

Laura Dreyfus-Barney Monologue
Bicentenary of the Birth of Baha'u'llah ¹

Washington, D.C.

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As a child I was introspective and attracted by the mysteries of the intangible. I can remember how as a thirteen-year-old at a Catholic convent school here in Washington, I longed to unravel the truths of existence. Little did I know that my curious nature, my concern with serious matters and thoughts, were the beginning of spiritual inklings that would aid me well in my service to the Bahá'í Cause later in life.

[pause for transition]

From birth, my sister Natalie and I were destined for a life of privilege and leisure. My father, Albert Barney, was a multi-millionaire industrialist from Ohio, and my mother Alice an artist of exceeding talent. I had French governesses and private tutors and later attended boarding school in Paris. As children, we were surrounded by the arts. I eventually studied dramatic arts and sculpture in Paris, and like mother, was very intrigued with theater.

[...]

I spent my youth in Washington, DC. Those years passed fairly uneventfully...

After my early youth in Washington, mother, Natalie, and I returned to Paris when I was nineteen. In Paris I met May Maxwell in the year 1900, and I was

¹ See bahai-library.com/various_monologues_bicentenary_howard

immediately drawn to her. She told me about the wondrous Faith of Baha'u'llah, and I accepted it immediately – in part because of its teachings that promoted women's rights and world peace.

[...]

Upon accepting the truth of this Revelation, I set out almost immediately to visit 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land. I travelled several times to the city of Akka and stayed for months at a time. During these repeated and extended visits I was permitted to ask 'Abdu'l-Baha many questions on spiritual matters – resulting ultimately in a book of my compiled notes called *Some Answered Questions*.

By the grace of God my mother also accepted the teachings of Baha'u'llah and joined me on one of my trips to visit 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land. Upon our return to Washington, and inspired by the Master's example, she became active by opening her home, Studio House, for Bahá'í meetings. Whereas once my mother hosted the elites of politics and society, our home was now open to and welcomed people of all walks of life!

Yet, in Washington social circles there was also ignorance and envy. We faced opposition and ridicule.

But nothing could weaken my devotion and perseverance in promotion of the teachings of Baha'u'llah. I remained staunch and firm in the path. My only thought was to work harder to further the Bahá'í Cause in Washington – that ignorance might be replaced by wisdom, and error by truth.

And I could well be patient, for I had always before me the greater lesson — the lesson of 'Abdu'l-Baha's personal life and example.

I continued, undaunted, undertaking the Bahá'í activities. In its work I found a worthy fulfillment of my ideals and aspirations.