical treatment. A combination of prejudice and bureaucratic inefficiency delayed treatment until it was too late. Of this he has said, "If I hadn't lost my eyesight, I might never have had sense enough to see the Faith."

After losing his sight, he was sent to a school for the blind where he met and later married Melba Call. She was the first Eskimo to become a Bahá'í. Before they were married she warned Gene that she was a Bahá'í. Gene thought that was all right as long as she didn't bother him about it. They were married for several years before he looked into the Faith seriously and embraced it.

Early in his life, Eugene had planned to become a Presbyterian minister. He studied the Bible and knew Indian prophecy. The discrepancies he found between his understanding of the Bible, the practices of the church, and his knowledge of Tlingit traditions caused him to reconsider his goal. While he did work for the church as a young man, he could not bring himself to go into the ministry. As time went on, he put aside most of his questions. But, when he discovered the Bahá'í Faith he found the answers to the questions that had disturbed him years earlier. In addition to fulfilling unanswered Bible prophecies, he found a religion that supported what he had learned of the Tlingit ways.

Eugene and Melba became widely known in the Pacific Northwest for their depth of knowledge and ability to explain the Faith. They were in great demand as Bahá'í speakers. Eugene's knowledge of prophecies made him a favored speaker both in North America and in Europe. The Kings felt that since they were both from Alaska they should try to help out Alaska, so they took teaching trips to this northern land. Don Anderson made it possible for them to move to Juneau. Shortly thereafter, Gene was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly.

In 1972 they returned to Seattle for health reasons. On September 7, 1979, Melba died. Despite protests from the doctors, Eugene returned to Alaska and was again elected to the National Spiritual Assembly. He stayed even when his doctors told him to move to a warmer climate. He continued to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly until 1991 when the delegates finally allowed him to retire.

Eugene made a pilgrimage in 1980. He returned to the Holy Land in 1983 and 1988 for the International Conventions where he proudly cast his ballot for the members of the Universal House of Justice.

## Lynn King—A Beloved Light Moves On

13 December 1937 - 30 January 1998

by Laurie King and Counsellor Laretta King

Lynn King passed away after a brief illness on 30 January 1998, in Scottsdale, Arizona, where, accompanied by his wife, he had traveled from Haifa, Israel, for medical treatment.

Many Alaskans remember Lynn with laughter, stories, and a few rolled eyes. What Lynn loved most in life was Bahá'u'lláh, and this love

motivated his decisions and actions. He wasn't always graceful or quiet in his life's trials, but you could not doubt his devotion to the Faith.



Lynn was a story teller at heart. His stories made the Faith come alive and he was the first to laugh or cry in the telling. He used this gift in teaching the Faith. His stories not only led people to become Bahá'ís, but Lynn was able to guide them to become devoted, active servants of Bahá'u'lláh. He connected with people on a spiritual level, and also helped them to walk the path with practical feet.

While living in Alaska he served on several institutions and committees. A unique service he provided was starting the J & L Flying Club with Jim Baumgartner. The club trained pilots and secured airplanes in order to reach the villages with greater ease, and to visit Bahá'ís in these remote areas. This provided an abundance of hilarious and moving stories, as well as many impassioned calls to contribute to the Fund so that planes and teachers could stay "in the air", flying to the villages.

Lynn was a travel teacher who facilitated institute sessions on teaching, as well as the "Secret of Wealth" deepening course, both on the homefront and internationally. His special love was teaching in the indigenous areas.

In addition to his teaching activities, he assisted in obtaining equipment for the maintenance of Radio Bahá'í stations in Latin America, and with the construction of two other stations, one in

South Carolina and the other in Liberia. Lynn was also known for his work with Red Bradley and Kingsley Thurber at Light of the North, a Bahá'í-oriented audio-visual production company, and was intimately involved in the production of a documentary about the Guaymí Indians in Panama entitled "A Light in the Mountains - The Guaymí Project."

When Lynn's wife, Laretta, was called to serve as a Counsellor member of the International Teaching Center, Lynn reached new levels of sacrifice. The changes needed to live in Israel did not come easily for him, but he achieved them in the end.

In the last several years in Haifa Lynn focused on his leather tooling, making beautiful covers for prayer books and the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, and generously teaching his craft to others who were interested. He developed his creative side essentially to be able to continue raising money for the International Fund. Lynn supported the Bahá'í funds in deeds and in words, exhorting others to give sacrificially to the Faith.

Undoubtedly, as a result of Lynn's sacrificial earthly deeds, he has ascended to another level of service where he can now continue to touch hearts and inspire souls through the Beloved Cause of God he loved so deeply.

4 February 1998

The National Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of Alaska

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice has asked us to share with your Assembly and the friends in Alaska its heartfelt condolences over the loss of dear Lynn King. His stalwart and persevering spirit, his many services to the Cause he loved so dearly, and the self-sacrificing support he gave to the work of his wife, Laretta, as Counsellor will long be remembered.

The House of Justice has offered its prayers at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of his soul in all the worlds of God.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,  
Department of the Secretariat

cc: International Teaching Centre  
Board of Counsellors in the Americas  
Counsellor Stephen Birkland

Photo:  
Lynn King and  
Counsellor  
Laretta King  
Photo credit:  
Laurie King



MELBA M. CALL KING  
1910-1979

A casual observer might assume mistakenly that Melba King lived in a limited and narrow world of darkness, for she was blind. But those who were privileged to share her world know that she lived in beauty and light, her horizons uncircumscribed by physical limitations.

A Yupik Eskimo, she was born on 11 October 1910 in the village of Savanaska in the Bristol Bay region of Alaska. Orphaned at an early age and physically handicapped, she might have been lost had it not been for Dr. French, a United States Commissioner, who took an interest in her welfare and assisted

<sup>1</sup> *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 39.

with planning for her physical and educational needs. She was reared by a white foster-mother, Corrine Call, a teacher for the Alaskan Indian Service.

Melba earned her way through college, attended the School for the Blind at Vancouver, Washington, and studied at Perkins Institute in Massachusetts. Later she completed two years' study at Washington University and an additional two years' study at Central Washington University. She was the first blind student ever to graduate from that University. Her diploma was presented to her by the Governor of the State of Washington, the Hon. William Langley.

Determined to help others to broaden their perspective through education, Melba accepted a position teaching newly-blind adults in New Mexico. It was there that she met Kathryn Franklin<sup>2</sup> who introduced her to the Bahá'í Faith, an event that was to change the course of her life. Melba declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh on 23 May 1943 in Albuquerque, New Mexico—the first full-blooded Eskimo to do so.<sup>3</sup> This occasion, unforgettable for Melba and significant for the Faith, was made more memorable by a letter written on the Guardian's behalf by his secretary on 24 July in which he predicted a radiant future for Melba and for her people. In his own hand Shoghi Effendi wrote, 'Your most welcome letter has rejoiced my heart. I extend to you a most hearty welcome into the ranks of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, and will greatly value your support and co-operation. Your conversion to His Cause is indeed an historic event, and will greatly rejoice the hearts of the believers. I will pray for your success and spiritual advancement from the depths of my heart. Rest assured and be confident.'

To teach the Faith among the Eskimos became her greatest hope.

She returned to Seattle, Washington, in May 1944 and attended the Washington State Training Center for the Blind where she met Eugene King. They were married on 30 September 1944.

Humility was an integral part of Melba's personality. She was a determined and completely honest champion of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, never hesitating to speak out

<sup>2</sup> See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIV, p. 337.

<sup>3</sup> *Bahá'í News*, November 1943, pp. 5-6.

to prevent misunderstandings or misrepresentations. As an active member of numerous Local Spiritual Assemblies she was to become adept in the art of consultation. Unafraid of controversy, she believed that all the facts were necessary to full and frank consultation, and encouraged everyone to express his opinion as openly as she did. Outstanding among her gifts was that of love which she extended to Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike. She was an accomplished pianist and often performed at public meetings. She was, as well, a skilled secretary, and a competent speaker and teacher. Her teaching trips were numerous and varied. She, Eugene and her gentle guide-dog became a familiar sight throughout Alaska, Oregon, California and Washington. She taught on Indian Reservations and at Bahá'í summer schools from Geyserville, California, to Juneau, Alaska. She served on the committee that launched the first mass teaching effort in Washington which reached nearly three thousand people, and made repeated visits to teach the Yakima

and Tulalip Indians on their reservations. Melba and Eugene were the first public speakers in an Indian community at Neah Bay, Washington. In addition to her dedicated and varied services as a member of the Local Spiritual Assemblies of Tacoma and Seattle she served on the National Bahá'í Committee for the Blind.

Throughout her many years of service in the Bahá'í communities of Washington, part of Melba's heart yearned for her native Alaska. In 1969 she and Eugene moved to Juneau and soon endeared themselves to the entire Alaskan Bahá'í community. Despite difficult weather conditions and precarious health they served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Juneau and its numerous committees, did extensive teaching throughout the country, and helped build and strengthen the Juneau community before moving to Anchorage in 1971, a move which became necessary because of the need for access to medical facilities. Melba also served on the National Teaching and National Goals Committees. In 1972 ill health forced the Kings to relocate in the milder climate of Washington. They were able to attend the 1976 International Conference in Anchorage, following which they made a teaching trip into the central and northern regions of Alaska. In July 1978 they made a teaching trip to Sitka and formulated plans to settle again in Alaska, this time in Haines. But it was not to be. On 7 September 1979, after a year of puzzling illness, Melba was called to her greater home in the Abhá Kingdom, leaving us very blessed for having shared her world of infinite vision. She was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Seattle. On 10 September the Universal House of Justice cabled:

PASSING MELBA KING FIRST ESKIMO TO EMBRACE CAUSE BAHÁ'Í GRIEVOUS LOSS. HER UNSTINTING SERVICES ADMINISTRATION AND TEACHING FIELDS FOR NEARLY FOUR DECADES IN ALASKA AND NORTHWEST UNITED STATES DESPITE LIFELONG PHYSICAL HANDICAP DESERVE SPECIAL MENTION ANNALS FAITH AMERICAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY. EXTEND LOVING SYMPATHY ASSURANCE PRAYERS TO HER HUSBAND EUGENE KING. SUPPLICATING HOLY THRESHOLD PROGRESS HER SOUL KINGDOMS

## KOLSTOES PIONEER TO ST. LUCIA

John and Beverly Kolstoe are typical Baha'is. They have one foot in the old world and one in the new, masters in one but dedicated with mind and soul to the other. Now they are going pioneering, to St. Lucia in the Carribbean. Beverly laughs and calls it a hardship post. We are sitting in the familiar Kolstoe dining room, scene of so many Baha'i events over the years, some sad, most joyous, like when someone signs their card. John is at a National meeting and no doubt will finish off the weekend with two or three insurance appointments sandwiched in between favors to some out of town Baha'i friend, all neatly notated in his appointment book and adhered to in the strictest manner as much as humanly possible. Efficiency allows more time to teach the Faith.

Beverly serves coffee. Always the hostess. Her shining round face looks pensive as she gives out the dates. So much history poured into a few minutes of conversation doesn't do justice to the true meaning of such lives, but occasional vignettes give poignant definition to the word sacrifice. Pioneered to Alaska in 1958. Two years later Hand of the Cause Bill Sears asked Alaska to fill all goals, especially the native ones. Fort Yukon was the only Athabaskan goal and would have to be scratched. Kolstoos moved there in 1961, with Bev teaching elementary school and John at high school. Village hostilities dictated prudence, so the Faith was not mentioned for one whole school year. After school was out native friends asked why they too had not quickly left the village for the summer like the rest of the teachers. Kolstoos' answer? "This is our home. Besides, everything we own is here. Where would we go?" That summer 19 new Baha'is signed their cards. As Bev said, Fort Yukon was the highlight of their life in the Faith, and what better way is there to serve the Faith than to pioneer.

In 1964 they moved to the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, then to Palmer in 1969, gathering the children along the way



BEVERLY AND JOHN KOLSTOE

... foster son Alfred, Tahirih, Karl, Lynn and Brent, each a beautiful example of the many flowers of mankind. At the good-bye ceremonies at convention Bev voiced her deepest parental love for her young adult children when she requested of her Alaskan friends to "Please look after my children." It is with that same deep commitment they both prepare to pioneer.

Now the same old feelings of destiny and correctness preceding the move to Fort Yukon repeat themselves in the move to St. Lucia, as a new goal for Alaska beckons to be filled. As always, Bev sees the brighter side. Twenty seven years ago when they moved to Alaska, she wanted to move to a warm climate. Now she can. And John has a new territory to organize and make efficient, for the greatest Cause known to mankind. John's boss once said if he would work full time at insurance instead of spending so much time with the Faith, he would make them both millionaires. Even so, John has garnered most of the top sales honors. But, little

does his boss know that all John's time spent working for the Faith is helping to make them both eventual millionaires ... spiritually.

It is hard to say good-bye to someone we have loved for so many years. But, as John and Beverly have so aptly demonstrated so many times, we must turn to the writings for understanding, consolation and strength.

"Now the time has come when we must part, but the separation is only of our bodies, in spirit we are united. Ye are the waves of the sea which shall spread and overflow the world..." Good-bye John and Bev. There won't be anymore stopping by for coffee and solving the world's problems, saying late night prayers together, deepenings or firesides, but our hearts and our love go with you. With your incredible energy and sacrifice we know you will fulfill the legacy of the pioneers who have gone before you.

Ya Baha-h'l-Abha!

Jerry Brown

In May of 1958 I attended the last of the Continental Conferences called by the Guardian and Beverly remained in Minneapolis. That is when I decided we should pioneer to Alaska. Returning to Minneapolis, I talked on and on about the Conference, evading the subject of pioneering until she asked: "Where are we going?" "Alaska." I answered. "Oh," she said, "I was hoping for someplace warm." Warm or no, we went north that summer.

Beverly was on the National Spiritual Assembly in 1960 when Bill Sears came to Alaska. It was her turn. She decided we should pioneer to Ft. Yukon, where we spent three memorable years.

In 1985 Alaska was given two international goals: St. Lucia and Iceland. We chose first and went to St. Lucia before anyone else had a chance at it. George Putney got Iceland. Finally, after 27 years of longing for someplace warm, her hope was realized. We stayed for five years, and she loved every minute of it. But then, she loved every minute of life.

Service was her constant joy: children's classes, Feasts, entertaining, teaching about the Faith. While pioneering in Palmer for 16 years, Beverly served on numerous national committees, including Child Education, National Teaching Committee and -- her dearest love -- Bahá'í International Goals Committee: "BIG C", she called it. She was a fixture as Secretary of the National Convention for six years in a row.

Beverly loved children. In addition to our own five of various races there always seemed to be one or two others living with us. She poured out her love generously and bonded deeply with others. On a trip to the States she said: "The thing I miss most about Alaska is the women from our community."

Her greatest joy came while her mother was living with us in St. Lucia. At the age of 83, she accepted

Baha'u'llah, 36 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 was plagued by serious medical problems all of her life, having been told at the age of 16 that she only had five more years to live. Twenty-one years ago, she had quadruple bypass surgery. The last nine years, since 1987, were especially difficult for her. In December of 1992 she suffered a heart attack. During the past year she was in the hospital five times. She was at the maximum dosages for all her medications and there was nothing further that modern medicine could do for her. Further heart surgery was the only hope she had to regain some vitality.

On Monday, June 10, 1996 she had heart surgery for five artery grafts. She was recovering well and was making plans for the things she wanted to do when she got out of the hospital. Suddenly, about 7 p.m. on Sunday, the seventh day after the surgery, she developed complications and she had no reserves left to fight off the problem. About 10 a.m. on Tuesday, June 18, 1996 she peacefully slipped away. An audio tape recording of the Memorial Service is available at cost through the Bahá'í Bookstore.

We sorrow at her loss, but can rejoice that we had her as long as we did, since she outlived the best of medical predictions. Her life has been full, but she said it best in her own words. During a sleepless night before her death she wrote a free-verse poem which she called "I have had the most AMAZING LIFE", copies of which are available for anyone who asks. In it she recounts all the extraordinary things she had done and concluded with:

*"Thank you, God. I have been most blessed! Your humble servant ... Beverly".*



### In Memoriam:

## **BEVERLY W. KOLSTOE**

1930 April 18 - 1996 June 18  
by John Kolstoe

Beverly was born and raised among the blue-collar workers of industrial northern Illinois. From her earliest days she seemed immune from the rampant race and class prejudice of the area. Years ago 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." We were married in 1952 and embraced the Cause of Baha'u'llah during the First Holy Year and the launching of Ten-Year Crusade in 1953.

## I Have Had the Most AMAZING LIFE:

(Written by Beverly Kolstoe about 3 years before her passing.)

I have climbed the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

I have visited Buddhist Temples and Shinto Shrines in Japan.

I have seen great cathedrals: Notre Dame in Paris, St. Paul's in London, and the Cologne Cathedral in Germany.

I have stayed on a Navaho reservation in Arizona and a Jewish Kibbutz on the Sea of Galilee.

I have swum in hot springs in Alaska, the Yukon, Tiberias in Israel, and in St. Lucia.

I have voted for the first and only elected International Bahá'í Council in 1960, and the Universal House of Justice in 1988.

I have made 3 pilgrimages to the World Centre, and met more Hands of the Cause than I can count.

I attended the second World Congress in New York, 1992.

I have flown in a small plane to St. Lawrence Island with Rúhíyyih Khánum.

I have walked along the shore of Lake Lugano, Switzerland, where Shoghi Effendi walked.

I have stayed at some of the most elegant resort hotels in the US: White Sulfur Springs, WV, Camelback Inn at Scottsdale, AZ, Hilton Head Island, SC, Century Plaza in Los Angeles; and at the Polar Inn in Nome.

I have visited Washington DC, the Capitol Building, the White House, the Mint, and the Smithsonian Institution.

I have seen reindeer herds in Finland and on Nunivak Island, Alaska.

I have dipped my bare feet into the ocean at Greenland, and snorkeled in St. Lucia where the most incredible yellow and black striped fish swam up to me and peered at me through the glass on my mask.

I have seen the sunrise over the Grand Canyon, and visited the cave dwellings of ancient Indians at Oak Creek Canyon.

I have experienced a typhoon in Japan, a hurricane in St. Lucia, a flood in Fairbanks, and lots of earthquakes.

I have walked on a glacier in Alaska and a volcano in St. Lucia.

I have seen in person: Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Mary Martin, Paul Robson, Uta Haagen, Jose Ferrer, Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronen, Burl Ives, and Vincent Price.

I attended the dedication of the Bahá'í Temple in Wilmette in 1953, and heard the inauguration of the Guardian's 10-Year Crusade, which has been the focus of our lives now for 40 years.

I attended the International Conferences in Sapporo, Japan and Helsinki, Finland.

I have taken each one of my children and my mother on an international trip.

I even brought "our Betty" on a visit to the United States.

I have seen the Coliseum in Rome, the catacombs, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and the Church of the Nativity in Nazareth.

I've seen the Pope, twice, once at the Vatican in Rome, and once at the airport in St. Lucia.

I have seen the Oberamergau Passion Play in the Bavarian Alps.

And I found the house where my father was born in Scotland

I've seen the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace and at the Tower of London.

I've been to Disney Land, Disney World, Epcot Center, as well as Busch Gardens in Florida and Knott's Berry Farm in California.

I've seen the Lippizan Horses in Vienna and Illinois.

I've been to Tivoli in Copenhagen, and I've seen the statue of the Little Mermaid.

I've visited Stratford-on-Avon and seen a Shakespeare's Richard III there, and Comedy of Errors at the Barbican in London.

I have seen Michelangelo's "David" in Florence, Italy, and ridden in a gondola in Venice.

I've lived North of the Arctic Circle among the Athabascans whom I love, and in the Caribbean among West Indians, whom I also love.

I have rich friends and poor friends, and lots in between.

I count as my friends, Indians, Eskimos, Asians, Persians, American Blacks and Native Americans, and especially the precious souls of the West Indies.

I have been able to serve Bahá'u'lláh in many small ways. I hope they are acceptable to Him.

All of these adventures and more have been mine, along with having been raised by loving parents, have a brother I adore, and grandparents and cousins, aunts and uncles among whom I felt loved and secure.

From there I married the greatest husband, and raised a whole bunch of wonderful kids and grandchildren.

Who could ask for anything more? Thank you, God. I have been most blessed!

Your humble servant.....Beverly

#### Ruby Lawson-Gubatayao

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 6 years as of 1999. First elected in 1991.

A Tsimshian Indian, Ruby was from Metlakatla, but was reared and educated in the Seattle area. There she suffered a barrage of racial indignities. Even some of the nuns at the convent school she attended would make racial slurs and considered Indians inferior. This steeled in Ruby a strong determination to succeed in spite of obstacles others placed in her way.

She majored in education and did graduate work in Indian Studies at the University of Washington during a time when Indian rights and Indian power movements were gaining momentum. She saw these as avenues and opportunities for Indians to gain the power and recognition that had been so long denied them. Her animosity toward whites was such that she confided to a Caucasian co-worker on the National Spiritual Assembly, "Before I was a Bahá'í, I wouldn't have given you the time of day."

While teaching school on the Makah Indian Reservation in western Washington, she was befriended by the Tylers, a Bahá'í Indian family. Ruby admitted that her attitude at the time was such that she never would have listened to the healing message of Bahá'u'lláh had she heard it from a Caucasian. She became a believer in 1976.

Her love of the Faith and eagerness to spread its healing message took hold of her from the start. Three of her six children and 8 of her 16 grandchildren have embraced the Faith. Over the next several years, Ruby pioneered to several Indian reservations in northeastern Washington and Idaho. On two occasions she made six-week teaching trips among the Sami (Laplanders) of Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

She was invited to teach at a Bahá'í summer school in Alaska. This fueled in her a special need and urgency to bring the Faith to her own people. Therefore, she moved to Metlakatla, her ancestral home, as a pioneer.

Ruby is noted for her love of the Creative Word and reliance on prayer, including memorizing long passages from the Writings.

While funds were being raised to build the Arc on Mt. Carmel, Ruby wanted to be a part of the project, but could contribute little as a retired schoolteacher. She decided to use her sewing skills by making book covers for the Kitáb-i-Aqdas from exquisite material and selling them. She raised an impressive sum of money to contribute to the object of her heart's desire.

Ruby represented Alaska at the centenary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh at the World Centre in 1992 as well as the World Congress that year. She attended the International Conventions and elections of the Universal House of Justice in 1993 and 1998.

John E. Kolstoe

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 26+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1959.

John was raised in North Dakota and became a Bahá'í while serving in the United States Navy. In 1958 he and his wife, Beverly, left graduate school at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis to pioneer to Alaska under the Ten Year Crusade. In 1961 John and Beverly pioneered to Ft. Yukon where they opened up the Yukon Basin to the Faith and were instrumental in forming the first Spiritual Assembly north of the Arctic Circle.

They left Ft. Yukon and their teaching positions in the State Operated School in 1964 when John accepted a position as Head of the Department of Evening Classes and Correspondence Study at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. In 1965 he entered the life insurance business in order to spend more time on Bahá'í activities.

A Minorities Conference was held in Petersburg, Alaska in October of 1970. Seven members of the National Spiritual Assembly, including John, were adopted as Tlingit Indians. John became a member of the Eagle Tribe. Up to then he had never used his middle initial. Shortly after the adoption ceremony, Helen Salpid, an Indian elder from Petersburg who had been involved in arranging the adoptions, sent him a card in which she called him "John (Eagle) Kolstoe" in reference to his new identity. He immediately started using his middle initial "E" as a reminder of this signal honor.

In 1969 the family pioneered to Palmer, making it possible to form a Spiritual Assembly there at Ridván.

John supervised the publication of High Endeavours, the Guardian's letters to Alaska, and as liaison to the National Spiritual Assembly, he supervised the design, preparation and construction of the present Hazíratu'l-Quds. He frequently wrote articles and deepening material for the *Alaska Bahá'í News* including series on "The Power of the Covenant", "Consultation", "The Wonder of the Writings", and "A Glance in the Rear View Mirror." Many of these have been reprinted in other Bahá'í journals.

The family pioneered to St. Lucia in the Caribbeann which was a goal for Alaska under the Seven Year Plan. They returned to Alaska in 1990 and John was again elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1994. He worked in the National Office periodically during his last few years in Alaska. Among other things, he prepared the biographical sketches for the portraits of seven early believers, that adorn the main hall of the National Office and the notes concerning the Hands of the Cause whose pictures are on display. Shortly after Beverly died, in 1996, John left the land in which he had pioneered for 33 years to work for a consulting firm in New York.

Noted for a lively sense of humor, John has been a frequent summer school teacher and public speaker. He has presented workshops, spoken or taught courses in Alaska and in many countries and islands throughout the world. He is known internationally as the author of a simple language teaching pamphlet: "Bahá'í Teachings: A Light for All Regions," the books Consultation, Developing Genius, and the workbook by the same title, all on the subject of consultation, and the book and video, Progressive Revelation. John has conducted numerous workshops on consultation and other subjects for both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í audiences and made several presentations for the *Association for Bahá'í Studies* and other special events programs. His study "Improved Access to Intelligent Responses Using the Bahá'í Model of Consultation: Two Exploratory Small-Sample Studies" appears in *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, vol. 7, #1.

John has made two pilgrimages to the World Centre, is scheduled for a third one and attended International Conventions for the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1968, 1973, 1978, and 1983 as a delegate from Alaska and in 1988 as a member of the St. Lucia National Spiritual Assembly.

# In Memory of Doris Kurzius (1926-1994)

Mrs. Doris Kurzius of Nome, a unique and life-long travelling teacher who had taught the Bahá'í Faith on every continent except Australia and Antarctica.



Word was received by the Universal House of Justice in a fax message dated 26 May 1994 from William and Wendy Mudd of Seattle, reporting the death in that city of Mrs. Doris Kurzius of Nome, a unique and life-long travelling teacher who had taught the Bahá'í Faith on every continent except Australia and Antarctica. Besides teaching the Faith throughout Alaska from her home base in Nome, an incomplete list of her teaching travels includes Thailand, Taiwan, China, Nepal, Singapore, Russia, Mongolia, Hong Kong and Europe. The email from the House of Justice said, in part, "Kindly assure the Bahá'ís of Seattle of the prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines for the progress of the radiant soul of Mrs. Doris Kurzius throughout the worlds of God."

bright, alert, bubbly and dedicated young Bahá'í who married Charles Kurzius and had three children. She attended both World Congresses and, with her husband, went on pilgrimage in 1972. She was born in 1926.



According to Phil Dunne of Stebbins, Doris learned from Counsellor Laretta King in 1984 about the need for a pioneer in Savoonga, and later relocated in Nome where she bought a home. Mrs. Margaret Ruhe reported that she and her husband, Dr. David Ruhe, retired member of the Universal House of Justice, knew Doris in Connecticut in 1949-52 as a

Photo :  
Doris Kurzius  
and Craig Wolfley  
Photo credit:  
Jan Wolfley



Stopped at a village on the Amazon River. Pioneer Kris Leonard (bottom deck); Travel Teacher (Spanish Speaking) Ida Solomon (Florida).



First day of building local Baha'i centr Village of "Rumococha" near Iquitos, Peru. Pioneers Bob Leonard (center), Mike Haigh (right).

**BOB AND KARIN LEONARD  
PIONEERING IN PERU**

The following are excerpts from a letter from Bob and Karin Leonard, former Alaskan Baha'is living in Kodiak, now pioneering in Peru.

"We are so thankful that we were able to be allowed to come to Peru. This has been a most wonderful experience! We are in the middle of a Mass Teaching area which is just being started. There has been a great success with teaching the masses in Bahia, Brazil where the International Conference was held in January 1977. It started 9 months before the Conference and now the State of Bahia has 38 new LSA's and over 7,000 believers! The plan is to mass teach along the Amazon River starting at both ends (Iquitos where we are) and Belem, Brazil. Manaus, Brazil which is in the middle already has over 200 believers and growing fast. So you can see the importance of Iquitos at the west end.

"We have been running a 'Hotel' (both pioneer families here) and have had Continental Counsellors Mas'ud Khamsi' and Leonora Holsaple Armstrong (Karin's aunt) here plus Auxiliary Board Members and many teachers. I believe it was developed by the Universal House of Justice and the International Teaching Center. Before starting mass teaching, we had close to two



Village "San Jose" on Amazon River near Iquitos, Peru

weeks of intensive training for the teachers. The two pioneer families (Haigh's from Canada and us) are most helpful in the area of the fund because the National is so poor, the whole country of Peru is poor! We are both flying here, making good money, so though our Spanish is poor, we can

contribute by finance of these projects. Karin and I are so thankful that we could help (and learn) in this mass teaching just starting on the Amazon.

"Please give our warmest greetings to all our friends in Alaska."

In His service,  
Bob and Karin Leonard

Lois K. Lee

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 8+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1957.

Lois was living in Kodiak when she embraced in the Faith. In those days it was typical for some administrative institution to interview prospective new members. Since there were no Bahá'ís living on Kodiak Island, Lois had to make a special trip to Anchorage to meet with the teaching committee before they would accept her enrollment. How different from later procedures!

Kodiak Island was a specific goal under the Guardian's Ten Year Spiritual Crusade. Bahá'ís who arose to fill those specific goals were named Knights of Bahá'u'lláh. Lois had moved to Anchorage before that, so there were no Bahá'ís living on Kodiak when the pioneers arrived. Lois, who had enrolled there and lived there before the coming of the pioneers, was not so named, even though she was the first Bahá'í to live on Kodiak Island.

The First National Convention took place while Lois was living in Anchorage. She was elected as a delegate to that Convention and subsequently to the National Spiritual Assembly. She was the first Treasurer. It was up to her to set up the books for the new institution.

Prior to the passing of the Guardian, Lois and Betty Becker requested pilgrimage dates. This request was granted. However, with the death of the Beloved Guardian on November 4, 1957, those plans were canceled. Lois did go on pilgrimage in 1959 and was the first pilgrim from this newly launched national community.

Being 1/8 Algonquin, Lois was the first member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska to have American Indian ancestry.

She was among those attending and participating in the first election for the Universal House of Justice in 1963.

Hazel Lovelace

Hazel is certainly among the better-known international travel teachers from Alaska. She learned of the Faith when she stopped by a Bahá'í Conference at Jackson Lake outside Whitehorse, Canada in 1962. She stopped by to see her aunt, Dora Wedge. There were deep, non-stop discussions and Hazel Enrolled.

This was during the Ten Year Crusade and Sitka was the responsibility of the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly. In an effort to form a Spiritual Assembly there before the end of the plan (April 1963), the Bahá'ís of Whitehorse were asked to recruit pioneers. Hazel and two others pioneered from Canada to Alaska to create the new Institution. Being a Tlingit Indian from Canada enabled her to have dual citizenship, which has often proved an advantage.

Hazel and her family, husband Art and daughters moved to California, but returned to Alaska and took part in the mass teaching of the late 60s and early 70s. Hazel became a tireless member of the teaching teams. She has been effective in every phase of the teaching work, but especially loves facilitating intensive Nine-Day Institutes on the Creative Word, which she has done in every part of the world.

Her international work has been extensive including North and South America, and Central America, where she pioneered in Belize for one year. She was on two extensive teaching trips to the Caribbean and traveled twice to Africa, as well as Mauritius, Australia, New Zealand, various islands of the Pacific, and parts of Southeast Asia. Hazel is bold and audacious and has been especially effective in bringing the teaching work of others to fruition, as well as stimulating others. One country counted over half of their enrollments for the year during the six weeks that Hazel was there, both from her own efforts and the better focused and more intense efforts of others.

Another favored activity has been working in the Native Councils and participating in teaching activities among Native Americans. She has attended pow-wows, potlatches and gatherings throughout Alaska, Canada and the contiguous 48 states.

Her love, if not her very life, has been being on the move, serving the Faith.

Joseph (Joe) Lenear  
Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for <1 year. Elected in 1964.

Joe was the first African-American Bahá'í to be elected to the National Spiritual Assembly.

Joe had been a dynamic force in the Tanana Valley community. When he built his home near Fairbanks he designed it with the Faith in mind. There was a lot of space for meetings. He even built a special room for committee meetings. This was a hospitality center for many traveling Bahá'ís. Numerous institutes and weekend deepening sessions were held there.

Shortly before his election to the National Spiritual Assembly, Joe seemed to withdraw somewhat from Bahá'í activities. It was as if there had been some deep hurt that he never talked about. Even though he was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, he never attended a meeting. He was not reelected at the following Convention and a short time later he withdrew from the Faith for reasons which were never made clear.

Joe passed away in his home in Fairbanks in 1994.

Michael P. (Mike) McConahy  
Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 4 years as of 1999. First elected in 1989.

Mike was a law student in Tacoma, Washington when he read Horace Holley's Religion for Mankind. He was attracted by the logic and eminent moral and social sense the book made. Shortly thereafter he declared his belief because it all made so much sense. In his words, "There was no epiphany."

Mike had his eye on Alaska for many years, attracted to the lure of hunting, fishing and outdoor activities. Armed with his newly-found faith and his love for the out of doors, he proceeded north to Alaska. He has pursued with vigor his professional life, the out of doors, and service to the Faith.

During his first year in Alaska, Mike passed the bar examination and was admitted to the bar. This is a rare feat, as most lawyers fail it the first time. Taking the test numerous times before passing is not uncommon.

He got a pilot's license and has logged many hours piloting the Bahá'i-owned airplane on various projects.

The Fairbanks Spiritual Assembly was in need of a center and Mike was instrumental in finding and procuring the first center for Fairbanks.

In 1993, Mike attended the seventh International Convention in Haifa for the election of the Universal House of Justice.

Richard (Dick) Mereness  
Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 2 years as of 1999. First elected in 1958.

Dick pioneered from Montana to Alaska during the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade. He tried finding employment in Seward, but spent most of his time in Anchorage, where he worked as a maintenance man in a housing project. During most of his stay in Anchorage he was the caretaker at the Hazíratu'l-Quds, where he did much to beautify the grounds.

Dick was one of the first Bahá'ís from Alaska to make a pilgrimage. It was during this experience that he realized that the needs in Europe were enormous and that he, as a young, single man was more free to go than most people. Therefore he moved to Stavanger, Norway to help that community prepare itself for the formation of its National Spiritual Assembly in preparation for the formation election of the Universal House of Justice.

## Luminous Spirit Florence Mayberry Passes 1906-1998

*Counsellor and International Teaching*

### FLORENCE IN ALASKA...

**"You Alaskans have been a perfect joy in my life."<sup>1</sup>**

Florence Mayberry was straining to hear the names during the 1954 National Convention. A new Institution, the Auxiliary Board to the Hands of the Cause had just been created by the Guardian. Horace Holley was reading the names of the new members and Florence was writing them down. As she described it, "But the fourth name was so shockingly familiar that I dropped pen and notebook on the floor, writing at an end."<sup>2</sup> That's how she learned she was part of the new Institution.

Those nine new Auxiliary Board members had responsibilities throughout the Western Hemisphere. Florence eagerly took on the task of serving Alaska, which she did, right up to the time of her appointment to serve at International Teaching Centre in Haifa in 1973.

In 1955 she made the first of her 18 trips to this northern land. Florence reported that, "Those eighteen trips included every season and category of weather, covered the state from the coasts of the Arctic Ocean and the Bering Sea, down into central Alaska, out to sea on the Aleutian and Kodiak Islands, up and down, back and forth within the forested, mossy sea-tangled, claciered wonderland of South Eastern Alaska."<sup>3</sup> It was during the first trip that she dedicated the first National Hazíratu'l-Quds for Alaska, two years before the formation of the National

Spiritual Assembly.

In April of 1957, she was on her pilgrimage, sitting at the Guardian's table, when he received the cablegram from Paul Haney announcing the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly. She has talked about how pleased and proud he was of the Bahá'ís in Alaska. Then, knowing that she had been there, he asked her why the Alaskans had so much zeal and vitality compared to other American Bahá'ís. She replied that she "didn't know but that maybe the Alaskans were still pioneers – physically and spiritually."<sup>4</sup> She reported that the Guardian looked at her, thoughtfully for a long time saying nothing, but he didn't refute her observation.

Her ability to respond to shifting circumstances was illustrated during her 1958 trip which she said was probably the most dramatic of the 18. She started in Ketchikan and was to go to Juneau where she was scheduled to give the first ever Bahá'í television interview and a slide show. The plane went from city to city and bad weather gave her an unscheduled stay in Petersburg, where she checked into the hotel. Although reserved by nature, she had a sudden impulse to go downstairs and socialize. She struck up a conversation with the woman who managed the hotel who later realized that she had read about Florence in the *Juneau Empire*. The manager suggested she should give her slide show to the Chamber of Commerce which was meeting just then in the hotel. Florence was only too happy to comply. After the meeting the discussion continued in the home of one of the



members. Charlotte Schwartz was called out of her sick bed and told her to come to meet a woman who "talks just like you do." That was the introduction of the Faith to Petersburg and why she is considered the spiritual mother of that community.

That same trip took her to Juneau, Sitka, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Barrow, Nome, Bethel, Unalaska, where she dedicated the Bahá'í Center, and Kodiak. Each stop was filled with adventure and miraculous opportunities for speaking of the Faith.

While kindly, she was also a strong and independent woman. All of the mystery stories she wrote for the Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine, had strong intrepid women as major characters. It is almost as if they were reflections of herself. With an eye for setting, her award winning book, *The Dachshunds of Mamma Island* was set in Sitka. She had an almost child-like love and excitement for adventure. The first time she flew in a single engine plane was when she traveled from Ft. Yukon to Beaver. The pilot asked her to sit in the front seat, next to him.

Transmitted electronically  
9 April 1998

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

**D**EEPLY SADDENED LOSS OUTSTANDING STAUNCH PROMOTER FAITH FLORENCE MAYBERRY. HER TIRELESS INSPIRED SERVICES, LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL, IN BOTH TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE FIELDS, SPANNING OVER FORTY YEARS, CROWNED BY UNFORGETTABLE DECADE AS COUNSELLOR MEMBER INTERNATIONAL TEACHING CENTRE.

VALIANT DEFENSE COVENANT, UNFLAGGING EFFORTS BLAZON NAME CAUSE, INTREPID FAR-FLUNG TRAVELS DISTINGUISH HER SPLENDID RECORD ACHIEVEMENTS.

ASSURE FERVENT PRAYERS PROGRESS HER LUMINOUS SPIRIT. CONFIDENT BOUNTIFUL REWARDS ABHA KINGDOM.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

With great enthusiasm she said, "Look, they're going to let me help drive!"

Two of her trips with Hands of the Cause were heavily reported in the *Alaska Bahá'í News*. The first was when she traveled with Mr. Furutan in 1969. This was reported extensively in both the October and November-December *Alaska Bahá'í News* of 1969. She also took part in the Minorities Conference with Mr. Olinga in Petersburg in 1971 and traveled with him to other parts of Alaska. This was reported in succeeding issues.

She often received praise for the public talks she gave. She was deeply touched one time in Anchorage when a 12 year-old boy approached her and told her how much he enjoyed her talk and why. Upon hearing his praise and her gracious response, someone asked her how she could keep a sense of balance when she got so much praise from so many people, of all ages. She replied that she enjoyed and relished a sincere compliment as much as anyone else did. But, the thing that helped her keep perspective was by remembering the phrase from the Visitation Tablet for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones..."<sup>5</sup>

Never one to scold, but always to encourage, during a National Convention in the days of mass teaching when the reputation of Alaska had spread round the world, she said the Alaskans could not stop and could not falter because "you have been caught in the trap your own success."

She made her final trip to Alaska in 1984, after she had retired from the International Teaching Centre. While she had no further official responsibil-

ity for Alaska, she maintained her keen interest and had penetrating insight. She asked what was going on, she wanted to know about both the obvious and the behind the scenes activities; she made observations; and she, as always, expressed her love for the people and hope for the future.

The Alaskan Bahá'í community owes much to the wise council, encouragement, guidance and example of this stalwart handmaiden who graced this land 18 times. That also happens to be the number of the Letters of the Living, and Florence was a living letter of love to Alaska.

To learn more of this remarkable lady, you are encouraged to read her captivating autobiography, "The Great Adventure."

<sup>1</sup> Florence Mayberry at the Carmel Conference in Anchorage, which she attended when she was enroute to the Holy Land to take up her duties in at the International Teaching Centre, *Alaska Bahá'í News*, December 1973, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Florence Mayberry, *The Great Adventure*, p. 132

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> *Alaska Bahá'í News*, November-December, 1969, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *US Bahá'í Prayers* (1982), p. 235.



## Byron McCord

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 1 year as of 1999. First elected in 1988.

Byron is a highly regarded and deeply loved orthopedic surgeon in Soldotna. He made a spiritual pilgrimage from being raised as an Episcopalian, becoming disenchanted, then enamored with the writings of Ayn Rand. He drifted into somewhat of an agnostic inclination, but, "there was an underground river of belief that God had to exist. It was a matter of finding out how the relationship worked."

During the early 1980s, Harold (Hal) Sexton, a Bahá'í psychiatrist from Homer, would travel to Soldotna and use Byron's office for his clinic. The two of them became close friends and would hold long conversations on spiritual matters. Through his conversations with Hal he saw that the Bahá'í Faith put all of his concerns into perspective.

His orthopedic practice put heavy demands on his time. As a result, he developed the skill of getting to the core of things quickly. He asked for the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, preferring that to what anyone had said about those Writings. He quickly developed a deep and abiding love for the Creative Word.

Since his enrollment in 1983, Byron has served the Faith with vigor and ingenuity. This has been difficult, given his heavy professional demands.

As an example of ingenuity, there was a popular game called "Trivial Pursuit" which featured obscure questions about trivial matters. Byron was asked to conduct a session during a weekend school and he invented a game, complete with prize for the winning team, that he called "Significant Pursuit." It consisted of wonderful, not-so-trivial questions from God Passes By.

Self-effacing and soft-spoken, Byron has touched many hearts through the example of his life.

## William D. (Bill) McKinley

Perseverance and dedication come to mind when thinking of Bill McKinley. Bill was working for the Alaska Railroad when he heard of the Bahá'í Faith from fellow worker Ed Russell. His acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh was wholehearted and energetic. He had an apartment building in Mt. View and turned a basement apartment into a Bahá'í Center that saw a lot of activities and many Nine-Day Institutes.

In the early 1970s, the National Spiritual Assembly asked a group of believers from Anchorage to consider pioneering to Eagle River and Chugiak. From that meeting a wave of Bahá'ís left Anchorage, establishing the two Bahá'í Communities. Bill is the only one from that original group still at his post. Bill and his daughter, Tammy, moved with Arnie Glaz, into a trailer home in Chugiak. Then, Bill bought some property and moved a trailer onto it, where he and Tammy lived while Bill built his home, designed in every way to serve the Faith. It is probably best known for the monthly Martha Root Socials and his famous barbecues. Everyone is welcome and hundreds have enjoyed his hospitality.

Bill was the general contractor for the construction of the present Hazíratu'l-Quds. Characteristic of his thoughtfulness, he took the first birch tree that was cut down for the construction and made it into a frame to hold the Greatest Name.

There are few Bahá'ís who have put as many miles on their cars for the Faith as Bill has. His travels, with his grandson, Mathaniel, throughout Alaska and to the States are legion. Stop in any Bahá'í home along the Alaskan Highway, from Dawson Creek to Beaver Creek, and they will tell you about the times that Bill McKinley stopped by. For years, Bill has been committed to teaching in the Copper Center area. It is the unusual weekend that Bill is not on his way to Copper Center or somewhere else to travel teach.

Whether driving a bus to take Bahá'ís different places, picking up hitchhikers and telling them of the Faith, offering hospitality to a wide range of people, or travel teaching, Bill has always been ready to serve, letting his quiet and gentle nature speak for itself. His way is to do rather than talk.

## In Memoriam

### Rose McFarland Passes to Ábha Kingdom

On October 4, at the age of 86, Rose Hathaway McFarland, mother of an extensive Bahá'í family both in Alaska and the Lower 48, passed peacefully into the Ábha Kingdom. In the last few months of her life she had the joy of witnessing the weddings of both a granddaughter, Pamela Maddock, in September and a great-granddaughter, Tierra Wakefield, in June.

Born in Washington, she moved to Alaska at the age of four when her family homesteaded near Kasaan. She and her seven siblings attended school in Kasaan. She worked as a nurse's aide in Ketchikan and Washington, where she met her husband, Elmer. He passed away in 1981. During her eventful life, Rose lived in Wrangell, Sitka, Ketchikan and Anchorage as well as Washington. Rose first heard about the Faith from her daughter Dolores and became a Bahá'í in the late 1970's after encountering one of the mass-teaching teams in Juneau.

Her varied interests included canning fish and game, fruit and vegetables; crocheting, sewing, and painting. The last nine years of her life were spent in Anchorage where she became interested in raising birds.

The surviving members of her family include three sisters in Washington and Ketchikan; daughters Sharon Maddock of Anchorage and Dolores Wakefield of Sitka; son John Stevens of Juneau; 13 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandson!



### ALASKAN PIONEER ED HAKERT REMEMBERED BY FRIENDS IN ALASKA, SOLOMON ISLANDS

Ed Hakert, formerly of Homer and Ridgeway, Alaska, passed away at his Pioneer Post in Honiara, Guadal Canal, Solomon Islands on 2 November 1996. Ed was raised in Billings, Montana, where he married Bonnie. It was in Homer, Alaska, where Ed, Bonnie and their four children were transferred by CTA Architects in 1972, that the family was introduced to the Bahá'í Faith.

In 1978 the family moved to Ridgeway, where Ed was Public Works Director for the Kenai Peninsula Borough. Both Ed and Bonnie served on the Ridgeway Assembly for those ten years and Ed was a major participant in the design and construction of the Ridgeway Bahá'í Center. He designed the collection boxes for the ongoing "Aluminum Cans for Public School Activities" — a Bahá'ís of Ridgeway, grassroots, socioeconomic development project.

Ed, his wife Bonnie and their two youngest children, Fawn and Chan, moved to the Solomon Islands (just east of Papua New Guinea) in 1988. His talents as an architect were immediately employed as a Project Supervisor with Island Architecture, Ltd., building roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and government buildings. After just two years' residence there, Ed's involvement in the Cause saw him elected to the National Spiritual Assembly — a position in which he served until his death.

Top: Ed Hakert (center) with fellow Alaskans at Bahá'í Internat'l Conference, Auckland, New Zealand, January 1995.

Photo credit: Byron McCord

Bottom: Rose McFarland, age 86, at wedding of great-granddaughter Tierra Wakefield on June 8, 1996.

Photo credit: Dolores Wakefield

# Fred Morgan Passes to the Abhá Kingdom

Fred Morgan, a Bahá'í dearly loved by many people in the Anchorage Community passed on to the Abhá Kingdom January 7, 1991. Fred came to Alaska in 1969 planning to acquire a homestead somewhere in Alaska and to pioneer for the Bahá'í Faith. His dream of acquiring a homestead never quite materialized but he did serve the Bahá'í Faith.

Whenever there was a town meeting that had anything to do with any aspect of the Bahá'í Faith, Fred was there. He made himself known and expressed his views. He was very interested in how the old world order operated and always was prepared to tell people about the Bahá'í way of solving political problems.

Fred was very faithful in coming to Feast. He didn't have transportation many times, but he came anyway. He would take a bus or walk. He contributed to the consultation portion by informing us about some news in the world and then relating it to the Bahá'í teachings. "Isn't that neat?" he would say. If some subject had already been talked about, he would say "I would like to add a footnote..."

Fred was remembered in a memorial service on Saturday, January 12th. Some of the things said by people who knew Fred were: Fred was a scholar, teacher, writer and a true friend. The following week the Salvation Army held a memorial service also.

by Patti VanZanten



**Photo:**  
Fred Morgan mailed a letter of hope at the International Youth Conference, July 1989.

**Photo Credit:**  
Jan Wolfley

## From The Moulds—American Samoa

### THE MOULDS

P.O. Box CB-23

Pago Pago, American Samoa 96920

November 1970

Dearest Baha'í Friends:

This is our second start at a general letter to all the friends in Alaska (as we are hoping you will pass this along to Janet Stout for excerpting for the ABN), as the first one got cut off by something urgent and we never got back to it. We would like so much to write an individual letter to each and every one of our many dear ones there, but this is impossible at the present time. We are going night and day trying to get a business organized, settled into a house, keep up with Baha'í activities, etc.

We arrived in Pago Pago on 17 September after stops in Seattle, Portland and Honolulu. In Seattle we stayed with Don and Ruha Rose and they certainly went way out of their way to be helpful to us. We visited the Harris family, the Grady Gibsons, the Javids and other friends there. One evening we had a special treat as Jeb Caldwell came through with a report on the first Teacher training institute in Alaska. Unfortunately, my Mother did not recognize me when I visited her in the nursing home where she lives.

In Portland we spent the night with Beryl Shuman formerly of Douglas, and it was a real gab-fest into the wee, small hours. In Honolulu we visited with the friends, met with the NSA and its pioneering committee (as they are our actual sponsors to this area), but mostly just rested from the horrors of packing, selling a house, saying final goodbyes to the greatest group of people we ever hope to know, leaving a job of 12 years, etc. It was sun, beach, swimming pool, more sun and more beach. Hawaii is about as close to paradise as we ever expect to come on this earth.

We traveled to Pago Pago with Bernard and Elyse Sailhauk and their daughter, who were pioneering to Tahiti. They are a French couple (only French Nationals are permitted to emigrate to Tahiti), and very devoted to the Cause. Bernard gave up a position as Executive Chef at the Sheraton Moana and was willing to take a waiter's job to stay in Tahiti. As it turned out, he was able to get a very fine position in Papeete, they have a nice place to live, have been able to contact the only believer there—and all done within the first 24 hours they were there. These folks had become Baha'ís in Hawaii just 6 months ago, and we have seldom met more devoted Baha'ís. Baha'u'llah must truly be smiling that they have arisen.

Pago Pago (pronounced **Pongo Pongo**) is really something else again. It reminds us of pictures we have seen of

Juneau circa 1900. The buildings are wood frame, old, lacking paint, crowded, gravel or mud streets except for one main road—it's hot and humid, the stores are continually out of everything (Georgine says shopping is not so much of a chore as it is a total experience), prices are higher than in Alaska on many food items, and wages are miserable. Georgine was offered a position teaching school at \$2,000 per year, and I make not quite ¼ of my Alaska income. The cockroaches are the size of full grown ptarmigans, mosquitoes like 707's, rats, vicious dogs . . . and WE LOVE IT!

To be serious for a moment, the plus quality here is the people. The Samoans are by and large healthy, happy people with a strong belief in God although 150 years of conflicting Christian missionaries have infused some very strange beliefs into a pure ancient culture. By nature the Samoans are very loving and kind and a noble race, great speechmakers, but fettered by social customs that make individual action very difficult. This has greatly hampered the spread of the Faith here, because independent search is not a concept they can understand. Everything has been done for generations on the basis of the family grouping (large, extended families), and the Chief or Matai does the thinking for all on material things and the village pastor on spiritual matters. There is only one LSA in American Samoa and a total of 7 LSA's under the newly formed NSA of Samoa, the other 6 being in independent (since 1967) Western Samoa. The teaching work is going better there at the moment.

We are not suffering from lack of Baha'í activity. There are weekly deepening classes, we've had visits from Russ and Gina Garcia and Hand of the Cause Enoch Olinga (who made us real homesick with his report on the conference in Petersburg), have welcomed two pioneering families since we have arrived, have committee and special assignments from the NSA already, and Georgine is teaching the Youth on Sundays, Holy Days, Feasts etc.

Our close friends will not believe the Moulds' new style of living! We arise at 6 A.M. each day, start work at 7:30 A.M.—and Georgine goes to class at the Community College here at the same time to take 6 credits of Education—and retire at 9:30 or 10:00 (P.M., that is). But this is the way you must accommodate the heat—as afternoons are impossible. We have a 3 room house, no phone, no TV, but we are smack in the middle of a village (untouched by the Baha'í Faith till now) and are the only white people (or Palangi) of the 1,000 people living here. To date this has given us some real opportunities for living the life, which we feel sure will pay off eventually.

We are looking forward to seeing many of you at the Conference in Fiji next May, and are certainly remembering you in our prayers — and ask that you do the same for us. Both Georgine and I have lost between 10 and 20 pounds to date—and this has not been harmful. We devoured the last issue of ABN, and are looking forward to the next one anxiously. Do write when you can and we will try to answer, if only with a short note.

Love to all,  
Georgine & Pat and the Kids.



*Georgine A. Moul*

**GEORGINE A. MOUL**  
1924-1986

The Hawaii Bahá'í community has been missing a dear and devoted believer since the passing of Georgine Arnold Moul on 21 March 1986 in Honolulu, following a long illness.

Georgine was born on 17 January 1924 in Peru, Indiana, U.S.A. She attended Purdue University and graduated from the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts where she soon became a faculty member while also working as artist in residence for the Maurice L. Rothschilds apparel store in Chicago, concentrating on fashion illustration. She became a Bahá'í in 1949 while still in school and apprenticed to Mrs. Betty de Araujo (then Scheffler), after attending firesides at the home of Ruth and Ellsworth Blackwell. For the next thirty-seven years the Bahá'í Faith was always her first priority.

Georgine married Robert 'Pat' Moul, a devoted Bahá'í, in 1952 in Evanston, Illinois. They responded to the Guardian's Ten Year Spiritual Crusade call for pioneers to Alaska during the first year of their marriage, moving to a new post only after the previous one was secured by new believers: Anchorage in 1953,

and the virgin goal cities of Ketchikan in 1954, and Douglas in 1957. During their seventeen years in Alaska, three children were born to them: Vicki, Doug and Larry.

In 1970, Georgine and Pat became the first pioneers to fill a foreign goal for the National Spiritual Assembly of the Hawaiian Islands by relocating the entire family to American Samoa. Here they operated a print shop and stationery and printing supply store, with Georgine as graphic artist, Pat as manager and printer, Vicki as clerk, Doug as cameraman, and Larry as binder. They remained in Samoa for four years, until Pat's deteriorating health forced them to sell the shop and move to Guam where they remained for a further period of almost four years.

In 1978—Vicki having married and Doug being on his own—Georgine and Pat and Larry moved to Hawaii where Georgine and Pat served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Honolulu until Georgine's illness prompted their resignations in the summer of 1985. Hawaii benefited from the Moul's masterful teamwork in many respects and also from their individual contributions, notably through Georgine's many art projects for the Faith such as Aloha Week Parade floats, designs for the national Bahá'í calendar, book jacket designs including two solicited by the Hand of the Cause William Sears, television program backdrops and a variety of posters. Georgine's business acumen transformed the National Bahá'í library into a successful enterprise, offering a multinational clientele a stock of books and other Bahá'í material virtually unrivalled elsewhere in the world for volume and variety.

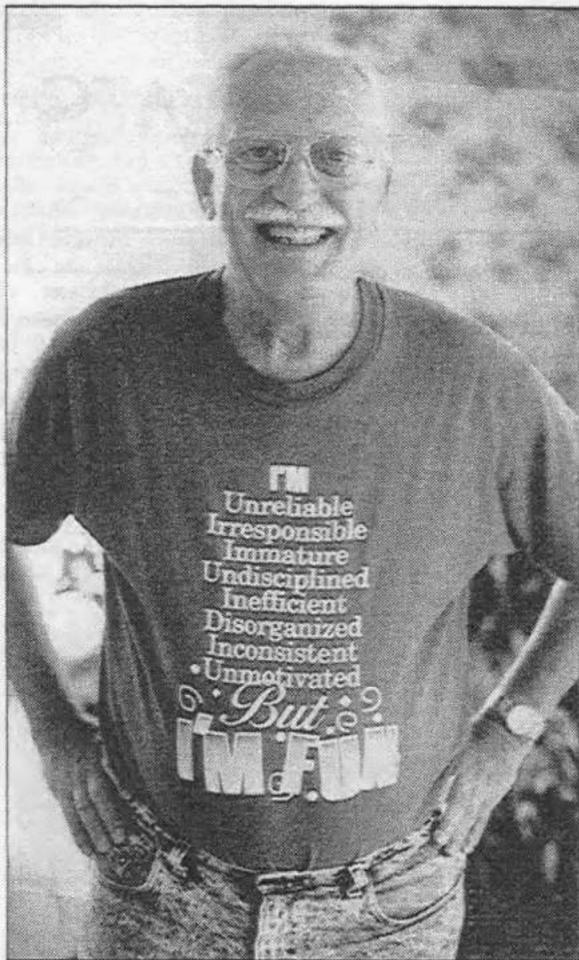
Georgine was that rare combination—an artist who was also an efficient organizer. Although marvelously creative, she never overlooked a detail, never forsook a responsibility.

Perhaps because she took to heart the Guardian's instructions about setting goals and making plans, Georgine (an inveterate maker of lists!) could be counted on to remember the tasks left undone—from dripping taps needing repair, to writing thank-you letters—often assuming these responsibilities herself. She sought guidance through prayer and research of the Writings before beginning any project and her work reflected that inspiration and wisdom. Her children also demonstrate her commitment to Bahá'í ideals—each is a firm believer, educated as a Bahá'í from birth. She was also a thoughtful friend, generously providing hospitality to a continual flow of international Bahá'í travelers as houseguests, and remembering each Assembly member's birthday with a homebaked cake and candles.

The body of our talented, hardworking friend was laid to rest in the Bahá'í 'Garden of Light' at Hawaiian Memorial Park on 24 March 1986, following a brief service of prayers and devotions which concluded with the reading of the following cable received that day from the Universal House of Justice:

HEARTS SADDENED NEWS PASSING DEARLY  
LOVED GEORGINE MOUL. HER DEVOTED SERVICES  
AS PIONEER ALASKA SAMOA GUAM AND HER  
CONTRIBUTIONS TO WORK HAWAIIAN BAHAI  
COMMUNITY ADD LUSTRE HER LONG AND  
DEVOTED RECORD SERVICE FAITH. OFFERING  
LOVING PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER  
IMMORTAL SOUL. KINDLY CONVEY PAT MOUL  
AND OTHER MEMBERS FAMILY HEARTFELT CON-  
DOLENCES.

ELIZABETH D. HOLLINGER  
LYNNE ELLEN HOLLINGER



IN MEMORIAM

## Robert E. (Pat) Moul

1924 MARCH 17 - 1996 APRIL 4

Word was recently received of the passing of Ten-Year-Crusade Pioneer to Alaska Robert E. "Pat" Moul. The immediate cause of death was heart failure. Pat was chairman of the first National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska and served in that capacity for thirteen years.

The Moul's were the first to bring the Faith to Ketchikan and later to Douglas. They were active in Native teaching and part of the early successes in Ketchikan. Pat continued his love of teaching to the end. The day before he died he gave a 1½ hour fireside to the hospice volunteer who had come to his home.

Upon hearing of his death, the House of Justice sent the following e-mail message: "With deep sadness the Universal House of Justice read of the recent death at Boulder City, Nevada, of Mr. Robert E. "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.'" ♦

Alaska Bahá'í Community  
Pioneers and Builders, p III-111

Robert E. (Pat) Moul  
1924 - 1996

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 13 years. First elected in 1957.

Pat's parents became Bahá'ís while he was in the service. It was more than ten years after they embraced the Cause before he looked into the Faith seriously. When the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade was launched in 1953, Pat and Georgine, who had been married less than a year, decided to pioneer from Chicago to Alaska.

The Moul's landed first in Anchorage where they remained for a short time. From there they pioneered to Ketchikan, forming the nucleus of Bahá'ís from which the Spiritual Assembly of Ketchikan grew to its formation in 1956.

They had really despaired of forming a Spiritual Assembly in Ketchikan until they had a visit from Frances Wells. She asked them if they had any letter from the Guardian. They did (High Endeavours # 70 p. 58). Frances read the letter and interpreted it as assuring them that the Spiritual Assembly would be formed. They hadn't seen it that way before, so the Moul's reread the letter, were stimulated by it, and the Spiritual Assembly was formed the following Ridván.

Pat was one of the delegates from Ketchikan to the first Convention in 1957. He was elected the Convention Chairman, later elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, and then its Chairman. He was the longest serving of the original nine and was Chairman during his entire 13 years of service on the body.

One of the first acts of the newly formed National Spiritual Assembly was to stimulate pioneering within Alaska. The Moul's did their part by pioneering from Ketchikan to open up Douglas Island. They remained there until they left Alaska for a new pioneering venture to American Samoa in 1970.

During the three years there, Pat was again elected to a National Spiritual Assembly. This time he served as Secretary. Later, the Moul's pioneered to Guam, then moved to Hawaii.

Pat had opened an office for Moore Business Forms in Juneau. He again worked for Moore Business Forms while pioneering in Guam and transferred with that company to Hawaii. After the passing of his wife, Georgine, Pat moved to Boulder City, Nevada where he died on April 4, 1996.

Pat participated in the first election of the Universal House of Justice, along with the rest of the Alaskan delegation in 1963.

#### Nameless and Traceless

*Blessed are the nameless and traceless poor, for they are the leaders of mankind.*  
('Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan, Page, 34)

Her passing, as her life, is veiled in obscurity.

It was four decades ago. She lived in the lower end of her remote village – far from the upper strata of society. She was a shy girl, the kind who slips by unnoticed. At a masquerade party she was disguised so well that no one knew her. She was the hit of the party. There were whispered guesses as to who she or he was. All were wrong. When the masks were removed some still asked: "Who is she?" Those who knew her were the most surprised to see that it was the shy girl from lower-town whose light was shining through the veil of anonymity.

A short time later, while walking to the post office, she was coming from the other direction. I smiled and she smiled back. That's all.

Later I discovered that she had been talking with another Bahá'í about the Faith and had accepted Bahá'u'lláh. After our chance passing on the street she told a friend something which captures the heart of Bahá'í community life: "When I see another Bahá'í, I just feel good inside."

She never served on a Spiritual Assembly or committee or attended a conference. There is no record that she even voted in an election. A name on a list – even removed from some lists. One of the many whom travel teachers miss on periodic visits.

She has now entered the next world where she no longer needs her veil of anonymity. When she sees other Bahá'ís, she can again "just feels good inside" and her joy is openly shared in a company of chosen angels

**BLU MUNDY EULOGY**

Her unusual funeral featured Blu before, during, and after. As people walked in they heard a tape of Blu playing old favorites. It was quite bouyant and light-hearted without being cheapening.

It was not a carnival atmosphere, but hardly the typical funeral. Before reading the eulogy I felt constrained to comment on my pleasure in "participating in the celebration of a life well lived."



**BLU MUNDY**  
**BLU MUNDY**

Perhaps you first met her as a blues singer or honky-tonk piano player or heard her playing Gold Rush music complete with wide-brim hat and fur neck piece like a page out of Robert Service, or as a college student — well past 50 planning her next career or playing for a USO show or as a teacher among wide-eyed and eager Eskimo children wrapped in the magic of her story-telling or on television as she was giving a lesson on the history of jazz or on cultural anthropology or you saw her as a featured speaker at a Baha'i meeting or was she the musical entertainment or the M.C. or conducting a class or you saw the strange comings and goings at her home — all those people — each so different, or she invited you into her home where every picture, momento artifact or knick-knack is designed to arouse interest and lead to a discussion on the Faith she loved so well or you were a stranger and heard her talk about her strange and wonderful Faith, her certitude in Baha'u'llah, her courage and confidence in His message for the healing both of the world, and those little cares which plague us all.

Everyone has his or her own memory of Blu she was so much to so many but everyone was richer by being in her presence — not just the whipped-cream richness of a nice trimming which is quickly gone leaving no trace but the filling and lasting richness which gives a life full of delicious memory and after-taste.

For some there will be the memory of her husky voice belting out the blues Others will relish the memory of her ballads or piano improvisations and singing the old favorites

Many will recall her talking of her dear Indian friend, Ya-Ya, who opened her eyes to a wonderous world which she so generously shared.

In all that she did in all that she said in all that she'd want remembered there was always the hope and the aim "How does it help the Faith?"

Telling others about her way of life, about her Faith, about her Baha'u'llah, that was and is her firm and unchanging desire.

Even in death the one yearning was to teach.

It was unusual for a woman in her 50's to change careers so drastically from musical entertainer to elementary school teacher an entirely new stage on which to perform

But, Blu was never of the usual mold Never one to linger on memories or regrets hers was a world of hopes and dreams and she had a habit of making dreams come true.

Now is the time for another career change. She has responded to a higher calling. Moved to a larger stage.

Blu has joined that galaxy of heroes and heroines, saints and martyrs whom we plead, beg and beseech to come to our aid and help with the harvest of new believers

And now, as the harvest begins and assistance pours forth from on high the beat picks up, teaching increases, and faintly, in the background, the sensitive ear with a tuned-in heart hears Blu making it just right making it special making it grand

by her strong beat on the piano and you hear her play, while all the Saints Come Marching In.

John Kolstoe

**BIRDIE SCHNELL**

You know her — she's the lady who never met a stranger, and never missed a day's work. Of course you do — Remember how she championed the rights of people, before it was popular to do so.

Yes — She was the one who embraced that weird Eastern Religion. But you know that religion turned out to be the animating force of her life.

Yup — That's her, never too busy to help a friend, or her children.

Absolutely — That was her — Brilliant thinker, always going to school, while at the same time, teaching.

O good, you remember.

Now may I tell you some things you may not know?

Were you aware this lady raised three children alone, at a time when it was not respectable to be alone, and she did it without the aid of food stamps, and welfare?

That she did it while working 18 hours a day?

That she was absolutely adored by every animal she ever owned?

Did you know that even though she looked and dressed like a queen, that for years her clothes came from second-hand stores or from her sister, Ethel, while she was alive?

Were you ever told that she drove over 200 miles every weekend for over two years, in ice, snow, and cold to Spokane, Washington from Lewiston, Idaho to be able to afford to stay in her pioneering post and feed her family by giving piano lessons?

Have you ever heard that she was adopted by the Spokane Indians and the Tlingit Indians? That she went with a mule train from Spokane to California; played a 46 key Caliope (one of six left in the world) in a parade? Rode the rapids through Hells Canyon on the Snake River on a raft; flew in a hot air balloon; entertained the tourists on a rinky-tink piano in Fairbanks, Alaska; pioneered in radio and television talk shows; was the Director of Music for the City of Spokane; travel-taught all over the world — England, Scotland, Ireland, Panama, U.S., to name just a few places? Has a Bachelors Degree in Education, with enough credits to have a Masters in several subjects?

Am I talking too long? Sorry, Please allow me just one more addition. She was a follower of Baha'u'llah for over 30 years.

How did I seem to know her so well?

My friend, she was my mother. You probably remember her as *Blu Mundy*.

By: Donna Ashton 2/14/82

Rebecca Getahoun (Becky) Murphy  
Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 8+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1976.

Becky's father, Getahoun Tesemma, was an Ethiopian diplomat. Consequently she had lived in India and Russia as well as her native Ethiopia. As a child she learned to speak French, Russian, English, and some Hindi in addition to her native Amharic.

In 1978 Becky discovered that her father had known many Bahá'ís when he attended the American University in Beirut, Lebanon. One of his closest friends was 'Abul Qasim Fazi, who was later named a Hand of the Cause. Ali Nakhjavani, later a member of the Universal House of Justice, was also a student whom Getahoun had known in Beirut. Later, when Getahoun was the Ambassador to India, he met Hushmand Fatheazam, another future member of the Universal House of Justice, who also became a close friend. While her father had not embraced the Faith he had infused in Becky many Bahá'í principles and ideals.

When Becky was attending the University of Alaska at Fairbanks she became acquainted with the Bahá'ís on campus. She enrolled in the Faith on March 28, 1972. (Her enrollment card also carries the date 17 'Alí' 128.) Her father's influence was immediately apparent as she seemed to have an intuitive grasp of the significance of the Bahá'í Revelation. She soon became a part of the Massive Encounter teaching project in Alaska. When she joined the Bahá'í teaching teams, Becky would explain various precepts of the Faith eloquently. But, her choice of words was different from other Bahá'ís. This is a reflection of the education in the Faith that her father had unconsciously given her. She almost intuitively knew the precepts, but was free of the jargon. During the last year of the Five Year Plan she traveled to Africa in an effort to help them with their goals. At the conclusion of the Five Year Plan, Becky returned to Alaska and married Marshall Murphy. She quickly became involved with the Institute program.

Having lived among high government officials under Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Becky has an appreciation and respect for kingship, which is uncommon in the western world. This upbringing is reflected in a special degree by her reverence for the Institution of the Universal House of Justice. Listening to her talk about that sublime institution gives a perception of its majesty that helps elevate the consciousness of many who were raised in a less formal setting and who have no experience with the majesty of kingship.

At the age of 24, Becky was the youngest person ever elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska. In 1980, Becky resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly when her family pioneered to Nigeria. The Murphys returned to Alaska in 1982 and she was again elected during the following Convention. She participated in the International Conventions and elections of the Universal House of Justice in 1978 and 1983.

In 1987 the Murphys left Alaska so Becky could pursue graduate studies at the University of Oregon. Later, she served the Bahá'í International Community in New York and was the representative of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States to its Non-Governmental Office at the United Nations.

In 1997 she was living in Rochester, New York and was elected to the first Regional Bahá'í Council of the North Eastern States.

# In Memory of Patricia Jean Newton

August 24, 1950 - July 28, 1994



Pat was born in Baltimore, Maryland on August 24, 1950 to Mary and William Hartmann. In 1953, the family moved to Portland, Oregon. Pat completed her high school studies there, graduating from Catlin High School in 1968. Pat finished her bachelor's degree in biology from Mount Holyoke College in Hadley, Massachusetts and took a master's degree in elementary education in 1975 from Portland State University in Oregon.

Pat and David Newton married in Portland in May, 1975. Pat was a devoted, loving and proud mother to their two sons, Galen and Alexander.

She taught school in the late 1970s and the early 1980s in Oregon, fifth grade in Beaverton and environmental education programs for the Beaverton School District and the Marion County School District in Detroit, Oregon. After the family moved to Alaska in 1984, Pat continued her work in education: as an outdoor education specialist for the Kake School District in Kake, Alaska and as a special education aide in Metlakatla and for the Nome School District. Pat especially loved her outdoor teaching work. She had a life-long passion for wildlife, camping, hiking, and everything in the outdoors. She would recall in vivid terms her experience of nature's wonders—an all-embracing northern lights display or the silence of a winter's night.

While living in Kake, Pat became a member of the Bahá'í Faith. Pat carried her dedication to children and education to her Bahá'í services. She was active in Bahá'í child education and as an assistant to an Auxiliary

Board member, specializing in family development and child education. She played piano for the children's classes, helping the children memorize prayers and learn songs. She led a study group for mothers and initiated fund-raising projects for the ongoing construction of the Arc project at the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa, Israel. In Nome, Pat supported exchange activities between Nome and Provideniya, Russia.

Pat was an illumined and radiant soul, whose loving, happy spirit touched many a heart and made us all the better for knowing her. She shall be long-loved and remembered. Surely she is rejoicing in the Divine Kingdom.

A memorial service was held for Pat in the Northern Lights Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall on July 30th with introductory remarks and welcome, prayers and readings from the Bahá'í Writings, and Bahá'í music, followed by selections from the Bible and a hymn, followed by more prayers and readings from the Bahá'í Writings, music, prayer for the departed and an invitation to join Pat's family and friends for fellowship following the memorial service.



## NEWS FROM OVERSEAS PIONEERS

### FROM THE NOLENS IN FINLAND

When Todd, Gerry and Jory Nolen left their homeland to pioneer in Finland, they were filled with excitement and anticipation, but understandably nervous about the big change in their lives. As the plane neared Helsinki September 2 they said to each other that the friends should be starting prayers for them as their Rainbow Group and others were to meet in the middle of the night at the exact time of their arrival. As they landed they felt a great peace and **knew** the prayers were being said for them in Alaska. (They were.)

At first they stayed at the National Haziratu'l-Quds in Helsinki, then in another Baha'i Center, and now have their own place in their pioneer post, Naantali. Gerry wrote October 7th.

Katinhanta 3 as. 8  
21100 Naantali  
Finland

"What to say, how to express what we feel? There is such a joy, a richness, and a fullness in our lives these days. There have been so many confirmations for us in our move here that we often walk around stunned with the wonder of it all. **If only the Friends could know how pioneering frees the spirit, many would arise.**

"Baha'u'llah has sent us wonderful friends in the Finnish Baha'i Community. I could never have believed it possible that any community could be so warm and loving, and close-knit and alive in their love for Baha'u'llah. It is so powerful that often when prayers are read there is a silence afterward filled with awe and power. Our love will always be with the friends in Alaska and we carry this with us inside, but the friends here are quickly winning our hearts. It's hard to believe we've only been here a little over a month, so much like home does it feel.

"Speaking of homes, we are settled now in a house we rent in Naantali. It is quite rare to find a rental in Naantali, let alone a **house**, for this is considered a beautiful paradise in Finland. It's a quiet little town on the sea, surrounded by rolling hills and farms. It's a nice old house, located near a park, back off the road amidst pretty little gardens of flowers and vegetables, as well as apple and maple trees.

"Finnish for foreigners is offered free at the University in nearby Turku, so we are both taking that class. A twenty-one year old girl, who stayed with us at the Baha'i Center for three weeks, comes along with us each time and plays with Jory while we're in class. Our Finnish class is really very interesting because of the 20-25 students: there are people from Poland,

Germany, America, Persia, Japan, Iraq, Alaska, and Nigeria. It reminds me strikingly of a microcosm of what the world will one day be: all races and colors joined together harmoniously, working towards a common goal.

"This Friday Betty Reed, a member of the European Continental Board of Counsellors, will be at our home for a meeting with the Naantali Baha'is. At first it was planned that she would spend the night with us also, but I was reluctant to ask her to sleep in one of our old mummy sleeping bags, as our bedding and other things are still in Helsinki! So other arrangements were made. It's really amazing to us to have this privilege of hosting the Counsellor.

"When we were in Wilmette on our way East, we met, of all people a woman about to pioneer to Finland. There was an immediate attraction and love between us. You can imagine our astonishment to find that when she arrived a few days ago she was also asked to come to Naantali! So now she is here with us in our home as she awaits housing of her own."

Todd writes: "Pioneering is like dying and going to heaven, exchanging this world for another world of God. How God has blessed us and guided us! We are like birds nestling in his hands for warmth—content and safe. We are tender plants attuned to the divine sunlight, seeking its light, striving to grow and produce fruit; and afterwards to replenish the soil, and content also in this final act.

"My soul, my heart, my being cries out to the Alaskan friends, to the world, whispering in the quiet temple of my mind. Oh people of Alaska! People of the world! **Arise to serve.** Do we remember when Mulla Husayn returned to Karbila in January 1844 to find that Siyyid Kazim had said before he died, 'The object of our quest was now revealed'? Do we recall how so many excuses were given about homes, jobs, families, and that these people sacrificed a priceless opportunity for things of dust?

"Our tortured planet is being cleaned and purged to become the footstool of our Lord. Read **The Promised Day Is Come** from page 1 in which Shoghi Effendi describes 'A tempest, unprecedented in its violence, unpredictable in its course, catastrophic in its immediate effects, unimaginably glorious in its ultimate consequences, is at present sweeping the face of the earth.' In Europe one can feel the drum-beat of the dissolution of various elements of civilization. Our assistance can mitigate the violent storm which is now uprooting everything except this divine, glori-

ous, all-inclusive Revelation. When the present day World Order is rolled up, what service can we each perform?"

Although Todd had not planned to go to work right away, the opportunity presented itself for him to teach English in a business college, and this he is doing. Normally, to get a work visa in Finland a foreigner would have to find a job there, then go to another country for awhile, and then return to work. However, the man who hired Todd had permission to hire a foreigner living in Finland!

### ROD FRANCETT WRITES FROM BELGIUM

Rod Francett, who is filling one of Alaska's three goals in Belgium, wrote September 18th:

"Things truly wonderful are happening in Belgium, as indeed they are in the entire Baha'i world. There is an increasing unity in our little community (Antwerp) as the latest National Weekend in Hasselt has shown. Very few contacts came to the wonderful presentation of "The Response of Mankind to God's Messengers," but for the first time, 75 Baha'is from all over Belgium showed up to support this teaching activity.

"Previous to this momentous gathering, the youth have been showing their vitality by coming together each weekend to travel to goal cities to teach. Many new and excited contacts have been made, and probably the greatest success has been that the youth did get together for teaching, and also discovered that it is fun!

"I have just returned from Antwerp, where I now live, after one and a half weeks of travel-teaching throughout Belgium with two other pioneers (both American), one Belgian and one Scottish travel-teachers. It was really wonderful! A key to happiness for Baha'i youth! Antwerp used to have an Assembly but it was dissolved two years ago. Now we have a small community of three and will stage a Proclamation on the 19th of October to celebrate the anniversary of the Birth of the Bab.

"I'm studying French and hope, within a year's time, to study agriculture in the Flemish area. This should be a 'passport' to a pioneering post in an underdeveloped country.

"You are all in my prayers. It would be wonderful to get a few letters from you. They are very important to me.

Amitie Baha'i,  
Rod  
72 Grotebeer Straat  
Antwerpen, BELGIUM"

(Two more Alaskan pioneers are urgently needed in Belgium.)

## ADDIE NORDSTROM

1885-1968

Addie Nordstrom was born on April 10, 1885 in the mid-western part of the United States. She grew up in Milwaukee and then moved to the west coast, married and established a home. Her only child, Ruth, was born late in her marriage. Tragically, this daughter was diabetic, eventually went blind, and passed away in her twenties.

After giving up membership in the church, Mrs. Nordstrom persisted in her lifelong search for spiritual fulfilment. She was about fifty-five years of age when she heard the Message of Bahá'u'lláh and she immediately accepted it. Through her prayers and steadfastness the attitude of her family slowly changed from ridicule to acceptance. Her daughter, who was at this time blind, accepted the Teachings, and later her husband entered the Faith. Mrs. Nordstrom had a special interest in the work of the Bahá'i Committee for the blind. The family home became a focal point of hospitality in the Kirkland-Seattle area.

Following the death of her child and husband Addie lived alone for a time and as she aged and her powers dimmed her youthful spirit longed to explore new areas of service to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. In her seventy-eighth year, while living with Ruth and Gordon Craig and their children who had offered her a home, Addie resolved to enter the pioneer field. In consultation with the Craig family the Aleutian Islands were selected as the goal.

Disposing of her burial plot next to the resting place of her husband and daughter, Mrs. Nordstrom travelled north to those islands notorious for their severe weather. Accompanied and assisted by the Craigs she made the trip to her new home, a small isolated village on the island of Unalaska and instantly recognized the village as one she had dreamed of a number of times before departing from Seattle.



Addie Nordstrom

Prayer was Addie's main support in her pioneering post. Rarely well enough to leave the Bahá'i Centre, she maintained a programme of prayer and reading that surely drew untold blessings to the island. During her eightieth year she kept the nineteen-day Fast. The Aleut people came to love her deeply and shaking off their customary shyness they would come to visit. If she were up they would accept her hospitality and if she were confined to bed they would sit near her and talk quietly. She was loved by so many, from the matriarchal head of the village to the housewives and their children and the rustic fishermen. She gave the Teachings to those who were seeking, telling everyone, "This is God's Day." Everyone marvelled at her strength and the power on which she drew to renew her spent energy. Her greatest joy in this interval was to visit her Aleut neighbours and to occasionally travel short distances out of the village to see the surrounding country. In 1966 she attended the Bahá'i Summer School in Juneau, Alaska.

After a brief illness, Mrs. Nordstrom passed away in her eighty-third year. In a letter dated February 23, 1969, the Universal House of Justice stated that she had "admirably fulfilled the Guardian's admonition to aged believers that they should not fail to gain the laurels of pioneering even if they must bury their bones in foreign soil".

R. L. HUDSON



SALLY NOBLE, Nenana

## IN MEMORIAM SALLY NOBLE

Sally Noble was 46 years old when she passed into the next world in the Fairbanks Community Hospital on July 12, 1974.

Sally became a Baha'i on November 5, 1970 when the first Proclamation Team came to Nenana, and as a very new Baha'i, along with Paul George, Liz Starr and Bonnie Reed, formed a native dance team that traveled with the Proclamation Team that went throughout Southeastern Alaska during the first part of 1971. Sally was elected to the Nenana Spiritual Assembly in April of 1971, was a member of the Assembly for its incorporation and was a member at the time of her passing.

Although there have been six Baha'is ascend in Nenana, Sally was the first one to have a Baha'i funeral in Nenana. The service was held at the Nenana Civic Center on Monday, July 15 at 4 p.m., with assistance from Fairbanks and Tanana Valley Baha'is.

# Joseph Pungowiyi

October 24, 1939—February 16, 1994

by Neena Miller

A balance of formality and informality, courtesy and spontaneity, sorrow and joy, the funeral of Joseph Me'nauq Pungowiyi on February 17 was an example of the association of two religions working together in amity and concord to celebrate his life. It was both a Christian and a Bahá'í celebration, officiated by Alice Green, who was with the Presbyterian church in Savoonga for many years, having been one of the first women ministers ordained in the Presbyterian Church. The service had readings from the Holy Bible by Alice Green, his daughter, Clarissa Ughvit Pungowiyi and his nephew Le Roy Seppalu, and Bahá'í friends shared prayers and readings from the Bahá'í Writings. The gathering sang *Jesus, Saviour, Pilot Me*, Joe's mother's favorite hymn. His aunt, Nancy Walunga, shared that when the family was out in the rough seas hunting and at other times, Joe's mother would sing that song.

The way Joe lived his life was the theme present in the testimonies of his loved ones. Threads of love, intertwined with a golden sense of humor, were spun from the stories told by Joe's family and friends, revealing to all the pattern of Joe's caring for all people, and linking person after person there.

His nephews Delbert Pungowiyi and Le Roy Seppalu told that Joe, both brave and generous, loved the traditional life style of hunting and fishing. He was remembered fondly with one of his jokes by his great-nephew, Kyle Pungowiyi. But the deepest love imparted by the stories was his love for all people. He became everyone's "Uncle Joe." The times that he spent with family, friends, and even hunters while he was guiding, exhibited his hard work and his sense of humor.

Joe's sister, Sharon Ryck, remembered a charming story about him as a little boy. Observing that when the cat was in front of the mirror it seemed larger, Joe would stand in front of the mirror because he wanted to grow bigger. His cousin Christine Walunga shared that she

and her children remembered Joe and talked about him a lot. Joe's former wife, Manya (Iris) Pungowiyi, who shared that Joe was a loving husband and father, told a story from Joe's time working on the pipeline. A co-worker there was very interested in the native food that she sent to him. When she sent a favorite food, ham hocks, and the co-worker inquired about the native food, Joe said, "Polar bear knuckles."

Joe's son, Bryce, who came from California to be with the family, thanked everyone there warmly and sincerely for the love they showed for Joe.

Joe had a vision of love and peace for all peoples. As a teenager he was an exchange student in high school in New York, and afterward he traveled from East to West in the lower United States. An artist and ivory carver, Joe created scenes of the traditional beauty of his people and his land. In the early 1970s, before anyone could imagine the recent changes denoted by the disintegration of the Berlin Wall and the Iron

Curtain, Joe talked about the collective will of the common people. He said: Other people are just like we are. They want to be friends.

Ida Putnam, who as a little girl traveled to Savoonga with her father, Napoleon Bergamaschi, Sr., to live and to teach the Bahá'í Faith, asked him why they had to go to such a faraway place. His answer was that Bahá'u'lláh wants us to find the jewels. "I like to think," she said, "that Joe was one of those jewels."



Photo:  
Joe Pungowiyi  
Photo credit:  
Keith Koontz

# Elinore Putney Czarnecki Knight of Bahá'u'lláh

by Elinore Putney Czarnecki

What was Unalaska like in the 50s and 60s? What was it like to go to a virgin goal? It was an adventure! We had the privilege of being of service to the Cause and the added blessing of a wonderful way of life we would never have had in a city. The first few months the girls, Loral, Kathy and Georgia, and I were in Unalaska, arriving in May of 1954, we lived with the Caldwell's (Jenabe "Jeb" and Elaine). Three boys, three girls, and three adults. Both of our babies were still in diapers.

Elaine taught me how to clean fish and bake bread and adjust to powdered eggs and milk. The Caldwell's helped me out in many ways. They

borrowed cans and a pressure cooker and showed me how to can fish, which Jeb caught for me.

Wage work in Unalaska was seasonal; the men left in the summer for sealing in the Pribilofs or fishing in the Bering Sea. In the summers there were only old men and boys in town except for the minister, the man who owned the bar, a white family that had lived there for years, and the Alaska Communications Service staff of three. The old men and boys and some young women fished with gill nets or small beach seines, and in August picked berries to can and for jam. We may have left behind some of the amenities of life we were used to, like radio, television, telephones, automatic washers and dryers, but we gained the blessings of life at a fundamental level. There were only four vehicles in town and you could hear each truck coming a mile away, so you didn't need to worry about kids and traffic. The people had a wonderful feeling for children, so the kids were safe, and welcome anywhere.

In all the (8) years we were there, the only time anyone got sick was when someone new came to town and brought a germ. The only time anyone had a cold was summers when fishing boats and Fish and Wildlife research vessels stopped by. A physician from the Health Service boat told us we had the best trained midwife on the Aleutian Chain.

Without some marvelous kind of antenna you couldn't pick up radio broadcasts except in the wee hours of the morning. The only popular songs of the 50s that I know were the ones I heard at Magaera's 2 o'clock feeding. We did listen to records though...really listened. Whenever someone would get a new record,

Photo:  
Elinore Putney  
Czarnecki in 1992

Photo credit  
Blaine Reed





Photo:  
Elinore Putney and  
Vassa Lekanoff in the  
1950s

they'd invite people over to hear it, and serve refreshments afterward.

No movies, no TV, no hype, no advertising, no pictures of a way of life

different from our own. The closest our kids got to crime stories was Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys. Now wasn't that a blessing?

The Northern Commercial Company didn't have any displays or do any advertising and only carried what people needed. There was no way you could buy a gift for anyone except through a catalog. That made birthday parties refreshing. No one brought gifts, and everyone had a good time.

My best friend, Vassa Lekanoff, had a baby daughter just a little bit younger than my baby. We saw each other every day. In 1957 we were both pregnant at the same time and for a while before she left Unalaska, we re-ran the story of when I first came to town—visiting with babies in our laps.

People ask, "What did you do out there?" We visited, we read, we played cards, we played Charades, we went on picnics. There was a white man in town with a flatbed truck. He'd load up half the town and drive out somewhere it'd take hours to get to if you walked, and we'd eat and watch the kids play, and visit.

That's what people did in Unalaska in those years—visit, read and play cards. Henry Swanson, an old man who lived near us, came over every day. Never missed a day. He told us stories of when he was a kid in Unalaska, and of

his years trapping before the bottom fell out of the market for fox. He reminisced about World War I; he was a treasure. He was like a grandfa-

ther to the girls. He'd take them in his dory over to an island where they'd have 'campfire tea' and pilot bread.

I learned to play pinochle. People who'd drop by during the day would be invited back to play cards after the kids were in bed.

Elaine's mother sent her *Family Circle* magazine and she always shared it with me. So the two of us enjoyed experimenting with recipes and menus. We had weekly devotions together and took turns bringing the refreshments. It was fun coming up with something new.

Elaine and I both got sewing machines at about the same time. Elaine is quite a seamstress; she sewed shirts for her boys and Jeb and she made a darling dress for Georgia for her second birthday. When people say what did you do out there, I can say I had time to teach my older girls how to sew and bake bread.

I'm sure Shoghi Effendi knew that each believer who went to a virgin goal would be blessed. We went to bring the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, and in return we received more gifts from the people and the land than we can recount. I think this holds true for all Knights, not just those of us who came to Sitka, Kodiak and Unalaska.

Robert W. (Bob) Putnam

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 7+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1978.

Bob and Bette Putnam became Bahá'ís in Iowa and became involved with Bahá'í activities in that area. They worked closely with Ruth Moffett in her projects, especially the publication of her book, New Keys to the Book of Revelation. An enduring interest in the Book of Revelation developed from that association. The fruit of that interest is a fascinating course which Bob has presented on several occasions.

Not long after enrolling in the Faith, the Putnams were invited to Haifa to work for the Universal House of Justice. After two years there, they decided to look for a pioneering post. Alaska was selected.

Upon moving to Alaska, it was determined that Anchorage was a community for which there was a great need. So the Putnams settled there and were a stabilizing influence in that community.

Bob worked for several businesses in Anchorage before he established his own business called Anchorage Data Processing, later shortened to ADP.

He was the official representative of the National Spiritual Assembly to the International Conference in Montreal in 1982 and the dedication of the Samoan Temple in 1984. In 1983 Bob participated in the Fifth International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice.

The Putnams left Alaska in 1987, then returned in 1993, staying until moving to Nevada in 1998.

#### **BLAINE AND BONNIE REED CALLED TO WORLD CENTRE**

Approximately 50 Baha'is gathered on Saturday evening, November 28, at Mathew Kaszab Institute to say goodbye to Blaine and Bonnie Reed who have been invited to work at the World Centre beginning in December. Blaine will serve at the Baha'i Printing Office and Bonnie will be an Executive Secretary. Blaine had been approached 10 years ago when they opened the printing office, but the time wasn't right then.

It was a sweetly sad evening as it always is when we say farewell to such beloved Alaskan Baha'is.

Blaine told us that the Baha'is are unique in this time, the love that we hold for each other, the Baha'i experience. . . . We must be in unity.

"The gauntlet has been thrown down, the natives and non-natives must be together in their aims . . ." He said.

"We must disregard our personal likes and dislikes to find the answer that is best for the Cause . . . We must have appreciation for each other."

Speaking of the Potlatch, Blaine told us that Enoch Olinga has said, "Don't forget that these victories are because of the prayers of the Friends."

The entire Alaskan community bids them a very loving farewell.

by Pat Eckhart



Blaine M. Reed

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 15+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1963.

Blaine and Bonnie Reed owned a small county newspaper in Nebraska. Bonnie's brother, Dan Jordan, had become a Bahá'í and sent them literature which they were "too busy" to read. Dan planned to visit them and the Reeds decided they should at least do Dan the courtesy of reading the material he had sent. Shortly thereafter they accepted the Cause, which then became the focus of their lives.

They sold their weekly newspaper, loaded their VW bus on a flatbed truck, and towed a house trailer from Nebraska for their pioneering venture in Alaska. The year was 1959 and the Reed family - Blaine, Bonnie, Nycki (Saxton), Gavin, Tim (Horn) and Shelley - settled in Fairbanks, where Blaine was hired as a typesetter for the "Fairbanks Daily News-Miner". Their youngest son, Daniel, was born in Alaska.

During the final year of the Ten Year Crusade, the Reeds decided to further pioneer to Nenana, so a Spiritual Assembly could be formed there. Blaine continued to work at the News-Miner and commuted from Nenana until he found employment which was closer to home, at Clear Air Force Station.

When Blaine was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly he was sure the delegates had made a mistake. Someone gave him an old, tattered, discarded briefcase, which looked good enough to last a year and he was certain that would be as long as he would be serving.

During his early years on the National Spiritual Assembly, he rarely made any contribution to consultation. It was several years before he suddenly burst forth with some of the most insightful observations. He was asked about this sudden burst of contribution after years of saying nothing. He replied that he finally concluded that whether he liked it or not the delegates had elected him to the National Spiritual Assembly and it was up to him to do his best. And, it was a marvelous best. He still used the tattered old briefcase.

Blaine had a knack for putting his finger on the core of anything which was being discussed. He would often be the first one to note even a hair's-breadth deviation from spiritual principles. While he had great tolerance for other points of view, no matter how different from his own, he would never compromise principle.

After his period of service on the National Spiritual Assembly, Blaine was appointed to the National Teaching Committee and served until 1981, when Blaine and Bonnie were asked to serve at the World Centre. They served there for ten years. In 1991, the Reeds returned to Alaska and became caretakers of the National Bahá'í Office. In 1992, Blaine was again elected the National Spiritual Assembly, then elected Secretary, where he served until he resigned for health reasons in 1994.

Blaine and Bonnie stayed on as caretakers at the national Hazíratu'l-Quds for about a year. They "retired" by returning to their pioneering post in Nenana.



Charley Roberts

#### CHARLEY ROBERTS

?-1969

Little is known of the early life of Charley Roberts, the first Athabascan Indian north of the Arctic Circle to embrace the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. We first met on the ice of the Yukon River in Fort Yukon, Alaska, in April, 1962, the last year of the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade. It was really more of an experience than a meeting; he looked into my eyes as if he were seeing clear through me and reading my soul.

My wife Beverly and I had pioneered to the village of Fort Yukon and found employment as school teachers. Having been cautioned by the officials about teaching our Faith, we were circumspect. I wished to cement a friendship with the elderly man with the penetrating gaze but planned to avoid any talk about religion. I walked the two miles through the snow to Charley's cabin. Charley immediately brushed

aside my attempt at caution. I had no more than entered his cabin when he said, "What church do you belong to, John?" That day Charley learned about Bahá'u'lláh.

At our fourth meeting, on May 22, Charley and I went hunting. The day coincided with the first day of pilgrimage for Beverly and our eight year old daughter. Charley said, "Tell me about it again, John." While he sat calmly on a river bank whittling the end of a shell so it would better fit his gun, I told him again about Bahá'u'lláh. After confirming that he believed what I had told him, I simply said, "Then you are a Bahá'í, Charley." Without looking up from his whittling, he softly answered, "I hope so, John."

This simple statement of faith signalled the beginning of a dynamic phase in Indian teaching in Alaska. Within ten weeks a Spiritual Assembly was formed in Fort Yukon, largely due to Charley's efforts. Shortly afterwards he moved to Fairbanks. There his teaching resulted in the Faith reaching both Nenana and Beaver, two other villages which formed Spiritual Assemblies during that final year of the Ten Year Crusade. Charley moved to Nenana to assure the formation of that Assembly. He gave generously of his time, his energy and whatever money he could earn.

Charley, though illiterate, spoke five languages and dialects, and he taught the Faith in all of them. His presentation was simple and direct: "There is only one God; all men are brothers; if you believe that, you are a Bahá'í." Once he expressed impatience at the lack of response in a woman he had told about the Faith: "She can't see it, and she even knows how to read and write!" Then he softened, "But some people are slow; it took me a long time." That "long time" consisted of three conversations during a six-week period. When Charley was unable to reach someone he would insist that another Bahá'í attempt to unlock the gates of their understanding.

Charley was fiercely independent and had a strength and depth of conviction that was rare. A day or so after his acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh a local missionary attempted to dissuade him. When asked "What did you tell him?" Charley's hand sprang up as in oath. With snapping eyes and stern countenance he thundered his conviction: "No man can make me change my mind about my religion."

Ten years before direct teaching on an organized basis got underway in Alaska, Charley had a vision of the potential response in the north and grieved at the inability of his fellow Bahá'ís to meet the pace he set. The pain of having the insight but not full and organized support for direct mass teaching drove him to seek solitude; at times he would go off for months by himself into the woods, returning with renewed strength. Charley was a man to fear; he had a flash temper and the strength of two men. When Bahá'u'lláh touched his heart, an overwhelming love conquered his rage and he developed remarkable patience.

With that sense of urgency and intensity of faith which must have burned in the breasts of the martyrs, Charley foreshadowed the fulfillment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prophecy: . . . *should these Indians be educated and properly guided, there can be no doubt that through the Divine teachings they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined.* Though unlettered, though he had difficulty mastering the pronunciation of the name of his Lord, the fire of his faith and his love for Bahá'u'lláh burned with a brilliance that has continued to shed illumination in the north long after his passing. His magnanimous spirit

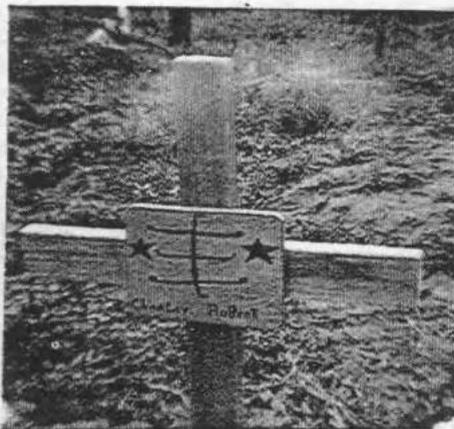
was matched by his hearty laughter, his love of children, the songs he would sing and the stories he would tell of the old days, of the crow, the bear, the fly or the salmon. He loved to tease and had a knack for giving his loved ones, especially children, endearing though whimsical Indian names that captured their personalities.

I last saw Charley the winter before he died. He was over seventy then but his spirit and enthusiasm were boundless still. As we sat in the dim yellow kerosene light of his small cabin where we had first talked of Bahá'u'lláh I think we both sensed that it was our last meeting. He was planning to travel to the village of Chalkyitsik because there was someone there "who will join us". He had an enrolment card and asked me to fill in the address; he would take care of the rest.

Charley died on August 6, 1969. His Bahá'í burial, the first in the area, was conducted with quiet dignity that contrasted sharply with the prevailing atmosphere of fear, opposition and prejudice. The funeral was a momentous teaching occasion; it took a spirit with Charley's strength to achieve it. His grave marker is a wooden cross bearing a plaque with the Bahá'í ringstone symbol carved in it symbolic of how, through Charley, these two great religions are shown to be one in reality.

Though illiterate, Charley was never without his well-worn prayer book. In it was found the unsigned enrolment card for his friend in Chalkyitsik; Charley did not complete his trip. Curiously, the man for whom it was intended died a short time before Charley did. It was almost as though Charley would go anywhere to tell someone about the Bahá'í Faith.

JOHN E. KOLSTOE



**CHARLEY ROBERT'S GRAVE**  
Fort Yukon, Alaska  
**HISTORIC FUNERAL HELD**  
**IN FORT YUKON**

"There is one God! All men are brothers! You believe that? You're a Bee-Ha'í!" This was Charley Robert's explanation of the Faith. To him the truth was manifest as the sunlight, and he had no patience with those who could read the Message and not accept it, for Charley could not read. From the day of his declaration, May 22, 1962, until the day of his passing, August 6, 1969, he was a staunch and outspoken Baha'i. With such an indomitable spirit as Charley's it was appropriate that this first Athabascan Baha'i from Fort Yukon also have the first Baha'i funeral in Fort Yukon.

When we (Eugene King, Gavin Read, and Beverly Kolstoe) arrived in Fort Yukon the day after his passing to make arrangements for the funeral, we found that nothing at all had been done by anyone. This was somewhat of a relief, because we were afraid that the church might have gone ahead with plans and that we might be in the position of "fighting over a body". We had taken the precaution before leaving Fairbanks of calling the Episcopal Bishop for permission to bury Charley in the cemetery, since it belongs to the church. He said he could see no objection to our having a Baha'i funeral and burying him in the church cemetery. He just told us to contact the priest in charge of the Ft. Yukon mission and make the necessary arrangements with him.

The priest was very helpful and cooperative and offered to help us with anything we were not able to accomplish ourselves. This was very gratifying because the previous priest had frightened several of the older people out of becoming Baha'is by telling them that the Baha'is would not bury them and neither would he, and so their bodies would lie on the ground and rot! So it was important to prove to them that the Baha'is would bury them, and in the native cemetery where they could be laid next to their loved ones.

At first when we talked to people, both the Baha'is and the non-Baha'is, about

having a Baha'i funeral, they were sceptical and couldn't believe that such a thing was possible. Not in the church? No preacher? That's no funeral! This just made us more determined that it could be done, and done nicely, too, so that everyone would feel that Charley had been befittingly remembered. Paul Gabriel was the first Baha'i to come to our assistance and saw it through to the end. With his help we finally found a crew of men to build the plywood coffin and another crew to dig the grave. The State trooper helped us in getting the death certificate and the permit to bury which was issued in my name, a strange experience. Other friends helped us get permission to use the Armory for the funeral. Our entire first day in Fort Yukon was spent in walking and walking, talking and talking, trying to convince people that it could be done. The second day people began to believe it and do what they could to help. We made several phone calls to Fairbanks and made arrangements for Nancy Stone and Galen Insbensen to come over for the funeral. Nancy brought her organ and played lovely music before and after the service, making it especially beautiful. They also brought flowers, including a wreath from the National Spiritual Assembly.

The evening before the funeral we stopped in at the Armory to admire the coffin. It was a lovely, simple thing, so very Baha'i-like in its simplicity, a varnished plywood box with a white flannel lining. A young man, Christopher Johnson, who had worked on the coffin came in while we were there and showed us a cross he had made as a grave marker. He told us too, that he planned to carve a small plaque with a cross on it and Charley's name, to put on top of the coffin. We asked him if he could carve something else on it, a Baha'i symbol, and showed him the ringstone symbol. He said he was sure he could and took with him an enlarged drawing. The next morning we again met him at the Armory. He had indeed carved a lovely plaque approximately 8 by 10 inches with the ringstone symbol and Charley's name under it. After some truly divinely guided consultation with him it was agreed that the plaque should be nailed to the cross as a grave marker rather than buried beneath the ground. Eugene was quick to use this as a symbol of the relationship between Christianity and the Baha'i Faith, joined together and inseparable for all eternity!

All details were finally falling into place, and the funeral was set for 2 p.m. Saturday afternoon, August 9. We put up notices that morning, and met with several of the local Baha'is to plan the readings. We had hoped to have the native Baha'is read the prayers, but they were insistent that this would not be appropriate and that they would rather that those of us who had come from Fairbanks would conduct the service. We did make sure, however, that the readings

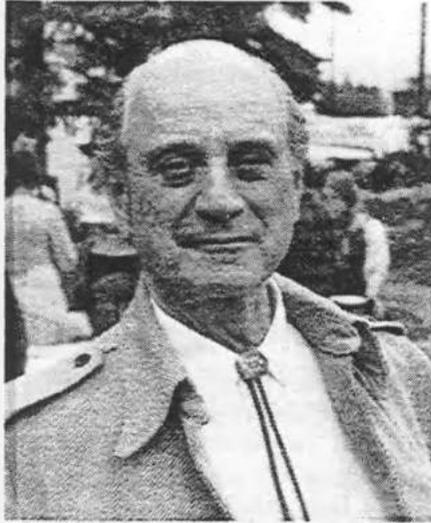
and the music we selected would pointedly support the fact that Baha'is do believe in Christ, as this is a criticism often heard in Fort Yukon.

Despite the fact that it had been raining hard all day, and the fact that there had been very short notice of the funeral, the Armory was crowded. An estimated 60 people gathered there for the first Baha'i funeral ever held in Fort Yukon. Just as the service was about to start, Peter Simple came running up and told us that one very prominent woman in the village had told someone that she wanted to come to the funeral, but that only Baha'is were allowed. We held up the funeral while a young friend went immediately to get her, to point out emphatically that this was not true. We were glad we waited, although poor Nancy, who had already begun to play the opening music, had to play for 20 minutes while we stalled!

For the service we read several Baha'i prayers as well as some readings from Baha'u'llah on the nature of the soul and death. Four of us read, Galen, Nancy, Gavin and I, and Eugene gave a short talk pointing out that Charley had believed so strongly in Christ, that he had recognized that Christ wanted him to accept the new Manifestation, Baha'u'llah. He defined the relationship between Christ and Baha'u'llah in a very clear but loving manner. After the closing prayer and removal of the coffin, the entire congregation slogged through the mud nearly a mile to the graveyard. There we read Blessed is the Spot, the Twenty-third Psalm, and the Lord's Prayer. As they lowered the coffin and began filling the hole a friend of the Baha'is led the group in singing two hymns in the Native language. After the grave was covered over and the flowers placed on it, we said the prayer for unity, and the Baha'is sang Allah-u-Abha. It was a beautiful funeral, very Baha'i, but completely satisfying to the gathered congregation as later comments confirmed.

All day it had been raining without let up. But just as the flowers were placed on the grave a tiny hole appeared in the clouds and a ray of sunshine shone full on the grave for about three minutes and then was gone again!

My own private miracle happened just minutes before that. As the first shovel of dirt hit the coffin with a thud, I heard Charley's intense voice insisting, "You got to tell them about BEE HA'Í!", something I had heard him say many times in life. During his first year as a Baha'i, Charley had been responsible for some 25 people recognizing Baha'u'llah and had been instrumental in the formation of three Local Assemblies — this radiant, determined Baha'i who could neither read nor write. With each shovelful he said it again, until his voice was finally muffled with dirt. "You got to tell them about Bee-Ha'í!" And Charley's funeral did! Beverly Kolstoe



EDGAR RUSSELL

### 'WE LOVE YOU TOO, UNCLE ED'

On Sunday, January 2, 1977, Edgar Russell, known affectionately the world over as "Uncle Ed," passed away in his home in Anchorage. When stricken with the fatal heart attack he was busily and happily packing his bags for a long-anticipated tour to eight countries, on which he expected to add Ireland as his 36th country visited to teach the Cause of God.

But his funeral took place just two days later — on the day he had planned to leave Alaska. The Anchorage LSA, with chairman Steve Coley officiating, sponsored a beautiful service for the many friends who gathered to pay their respects to Uncle Ed, his wife Dorothy, and son Daniel. Janet Stout, long-time friend and associate, gave the eulogy, briefly outlining Ed's many services for the Faith. He was buried in the city cemetery the following day with a short graveside service.

A story of Uncle Ed's Baha'i life could not be written by only one person as his activities were carried out in so many areas of the globe, and in so many different phases of "living the life" during his twenty-eight and a half years of service to the Blessed Beauty. The National Archives Committee is writing up Edgar Russell's biography for the Universal House of Justice and it is hoped that anyone knowing any "Uncle Ed" stories, showing his loyalty, devotion and reliance on prayer will send them to Janet W. Stout, Star Route Box S-815, Palmer, AK. 99645. An article on his life will be published in an early issue of the *Alaska Baha'i News*.

Ed's widow, Dorothy, resides at 736 East 3rd Avenue, Apt. 10, Anchorage, AK. 99501 and would appreciate hearing from his many firends.

### CABLE SENT TO WORLD CENTRE

JANUARY 2, 1977

TIRELESS LONGTIME SERVANT BLESSED BEAUTY EDGAR RUSSELL JOURNEYED ABHA KINGDOM DAY BEFORE PLANNED THREE MONTH TEACHING TRIP EUROPE CLIMAXING SERIES TEACHING TRIPS INCLUDING ALL CONTINENTS INCLUDING THROUGHOUT PACIFIC. HIS LIFE EXEMPLIFIED QUALITIES LOYALTY, DEVOTED ACTION AND EAGERNESS UNDER ALL CONDITIONS TO ARISE TO SERVE. REQUEST PRAYERS PROGRESS SOUL. ALASKAN ASSEMBLY

### CABLE FROM HAIFA

GRIEVED PASSING EDGAR RUSSELL WHOSE CONSTANT ACTIVITY EXTENSIVE TRAVELS EXEMPLARY ZEAL HAVE AIDED GROWTH FAITH STOP CONVEY FAMILY ASSURANCES PRAYERS SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL ABHA KINGDOM

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

## In Memoriam

### Warren Rodgers

An Early Stalwart of the Faith in Alaska

Warren H. "Rod" Rodgers, a founding member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska and a teacher of the Faith in several areas of the world, passed away Oct. 26, 1997, in Gore, Oklahoma.

A U.S. government employee specializing in work with power plants, the Oklahoma-born Mr. Rodgers was living in Fairbanks, Alaska, when he declared his faith in Bahá'u'lláh in February 1954.

He was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly twice, beginning when it was formed at Ridván 1957. During 1958 Mr. Rodgers pioneered with his wife, Kathy, and their daughter, Ginger, to Nome, Alaska.

Later his work allowed the family to pioneer internationally in Morocco for three years and Cuba for two years; finally, they settled for 10 years in Rota, Spain. The teaching work continued throughout the family's travels, with seven people declaring their faith during one memorable day in Spain.

Mr. Rodgers retired in 1976, and he and his wife toured the United States in motor homes for 18 years as itinerant Bahá'í teachers.

They owned property in Gore—the town of Mr. Rodgers' birth — on which they built a "Bahá'í Center," which for years was used often as a guest house for Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í travelers. The couple settled there in 1994. Kathy will remain in Gore and devote the rest of her life to teaching the Faith. She would like to see some Bahá'ís move into the area. You can reach her by phone at 918-489-2895 or by writing to PO Box 423, Gore OK 74435.

*Adapted from "The American Bahá'í" 31 December 1997 and a letter from Kathy Gore.*

Alaska Bahá'í Community  
Pioneers and Builders, p III-125



### Kathryn Rodgers

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 1 year as of 1999. First elected in 1956.

Kathy and Rod Rodgers pioneered to Alaska during the Ten Year Crusade and settled in Fairbanks. Both Kathy and Rod attended the first National Convention and both were elected to the National Spiritual Assembly.

One of the first actions of the new Assembly was to assess the pioneering needs and possibilities within Alaska. The Rodgers were two of five members of that first Spiritual Assembly to home-front pioneer during its first year. They pioneered to Nome and they became the first Bahá'ís to settle in that important post.

As a result of their pioneering activity, an Eskimo girl, Martha Noyakuk (Trigg - See: Bahá'í World, vol. XVII, pp. 447-449.) was attracted to the Bahá'í Faith, and through her, many members of the Kakarak family became Bahá'ís.

The Rodgers left Alaska in 1958 when Rod was offered a transfer to Colorado. They pioneered to Morocco during the Ten Year Crusade and later moved to Oklahoma.

### Arsalan Sadighi

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 5 years as of 1999. First elected in 1989.

Arsalan was the first Persian Bahá'í to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly. A fifth generation Bahá'í, he was born and spent his youth in Tihrán. When he was 15, his family pioneered to Spain and Arsalan spent the next five years there before moving to the United States for college at the University of California in Los Angeles in 1976. He specialized in Computer Science.

He stayed in Los Angeles for 7 years before moving to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Arsalan married Haifa Foroughi while in Albuquerque. They had known each other as Bahá'í youth in Spain. Haifa's family had pioneered and been living there since the Ten Year Crusade.

Haifa studied fauna and flora of the north in school, and that is how, at nine years of age, she learned about Alaska and dreamed of living there. So, Arsalan started looking for employment in Alaska. As of this writing, he works for the state government as a Systems Programmer. This carries the responsibility for operating systems throughout Alaska for both program development and trouble shooting.

Since the arrival of the Sadighis in Juneau, the family has been actively involved with fireside teaching and local deepening projects. The Sadighis worked on a program for helping parents create an atmosphere in which children grow with nurturing and security to develop their special talents

Over the past four years Arsalan has been working with Bahá'í youth from Juneau with in-depth study and application of the Bahá'í Writings. This has been a most rewarding experience for him. In general, Arsalan has been impressed by knowing members of the Alaskan Bahá'í community, and especially moved by the dedication, devotion and long-term commitment to service that he has seen.

While Arsalan was serving on the National Spiritual Assembly, Haifa was appointed to the Auxiliary Board, making theirs an extremely busy household.

Arsalan attended the Seventh International Bahá'í Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel, in 1993.

David John Rychetnik

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 5+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1989.

In the fall of 1971, David was a freshman at the University of Alaska and was working at the Student Activities Center. A traveling Bahá'í musical group, headed by Victor Wong, put on a series of firesides at the Student Center. David helped them with their posters and he and Victor became fast friends. Over the next several months he stayed close to the Bahá'ís, even writing some music for their presentations. It was, however, a period of intense investigation.

During spring break, David went to Anchorage to visit his mother and many of his newly-found friends were also in Anchorage for the Bahá'í National Convention. In the evenings, David would join them at the home of Herb and Marian Johnson. He was impressed by the spirit they carried as they returned from the Convention hall. On the last day of Convention he arrived at the Johnson home before the others and saw an illuminated copy of the Long Obligatory Prayer. He read it with great interest. In solitude and quiet reflection, contemplating that prayer, he knew that Bahá'u'lláh was Who He claimed to be.

David's talents as a musician and artist were quickly pressed into service. He was a founding member of the Windflower musical group of young people who traveled during the Nine Year Plan and did much to win victories in Alaska, Canada and Europe. When they returned from their European teaching venture, they settled in Oklahoma City. They had no money and didn't quite know what to do next.

The National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska recognized the potential value of these young believers and bought tickets for the entire group to move back. There was no specific project in mind, just the conviction that it was the right thing to do.

Soon after the return of the Windflower group, there was a three-day concept conference on media. From that event in 1979, David, together with some other Windflower members entered the media production field. David founded and became the president of a media production company called Connections. One of the early and major contributions the company made was producing an 81-part series, "The Light of Bahá'u'lláh", which involved interviews with a broad cross-section of Bahá'ís from youth to the aged on 81 different topics.

Following the tragic death of Don Anderson, David was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly. At the first meeting he attended, he was also elected Treasurer. He set up a computer program for the financial records which has continued to be the basic tool for the Office of the Treasurer.

His artistic and media skills were called upon for the 1992 World Congress and he worked closely with Douglas and Elizabeth Martin from the World Centre in creating displays for that event in New York City.

David resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly and moved to Seattle because of an unusually fine career opportunity with the potential of serving the Faith with even more leading-edge media technology.

David attended the seventh International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa in 1993.

# Jim Schoppert

by John Walker

Jim Schoppert was born in Douglas, Alaska in 1947, and we became friends in Anchorage in 1974. He was a man of enormous talent, his winter dark eyes were full of mystery, and his jet black hair, often worn long, made me think he must be akin to The Raven. (He was indeed a Raven of the Tlingit Indian tribe and his crest was the Frog). One thing I can say for certain, Jim was positively unique, and uniquely positive. His history of hard knocks and heartaches were never mentioned by him. Rather, his big smile and fun-loving personality were his trade mark.

I learned by observation that everyone was in awe of his art. To that end, I believe much more respect for his vast accomplishments in the art world will be shown as time goes by. His most noted works can be found standing in testimony in and around Anchorage. "Transitions", a big beautiful metal sculpture graces the entrance to the George M. Sullivan Arena. It gives us a glimpse of the range and scope of the artist, and demonstrates his understanding of more contemporary pursuits.

The Anchorage Sheraton Hotel too, is a vast spectacle of the greatness of this artist. Jim was the commissioned director of the interior design and execution of the colors and depictions that enchant the halls and walls of the facility. In particular, the migratory design in relief on the walls of the main ballroom are Jim's, and I think attest to his particularly deep commitment to his rich heritage.

Jim's cooperative management style during the construction of the hotel won praise from fellow artists and much respect from the corporate world that witnessed his direction. I'll never forget the night we met. During our conversation I asked him what he did and with great aplomb he looked up to the sky and exclaimed "I am an artist!" As I've stated, I believe that remark to be an astounding under-

statement. Not only has his work continued to rise in value and appeal, as it should, but his technique is proving to have been insightfully masterful.

Jim's love for his work wasn't confined with and to any traditional theme, though it was apparent that his affinity for totemic design was primary. He was adventurous and one to always test the limits of his talent and of his peers' opinions when it came to artistic form. Always exploring new media, and enjoying it was his nature. At various times I've seen him work with stone, ivory, feathers, wood, paint, charcoal, metals, rubbings, welding, wire, beads, leather and wax, to mention a few. He liked to fit different things together, and it always came out right.

Once we were in the Yucatán together. We had gone down to attend the Merida International Teaching Conference and while there went to visit some of the Mayan ruins. Fascinated by the overall impact those magnificent ruins reveal, I was struck by the way Jim approached the artistic value of the ancient structures. He not only tried to figure out how the buildings were pieced together, but saw the reasoning and asymmetrical beauty in object placement and size. He lead me around pointing out the many and various features the untrained eye would never see, and though I could tell he was enjoying himself in our discoveries of the place, he was truly in a world I knew I would never be able to fully understand. It was almost more interesting watching him than it was exploring the temples.

At Chichén Itzá we approached the great central pyramid, and just as we arrived at the base of it, Jim looked at me and, laughing like a boy on his birthday, shouted, "Last one to the top is a rotten egg!" Away we went, racing skyward. As I struggled to the top, my heart pounding like a prize fighter hitting a punching



bag, I peeked over the top and saw Jim sitting serenely at the apex, as though that was his rightful place in the world 'King of the Mountain'. Our eyes met, and we both laughed and joked about how, at least this time, youth and agility had won out over old age and treachery.

Jim had just found the Faith when we met, and I wondered to myself how he would find his place to serve. He chose the Red Path, which was, of course, his. He taught the indigenous people well, but in that particular work, I think he inadvertently taught the rest of us too. He served as an example to what we all can achieve, if we but try.

Jim was a very intelligent man, and as such found an easy time with the books. He received his Masters Degree in sculpture from the University of Washington and was a visiting professor of art at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. His education, together with his life experience, proved to be invaluable to the Bahá'í world, and he was elected to the Local Spiritual Assemblies of Anchorage, Spenard, Oceanview and Nome. He was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, and also served the Faith as a member of the Auxiliary Board. He achieved much success in each of these capacities, leading and helping.

It's so hard to give up our friends, especially when they mean so much to our own spiritual growth. I could tell of many humorous, and heartfelt things that Jim and I shared but my stories would be never-ending. He was a man; he was an artist, a father, a thinker, a teacher, a counselor, a confidant. He was my friend, and a friend to many. I'll miss him in ways I could never describe on paper. We were buddies, and the time we had together made a huge impact on my life.

Alláh-u-Abhá brother, I'll see you on the other side.



Photo:  
Jim Schoppert at a  
National Teaching  
Conference in 1984.

# Jim Schoppert Exhibit in Juneau



“Art Can Better Awaken Such Noble Sentiments. . .”

by Patricia Osgood

Nothing prepared me for the impact that Jim Schoppert's art show would have on me. Juneau has a lovely Museum and it is a warm welcoming place. With anticipation I took the winding ramp to the second floor which opened on a dimly lit room with dark wood and illumined shelves of wonderful native beadwork. The back lighting did much for the somber mood of the artifacts on display.

For the second time that day I was not prepared for the physical and emotional feelings as I walked into the brightness and the color of Jim Schoppert. My eyes could not take in the whole show, it was immediate and intense. At first it was shapes that I was not used to. I knew the traditional shapes and how they felt, but Jim's work was powerful. It called to me very insistently, my senses were reeling. The shapes, the colors, the messages explaining the work, all were well thought out and well presented. But the most powerful of all was the spiritual awe I felt. Bahá'u'lláh truly took Jim's hand and moved it over the wood and canvas, the ivory and the cloth. Jim was so "present" in the room that I found myself commenting to him on his work! At one point I drew myself away from the show and watched the various tourists as they entered the room. There were cursory glances that took in only shapes on the wall and the displayed work on the

pedestals. There was the determined "looker" with no concept of what was before him, but there were a few who were drawn to Jim's work. They were the ones who stood and looked and talked in hushed tones and did not take photographs.

I am not an art critic, so could not judge the show in that light. I am a Bahá'í, though, and could read the love Jim had for His Beloved and for his heritage, and how it translated itself to these seekers. I had taken Eugene King with me to "see" Jim's work. As we walked around the rooms, I would describe to Gene what was before us. With his acute sense of touch, he would comment on the feeling as well as the

carving, remembering the time when he was not blind and he saw carvings and beadwork. As we finished "looking", he told me his favorites were "Teasing Eagle" and "One September Morn." The best part was just to be with him while he enjoyed being there.

When it was time to leave, I did so reluctantly. It is a rare thing to be with an old friend in this manner. I repeated in my mind some of my favorite carvings such as "Meditation in Ivory", "Miro" and "the Midnight Sun", "Raven Opens Box of Stars" and so on. A book about Jim's work is being sold in the gift shop; it is called *Instrument of Change, Jim Schoppert 1947-1992*.

Jim Nicholls, Curator of Exhibitions at the Anchorage Museum, said: "Jim Schoppert was a truly talented individual, not just in the area of visual arts but also as a spokesperson for Alaska Native Art. He was an articulate public speaker who expressed eloquently and effectively the positive role that Alaska Native artists contributed to their culture in particular and to art and society in general. ... His work is unmistakable, often confrontational and challenging but always full of beauty. He stretched the boundaries of Alaska contemporary art. . ."

I understand that Jim's show is going to Fairbanks from here. What a rare treat is in store for you. Savor this visit with Jim as I did, chat with him as with an old friend, as a devout Bahá'í and as a brother. Let Jim's poem close this article.

## ART

by Jim Schoppert

*If art has a master  
Imagination cracks the whip.*

*If art is a celebration  
the vernal equinox is its maiden.*

*Art is shorthand for expression.*

*Morse code for creation.*

*It causes us to move quantum leaps  
in the blink of an eye  
and fathom mysteries within blocked  
by refuse of a generation left uncaring  
and therefor uncared for.*

*Art speaks a language unique yet familiar.*

*It marks the way with signposts that  
lead us still another step further into the question*

WHAT IS ART?

## Charlotte Schwartz

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 2 years as of 1999. First elected in 1968.

In 1958 Florence Mayberry was on an extended teaching trip in Alaska. She started in Ketchikan and was scheduled for a public meeting and slide-show in Juneau. The meeting was advertised in the "Juneau Empire" newspaper and there was a sense of urgency about this first advertised public meeting. Florence was supposed to change planes in Petersburg, but inclement weather caused her to be stranded there. There were no Bahá'ís in Petersburg, and Florence had no plans to be there. She checked into the hotel and concluded that if there was any special reason for her to be in Petersburg, she had better get out of her room and mingle.

She struck up a conversation with the hotel manager who informed her that the Chamber of Commerce was meeting in the hotel. The manager had read the ad in the Juneau newspaper and suggested that since Florence was a world traveler with a slide-show, she might offer it to the Chamber of Commerce, which she did. Her talk was so well received that one member, Norman Hiemdahl, invited Florence and others who were interested to come to his home to continue the discussion.

Norman called Charlotte Schwartz at home and suggested that she come to his home to meet a stranger in town who was saying the same kinds of things that Charlotte was noted for saying. With her hair in curlers and harboring a beastly head cold, Charlotte hurried for the Heimdahls where she and Florence cemented a bond that will endure for all eternity.

Charlotte and her friends wanted to know more. They scheduled speakers, bought books, and carried on a lively correspondence. It was joked among Bahá'ís that Petersburg was the only community with a corresponding secretary, a fireside committee, and sales library but no Bahá'ís. In 1959 Charlotte attended summer school in Juneau and enrolled. Petersburg has had a flourishing Bahá'í community ever since. Bob, her husband, did not attend that summer school, but later that summer he attended a conference in Whitehorse instead. Charlotte's enrollment is dated 7-9-59 and Bob's 9-7-59.

Good humor, optimism, and a lively curiosity served Charlotte well as she, Bob, and the rapidly growing community of Petersburg established a firm foundation both for the administrative institutions and for a major break-through in Native teaching. The Schwartzes are dearly loved by the Tlingit Indians because of their helpfulness without being patronizing.

They were among the first Bahá'ís to be adopted and receive Tlingit names. The laundry which they owned soon became a Bahá'í center: the place where clothes were cleaned and plans were made. Their support of the teaching work among the Tlingits was vital and well known throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Charlotte traveled to Haifa to participate in the second International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice held during Ridván, 1968.

Robert K. (Bob) Schwartz

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 1 year as of 1999. First elected in 1968.

Bob had been a long-established businessman in Petersburg, primarily as owner of Citizens Steam Laundry. He was consistently an energetic, community-minded person taking an active part in the Chamber of Commerce, as Chief of the Volunteer Fire Department and a motive force behind many community projects.

He had a well-established reputation for fairness and honest concern for the native population. Many natives worked for him and they were frequent patrons of his laundromat. He was known as one who could be trusted and who was willing to give a helpful hand to anyone. Because of this, he and Charlotte were both adopted as Tlingit Indians by the Martin family from Kake

When Charlotte first developed an interest in the Faith, Bob gave his enthusiastic support, but was involved with so many activities that he really did not give it as much attention as Charlotte did. When Charlotte attended summer school in 1959 (before either of them were Bahá'ís), Bob arranged to have a case of fresh shrimp delivered to the school as his gift since he could not be there in person. That was typical of his ways: thoughtful service without fanfare and with no expectations of applause.

When Charlotte came home an enrolled Bahá'í, Bob told her that since she got to attend the last one, the next one would be his turn. His turn came up fast. The Whitehorse Bahá'ís sponsored a Labor Day weekend Bahá'í retreat. Charlotte stayed home to run the laundry and Bob went. This time, he came home a Bahá'í.

Bob and Charlotte have been energetic servants of the Cause ever since. They have done much teaching in Alaska and elsewhere. They have consistently been among the first to lend a helping hand in a project. Many of their family members have been staunch members of the Bahá'í community. They are probably best known for the ground breaking work they did in order to bring the Faith to the Tlingit and other minority people in Petersburg and elsewhere in Southeast Alaska.

After they sold the laundromat in Petersburg, they were free to travel more extensively, and did so for several years. They also spent several years serving at the Bahá'í National Office, caretaking and serving in every way they could.

In 1992 Bob was one of the 19 representing Alaska at the commemoration of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh in Haifa, Israel.

# Jared Shuey

1 June 1983—31 January 1998

by Debbie Shuey

*"Thou shalt find me in the heaven of the Lord, immersed in an ocean of light."*

Jared Shuey, 14, died from cancer on Saturday, 31 January 1998 in his own bed at home in Kenai, Alaska. Although he lost his battle with cancer, he still won the war because it allowed him to grow emotionally and spiritually. He was a model of courage, perseverance, tolerance, and acceptance throughout his two-year-long fight with cancer. He was very intelligent, sensitive, kind, and spiritual. Through his faith he understood that dying is not an end, but a passage to a higher existence. He also has been able to live each and every day to the fullest and to learn what is really important in life. He has made many friends and has only strengthened his old friendships. His extended family, communities, and schools have pulled together to offer support and love. Jared has been blessed with so many wonderful memories and experiences. His only concern about death was for his family and friends. He didn't want them to be sad.

Jared always had a project he was working on. He loved remote controlled trucks. He built his own surfboard one winter and refurbished a small dingy the next winter. He started his own bird house business at age nine. Just prior to his death, he helped his dad and grandpa rebuild a snowmachine and was working on rebuilding a 302 Ford engine for his 4 by 4 truck. He loved science and math.

Although Jared lived only 14 years, he experienced enough for 60 years. He lived in such diverse places as Goodnews Bay, Alaska; Leadville,

Colorado; Anchorage, Alaska; Seattle, Washington; New York City, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and of course, the Kenai Peninsula. He had a circle of friends from all walks of life. His interests were diverse and his friendships reflected this. Since his illness, he has touched so many peoples' hearts, that we can't begin to know the depth this loss means to so many people. Jared had a wonderful, enriched, exciting, and challenging life. He was very positive and felt he was lucky. Often times he would see other children or learn about families having a difficult time, and he would say, you know, I am lucky, because I have it so good. As he said this, he would be lying in bed with 100 stitches down his spine and knowing this was just the beginning.

Jared requested his funeral service be held at the Bahá'í Center in Ridgeway so that his friends would perhaps learn more about this Bahá'í Faith. This service was held on Monday February 2nd.

On Sunday, 8 February 1998, there was a memorial service which was held in the Kenai Middle school gym where he attended sixth grade. There were so many great times and memories to share with one another. We requested the Bahá'í Youth Workshop to attend and they performed several dances.

This quote brings us much comfort, and we have shared it with many, many people:

Photo: Jared Shuey, first day of school August 1997, 8th grade.  
Photo credit: Debbie Shuey

*"O Thou kind Mother, thank divine Providence that I have been freed from a small and gloomy cage, and, like the birds of the meadows, have soared to the divine world—a world which is spacious, illumined, and ever gay and jubilant. Therefore, lament not, O Mother, and be not grieved; I am not of the lost nor have I been obliterated and destroyed. I have shaken off the mortal form and have raised my banner in this spiritual world. Following this separation is everlasting companionship. Thou shalt find me in the heaven of the Lord, immersed in an ocean of light."*

'Abdu'l-Bahá



## IN MEMORIAM—PETER SIMPLE

Pete had just finished reading these words of 'Abdu'l-Baha: "Some are asleep; they need to be awakened. Some are ailing; they need to be healed. Some are as immature children; they need to be trained."

"When I read that, I think of the Indian people." I said.

Pete slowly lowered the book and looked at me with his gentle brown eyes ringed with gray. His face showed no emotion or expression. After what seemed like an endless silence he spoke. Softly, in a voice at once solemn and dignified, he said, "I feel like I'm waking up for the first time in my life."

So began the Baha'i life of Peter Simple in Ft. Yukon—the second Athabaskan Indian north of the Arctic Circle to become a Baha'i and one of the true "treasures" promised by Baha'u'llah: "... men who will aid Thee . . ."

Beverly was on pilgrimage and I told Pete it would really thrill her to get a telegram while in the Holy Land that he had become a Baha'i. "For Beverly, I'll do it!" was his firm reply. That was May 31, 1962.

Peter Simple was always known as "Pete" to the many who knew and loved him; and to know him was to love him. He was born just before the turn of the century near Ft. McPherson in the Northwest Territories of Canada. Pete was left an orphan at an early age and was raised mainly by his grandparents. His grandfather told him that the day would come when the Indians would be confused; that many different religions would come and that the white man would say "do this" and "do that" and that the Indians would not know what to do. But, then One would come who would unite all.

Pete never went to school, but somehow he learned the names of the letters of the alphabet. When he was 17, hauling freight by dog sled along the MacKenzie River, he had a fascinating thrill of discovery. Night after night he would lay in his bedroll looking at the letters T-E-N-T. Over and over again he would say the letters. He knew they spelled something. Then one night he leaped from his bedroll and shouted for joy. "Tent! It spells tent!" His joy was boundless and he had no one to tell but his dogs. Having learned that letters make words he looked for other things to sound out. He found the second word he could read: Vancouver.

Throughout his life, Pete seemed to reach out almost beyond himself. Often he would make discoveries or gain new insights and have no one who could really understand. In everything he did there was a special mark of quality; of excellence. He was not just a good river man and pilot; he was one of the best. He was not just a good trapper; again, he was one of the best. It was a

long time since there had been a "Chief" around Fort Yukon—the title Chief was earned by strength of character, hunting and leadership ability. However, many of the people referred to Pete as "Chief." Indeed, if the custom of naming a chief were still followed there is little doubt that it would have been Peter Simple.

It was his quest for excellence and desire to know more that kept him going. That's how he happened to ask me, a school teacher, to help him learn to read better. He taught himself how to read and he read all the leading news magazines, but he was not satisfied. He wanted to read better.

I stopped by Pete's home one day shortly after he had asked me to help him with his reading. His cousin was there and Pete spoke to his cousin in Athabaskan. He then turned to me and said, "I was just telling my cousin, John, that I was going to learn all about the Baha'i Faith and become the interpreter of it for my people." That night, May 28, 1962, we started our reading lessons—using Baha'i books. Three days later he accepted Baha'u'llah.

During his first year as a Baha'i, Pete went to the Council Fire in Arizona representing the Baha'is of Alaska; he taught a course on the **Hidden Words** ("That book is sure well named—those meanings are hidden all right!"); he helped form the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Fort Yukon; went on to a teaching trip to Beaver, which enabled them to form their first Local Spiritual Assembly.

Over the years he served in many ways the Faith he loved so well. We worked together to write **Baha'i Teachings** (a simplified outline on the Baha'i Faith which has been translated and used on four continents). He was frequently a delegate to the National Convention; he served on the Yukon Basin Teaching Committee; he helped in the translation of Baha'i prayers into Athabaskan, etc. He was bitterly disappointed by a teaching trip he made in 1968 to Dawson City in the Yukon Territory: no enrollments. In the last year of his life he was back in Dawson with the Proclamation Team and saw over 50 accept the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

However, over and above these accomplishments, that which is best remembered and sorely missed are his charm and gracious nature, and delightful humor. He "fit in" in modest log cabins or ornate surroundings. He was welcome in any and every home and he was a friend to all.

"Dignity," a Baha'i commented to me once. "That's what I think when I think of Pete Simple." When a person was agitated, Pete could put him at ease. When overly sentimental or off-the-track Pete could be counted on to restore per-

spective. His quick and gentle wit turned many ordinary events into memorable occasions.

There was the Fairbanks Winter Workshop of 1962 in which his course on the **Hidden Words** followed a very scholarly presentation by Ted Anderson of Whitehorse, now a member of the Auxiliary Board. Ted had used many books and 3x5 reference cards which he had in his brief case. Pete had a single sheet of paper with notes. This was folded up and carried in his back pocket. Pete started his course by saying: "I'm not like Ted Anderson who has to have a suitcase to carry his brains around." He then pulled out his single sheet of notes and added, "I keep everything I know in my back pocket."

During the 1968 Fairbanks Summer Institute I asked Pete to open one of the afternoon sessions by saying the "Noon Day" Prayer in Athabaskan. Pete agreed. When the afternoon session started it was 2:00 p.m. Pete said, "John wants me to read the 'Noon Day' Prayer, but I'm not going to." He looked at his watch and said, "If I did that, Baha'u'llah would just look down and say, 'Oh, it's those Baha'is. They're late again!'" So he said a different prayer in Athabaskan.

When he attended the National Conventions as a delegate he always had something to say and it was always well received. One time another one of the delegates asked him to be sure to take the love of the Convention back to the Baha'is in Fort Yukon. "All right," he replied, "if it's not too heavy."

As a switch during the 1970 Fairbanks Summer Institute Pete and I agreed that I would read "Blessed is the Spot" in Athabaskan and he would read it in English. Always one to get the most out of any situation he said, "This is quite a religion. Where else can you turn a white man into an Indian and an Indian into a white man?"

**August 17, 1971.** Pete was walking across the street in Fairbanks. A car turned the corner, hit him, knocked him unconscious and Pete did not survive the night.

'Abdu'l-Baha said, "... should these Indians be educated and properly guided there can be no doubt that through the Divine Teachings they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined."

Pete was among the first to reflect a glimmer of that light. At times the reflection seemed dim and at times it was brilliant. For nine years, during the difficult early dawn of the new light, he held on to those "Divine Teachings." In varying degrees he reflected the light. He helped countless others reflect whatever portion of the illumination they had found. But Pete is a symbol of

(Continued on page 8)

## NANCY SLONE 1924-1983

*"... Her hopes and expectations are centered in Thee, open Thou to her face the portals of Thy tender mercies and lead her into the ways of Thy wondrous benevolence . . ."*

These words are from a prayer Abdu'l Baha said for his sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf. However, We don't think he would mind if they were borrowed for another special lady, Nancy Slone.

Nancy died after a long illness on June 5, 1983, the Feast of Light. Perhaps that was an appropriate day for her to enter the Abha Kingdom after her many years of quietly radiating light wherever she went. Nancy's way of shining was steady, sturdy and constant, but never obtrusive or presumptive. Her love of music and her skill with the piano, organ and viola touched many lives, spreading the loving message of Baha'u'llah.

Nancy was born in Randolph, New York, on 29 May, 1924. When still very young she spent summers at Lake Chautauqua where she learned to love opera. Instead, she worked her way through Fredonia State Teachers College in New York, waitressing and accompanying singers as a pianist. Nancy was a natural teacher; she began by teaching herself to play both the piano and viola. When she came to Alaska in 1966 she was qualified to teach voice, strings and English.

Nancy was active in Fairbanks in the Youth Symphony and played viola in the Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra. She was organist for the Church of Christ Scientist and served for many years as a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Fairbanks. In 1968 she married John Slone of Fairbanks, long time member of the National Spiritual Assembly.

Another of her accomplishments was her ability to turn out delicious home-cooked country style food. One Baha'i claims he entered the Faith because of Nancy's cooking; he just couldn't stop going to firesides at the Slone's.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate Nancy's way of giving is to relate how she orchestrated her own funeral. Before illness claimed her ability to play the piano she asked friends with whom she played in the orchestra to play certain instruments or sing as she accompanied them in selections of classical music, her great love. She undoubtedly left an indelible impression in the hearts of her non-Baha'i friends when this quiet, dignified lady asked them to perform on tape at her funeral. She wanted the occasion to be more like a concert than a funeral, and it was. The finale was a resounding crescendo of organ music rising into an explosion of pure joy — just the way Nancy wanted it. Few people cried; all felt the contentment and happiness Nancy wished them to feel and which she must enjoy now.

Thank you, Nancy, for the music you brought and for the dignity you imparted.

— Bev Webb, Reporter



**PETER SIMPLE**

### **PETER SIMPLE — continued**

something even more because he showed many — Indians and non-Indians alike — the first shafts of that illumination. Because of Pete, many were enabled to catch their first glimpse of the tremendous potential enshrined in that weighty prophecy of 'Abdu'l-Baha's. Others will spread the illumination with greater force, but it was Pete who caught a feeble ray in the early dawn and proved that enlightenment would follow.

We are so much richer because of this "treasure" of Baha'u'llah. The vision of what's ahead, both in potential and challenge, is made more clear because of Pete.

In summarizing one of the Hidden Words Pete said, "He made us perfect and that's the way He wants us back." Pete's back now. And, we . . . well, we are thankful for having seen him along the way.

John E. Kolstoe

Charlotte Siverly

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 9+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1982.

One might say that Charlotte became a Bahá'í twice. The first time was as Charlotte Williams. She first heard of the Faith when she was going to college in Bellingham, Washington. She liked what she heard and saw, and enrolled as a Bahá'í. However, when she returned to her home in Hoonah, Alaska, she was a new Bahá'í and had not had much deepening in the Faith. In addition, the transfer of records was never completed and it was years before she established contact with the Bahá'ís again.

Tom and Dottie Baumgartner pioneered to Hoonah. One day Charlotte saw Dottie walking down the street and there was something unusual about her that attracted Charlotte's attention. Smiles were exchanged and soon they became acquainted.

Then, Charlotte discovered the joy of embracing the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh for a second time. She signed a second enrollment card with her married name, Charlotte Siverly and bearing the date 14 Words 130 (7-2-73). From that moment forward, her active support of the Faith went full steam ahead.

As a Tlingit Indian, Charlotte has been concerned about matters affecting her people all of her life. She tried in so many ways to place herself in a position of greater service to her people. Charlotte has been a secretary, journalist and started up a small newspaper in Hoonah.

She pioneered to Yakutat – a most heart-warming experience – but finances and family responsibilities made it necessary to return to Juneau.

Charlotte has been actively involved with the Office of Native Teaching and Development within Alaska. She served as the National Spiritual Assembly's liaison with the Tripartite Committee of three National Spiritual Assemblies, which planned the Native Council in Fairbanks in July of 1985.

In 1983, Charlotte was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in a by-election, just in time for her to attend the Fifth International Convention for the election of the Universal House of Justice. She served until 1987, was off for one year, served for another year, was off for another year, then served another year. She was again elected in 1996 and has been on the body continuously since then, serving as Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly. She attended the International Conventions and elections of the Universal House of Justice as a delegate in 1983, 1988, and 1998.

John P. Slone

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 7 years as of 1999. First elected in 1976.

John was an electronics technician stationed at a satellite tracking station just outside of Fairbanks. He was raised a Southern Baptist, but as an adult, could not accept those teachings and could not find a religion he could accept. Marital difficulties and a divorce forced him to search for some greater meaning in life. He heard of the Bahá'í Faith while attending a Creative Thinking seminar and immediately thought it made sense and if he was to join any religion it would be the Bahá'í Faith.

Some time later, he inquired how he might learn more about the Faith and started attending firesides. He became an enigma to the Bahá'ís because he would ask one or two penetrating questions during each fireside, listen carefully to the answer and never register approval nor disapproval. Nor would he follow up with further discussion or questions. The only way the believers knew of his continued interest was that he kept coming back and asking more specific questions.

When he enrolled on February 18, 1968, he came in full of enthusiasm and energy. He knew this was the Cause for which he had waited and he wanted to devote his life to serving it. By nature John is shy and retiring. Yet when he embraced the Faith he immediately became involved with the life of the community serving in any way he could.

John did not have any experience with village life in Alaska, but became a pillar of strength for the Northern Goals Committee, realizing to an extent few others shared, the necessity of reaching the villages and being of service to the native believers.

He fell in love with the Writings, hosted many series of deepenings in his home, and maintained the sales library for Fairbanks. His appreciation and support of the fund also reflected his deep commitment.

John's regard for and commitment to the Institutions of the Faith was reflected in the fact that wherever there was a need, John would do what he could to fill it. He would attend Conferences whenever and wherever he could. His car was always full because he kept encouraging people and offering rides. He became editor of the *Alaska Bahá'í News* in 1984 because it was a job that needed to be done. However, an unexpected change in his employment situation involved a move to Maryland. After retiring, John returned to Alaska in 1993, settling first in Valdez and later moving to Anchorage.

In 1978 he participated in the Fourth International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa.

## Janet Smith to Haifa

"Sorrow and joy embraced." Mr. Kavelin, member of the Universal House of Justice, quoted the Guardian with those words. He was describing a situation which was a time for both tears and gladness. He said that on July 23 in Grant Hall in Anchorage. The same night he also casually mentioned to an attentive and stunned audience that National Spiritual Assembly secretary Janet Smith had accepted an invitation from the Universal House of Justice to work at the World Centre in Haifa.

It was 1952 when young Janet Johnson first came to Alaska. Only a year or so out of high school, she started on an exciting well-thought out plan to see the world. Alaska was the first stage in her round the world venture. She took a job with the Territorial Department of Health as a secretary—despite the fact that her high school Kudor Preference Test indicated that secretarial or clerical work was her lowest area of interest.

She would have moved farther west as she had planned except that some unexplained delays in telegram delivery caused her to miss jobs for which she had been accepted. Janet then left her work with the mobile x-ray unit and accepted the position as medical secretary on the H.S. Hygiene—a medical ship operated by the Health Department to service outlying communities.

Fear of an epidemic in Unalaska (which did not materialize) sent the ship on an unscheduled trip from Ketchikan to Unalaska. There Janet learned of the Faith from pioneers, Jenabe and Elaine Caldwell and George and Elinore Putney. From that time forward, the Hygiene made a number of stops in Unalaska, both scheduled and unscheduled, during which time Janet would learn more about the Faith. Finally she realized that this was the Word of God for this day and became a Baha'i.

Psychologically, Alaska then became "home." However, still not being interested in being a secretary, she went back to Montana for college. A year later, when her funds ran out, she returned to Alaska and settled in Juneau. She was among those attending the first National Convention of the Baha'is of Alaska in 1957.

In 1959 Janet was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly and served for one year. In 1961 she was back on the National Spiritual Assembly and has been elected each year since.

In 1962 she became Recording Secretary and, when Evelyn Huffman resigned as Secretary in 1964, Janet was the logical replacement. She was Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly for all but four of her 19½ years of service.

When Janet first became National Secretary, she was still working eight



Janet Smith at Airport

hours a day at the Health Department, serving on the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly, and holding firesides. Oh, yes, she cooked meals during the National Spiritual Assembly meetings, too. She had a two-bedroom apartment on Sixth Avenue. One room was for herself and son, Jon, and the other was the National Office-meeting room.

Finally, in 1965 the National Office was moved to more spacious quarters in Hollowbrook Subdivision along the Old Seward Highway. In 1969 the National Assembly decided, despite the status of the Fund, that Janet should give up her work at the Health Department and work full time as Secretary. Then the Hazira in Hollowbrook became the home of herself and Jon, her office, the place where she still held very active firesides and where the friends would come to call at all hours.

As a member of the National Spiritual Assembly, Janet attended the first election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963. She is the only member of the National Spiritual Assembly who has attended all four elections of the Universal House of Justice.

When the question of salary would come up, negotiations would take a peculiar turn in these days of frequent strikes. Janet would be the one protesting that the Fund could not support a larger salary. Yet she never earned more than a third to a half what would be paid for a position of similar responsibility elsewhere.

But the Janet that everyone knows and loves is not just an efficient and dedicated, selfless, and uniquely effective National Secretary. She is a warm, responsive, and above-all caring human being. She has the capacity to listen with an intensity which is rare. No matter

how trivial the problem or story being told she has a way of making the teller think that listening to him or her is the most important thing that she could do at that moment. While sympathetic in listening to others, she disliked very much talking about herself and never liked to be the center of attention.

Though never a pioneer, she knew, felt, and sensed the problems of the pioneers. Rarely did she have the luxury of travel teaching. Yet perceptively, almost intuitively, she was aware of all the problems travel teachers had to endure. Every phase of service to the Cause she seemed to relate to as if it were her own experience.

Both in and out of Assembly meetings she was like a gyro giving stability, direction and perspective to every situation, never allowing the present circumstances or current crisis to deflect the main objective. A course of action would be encouraged or discarded only according to the degree to which it affected the Cause. It didn't matter if it was a seemingly bizarre scheme or the most "practical" course of action.

Yes, with Janet's going to Haifa, "sorrow and joy embraced" for Alaskans. The sorrow is, of course, not only that we will all miss her but because she will no longer contribute that special quality that she uniquely gave everything she touched. And, our "gyro" may not work so well. The joy is knowing that she is giving even greater service to the Universal House of Justice at the World Centre, working in the Department of Israeli Affairs.

In Janet, Alaska has the rare bounty of giving of its best for service in the World Centre. In this we can all find comfort and joy.

John Kolstoe

# Janet Smith to Haifa — Again

by John Kolstoe



school, she started on an exciting well-thought-out plan to see the world. Alaska was to be the first stop in her round-the-world venture.

She was offered a job which would have sent her further west. However, an unexplained delay in the delivery of a telegram caused her to miss that opportunity.

A series of unusual circumstances led to her working as a medical secretary for the Territory of Alaska on a ship which had been equipped as a medical clinic, the H.S. Hygiene.

A false-alarm epidemic in Unalaska sent the ship on an unscheduled trip from Ketchikan to Unalaska where Janet learned of the Faith from pioneers Jenabe and Elaine Caldwell and George and Elinore Putney. Thereafter, the Hygiene made many scheduled and unscheduled stops in Unalaska which enabled Janet to study the Faith which she embraced in 1956.

Janet did not want to be a secretary any longer. So, she returned to Montana for college. Scholarships were rare and there were no student loan programs. A year later, when her money ran out, she returned to Alaska.

At the third National Convention in 1959, Janet was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly and served for one year. In 1961 she was back on the National Spiritual Assembly and served continuously until leaving for Haifa in 1979.

In 1962 she became Recording Secretary. When Evelyn Huffman resigned as Secretary in 1964, Janet was the logical replacement. At that time she was still working 8 hours a day at the Health Department, serving on the Anchorage Spiritual Assembly, and holding regular firesides. Oh, yes, she also cooked meals for the NSA members during their meetings.

**F**or old-time Alaskan Bahá'ís, it's déjà-vu. The December 1979, *Alaska Bahá'í News*, p.4 carried the headline, "Janet Smith to Haifa". Now, 12 years later, many can remember how Mr. Borrah Kavelin, former member of the Universal House of Justice, announced Janet's first invitation to serve at the World Centre by quoting the Guardian, who said "sorrow and joy embraced" in describing a time calling for both tears and gladness.

It was 1952 when young Janet Johnson first came to Alaska. Only a year or so out of high

Photo:  
Janet Smith, just prior  
to her departure for  
Haifa

Photo credit:  
Blaine Reed

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***"Because of her ability to maintain a climate in which differing temperaments could work together productively, many fragile enterprises turned into successes. Her participation during those crucial years played a pivotal role in building a firm foundation for both National and local Institutions."***

She had a two-bedroom apartment on Sixth Avenue. One room was for herself and son Jon, and the other was the National Office and meeting room.

She continued working for the Health Department until 1969 when the National Spiritual Assembly decided that she should work full time as National Secretary. Salary negotiations were interesting. It was usually Janet who would protest that the Fund could not support a higher wage, so she never earned more than about a third of what comparable responsibility would pay elsewhere.

It is a happy set of circumstances when the right person is at the right place at the right time. History conceals an endless list of opportunities which have been lost for want of a key person. Janet, as Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly during its crucial developmental years, seemed to have been that right person in the right place at the right time. Because of her ability to maintain a climate in which differing temperaments could work together productively, many fragile enterprises turned into successes. Her participation during those crucial years played a pivotal role in building a firm foundation for both National and local Institutions.

In September of 1979 Janet went to the World Centre where she remained for five years working first in the Department for Israel Affairs and later in the Secretariat. She returned to Alaska in March of 1984. John Slone resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly later that year and she replaced him in a by-election. After the next National Convention, she found herself back in the familiar role of National Secretary.

But, the Janet Smith that everyone knows and loves is more than just an efficient, dedicated, selfless, and uniquely effective National Secretary. She is a warm, responsive, and above-all caring human being. She listens to people with intensity. She has a way of making people think that listening to them is the most important thing she could be doing. Yet, she rarely speaks of herself and shuns personal attention.

Though never a pioneer, she knew, felt, and sensed the special problems of pioneers. Rarely did she have the luxury of traveling teaching (her sled-dog teaching trip from Kotzebue to Deering notwithstanding). Yet, perceptively, almost intuitively, she was aware of all the problems traveling teachers had to endure. She seemed to relate to every phase of service to the Cause as if it were her own experience.

Yes, once again, as Janet goes to Haifa, "sorrow and joy embrace". The sorrow is both that she will be missed personally and that she will no longer be here to contribute that special quality she gives to every thing she touches.

The joy is both in knowing how happy she will be and that through Janet, Alaska has twice given of its best for service in the greater arena. That is the comfort for those of us who are left behind.

Janet G. Smith

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 14+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1977.

In 1952, Janet Johnson (Smith) left her home in Montana for Alaska with the idea of working her way around the world. She was accepted for a job at her next stop. But, because of an undelivered telegram, she never received notice and remained in Alaska. Some unusual circumstances lead to her working as a medical secretary for the Territory of Alaska on a ship, the M.S. Hygiene, which had been equipped as a medical clinic. The ship was unexpectedly sent to Unalaska on a false-alarm emergency in 1954 and returned often for fuel and water. It was under these circumstances that Janet learned of and studied the Bahá'í Faith with the pioneers to Unalaska: Jenabe and Elaine Caldwell and George and Elenore Putney. In 1956 she embraced the Faith which she has served so well since.

History conceals an endless list of priceless missed opportunities; they were never developed because the right person was not present to make things work out. Under the happy circumstances in which the right person is at the right place at the right time, potential blossoms into marvelous results. Janet, as Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly during its crucial developmental years, seemed to have been that right person in the right place at the right time. She played a key though often inconspicuous role during those formative years. Because of her ability to maintain a climate in which differing temperaments could work together productively, many fragile enterprises became successes. Among the programs benefiting from her vision, diplomacy, perception and perseverance were: the Mass Teaching of the 70's; the Institute program; the development of the Native Councils; construction of the Hazíratu'l-Quds; arrangements for the International Conference of 1976; publication of High Endeavours and other works; maturing of national committees; the production of the "Secretary's Manual," the adaptation of "Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies for Alaska," and many and varied other activities of a vigorous, youthful and growing national community. Her participation played a vital role in preparing a firm foundation for both national and local Institutions.

A Minorities Conference was held in Petersburg in October of 1970. Seven members of the National Spiritual Assembly, including Janet, were adopted as Tlingit Indians.

Janet was among those present for the first election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963 and she participated in subsequent International Conventions in 1968, 1973, 1978, and 1988. In 1979 she accepted an invitation to work at the World Centre, where she served as an Assistant in the Secretariat. She returned to Alaska because of family circumstances in 1984. In 1991 she returned to Haifa and remained until 1996, when she returned to Montana to care for her aged mother.



Elizabeth Starr

### ELIZABETH STARR

Elizabeth Starr became a Baha'i during the first Proclamation held in Nenana in November, 1970. Liz was killed in a hit and run accident in Fairbanks on April 5, 1979 while she was in Fairbanks helping to care for her grandchildren.

Liz served on the Nenana Local Spiritual Assembly since September of 1971 and was a member at the time of the incorporation of the Nenana Assembly on October 28, 1971. She was a member of the Proclamation Team that was in Southeast Alaska for five weeks beginning January 1, 1971. Liz laughed and smiled much of the time during this trip and when asked why she hardly ever laughed or smiled before she said she never had a reason to smile before becoming a Baha'i. At the Proclamation meeting when she signed her card it was the first time she hadn't felt lonely, and she didn't really understand why because she hardly knew the Baha'is there, but she felt the warmth and friendliness.

Liz was a member of the Nenana Native Dancers on this Proclamation, but she also helped with the cooking or anything else that needed to be done. Her beadwork was outstanding and she brought it along on the trip and many of the members started beading anything they could get their hands on during the layovers, between programs, and on boat trips, with Liz happily showing them how to do it and sometimes laughing with them at their efforts. Liz also helped on the Massive Encounter Team during the summer of 1971.

Liz was a very hard worker and when anyone needed help, she was there, especially if there was a death in the village. She would be the first one there to help the family with cooking, serving and organizing.

We were unable to have a Baha'i funeral for Liz, but many prayers were said for her and floral wreaths were sent from the Baha'is of Tanana Valley and from the Nenana Baha'is. Liz will be greatly missed by all of us who knew and loved her. She was indeed a "brilliant Starr."



ALASKA PIONEERS TO SWAZILAND: Deanne Donnelly, Karl Don, and Lucille Stettler. At Alaska National Convention, 1970.

### Pioneer Send-Off Stettlers to Africa

About 65 persons attended a "going away" party for Karl and Lucille Stettler and Deanne at the Ben Crawford Memorial Hall in Anchorage on June 11. The Stettlers expect to be leaving soon for a pioneering post in Swaziland, Africa. The affair, sponsored by the Spenard Assembly, was attended by Baha'is from Anchorage, Spenard, Eagle River, Matanuska Valley and Palmer. Several contacts were also present.

A program slanted toward pioneering was presented. The Chairman, Mrs. Evelyn Huffman, paid tribute to the Stettlers for their many years of dedicated services to the Faith in Alaska. Particularly mentioned was their outstanding hospitality. Their home was always a home away from home for many friends coming into this hub-Anchorage-Spenard for various reasons. Also noted was Karl's years of service as the National representative for sale of foreign literature during which time he built up a fine collection and shipped books throughout Alaska and even filled orders from the "south 48". Both Karl and Lucille served on the Spenard Assembly for many years and held various offices. Lucille assisted in children's activities for many years, and she illustrated the first pamphlet to be translated into the Kobuk Eskimo dialect. In 1961 Karl was elected to the NSA; then in 1969 he moved to Matanuska Valley to hold that LSA. The Chairman stated that "the fruits of their labours can never be estimated. Such services will continue to yield their harvest in years to come."

Karl Stettler gave us an interesting resume of the progress of the Faith in Swaziland for which post they will soon be leaving. John Kolstoe spoke on the station of pioneers in the Baha'i Faith.

Verne Stout spoke about Alaskan pion-

eers who have gone forth into the international field of pioneering. He mentioned many early Baha'is—those who came to establish the Faith in Alaska during the first 7 Year Plan — Honor Kempton, Betty Becker, Dagmar Dole, Verne Stout, Frances Wells, Helen Robinson—and Janet Stout (the first to be enrolled in Alaska during this period.) Later several of these responded to calls for pioneering in the succeeding 2nd 7 Year Plan and the 10 Year Crusade.

In fact, Alaska Baha'is have scattered widely to proclaim the Faith, and it is on record that they have gone to the following areas, being elected to at least seven National Assemblies: In Africa—Republic of Cameroon, East Africa and South Africa; Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Columbia, S.A., Denmark, Finland, Hawaii, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Puerto Rico, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

At the close of the program Neena Miller gave a beautiful vocal rendition—"I Wouldn't Miss the Chance" from the play by that name. She was accompanied by Monte Smith on the guitar. This was followed by a surprise number sung in Eskimo from a hymnal by Neena Miller and Belle Koenig.

A gift of money was presented from the friends to the Stettlers. The evening closed with refreshments.

Lucille Stettler and Deanne left on June 17 for Swaziland via pilgrimage in Haifa. Karl Don will follow as soon as business matters are settled. It has been learned from the Stettlers that they will be living in the new Hazira complex in Mbabane, Swaziland which they will assist in completing. Lucille and Deanne arrived July 6 in Mbabane.

KARL DONALD STETTLER  
1908-1980

Karl Donald Stettler was born in Canton, Ohio, U.S.A., on 17 October 1908 to Roman Catholic parents. A few years later his family moved to San Bernardino, California, where he attended school. While still a young man he was lured north to Alaska where he settled in Cordova and trained as a meteorologist. After completing his training, he travelled to all the weather stations throughout Alaska as a relief meteorologist.

While stationed at Point Barrow, he first heard about the Bahá'í Faith from a pioneer, Frances Wells.<sup>1</sup> She introduced me to Karl just before she left to pioneer once again, this

<sup>1</sup> See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIII, p. 923.



*Karl Donald Stettler*

time to Luxembourg. She suggested that I keep in touch with him and invite him to Bahá'í activities when he was in Anchorage. I discovered while talking with Karl that I had been binding his library collection on Alaska through the local book store. After that he brought his books directly to me. Dutifully, I sent him Bahá'í literature and notices while he manned weather stations out in the tundra. For my birthday, he sent his Bahá'í enrolment card. The next summer we were married.

Karl was active on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Spenard and was a popular speaker and chairman for public meetings. He became the executive member of the Alaska National Book Sales Committee. Through him, the book sales were enlarged to include publications from Bahá'í publishers around the world. In 1960 he was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska but in the same year the weather bureau sent him to Washington, D.C., for additional training in personnel work.

In 1970 Alaska was requested to send pioneers to Swaziland. Karl, myself and my daughter, Deanne, volunteered for this assignment. We became the first caretakers of the

Leroy Ioas Institute at Mbabane. Karl was constantly working to improve the facilities.

During his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1973 Karl learned that George Ronald, Publisher, in England, could use his help. He had long nursed a desire to work at this publishing house for Marion Hofman. We moved to Oxford and lived in an apartment over the company's office. In this position Karl also worked for the Publishing Department of the Universal House of Justice.

In 1979 Karl's health forced him to give up this work to which he had devoted so much love. We returned to the United States and settled in Coos Bay, Oregon.

On 25 May 1979 the Universal House of Justice wrote to Karl, 'On the occasion of your leaving the service of the Department of Publishing we take the opportunity of expressing to you our very warm thanks and commendation for the devoted services which you have rendered over the past few years. We are very happy that you and your dear wife have been able to visit the World Centre before going back to Oregon and we offer you both a very warm welcome. Your pioneering services in Africa are remembered by us and we are sure that wherever you may be you will continue to serve the Cause with steadfast devotion. We will offer prayers for you both at the Sacred Threshold.'

After a year's illness Karl passed from this life on 7 October 1980. He was the first Bahá'í to be laid to rest in the Sunset Memorial Park in Coos Bay. On 21 October the Universal House of Justice cabled:

OUR LOVING SYMPATHY TO YOU LOSS KARL  
STEADFAST DEVOTED SERVANT BAHAUULLAH.

Karl was a generous, loving, hospitable person and was happiest when our home was humming with Bahá'í activity. His quick wit made him many friends wherever he went. We miss you, Karl, but we know you are just as busy helping as before.

LUCILLE STETTLER



Gay Stewart, June 1959

### GLADYS STEWART

Gladys "Gay" Stewart, pioneer to Juneau, Alaska passed away in Victoria, Texas in May 1978. Although information regarding her death came late to friends in Alaska, this article is being written in her memory for her teaching work she was able to do in the "lower 48", in Mexico, and in Alaska for Baha'u'llah.

Many believers in Alaska will remember her, especially in Southeast. Gay responded to the pioneering call made by Shoghi Effendi at the beginning of the 10 Year World Crusade, arriving in Juneau in 1953. She worked for the United States Government in Veteran's Administration, establishing herself through her capable and reliable ways and worked beyond the age of retirement because of her recognized ability. She established herself as a Baha'i by serving each year on the Local Assembly elected during her years of service in Alaska, and by her way of life.

Gay became the back-bone of the early Juneau group, welcoming other pioneers and assisting them in "settling in." Many of the pioneers and new believers were young couples and Gay became "Auntie Gay" as families grew and the Baha'i children came to know her and love her.

Gay was elected Secretary for the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Juneau formed in April 1957, and was the Secretary of the Local Spiritual Assembly when it incorporated in 1960, typing the legal papers herself.

Gay left Alaska in the middle 1960's to retire. But by 1968, she was back, first to Juneau, and then on to Haines. However, retirement in Alaska is both difficult and expensive, and in 1972, at the age of 78 she left again for the U.S. to retire near her family in Texas. Plans to return to



Boyd and Carroll Stormer, Pioneers to Finland

### STORMERS PIONEER TO FINLAND

Boyd and Carroll Stormer have recently pioneered to Finland in answer to the call for additional pioneers from Alaska. On May 7th their home community of Rainbow hosted a reception for them at the Wasilla Public Library and friends came from Anchorage and nearby local communities to wish them well.

Both Carroll and Boyd became Baha'is when residents of the Matanuska Valley Community, in October and November 1974, respectively. When the boundaries of the Valley area were changed by the National Assembly, the Stormers found themselves in a new area — Rainbow — and set about to

work hard for the formation of an Assembly there. They hosted many Holy Days, play days, special firesides and other activities in their attractive log home by the lake. On January 30, 1977 this all came to fruition by the formation of the Rainbow Local Spiritual Assembly.

This June, Carroll left on her pilgrimage to the Holy Land and then went to her goal post in Finland. Boyd followed several weeks later. He was fortunate to secure a position with the U.S. Veterans Administration to represent American veterans in the Scandinavian countries. Temporarily they are living with their daughter Gerry Nolen in Naantali.

visit again or stay never were realized due to problems of health, and she lived in Texas until her death in 1978.

"Auntie Gay" will be remembered for her un-reserved dedication, service and support of the Faith of Baha'u'llah and its Institutions. And for her oil painting and cinnamon rolls. She was a wonderful lady, whose way of life gave prestige and respect to the Faith!

Georgia Haisler

# Passing of Don Stickman

21 November 1920-23 February 1998

by George Baumgartner

Don Stickman, an outstanding Bahá'í of the Galena area, passed away peacefully at home on 23 February 1998 in Galena. He leaves behind his wife Jesse and their children and grandchildren. These are my recollections of my conversations with Don.

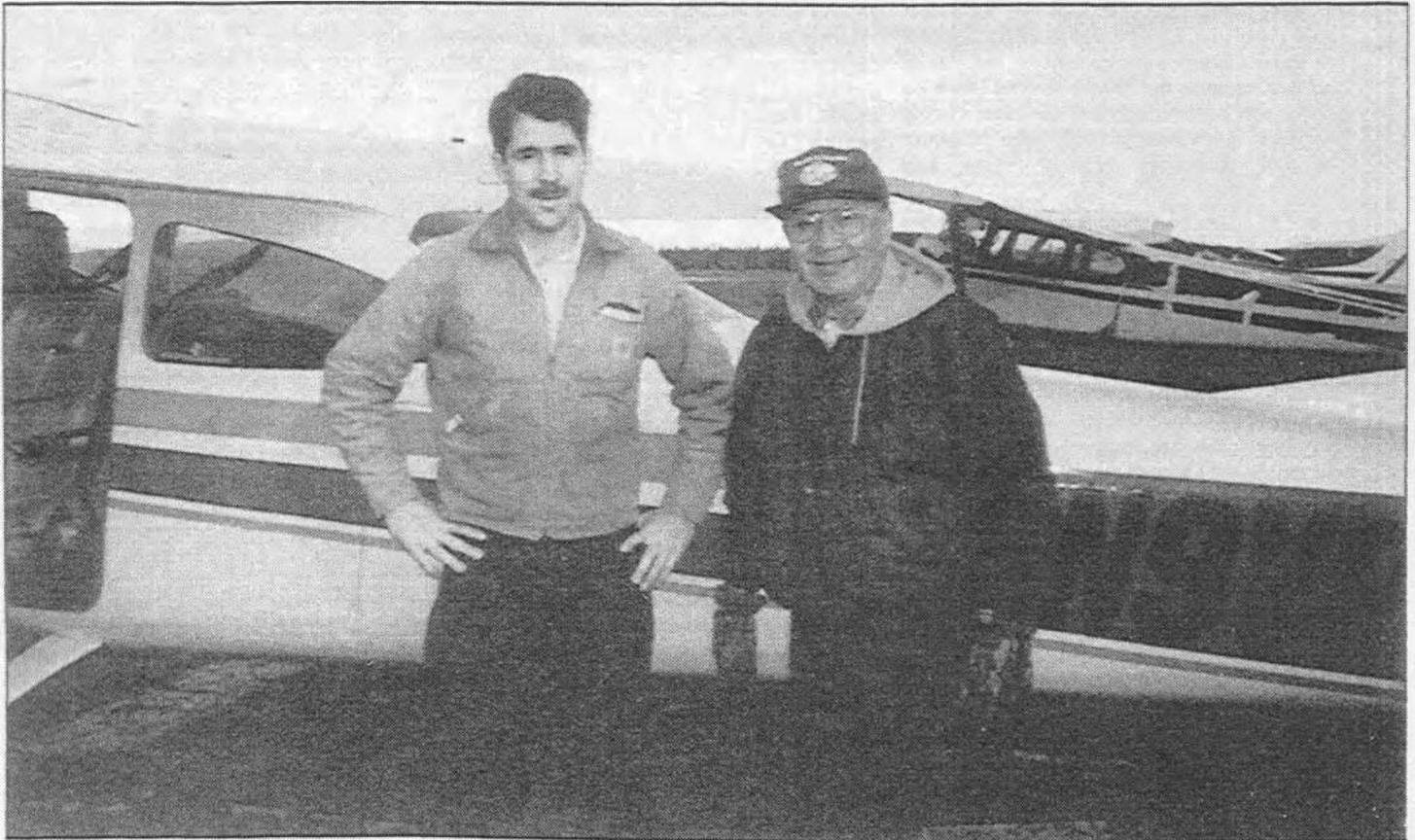
He was born in Nulato, Alaska, 21 November 1920 and spent his childhood being abused by the clergy. Forbidden to speak his own language, taken from his family, made a slave, and treated with cruelty, he suffered at the hands of those who, though claiming righteousness, sought position

and power by persecuting the masses of Native peoples. Letters he wrote to his father, describing the conditions at the religious school and treatment of the Native peoples, were confiscated and destroyed by the clergy.

Eventually, he escaped to his father and spent his time living the traditional Native life: hunting, fishing and trapping at their hunting and fishing camps. During World War II Don was a radio operator and pilot for the military. He flew countless hours back and forth along the Aleutian Islands. Flying in swiftly changing weather, Don became a highly skilled pilot and continued to fly after the war. He acquired his commercial pilot license and flew to villages along the Yukon River for many years. He met Pat and Don Myers, who pioneered to Galena some years ago, and was given the message of Bahá'u'lláh. Don became ill and was given some Bahá'í prayers for healing.

He used the prayers and soon became well again. He was so moved by the power of the prayers and the power of Bahá'u'lláh that he became a Bahá'í. Don remained steadfast in the Cause throughout his life, despite constant persecution and ridicule by the clergy and his fellow Native people. He lovingly taught the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh to those around him and recited Bahá'í prayers in both English and his Native language. Don was an athlete and remained very active until the end of his life. As a young man, he won the Seward Marathon for two of the four times he participated and as an elder, was competitive with middle-aged runners in local races. He was awarded a plaque for "Elder of the Year" by a Native Corporation, praising him for his excellence in all things. Don lived an exemplary life. I am grateful to have known him.

Photo: In McGrath, ready to depart for Galena, George Baumgartner (left) and Don Stickman, the first Alaskan Native to become a commercial pilot, stand in front of the Bahá'í plane. June 1996.  
Photo credit: Laural Baumgartner





Verne and Janet Stout with their award, presented for "Mining the gold of human hearts in the Matanuska Valley since 1958 - The Baha'is of Palmer and the Matanuska Valley presented the award.

## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN THE VALLEY

The Palmer Spiritual Assembly had the incomparable bounty of hosting a reception for Verne and Janet Stout. The occasion for the rejoicing was that more than a quarter of a century earlier the Stouts brought the Faith to the Matanuska Valley. In Janet's characteristic way she wanted it made clear that a party was in order because the Baha'i Faith was brought to the Valley and *not* because the Stouts moved there - a distinction some might not see. Her strong opinion notwithstanding, the Palmer Spiritual Assembly decided Verne and Janet deserved recognition!

It was 1942, 42 years ago, that Verne was asked if he would leave his home in Seneca Castle, near Rochester, New York to pioneer in Alaska for the formation of its first Spiritual Assembly in Anchorage. Janet was teaching school in Tuluksak on the lower Kuskokwim when she, too, was asked to pioneer to Anchorage. They were among the nine who were gathered for the formation of the mother local Spiritual Assembly of Alaska in Sept. 1943. It is somehow fitting that these two souls were brought together and met because of their responses to a request for service. They married and settled in Anchorage where their two children were born.

Fourteen years later, in 1957, they were both elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Alaska. Five members of that remarkable group arose to pioneer within Alaska during its very first year. Thus it was that in March of 1958 Verne, Janet, Dorothy and Richard Stout moved, first to Palmer, then to the well-

known Stout home five miles south of Palmer.

Not only were the Stouts the first to bring the Cause to this land of gold mining and agriculture, but they provided a golden and fruitful thread of consistent and enduring service.

Repeatedly the history of the Faith has shown the difference it makes when a dedicated pioneer family endures and establishes roots. They are often the difference between the development of a cluster of communities which survive their various struggles and thrive in contrast to those which do not. Where there is no pioneer family which stays, gains are often followed by reversals. Footholds - sometimes established at great sacrifice - are lost. The promised potential does not materialize. It does not seem to matter how clever the pioneers may be; whether they are easy to get along with; or if they have exciting and novel teaching plans; or have profound insights into the Writings; or whether they are a storehouse of practical advice; or if they are astute administratively. These qualities often exist in varying degrees. However, their primary contribution is that they stay. They endure for the long-run and remain firm through thick and thin. In addition to direct contributions, they provide the stability and continuity which enables the Cause to flourish. When this element is missing, sustained growth is often only a dream.

Other Baha'is have come and gone. Some came pioneering; some came by happenstance. Many people enrolled. Some stayed. Some left. The Stouts stayed. They endured the hard and lean times; they did what needed to be done - with or without help or encouragement from others.

During this quarter of a century they witnessed the Baha'i growth of the Matanuska Valley to Assembly status (1960) and incorporation (1973). They saw the formation of sister Assemblies in Palmer (1970), Rainbow (1977), and Wasilla (1981).

Whatever was going on for the Faith, the Stouts were there. Their wide ranging, never flagging and all consuming interest in everything Baha'i is unique. It has been an inspiration for many while their sheer energy, persistence and ways of doing things have made a few uncomfortable. For the Stouts even an emergency trip to the hospital has become an opportunity to tell the doctors and nurses about the Faith and what our Teachings say about prayer and healing.

Through it all - the comings and goings, the changes and chances - it has been the Stouts who have provided continuity so a spiritual foundation could be built which has already stood the test of time. Genera-

tions yet unborn will marvel and venerate what we today take for granted and do not always see in true perspective because we stand too close.

Baha'is from around the world can take enormous pride in the remarkable record they have established.

Believers from Oceanview, Anchorage, Eagle River, Palmer, Matanuska Valley, and Wasilla as well as friends who were not Baha'is gathered on Sunday, April 8th for the celebration. And perceptive souls round the entire Baha'i world, each in his own way, join in, because in a larger sense this celebration is a tribute to all those precious followers of Baha'u'llah who have gone and endured the vicissitudes of time and remained at their posts.

The highlight of the day was a presentation of the type of gold-pan used in prospecting. It bears the following inscription: "Presented to Verne and Janet Stout - For mining the gold of human hearts in the Matanuska Valley since 1958 - The Baha'is of Palmer and the Matanuska Valley".

## JANET WHITENACK STOUT

November 24, 1907 to February 23, 1985

Alaska has lost a remarkable woman. Of all the adjectives one can think of to describe Janet Whitenack Stout, the one which seems the least appropriate is the word ordinary. Nothing about her was ordinary. She neither conformed to the expectations of others nor rebelled against convention. She was that rare soul: a truly independent thinker.

Even her early life was unusual: She was raised in wealth in Pelham, New York; while a young girl her mother took her to Europe 3 times; as a teenager in the 1920's she had her own car; she wanted to visit Mexico, so she drove there; after completing finishing school she enrolled in and graduated from Syracuse University; her mother gave her an extra allowance of \$2,000 a year for clothing (in the 1920's!); out of this money, Janet secretly paid for typing and other clerical lessons so she could learn some practical skills; she became the Executive Director of the New York Chapter of the American Birth Control League. (She learned of the Baha'i Faith from her private secretary there, but had no serious interest in pursuing it at that time.) All of this before 1939!

That was not enough for Janet. In her excellent and well written article, "In Search of a New Way of Life" which appeared in *World Order Magazine*, Janet wrote:

"I had lived in and near New York City all my life but gradually became very dissatisfied with the high pressure tension, the hustle and bustle, the dirt and noise, and the swarms and swarms of people. There was too little nature, or space unfilled by humanity and buildings.

"But above all, I was fed up with the feverish intensity of 'keeping up with the Joneses', with the general acceptance of false standards of worth governed by money, social position, ancestry, etc.

"Inspired by stories of Alaska, I set out alone for America's last frontier to find a 'new way of life', where the individual, any individual, would be accepted on the basis of his own worth . . ."

Honor Kempton had pioneered to Alaska in response to the Guardian's plea for "nine holy souls" to arise to settle the nine remaining virgin areas, including Alaska, of the first Seven Year Plan. After just missing each other in Juneau, Honor and Janet met in Anchorage because they were each thinking of opening a book store. Janet had heard there was a Baha'i in Alaska, but never seriously thought to look up the individual. She met Honor because they were both thinking of going into the same business and didn't realize



at first that Honor was the Baha'i whom her former secretary had mentioned. During the meeting, Honor was greatly relieved that Janet planned to open her store in Fairbanks as Anchorage was not yet large enough to support 2 book stores.

Honor had been discouraged about her teaching work. She felt there was no one in Alaska interested in spiritual things and she wondered if it had been a mistake for her to come. She had been encouraged to expect miracles, but had concluded that "miracles don't happen in Alaska". Then she met Janet.

In her article Janet said, "I was not consciously looking for a religion and probably would have denied it if anyone else had suggested it to me." "On August 6th, (1939) just nine days after meeting Honor, and only five days after Honor first mentioned the Baha'i Faith to me, I told her I wanted to be a Baha'i. She was standing by the window of her apartment, a radiantly beautiful woman. There was no audible response to my declaration. She seemed stunned. She turned from me and looked out the window."

Janet described that event by saying that she wondered if she had done or said something wrong or that maybe Honor felt she was not worthy to become a Baha'i. Honor reported that she could hardly believe her ears. She said she turned away from Janet to the window to say a silent prayer of thanksgiving and remonstrated herself for being so impatient. Honor said she regarded Janet as her miracle.

Janet returned to Fairbanks and opened her book store. Two years later she had to close her store because the United States Army took all available space in Fairbanks, including that which she was renting. That became her oppor-

tunity to pioneer among the Eskimos. She got a teaching position at Tuluksak on the lower Kuskokwim. At that time, the people in the village spoke virtually no English and Janet did not speak Eskimo. It was an interesting year and a half.

In 1943 she was asked to move into Anchorage from her pioneering post in order to form the first Spiritual Assembly in Alaska. It was there that she met and later married Verne Stout.

The Stout home became the nucleus of Baha'i activity in Anchorage. Their two children, Dorothy (Arab) and Richard were both born while they were living in Anchorage. Janet was busy with her home and children, multitudinous Baha'i activities and still found time for her many other interests. When she joined the Anchorage Woman's Club, it was still racially segregated. She invited Blanche McSmith, who is black, to join. Mrs. McSmith's application for membership was challenged. Janet persisted to the point that she said she would resign if they did not accept Mrs. McSmith. They relented and Janet and Blanche broke that color barrier in the Pioneers of Alaska in much the same way.

Janet was secretary of the Alaska Teaching Committee in the all important years preceding the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly in 1957 and played a strategic role in the preparations for that first National Convention at which she was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly.

Janet and Verne were two among the five members of that body who pioneered in that first year. They sold their home in Anchorage and settled first in Palmer, then five miles outside of Palmer to open up the Matanuska Valley. A Spiritual Assembly was formed there for the first time in 1960.

If Honor is the Spiritual Member of the Baha'i community in Alaska, Janet could possibly be called the First Spiritual Daughter. She certainly had an impressive array of firsts: First to enroll after Honor's arrival; first Baha'i to live in Fairbanks; first to pioneer to an Eskimo village; on the first local Spiritual Assembly (Anchorage); elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly; first editor of the "Alaska Baha'i News"; the first marriage of a Baha'i couple; among the first to pioneer in response to a goal from the new National Spiritual Assembly; first to pioneer to Palmer and the Matanuska Valley. These are just some of the firsts. There have been many, many more.

Among Baha'is in this day, Janet will be remembered for the prodigious work she did as editor of the Alaska Baha'i News for approximately 20 years. She

earned a worldwide reputation for the excellence of that news organ. Second only to her work as editor is the spectacular service she has rendered on the Archives Committee.

Even more impressive than these achievements is Janet as a person. There are four aspects of her character that deserve special mention. One has been her intense and wide ranging interests. Another is her degree of involvement in all Baha'i affairs. A third is her undeviating reliability. This is capped off by her unusual and deep concern for people.

Right up to the end of her life she seemed to live life more fully and get more out of things than most others. There was an added dimension to all she did. For instance, hers was not an ordinary stamp collection. It was a pictorial study of Baha'i principles, of the flowers and countries of the world, of mankind's achievements, etc. To see her dance was a treat. She was more than just good; she was a dream, like a zephyr that would float over the floor soft as a summer breeze.

In 28 years she never missed a National Convention, nor a Territorial one earlier. She was one of the oldest Baha'is actively involved with the mass teaching and to attend a nine day institute during the 1970's. After recovery from hip surgery a few years ago she resumed vigorous travel teaching. In Nome a non-Baha'i commented on the Baha'is who came into town on a teaching project. He said, "I really did not take it seriously until I saw that old woman walking around . . ." In the remote village of Venetie, north of the Arctic Circle, a local resident took pity on this 70 year old woman hobbling down a dirt path and cut a diamond willow walking stick for her. It became a most prized possession.

Her word was her oath. If she said she would do something, it was assured. Others made promises; Janet delivered.

Her interest in people was unusually deep. When she asked "How are you?" she was not just making conversation with a rhetorical question. She wanted to know because she cared and she expected an answer. She was never passive, but actively involved in her many and varied organizations.

Baha'is of future centuries will remember her for other reasons. Long after the rest of us are forgotten, the name Janet Stout is apt to be recalled for three very good reasons. 1) She was the first to enroll after Honor pioneered here — the Thornton Chase of Alaska; 2) She has kept voluminous records which should prove invaluable for many a scholar of the future writing about the administrative developments in Alaska; 3) Her personal diary is probably the most complete record, not of administrative events, but of the day to day activities in the lives of

the Baha'is who played such a vital and dramatic role in the establishment of the Kingdom of God in Alaska. Indeed, the future is apt to see the first four and a half decades of the national community of the Baha'is of Alaska largely through the vision of Janet Stout. The significance of that looms even larger when one realizes that, because of Janet, Alaska probably has the best documented account of the struggles of an evolving national Baha'i community to be found anywhere in the world.

Janet had had a heart attack in September of 1983. She realized what was happening to her and reported her thoughts during that crisis: "I can't die now; I have too much to do!". For the next year and a half Janet strived with all her might to do as much as she could. Her deteriorating physical condition and failing eyesight made it difficult, so she tried harder. But, she never gave up. She participated in everything she could. On Friday, February 22, 1985 she delivered some back issues of the Alaska Baha'i News which a Baha'i had requested, attended a deepening class, took careful notes, discussed some events planned for the weeks ahead, went home to make a final entry in her diary and went to bed. She woke up in the middle of the night knowing something was wrong because she had difficulty breathing. She called an ambulance, got dressed, woke Verne and got into the ambulance under her own power. By 9:55 in the morning of Saturday, February 23, of her 78th year she consummated her "new way of life" and had finished all that she could do.

John E. Kolstoe

### I PUT THE LID ON JANET'S TYPEWRITER

*(In memory of Janet Stout, who passed away February 23, 1985.)*

Today I worked, as I have often done  
In Janet's cluttered room  
Sorting mountains of papers.

Each time I am struck with the genius  
of her,

The ABN, Archives and notes of all kinds,  
Each time I marvel, and sometimes I laugh  
At the foibles, the interest,  
The things that she saved.

Today I found the lid to her old  
beat-up machine  
and put it securely over the top.  
To my amazement I burst into tears!  
I was closing her coffin, stilling her voice!

Never again would it pour forth  
the words,  
Words and sentences, paragraphs,  
articles.

Writing articles which no one submitted,  
Correcting the grammar of those who did,  
And putting in commas,  
How Janet loved commas!

Alaska will go on, and the ABN too,  
But the genius that was Janet:  
determined devotion,  
Dedication to task, persistence, accuracy  
Will never be matched.

I didn't put the lid on Janet's typewriter,  
God did!

Beverly Kolstoe

# In Search of a New Way of Life

*Janet B. Whitenack*

"INDEED, God's ways are mysterious and unsearchable" said 'Abdu'l-Bahá. That certainly seems to have been true for me. For, although I lived only two blocks from the Bahá'í Center in New York City, the headquarters for hundreds of Bahá'ís, I had to travel five thousand miles all the way across the continent and up to Alaska, a vast Territory of half a million square miles, to find the one Bahá'í there, and to accept the Bahá'í Faith.

I had lived in and near New York City all my life but gradually became very dissatisfied with the high pressure tension, the hustle and bustle, the dirt and noise, and the swarms and swarms of people. There was too little nature, or space unfilled by humanity and buildings.

But above all, I was fed up with the feverish intensity of "keeping up with the Joneses", with the general acceptance of false standards of worth governed by money, social position, ancestry, etc.

Inspired by stories of Alaska, I set out alone for America's last frontier to find a "new way of life", where the individual, any individual, would be accepted on the basis of his own worth only; and to find the peace that comes with nature's unspoiled domain. As Bahá'u'lláh has so graphically expressed it, "The country is the world of the soul, the city is the world of bodies."

I was not consciously looking for a religion and probably would have denied it if anyone had suggested it to me, al-

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*World Order*

though the relation between religion and "a new way of life" is too obvious to need pointing out. I was a member of a Protestant Church and had always been a very faithful member in attendance and in contributions, but had never been really enthusiastic about it or about any other Christian sect. I had enjoyed going to church at home to hear the music, see the pretty altar flowers, hear the sermon, and above all, to see my friends. But it had been merely a comfortable and pleasant once-a-week habit.

My first introduction to the Bahá'í Faith came in New York City. I worked for a social service organization (the American Birth Control League) there and one memorable day in the fall of 1935 at last acquired a secretary, Grace Bastedo. I was naturally interested in her as a human being and took her to lunch soon to become better acquainted with her. She told me of her interests outside the office and inquired if I had ever heard of the Bahá'í Faith. My answer was, "No. Tell me about it." Grace's brief resumé was thought-provoking. Then she asked if I would like to go to a Fireside at her apartment to learn more about it. In saying, "Yes", my main conscious reason was to see her apartment, meet her husband, and in general to fill in my picture of her with her home background.

Soon the Fireside was held, with Judy Blakesley as the speaker. There were twenty-five or thirty in the audience and most of us sat around the floor informally on pillows. The earnestness of the speaker impressed me greatly and her theme, the cycles of nature, of civilizations, and of religion fascinated yet bewildered me. It seemed as though the door of my horizon had opened just a tiny crack, showing a dazzling, brilliant light on the other side.

After that Fireside, I went to three or four more that winter at various homes and each time the door opened a little

wider and my perception became a little clearer. However, I told Grace then that I was "too busy" to go to any more Firesides as I was afraid that if I learned much more about the Bahá'í Faith I might want to drop everything else and devote all my time to it. How prone we mortals are to put everything first but religion!

In the Spring of 1939, when I was preparing to go to Alaska, Grace asked if I wanted to look up the new Bahá'í pioneer in Alaska. I replied in the affirmative, more to be polite than anything else. But Grace couldn't get the name for me before I left. Details of the new Alaskan pioneer had not yet reached New York. She didn't know if the pioneer were a man or a woman, or where the pioneer was planning to settle. So I promptly forgot all about it. I wasn't consciously interested in the Bahá'í Faith at the time so avoided Chicago and its environs on my way West, not liking big cities. How I regret that now, as I have never seen the Temple at Wilmette and do not know when I can get back East again!

From Seattle I sailed on the S.S. Alaska and arrived in Juneau, Alaska, on May 30, 1939. I made some very good friends on the boat and, after getting a room at the Baranof Hotel, went down to the dock again to see them continue their trip northward on the S.S. Alaska to Seward. . . . Little did I realize how much a new passenger on that boat would come to mean to me two months later.

Before leaving New York I had decided to spend the whole summer selecting my new home and occupation in Alaska and had promised myself that I would not be lured into settling down any place until I had looked over Juneau, Anchorage and Fairbanks. Accordingly, I spent a month in Juneau, and although I made some good friends there, knew that I would not like it well enough to stay permanently.

I then flew to Fairbanks—a magnificent flight over snow

covered mountains, and then rolling, fertile fields—and liked it immediately. In less than two weeks I had decided that Fairbanks was the one place in the whole world for me. I loved the spirit of friendliness, of community-mindedness, of the general respect for one's fellowmen regardless of station. They were wholesome, intelligent, courteous people who insisted on being themselves regardless of what others might think of them.

However, before settling down in Fairbanks, I went to Anchorage in order to carry out my original promise. At the time there seemed to be no other reason for going.

When people asked me what I was going to do, I said that I was thinking of starting a bookstore. At a tea a few days after my arrival, Vivian Kinsell\*\* said that another lady, Honor Kempton, had gotten ahead of me in Anchorage, had ordered her books and found a location for her store.

In order to make sure of this I went to see Honor. (This was on July 28th.) It was true; she was starting a bookstore and had invested all the money she could spare for books. She was delighted to know that I was only in the thinking stage as Anchorage was not big enough for two bookstores. I told her frankly that I really planned to settle in Fairbanks, and that I probably would start a bookstore there.

We spent several hours comparing notes on how to establish a bookstore, and talking over our impressions of Alaska. Strangely enough, Honor had also looked over Juneau before finding her "anchorage" in Alaska, preceding me by about six weeks. She had actually taken the S.S. Alaska from Juneau the very day I had disembarked from her, and I had watched the boat sail! But it was meant for us to meet, and meet we did in Anchorage, although each of us reached that city from

\*\*Vivian became a Believer in the Spring of 1942.

opposite directions—Honor from the South and I from the North. She did not tell me then that she had left San Francisco that Spring in response to the Guardian's plea in his cablegram of January 26, 1939, for nine "holy souls" to pioneer in virgin territories. We did not mention the Bahá'í Faith that day.

But three days later, on August 1st (the Feast of Perfection) Honor invited me to dinner and then asked me if I had ever heard of the Bahá'í Faith. I said "Yes", but had to grope consciously to remember the principles I had heard discussed in New York City four years earlier. I suddenly realized that Honor was the pioneer Grace Bastedo had referred to before I left New York.

Honor gave me several pamphlets to read later at my leisure, and they gripped me instantly. From then on, I sought out Honor daily and we had wonderful long walks, picnics, and discussions, and I could feel myself being irresistibly seized by a Great Power. Those few days of deep companionship with Honor were a rare treat as neither of us had any family or business ties, and we could walk and talk endlessly without thought of responsibilities to others.

On August 6th, just nine days after meeting Honor, and only five days after Honor first mentioned the Bahá'í Faith to me, I told her I wanted to be a Bahá'í. She was standing by the window of her apartment, a radiantly beautiful woman. There was no audible response to my declaration. She seemed stunned. She turned from me and looked out the window. So I repeated my wish, and asked, "What do I do, Honor?" Then she came to me, patted me on the head, and said, "God bless you, Janet."

To my surprise, when I got settled in a log cabin in Fairbanks a month later, and opened my trunks for the first time since leaving New York, I found four Bahá'í pamphlets which

Grace Bastedo had given me four years earlier. When I had pulled up stakes in New York I had thrown out literally barrels of old papers and "stuff", but I now recalled looking at these pamphlets and thinking, "I'd like to read these again some time." So I had sent them thousands of miles through the Panama Canal to Seattle and all the way to Interior Alaska!

As I had an appointment in Fairbanks the middle of August, I reluctantly left Anchorage on August 10th. I had known Honor for less than two weeks, and had seen her on just nine different days, but I was returning to Fairbanks a new woman who had truly found a "new way of life." For Bahá'u'lláh had seized my life. "Then will the manifold favours and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. . . . He will discover in all things the mysteries of Divine Revelation and the evidences of an everlasting Manifestation."

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Religion must reconcile and be in harmony with science and reason. If the religious beliefs of mankind are contrary to science and opposed to reason, they are none other than superstitions and without divine authority; for the Lord God has endowed man with the faculty of reason in order that through its exercise he may arrive at the verities of existence. Reason is the discoverer of the realities of things; and that which conflicts with its conclusions is the product of human fancy and imagination.

—'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Verne Stout  
1897 - 1995

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 6 years as of 1999. First elected in 1956.

Verne Stout credited his pinochle partner for bringing him to an acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh. That was while he was living in Geneva, New York. In 1944, when he was 45 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 and with extra effort it would be possible to form an administrative institution before its conclusion. Verne was fond of recalling that Kenneth's letter, which beckoned him to the pioneering field, needed only a 2¢ stamp.

Verne agreed and became the first man ever to pioneer for the Bahá'í Faith to Alaska. Eleven women had preceded him in serving in that far-north land, which had been considered the land of sourdoughs and other "he-men." When Verne arrived in Anchorage, in June of 1943, it was hard 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, then someone else would sleep in it.

He met his future wife, Janet Whitenack, when she arrived from Tuluksak, Alaska, to help form that first Spiritual Assembly. Verne rented a taxi and went to the train depot to pick her up. He remembered paying 25¢ for each of the 13 small boxes which constituted her luggage. That was his first adventure with his wife to be.

The Spiritual Assembly of Anchorage was duly formed on September 8, 1943. The membership consisted of Verne, one other man and seven women. Shortly thereafter, the other man left Alaska. In the by-election, it was bachelor Verne and eight women, most of whom were single. He married Janet Whitenack, who was also originally from New York state, and their home on 10th 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 to the Matanuska Valley in 1958.

Verne was Chairman of the memorable Alaska State Convention of 1953. At that time there were forty some Bahá'ís living in 11 different communities. All had been stunned by the news that Alaska was to have its own National Spiritual Assembly. Someone at the Convention 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 formed. Verne, as chairman, monitored the discussion, reached in 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 of 1954, Leroy Ioas, writing in behalf of the Guardian wrote: "He (the Guardian) was pleased with the establishment of the fund for the Hazíra for Alaska...."

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 to make it suitable. Verne was the major force behind the renovation and he found it difficult to get reliable volunteer help. He was fixing and doing right up to a half an hour before the formal dedication, which was conducted by Florence Mayberry in August of 1954.

In 1957 Verne and Janet were both elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska. By the end of that first year, Verne 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. He lived there for nearly 30 years until the infirmities of age required a move to a retirement home in Palmer in 1986. 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.

In 1963 Verne attended the first International Convention in Haifa, Israel for the 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 age. His gentle manner, kindness of heart, demeanor, composure and aura of serenity were best expressed by an acquaintance who remarked these simple words with musical eloquence in his voice: "Now, there is a gentleman." His portrait is one of seven of the early believers which are displayed at the National Hazíratu'l-Quds of Alaska.

On June 28, 1995, at the age of 97, 52 years after pioneering to Alaska, Verne's soul winged its flight to the 'Abhá Kingdom. He was preceded in death by 10 years by his wife Janet, and is buried by her side. These two illustrious pioneers, side by side, buried their bones at their pioneer post.

News of his passing was conveyed to the Universal House of Justice and the Secretariat responded as follows:

*The Universal House of Justice has received your email message of 29 June 1995 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.*

*Department of the Secretariat*

Victor A. Wong

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for <1 year as of 1999. First elected in 1976.

Victor is a Chinese-American who came to Alaska as part of a singing group during the Massive Encounter of the early 1970s. The group of which he was a part disbanded, but Victor became very much involved with the intensive teaching activities of that period.

A musical group known as Windflower was formed and Victor was an integral part of that group for the rest of his time in Alaska. He did much of the musical arranging. They traveled throughout Europe where they were well received.

Victor is not robust. The strenuous duties of the teaching team were a great hardship for him. A measure of his devotion was shown when he was a part of a group that taught in the villages along the Yukon River. The group traveled by boat from village to village. Victor had severe reactions to mosquito bites and the river was heavily infested. While going down the river in the heat the day, Victor would have to wear heavy clothing including gloves and a mosquito net over his head. Despite the unbearable heat, he persevered in doing his part to spread the Message of Bahá'u'lláh on the Yukon River.

When the Windflowers were travel teaching and singing in Europe, Victor was often mistaken by the audiences for an Eskimo since the group came from Alaska. There is a picture taken in England and the caption calls him an Eskimo. An Eskimo believer from Alaska laughed when she saw the picture and gave

Victor the name of Wongapuk—which sounds similar to many genuine Eskimo names. This name of endearment was used in association with Victor for many years.



## Lloyd Sutton: In Memoriam

by Laurie Nix

The Office of Native Teaching and Development prepared the graveside service and memorial service for Mr. Lloyd Sutton, Tlingit Baha'i who declared in 1963 in Sitka. After a lengthy illness Lloyd passed away peacefully in his sleep July 13, 1996. He was 63. Counsellor Laretta King, and her husband Lynn who was Lloyd's Sitka High School classmate, participated. Mr. William Jackson of the 'Naa Luudisk Gwaii Yatx'i' dance group in Anchorage sang a Tlingit mourning song. Rita Blumenstein, who called herself a Tlingit in spirit, shared a Spirit song in honor of Lloyd.

A special contribution to the service was presented by representatives Herb Hope, Mary Lekanof, Harriet Beale and Arnold Didrickson from the Anchorage chapter of Tlingit and Haida Central Council. They paid their respects by remembering Mr. Sutton's contribution to that organization as an advocate for his people. Others who addressed the family were Mr. Charlton Smith, Sealaska Board member, the Anchorage Local Spiritual Assembly, who acknowledged Lloyd's contribution administratively as a former Anchorage LSA Chairman; and other individuals from his Baha'i and Native family. A special contribution at the

graveside service was "Blessed is the Spot" sung by Greeta Brown from Anchorage. Gavin Reed, John Kolstoe, Maynard Eaken, Laurie Nix, Charlotte Siverly and Walter Austin also participated in the services. Lloyd will be remembered as a humble and steadfast servant of the Faith

The Baha'i Faith has recognized Lloyd's many acts of service over the years, not only administratively but for his work in 1985 in Fairbanks at the Continental Indigenous Council, a gathering of Native Baha'is from around the country. He traveled to Russia and it was an experience that he often spoke of with enthusiasm and with great regard for the people he met there. He generously provided hospitality until his very last days on earth. Over the years many have been the recipients of his welcoming spirit.

One of the Writings of the Faith used often to describe the Indigenous people of the world is from the Arabic *Hidden Words*, No. 22: "Noble Have I Created Thee..." Lloyd deserves to be called noble as a strong and proud Tlingit man as well as a member of God's world community. Lloyd was Kaagwaantaan, Eagle moiety, and grew up in Juneau and Sitka. Herb Hope, on behalf of the Anchorage Native community, acknowledged Lloyd's service:

"... he served his Native people for many years as an officer and delegate — always ready and willing and always well informed on many issues facing our people."

'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "These days are swiftly passing and this mortal life will remain fruitless and without result. Therefore, while there is yet time and the arrow is in the bow, enter ye the chase and strike ye the game. This game is the good-pleasure of God, and this chase is the merciful Providence; that is, living in accord with the divine instructions." The Baha'i community and the Native community in Alaska bid a fond farewell to our Brother Lloyd Sutton.



Lloyd Sutton in a recent photo.

Photo Credit:  
Laurie Nix

## Martha Trigg

1/18/44 - 2/9/78

When Ruhyyih Khanum was in Alaska in 1973 she had her picture taken with Martha Trigg while Martha was wearing her lovely, traditional Eskimo parka. After hearing of Martha's death, the Universal House of Justice sent a copy of the picture to Alaska for possible use in the *Nome Haziratu'l-Quds*. The National Spiritual Assembly thought it would be appropriate to use the photograph together with a memorial article for Martha in the *Alaska Baha'i News*.

Martha Noyakuk Trigg's Eskimo name, Nakiya, was highly significant. It meant "a point for guidance." When the hunters or travellers would be out in their skin boats a familiar landmark could mean the difference between life and death.

Martha never had an easy life. It was filled with trouble and turbulence. Yet the Baha'i Faith, the Baha'i Writings and the love for 'Abdu'l-Baha remained her "point of guidance" from which she derived both strength and direction.

At one low point in her life she had been home alone for a long time when her husband, Jerome, arrived. She had been weeping and fallen asleep. On the table were several pages of partial quotations from the Baha'i Writings, such things as: "Oh, God! My God! My Beloved, my heart's desire." She had written down so many of these beautiful touches of God which reach out — not with new and profound truths for a new Day — but with a tender touch of love, reaching, touching, and soothing a wounded and heavy heart.

Maybe because Martha knew trouble up close she was especially good at soothing other troubled hearts. She was often a "point for guidance" for others as she gave assurance, new hope and gentle, but sound advice.

Martha was born in Mary's Igloo, Alaska on January 18, 1944. Most of her younger years were spent with her grandparents, John and Alice Kakaruk, whom she called Papa and Mama. From them she learned much of the old days, of her great-grandfather who had been a Shaman (medicine man or holy man). He had seen good in Christianity and had encouraged his people to become Catholics. She learned the Eskimo dances, the songs and legends. She learned to love her heritage.

Martha was about 13 years old, living in Nome on the Bering Sea when a new sign appeared on an old house. It said, "Baha'i Center." It was the home of pioneers Warren and Kathy Rodgers. Many of her friends were frightened and turned away. Martha became curious and wanted to know what it was all about. A deep interest developed and Martha introduced her grandmother to that which she had found. The interest grew to a deep



Hand of the Cause Ruhyyih Khanum and Martha Trigg, 1973.

bond of love despite the fact that the Priest had warned them that this new thing was from the Devil and that if they had anything to do with the Baha'is they would go to hell.

About three years later, when Martha and her grandparents were living in Anchorage, a Baha'i who had met the family in Nome introduced them to the Baha'is of the Anchorage area. Soon she became a live-in babysitter in our home — learning more about the Faith as she helped with the household. "San," that Korean term of endearment had captured her fancy, so she was "Martha-san," I was forever "Papa-san," and my wife, Beverly, was "Mama-san."

On February 12, 1961, Martha became a Baha'i and developed a deep love for the Writings and history of the Faith. One day, while she was reading *Release the Sun*, I unsuspectingly walked into the room and she leaped out of her chair, arm waving, over her head, shouting "Mount your steeds, Oh, heroes of God." That became a watchword which would move her to action throughout her life.

On January 3, 1963, Martha married Jerome Trigg, Jr. Jerome, Martha and the four lovely Trigg children: Valerie, Pamela, Jerome III (Koodook) and Sara (Suki) were well received and well loved wherever they lived. At various times they lived in the Baha'i communities of Soldotna, Haines, Bethel and Kotzebue in addition to Anchorage and Nome. Wherever they would go the same thing would be heard, from school authorities and neighbors: "What a nice family. They are always welcome back."

It was one of Martha's greatest joys when members of her family, including

her beloved grandmother, two sisters, an uncle and all four children became Baha'is. When her husband, Jerome, embraced the Cause during a visit of Hand of the Cause John Roberts on Ridvan 1967 they became the first Eskimo Baha'i couple in the whole world.

Martha was one of the first Baha'is to realize that something special had to be done to reach the native people. Frequently she was asked to consult on ways to bring Baha'u'llah's Message to the Natives. She participated in a special panel during the Convention of 1969 which provided a major breakthrough in Native teaching.

When mass proclamation and mass teaching started in the early 70's Jerome and Martha were among the first to join in. With pride and dignity Martha would wear her beautiful, long, fur, traditional dancing parka which her grandmother had made for her. (That is the parka she is wearing in the picture with Ruhyyih Khanum.) It was complete with the special frills and adornments which make each parka unique. She would dance the Eskimo dances, tell of the old ways and tell how the old lead right up to the coming of Baha'u'llah. She would dance in the best of settings with the best of Eskimo drummers and singers, or, with equal enthusiasm, she would dance on make-shift stages with a tape-recording and make-believe Eskimo drummers. In the north, the west, the Aleutian chain, Kodiak Islands, throughout the islands, cities, and villages of south-east Alaska she would dance and tell of Baha'u'llah.

On a bitterly cold night in Nome on February 9, 1978, the stove overheated and burned down the house  
(Continued on Page 3)

## HOW I BECAME A BAHAI

By Don Van Brunt

At 7:45 p.m. I jumped out of the sack, threw on my clothes, ran down the stairs and sloshed rapidly through a heavy rain to get to the American Legion "Dug-out" by 8 o'clock ...to a "religious meeting."

"What!?" Half way across the street I stopped. "What in the H ...s the matter with you, Van Brunt? You're nuts!" I went back to the curb and leaned on a wet pole..."Nuts...and wide awake...and wet...Go back home, stupid, you've got three more hours to sleep!" (before graveyard shift at the Ketchikan Pulp Mill).

All I recall about the newspaper ad was that it was very small and announced a meeting that appeared to be about religion, "at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7, at the Dugout," and I clearly recall tossing the thought aside with a, "Who wants to go to a religious meeting?"

This was in Ketchikan in 1959. After over seventeen years of searching and praying to God for "understanding" and "the purpose for my being," I could not know that the answer to it all was just a couple of blocks up the street. I was still fighting the guidance for which I had so long and fervently prayed. As I leaned against that soggy pole, thoughts flashed through my mind. How long I stood there I do not know. I was way back along the long trail of the years:

FLASH -- 1948: A trip from Grand Junction, Colorado to San Francisco, California, to investigate "Mental Physics" ...Listened to the founder of this philosophy speak, completely discrediting his scheme in my eyes ... Left with no further contact.

FLASH -- Years later, 1957: 3 a.m. on a winding coastal road from Seattle to Fresno...doing 90 mph plus...sharp curve sign coming up...kept foot on pedal. "O God! I'd just as soon it'd be now." But the time was not up yet; the road stayed beneath me.

FLASH -- December 1958: Santa Cruz, Calif. ...Gave away clothes, books, things ...sold car...turned down good sign-painting job...tried to find way to ship out to India to search Vedanta (Hindu) at its source...No jobs on ships.

San Francisco -- Same thing...No jobs on ships.

Seattle -- Same thing...Seamen in Union Hall with no work...No chance... Had about \$85. and was wearing everything else I owned, which included no rain gear and no winter clothing at all.

FLASH -- Pan Am ticket office, Seattle...Sign in window "Alaska \$66.00", Bought ticket...Arrived Ketchikan with \$6.75 on December 16, 1958...just before Christmas...No jobs...No one knew of any job possibilities..."Do you have any kind of work for me?" Next place: "Do you know anyone who needs help with anything?" Next afternoon: "Yes, how would you like to clean out our warehouse?"

From the bottom it is clear that the only way one can go is UP. You can guess that I went to that meeting...You can be sure that a strong Hand pulled me to it. Bill DeForge, dynamic Auxiliary Board member, was there. From the time he first talked about Baha'i, and I had read all the pamphlets that were given to me that first night, there was never a doubt that I had found the Source of answers to all possible problems, and, in addition, a new world had opened up: From a state of chronic "Don't-give-a-damn-itis" to a state of unquestioned sureness, immediate and complete. The next evening I inquired as to how I might join the Baha'i Community! My card bears a June 4 date, but the important date for me is April 7 -- when I discovered my religion had a name.

My story may be a little different from that of others in the matter of length of search, almost instant recognition at the last, and complete blindness until the moment that the final veil was lifted. At least twice every month for four years I had driven by the "Baha'i Summer School" sign over the entrance at Geyserville, Calif. If I had seen it, I probably thought it was "Bna'i Brith", the Jewish organization.

My life began at age 45. Just a brief mention will suffice to show how overflowing the years have been with bounties: Summer Schools, Yukon Conferences Winter Workshops, Kenai Institute, custodian of the first National Office in Anchorage, teaching trips in Alaska, Canada, United States, Mexico, all Central American countries; attendance at the Most Great Jubilee in London in 1963, Panama Conference, pilgrimage travel in European countries, twice serving on the NSA of Alaska, being a member of five LSA's and holding all offices on LSA's, helping to form 3 LSA's (Matanuska Valley, Unalaska and Valdez), carrying out speaking engagements, teaching children's classes and classes at many Baha'i schools and institutes, activities at Fairs; and marriage to a dedicated, capable and loving wife, Marie Guffey.

And, in addition to all these great Blessings, we have had material "showers of blessings" in undreamed of proportions, and health and loving friends. As if all that were not enough, a number of times we have had the unexcelled thrill of helping other souls to find this great gift of God, of being channels "through which the Holy Spirit may flow to others."

And as a final acknowledgment, Marie and I have been able to help form four original LSA's between us. Our guest book has names and memories of those who have shared our homes, our refreshments, and in most cases a bit of our way of life--folks from many states and many countries.

As we say so often, "Thank you, Baha'u'llah."

--DON VAN BRUNT

November 1978

## MARTHA TRIGG

(Continued from Page 2)

where Martha had been temporarily staying. Four people, including Martha, died in that fire. No other members of her family were involved.

Twenty-one years after she was the first Eskimo youth of Nome attracted by the strange word "Baha'i", she was the first to have a Baha'i funeral. Two months after her death, pictures of her were shown as part of a special slide show presented at the Fourth International Convention in Haifa showing Baha'i teaching activities around the world. Five months after her death, her picture appeared with others on the cover of a special edition of the U.S. Baha'i News about activities in Alaska.

Her well-worn prayer book, which somehow had missed the fire, was used at her memorial service. The service itself was simple with pictures of Martha adorning the casket together with lit candles and fresh cut roses — a flower which she loved so well because the rose to Martha symbolized the many blessings of Baha'u'llah's Revelation. In her prayer book she had written many of her favorite quotations. There were also greetings from some friends and several Hands of the Cause. Almost prophetically, inside the front cover appears these simple words which I read at the funeral of Martha-san — Nakiya: "Oh God! Thou Who art adored. I am from Thee and unto Thee I come."

John E. Kolstoe

## THE VAN BRUNTS LEAVE FOR ICELAND

Two of Alaska's most devoted, hard-working servants of Baha'u'llah, Don and Marie Van Brunt, left Alaska in March for their new pioneer post in Iceland. Almost all but the newest Alaskan Baha'is have been warmed and comforted by their love, as they have served the Faith in so many ways in so many areas.

Marie came to Alaska from Ohio in 1954 to form the first Local Assembly in Fairbanks. She and her husband, Elmer Guffey, purchased a home which was the principal center in Fairbanks during the early years of that Baha'i community existence. In 1960 they again moved to a new post to help establish the first Local Assembly in the Matanuska Valley. In June 1961, Elmer lost his life in an accident while working at the Sparrevohn Air Force Station.

Don came to Alaska in 1959 and became a Baha'i in Ketchikan that June. He also heeded the call for pioneer settlers in 1960 to help form the first Assembly in the Matanuska Valley. In 1963, he and Marie were married in London, where they had gone for the Jubilee Celebration.

After driving to the Intercontinental Conference in Panama in 1967, the Van Brunts moved to Valdez to pioneer in that goal city. While working toward a Local Assembly there, Don felt that he could also help form the first Local Assembly in the Aleutians in Unalaska, so he moved there for a few months, and that Assembly was established in April 1969. He later returned to Valdez, and the Assembly was formed there in April 1970, with the help of new and old Baha'is.

Both Don and Marie have given classes at numerous summer schools and institutes, and Marie has served faithfully as cook at many of these gatherings. At one time, Don was resident in the first Alaska National Haziratu'l-Quds in Anchorage, and he has twice served on the national body.

This is but a very brief resume of these two dear friends, who will be sorely missed in Alaska. But they are carrying Baha'u'llah's Fire and Light to another north-land to melt the snow there.

### GOING-AWAY PARTIES

At their last scheduled fireside in their home in Valdez, Don and Marie were overjoyed to accept another declaration that of Irene Coonrod. They left in a few days on a teaching trip en route to Fairbanks, where they visited Ray and Gloria Guffey who now own the family home. The Guffeys had an Open House for the Van Brunts and many of their old friends came to wish them well.

Their next stop was Palmer and the Matanuska Valley, where the friends of those communities put on a lovely reception on March 11th. About 75 attended. Sandra Humphrey and Marzieh Miller made most attractive hors d'oeuvres,



DON AND MARIE VAN BRUNT in front of their home in Valdez, February 1971.

(Valdez has lots of snow!)

and Betty Lee Summers baked a Farewell cake. John Kolstoe was chairman for the evening and explained to the assembled guests Alaska's assigned responsibilities in the international field. These include financial assistance to the purchase of Temple sites in Luxembourg and in Liberia, and furnishing pioneers to Iceland by this Ridvan. The Alaskan National Assembly and individual believers have also contributed to the Panama Temple Fund, to the International Fund in Israel for development of the properties at the World Centre, and for other activities; to the International Deputization Fund and to the Continental Fund of North America.

The final stop for the Van Brunts in Alaska was in Anchorage-Spenard. Bill McKinley hosted a fireside on Saturday night and Janet Smith, National Secretary, provided the Sunday night fireside just before Don and Marie boarded the plane for Outside. They plan to visit their families before leaving the States.

After April 10th, the Van Brunts' address in Iceland is c/o Odinsgata 20, Reykjavik, Iceland.

### VAN BRUNT TEACHING TRIP

While the November teaching trip by Don Van Brunt took three weeks, this followup was made in three days. (See photos in preceding three issues of November trip.) On the first lap of their trip to Iceland as pioneers, Marie and Don Van Brunt left Valdez at 7:30 in the evening on March 3rd., getting into Glennallen late because of icy roads and high winds. They were invited to park their camper at a newly completed motel by the Claytons, who operate "Santa's Cafe".

In the morning, they told the Claytons and Ida Roberson about going to Iceland. Mrs. Clayton, for many years, published a paper called "Copper River Current", in which the Matanuska Valley Assembly used to have weekly inserts of "Words for the World" type.

They visited Julie Cesarini and her new daughter at the Glennallen Hospital and also visited with Julie's roommate, Lois Johnson, whom they had met at the Chuck Larsons' about two years ago when Sam Ezi had taken pictures of her and her family. Still in Glennallen they visited with John and Iris Tiffany and Brice, and had a chance to meet Mrs. Keith Maxwell, Marge and Lee Adler in John's office and talk about Iceland and the Baha'i Faith.

They had a brief visit with Fred and Stella Ewan, owners of the E. & E. Store in Gulkana Village. At the Lodge at Chistochina, they met Red and Wanda James. Marian Johnson and Joyce Norman have talked with them and when they asked about Iceland it provided the opportunity for visiting. They were introduced to Lucy John, who is 100 years old.

On March 5th, at Mentasta Village, after a night with old friends, Jim and Mary Frey and Phil from Palmer, now living at Mile 58 Tok cutoff, they renewed acquaintances with Fred and Katie John, Frank and Evie Sandford and the school teacher, Richard Schultz and family.

They spent the evening and the night of the 5th in Tanacross with Bea Lake and family, who is reading "Baha'u'llah and the New Era". Marian Johnson and Joyce Norman have visited them also. All communities have been told about a proclamation team to come later on.

At Dot Lake, Abraham and Eva Luke and Marlene Sally, their daughter, live there, as does Andrew Izaak, brother of the chief of Tanacross. There is a boarding school there. Adolph Gray, the school teacher, is enthusiastic about the Faith and has seen the House of Worship in Wilmette and hopes to correspond with the Van Brunts in Iceland.

Rosa McMillan, at the Buffalo Lodge in Delta Junction, was told briefly of the Baha'i Faith and given a "Communion with God".

## With Our Pioneers - - -

Eugene, Ethel and Elaine Van Zanten  
Bethel, Alaska

Bethel, a city with a permanent population of 1600, predominantly Eskimo, is the metropolis and commercial hub for an area of about 85,000 square miles. This district encompasses the mouths and lower reaches of Alaska's two great rivers, the Yukon and Kuskokwim, and is a vast, treeless tundra containing numerous nameless lakes, sloughs, and meandering streams.

It is listed as an area of "persistent unemployment," according to the classification of the U.S. Department of Labor. According to a *New York Times* staff writer who visited this area last fall, the "poorest American citizens are some 12,000 Eskimos and Athabaskan Indians" living in the Bethel district. Housing is critically short in Bethel, even for white people. Disease rates are remarkably high, with 12 of every 100 babies dying before they are a year old.

Surely this area is a great challenge to our Baha'i pioneers, Eugene and Ethel Van Zanten, who transferred there last fall from Delta Junction. Ethel teaches second grade in the public school and Gene is the Music Supervisor for grades 8-12.

The Van Zantens are the first resident pioneers since Agnes and Wally Harrison and Bernard Blumenstein left that area in 1960. During this earlier period, the first public proclamation of the Faith was made by Florence Mayberry, who visited Bethel on a teaching trip in February 1958.



Ethel and Gene Van Zanten with  
Baby Elaine and Pat Armstrong,  
Youth.

Gene Van Zanten happily writes this account for their Baha'i friends:

"Just a few words from the pioneers here in Bethel. Here is a picture of Ethel, baby Elaine and myself along with the first Bethel declaration. This picture was taken during Intercalary Days this year at the Open House we held for the neighbors.

"The first Bethel Declaration is Pat Armstrong. Pat is a Sophomore here at the Bethel High School. He first learned of the Faith over at Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island as the result of pioneer Bud Revet. Pat's folks teach over there and they are pretty close to declaring themselves also. Pat's brother just got back from the "Lower 48" and Bud has been "Firesiding" him until all hours of the morning.

Eugene and Ethel (Patti) Van Zanten

These devoted Bahá'ís have been followers of Bahá'u'lláh for over 36 years. They have served as homefront pioneers throughout Alaska, in places as diverse as Delta Junction, Bethel, Eagle River, and Skagway. They have served on Local Spiritual Assemblies, as committee members and in any and every way they could. Both Eugene and Patti have backgrounds and academic training in music. Eugene is retired music teacher from a number of schools in Alaska. He has also been a professional musician and willing performer, sharing his talents with the Bahá'í communities. Patti recently retired from her work as a librarian in Anchorage, enabling them to pioneer to Lithuania, where they continue to teach and serve .

"We had an Open House on Sunday, February 26, at our house. We invited all of the neighbors and about 7 women, one man and 14 children attended. There were a few questions about the Faith, and I think that it was a real success. Many of our neighbors received clothing as a result of Dolores Smith and the Fairbanks area Baha'is. We received four large boxes of clothing and in no time they were empty. We did not know how we were going to distribute them, but our baby sitter took care of this and all of the items went to really needy people.

"During the first week of school, the school paper interviewed us as new teachers. One of the questions they asked us was why we came to Bethel, and we told them that we came to pioneer for the Baha'i World Faith. As a result, everyone knows about us and many have been asking questions.

"We feel we have been very successful in spreading the Word of Baha'u'llah here in Bethel and can see a real need for the Teachings. We have already made plans to come back next year and continue our teaching efforts here."

George M. H. Wang

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 6+ years as of 1999. First elected in 1972.

George was from the Jiansu Province of Mainland China. After the communist take-over, he escaped to Hong Kong under the floorboards of a boat. In Hong Kong he worked as a bookkeeper with a partner in a tailor shop. By age 34 George was married and had four children.

He had a thirst for knowledge. While still in Hong Kong, George applied for admission to the University of Alaska and was accepted as a freshman. While there he met Robin Fowler and became a Bahá'í on August 13, 1962.

When George was a child, before the Chinese Revolution, his grandmother had become a Christian. She would take him to church with her. He also attended traditional Buddhist functions with his mother and father. This caused great confusion for George. He loved his parents and he loved his grandmother. Why was there a difference in the way they worshipped? Who was right? Who was wrong? Wasn't there some common ground? Once he found the Faith, George was able to appreciate the validity of both.

George's family had not come with him to Fairbanks. With the assistance of Bahá'í sponsorship, he was able to move his family from Hong Kong. Their fifth child was born in Fairbanks. George and his wife, Mary Lu, did custodial work for expense money so George could continue in school. Even though George had a limited knowledge of English before moving to Fairbanks, his school record was so outstanding that his name was placed on a wall plaque in the Bunnell Building as "Student of the Year" for 1964(?)

After graduating from college with a degree in accounting, George was employed as an accountant for the Golden Valley Electric Association in Fairbanks.

George is the first Bahá'í of either Chinese or Buddhist background to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly. It was not easy for him because Chinese was his mother tongue and consultation proved difficult. The fast pace of exchange and frequent use of unfamiliar idioms were especially difficult to follow. In talking about idiomatic speech, he was asked about any figures of speech that were common in Chinese. He smiled and said: "Never swat a fly that's on the back of a tiger."

The language difficulty for him was so severe that at times he would get headaches from the need of concentrating so hard. Yet, George persisted and gave a perspective which was unique and treasured. By his nature he highlighted the value of courtesy and he was able to share, in so many beneficial ways, the insights from his culture.

In 1978 migraine headaches and fatigue forced George to resign from the National Spiritual Assembly which he had served so well.

In 1981 George retired from his position as Chief Accountant of the Golden Valley Electric Association.

Since that time George and Mary Lu have lived in Anchorage, where he served on the National Chinese Teaching Committee for several years.

## ALFRED WITHROW JAN. 1, 1906 — NOV. 7, 1987

Now and again, if you're lucky, you meet up with a man who is so special that he stands in a class by himself.

Rough and rugged and tender of heart, he was pure Alaskan sourdough. "One of the old timers" is the way some of the Natives would say it.

Dreamer and visionary, yet practical and direct, such a man was Al Withrow.

He lived all over Alaska and did a variety of things — fisherman, gold miner, trapper, hunter and telegraph operator. His wife, whom he adored, was the last of the Athabascan Indian medicine people. Even after she died, he was in awe of her and her special powers. He figured she was a vital part of that process which lead him to recognize and accept Bahá'u'lláh.

Al had retired and was living with his step-daughter and her family between Clear and Nenana. One day, in a used book store, he found a copy of *Thief in the Night*. He loved mysteries, so he bought the book, took it home and read it. Life was never to be the same.

Blaine Reed's name and address were in the front of the book, so Al wrote to him. The problem was that the address was an old one and the Reeds had since moved to Nenana and Blaine was working at Clear. The postmaster at Clear saw Blaine's name and delivered it to his new address rather than the one on the envelope. That was the beginning of an enduring relationship and Al's remarkable life of service to the Faith he loved so much.

Al was one of the first to see the need to produce simplified literature. He pioneered in the production of cassette tapes for use in the villages. For years he would condense, edit and simplify the *Bahá'í International News* for distribution in Alaska.

There was a need for someone to work at the National Bahá'í office. Al swore he would never be caught dead working in an office. His life as a telegraph operator in the bush was as close as he ever wanted to come to the confines of office work. But, he had the skills and the need was there, so Al became an integral part of the National Bahá'í Office.

When the new Hazíratu'l-Quds was built, the caretaker's quarters were designed with Al in mind. He was the first caretaker and host — often far into the night. The simple sign on his door, "Al's Place," was an open invitation to anyone who needed a sympathetic ear. He had regular firesides and many Bahá'ís enrolled and/or were deepened under Al's patient care. He loved unconditionally and this love was a healing balm to many a hurting heart.

He was constantly buying some new gadget for the office out of his social sec-



Al Withrow

urity check — high speed tape dubber, electric stapler, recording equipment, collator, etc. Whatever was left from his meager funds went straight into the Bahá'í Fund.

For the years that he was able, he would set up his recording equipment at Conventions and other special events. As a result, Alaska has an enormous tape library of talks by Hands of the Cause and other events of interest.

Before he moved to the National Office, he had been told by doctors that he was going to lose his legs because of poor circulation. By willpower, vitamin therapy and other remedies of his own he held off the surgeon's knife for eight years. Finally the pain got so bad that the legs had to go.

Undaunted, he got around in his wheel chair. He and Gordon Fleming built any number of special ramps and attachments so that Al could continue to serve at the National Office.

Then, his left hand started to give him trouble. A poignant scene stands out of Al, in his wheelchair, using a stick with a rubber tip, scooting his wheel chair with great speed down the hall of the National Office so he could continue to do his work.

When it came time to leave the Hazíratu'l-Quds he moved out to the Matanuska Valley to await an opening in the Palmer Pioneer Home. Their numbers were low and he could help out by serving on their Spiritual Assembly. But, he didn't like being surrounded by old people waiting to die, so he struck out again.

He moved to Homer, back to Clear-Nenana and finally to the new Anchorage home. He continued to serve wherever he went. In recent years Al could still be seen at the National Office doing his bit

when it was time to mail out the *Alaska Bahá'í News*.

One day while sitting in his wheelchair, despite his missing legs and crippled hand, he was reminiscing about his life and his years of working in the National Office. He said, "I guess I'm about the luckiest old 'so-and-so' who ever came down the pike."

The lucky ones are those of us who knew him and felt his spirit as he was "coming down the pike." God's speed, Al.

John Kolstoe

# In Memory of Barbara Willson

by David T. Wellman



On October 30, 1914, in a room above her father's store in Sheffield Mills, Nova Scotia, Helen Barbara Willson first encountered the world in which she was to dwell for eight eventful decades. She was the eldest of three daughters born to a family deeply rooted in the faith and traditions of the Society of Friends, also known as Quakers. Among these traditions were a firm belief in tolerance, in peace, in the benefits of cooperative human community, and in the importance of living a life of service to others. These convictions—ultimately deepened and illumined by the light of Bahá'u'lláh—formed the central theme of Barbara's life, a theme to which she consistently gave expression through acts of love, sacrifice, and service.

The details of Barbara's life can be sketched here only briefly. At the age of 12 she left Nova Scotia to attend boarding school at Ackworth in Yorkshire, England, where her maternal grandfather had previously been headmaster. She was a bright student, graduating at age 16 and moving on to Dalhousie University in Halifax, where she completed a 4-year course in mathematics in just three years. Degree in hand at age 19, Barbara began a career in teaching, finding employment at various private girls' schools in British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Ontario.

Following World War II, she was among the first participants in the Quaker relief effort in Europe, working to rebuild and heal in the wake of the Holocaust. This experience left a deep impression on her.

Returning to the west side of the Atlantic, she spent time at Pendle Hill, a Quaker study center near Philadelphia. Here she took classes, worked as a cook, and became close friends with a faculty member named Dora Willson. Later,

when she heard that Dora was ill with cancer, Barbara, now working as a teacher in California, traveled back to Pennsylvania to visit her stricken friend. After Dora's death, Barbara was surprised, overwhelmed, and excited to receive a letter from Dora's husband, Bob Willson, inviting her to join their family. The two corresponded, and soon Bob visited Barbara in California. They were married at Pendle Hill in 1954.

Bob had by this time found and embraced the Bahá'í Faith. It was fire which burned in his soul, but not yet in Barbara's. In characteristic fashion, Barbara studied the Faith for more than two years until, convinced of Its truth, she herself enrolled. She and Bob made a powerful team, energetically serving the Cause of God throughout their long life together.

Shortly after their marriage, Barbara and Bob, together with their daughters Gay and Nancy, moved to Michigan, where Bob worked as an educational representative for the Ferndale Cooperative Credit Union. They were deeply involved in Bahá'í communities in Royal Oak Township, in Ferndale, and later, in Newaygo. Their home was a dynamic focus for Bahá'í activity. Barbara and Bob were also involved with the Louhelen Bahá'í School during its formative years. It was in Michigan that Barbara began translating Bahá'í Writings into Braille for the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States. She continued her work with Braille throughout her life.

Barbara was able to go on two pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and to attend both World Congresses—in London in 1963, and in New York in 1992.

When Bob developed serious heart problems in the mid-1980s, he and Barbara moved to Alaska to be near their daughter Gay. It was in Alaska that Barbara's



lifelong interest in art found its fullest expression. She took art classes at the Anchorage Senior Center and won many awards in juried exhibits.

Bob's death in 1989 was very difficult for Barbara, but she met the challenge by sharpening the focus of her activities and rededicating her life to service to Bahá'u'lláh. Barbara was a systematic individual, and she approached her service projects in a systematic fashion. She would investigate to find where a need existed, and then, step-by-step, proceed to meet that need. She was exceptionally effective in this. Among her many activities during the last years of her life, Barbara served on the Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'ís of Oceanview and Anchorage, served as editor of the *Alaska Bahá'í News*, helped found a local Institute for the Healing of Racism, served as a tutor in the Literacy Project, participated in activities at the Anchorage Senior Center, painted with an increasing degree of artistic accomplishment, went travel teaching, and befriended an ever-widening circle of diverse humanity.

Barbara was active until the last moment of her life. Her death at her home in Anchorage on April 20, 1995 at the age of 80 seemed as unexpected as a death of a child. There is a mental image of Barbara that, to this writer, seems fitting. It is that of a child, a young girl, holding the Hand of God, walking on the pathways of light toward a reunion of worthy souls.

# In Memory of Robert Z. Willson

*"The steed of this Valley (the Valley of Search) is patience; without patience the wayfarer on this journey will reach nowhere and attain no goal. Nor should he ever be downhearted...."*

*Bahá'u'lláh, The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys.*

The Steed of Patience is one which Robert Willson sometimes had a difficult time riding. He knew, very clearly, where our troubled world ought to be heading, and he knew, just as clearly, the road it should be taking to get there. And he was impatient--impatient to see the Cause of God progress, impatient for the work of teaching and deepening to be carried forward, impatient to see the Bahá'ís coalesce into that "organic community" which so excited his own spirit. But Bob was not one to be downhearted. He was always ready, always eager to do whatever needed to be done, to contribute in any way he could to the building of God's Kingdom on earth.

Bob's own spiritual journey began in 1901, when he was born into an Iowa farming family. He was raised as a Scotch Covenanter, a small, fundamentalist denomination also known as Reformed Presbyterians. In later life, Bob sometimes remarked in his humorous way that this group had reformed so much at the time of the Reformation that they had been unable to make any further reform since.

As a young man, Bob took advantage of an opportunity to teach at a boys' school, a Covenanter mission school, on the island of Cyprus. This was a memorable experience for him, and provided stimulating contact with other nationalities and cultures. It also gave him the opportunity to meet a young lady named Dora Bieneman, whom he married in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1930.

Bob and Dora continued their spiritual journey together. It soon led them to Quakerism, and they were accepted as members of the first student body at the newly-formed Quaker school of Pendle Hill, near Philadelphia. Not long afterwards, Bob obtained a degree in economics and political philosophy from Swarthmore College.

Both Bob and Dora were committed to a life of service. Bob developed a passionate interest in the consumer co-op movement. In pursuit of this, he became an agent with Farm Bureau Insurance and, later, worked with the Ferndale Co-op Credit Union in Ferndale, Michigan. In the 1940's he organized an interracial cooperative community on a 100-acre Pennsylvania farm site. This community, known as the Tanguy Co-op Homesteads, was the Willson home for a number of years, and was where Bob and Dora's two daughters, Nancy and Gay, spent the happiest and most memorable years of their childhood. A long-time friend of the family recently stated that, in his opinion, Tanguy remains today the "strongest co-op community of its type in the United States." He attributes this, in part, to its founding, when "the educational groundwork was so well done."

Dora's death from cancer, in 1953, was a further, painful step in Bob's spiritual journey. In the grief which followed, he found the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and never again looked back. In 1954, after marrying Barbara Walker, the family moved to Michigan. It was here that Bob eventually bought large pieces of rural land, and started dreaming of another co-op homesteads community. He grew Christmas trees on the cleared land, and developed some into lots for home sites.

In 1985, with his health beginning to fail, Bob and Barbara relocated to Alaska to be closer to their daughter, Gay. Bob had always had strong feelings of kinship with Native Americans, and it was in Alaska that he saw these feelings fulfilled,

through his adoption into the Tlingit tribe by Walter Austin. The necklace Bob was given at the adoption ceremony was worn often by him on public occasions and was placed around his neck at the time of burial.

Bob had many trials in his life, but he had a great resiliency of spirit. His daughter, Gay Wellman, states that one of her father's gifts to her was his sense of what she terms "realistic optimism." "Things have a way of working out," was something he often said.

Bob's contributions to the Bahá'í Faith were numerous. He taught courses at the Louhelen Bahá'í School at Davison, Michigan. He conducted numerous firesides and public meetings as he traveled throughout Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Iowa. He attended the Bahá'í World Congress in London in 1963, and international Bahá'í conferences in St. Louis and Montreal. He went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1969. With his wife, Barbara, he conducted five nine-week personal transformation deepenings, in Michigan and in Alaska. One of his last contributions was the compilation of a set of quotations on the organic nature of the Bahá'í community. Alaska friends will remember him for his spirited devotion to this topic, as expressed in his classes at summer school and the Honor Kempton Institute.

When Bob and Barbara came to Alaska they moved into an apartment above the National office, at the center of Bahá'í activities. It was in this apartment at about 7:20 a.m. on the morning of Thursday, December 27, 1990, that Bob Willson, age 89, took his final earthly step on this spiritual journey. Those who

were acquainted with Bob knew that he was well-prepared for this last step. He was ready to move on. In a way, it seemed he was waiting—a bit impatiently, perhaps. When the time came, his heart quit, and within a few minutes he was gone—through the door, and beyond the veils of light.

*"O My servants!...*

*Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes... To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain."*

*Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.*

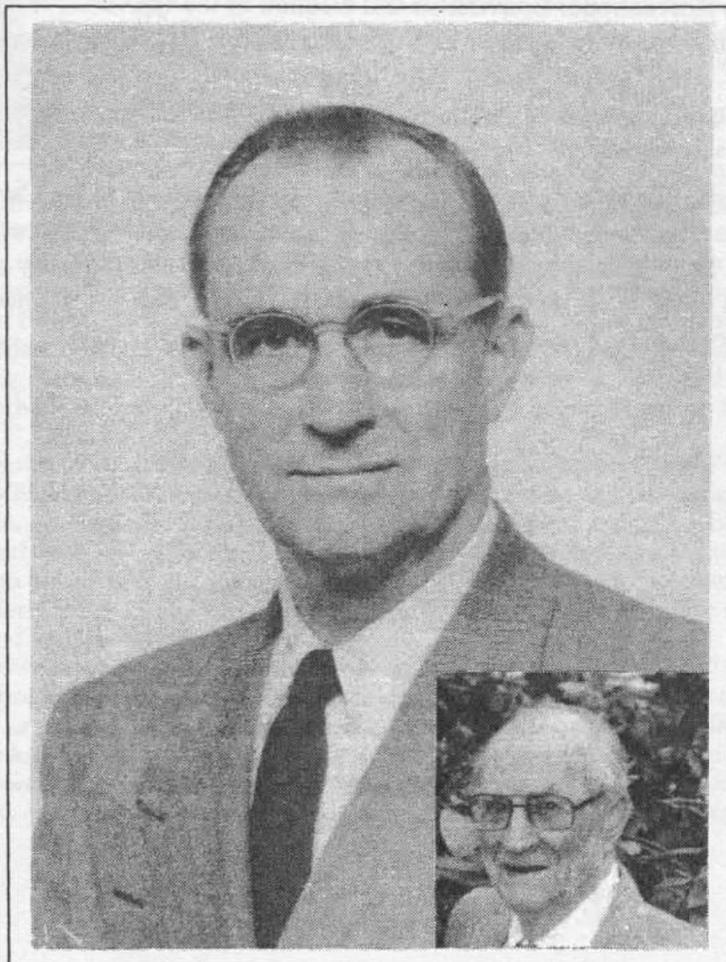


Photo:  
Robert Willson in  
the 60's.

Photo insert:  
Robert Willson  
April 1989.

Rose (Perkal) Yarno (Gates)

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly for 2 years as of 1999. First elected in 1957.

The indomitable little Rose (she was under 5 feet tall) was named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for pioneering to Kodiak Island in response to the Guardian's appeal during the opening years of the Ten Year Crusade. She is listed on the Roll of Honor under the name Rose Perkal. In 1956 she moved to Tanana Valley to form the first spiritual Assembly there. While there, she married Ken Yarno and went under that name for the rest of the time she was in Alaska.

As a delegate from Tanana Valley to the first National Convention, Rose was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly. She was the first person from a Jewish background to serve on the body. Rose was one of the most energetic and effective teachers Alaska had seen in those early days. Many a meeting would have 10 to 15 non-Bahá'ís in attendance, all there because of Rose. During one fireside about 15 people showed up, and there were only a half dozen donuts for refreshments. Undeterred, Rose cut each donut into eight, bite-sized pieces, piled them on the platter so it looked like a huge mound and served them with a smile. There was enough to go around. People who learned of the Faith through Rose are literally serving all over the world.

In the closing years of the Ten Year Crusade there was an appeal for pioneers to Switzerland. Rose left Alaska to answer the call. She spoke neither French nor German but said she got along just great on her Yiddish. Later she pioneered to South Africa where she met and married Mr. Gates. She was a frequent member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South Africa.

Rose returned to Alaska for a visit during the International Conference in 1976.

In 1983, during the International Convention and election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Rose was a delegate from South Africa. One evening in the Pilgrim House a group from Africa was loudly singing some Bahá'í songs. There in the midst of them was Rose – well into her 70's – singing along with the best of them. Many a younger celebrant got worn out and retired early, but Rose kept up the songfest well into the night.

In 1986 she planned still another pioneering venture to the Dominica in the Caribbean. In personal correspondence she explained that she wanted to continue international pioneering, but be closer to her sons and grandchildren, in the United States. However, the infirmities of age finally caught up with her and, while visiting her son, en route to her new pioneering post, the family decided she needed nursing home care. She died in a nursing home in Anaheim, California, yearning to pioneer again.

## Pioneer Ed Young passes in Hawaii

"Saddened loss staunch consecrated promoter Faith Ed Young. His pioneer administrative services unforgettable. Assure family friends ardent prayers Holy Shrine progress his soul."

*Universal House of Justice*

Ed Young became a Bahá'í in 1964 while living on Bainbridge Island, Washington. He and his wife pioneered to a number of communities in both the United States and Alaska. His Alaskan posts included both Douglas and Petersburg.

In 1984 the Youngs answered the call to pioneer to Hawaii, helping to form an Assembly in North Hilo that year. The story of Ed Young intensifies with his arrival in Laupahoehoe. It became increasingly apparent to Ed's family and to the Bahá'ís of the Big Island, that Ed had become an integral part of this community. He knew when he left Alaska that he had cancer and that he might not live too long. He said that he loved Hawaii and wanted to be buried there when he died. Shortly after Ed and Esther arrived in Hawaii, Ed began wandering around the town. He walked daily; and as he made his daily rounds, he introduced himself to his neighbors. He told everyone that he met that he and his wife had moved to Laupahoehoe for the Bahá'í Faith. He would introduce himself as a Bahá'í and that he was there to teach his Faith. Whenever driving around the Big Island, Ed and Esther would explore side roads; and they discovered many former work camps where people still reside. Whenever Ed saw anyone by the road or in the field or in their yard, he would stop the car, get out and talk to them. He always mentioned that he was a Bahá'í and that he was teaching his Faith.



Ed loved to read. When he found out that the Public Library in Laupahoehoe was to be closed permanently, he went from house to house and told the residents that they needed to go to the public meeting if they wished to see the library remain open. In his own words, "if you don't want to lose your library, you'd better get to that meeting." Due to this effort, the library remained open; and Ed won the love and respect of the library staff as well as many local residents.

In May, 1988, the cancer began to spread rapidly once again. Chet Randrup, a Bahá'í from Petersburg, Alaska, moved to Laupahoehoe and lived with the Youngs for three months. Chet helped Esther with Ed's care which enabled Ed to remain at home until his final hospitalization in March.

Ed loved Hawaii; and his wish had been to die and be buried there. Part of his heart also belonged to Alaska. Two days prior to his passing, he looked up and saw eagles soaring and circling above him. He began to count aloud and said, "Esther, do you see them? Beautiful, white-headed bald eagles? My gosh, there's half-a-hundred of them!" The day prior to his passing, he suffered a stroke, was unable to speak and one side of his body was paralyzed. He continued to teach. He held the booklet "Bahá'í Thoughts on Peace" to his heart, would let no one take it from him, and had it in his hand until he left this earthly plane.

It was during the past year that Ed's wife, Esther, and Ed's family, and the other Bahá'ís in the area became aware that the local residents were lovingly and affectionately referring to Ed as "the mayor of Laupahoehoe". They also referred to him as "the cigar man". Many of the neighbors and long time local residents have accepted the Youngs as members of their families. This became even more apparent when several Hawaiians came to the house the evening before the funeral to sit with the family. The family didn't realize until later that this was a custom among the native Hawaiians.

# In Memory

*Death proffereth unto every confident believer the cup that is life indeed.*

*It bestoweth joy, and is the bearer of gladness.*

*It conferreth the gift of everlasting life.*

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, Page: 345)

## Esther Young

Esther Young, born June 14, 1920 in Syracuse, N.Y., passed on to the Kingdom of Abhá on Wednesday, December 23, 1998 in Petersburg, Alaska.

Esther declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh in 1962 on Bainbridge Island, Washington, after extensive study of Bahá'í books given to her by her daughter and son-in-law, Kay and Mike Schwartz. From the day of her declaration until the time of her passing, Esther served Bahá'u'lláh with distinction. Her teaching efforts among the Native Americans on Bainbridge Island and elsewhere are still remembered today.

After her husband, Ed, declared his belief in 1964, they traveled and pioneered extensively for the Faith, finally settling in Laupahoehoe, Big Island, Hawaii in 1986.

Everywhere that Esther and Ed pioneered, there were teaching campaigns with resulting declarations of faith followed by classes for deepening of the new believers. They were determined to remain in Laupahoehoe until a functioning Assembly was firmly established. Esther often quoted the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, regarding remaining at a post until a goal was fulfilled. Ed passed away in 1989. Esther, surmounting numerous difficulties, was determined to remain at her post, staying in Laupahoehoe until 1998, when she became ill. It was at that time that she moved to Thousand Palms, California for needed medical attention and became a member of the Desert Judicial District.

Even during the time of extensive radiation therapy, she thought of how to be of service to the friends. She made arrangements with a young Bahá'í friend to replace her in Laupahoehoe; she asked to have the weekly prayer meetings be held at her daughter and son-in-law's where she was residing; and she asked that several of the Feasts be conducted there as well.

In the middle of June, after the radiation treatments, she went to Petersburg, Alaska to visit her grandchildren and greatgrandchildren. After arriving in Petersburg, she immediately set up a weekly study class. In July her illness worsened and she entered the Petersburg Medical Center Long-Term Care Center facility on October 27, 1998 where she continued to teach in more subtle ways, with her prayer book and the *Open Door* pamphlet next to her bed, and with Bahá'í Writings on the bulletin board. There were many favorable comments about the atmosphere in Esther's room, the beautiful music, the wonderful support group of family and friends, and about her beautiful courteous self.

Esther is survived by a sister Norma Knapp of Syracuse; two daughters Kay Schwartz of Petersburg and June Torres of Hilo, Hawaii; eight grandchildren, seven great grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

A Bahá'í graveside service was held in Petersburg on December 24, 1998 followed by a fellowship gathering at the home of Mike and Kay Schwartz.

Alaskan Bahá'í Community:  
Its  
Growth and Development  
The Formative Years:  
To 156 B. E. (1999)

Part IV  
Hands of the Cause



**Alaska Bahá'í Community:  
Its Growth and Development: The Formative Years  
IV - Hands of the Cause of God**

Thirteen Hands of the Cause of God are recorded as making 26 visits to Alaska. Five of them were in Alaska only once and John Robarts holds the record with four visits. Rúhíyyih Khánum's historic month-long sojourn was one of the longest stays and the best recorded.

These visits inspired the friends and stimulated both individuals and institutions to greater achievements. The presence and guidance given by the Hands of the Cause was especially crucial prior to the formation of the Universal House of Justice. Following is a listing of those who journeyed to Alaska and when, together with references for finding more about their travels. A complete story of their visits to Alaska would be a book worth having. Perhaps, someday someone will compile that. In the meantime, here is a record of their visits. At the end of the list is a reprint of an article by Ray Hudson about the Institution of the Hands of the Cause. Ray wrote this when he was living in Unalaska and serving on the Auxiliary Board.

**Paul E. Haney** August 20, 1909 - December 3, 1982.

Appointed: 1954 March 19, after the passing of Dorothy Baker; North America. He was educated as an economist and worked for the United States Government. One of nine Custodians in the Holy Land after the passing of the Guardian.

The first Hand of the Cause to visit Alaska, Mr. Haney opened inaugural National Convention in 1957 as both the Guardian's representative and the representative of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States which was the sponsoring (mother) Spiritual Assembly.

See: Bahá'í World Vol. XIII, p. 389; Vol. XVIII, pp. 613-618; Letter from National Spiritual Assembly to the Alaskan Bahá'í community May 9 1957. This letter preceded the publication of the first issue of the *Alaska Bahá'í News*.

**William Sears** March 28, 1911 - March 25, 1992.

Appointed: 1957 October, one of 8 in the third (last) contingent; Africa. A popular radio sportscaster and TV personality before pioneering to Africa, he continued to use his talents in service to the Faith and authored several books on the Faith. Assigned to America after the passing of the Guardian.

Mr. Sears visited Alaska in 1960 and was the first Hand of the Cause to travel to Alaska after the passing of the Guardian. He owned some property in Soldotna where he hoped to build a retreat. He also visited Alaska for the 1966 summer school in Juneau and in 1976 (Inter-Continental Conference). His attendance at the Inter-Continental Conference was in appreciation since Alaska had made the greatest use of his television proclamation series.

See: All Flags Flying; Bahá'í World, Vol. XIII, p. 391; *Alaska Bahá'í News* # 34, January 1961 ; #86, August 1966; #195, Conference Special 1976.

**Dhikru'lláh Khádem** 1904 - November 13, 1986.

Appointed: 1952 February 29, one of 7 in the second contingent; Persia. He was a career diplomat in Persia. He was assigned to America after the passing of the Guardian.

Mr. Khádem attended the Alaska Bahá'í Summer School in 1961 and National Conventions in 1965 and 1981. In 1965 he appointed Howard Brown as the first Alaskan to serve on the Auxiliary Board.

See: Zikrullah Khádem; Bahá'í World, Vol. XIII, p. 386; *Alaska Bahá'í News* #39, July 1961; #74, May-June 1965; #263, May 1982

**Ugo Giachery** May 13, 1896 - July 5, 1989.

Appointed: 1951 December 24, one of 12 in the first contingent; Europe. Born to Italian nobility, Dr. Giachery was educated as a chemist. His book Shoghi Effendi covers the time when he worked with the Guardian on the acquisition of marble and construction of the superstructure for the Shrine of the Báb.

Dr. Giachery and his wife, Angeline, attended the Bahá'í Summer School in Juneau in 1964. After the school, Mrs. Giachery carried on an extended correspondence with Mary Brown. This friendship and encouragement eventually led to the Native Councils held throughout Alaska.

See: Bahá'í World, Vol. XIII, p. 385; *Alaska Bahá'í News* #66, August 1964

**John Robarts** November 2, 1901 - June 8, 1991.

Appointed: 1957 October, one of 8 in the third (last) contingent; Africa. In 1953 he left his life insurance business in Canada to pioneer to Africa. He returned from Africa to serve in the Americas during the days of the Universal House of Justice. He was adopted as a Tlingit in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory.

A frequent visitor to Alaska, Mr. Robarts made teaching trips in 1967, 1974, 1976 (Inter-Continental Conference) and 1978.

See: Bahá'í World, Vol. XIII, p. 392; *Alaska Bahá'í News* #94, May-June 1967; #170 July 1974; #195, Conference Special 1976; #222, December 1978

**'Alí-Akbar Furútan** April 29, 1905 -

Appointed: 1951 December 24, one of 12 in the first group of appointments; Persia. Born in Ishqabad, Russia, he received his doctorate in education from the University of Moscow before being exiled from the Soviet Union for Bahá'í activities. He was a long-time Secretary National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Persia and one of nine Custodians in the Holy Land after the passing of the Guardian.

Dr. Furútan visited Alaska in 1969, 1971 and 1977; audio cassette tapes of his talks in Alaska are available.

See: The Story of My Heart; Bahá'í World, Vol. XIII, p. 382; *Alaska Bahá'í News* #119 & #120, Oct. & Nov.-Dec. 1969; #139, Oct. 1971; #210, Nov. 1977

**Enoch Olinga** June 24, 1926 - September 26, 1979.

Appointed: 1957 October, one of 8 in the third (last) contingent; Africa. Called the "Father of Victories" by the Guardian he was the only African appointed a Hand of the Cause. Trained as an economist, he owned a coffee exporting business in Uganda.

While on a world-wide teaching trip, Mr. Olinga stopped in Alaska in 1970 for the Minorities Conference in Petersburg, then traveled on to Anchorage after a stop in Whitehorse. Tape recordings of his talks to the friends are available.

See: Bahá'í World, Vol. XIII, p. 391; Vol. XVIII, pp. 618-635; *Alaska Bahá'í News* #131, January 1972.

**H. Collis Featherstone** May 13, 1913 - September 29, 1990.

Appointed: 1957 October, one of 8 in the third (last) group of appointments; Pacific. Trained as an engineer, he was an industrialist in Australia specializing in making metal parts.

Mr. Featherstone visited Alaska in 1973, 1974, and in 1976 when he was the Official Representative of the Universal House of Justice for the Inter-Continental Conference held in Anchorage.

See: September 1974; #195, Conference Special 1976.

**Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánúm** August 8, 1910 -

Appointed: 1952 March 26, after the passing of her father, Hand of the Cause Southerland Maxwell; Holy Land. Guardian's liaison to the International Bahá'í Council. One of nine Custodians in the Holy Land after the passing of the Guardian.

Rúhiyyih Khánúm spent the month of August traveling throughout Alaska in 1973. She was able to visit most of the major communities from Barrow to Ketchikan. Her comment upon seeing television antennae in Barrow: "I'm too late." She was adopted as a Tlingit during the Summer School.

See: Bahá'í World, Vol. XIII, p. 379; *Alaska Bahá'í News's* #s 161, 162, 164 & 165, Oct. & Nov. 1973 Jan. & Feb. 1974

**Jalál Kházeh** 1897 - February 20, 1990.

Appointed: 1953 December 6, after the passing of Siegfried Schopflocher; Persia. A Colonel in the Persian army, he traveled throughout Persia at the instructions of the Guardian in order to visit isolated Bahá'ís in the smaller communities. He was one of nine Custodians in the Holy Land after the passing of the Guardian.

On two occasions Colonel Kházeh visited Alaska. He once expressed the wish to live and die here. He was adopted as a Tlingit at the 1973 Alaska Bahá'í Summer School.

See: Bahá'í World, Vol. XIII, p. 389; *Alaska Bahá'í News* #157, June, 1973; #162, November 1973.

**Abu'l-Qásim Faizí** 1906 - November 29, 1980.

Appointed: 1957 October, one of 8 in the third (last) group of appointments; Arabian Peninsula. One of nine Custodians in the Holy Land after the passing of the Guardian. Called by the Guardian "The Spiritual Conqueror of Arabia" for pioneering work in Bahrain. As an educator, he was dearly loved by all his students.

Mr. Fazí attended Alaska Bahá'í Summer School in Juneau in 1974.

See: Bahá'í World Vol. XIII, p. 394; Vol. XVIII, pp. 659-656; *Alaska Bahá'í News* #172, September 1974.

**Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir** 1923 - December 29, 1979.

Appointed: 1957 October, one of 8 in the third (last) contingent; Pacific. The name Muhájir means "pioneer" which he embodied. Because he was a medical doctor he was able to go where others were not allowed. Best known for his work in mass teaching.

Dr. Muhájir was in Alaska twice and generated enthusiasm for a "Pacific Rim" projects which would include Bahá'í communities which form a rim around the Pacific Ocean.

See: Dr. Muhájir; Bahá'í World Vol. XIII, p. 394; Vol. XVIII, pp. 651-659; *Alaska Bahá'í News* #189, February 1976; #193, June-July 1976

**'Alí-Muhammad Varqá** 1911 -

Appointed: 1955 November 15, after the passing of his father, Hand of the Cause Valíyu'lláh Varqá; Persia. He was a teacher and Trustee of the Huqúqu'lláh. When the Islamic Revolution broke out in 1978 he had been on a trip to and was in London. So, he remained in the West, living in Canada until he resettled to the World Center.

Mr. Varqá traveled to Alaska for the National Convention in 1982.

See: Bahá'í World, Vol. XIII, p. 390; *Alaska Bahá'í News* #265, July 1982

## 5. THE HANDS OF THE CAUSE OF GOD: AN APPRECIATION

RAY HUDSON

### I

AMONG the wonders accomplished by Shoghi Effendi during the last few years of his ministry was the elevation to the rank of Hands of the Cause of God of a few believers from among the Bahá'ís of the world. These precious souls were like jewels buried among the mass of the believers until the beloved Guardian plucked them out. The consummate wisdom of this action became evident when the Universal House of Justice, in its first message presented 30 April 1963, at the World Congress, paid tribute to the work accomplished by the Hands of the Cause following the passing of the Guardian:

'The Universal House of Justice, with pride and love, recalls on this supreme occasion its profound admiration for the heroic work which they have accomplished. We do not wish to dwell on the appalling dangers which faced the infant Cause when it was suddenly deprived of our beloved Shoghi Effendi, but rather to acknowledge with all the love and gratitude of our hearts the reality of the sacrifice, the labor, the self-discipline, the superb stewardship of the Hands of the Cause of God.'<sup>1</sup>

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh is crowned with the Universal House of Justice, an

Institution which was created by Bahá'u'lláh Himself and which is under the guidance of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. 'Abdu'l-Bahá declared this body to be *the source of all good and freed from all error*.<sup>2</sup> The beloved Guardian labored all his life to erect this Institution which is twin to the Institution of the Guardianship, and through those Hands of the Cause whom he appointed the election for this Supreme Body was called.

The work of the Hands of the Cause constitutes an integral part of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Today this work is flourishing throughout the world, and under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice it will continue in future decades and centuries. The story of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God is such that centuries will be unable to fathom the love these believers held for their beloved Guardian nor will ages comprehend the iron resolution of their steadfastness in the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh. There will be no repetition of their examples. They are unique among the followers of Bahá'u'lláh. They are the priceless gifts which Shoghi Effendi gave to us.

Where does the story of such enduring love begin?

### II

Bahá'u'lláh Himself named the first Hands of the Cause and called them those *through whom the light of fortitude hath shown forth and the truth hath been established that the authority to choose rests with God*. He said they were those *through whom the ocean of bounty hath surged and the fragrance of the gracious favours of God, the Lord of Mankind, hath been diffused*.<sup>3</sup> 'The Hands of the

Cause, of Bahá'u'lláh's days,' stated Shoghi Effendi through a letter written by his secretary, 'will be known to the friends by name when the history of the Cause in Persia and the Near East is written and available.'<sup>4</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá did not Himself formally appoint any Hands of the Cause. Certain outstanding Bahá'ís, however, were referred to by Him as Hands.

<sup>1</sup> *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Will and Testament*, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIV, p. 445.

## III

Shortly after His ascension it was discovered that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had produced an extraordinary Will and Testament, portions of which outlined the appointment, duties, and obligations of the Hands of the Cause. Written entirely in His Own hand, this great testament, the Guardian has declared, is the Charter of the Administrative Order, 'His greatest legacy to posterity' and 'the brightest emanation of His mind.'<sup>1</sup> Providing an 'indissoluble link' insuring 'the continuity of the three ages that constitute the component parts of the Bahá'í Dispensation'<sup>2</sup> (the Heroic, the Formative, and the Golden Ages) this document requires 'time, and the guidance of God's Universal House of Justice, to obtain a clearer and fuller understanding of its provisions and implications.'<sup>3</sup> The Guardian, writing through his secretary, stated: 'The contents of the Will of the Master are far too much for the present generation to comprehend. It needs at least a century of actual working before the treasures of wisdom hidden in it can be revealed . . .'<sup>4</sup> In *God Passes By*, page 328, Shoghi Effendi summarizes, in his concise and masterly way, the contents of the Will and Testament. Here, however, we are primarily interested in what was written about the Hands of the Cause.

The appointment of the Hands of the Cause, 'Abdu'l-Bahá categorically states, must be made by the Guardian of the Cause.

*The obligations of the Hands of the Cause of God are to diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men, to promote learning, to improve the character of all men and to be, at all times and under all conditions, sanctified and detached from all earthly things. They must manifest the fear of God by their conduct, their manners their deeds and their words.*<sup>5</sup>

The Hands of the Cause are urged by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to diffuse the sweet savors of God, and to guide all the peoples of the world, for it is the light of Divine Guidance that

*causeth all the universe to be illumined.*<sup>6</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá further bestows *salutation and praise . . . upon the Hands [pillars] of the Cause of God that have diffused widely the Divine Fragrances, declared His Proofs, proclaimed His Faith, published abroad His Law, detached themselves from all things but Him, stood for righteousness in this world, and kindled the Fire of the Love of God in the very hearts and souls of His servants.*<sup>7</sup>

He also states: *This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction of the guardian of the Cause of God.*<sup>8</sup> As we witness (and as history will study) the steadfastness and complete, wholehearted, joyful obedience of the Hands of the Cause we might understand the meaning of being *under the direction of the guardian of the Cause*. The spontaneity that they have shown in fulfilling the wishes of the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice endures as a lasting lesson to all Bahá'ís. Obedience is the true measure of love for Bahá'u'lláh; the loving devotion of the Hands of the Cause found expression in an exact and instantaneous obedience.

Such obedience does not come automatically. By appointment as Hands of the Cause these believers were not guaranteed steadfastness in the Covenant. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá placed the Hands under the direction of the Guardian He said: *Should any, within or without the company of the Hands of the Cause of God disobey and seek division, the wrath of God and His vengeance will be upon him, for he will have caused a breach in the true Faith of God.*<sup>9</sup> Yet 'Abdu'l-Bahá stressed that the Hands had responsibility for protecting the Cause. He said they *must be ever watchful* and He gave them the authority needed to preserve the security of the Faith.

In formally establishing this institution 'Abdu'l-Bahá presented the Hands of the Cause with the *dual function of guarding over the security, and of insuring the propagation, of His Father's Faith.*<sup>10</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá called them to this high station. Who could do these things? Who could demonstrate such stead-

<sup>1</sup> *God Passes By*, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice: 1968-1973*, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Will and Testament*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 127.

fastness, encompass such knowledge, and personify such love? During the thirty years that followed 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension it was seen that a few Bahá'ís had achieved this station. Periodically Shoghi Effendi cabled or wrote National Assemblies the news that a certain outstanding teacher or administrator of the Cause had died. On rare occasions he would use such a communication to announce that this believer 'by sheer merit deserved to rank as one of the Hands of the Cause of God'<sup>1</sup> or that the services of another believer 'entitled her to an eminent rank among the Hands of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.'<sup>2</sup> There were ten believers posthumously named Hands of the Cause by Shoghi Effendi. The complete list is found in *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIV, pages 447-449, and includes:

1. Martha Root—'that star-servant of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh,' the 'foremost Hand which 'Abdu'l-Bahá's will has raised up in the first Bahá'í century.'<sup>3</sup>
2. Keith Ransom-Kehler—the 'first and distinguished' American martyr.<sup>4</sup>
3. Dr. John Esslemont—whom Shoghi Effendi called 'the warmest of friends, a trusted counsellor, an indefatigable collaborator, a lovable companion.'<sup>5</sup>
4. Louis Gregory—the 'noble-minded, golden-hearted' believer who was 'loved, admired and trusted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.'<sup>6</sup>

After 1951 when the first contingent of living Hands of the Cause was named there were no further posthumous appointments.

#### IV

As 1953 approached the Guardian began to make plans for the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation in the Siyáh-Chál, that dark loathsome prison of Tíhrán. This called for a series of four International Conferences and the launching of an unprecedented teaching campaign that would establish the Faith throughout the world. This Ten Year Spiritual Crusade constituted one of ten stages of 'the plan wrought by God Himself for humanity'—a plan which began with Adam and which will culminate when 'the light of God's triumphant Faith shining in all its power and glory will have suffused and enveloped the entire planet.'<sup>7</sup>

This Spiritual Crusade was to be a glorious enterprise and glorious were the events that led to its launching. Among these preparatory events was the announcement, on 24 December 1951, of the first contingent of living Hands of the Cause of God. Those named were: Sutherland Maxwell, Mason Remey, Amelia Collins, Valíyu'lláh Varqá, Tarázu'lláh Samandari, 'Alí-Akbar Furútan, Horace Holley, Dorothy Baker, Leroy Ioas, George Townshend, Hermann Grossmann, and Ugo Giachery. On 29 February 1952 the twelve Hands were increased to nineteen with the

nominations of Fred Schopflicher, Corinne True, Dhikru'lláh Khádem, Shu'á'u'lláh 'Alá'í, Adelbert Mühlischlegel, Músá Banání, and Clara Dunn.

With this announcement the Guardian said: MEMBERS AUGUST BODY INVESTED IN CONFORMITY WITH ABDULBAHAS TESTAMENT, TWOFOLD SACRED FUNCTION, THE PROPAGATION AND PRESERVATION OF THE UNITY OF THE FAITH OF BAHAUULLAH AND DESTINED TO ASSUME INDIVIDUALLY IN THE COURSE OF TIME THE DIRECTION OF INSTITUTIONS PARALLELING THOSE REVOLVING AROUND THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE . . .<sup>8</sup>

Over the next five years the number of Hands was kept at nineteen. Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, Jalál Kházeh, Paul E. Haney, 'Alí-Muhammad Varqá, and Agnes B. Alexander replaced those Hands of the Cause who passed away.

In October 1952 the Guardian called upon the Hands, 'by virtue of their supreme function as chosen instruments for the propagation of the Faith,' to appoint during Ridván 1954 Auxiliary Boards whose members would act as the 'assistants, deputies, and advisers' of the Hands on each continent.

<sup>1</sup> *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> *Messages to America*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> *Citadel of Faith*, p. 163.

<sup>7</sup> *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 155.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

From the time of their appointments the Hands of the Cause were outstanding in helping to win the goals of the Ten Year Crusade in their respective continents. In them the Faith also found leonine defenders and Shoghi Effendi once wrote how certain Hands had shared in 'administering a stunning defeat to the enemies of the Faith.'<sup>1</sup>

The protective function of the Hands of the Cause was further re-enforced in October 1957 when the number of Hands was increased to twenty-seven. The Guardian said this body was 'one of the cardinal and pivotal institutions ordained by Bahá'u'lláh, and confirmed in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.' He called the Hands of the Cause 'the Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth, who have been invested by the unerring Pen of the Center of His Covenant with the dual function of guarding over the security, and of insuring the propagation of His Father's Faith.' He wrote:

'The eight now elevated to this exalted rank are: Enoch Olinga, William Sears, and John Robarts, in West and South Africa; Hasan Balyúzi and John Ferraby in the British Isles; Collis Featherstone and Raḥmatu'lláh Muhájir in the Pacific Area; and Abu'l-Qásim Faizí in the Arabian Peninsula—a group chosen from four continents of the globe, and representing the Afnán, as well as the black and white races and whose members are derived from Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Pagan backgrounds.

'This latest addition to the band of high-ranking officers of a fast evolving World Administrative Order, involving a further expansion of the august institution of the

Hands of the Cause of God, calls for, in view of the recent assumption by them of their sacred responsibility as protectors of the Faith, the appointment by these same Hands, in each continent separately, of an additional Auxiliary Board, equal in membership to the existing one, and charged with the specific duty of watching over the security of the Faith, thereby complementing the function of the original Board, whose duty will henceforth be exclusively concerned with assisting the prosecution of the Ten-Year Plan.'<sup>2</sup>

The Ten Year Crusade was nearing its midpoint on a wave of unprecedented victories. The believers had pioneered throughout the world. They were raising the call of *Yá-Bahá'u'l-Abhá*\* through all regions. Translations of the Writings were being made. Incorporations and legal recognitions of the Faith were being obtained. Bahá'í Centers, local and national Ḥazíratu'l-Quds were materializing. It was a vibrant time. The air was electric. During his few moments of rest from the administration of the vast complexities of the Faith, Shoghi Effendi was hard at work on a beautiful map which gave expression to the joy and pride he felt for the believers. From every continent he drew colored arrows charting accomplishments and from Haifa golden rays burst forth keyed to record the development of the World Center of the Faith. One gold ray was the recent appointment of additional Hands of the Cause. With an abruptness that stilled all things the hand of the beloved Guardian was withdrawn. He died in London on 4 November 1957.

#### V

Prostrate with grief yet steadfast, overwhelmed with sorrow yet steadfast, the Hands of the Cause of God began the most extraordinary period of their services. The reins of the Cause had suddenly been handed to its Chief Stewards. It is to this period, spanning the last six years of the Ten Year Crusade, that the Universal House of Justice paid

moving tribute:

'Following the passing of Shoghi Effendi the international administration of the Faith was carried on by the Hands of the Cause of God with the complete agreement and loyalty of the national spiritual assemblies and the body of the believers. This was in accordance with the Guardian's

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

\* 'O Thou the Glory of Glories!', another form of the Greatest Name *Alláh-u-Abhá*.

designation of the Hands as the "Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth."

'From the very outset of their custodianship of the Cause of God the Hands realized that since they had no certainty of Divine guidance such as is incontrovertibly assured to the Guardian and to the Universal House of Justice, their one safe course was to follow with undeviating firmness the instructions and policies of Shoghi Effendi. The entire history of religion shows no comparable record of such strict self-discipline, such absolute loyalty, and such complete self-abnegation by the leaders of a religion finding themselves suddenly deprived of their divinely inspired guide. The debt of gratitude which mankind for generations, nay, ages to come, owes to this handful of grief-stricken, steadfast, heroic souls is beyond estimation.'<sup>1</sup>

For six years the Hands of the Cause guided the Bahá'ís with infinite tenderness and love. They for whom the loss of the Guardian was greatest gave the most to their fellow believers. On them descended, with all its fearful implications, the actuality of protecting the Faith when the storm of opposition to the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh was again unleashed. Speaking at the Intercontinental Conference in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1958, the Hand of the Cause Amelia Collins said:

'We are all, in a way, Shoghi Effendi's heirs. We have inherited his work. His plan is completely laid out. Ours is the task to fulfill it. We must, each of us, complete our share of the World Crusade. This is the memorial we must build to our beloved Shoghi Effendi.

'Let us love him more now than ever before, and through the power of our love attract his love to us, and bring his blessing on our labors.

'Let us not fail him, for he never failed us. Let us never forget him, for he never forgot us.'<sup>2</sup>

The labors and sufferings of the Hands of the Cause were blessed. On 22 April 1963, from the International Convention in Haifa, they were able to cable all National Assemblies:

OCCASION WORLDWIDE CELEBRATIONS MOST GREAT JUBILEE COMMEMORATING CENTENARY ASCENSION BAHAUULLAH THRONE HIS SOVEREIGNTY WITH HEARTS OVERFLOWING GRATITUDE HIS UNFAILING PROTECTION OVERFLOWING BOUNTIES JOYOUSLY ANNOUNCE FRIENDS EAST WEST ELECTION SUPREME LEGISLATIVE BODY ORDAINED BY HIM IN HIS MOST HOLY BOOK PROMISED BY HIM RECEIVE HIS INFALIBILE GUIDANCE.

And they also said:

TO JUBILATION ENTIRE BAHAI WORLD VICTORIOUS COMPLETION BELOVED GUARDIANS UNIQUE CRUSADE NOW ADDED HUMBLE GRATITUDE PROFOUND THANKSGIVING FOLLOWERS BAHAUULLAH FOR ERECTION UNIVERSAL HOUSE JUSTICE AUGUST BODY TO WHOM ALL BELIEVERS MUST TURN WHOSE DESTINY IS TO GUIDE UNFOLDMENT HIS EMBRYONIC WORLD ORDER THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS PRESCRIBED BY BAHAUULLAH ELABORATED BY ABDULBAHA LABORIOUSLY ERECTED BY SHOGHI EFFENDI AND INSURE EARLY DAWN GOLDEN AGE FAITH WHEN THE WORD OF THE LORD WILL COVER THE EARTH AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA.<sup>3</sup>

With that beautiful cable an era in the work of the Hands of the Cause came to a close. Now their destiny was to be unfolded for them by this same Universal House of Justice. A new chapter in the evolution of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause was about to open.

## VI

Inaugurated by Bahá'u'lláh, formally established by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, brought into operation by Shoghi Effendi, the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God now looked upon

the Universal House of Justice to insure its continuation into the future. How would this be done? In November 1964 the House of

<sup>1</sup> *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIII, p. 840.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 362.

Justice announced: 'There is no way to appoint, or to legislate to make it possible to appoint, Hands of the Cause of God.' How then could this 'cardinal and pivotal' institution extend 'into the future . . . its appointed functions of protection and propagation'?

The initial step was taken in November 1964 when the Hands were formally related to the House of Justice. Still assigned to specific continents, they were 'reinforced by a wider and more efficient organization of their work' through an increase in the number of Auxiliary Board members and the appointment of certain Board members to act in an executive capacity on behalf of each Hand.<sup>1</sup>

After much thought and study, after 'prolonged and prayerful consultation between the Universal House of Justice and the Hands of the Cause of God', in June 1968 the Supreme Body announced the establishment of Continental Boards of Counselors for the protection and propagation of the Faith. The creation of this institution insured the extension into the future of the appointed functions of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause. The Hands of the Cause were released from administration of the Auxiliary Boards whose members now were appointed by and reported to the Continental Boards of Counselors.

'The Hands of the Cause of God,' wrote the Universal House of Justice, 'are one of the most precious assets the Bahá'í world possesses.' The House of Justice looked forward to the appointees of the Guardian being able 'to concentrate their energies on the more primary responsibilities of general protection and propagation, "preservation of the spiritual health of the Bahá'í communities" and "the vitality of the faith" of the Bahá'ís throughout the world.'<sup>2</sup> The increased freedom for the Hands to travel widely has had a profound effect on the progress of the Cause. At the conclusion of the Nine Year Plan, the Universal House of Justice wrote: 'They have, in all parts of the world, inspired the friends, assisted National Spiritual Assemblies, promoted the teaching work and played a vital part in the success of the Plan. The lagging fortunes of more than one national community have been revolutionized by a visit of a Hand of the Cause; swift and energetic action,

inspired by the Hand, has been followed by astonishing results, completely reversing that community's prospects.'<sup>3</sup>

When the House of Justice announced the creation of the Continental Boards of Counselors it alluded to the eventual establishment of an international teaching center at the World Center. This teaching center had been foreshadowed in the writings of the beloved Guardian. The evolution of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause took a further step in June 1973 when the House of Justice announced: 'The time is indeed propitious for the establishment of the International Teaching Center, a development which, at one and the same time, brings to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land and provides for its extension into the future, links the institution of the Boards of Counselors even more intimately with that of the Hands of the Cause of God, and powerfully reinforces the discharge of the rapidly growing responsibilities of the Universal House of Justice.'<sup>4</sup> All the Hands of the Cause are members of the International Teaching Center. Each Hand is kept informed of the activities of the Center, each conveys suggestions, recommendations and information to the Center, and when in the Holy Land, takes part in the consultations and activities of the Center. In addition, four believers with the rank of Counselor serve on this body.

In announcing the Seven Year Plan the Universal House of Justice wrote: 'The Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, the Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth, is bearing a precious fruit in the development of the International Teaching Center as a mighty institution of the World Center of the Faith; an institution blessed by the membership of all the Hands of the Cause; an institution whose beneficent influence is diffused to all parts of the Bahá'í community through the Continental Boards of Counselors, the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants.'<sup>5</sup>

The marvel and wonder of the International Teaching Center is only beginning to unfold before us. It is a further evidence of the

<sup>1</sup> *Wellspring of Guidance*, pp. 40-43.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> *Messages: 1968-1973*, p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> Universal House of Justice letter dated 8 June 1973.

<sup>5</sup> Universal House of Justice letter dated Naw-Rúz 1979.

eternal legacy of the Hands of the Cause. In the future it will operate from that building on the arc on Mount Carmel designated by the Guardian as the Seat for the Hands of the Cause.<sup>1</sup>

The Universal House of Justice in writing about the Hands of the Cause of God, the Counselors and the members of the Auxiliary Boards, said that 'it is not incorrect to refer to the three ranks collectively as one institution.'<sup>2</sup> It explained that the Auxiliary Boards were brought into being to assist the Hands, and they are now the 'assistants, deputies, and advisers' of the Continental Board of Counselors for each respective area. The Continental Boards of Counselors were brought into

being to carry into the future the vital functions of protection and propagation vested in the Institution of the Hands of the Cause. 'However,' continued the Universal House of Justice, 'each is also a separate institution in itself.' The House of Justice also has stated that 'Although the Counselors occupy a rank lower than that of the Hands of the Cause, they are nevertheless charged with the same two responsibilities and follow in the footsteps of the Hands of the Cause.'<sup>3</sup> The Supreme Body in addition stated that the Hands of the Cause would 'nurture the new institution and function in close collaboration with it as long as possible.'<sup>4</sup>

The Hands of the Cause of God are the standard-bearers. They are the 'divinely appointed, tried, and victorious souls . . .'<sup>5</sup> 'Their deeds are such as to eclipse the acts of the apostles of old and to confer eternal splendor on this period of the Formative Age.'<sup>6</sup>

What more can be said once the Universal House of Justice, *freed from all error*, has stated categorically that our debt of gratitude to them is beyond estimation?

'These few gallant and dedicated believers, whose place in history is forever assured by virtue of their appointment to their high office,' wrote the Universal House of Justice on another occasion, 'are indeed a precious legacy left to us by our beloved Guardian, and as the years go by there is increasingly added to the honor and respect which is their due by reason of their exalted rank, the love and admiration of the friends evoked by their constant services.'<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universal House of Justice letter dated 8 June 1973.

<sup>2</sup> *Messages: 1968-1973*, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Universal House of Justice letter to a National Spiritual Assembly dated 20 May 1970.

<sup>4</sup> *Messages: 1968-1973*, p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Messages: 1968-1973*, p. 70.

<sup>7</sup> *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 106.

## Continental Board of Counselors

The Universal House of Justice created its first Institution, the Boards of Counsellors in 1968. It came as no surprise to the Bahá'is who had worked with Florence Mayberry to learn that she was among the first ones appointed. At first there were separate boards of North and South America. The first three appointed for North America, Lloyd Gardner, Florence Mayberry and Edna True, traveled to Alaska for official visits. With the appointment of Florence Mayberry to the International Teaching Centre in Haifa, Israel in 1973, Sara Pereria and Velma Sherrill were added to the Board. Velma Sherrill had primary responsibility for Alaska and made frequent trips throughout the State.

About the time the Boards for the Americas merged into a single entity, Alaska's own Laurretta King was appointed a Counsellors. The door was opened for visits by Counsellors from South America including Raul Peron, Eloy Anello, Jamshed Khamsi, and Donald Wetzel.

When Laurretta King was asked to serve at the International Teaching Centre at the World Centre, primary duties for Alaska were carried out by Counsellors Jacqueline Left-Hand-Bull Delahunt and Stephen Birkland.

## The Auxiliary Board

Alaska has benefited greatly from the creation of the Auxiliary Board by the beloved Guardian in 1954. The first nine board members for North America had ranging responsibility for all of North and South America. Florence Mayberry visited frequently as a member of the Board and Billy deForge made a remarkable trip covering much of Alaska in 1959.

The Universal House of Justice expanded the number of Auxiliary Board Members and R. Ted Anderson of Whitehorse, Yukon Territory was assigned to Alaska. Other Canadian Board Members, Fletcher Bennett, who flew all over Alaska in his own plane in serving the Faith, and Mark Wedge also made major contributions to Alaska. Paul Pettit, an Auxiliary Board member from Oregon, was temporarily assigned to Alaska to work with the mass teaching projects of the 1970's.

When Howard Brown was appointed by Hand of the Cause Mr. Khadem in 1964, he became the first Alaskan to serve on that Institution. His area of responsibility went far beyond Alaska including Washington and parts of Idaho and Oregon. With the creation of the Assistants to the Board, Laurretta King was the first to fill that newly created position, having been appointed by Auxiliary Board member Ray Hudson. She served as an Assistant until appointed to the Auxiliary Board.

Following are some of those intrepid Alaskans who have been appointed to the Auxiliary Board: Jetta Brewer, Howard Brown, Jenabe Caldwell, Ray Hudson, Randall Johnson, Laurretta King, Laurie King, Raye Mullins, R. Marshall Murphy, Patricia Myers, Gavin Reed, Haifa Sadighi, R. James Schoppert, Harold Sexton, Douglas Samimi-Moore, and R. Randall Taylor.

Alaskan Bahá'í Community:  
Its  
Growth and Development  
The Formative Years:  
To 156 B. E. (1999)

Part V  
The National Spiritual  
Assembly



**Alaska Bahá'í Community:  
Its Growth and Development: The Formative Years  
V – The National Spiritual Assembly**

With the historic creation of the National Spiritual Assembly in 1957, an Institution was born which is destined to survive the centuries. While the Institution continues, the members of that body change. As is appropriate, attention is given to the Institution rather than to its members. However, that also means that with the passage of time, it becomes unclear who served when. There is some value in knowing of them because knowing the people adds meaning to the events of history and helps dry facts come alive. The members have been in the forefront of the building process and have been drawn from every segment of the community. They are, in part, emblematic of all and are among those on whose shoulders future generations stand.

The following pages show who served on that enduring Institution from its inception through the formative, first 42 years to B.E. 156 (A.D. 1999). Published biographical material is included in the section on pioneers and builders. A brief sketch was written for those for whom there was no other material. Those narratives are best thought of as remembrances of conversations, or verbal snapshots, from one who knew them. It has been my privilege to meet all of them, either in Alaska or elsewhere. Forty-five of them were members while I was.

**Statistical Summary  
of National Spiritual Assembly Members  
Ridván (Pre-Convention) 156; 1999 A.D. (C.E.)**

In the 42 years since its inception in 1957, 57 different individuals have served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska. Some details of membership service are as follows:

Pioneers during the beloved Guardian's Ten Year Global Spiritual Crusade were notable among the champion builders of the administrative institutions. It is not surprising that five of the first nine and 12 of the first 22 members were Ten Year Crusade pioneers. Nor, is it surprising that 11 of those 12 left Alaska for further pioneering activity elsewhere in the world. One never left her post and is still there as of this writing, 42 years later. Two of the 11 who served elsewhere returned to Alaska after completing their international work.

There have been 22 women (39%) and 35 men. Twenty (35%) represented racial minorities. There has been at least one member of a minority on the body for 33 of the 42 years. That is, nearly 80% of the time. Since 1969 there has always been at least one minority member. Eleven (19%) of those elected have identified as Native Americans. There has been at least one Alaskan Native serving each year since 1970. During the past 25 years (since 1974), 28% of the members have been Alaskan Natives.

Half of those serving were on the National Spiritual Assembly for 5 years or more. The average (arithmetic mean) length of service is 6+ years. The distribution in terms of years of service is as follows:

Number of Years	Number of People	Number of Years	Number of People	Number of Years	Number of People
<1-2	12	7-8	4	14-15	1
2-3	10	8-9	2	15-16	1
3-4	2	9-10	1		
4-5	1	10-11	1	26-27	2
5-6	7	11-12	0	29-30	1
6-7	8	13-14	1	32-33	1

There have been 29 mid-year resignations and 39 changes as a result of elections at the National Convention. There is an inverse relationship between the number of delegates voting and the number of convention changes.

#### Mid-Year Resignations

Reason	Number
Moved outside Alaska	10
Medical Reasons	6
Foreign Pioneering	4
Accepted Appointment to Auxiliary Board	3
Administrative Service at the World Centre	3
Other	3

Former members of the National Spiritual Assembly have compiled an impressive record of service. In addition to those doing valuable teaching and administrative work in Alaska, notable service has been rendered elsewhere:

- 9 have pioneered internationally;
- 5 have served at the World Centre; and
- 4 have served on the Auxiliary Board.

As of Ridván 156 (1999) the status of the 48 former members is as follows:

- 17 are deceased;
- 16 live in Alaska;
- 14 live elsewhere in the United States; and
- 1 is serving at the World Centre.

### ALPHABETICAL LISTING

Name	First Elected	Years Served	Bio Page	Name	First Elected	Years Served	Bio Page
Alio, Kathryn	1958	5	III-23	Kolstoe, John E.	1959	26+	III-99
Anderson, Donald A.	1960	29+	III-30	Lawson-Gubatayao, Ruby	1991	6	III-98
Ataian, Yeganeh	1997	2*	III-32	Lee, Lois K.	1957	8+	III-102
Austin, Walter W.	1986	6	III-33	Lenear, Joseph (Joe)	1964	<1	III-103
Baumgartner, Thomas Ernest (Ernie)	1995	3+*	III-37	McConahy, Michael P. (Mike)	1989	4	III-103
Brewer-Huber, Jetta A.	1976	5+*	III-43	McCord, Byron	1988	1	III-106
Brown, Howard	1957	7+	III-46	Mereness, Richard (Dick)	1958	2	III-106
Brown, Mary A.	1970	7+	III-47	Moul, Robert E. (Pat)	1957	13	III-109
Chapman, Hugh B.	1973	2+	III-53	Murphy, Rebecca Getahoun (Becky)	1976	8+	III-114
Chapman, Rachel Lei A. (Lei)	1974	2	III-55	Putnam, Robert W.	1978	7+	III-120
Christian, Roberta	1968	<1	III-54	Reed, Blaine M.	1963	15+	III-121
Corbett, Stanley W. (Stan)	1993	6*	III-57	Rodgers, Kathryn	1957	1	III-126
Currington, Rowena B. (Ro)	1980	1+	III-60	Rodgers, Warren H. (Rod)	1957	1+	III-125
Eakan, Maynard	1978	2	III-66	Rychetnick, David	1989	5+	III-127
Ellis, Steven E. (Steve)	1994	5*	III-68	Sadighi, Arsalan	1989	5	III-126
Feller, John	1997	2*	III-69	Schoppert, R. James (Jim)	1977	1+	III-128
Fleming, Carolyn	1991	5+	III-68	Schwartz, Charlotte	1965	2	III-131
Fowler, Robin C.	1962	6+	III-69	Schwartz, Robert K. (Bob)	1968	1	III-132
Gray, Hugh H.	1982	1+	III-78	Siverly, Charlotte	1982	9+*	III-136
Gubatayao-Hagen, Mary	1994	3+	III-77	Slone, John P.	1976	7	III-140
Guhrke, Bernard H. (Ben)	1964	5+	III-78	Smith, Janet G.	1959	26	III-137
Haisler, Georgia A.	1965	33*	III-80	Stettler, Karl Donald (Don)	1961	1	III-142
Hudson, Raymond L. (Ray)	1972	1	III-62	Stout, Janet W.	1957	2	III-147
Huffman, Evelyn	1957	10+	III-84	Stout, Verne L.	1957	6	III-152
Jess, Arthur L., Jr. (Art)	1969	5+	III-88	Van Brunt, Donald (Don)	1966	1+	III-156
Johnson, Ramona (Mona)	1985	13+*	III-89	Wang, George M. H.	1972	6+	III-159
Jones, Tod A.	1977	14+	III-91	Wong, Victor A.	1976	<1	III-153
King, Eugene (Gene)	1970	13+	III-92	Yarno (Perkal/Gates), Rose	1957	2	III-165
Kolstoe, Beverly W.	1960	1	III-96				

\* Member of the National Spiritual Assembly as of Ridván 156 (1999).



Members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Alaska 1957-1971

Baha'i Year		114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	
Gregorian Year		19	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71
1	Brown, Howard	7+	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	X								
2	Huffman, Evelyn	10+	SXX	XXX	X												
3	Lee, Lois	8+	XXX	X													
4	Moul, Robert E.	13	CXX	XXX	XXC												
5	Rodgers, Kathryn	1	XXX														
6	Rodgers, Warren (Rod)	1+	XXX	X													
7	Stout, Janet	2	XXX	XXX													
8	Stout, Verne	6	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX									
9	Yarno, Rose	2	XXX	XXX													
10	Alio, Kathryn	5		XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX									
11	Mereness, Richard (Dick)	2		X	XXX	X											
12	Kolstoe, John	26+			XXX	X		XXX	CXX	XXX							
13	Smith, Janet	26			XXX		XXX	XXX	SXX	XXX							
14	Anderson, Donald (Don)	29+				XXX	XXX	XXX	TXX	XXX							
15	Kolstoe, Beverly	1				XXX											
16	Stettler, Karl Don (Don)	1					XXX										
17	Fowler, Robin C.	6+						XXX	XXX	X				X	XXX	XXX	XXX
18	Reed, Blaine	15+							XXX								
19	Guhrke, Bernard (Ben)	5+							X	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX			
20	Lenear, Joseph (Joe)	<1							X								
21	Schwartz, Charlotte	2								XXX		XXX					
22	Haisler, Georgia	33*								X	XXX						
23	Van Brunt, Donald (Don)	1+									XXX	X					
24	Christian, Roberta	<1											X				
25	Schwartz, Robert	1											XXX				
26	Jess, Arthur (Art)	5+												XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
27	Brown, Mary	7+													XXX	XXX	XXX
28	King, Eugene	13+														XXX	XXX
29	Wang, George	6+															
30	Hudson, Raymond (Ray)	1															
31	Chapman, Hugh	2+															
32	Chapman, Lei	2															
33	Brewer-Huber, Jetta	5+*															
34	Wong, Victor	<1															
35	Murphy, Rebeka (Becky)	8+															
36	Slone, John	7															
37	Schoppert, James (Jim)	1+															
38	Jones, Tod	14+															
39	Eaken, Maynard	2															
40	Putnam, Robert (Bob)	7+															
41	Currington, Rowena	1+															
42	Gray, Hugh	1+															
43	Siverly, Charlotte	9+*															
44	Johnson, Ramona (Mona)	13+*															
45	Austin, Walter	6															
46	McCord, Byron	1															
47	McConahy, Michael (Mike)	4															
48	Sadighi, Arsalan	5															
49	Rychetnik, David John	5+															
50	Lawson-Gubatayao, Ruby	6															
51	Fleming, Carolyn	5+															
52	Corbett, Stanley (Stan)	6*															
53	Ellis, Steven	5*															
54	Gubatayao-Hagen, Mary	3+															
55	Baumgartner, T. Ernest	3+*															
56	Atian, Yeganeh	2*															
57	Feller, John	2*															

\* Member of the National Spiritual Assembly as of pre-Ridvan 156 (1999); C=Chairman; S=Secretary; T=Treasurer



Members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Alaska 1990-1999

	Baha'i Year	147	148	149	150	151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	
	Gregorian Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	
1	H. Brown	7+																			
2	Huffman	10+																			
3	Lee	8+																			
4	Moul	13																			
5	K. Rodgers	1																			
6	W. Rodgers	1+																			
7	J. Stout	2																			
8	V. Stout	6																			
9	Yarno	2																			
10	Alio	5																			
11	Mereness	2																			
12	J. Kolstoe	26+				XXX	XXX	X													
13	Smith	26	XXX	S																	
14	Anderson	29+																			
15	B. Kolstoe	1																			
16	Stettler	1																			
17	Fowler	6+																			
18	Reed	15+			SXX	S															
19	Guhrke	5+																			
20	Lenear	<1																			
21	C. Schwartz	2																			
22	Haisler	33*	XXX	CXX	XXC	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX										
23	Van Brunt	1+																			
24	Christian	<1																			
25	R. Schwartz	1																			
26	Jess	5+																			
27	Brown	7+																			
28	King	13+	XXX	XXX																	
29	Wang	6+																			
30	Hudson	1																			
31	H. Chapman	2+																			
32	L. Chapman	2																			
33	Brewer-Huber	5+*									XXX*										
34	Wong	<1																			
35	Murphy	8+																			
36	Slone	7																			
37	Schoppert	1+																			
38	Jones	14+	XXC			CXC															
39	Eaken	2																			
40	Putnam	7+																			
41	Currington	1+																			
42	Gray	1+																			
43	Siverly	9+*	XXX					SXX	XXX	XXX*											
44	Johnson	13+*	XXX	XXS	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX*											
45	Austin	6	XXX	XXX	X																
46	McCord	1																			
47	McConahy	4		XXX	XXX	TTX															
48	Sadighi	5	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX															
49	Rychetnik	5+	XXX	XXX	XXT	T	XXX	T													
50	Lawson-Gubatayao	6		XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX												
51	Fleming	5+		X	XXX	XXS	XXX	XXS	XXX												
52	Corbett	6*				XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX*										
53	Ellis	5*				CXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX*										
54	Gubatayao-Hagen	3+				XXX	XXX	X	XXX												
55	Baumgartner	3+*						T	XXX	XXX	XXX*										
56	Atian	2*								XXX	XXX*										
57	Feller	2*								XXX	XXX*										

\* Member of the National Spiritual Assembly as of pre-Ridvan 156 (1999); C=Chairman; S=Secretary; T=Treasurer

**National Spiritual Assembly members  
in order of their first election to the body**

Howard Brown

1957 to 1964-65 (midyear): 7+ years

Frequently Vice-Chairman.

Elected in 1957 with the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska.  
Resigned midyear when appointed to the Auxiliary Board in 1965.

Evelyn Huffman

1957 to 1967-68 (midyear): 10+ years

Secretary 7 years

Elected in 1957 with the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska.  
Resigned to move to California so Vern, her husband, could have open heart surgery.

Lois K. Lee

1957 to 1965-66 (midyear): 8+ years

Treasurer 6 years

Elected in 1957 with the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska.  
Resigned upon her retirement from the Alaska Railroad to move to Oregon.

Robert E. (Pat) Moul

1957 to 1970: 13 years

Chairman 13 years

Elected in 1957 with the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska.

Kathryn Rodgers

1957 to 58: 1 Year

Elected in 1957 with the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska.

Warren H. (Rod) Rodgers

1957 to 1958-59 (midyear): 1+ years

Elected in 1957 with the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska.

Janet W. Stout

1957 to 1959: 2 years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the first National Convention in 1957.

Verne L. Stout

1957 to 1963: 6 years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the first National Convention in 1957.

Rose (Perkal) Yarno (Gates)

1957 to 1959: 2 years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the first National Convention in 1957.

Kathryn Alio

1958 to 1963: 5 years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the second National Convention in 1958.

Richard (Dick) Mereness

1958-59 (midyear) to 1960-61 (midyear): 2 years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in a by-election when Rod Rodgers resigned in the summer of 1958. Dick resigned in January of 1960 in order to pioneer to Norway.

John E. Kolstoe

1959-60; 1960-61 (midyear) to 61; 1963 to 1985-86 (midyear);

1993 to 1996-97 (midyear): 26½ years

Chairman 12 years, periodically Vice-Chairman and Assistant Secretary.

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly at the 3rd National convention in 1958. Not re-elected the next year, but elected in a by-election in midyear 1960-61 when Dick Mereness resigned to pioneer to Norway. Resigned in 1985 to pioneer to St. Lucia. Returned to Alaska and elected again in 1994. Resigned in the fall of 1996 when he moved from Alaska.

Janet G. Smith

1959 to 60; 1961 to 79-80(midyear); 1984-85 (midyear) to 1991-92 (midyear): 26 years

Recording Secretary 2 years, National Secretary 20+ years

Elected in 1958, then was off for one year, re-elected and served until she resigned in October 1979 to accept a position at the World Centre. In 1984 she returned to Alaska and was elected in a by-election to replace John Slone who had moved. She resigned in 1991 when she returned to the Holy Land to work at the World Centre.

Donald A. Anderson

1960 to 1989-90 (midyear): 29+ years

Treasurer 22½ years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the 4th National convention in 1959. He served continuously until his death in 1989.

Beverly W. Kolstoe

1960 to 1961: 1 year

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the 5th National Convention in 1959.

Karl Donald Stettler

1961 to 1962: 1 year

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly and served for one year in 1961.

Robin C. Fowler

1962 to 64-65(midyear); (midyear)68-69 to 72-73(midyear): 6+ years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1962 and served until his resignation in 1964 to attend graduate school at the University of Hawaii. He returned to Alaska and in 1968, just after the election of the National Spiritual Assembly, Roberta Christian resigned and Robin was elected in the by-election. In 1972 he accepted a position in the finance department serving the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel and once again resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly.

Blaine M. Reed

1963 to 1977; 1992-1993-94 (midyear): 15 + years

Secretary 1+ years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1963 and served for 14 years. Later, the Reeds left Alaska to serve at the World Centre for 10 years. In 1992, a few years after the Reeds returned to Alaska, Blaine was again elected to the National Spiritual Assembly.

Bernard H. (Ben) Guhrke

1964-65 (midyear) to 1970: 5+ years

Elected in a by-election to replace Robin Fowler who resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly in 1964 to attend graduate school in Hawaii.

Joseph (Joe) Lenear

1964-64 (midyear) to 1965: <1 year

Elected in a by-election to replace Howard Brown when Howard resigned to serve on the Auxiliary Board.

Charlotte Schwartz

1965 to 1966; 1967 to 1968: 2 years

Elected at the National Convention in 1965 and was not re-elected the following year. In 1967 she was again elected for one year.

Georgia A. Haisler

1965-66 (midyear) to 1982-83(midyear); 1983 -\*: 33 years

Chairman 2 years, and frequently elected Recording Secretary and Vice-Chairman

\*Member of the National Spiritual Assembly pre-Ridván 156 (1999)

Georgia, the longest serving member of the National Spiritual Assembly, was Elected in a by-election to replace Lois Lee. Georgia resigned in 1983 to care for her husband, Tom, who was terminally ill with cancer. Reelected at Convention 1983, shortly after Tom's death.

Donald (Don) Van Brunt

1966 to 1967; 1967-68 (midyear) to 1968: 1+ years

Elected in 1966 and served for one year. During the following year, Evelyn Huffman resigned mid-year and Don was elected back on the National Spiritual Assembly to serve out that year.

Roberta Christian

1968-69 (midyear): <1 year

After being elected to the National Spiritual Assembly at Convention 1968, Roberta explained that she planned to move to California to be near her son. Her resignation was accepted during her first meeting.

Robert K. (Bob) Schwartz

1968 to 1969: 1 year

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the National Convention in 1968 and served for one year.

Arthur L.(Art) Jess Jr.

1969 to 1974-75 (midyear): 5+ years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the National Convention in 1969 and served until his resignation in the Fall of 1974.

Mary A. Brown

1970 to 1977-78 (midyear): 7+ years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the National Convention in 1970 and served until she resigned due to failing health in 1978.

Eugene (Gene) King

1970 to 1972; 1980 to 1991: 13 years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the National Convention in 1970 and served until he moved from Alaska in 1972. Shortly after returning to Alaska, Eugene was again elected and served for 11 more years.

George M. H. Wang

1972 to 1978-79 (midyear): 6+ Years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the National Convention in 1972 and served until deteriorating health caused him to resign in 1978.

Raymond L. (Ray) Hudson

1972-73 (midyear) to 1973-74 (midyear): 1 year

When Robin Fowler resigned to work at the World Centre, Ray was elected in the resulting by-election. A little more than a year later, he accepted an appointment to the Auxiliary Board and resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly.

Hugh B. Chapman

1973-74 (midyear) to 1976: 2+ years

Elected in the by-election to replace Ray Hudson when Ray accepted an appointment to the Auxiliary Board.

Rachel Lei A. (Lei) Chapman

1973-74 (midyear) to 1976-77(midyear): 2 years

Elected in the by-election to replace Art Jess in the fall of 1973. Shortly after the Convention of 1976 Lei resigned to move to Oregon.

Jetta J. A. Brewer-Huber

1976 to 1976-77(midyear); 78-79 (midyear) to 1982-83(midyear); 86 to 89; and 1998 - \*: 6 Years  
Secretary 2 years

\*Member of the National Spiritual Assembly pre-Ridván 156 (1999)

Jetta served less than a year when she resigned to accept an appointment to the Auxiliary Board. In 1979 Janet Smith resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly to accept a position at the World Centre. Jetta was subsequently elected back on the National Spiritual Assembly and served until her resignation in 1983. She was again elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1998.

Victor A. Wong

1976-77 (midyear) to 1976-77 (midyear): <1 year

When Lei Chapman resigned to move from Alaska, Victor was elected in the by-election. He, too, moved a few months later and resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly.

Rebecca Getahoun (Becky) Murphy

1976-77 (midyear) to 1979-80 (midyear);  
1982 to 1987 (midyear): 8 + years; Secretary 5+ years

When Jetta Brewer and Victor Wong resigned in 1976, Becky and John Slone were elected in the ensuing by-election. The Murphys pioneered to Africa in 1980. They returned from Africa in 1982 and Becky was elected back on the National Spiritual Assembly at the following Convention. She was elected National Secretary when Jetta Brewer resigned from that position in 1983.

John P. Slone

1976-77 (midyear) to 1983; 1984 to 1984-85 (midyear): 7 years

When Jetta Brewer and Victor Wong resigned in 1976, Becky Murphy and John Slone were elected to replace them. John served until 1983. A year later the delegates voted him back on the National Spiritual Assembly. He resigned because of an employment transfer from Alaska in 1985.

Robert James (Jim) Schoppert

1977 to 1978-79(midyear): 1+ years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly at Convention in 1977 and served until 1978 when he left Alaska to continue graduate studies in Washington State.

Tod A. Jones

1977-78 (midyear) to 1991; 1993-1995: 15+ years

Chairman 9 years

Mary Brown resigned due to health reasons in the winter of 1978 and Tod was elected to replace her. He served until 1991, was off the National Spiritual Assembly for two years and elected in 1993 and served two more years.

Maynard Eaken

1978-79 (midyear) to 1980-81(midyear): 2 years

When George Wang and Jim Schoppert resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly, Maynard and Bob Putnam were elected as replacements. Maynard resigned in 1980 because of extensive international teaching.

Robert W. (Bob) Putnam

1978-79 (midyear) to 1986: 7+ years

Secretary <1 year, Treasurer 3 years

When George Wang and Jim Schoppert resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly, Bob and Maynard Eaken were elected to replace them. When Janet Smith resigned as National Secretary, Bob was elected to fill that position.

Rowena Burack (Ro) Currington

1980-81 (midyear) to 1982: 1+ years

When Maynard Eaken resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly, Rowena was elected in the ensuing by-election and served for one and a half years.

Hugh H. Gray

1982-83 (midyear) to 1984: 1+ years

Treasurer: 1 year

When Jetta Brewer and Georgia Haisler resigned in March of 1983, Hugh and Charlotte Siverly were elected in the resulting by-election. He served until moving from Alaska in 1984.

Charlotte Siverly

1982-83 (midyear) to 1986; 1987-88 (midyear) to 1988; 89-90; 96 - \*: 9 years

Secretary: 3 years

\*Member of the National Spiritual Assembly pre-Ridván 156 (1999)

When Jetta Brewer and Georgia Haisler resigned in March of 1983, Charlotte and Hugh Gray were elected in the resulting by-election. Charlotte served for five years, then intermittently until 1996 when she was again elected to the National Spiritual Assembly and became National Secretary.

Ramona M. (Mona) Johnson  
1985-86 (midyear) - \*: 14+ years  
Secretary < 1 year

\*Member of the National Spiritual Assembly pre-Ridván 156 (1999)

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in the by-election when John Kolstoe resigned. Mona was the first Tsimshian Indian to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly. She has been serving continuously since that time.

Walter W. Austin  
1986-7 (midyear) to 1992-3 (midyear): 6 years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in a by-election when Eugene King moved to the state of Washington. Walter continued to serve until his resignation in 1993.

Byron McCord  
1988-1989: 1 year

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the National Convention in 1988 and served for one year.

Michael P. (Mike) McConahy  
1988 to 1989; 1990 to 1994: 5 years  
Treasurer 1 year

Elected during the National Convention in 1988, Mike served for one year. After being off for a year, he was again elected and served for four more years.

Arsalan Sadighi  
1988 to 1994: 6 years

Elected during the National Convention in 1988, Arsalan served for six years.

David John Rychetnik  
1989 (mid-year) to 1993; 1993-94 (midyear) to 1995-96 (midyear): 5+ years  
Treasurer: 5+ years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in the by-election following the tragic death of Don Anderson. He was also elected Treasurer to carry on that important function and served until 1993. He was again elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in the by-election following the resignation of Blaine Reed.

Ruby Lawson-Gubatayao  
1991 to 1998: 7 years

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly at the National Convention in 1991. She served continuously until 1998.

Carolyn Fleming  
1991-92 (midyear) to 1997: 5+ years  
Secretary: 3+ years

Carolyn was elected in the by-election following the resignation of Janet Smith when she returned to serve at the World Centre in December 1991 and served until 1997.

Stanley W. (Stan) Corbett  
1993 - \*: 6 years

\*Member of the National Spiritual Assembly pre-Ridván 156 (1999)

Elected during the National Convention of 1993 and has served continuously ever since.

Steven E. (Steve) Ellis

1995 - \*: 5 years

Chairman 5 years

\*Member of the National Spiritual Assembly pre-Ridván 156 (1999)

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly during the National Convention in 1995 and has been serving continuously, as Chairman, ever since.

Mary Gubatayao-Hagen

1994-1996; 1996-97 (midyear) to 1998: 3+ year

When Mary was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1994, it was the first time that a mother (Ruby Lawson-Gubatayao) and daughter had served together in Alaska. She served for two years, was off for a half year and reelected in the by-election to replace John Kolstoe and served for another year and a half.

Thomas Ernest (Ernie) Baumgartner

1995-96 (midyear) - \*: 3+ years

Treasurer 3+ years

\*Member of the National Spiritual Assembly pre-Ridván 156 (1999)

When David Rychetnick resigned to move to Seattle, Ernie was elected in the by-election. He was elected Treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly at the next meeting and has been serving in that capacity ever since.

Yeganeh Ataian

1997 - \*: 2 years

\*Member of the National Spiritual Assembly pre-Ridván 156 (1999)

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly at the National Convention in 1997.

John Feller

1997 - \*: 2 years

\*Member of the National Spiritual Assembly pre-Ridván 156 (1999)

Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly at the National Convention in 1997.