

A WAYFARER BETWEEN TWO WORLDS



HARRY LIEDTKE

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RECOLLECTIONS BY HARRY LIEDTKE

THE HOPES AND CHEERS OF BYGONE YEARS

THE VISIONS FOR TOMORROW

This brief chronicle records some of the highlights of the now seventy-five years that I have been a Baha'i. It tries to tell without bias the cheerful and the painful and both with equal candor. I know that the perception of these two attributes is shaped by my inheritance and life experience and may differ from the perceptions of others. My observations carry therefore no authority. They are meant to stimulate thought rather than debate. The purpose is to invite others to accompany me through the pages of my life and take heart in the achievements of many extraordinary people I met en route. The fact that there are so very few of us left who retain a clear memory going back to the early 1930's renders this task very special but also daunting. My long journey from one world to another was not just one of geography, but also one of the spirit and the intellect. It took me in every sense of the word from an old world to one that was new and totally different. It opened up new horizons and has raised hopes that the unlimited potential that dwells within us all can indeed be realized. While history, such as some of the narrated circumstances and events, cannot be altered and must not be rewritten, I have every confidence that individual engagement and collective effort will shorten the time of sorrow the world is currently passing through, and will altogether change for the better the outcome of humanity's odyssey.

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Part I

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Germany's Baha'i community in 2005, it is both an honor and a responsibility to preserve for posterity the memories of early years. The fact that these notes were written in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia may hint at the contribution of German Bahá'ís to help spread the Faith to all parts of the globe. My wife Gisele and I have been living in Canada for 70 years and have belonged to a dozen communities in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. We always look back with great fondness to the glory days of our youth after the end of World War II, when we were given the opportunity to participate in the rebuilding work of Germany's Baha'i community.

I started out on my journey on the 13th day of November 1927. It was a Sunday shortly after high noon, at 12.45 to be precise. The Sun shone bright on that day. I was told that my parents were overjoyed by my arrival. For the next twenty years they showered me with their love and gave me the security of a harmonious family life. In my youth they nursed me through a long, often fatal illness and provided me with a well-rounded education. I belonged indeed to the privileged few.

A far greater privilege was that I was called into life at the start of a new era of human evolution, in the 84th year after the Manifestation of the Bab had opened the gate to a knowledge explosion which would have been the envy of my ancestors. It was to enrich my life beyond the highest expectations of my forefathers and it gave impetus to my future involvement in the spread of global aviation.

Greater still, however, was the honor for me to have recognized this rare moment in history when religion was renewed. Alas, along with such bounty came the pain of witnessing the snail pace of progress and the persistent failure to turn the promise of a peaceful global society into reality. Much of this pain was caused by my own lack of response to Mahatma Gandhi's reminder that "Y o u must be the change you wish to see in the world."

My parents had been living in Berlin where they met in 1918 after father had returned from the Great War. They delayed their marriage until 1923 and the start of a family for a further four years as they were waiting out war's harsh economic aftermath. It was a fortunate decision, for had I been born even a few years sooner, I may have been swallowed up in the meat grinder of World War II as were so many of my contemporaries and this story would never have been written.

My father was a kind and gentle man and an accountant by trade. He had a sense of humor and was a champion gymnast in his youth. His father, my grandfather, was well read and managed a shop where multi-lingual books for higher learning, some in Greek and Latin, were typeset and printed.

My mother was loving but strict with an uncompromising sense of justice. Like father she also was an accountant with a mind that worked faster than a calculator and she was never too shy to speak it. Her father had worked for the railway and managed long distance express trains. He died when my mother was only four years old.

Both my parents accepted Baha'u'llah. While they were no churchgoers they had an unwavering faith. For the first 50 years of her life mother was a lover of Jesus and cried for Him on every Good Friday. For her second 50 years she was a lover of His return and to the end of her century was able to recite the Tablet of Ahmad by heart.

In 1931 we moved from Berlin to Stuttgart and two years later from there to Hamburg where I entered school. In June of 1937 we returned to Stuttgart and moved to a home at 18 Schumannstrasse (today Bischoffstrasse) in Vaihingen, a south-westerly suburb. Three houses down at No 12 lived Werner and Hede Schubert and their 7-year old son Dieter, who soon became my friend. 85 years later he still is. We had never heard about the Baha'i Faith and had no idea that of all people the Schuberts were Bahá'ís. Moreover, Hede Schubert had come into the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha in the spring of 1913 when she was 14 years old. All this came to light only after war's end in the fall of 1945 when the ban against the Baha'i community was lifted.

As fate would have it, the Baha'i Faith in Germany was outlawed in May 1937, just a few weeks before our return to Stuttgart. Following the dictates of their faith, our friends obeyed the government edict and for the next eight years never mentioned the Baha'i Faith to anybody. Sometimes, in the middle of a bad bombing raid, they would ask how I imagined the post-war world to develop. My vision of a globally governed peaceful society must have sounded to them like a fireside lecture.

The World of Tomorrow

A small glimpse of tomorrow's world came after one particularly harrowing bombing raid. Ours was the last house left habitable in the neighborhood. A cluster of four 2000-pounders had come very close. They burst our ear drums and gave us a bad nose bleed as we struggled for breath. I have often contemplated what would have happened to us had the bombardier hesitated even a single second before releasing his bomb load. Many buildings collapsed or burned down. 112 people died and 386 were injured in the fires and explosions. Afterwards I walked to a nearby pear orchard to regain my sanity. A fresh wind had cleared the smoke of the conflagration and I could see the stars. Their orderly display and utter detachment from all earthly turmoil suddenly made me realize that the order that prevailed throughout God's great universe was indivisible. His order would also come to earth once the dragon of war was slain.



Another brief glimpse came in 1944 when I watched a formation of no less than 1,200 four-engine bombers return from a daylight raid on Berlin. Flying high and out of reach of anti-aircraft guns, they flew home across southern Germany to evade the fighter squadrons that were waiting to intercept them along the northern route. Against the deep blue sky they looked like a silver pattern on a gossamer curtain. Here were over thousand planes, each with a crew of ten, pushed along at some five kilometers per minute by the flawless operation of almost 5,000 engines. Some twelve thousand 'enemies', a whole division of men, was traversing the sky above me. At this moment I knew that tomorrow's world would be vastly different. This technological

marvel would not just go away once the war was over. People by the thousands would crisscross the skies at great speed and our world would suddenly become very small.

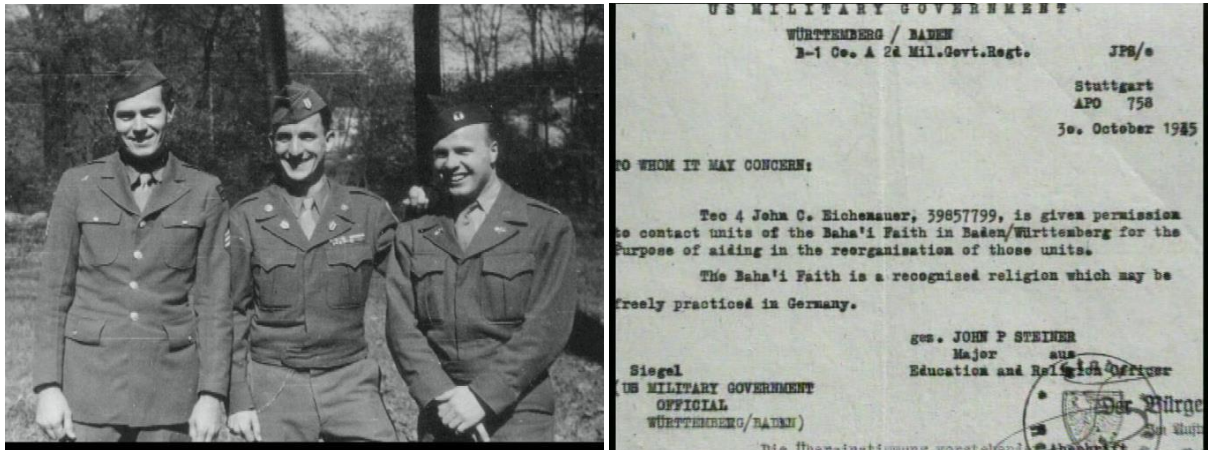


The Katarinenlinde, the old Linden tree on a hillside near Esslingen

But a first strange episode occurred on Thursday June 13, 1940, the day before German troops entered Paris. I was 12 years old and was on a class excursion. On a sun-lit hilltop overlooking the broad Neckar Valley we came upon an old Linden tree where we stopped for a picnic. I had never been to this place before, but I immediately fell in love with it and experienced a strange feeling of bliss, such as a 12 - year old can claim to experience. It was all very puzzling. I never returned to my newly discovered favorite spot until almost seven years later on February 23, 1947, a Sunday, when I attended my first Baha'i youth meeting at the famous 'Häusle', the little Baha'i property in the countryside at Esslingen-Krummenacker. After the program we went on a stroll and came upon my favorite tree, the "Katharinenlinde" (Catherine's Linden Tree). I was somewhat stunned when they told me that in the spring of 1913 'Abdu'l-Baha and a group of German Bahá'ís had picnicked in the shade of this old tree. I have learned since about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's explanation that *"In the world of God there is no yesterday, today or tomorrow. All are one."*

New Beginnings and new Friendships

On October 30, 1945 our fellow Baha'i John Eichenauer of Phoenix, Arizona, obtained a permit from the U.S. Military Government in Stuttgart that allowed the German Baha'i community to resume activities. On my next visit to the Schubert's there was a picture hanging on the wall of a bearded old man with turban. When I asked since when they had this grandfather in their family, I was told it was 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It meant nothing to me. When they asked whom I considered the most important person alive and I answered "Mahatma Gandhi," they told me that it was a man called Shoghi Effendi. Again this was absolutely meaningless for this 18-year old.



Johnny Eichenauer with fellow Baha'is
Bruce Davidson (l) and Henry Jarvis (r)

Permit issued to John Eichenauer
for resumption of Baha'i activities

Then I heard that Mrs. Schubert was to give a public talk on the topic "The Baha'i Faith and World Peace." It was in January of 1946. My favorite uncle who lived in Hamburg and whom I had not seen for nine long years, happened to visit our family that very evening. He seemed surprised, but accepted my apology when I told him I absolutely had to attend the first public lecture on the Baha'i Faith since the war. It took place at Stuttgart's "Wilhelma" and was attended by several hundred people. There was, of course, no heat and everybody sat in their coats. Every word I heard seemed like the answer to my prayers.

When at the end of the talk Fred Kohler as chairman for the evening invited questions, a tall chap who looked and sounded like a confirmed National Socialist began to raise his voice. Mr. Kohler saw himself forced to close the meeting, but the fellow approached the rostrum and called on people to stay and listen to his opposition speech. It was the janitor who saved the evening by bluntly telling the chap in a delightful Schwabian dialect that he had not paid for the use of the hall and that he was to get out now.

Burdened with many bad memories of years of fanaticism and sick racist arrogance, I felt so upset that I stood there in the snow and loudly proclaimed that it was precisely people like him who had helped to bring the temple down. And now it was him again who decried this message of universal brotherhood and peace that we had just listened to. Therefore, I said, this wonderful message must be the truth. The interloper had achieved exactly the opposite to what he had hoped, at least as far as I was concerned. Years of isolation amidst a sea of nationalist frenzy lay safely behind and I became now acquainted with those wonderful open souls of the Baha'i community. I felt like a released prisoner who had climbed out of a dark dungeon into bright sunlight. Only a similar experience can convince the reader that this was no false emotionalism.

The Challenge of a Hereditary Guardianship

During the war that seemed to have no end, people were pleading, "Better an end with horror than horror with no end." The question was what should come after. My personal blueprint of a peaceful future world matched almost exactly the teachings of the Baha'i Faith. When I first heard about the faith it seemed too good to be true. At first I thought that the whole thing had to be a colossal hoax. As a typical 19-year-old who thought he knew everything, I set about to "prove" that we were dealing with a fraudulent claim. Peter Mühlischlegel (my future brother-in-law) told his father Adelbert Mühlischlegel (a future Hand of the Cause) to come to the next meeting and to get rid of me once and for all. Somehow I missed that meeting. The last hang-up was a provision in 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament of a hereditary Guardianship. It reminded me of an inbred monarchy and it therefore had no place in my private blueprint of a new

world order. After several months of argument I gained the remarkable insight that I was perhaps not quite as wise as ‘Abdu’l-Baha and yielded to His higher wisdom. My own deep appreciation of a hereditary Guardianship I left to future years. Ironically, it was this provision which at first had doggedly kept me from becoming a Baha’i that was lost to humanity only a short decade later. This loss eventually turned out to be a far greater test than all my youthful misgivings had been.

Starting from scratch

By standards that are prevailing today in the “developed world”, the community, as did the whole country, was facing huge difficulties. Many had lost their homes and possessions, were ill clad and went to bed hungry. Savings had evaporated and shelter was almost impossible to find. Under these circumstances the Stuttgart community was lucky to find for their gatherings a large, but completely bare room on the ground floor of a burned out office building that could hold about 100 people. Walls, floor and ceiling were bare concrete. In the center stood an old wood stove whose stove pipe ran below the ceiling straight across the room and through an opening out into the street. We sat on wooden benches and the place was lit by naked light bulbs. It was OK on warm days, but in the winter one kept coats on, unless people brought enough firewood to the meetings. But despite empty stomachs, chronic tiredness and a long walk or poor tram connections, there was great enthusiasm and few were absent. It was in this room that the closing meeting of Germany’s first post-war convention took place. I well remember Hermann Grossmann’s words. Many have lost their ideals, he said, the economy is bankrupt, and nobody really knows how to carry on. Especially the youth is facing years of uncertainty. It is our task to encourage and to bring back confidence by offering the Message of Baha’u’llah. And this became our firm resolve.

Bahá'í Youth

Baha'i youth faced similar conditions. We once met on a meadow near Heidelberg and had brought blankets to improvise tents for camping overnight. It was all very romantic until an icy downpour drenched us during the night. The first youth summer school took place near the town of Heppenheim, south of Frankfurt. We were the guests of family August Ehlers who made us feel completely at home. But despite their excellent hospitality we woke up hungry and before breakfast went to a field where we filled up on juicy carrots. Then there was a youth summer school near Heidelberg-Neckargemünd, home of Hermann and Annel Grossmann, their daughter Suzanne and son Hartmut. A group of young cyclists dropped by as one of them had a flat tire. We helped them fix the bike and invited them to stay, but they wanted to move on. One of them wore black shorts and a white shirt. In later years he became known as Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl. I hear that he has recalled the good feelings our brief encounter had left with him. It is useful to remember that when one meets a person, one never knows what influence he or she has, or may have in future.



Baha'i youth gathering near Esslingen on February 23 1947. John Eichenauer and Gisela Walker in front center; Manoutschehr Zabih in back row left; Dear Me in ill-fitting dark suit at top right.

Empty book shelves

Next to the food shortage the greatest handicap was lack of Baha'i literature. Practically all books had either been confiscated, or were lost in the bombing. I heard that the only thing a friend had picked from the rubble was a picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. There was an urgent need for literature and the only book that was available was the original English version of BAHA'U'LLAH AND THE NEW ERA by John Esslemont. Since I was fluent in English I decided to translate the chapter "What is a Bahá'í" because everybody asked us this question. But in the end I didn't stop with this one chapter and soon began to feel a close kinship with John Esslemont who had poured his soul into these very same sentences 25 years earlier. -

It was a sunny Sunday afternoon when I sat at my father's writing table and worked on the translation. Today's computers result in a clean copy despite constant corrections and text changes. In those days one worked with pencil and eraser and added lines and arrows to reshuffle a sentence. In the end the manuscript looked like a typical hand written score by Ludwig van Beethoven.

Then the phone rang. "Hermann Grossmann, here," he introduced himself to me, an 18-year old, not Dr. Grossmann. I was startled by his humility. He called from an NSA meeting. "We have great problems in Frankfurt," he began. "There's disunity between the youth and the older generation and the youth wants to form their own Assembly. Are you prepared to move to Frankfurt and broker peace?" Here I was sitting in my Dad's study, surrounded by all the comforts of home, and he wants me to leave home for the first time and move to Frankfurt which was not much better than Hiroshima? But then I remembered the bomber formations and my hunch about the future of aviation. Frankfurt had the aviation hub of Rhein-Main airport. Perhaps I could start a career there. "I'll go," I told him, "but first I have to finish my journalism studies and sit my exams." He seemed surprised and relieved. "In that case," he told me in an almost formal voice, "I am pleased to tell you that you are the first to be appointed to our new National Youth Committee." - After I hung up I wondered if this was meant to be a reward, or a punishment for being stupid enough to volunteer to go to a place that was nothing but one big heap of rubble.

A Brief Introduction to the Faith

Here I must digress. My exam finals that were coming up included a government-run test of my proficiency as English-German-English translator. Since I had been exposed to the English language since childhood, I passed with flying colors. I was now a 'government accredited translator' and authorized to run my own translation bureau. It also opened doors to industry, media and the diplomatic service. My written dissertation on the freedom of movement through the world's canals and sea narrows, such as the English Channel, Suez and the Malacca Strait, had won accolades. Next I was facing a group of professors and government representatives for a demanding demonstration of simultaneous translation. The examiners pretended that I was translating at a discussion of some foreign affairs issue. I was blown away when my history professor suddenly told everybody present that I was Baha'i and that he wanted me to give them 'a brief introduction' to the Baha'i Faith. They chuckled when I asked the professor in turn how he would manage to give us a 'brief introduction' to Christianity. Just as I was getting to the main points he stopped my oration with an appreciative 'thank you', but I told him that I hadn't quite finished and was given extra time to complete my 'brief introduction.'

Adelbert and Herma Mühschlegel

It was around this time when I first met Adelbert and Herma Mühschlegel. There will be later mention of Hands of the Cause, but the Mühschlegels need to be mentioned right at the beginning as they became a very special influence on my newfound life. After they lost their belongings in the air war, Adelbert as a family doctor found a spacious apartment at war's end. It was on Stuttgart's Alexanderstrasse. Their new home soon became known as "Hotel Mühschlegel." Besides their own family of six they had Alice Schwarz and her son as tenants. Mrs. Schwarz was among Germany's first Bahá'ís and she and her husband, Consul Schwarz, were host to 'Abdu'l-Baha when He visited in 1913.



Adelbert and Herma Mühschlegel



Hede Schubert in dark dress at left

The Mühschlegels opened their home to many young students from Iran who had come to study in Germany and who stayed at the Mühschlegels until they found permanent accomodation. It could be said that their home came close to being a Baha'i Center where many meetings were held. I especially remember the group who translated the Hidden Words. They were the German author Günter Heyd from Hamburg, Johanna von Werthern nee Hauff who as a young girl had the honor of saying prayers at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's

bedside after His passing, and Manoutschehr Zabih from Teheran, the first Persian to visit Germany after the war. The fourth translator was Adelbert Mühlshlegel who not only wrote a superb German, but knew fifteen other languages, among them Arabic and Farsi.

Adelbert Mühlshlegel always stressed the importance of language. His careful, lucid style and inspiring poetry were unsurpassed. I am afraid he would be saddened to witness today's decline of language. Everybody always looked forward to his talks that he delivered on special occasions and which he often ended with a new poem. On his birthdays he always took time to emerge from his study. Waving a piece of paper with statistics, he would lament how very few hours he had been able to devote during the past year to the study of a certain language, and how much time he had wasted attending seemingly fruitless meetings. Among his translations are the Kitab-I-Iqán, God Passes By, and The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, plus most of the Guardian's letters. Contrary to what one would expect from a physician, Adelbert had a beautiful handwriting. Using pencils for his translations, he gave each one of them a name and never discarded them after they were down to a small stump, because they had been his faithful servants.

I have no idea how the man found time for all this work. After all, he was also a practicing physician who had to look after patients and feed a large family. During one of my visits he was called to a sick patient. Since he didn't own a car and taxis were expensive, I gave him a ride on my Italian motor scooter. We were in a hurry and I was afraid I might slip on the wet cobblestones while he held on tight on the rear saddle. Thankfully, I had no idea that I played chauffeur to a future Hand of the Cause, or I surely would have wiped out.

It must be mentioned that our loving, philosophical Adelbert would not have managed without his dear Herma who was a blend of a loving heart, total devotion and an iron will. After the Faith was banned in Germany in May 1937, she arranged to take voice lessons in Switzerland. From there she corresponded with the Guardian

and committed his replies to memory so she could repeat them to the friends upon her return. Her brave effort helped to maintain a link with Haifa until the outbreak of war. Another great deed for which she will be remembered was when she placed her own life at risk to save the foot of a young female medical student from Iran who had been run over by a streetcar. Herma submitted to a painful procedure where the mangled foot was firmly embedded into a skin pouch cut into her stomach. Running a dangerous fever she had to endure for two agonizing weeks almost like a Siamese twin, until the skin graft took and saved the girl's foot. The girl's grateful parents wished to send Herma on pilgrimage, because she had always wanted to return to Haifa after her only visit there in the early 1930's. But Herma chose to donate the money to the European Temple Fund instead.

But there was also plenty of humor in their family. When Herma once mentioned to her husband that everybody, especially the cleaning lady, seemed to stand in such awe to him, he laughed and sang out loud, "They shall all fear me!"

Adelbert Mühlischlegel had a profound understanding of the realities of life. He always focused on the core of things and eschewed trivialities. "Ach...Krampf!" Ah, Nonsense, he would shout in exasperation, or he would say, "Oh, but all these things are sooo very unimportant!"

Our last visit with him was in his apartment in Athens where the tiny elevator rarely ran or got stuck between floors. He talked about his mother, Doris Mühlischlegel. She had written to him when he studied medicine at the University of Greifswald that she believed she has found what they had both been searching for. She meant the coming of Baha'u'llah. A caring mother is God's deputy, he philosophized. "When the eyes of a loving mother watch over a baby it is as if the good Lord Himself was watching over it." He was both a healer of the body and of the soul, and his deep insights are perhaps best revealed in his great poem about the Seven Valleys. This English translation was done by our gifted writer friend Brigitte Knaack of Kelowna, Canada.

The Seven Valleys

A man awakes from slumber deep
at early break of day.
His life misspent, what will he reap?
He vows to change his way.
He searches, searches for the light.
In spite of ridicule and slight
he searches staunchly day and night
and finds a narrow-winding trail
through life's First Vale.

He feels akin to man and beast,
all children of God like he.
He loves the noble, loves the least,
love floods him like a sea.
He does not know how to control
his heart's compassion warm and whole,
his overflowing loving soul.
Kinship of God, oh, sweet travail,
all through the Second Vale.

He knows the others' deep dismay,
divines life's mystery,
beholds the world as God's array,
sees in a drop the sea.
He grasps the symbols' inmost cue;
he knows man's nature through and through;
he knows both worlds' wherefrom and whereto.
He climbs the steps now without fail
through life's Third Vale.

His eye itself turns into light,
sees light in all design.
And truth, so simple, clear and bright,
grows one with him, its shrine.
And all and none, begun and done,
and big and small, and stone and sun,
are now his own and all is One.

He pierces through the portal's veil
to enter life's Fourth Vale.

With radiant splendor does appear
Eternity Sublime:
no eye can drink, no ear can hear,
no word reveal God's Time.
He stands adorned in sunlit land,
and all he touches with his hand
turns light and brilliant on demand.
Thus burdened by his Holy Grail
he walks through life's Fifth Vale.

Extinguished his old self's mistakes.
Weighed down by grace and worn,
the last of mortal crutches breaks
and spirit man is born.
In great astonishment he is shaking.
What seemed so firmly built is quaking,
and time-worn, hallowed walls are breaking.
So lonely leads his barren trail
through life's Sixth Vale.

Old Adam's last dim light is blown,
resolved his cryptogram.
The Word bears fruit, the Word alone,
bears witness, speaks, "I am."
Shines forth from all created things
and sounds through all life's utterings.
Throughout the worlds Its echo rings.
Oh, radiant Light Triumphant, hail !
The Seventh Vale.



Gisele's last visit with her father at his Athens home in 1980

The National Youth Committee

Once the translation of “The Esslemont” was done, it needed to be typed. The newly appointed National Youth Committee met on a Saturday afternoon in the waiting room of Dr. Adelheid Jäger, sister of Hede Schubert, who was a pediatrician in Stuttgart. Our “Mentor” was Manoutschehr Zabih from Teheran, who had arrived in Germany to finish his studies at Tübingen university and at the same time help in Baha’i work. There were five of us on the committee and he wanted to know who could type. None of us could. Did we know anybody who could do the job for us. No we did not. He went around the table and asked each one of us, but this didn’t change things. Manoutschehr was a tall, well-built fellow in his thirties. He got up and opened our second-floor window. To our horror he waved his arms and yelled to the people in the street, “We are Bahá’ís up here and need urgent help. Can anybody type...”

Somebody grabbed him by the arm and pulled him away from the window. "Stop it, Manoutschehr, we know people who can do the typing," we shouted, almost in unison. "You see," he grinned, "I knew you did."

We had another committee meeting with him in the home of Hermann and Annel Grossmann in Heidelberg-Neckargemünd. This time we were discussing in great detail the structure and functions of various committees. "Members on national committees are declared Bahá'ís," he lectured, "but sub-committees could have members who are not declared Bahá'ís." "So what's the difference," I asked. "Well, YOU are a declared Bahá'í," he explained. "What makes ME a declared Bahá'í," I wanted to know. He almost got angry with me. "Because YOU have signed a declaration card!" "I never have," I corrected him. Suzie Grossmann who was also on the committee then explained that there was no paper in Germany to produce such cards. "In that case you can't be here," he said with finality and he as much as showed me the door. His tone and his whole demeanor told me that he actually meant it and that this wasn't some kind of a joke. Commitment and sacrifice weren't enough. Here, too, one needed a piece of paper. I got up and said I'd gladly go home, but then Suzie started to cry and we went upstairs where we found a small typewriter and a few sheets of flimsy paper. I used half a sheet to type my "Voluntary Declaration" that I believed in the Báb, in Baha'u'llah, and that I accepted the authority of 'Abdu'l-Baha and of the Guardian Shoghi Effendi. I even put in all my four given names, my date and place of birth and my new address in Frankfurt. It had to be one of the most detailed and comprehensive declarations that had ever been signed by a believer. Suzie and I went back to the meeting and I handed Manoutschehr the small piece of paper. "Will this do?" I asked. He studied it in silence. "Oh, mein liiieber Freund," my dear friend, he shouted and gave me a huge oriental hug, buzzing my cheeks. I was not at all impressed by this sudden show of affection, coming as it did right after a curt dismissal that had ignored Suzie's explanation and even overruled the National Assembly's appointment. And it had all happened in the Grossmann's home, of all places. I guess this was the first, but sadly not the last time when so-called cultural differences would test my tolerance.

Another memorable committee took place in Esslingen. There was tiresome consultation about an item that was so very important that I fail to remember it today. Finally, we had agreement, but then one member urged us to reconsider. We did and eventually agreed for a second time and moved on to the next point, but then the same member interrupted again and wanted to revisit the item once more. We reluctantly agreed and after the longest debate agreed a third time, then briskly moved on with our long agenda. Several minutes went by, when our friend interrupted again, "No, I am still not happy with our earlier decision, I think we should..." That's when our genial mentor, an older Baha'i with whom us young folks enjoyed the most cordial relations, taught us an object lesson how to achieve unanimity. With a smile he turned to our unhappy friend, "Feller, if you don't finally shut up now I'll box your ears!"

Cultural Differences

Differences in cultural behavior are of course only noticed when people of different cultural backgrounds meet. Such differences changed from being mere novelties to becoming a real annoyance when formerly isolated sections of humanity were suddenly brought together to interact and when they often tried in vain to cooperate without causing a collision of their cultural habits. Today many people on earth face this situation and must try to come to grips with it. Post-war Germany still had a homogenous population with few cultural differences. Perhaps more than any other religious group and organization the small German Baha'i community had an early opportunity to learn how to cooperate with friends from different cultures, because German Baha'is were anxious to practice the tenet of the oneness of humanity by eagerly welcoming visitors from North America, Iran, and other parts of Europe. But despite their best intentions cultural difference left scars.

It was a habit of Iranian friends to use exaggerated and flowery language that was laden with superlatives, while Germans spoke directly and plainly and took language at face value. A German Baha'i lady, we shall call her Mary, was helping an Iranian friend as his secretary. She had a severe physical handicap and had never married. The two always appeared together, smiling and cheerful, and our Iranian friend began to refer to her as "my beloved Mary." In German culture it was a given that when a man publicly called a lady "my beloved" he had proposed to her and they were going to get married. This is what everybody understood to be the case and the hearty response by the community to their friendship raised Mary's hopes even further. But everybody had misunderstood. There were no wedding bells and Mary was left high and dry, and with a tarnished reputation to boot, when her "beloved" left without explaining himself to her or to anybody else.

Since the time of Mary's crushing experience the word "beloved" has retained its universal meaning, but in Baha'i usage it has become a code for genuine friendship, deep appreciation or reverence. Within the Baha'i community a deliberate non-use of the word "beloved" can put a speaker's or writer's loyalty and devotion into question. But for an outsider the constant use of the word "beloved" runs counter to accepted norm and can cast doubt on the face value of everything else a person communicates. Before the word "beloved" was imported, German Baha'is always referred to either Shoghi Effendi or to the Guardian. Ruhiyiyih Khanum herself said that one should speak of the Guardian and not of the beloved Guardian. But who dared to be seen in a lesser light. There is a video record of House member Peter Khan speaking in Vancouver about the construction of the Arc on Mount Carmel when somebody raised a question. The questioner began by saying "The Guardian..." then stopped himself short and started over, "The beloved Guardian..." Beloved, much loved, deeply loved, all such protestations water down language and can make the Baha'i community look less genuine and less honest to an observer.

I do not know if language concerns were ever brought to the attention of the Guardian, but a message to German Baha'i youth seems to indicate that one should respect indigenous culture when teaching the Faith.

“He hopes that the German youth, in spite of the fact that they now have Persian co-workers in their midst, will consider that the work in Germany is their responsibility, primarily, and not the responsibility of foreign students, whether they be Persians, Americans, or from any other nation. Each country must create its own active corps of servants ... and not permit other people to do it for them.”
- Lights of Divine Guidance Volume II, p. 98

I remember that at the time the Guardian did not allow some of my Persian friends to move to America, even for the purpose of study. Our “Persian co-workers” were mainly students like Manoutschehr Zabih who wrote his PhD at Tübingen University. As most of them were presumed to leave again after their graduation, the Guardian’s advice was thought to apply to visitors and temporary residents. The cultural influence “of other people” which in later years permanent settlers brought into the community’s life was of a similar nature. It therefore should have demanded the same prudence in order for the faith not to be misjudged as some alien ideology. This important consideration was in some instances strangely forgotten. As the Guardian is quoted on page 71: “Our Faith has no ritual.”

Typing, Printing and Blackmarketeering

The typing job for the Esslemont translation was done by Hilde and Gisela Walker who later moved to Phoenix and Flagstaff in Arizona where they married and raised their families. Hilde died in 2003

but her daughter Marianne and Gisela who later married Bill McCormick are busy with a Baha'i school. Hilde had suggested that we should abide by the "sacred number nine" and therefore make nine carbon copies. She was to regret it. Even using thin typing paper which we had obtained from an American source, one had to hammer down on each key to produce nine copies. Besides, the project turned out to be some 120 pages single-spaced. After a short while their fingers started to hurt and they had to take turns after each page. I was left dictating from the manuscript which nobody else could decipher. After a day or two I had trouble with my voice. In the meantime, a generous supply of Coca Cola kept us going. The finished job was sent to ten communities who finally had something in print.



In 1947 the National Youth Committee had the manuscript printed in book form by authority of the U.S. Control Commission for the State of Hesse, where Frankfurt is located. I had moved there and was working at Rhein-Main Air Base where I discovered an abandoned crate with printing paper. I was allowed to take it as it was "garbage" because it supposedly had caught moisture, but to me it looked in perfect condition. It was taken to Druckerei Köhler in Frankfurt with the understanding that they would use half the paper for printing 500 of our books and in payment retain the other half for

their own use. They were delighted, because paper was scarce and without paper they had no work. A month later we went to pick up

the books, but were told they were still waiting for the paper. It was time to call in our friend Hans Berge, a businessman and negotiator. He calmly made the printers understand that there would be no further delay, that we would come back every week and check and that we would expect to receive the finished product in a month's time. "Otherwise I will be forced to bring in the experts," he added darkly. I am not sure if the printers thought the experts were the police, the lawyers, or the Mafia, but we finally got our 500 copies of WAS IST EIN BAHÁ'Í.

The books were sent to various communities, except the books for Stuttgart which I wanted to take along on my next visit. My train arrived late as usual, the streetcars had stopped running and I went to the Walkers to overnight. As I left the station with two large suitcases, a friendly policeman wanted to know what I was carrying. In those days the black market flourished and anyone arriving late at night was automatically suspect. "Dirty laundry and books," I told him. Sure, sure, let's just have look. One suitcase was indeed full of clothes for my mother to wash, because I couldn't do it in flattened Frankfurt, and the larger case was filled with our new Baha'i books. I gave him one "in recognition of his good work," and told him that he was the first person in Stuttgart to get one. Later I learned that he had attended a meeting.

Zuzugsgenehmigung to Fortress Frankfurt

But I have jumped ahead in my report. I arrived in Frankfurt in the fall of 1947 with a raincoat and two suitcases. One case was for clothes and extra underwear, the other one for potatoes and mother's preserves, because Frankfurt would be no man's land. The war damage was much worse than it was in Stuttgart.



Accommodation was almost impossible to find and the few restaurants asked for ration stamps. But ration cards were only issued to residents and to be a “resident” you needed to have a registered “residence”. However, in order to obtain a residence you required a “Zuzugsgenehmigung”, a permit for moving into the city. But a Zuzugsgenehmigung was only issued to people who had employment. How could one go to work without having access to food? It was a vicious circle and I soon understood that the objective plain and simple was to prevent people from moving into this pile of rubble. I called it Fortress Frankfurt. The only thing missing was a moat and a drawbridge.

An American Baha’i found accommodation for me at the private home of the Hartmann family. Their house stood only minutes from Frankfurt’s central railway station and not very far from our future Hazira. It was like a miracle that it was still intact. The Hartmann’s had other people living under their roof and the only place left for me was a cot in the downstairs corridor. Mr. and Mrs. Hartmann, who had a grown daughter and son, were extremely helpful and offered their living room for weekly firesides. They took food out of my suitcase to prepare my meals. Amid all the devastation I felt as if had won the lottery.

Our weekly fireside was hosted by an elderly American lady who brought her fine bone china, coffee, cream, sugar, cookies and...cigarettes. There were many young people in attendance and they kept bringing new friends. As soon as they arrived they went after the cigarettes. Cigarettes had become "illegal tender". They were no less than five Marks each on the black market. If they were not smoked at the meeting, they all disappeared with the guests. During prayers the burning cigarettes were kept discreetly held hidden under the tables. When I remarked that some of the young folks were only attracted by the free cigarettes, I was corrected that they were all very sincere seekers. Well, for how long had they been seeking, I asked. They had attended firesides for the past half year, I was told. That's 25 firesides, I observed, plenty of time to have found what one was seeking. We agreed to stop the cigarettes and straightaway you could hear whispers, "What happened to the cigarettes...have you seen any cigarettes...she must have forgotten the cigarettes." And the following week she forgot them again and pretty soon attendance figures dropped until we were down to perhaps half a dozen people. But luckily for me there was always a bottomless cup of coffee.

At the crack of dawn I hitched my ride to Rhein-Main where I was employed by the U.S. Air Force as interpreter and publisher of a small bilingual weekly for several thousand German workers and air force personnel. I often rode in an open army jeep. To impress passengers one drove a jeep at breakneck speed, especially on a rain slick Autobahn. "This is where German champion driver Rosemeyer became airborne and killed himself," I told one reckless driver. "No kidden' " was his bored reaction. "Better slow down," I begged. "Aw, don' worry Red, Ah'm quite shore the Good Lawd wants you to live for a long time." How was he to know. Truer words were never spoken. Now that I had a job I went after my Zuzugsgenehmigung. "For this kind of work we have hundreds of our OWN people," I was told. "You better go back to Stuttgart." After a second futile attempt I talked to Rhein-Main's commander,

a Colonel Walter Lee. As it turned out he had more trouble with the German tongue twister Zuzugsgenehmigung than with German red tape. He wrote a terse one-liner to the authority, "I insist that a Zuzugsgenehmigung is issued to Mr. H. Liedtke forthwith." Then he sent me back in a jeep with a uniformed driver who stood menacingly at the door while they issued the coveted document.

Shielded from Danger

Today one travels by rail between Stuttgart and Frankfurt in under two hours, has reserved seats and checks his baggage. But in those years the journey often took five hours, you had to fight the crowd to make it into the carriage, and you mainly sat on your luggage. Many sections of track and especially bridge crossings had suffered war damage. I particularly remember a high viaduct just north of Stuttgart that had been mended by U.S. Army engineers and looked like one of those high rides in an amusement park. Our train came almost to a stop as it cautiously crept across the vibrating trestle.

Then there was the episode of the missed ride aboard a B-17 Flying Fortress at Rhein Main. The plane was used for air-sea rescue missions and carried a large wooden life boat under its belly to be dropped to rescue people at sea. I had suggested that unless it was a sea rescue one should leave the boat behind as it added unnecessary weight, but the idea was rejected because in an emergency it would take an extra half hour to fit the boat to the bomber. Besides, in wartime the B-17 had carried a heavy bomb load, ten machine guns and thousands of rounds of munitions. When a twin engine DC-3 passenger aircraft went missing over the French Alps, the B-17 was ordered out for a search. Lieutenant Mike Casner strolled into

our office and offered me a ride. “How about it, Red, we could use an extra pair of sharp eyes.” But it was a Friday and I had plans to go home for the weekend to have my laundry washed by my mother, my food supply restocked and to attend a Baha’i meeting. I felt guilty to decline. As he was leaving he dropped a pack of cigarettes on my desk, “Have some smokes, Red.” For me as a non-smoker it was equal to leaving a 100-Mark bill, enough for a return ticket to Stuttgart.

When I got back on Monday morning I learned that his B-17 had crashed in the Alps. After finding the debris of the missing plane they had to clear a mountain ridge when turbulence pushed one wing up and the other wing down. The aircraft snagged the top of the ridge and the plane cart wheeled down the far side and exploded. One lucky survivor, a Sgt. Angelo LaSalle of Des Moines, Iowa, reported later that the pilot had shouted for more altitude. Badly injured, LaSalle was ejected and slid down a snowfield. He was rescued by Horst Kupski, a German pilot who was still held in French captivity. Kupski was released and flown to the U.S. to be best man at LaSalle’s wedding.

For the longest time I struggled with questions. Had the boat’s weight meant the difference between life and death as I had always feared. Why had nobody pulled the bomb release to jettison the lifeboat. Why had I been kept waiting to receive a ration card for Frankfurt and needed to go home that weekend. Why was the search not started immediately, but delayed for three days until that Friday. The DC-3 had gone missing three days earlier on Tuesday the 27th of January. Except on that Friday I would have cheerfully joined the search on any other day. 70 years later as I was editing this chapter, I discovered a strange coincidence. The B-17 left Rhein-Main on Friday, January 30, 1948

at about 9.30 a.m. Cruising at 300 km/h it covered the ca. 900 kilometers to the search area in roughly three hours and was above the French Alps by 12.30 p.m. Around that time Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated. The shots rang out in New Delhi at 5.17 p.m. when it was 12.47 p.m. in Central Europe.



Mother's Love

Tuesday, March 2 1948, was the start of the annual Baha'i Fast between sunrise and sunset which I had decided to observe now that I was in my 21st year. It was also the day I had to return to Frankfurt. I had become wire editor with the Associated Press and my shift started that evening. I had no alarm clock and since mother was an early riser I had asked her to wake me well before six o'clock. I woke up hearing her sing out "Good Morning." She opened the shutters and I was greeted by bright sunlight. She said she had fixed me an extra special breakfast for my "stressful

journey,” but I had to tell her that breakfast time was over. For the next hour until I left for my train I had to listen to mother’s loud pleading and threats that I would surely ruin my system by not eating before my trip. I remained unmoved and instead rubbed salt into her wound by telling her that since my nightshift ended on the following morning after sunrise and since I would only get tea and biscuits during the night and then nothing until sundown on Wednesday, it would be 48 hours since I had my last solid meal.



Here I must mention that both my parents became Bahá'ís. Father in 1950 and mother in 1952. From early childhood on mother was a devout believer in Christ. While she rarely went to

church, she always shed tears on Good Friday. “I shall never leave Christ,” she had often promised, and I had told her that if she really loved Christ He would surely reveal Himself to her on His Return. Mother left this world shortly after her 100th birthday. She recited the Tablet of Ahmad by heart almost to the end. The first half of her century she lived in the spirit of Jesus the Christ and the second half in the spirit of His Return. It is for this reason that I feel sad when people say that one should not “waste time” on older folks, but concentrate on teaching the young. Instead, one should remember that youthful ardor often will fade through life’s struggles. On the other hand, an older person who has seen it all will take such step far more deliberately and can become a wonderful teacher and living example, such as my dear parents have been.

Tante Marie Schweizer

This story would not be complete without mentioning Marie Schweizer, or Tante Marie as we called her. Always full of wit and laughter, here she is seen trying on different miens for the benefit of posterity.



Marie was a very early German Baha'i who lived in the small town of Zuffenhausen, just North of Stuttgart. She was married to Karl Schweizer, tall and athletic, whom she always referred to as "Mein Schweizer." I was told that after 'Abdu'l-Baha, coming from London, had arrived in Paris on January 22, 1913, Marie Schweizer was part of a small German delegation that travelled to Paris to invite the Master to visit Stuttgart.

'Abdu'l-Baha left Paris on March 30. The train to Stuttgart took Him through countryside which only a little over a year later would be engulfed in the Great War. On arrival in Stuttgart He moved to Hotel Marquardt. Here it is noteworthy that Hotel Marquardt, located not far from the railway station, was just about the only large structure left standing in the center of town when Stuttgart was almost completely destroyed in the Second World War.

While Karl Schweizer was not a Baha'i then and considered his wife's Baha'i involvement some innocent little hobby, he was caring enough to escort his wife when she went to pay her respects to the Master at His hotel. Tante Marie told me that as the door opened, there was 'Abdu'l-Baha standing in the middle of the room. To her utter consternation, "mein Schweizer" dashed towards 'Abdu'l-Baha and fell to his knees. Marie, shocked and embarrassed, quickly left the room and closed the door. When after a few anxious minutes Karl emerged he couldn't find the words to share with his wife all the wonderful things 'Abdu'l-Baha had told him. "How could you talk to each other," she asked him, "when you don't understand Persian and 'Abdu'l-Baha doesn't speak German?" She said that at that moment Karl almost suffered a second spell.

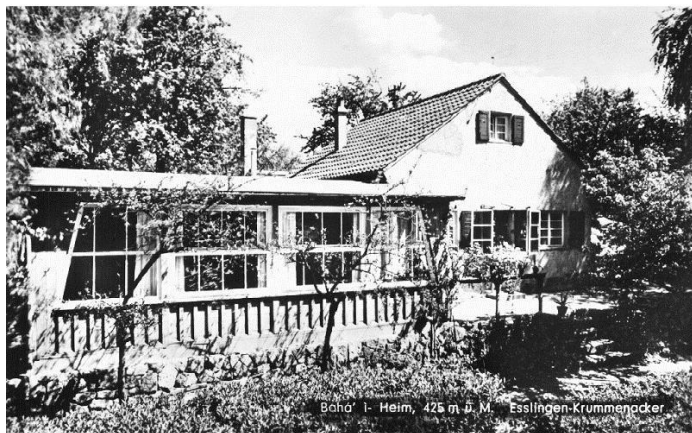
Twenty-four years later, in May of 1937, Marie Schweizer found a notice in her mail box ordering her to appear in Court. She had not the faintest idea what it was all about. Then she learned that other believers had received similar notices. Once they were all assembled a friendly and benevolent judge read them the government edict which banned all Baha'i activity in the Third Reich. There was little elaboration, except that the decree was final and would be enforced.

It was Marie Schweizer who stood up and asked the judge if she was allowed to make a brief statement. She was. What she said was roughly this: We understand the order, your Honor. Please tell the government they need not worry about Baha'is. Baha'is are law abiding citizens and obey their governments. But if you were to order us to deny our faith we would rather die before that happens. "Please, Mrs. Schweizer, please," the judge waved her off, "nobody is ordering you to give up your faith, "all the government wants you to do is to dissolve your organization and stop your teaching."

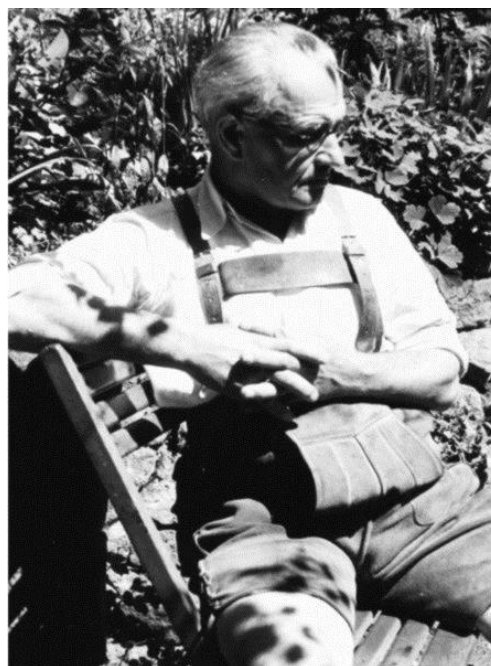
Eight interminable years and six months later Tante Marie was back teaching the Baha'i faith, this time to young people like me.

The Baha'i Home at Esslingen

The Baha'i Home at Esslingen Krummenacker, fondly known as "The Häusle," or the little house, was located a ten minute walk from 'Abdu'l-Baha's famous old Linden Tree. Venue of Germany's Summer Schools in the 1930's, the Guardian had encouraged that it become a center of learning for Europe. When the faith was outlawed in 1937, a government takeover of the property was only avoided when the caretakers Hugo and Clara Bender claimed the place as their



own residence. Continuing with their dedicated services after the war, "Uncle" Hugo and "Tante" Clärle hosted hundreds of visitors from all over the world, among them Rúhíyyih Khánum, Tarázu'lláh Samandarí, Canada's Marion Jack, Martha Root, Emeric and Rosemary Sala, Freddy Schopflocher, and many others, far too numerous to mention here.



Trygve Lie of the United Nations

Shortly before I left Rhein-Main to become wire editor with the Associated Press I met the Norwegian statesman Trygve Lie. He was the first Secretary General of the newly founded United Nations



organization and I presented him with Baha'i literature. It was in early 1948 when he came from a visit in Prague with Czech President Edvard Benes and made a brief stopover at Rhein Main en route to London. I found him in the VIP lounge munching on a banana and introduced myself. I told him that I belonged to the Baha'i World Faith and that all Bahá'ís wished him and the United Nations much success as we were convinced of the ultimate establishment of a

united and peaceful world society. I then gave him the new booklet FAITH FOR FREEDOM which showed on its cover the new House of Worship in Wilmette. Trygve Lie was a huge man in his fifties. He listened to me very attentively and promised to read the booklet on his flight to London. But then he remarked, "It will probably take a long time to get there, and we are still facing many hurdles before all this will come to pass." My youthful enthusiasm found his opinion rather pessimistic, but it was not very long before the validity of Trygve Lie's assessment of the world situation became evident even to peace lovers like myself. On June 2, 1948 President Benes was forced to resign and to hand the reins over to the Communists. On June 24 began the Soviet blockade of Berlin that triggered the historic Allied airlift to the city, and exactly two years later, on June 25, 1950, the Korean war broke out. It has not officially ended to this day. They told me that as the AP's wire editor I was the first person in all of Europe to learn the bad news when "Ten Bells" on the printer signaled the rare arrival of a Newsflash.

"""""" FLASH NORTH KOREAN TROOPS HAVE INVADED SOUTH KOREA.

Beating Swords into Plowshares

Just days before the sudden Berlin crisis made us face stark reality and turned Rhein Main into an important base for the Berlin Airlift, everybody was basking in a warm sunshine of peaceful intentions. Bruce Davidson, a Bahá'í from Florida, and I had progressed plans to give Rhein Main a Peace Monument of Civil Aviation. In front of the terminal, facing the arriving and departing passengers, stood a tall granite column from which the eagle of the fallen regime had been removed. Word was out that the column would shortly be dynamited. This is when Bruce and I announced that as Bahá'ís we wanted the symbol of power be replaced by a symbol of world peace. With the cooperation of Colonel Lee a design competition was launched among all members of the U.S. armed forces in Europe. The winning design was a globe circled by futuristic looking jet aircraft and topped by a large dove of peace holding an olive branch in its beak. Frankfurt's Lord Mayor Walter Kolb contributed 20,000 marks from city coffers, but warned me, "You must hurry, because after the impending currency reform this amount will no longer be available."





We did hurry up and on June 12, 1948 our monument was unveiled at a large public ceremony. To make the affair especially memorable we had covered the globe with a surplus parachute which was to be lifted up by weather balloons. Tests showed that two balloons were needed. We inflated four, just in case. It was a hot day and the balloons were turning brown in the broiling sun. The crowd first laughed, but then gasped when first one, then a second balloon burst. Lord Mayor Kolb hurried up his speech and pulled the ripcord while there were still two balloons left and everybody cheered. We were pleased that all involved were aware of the Baha'i connection: the young sculptress Gretel Fendel from Frankfurt-Hoechst who created the dove and the aircraft, Hans Tröller who fashioned the huge globe with its brown continents and blue oceans, and the foundry workers who we had supplied with a truckload of spent ammunition cartridges. Everybody was reminded that swords had indeed been beaten into plowshares. But had they really ?

The Berlin Airlift

If this account of the Berlin Airlift takes up more space in my journal than may be felt is necessary, it is because the event demonstrated to me very early on that we can defend our values without having to go to war. Besides, without the Berlin Airlift world history as a whole may have taken an entirely different turn. While everybody at Rhein-Main celebrated the new peace symbol and had high hopes for a happier future, dark thunderclouds had formed once again on the political horizon. The German currency reform, promised by the United States, Britain and France, was barely a week away. It would create a sound Deutschmark which could be traded in the West to put the country's economy back on track. But the Soviet Union used printing plates of the old worthless wartime currency to stoke inflation and economic chaos. It insisted on maintaining the status quo, knowing full well that Communism wouldn't stand a chance in an affluent society.

When the Western powers decided to go it alone, Stalin began to retaliate by slowly strangling West Berlin. The city, located inside the Russian zone of occupation, was accessible from the West via Autobahn, by rail, shipping canals and through international air corridors. There had been growing delays on the Autobahn since April on account of increased "security checks" and closures "for technical reasons". Next, they closed down the rail lines, then the shipping canals. By the end of June they dropped the last vestige of a pretext: Berlin was cut off in an effort to starve it into submission.

The United States and her Allies considered counter moves. There was talk they would send a tank column down the Autobahn and shoot their way in. Many feared that a trigger happy Russian tank commander or fighter pilot would shoot first and that we would be back at war. After Germany's defeat and the fall of Japan, America's armed might had long been dismantled, their weapons either stockpiled or mothballed in desert locations, their millions of

fighting men back home again and in civilian jobs. America could only try to stop the Soviets by using atom bombs and poisoning Europe in the process. This was no crazy fantasy, it was reality.

Then we heard that Berlin would be supplied by air. On a rainy morning perhaps two dozen twin-engine C-47 transport aircraft



were loaded with bottled milk and blood plasma. The first priority were the very young and the very sick. As we witnessed these developments we couldn't help but remember Goering's boast to Hitler just five years earlier that he would supply the 100,000 troops surrounded at Stalingrad by air. He failed miserably. How could aircraft alone supply Berlin's population of almost two million.

Later, Bruce told me that we were to be present at a meeting with "a very, very important General". He almost begged me to be at my best behavior. He was General Curtis LeMay. His reputation as an utterly tough and ruthless warrior had preceded him. LeMay flew in command of the epic daylight bombing raid on the heavily defended Fischer ball bearing plant at Schweinfurt. Of the 376 Flying Fortresses 60 were shot down and 47 others had to be scrapped. Later he was transferred to the Pacific where he took command of the giant B-29's and executed the rain of destruction on the cities of Japan. Much later he would be put in charge of America's feared Strategic Air Command. A man of his determination was badly needed to manage the looming crisis. The General was a short, squat man with watching eyes. I can't remember him saying much. With his traditional big cigar clamped in his teeth he just listened to what everybody else had to say, then made his decision to call for the heavy artillery.

Everybody knew that the C-47's alone couldn't do the job. Word leaked out that the four-engine C-54's were coming from Westover Field in Massachusetts. I saw them arrive, 52 of them. They landed in one-minute intervals. The following day huge trailer transports loaded with surplus army duffel bags filled with coal from the Ruhr drove onto the ramp. Each C-54 was loaded with nine tons of coal and took off. I had invited reporters from local radio stations -There was no television at that time - and two newsreel cameramen to record the event. We were allowed to stand near the edge of the runway and for the next two hours watched the giant planes roar past us in two-minute intervals. It was perhaps the most dramatic event I had ever witnessed. The resulting photo told Stalin that the West was going to stand up to him.



Each plane was scheduled for two missions a day. It meant four trips for each crew with a couple of hours rest while their aircraft was unloaded at Berlin's Tempelhof airport, reloaded at Rhein/Main and unloaded once more in Berlin. Each flight took one hour and forty minutes and the turn-around initially one hour and twenty minutes. Along with briefing and debriefing it was a twelve-hour day.

In the big Nissen hut which served as our mess hall a huge blackboard showed the daily statistics. We were told that the airlift averaged 2,500 tons per day. During the summer months the city might just get by on 3,500 tons, but in the winter 4,500 tons were needed to avoid extreme hardship. By the end of August the combined British-American lift from both Rhein/Main and Hannover averaged 3,300 tons with a maximum daily tonnage of 4,575 tons. A small surplus was beginning to accumulate in Berlin and everybody was jubilant. But the unspoken worry was what would happen when foggy weather set in just at the time of maximum need for coal supplies. Who would crack first, the men, the machines, or the Soviets.

The operation became steadily more efficient. Crews stayed on board and took their meals in the cockpit, getting briefed by the meteorologist while mechanics checked engines. Turn-around times were thus cut to a mere twenty minutes. Every three minutes, around the clock, transports were leaving and landing at Rhein/Main and at Tempelhof. They were like a string of pearls in the sky. In bad weather the "threading in and out of traffic" was nerve-racking for both pilots and ground controllers. I saw them get off their shift with their shirts drenched with sweat.

At the onset of winter empty return flights were used to evacuate from Berlin 55,000 sick or elderly. It saved those poor people a lot of hardship and it automatically reduced the supply requirements. Everything the city needed was flown in. Volkswagen beetles for the police, two million tree seedlings for reforestation of trees that had

been cut down for firewood. Most potatoes and vegetables were shipped in dehydrated form, saving 80% of weight. When Berlin's airports at Tempelhof and Gatow became hopelessly overcrowded, a new airport was built at Tegel and all necessary earth moving, construction equipment and supplies were flown in.

To cut turn-around time even further, especially during bad weather when aircraft lost time by having to make more than one approach to the runway and had trouble maintaining the tight schedule, word went out for volunteers to ride in the cabin and unfasten the load immediately after touchdown. It saved at least another ten precious minutes. I went on nine missions mainly for the thrill of it. The duffel bags with coal were lashed to the floor with webbing. The cabin interior had thin, olive green fiber glass matting without sound insulation. The noise was deafening and flying at low altitude of 5,000 to 10,000 feet there was always a lot of turbulence. Right on my first empty return we were badly tossed around in a thunder storm. It was pitch dark outside and there were constant flashes of lightning. Our aircraft cabin was full of coal dust and one was worried sick about the consequences of a possible lightning strike.

Against all odds and certainly against all Soviet scheming, the 276,926 flights of the Berlin Airlift managed to keep the big city alive for 327 days through the bitter winter of 1948 to 1949. Stalin knew that his gambit had failed. After much face saving diplomatic doublespeak the blockade was finally lifted on May 12, 1949. Of all the many events I witnessed during the short eighteen months at Rhein/Main the Berlin Airlift had to be the centerpiece. I am glad that fate and timing had made it possible for me to participate.

*“The moment a little boy is concerned with
which is a jay and which is a sparrow,
he can no longer see the birds or hear them sing.”*

Eric Berne

Among the many interesting people I met at Rhein Main was a young U.S. Air Force Private who worked at the motor pool. He had missed the war's fighting as he had just recently arrived from the U.S. Bruce told me that he was quite homesick and that it might help to befriend him. I invited him to accompany me to a youth gathering at Darmstadt, an hour's drive south of Rhein Main. We hitched a ride to Darmstadt and from there we took a tram to the rural home of Marie Schenk where the meeting was to take place.

All went well until we boarded the tram. To get a better view of the countryside we had picked a place on the rear platform of the last tram car. Our fellow passengers were Germans of middle age and mostly dumpy women. They gave us the evil eye as soon as we got on. They probably didn't like what they saw and felt insulted by our presence. I have failed to mention that our young friend came from south of the Mason-Dixon Line and was of phenomenally dark complexion. They began to make angry gestures and we were forced to listen to the malevolent hiss of their poisonous insults. Much of their scorn and contempt was directed at me, because in their eyes I had become a traitor to the Arian race.

I just tried to ignore the uproar and kept explaining to my friend the history of the area we were passing through. I told him of the great dirigibles that once flew from Rhein Main to New York and Rio de Janeiro before the war; I explained that the Frankfurt-Darmstadt sector was the first stretch of Germany's autobahn network to be completed and that racing car champion Berndt Rosemeyer had died there in 1938 while attempting to set a new world speed record; and I tried to cheer him up by telling him how much my fellow Baha'is were looking forward to meet him.

But he didn't seem to listen. He looked scared. His large brown eyes were those of a hunted deer. "I am so sorry to put you through all this," he finally spoke up, "and I want to apologize to you." - "There is absolutely no reason for *you* to apologize, and certainly not to *me*," I insisted. "It is *I* who must apologize to *you* for the dreadful behavior of my fellow countrymen." What upset me most was that right at his first encounter with the local populace - and on top of it while on his way to a gathering of Baha'i youth - all the horrible stories he must have heard about those bad Germans were getting confirmed. In the meantime, we had to endure to the very end the ugly venting of anger by those who had been vanquished. Later, when the time came for me to leave the country of my birth, the vivid memories of this shameful incident helped to ease the pain of having to say good-bye.

Germany's First Hazira

The rise of Germany's first Hazira from a ruin of war was another highpoint of my stay in Frankfurt. A look at old photos tells the tale.



Thanks to the negotiating skills of our friend Hans Berge a ruined residence was purchased at 24 Westendstrasse, only a short walk from Frankfurt's central rail station. The purchase agreement provided that the former owner, a dentist, would have lifetime rights to an apartment on the ground floor. Initial task was to remove all debris from the property and to scrape mortar off bricks that could be recycled since building materials were almost impossible to obtain. Volume XI of Baha'i World, covering the period from 1946 to 1950 reports on page 390, "A demonstration of the Baha'i spirit in action was the reconstruction of a building in Frankfurt which had recently been purchased by the German National Assembly. In August 1948 a group of 20 young people from various parts of western Germany hitch-hiked or cycled to Frankfurt. After brief devotions they started the tremendous job of carrying away over

4,000 cubic feet (150 cubic yards) of rubble which covered most of the “garden” in a layer ten feet high. The youth had given their vacation time for this work which took three weeks to complete...” Some other exploits are reported on pages 365, 378 and 388 in the same volume.



Dear Me in undershirt (at left) hard at work. At extreme right is Hans Berge

One evening we sat down for supper in front of a newly built interior wall that was put together with a single layer of bricks. When somebody discovered that the brick work had been done rather carelessly without any interlock, we prudently moved away from the spot. Sure enough, on the following day the whole wall tipped over as one big slab, and slammed down where we had been sitting. The Hazira opened in time for the 6th post-war National Convention. I was thrilled to catch the moment on camera when architect Bruno Bauer, a Baha'i from Stuttgart, handed the key for the building to NSA chair Eugen Schmidt.



Bruno Bauer (l) hands key to NSA chair Eugen Schmidt. In front is Dr. Adelheid Jaeger

The reluctant Translator

The joy of the occasion was spoiled when disunity reared its ugly head and the outgoing NSA decided to inform the Guardian that the election for the new National Assembly would have to be “vertagt”, or postponed. The problem was that nobody could think of the English equivalent for the word vertagt, except I, and I refused to tell. It caused a bit of a stir.

I remember the debate I had with the Grossmanns. In fact there is a snapshot of this unhappy moment. I was about to remind them that there was really no need for me to translate as Ruhyyih Khanum spoke a flawless German, but trying to change their mind I first let them stew over that single little word which was key to the issue.

I thought it would be terrible to upset the Guardian, but in the end I became the reluctant translator. Next morning there arrived this rocket from Haifa: “INSIST NO POSTPONEMENT ELECTION SHOGHI”



The reluctant translator with Hermann and Annel Grossmann

The Foreigner

Even as construction was in progress we held meetings in an unfinished room that had a bare concrete floor and rough brick walls. We sat on narrow wooden benches while a couple of tired bulbs tried to shed some light on the dismal surroundings. Still, people came flocking to these meetings and there was quite a stir when one evening a stranger burst into our Nineteen Day Feast to announce that he, too, was a Baha'i. He was a man perhaps in his late sixties, or early seventies. But most importantly, he was "a foreigner" and Baha'is were always most anxious to welcome all foreigners with open arms to prove to everybody that Baha'is had absolutely no racial or national prejudice. The man introduced himself with an unpronounceable mid-Eastern name as he went around eagerly shaking hands with everybody in the room.

In those post-war years Baha'is in Germany had no identification. There was hardly any need for one, because everybody knew mostly everybody else in our small community. Besides, there was no paper available for such luxury item. Visiting Baha'is from abroad on the other hand always presented "their credentials". Having been isolated from the rest of the Baha'i world for almost a decade, the requirement for credentials did not yet extend to German believers. I therefore thought it would not be a challenge, let alone an insult, if I asked this man for his credentials. There was a gasp of disbelief from the mainly female members in our group. But the visitor didn't seem to mind. He looked at me with a forgiving smile and said that he understood that there was no requirement for this in Germany. Of course, everybody was immediately nodding their agreement.

Then, just before the meeting was to open with a prayer, somebody asked him how he would normally greet his fellow Baha'is, to which he only shrugged his shoulders as if this was a totally irrelevant question. Well, did he say Allah-O-Abha as we did, somebody was asking. "Yes, yes, allahuabba allahuabba, we also say allahuabba," he laughed in a rather shrill tone as if this was a huge joke. I had enough of this character. "You know what," I told him firmly, "I don't believe that you are Baha'i at all. Baha'is never poke fun at the Greatest Name. You better leave NOW." With that I got up and

walked over to him to help him get up from his bench. He left in a big huff.

But this wasn't the end. First I got a bad earful from our friend Johanna von Werthern. Before her marriage she was Johanna Hauff. As a young woman she once had the honor to pray at the Master's bedside immediately after His ascension. She called my behaviour "ganz ungezogen", which Google translates as "very naughty." For a moment I even felt contrite for the way that I as a 22-year old had behaved against the older generation. For the rest of the evening I felt abandoned in my doghouse. However, it wasn't too long afterwards that we were warned against some emissary from the followers of Subh-i-Azal, the notorious enemy of the Baha'i Faith, who was trying to wheedle his way into the German Baha'i community. While many of my friends never wanted to admit it, it was obviously not a very good idea to welcome any "foreigner" with open arms, just because he happened to be a foreigner.



Ian Semple's first visit to Germany at a meeting in Esslingen 1951
Front l. to r. Ian Semple, Bozorg Hemmati, Heschat Moyyat, X, Harry Liedtke,
Hermine Meyer-Berdjis, X; Back l. to r. X, Bertha Kohler, Marie Schweizer, Eugen
Hörttrich, Mrs. Hörttrich Snr., Miss Hörttrich, Carla Macco, Kurt Henseler, X



Participants of the 4th European Baha'i Teaching Conference in September 1951 are assembled at the main entrance of the Peace Palace in The Hague, Holland. The Palace was opened on 28 August 1913 to provide a home for the 'Permanent Court of Arbitration' which had been created by the Hague Convention of 1899. One year after the building's inauguration began the First World War. It was the start of a painful series of conflicts which by the end of the 20th Century had killed over one hundred million people.

Standing in the front row to the right of center in dark jacket and white shirt is Edna True of the European Teaching Committee (ETC), daughter of Hand of the Cause Corinne True of Chicago. (Some of her friends joked that ETC stood for Edna True, Chicago). At the far right is U.S. Army Captain, later Colonel, Joel Marangella who in later years supported an illegitimate Guardianship. In the next row at far right is Dear Me and sitting at front and center in a light jacket is Masoud Berdjis with whom I had travelled from Germany.



A last gathering with friends in Heidelberg before I left for Canada in September 1951. Yours truly is in the fourth row slightly to the right of center; behind me in striped sweater is Volker Muehlschlegel; to his right in dark dress his sister Ursula and next to her in light colored dress my future wife Gisele Muehlschlegel. In the second row center, leaning forward, is Peter Muehlschlegel with Dieter Schubert to his right. Sitting at the very front at the right end is Martin Aiff who later pioneered to Namibia. In the second row at the right edge of the photo can be seen the author Udo Schaefer. In the third row, third from right in dark dress is Ursula Kohler-Muehlschlegel who later pioneered with her husband Adelbert to Greece. In the back row third from right wearing a grey tunic is Hartmut Grossmann. Use the zoom feature for better viewing of this and other pictures in the report. If you recognize a face you can enter names here.

Part II

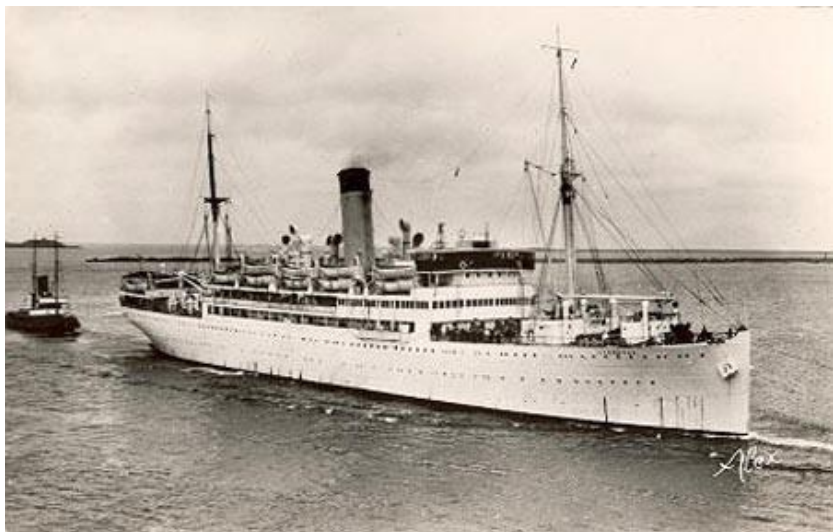
A WAYFARER BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

My second trip as “pioneer” took me across the ocean. At the beginning of the 1950’s there were appeals for pioneers from Canada’s NSA. At that time there were only some 200 Bahá’ís in all of Canada. In September 1947 I had left my parental home in Stuttgart to go to Frankfurt. I had been quite unaware that this made me the first post-war “home front pioneer.” Now, almost exactly four years later, I was en route to Montreal to help spread the Message in the promised land of Canada. I had decided on this move against many pleas and urgings by several of my closest friends. Without any prospects of employment I had terminated my promising career with the Associated Press as wire editor and foreign correspondent and was prepared to face uncertainty.

I sailed from Bremerhaven for Montreal on Wednesday, September 19, 1951 in mid-afternoon. Along with 800 mainly sea sick fellow emigrants from all parts of Europe it took me eleven days to cross the storm tossed North Atlantic aboard the ancient 7,700-ton SS Canberra of Greek Line. Mountainous waves caused the ship’s screws to emerge and thrash around in empty space. The relentless punishment caused the bearing of one propeller shaft to pack in. Caught in mid ocean with almost 1,000 souls on board Canberra gamely continued to battle the elements with only one engine. The outage of one of the ship’s two dynamos dimmed all lights on board, and the asymmetric propulsion resulted in an alarming list to starboard. It slowed progress considerably and prolonged the misery aboard this overcrowded floating refugee camp. The journey’s agony became for many of my shipmates a fitting prelude to years of hardship that now lay ahead, as they struggled to establish themselves on a new continent. It also prolonged my own guessing game where I would be asked to settle in Canada’s vast Dominion.



Saying good-bye to my little sister Christina.
A monument to emigrants stands at Bremerhaven
where I started out on my odyssey. SS Canberra.
Mountainous waves. On Canberra's afterdeck en
route to Canada at gale force eleven.



Canberra eventually docked in Montreal on the morning of Tuesday, October 2. As soon as I had disembarked I walked a mile to 420 Lagachetiere Street West to meet with Canada's National Teaching Committee in an office on the sixth floor. I had arrived with a single suitcase and a sailor's bag stuffed with clothing. I also had managed to buy currency and had the princely sum of \$ 315 waiting for me at a branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. When I met the committee I told them that I was ready to go anywhere. I was secretly hoping they would send me straight to the railway station to continue my journey, perhaps to the prairies, or to the Golden West. Instead, they suggested I go and do some sightseeing while they consulted. I found it a bit strange that I was not asked to participate in their consultation.

I knew absolutely nothing about Montreal and very little about its role in Baha'i history, and I was not particularly interested in the city. Having been cooped up aboard ship I felt drawn to the wooded hillside of Mount Royal and hiked to its lookout. On the way back I discovered a street with charming old English-style sandstone homes and made a little detour along Pine Avenue. Back at the meeting they were astonished that of all places in town my brief sightseeing should have taken me to the Mt. Royal lookout and past the home of the Maxwell's, both places where 'Abdu'l-Baha had visited in 1912.

I would be less than candid not to admit that the committee's decision to send me to Verdun, a half-hour bus ride from downtown Montreal, was a disappointment. Was this why I had moved to another continent and had cut off a career. Hoping not to offend anybody with this epistle, I must confess that Verdun seemed a most unlikely choice to this enthused pioneer. Back in 1951 the place struck me as a dull bedroom community, firmly entrenched in its daily routine. Its people were mainly French Canadians or of Anglo Saxon descent, self-sufficiently proud of their heritage and firmly set in their tradition. Emeric Sala would have said that "Their cup is full." What was I here for, I wondered. Reluctantly I scanned the papers and found what was advertised as a "sunny room in bright cottage" at 1109 2nd Avenue, the home of Roland and Yolande Trudeau and their three small children. I paid my weekly rent of ten dollars, breakfast and laundry included, and moved in. That same evening I met for the first time my three fellow Baha'i pioneers. They were Anne Powers with her young daughters Gail and Norma, and Angela and Paul Rheume with a teen age daughter and their two small sons Tip and Sandy.



These are some of the friends I met on arrival in Montreal. They are, back row left to right: The author, Lou Boudler, Unidentified, Rosemary Sala, Gail Bond, Jameson Bond, Vera Raginsky, Helen Bond, Emeric Sala. Front row l. to r.: Unidentified, Nancy Campbell, Siegfried Schopflocher, Mrs. Bond Snr., Hedda Rakovsky, Unidentified, Louise Boudler. This photograph was taken in the living room of the Maxwell Home, where “the lights went out” during my talk. The picture was taken at Gail and Jameson Bond’s wedding. The following morning they left aboard a Canadian ice breaker to pioneer on Baffin Land as Knights of Baha’u’llah.

We invited Mrs. Ruth Moffat, a well-known Baha’i teacher from the U.S., to help run public evening classes. They were held in an empty store on one of Verdun’s shopping streets. Mrs. Moffat in her plain dress and bifocals came across as an old school mistress. She would bring the place to order by loudly clapping her hands together and shouting “Class!!” We also regularly invited friends and an interesting cross section of college contacts to attend weekend seminars at the Beaulac Baha’i School located in the Laurentian Hills some 50 miles north of Montreal. Our small band eventually was able to welcome into our ranks Alex and Gerry Takacz, a young couple who had escaped from Communist Hungary. After they signed their declaration cards, a friend enthused, “Alex, you will discover that from now on all your problems will disappear...” What Alex discovered on the following morning was that his car that always gave him trouble had disappeared. It had been stolen.

Ridvan 1953 marked the beginning of the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade. It was our fervent wish to form the first Assembly in Verdun to coincide with this momentous event in history. Our hopes were boosted when my new wife, Norma Sala who had just turned 21, moved in, and when Rod and Doreen Willis pioneered to Verdun from Burlington, Ontario. Doreen was a school teacher on maternity leave and Rod was a talented commercial artist. Then, just three weeks before Ridvan, Norma tragically died after giving birth to our son Keith.

When it became obvious that none of our close contacts felt motivated to take Norma's place on the new Assembly by signing their declaration card, a general SOS went out. Help arrived from a most unexpected quarter. Mary Zabolotny, then in her early twenties, had left her native Winnipeg and was on the train to Kingston, Ont. where she was needed as the ninth member of Kingston's first Spiritual Assembly. When she arrived there in the afternoon of April 20 after a tiring journey of three days and two nights, her heart leaped as she leaned out the train window and saw the smiling faces of her fellow-Bahá'ís gathered on the station platform. "Are you Mary?" they asked. They said they had some good news and some bad news for her. The bad news for Mary was that Kingston had just had a declaration and that Mary was no longer needed there. The good news was that in the City of Verdun, just another three hours down the rail line, a sudden vacancy urgently required Mary's presence. Mary after a quick and cheerful hello said her cheerful good-bye, "I have come 2,500 kilometers, and another 200 really makes no difference." Hers was the true pioneering spirit. In later years she married Ken McCullough and they pioneered to Canada's Arctic. Not until the phone rang and Kingston was on the line could we be sure of Mary's help. Rod Willis, our artist friend, hurriedly prepared a huge banner, "Welcome to Verdun, Mary." It greeted her at Montreal's historic Windsor Station, the same station, we told her, where 'Abdu'l-Baha had arrived in Canada 41 years earlier. Then we rushed off to Verdun where with feelings of gratitude we formed the City's first Assembly.



First Impressions

I disliked the new city environment, but always tried to remind myself that this was part of Canada. Any effort made here would benefit a country for which 'Abdu'l-Baha held such high promise. Before attending the first Nineteen-Day Feast shortly after my arrival, Emeric and Rosemary Sala had me at their home in St. Lambert on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River. They asked me to say 'Abdu'l-Baha's prayer for Canada. Afterwards Rosemary said, "Now you are a Canadian," and gave me the prayer book to keep. How wonderful, I thought, no passport, no stamp, no judge, just this prayer by 'Abdu'l-Baha. If this sounded almost too good to be true, it was.

The Nineteen-Day Feast was held at the home of Mrs. Lanning in St. Lambert. We were about 20 people in the room when a young lady in her late twenties arrived. Naturally they were anxious to introduce the newly arrived Baha'i pioneer. To everybody's consternation she gave me an icy stare and said, "First you tell me if you were in the German army." "No, I wasn't," was my truthful reply. "In that case, I can shake hands with you," she said. She then explained that her fiancée had been killed fighting the Germans and she would therefore never shake hands with a former member of the German army. I explained to everybody that it was only a very serious and prolonged illness that had kept me out of the army and now made it possible for me to shake hands with a fellow Baha'i. I am certain that she never caught on to this irony.

The incident was a foretaste of what to expect. In 1951, just six years after war's end, I was initially eyed with suspicion and had to prove my sincerity and character every step of the way. Most Baha'is offered me genuine fellowship. One said that accepting a former enemy stranger gave them an opportunity to prove to themselves and to others that their faith was no mere lip service. Apart from such somewhat questionable contribution to the teaching effort, I noticed that my presence was not always welcome and my people contact was not nearly as effective as I had always been accustomed to. For a good many years I remained a foreigner.

However, this was difficult for me to judge. Canadians, especially those of Anglo Saxon background, seemed to be more reserved than Europeans. The Germans, the Dutch, the Danes, the French, were more forthcoming and responded more readily to your approach, be it pro or con. Anglo Canadians appeared more formal and reserved. They seemed almost anxious not to intrude with their own opinion. Add to this their discomfort dealing with a foreigner and one can see why any dialogue, especially one that concerned religion, would be constrained.

Another thing that became apparent to me almost as soon as I arrived was that Canadians took their religion very seriously. In this connection it is interesting that half a century later a survey, I believe by the United Nations, asked people if they believed in a God. In North America over 90 percent responded that they did believe in God, while in Western Europe the percentage of believers was less than 50 per cent, and in former communist territories less than 20 per cent. Apart from such lesser impact that religion had on people in Europe, as compared to Canada, I was brought up in a Protestant environment which in some respects is less straight laced and more tolerant of free thought and expression.

Ancestry and upbringing leave marks on attitudes and behavior, even among individual Baha'is, and through them on entire Baha'i communities. While it is a wonderful vision that all Baha'is should feel and act alike, they cannot and do not at this early dawn of a new human cycle. As this was the first time that I had ventured outside my ancestral culture, I had never had reason to ponder this phenomenon. I was therefore surprised when fellow Baha'is, raised on a strict Presbyterian or Anglican diet, acted in a tradition of religious exactitude, almost austerity, and looked askance at a free spirited newcomer. Cultural influence showed itself later among Iranian Baha'is who often displayed the ancestral behavior of *taqlid*.

Despite such disappointing initial stresses, the abiding feeling that I remember from those early days, now almost 70 years ago, was one of gratitude and high anticipation to live and work in this blessed land. I felt then as I feel today that Canada is destined to be a

marvelous laboratory for the eventual emergence of a global future society, a working example of a New World Order for all to see.

Living in a Half-light

When they accorded me the great honor to speak at a Sunday fireside in the Maxwell Home, it was only natural that I chose as my subject ONE WORLD, the title of a book by America's statesman Wendell Willkie. He wrote it during World War II after he had traveled around the globe and had recognized the absolute interdependence of nations and the need for some form of future world government. There may have been some 40 people in attendance. Lou Boudler chaired the meeting and Sutherland Maxwell and his devoted nurse Madame Helen Bovais were sitting in the front row. On account of my reddish hair Mr. Maxwell always called me Mulligan. On this evening speaker Mulligan sat in that famous green armchair that 'Abdu'l-Baha once occupied 40 years earlier.

I had barely started my talk when all the lights went out. I counted to ten and when nothing happened I decided to continue in the dark, pointing out how important the presence of light was to the human world. They were still scurrying about to find candles, when the lights came back on. But do not rejoice, less than a minute later the lights went out again. This pattern of talking half with the lights on and half in darkness continued for quite a while. Everybody got used to it and felt that it was uniquely appropriate for the talk's subject about a world that was half illumined and still lay half in darkness. I thought that all in all things had gone rather well and was looking forward to a good question and answer period. That's when a tall man known as "Ronnie" stood up in the back row and rocked the meeting. "All our problems are caused by the price of land," he stated with conviction. "Can the speaker tell us if there is anything that he can think of that can bring us peace, other than having communism."

Such distracting voices didn't want to go away. Perhaps 20 years and scores of firesides later, Gisele and I were invited to talk about the Faith at the United Church of Stouffville, northeast of Toronto. We had joined the United Church Couples Club and suggested an

inter-denominational dialogue at a Sunday service. The church was packed. There must have been 300 people. Other speakers represented Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. After everybody had spoken, the audience could ask questions. To the discomfort of the other panel members all questions were directed only at the Baha'i representative. People seemed anxious to learn more about the faith. This forum, so it seemed, gave them an opportunity to come out of their protective shell and ask questions without appearing to be disloyal to their own church. Personal follow up became a different matter. This was typical for a small town where nobody wanted to be seen to step outside the fold. When we finally ran out of time at the church meeting, there was one elderly gentleman in the crowd who urgently motioned that he wished to talk further. I was delighted to meet him. With some ceremony he presented me with a pocket book and urged me to study it. It was in praise of Mao's doctrine.

“Putting down Roots”

At the start of the Ten Year Crusade in the spring of 1953, great emphasis was also placed on consolidating the “home front.” An appeal from the National Spiritual Assembly called for pioneers “to put down their roots” in various places across the country, including Ontario where the community of North York was singled out as an important goal. My decision to move from Verdun to North York followed a fate laden period of just eighteen months: Verdun had formed its first Assembly. I had suffered the crushing loss of my wife Norma Sala after she gave birth to our son Keith. Our all too brief marriage was a testament to the healing Message of Baha'u'llah. Norma's parents were Jewish before becoming Baha'is and had welcomed me into their family with open arms, despite the fact that they had lost all their European family members in the Holocaust. Strangely, some of my closest friends were Baha'is of Jewish background, like Siegfried Schopflocher, Vera Raginsky and Bert and Hedda Rakovsky. But now, in rapid succession, I had lost two other members of the Sala family and two good friends. Eddie Elliott, who I believe was the first Canadian Baha'i of the black race, died when he was electrocuted at work, and Siegfried Schopflocher

died suddenly of a heart attack. At this traumatic time of terrible turmoil God looked after me and sent me a saving angel in the person of Gisele Mühlshlegel who initially fell in love with my infant son and later became my companion for life. She agreed to follow me to Ontario. We were married at the home of Alan and Evelyn Raynor. Ours was the first Baha'i wedding in North York.



Unlike Montreal, Toronto was known as a city of homes. There were very few apartment buildings. And unlike Montreal where weekends were party time, "Toronto the Good" closed down to observe the Lord's Day. To my recollection there were less than a dozen good restaurants open on Sundays; The Royal York and King Edward Hotel dining rooms, Dintymore's, Savarin Tavern, Winston's, a few coffee shops, and in Chinatown Lichee Gardens and Nanking Tavern. Some friends tried to discourage me from moving. "You can't live in Toronto, because you haven't got the money to buy a home."

Unbeknownst even to many Torontonians a new development had started up. It was tucked away in the Don Valley where people used to hike, ride horseback, or fly kites. The place was called Don Mills. There were half a dozen brand new apartment buildings nearing completion. Most important, Don Mills was in the borough of North York. I signed a lease and called the movers.

Along with the North York community our family also grew. We now had three children five, two, and one year old. That's when the earlier promise of "putting down roots" was all forgotten. "I want you to move to Pickering," said the caller, a 'prominent' Baha'i. This was not a suggestion by an Assembly or by some committee, it was his idea. "I want you to move". He said that Pickering was one member short for maintaining its Assembly status and I was needed there now. "I don't think I can find a place for my family," I told him. "No, you go and your family can follow when you can find a place." It sounded like an order. The memory stands out as we have encountered this kind of behavior, call it self importance or arrogance, on several other occasions. The conversation soon turned into one of those nasty little tests of will that nobody seeks, but everybody needs once in a while to strengthen their spiritual muscle. "Tell you what," I finally said, "I have just made a deal with God. If He really wants us to live in Pickering, He will find a place not just for me, but also for my family." Only a few days later our dear friends Sam and Lynde Tranter who lived in Pickering found a small house in their immediate neighborhood for us to rent. We moved in but it nearly cost us our lives.

"The house" was a one-and-a-half storey jerry-built wooden structure that was covered with Insulbrick siding and had been built on a "rustic" lot by its not very talented owner. Insulbrick consists of a fiberboard sheathing coated with tar and an embedded granular material. The surface is usually embossed and colored to look like brick or stone. It was typically nailed on plywood walls. After searching in my computer for a non-existent name in order not to offend anybody, I shall call the owner Mr. Snox. It comes close enough to reality. "Snox Palace" as we called it had mice, sagging floors, a septic system that bubbled out of the ground every time somebody flushed the toilet, iron spikes in the yard that our

kids stepped on, and a well that constantly ran dry and required a costly tanker load of water for us to take a bath. It was so bad that to this day my wife reminds me “Don’t be a Snox” whenever my work around the house sinks below par. But the worst was the oil furnace. Leaning against the outside wall of the house was a 200-gallon tank of fuel oil. After passing through a filter, a thin copper pipe took it to the furnace. During an extreme cold spell just before Christmas the furnace quit in the middle of the night. We couldn’t get it started and discovered that the oil had congealed in the filter outside, thereby interrupting the flow and starving the furnace. Mr. Snox had the brilliant idea of wrapping cotton batten around the filter and for good measure to place an electric light bulb next to it to keep it from freezing. The next morning we got up much earlier than usual and sat half-dressed at the breakfast table. That’s when our neighbor hammered on our door and yelled “Your house is on fire.” The electric bulb had ignited the cotton and the fire was eating its way up the Insulbrick right next to the full oil tank. Gisele took the barefoot children out into the snow and I somehow managed to climb on top of the tank and rip the burning tar paper off the wall. By the time the voluntary fire brigade arrived there remained little to be done, except to put out the flaming debris in the snow and to take me to our doctor to get my badly burned hands bandaged. For many days we suffered from aftershock at the thought what might have happened had we decided to rise at our usual time an hour later, or had Snox’s bandage caught fire in the middle of the night.

A vibrant community

In the late fifties the entire Canadian Baha’i Community numbered about 380 people. They lived mainly in Ontario with a small number in Quebec and a handful of communities in the prairies and in the West. The National Office was then located in a converted small two story home on Lola Road off Yonge Streetsouth of Eglinton Avenue right next to the subway line. Peggy Ross had taken over as secretary from Laura Davis. Both ladies were supported by a number of dedicated volunteers who worked without the help of telephone answering, photocopier or fax machine, not

even to mention computers. Still, the job got done. This was no mere make belief, but a dedicated and truly vibrant community. Our children participated in many activities and much of Gisele's work revolved around teaching children. Along with Pearl Hannah of Pickering and a large group of helpers she organized weekly classes that were regularly attended by 20-30 children. These classes, like those in many other Ontario communities, had developed innovative curriculums that caught the children's imagination and nurtured their hidden talents.

Wherever you looked there was evidence of enormous dedication. Speakers would often drive for hours to get to their fireside or to some public event. Even winter weather would not deter them. I recall a public meeting at a hall in the countryside outside Pickering, Ontario. We were showing a black and white movie of the British historian Arnold Toynbee who had stated that the Baha'i Faith was not some Islamic sect, but a new and independent world religion. It had snowed heavily and in the darkness we were counting headlights and guiding the arriving cars to the parking lot. But there were also more prominent venues like hotel ballrooms in Toronto and Hamilton where several hundred people were in attendance. Shortly after my arrival in Toronto I had the privilege of giving a fireside at Toronto University's Hart House. In the sixties and seventies, hundreds, if not thousands of people were introduced to the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

The Saints of Kiribati



The Republic of Kiribati is situated on the Equator in the Western Pacific Ocean, roughly halfway between Hawaii and New Guinea. It used to be known as the Gilbert Islands and it is remembered for the epic battle that took place at Tarawa atoll in World War II. More recently, Kiribati made the television news when it became the first nation to welcome the dawn of the year 2000. For Bahá'ís Tarawa remains forever tied to the memory of Samuel and Lynde Tranter, their devotion to Baha'u'llah, and their compassion for humanity.

Sam and Lynde became especially dear to us and to our children when we lived in Pickering. It was they who had found us a place to live in and it was they who helped our family through difficult times. Their story deserves to be repeated often.

It was the future Hand of the Cause John Robarts, who was so impressed by Sam's unfailing courtesy and trustworthiness at his service station in downtown Toronto, that he persuaded Sam to switch careers and to join his group of insurance consultants. Next, he urged Sam to study the teachings of Baha'u'llah, and then he invited him to join the Baha'i Community. Sam and his wife Lynde soon became pillars of the Ontario home front, frequently to the point of exhaustion. When Sam "retired", he and Lynde decided to pioneer to the Pacific and live among islanders who seemed abandoned by the rest of the world. Plagued by a lack of education and surrounded by poverty and decay, these people were clinging to a meager and often precarious existence on barren atolls that surrounded shallow lagoons.

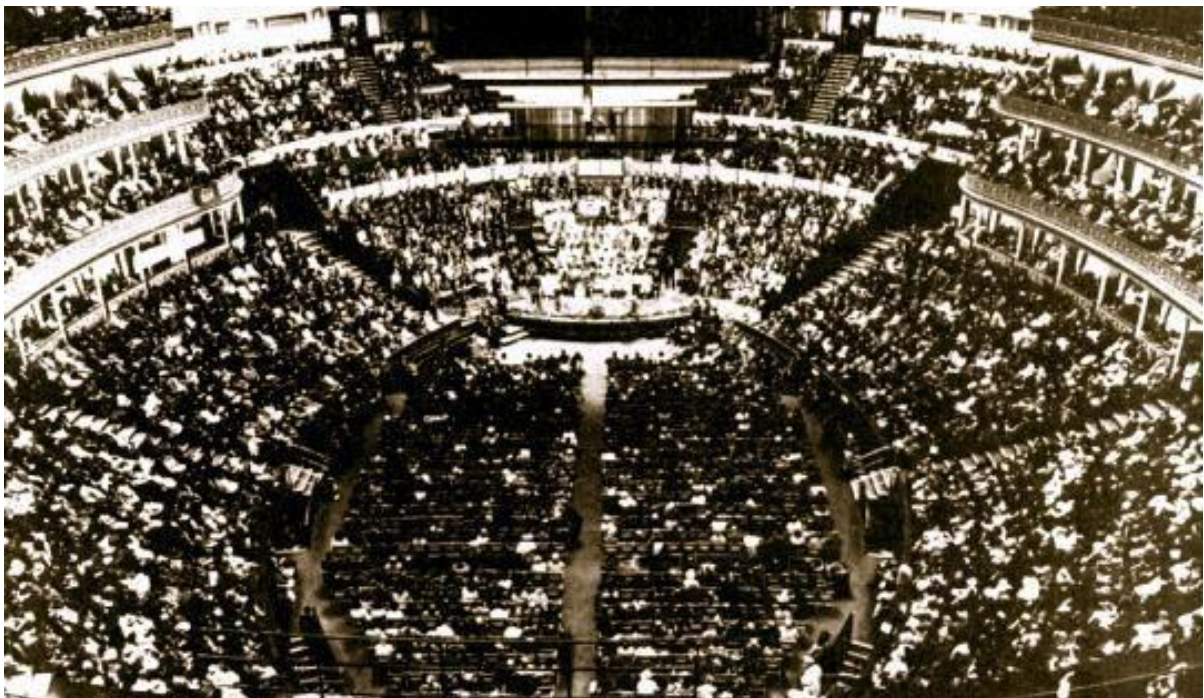
Lynde settled in as a schoolteacher and Sam went to work offering practical help, while both prayed for the region's progress. We have all seen places where wrecked cars are simply dumped by the wayside and left to rust. But here it was not unusual to discover human corpses who had been abandoned without a burial. Sam was regarded with high esteem, almost with awe, when he made it his business to collect the dead and gently lay them to rest in the hard coral. Amid such conditions disease could be of epidemic proportions. Sam once caught a killer virus while on a visit to a neighboring island. His life was miraculously saved when a Catholic priest who traveled on the same boat happened to carry with him a rare medication for just such emergencies.

After struggling and praying for five long years, Sam and Lynde began at last to notice promising changes. They had firmly made up their minds to live out their lives in Kiribati and help her people until their remaining energies were spent. Just one more year, they figured, and they would be given permanent residency status. But it seemed that God had willed otherwise. Their permit to stay that crucial extra year was denied and they eventually returned to Ontario's Haliburton highlands. There, in quiet moments, they would converse in *Gilbertese* as their prayers took them back to their beloved islands.

Samuel Tranter passed to the Abhá Kingdom on November 15, 1999 in Lindsay, Ontario, almost to the day and not far from where he was born 82 years earlier. His cheerful, stalwart, ever-loving companion Lynde joined him three years later. They shall be remembered for having belonged to that small band of truly great Canadians who set out to civilize the world through the love of Baha'u'llah.

The London World Congress

In April of 1963 I had the great privilege to act as simultaneous translator during the Baha'i World Congress at London's great Albert Hall. It turned out to be a demanding assignment. Ety Graeffe of the European Teaching Committee in Geneva had booked facilities in a translation agency where we spent a great deal of time preparing. It was important that all of us used the same German equivalent for words and expressions that were known to be recurring in English Baha'i literature. Without such preparation there was the risk of making certain translations sound absolutely ridiculous. The translators sat in a sound proof booth high up below the ceiling of Albert Hall. From here they had a clear view of the stage.



They listened on head phones to the speakers and trailed the English remarks in German as they talked into a microphone. While half your brain listened to one language, the other half spoke in another. The German speaking audience carried a small wireless receiver to listen to the translator. It was a joy to translate the many moving reports from pioneers around the world and to translate for Rúhíyyih Khanum, who at first had to fight off the fervor of

some Iranian friends who climbed the stage trying to kiss her feet. And finally there came the introduction of the nine members of the first Universal House of Justice of this Dispensation. After 45 minutes, sometimes less, the translator was mentally exhausted and had to be relieved. But I heard that on some occasions the audience fared not much better when a translator was unable to keep up with the speaker and produced some horrible gobbledygook.

The event was indescribably memorable and left everybody in a state of high euphoria to a degree that few paid attention to the London "Bobby" who tried to shepherd people safely across Kensington Ave. One had to cross this busy traffic artery to get from Albert Hall to Hyde Park where people liked to relax during breaks. In order to gain attention he had the bright idea to raise his arms and shout Allah'u'Abhá. It had instant results. People shouted with glee and dashed over to hug and kiss the surprised man in uniform.

Queen Victoria's Message

Few of us who attended the Centennial Celebrations were aware of a message which Queen Victoria had left for future generations at Albert Hall, her great temple for the arts and sciences for which she laid the foundation in 1867, exactly four years after the beginning of the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah.

Much has been written about Victoria and her long and fruitful reign, but who knew of her humanity and faith which ruled her life. While on one of my trips to London I visited Albert Hall and made the discovery. It lies hidden in a message of philanthropy and trust in God, which is emblazoned on a high frieze that encircles the building below its shallow dome of steel and glass.

Victoria was a petite 18-year-old when King William IV died in 1837 and she ascended the Throne. The following year her handsome cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, visited. They fell in love and were married two years later in 1840. They were then both 21 years old. Their marriage blossomed and bore nine children. The couple promoted a great moral revival. Albert became Victoria's greatest support. "Nothing small or great was done but by his advice," noted Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. Albert would prompt the Queen in German to ask her advisors pertinent questions.

Albert was a man of many talents. Early photography was one of his many interests. He also was a gifted musician and wrote music which the family played. In 1842 composer Felix Mendelssohn, then 32 years old, visited the Royal Couple at Buckingham Palace. They loved his music and sang along as he played the piano. He paid them several return visits and wrote to his mother, "The Palace is the only house in England where one feels completely at home."

Outside his family, Albert's deepest interests lay in commerce, engineering, manufacture and architecture. In the face of fierce opposition he orchestrated the Great Exhibition of 1851 and realized a large profit which by his foresight went into the funding of South Kensington. It was nicknamed "Albertopolis", a collection of museums and learned societies. One of his dreams was a great Hall for the Arts and Sciences, but he was not to see it built. In 1861, busy preparing for yet another International Exhibition, he was struck down by typhoid fever. "He had lived," it is written, "on the treadmill of never ending business and did not cling to life." He died in his prime, only 42 years old. Disraeli spoke for the stunned public. "This German prince has governed England for twenty-one years with a wisdom and energy such as none of our Kings have ever shown."

In their 21 years of marriage Victoria had been an adoring wife. Now she was devastated. It took her two years to regain some of her composure. The Queen told a close friend, "My nature is too passionate, my emotions are too fervent. He guided and protected me. He comforted and encouraged me." She decided to make the Great Hall on Kensington Avenue a monument to her beloved Albert.

The Hall of Arts and Sciences was designed not by an architect, but by two engineers, a Captain Fowke and a Major General Scott who took Roman amphitheaters as their models. To raise initial funds, 1,300 of the hall's seats were leased "for 999 years" at today's bargain basement price of 100 Pound Sterling each.

When in 1867 Queen Victoria laid the corner stone, she quite unexpectedly announced that 'Royal Albert' would be added to the hall's name. She opened Royal Albert Hall four years later. At the inaugural concert Anton Bruckner in person played Willis's 9,000-pipe steam engine driven organ. Millions of visitors have since listened here to countless world-class artists, but few may have noticed the message that runs along the oval dome. On account of the

building's great height you can only catch the beginning of the message when you cross Kensington Avenue and stand at the Albert Memorial.

"This Hall was erected for the Advancement of the Arts and Sciences and Works of Industry of All Nations,"

it reads, and you have to cross Kensington Avenue back to Albert Hall in order to be able to read on,

In Fulfillment of the Intentions of Albert, Prince Consort,"

the message continues, as you keep walking around the Great Hall, hugging the surrounding buildings in order to still read the dedication.

"The site was purchased with the proceeds of the Great Exhibition of the year 1851. The First Stone of the Hall was laid by Her Majesty Queen Victoria on the 20th day of May 1867 and was opened by her Majesty the 29th day of March in the year 1871."

And, finally, this solemn affirmation.

"Thine, Oh Lord, is the Greatness and Power and the Glory and the Victory and the Majesty. For All that is in the Heavens and in the Earth is Thine. The Wise and their Works are in the Hands of God. Glory be to God on High and on Earth Peace."

This Message, concealed to many, certainly does recommend itself to those who are the rulers of today.

Later, in 1974, as part of the proclamation effort, I accompanied Counselor Lloyd Gardner to present a copy of the PROCLAMATION OF BAHA'U'LLAH to Pauline Mills McGibbon, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Ontario. Earlier that year she had become the first woman to represent The Queen in Canada and in the entire Commonwealth. She received us in her office at the Parliament Building on Toronto's University Avenue. In a brief and cordial audience in which the conversation remained, however, largely one-sided, we were able to acquaint the Lieutenant Governor with the principles of the Faith and its activities in the province.



Hands of the Cause of God

Among the 17 Hands of the Cause I met, I had the privilege to have close contact with Adelbert Mühlischlegel, Hermann Grossmann, Siegfried Schopflocher, John Robarts, Rúhíyyih Khanum, Amelia Collins, Sutherland Maxwell, and Bill Sears. All carried their high office with modesty, great dignity, joyful and open, without the least trace of false piety. Our relationship was one of friendship. There was never a need to hide one's feelings. These friends were proof of an old rule that the greater the knowledge and spirituality, the more candid the discourse, and the weaker the spirit and the smaller the intellect, the more constrained and beclouded the dialogue.

On March 2, 1951 a telegram from the Guardian announced:
“Greatly welcome assistance of the newly-formed International Council, particularly its President, Mason Remey, and its Vice-President, Amelia Collins, through contact with authorities designed to spread the fame, consolidate the foundations and widen the scope of influence emanating from the twin spiritual, administrative World Centers permanently fixed in the Holy Land constituting the midmost heart of the entire planet. Shoghi.”

In the summer of 1951 Mrs. Collins visited Germany. It became my assignment to be her assistant. This is not the place to go into details, but I wish to share with posterity the following small anecdote that hints at her character and attitude. Under certain circumstances I have remembered it many times.



It was an extremely hot day and Mrs. Collins wished to return to her Hotel at Bad Homburg near Frankfurt to rest up. "Can I offer you a beer?" she asked. "Certainly, Mrs. Collins," was my reply. "I don't normally touch the stuff, but if you like to have a German beer I'll keep you company." She was a small person and wore sparkling glasses which added to her smile and made her look like Miss Marple in the Agatha Christie thrillers. "I just wanted to test the German Baha'i youth," she confessed. Then a tuxedoed young waiter appeared and she ordered in her best German, "Ich möchte HEISSEN Kaffee und HEISSE Milch, BITTE." I would like to have HOT coffee and HOT milk, please. I ordered the same. The waiter returned with a large silver tray that bore a silver coffee carafe, creamer and sugar bowl. She immediately stretched out to test the coffee carafe. "Ich sagte HEISSEN Kaffee und HEISSE Milch, BITTE." The waiter apologized and took everything back to the kitchen. He had a big smile when he returned. This time the coffee seemed to her liking, but then she touched the creamer. "Ich sagte HEISSEN KAFFE u n d **HEISSE MILCH, B I T T E !**," she complained in a loud voice. The young waiter was shattered and took everything away for a third try. "Am I embarrassing you?" she asked me sweetly. "Well, perhaps just a little," was my honest response. "Don't be embarrassed," she corrected me with emphasis. "I am just giving this young man an opportunity to do his job right."

Sutherland Maxwell was dignified and tall. He had unfortunately suffered a stroke when I first met him. "Ah, Mulligan," he greeted me on account of my reddish hair. And every time I came back to the Maxwell Home it was the same greeting, "Mulligan is back ! Mulligan is here again !" When Emeric Sala went to read him the telegram from Shoghi Effendi conferring on Mr. Maxwell the rank of "Foremost Hand of the Cause," he just stood there and spoke with a very quiet voice, "I did not do all this alone."

Siegfried Schopflocher, the inventor and entrepreneur from Montreal, who on Saturdays would stroll through Atwater Market masquerading as the poor old man until merchants took pity and offered him bargains, was so generous with his personal fortune that the Guardian called him the Temple Builder. Together with Emeric Sala he had purchased a farm at Beaulac in the Laurentian

Hills, 50 miles north of Montreal. We would spend weekends sprucing up the place and transforming the old barn into a meeting hall. But Freddie soon became disenchanted. He had heard that the bedroom doors were left open to keep the rooms warm during freezing nights “I shall write Shoghi Effendi and tell him that Beaulac is a Schweinestall,” a pigsty, he threatened. He was upset that doors were left open, because there were no heat vents and one didn’t want to go to bed wearing ski suits. No matter how much I pleaded with him not to bother the Guardian, he insisted that he would tell Shoghi Effendi that Beaulac was a Schweinestall. During our work weekends we allowed ourselves some recreation by going skiing. I fell on an icy hillside, twisted my knees and ankles and cut my face. When we returned to the city on Sunday night, we always went to the meeting at the Maxwell Home. I tried to hide behind a curtain, but Freddie soon discovered the lacerations on my swollen face. “What happened to you, poor fellow,” he enquired concerned. “I took a tumble skiing,” I informed him truthfully. “Where did you go skiing,” he wanted to know, even though he knew full well where we spent our weekends. “In Beaulac,” I confessed. “Serves you right,” he said without pity and walked away.



At Beaulac (Located east of Rawdon on Route 125 ca 50 miles north of Montreal) l to r Bill Suter from Switzerland who became Baha’i in Toronto in the 1930’s, built his rustic cottage at Beaulac and supervised the Baha’i property; Norma Sala from New York, Rosemary Sala, Henry Jarvis (see p.10), u.i., Doris Richardson, Jean Smith. Above l to r Ron Nablo and Noel Ryan. Two unidentified visitors from New York.

Siegfried Schopflocher was more concerned about helping the Guardian than about anything else. When his wife Laurol visited Haifa he sent her a telegram. If she would forgo a new Cadillac that year he would send Shoghi Effendi \$ 50,000. "How about \$100,000," she cabled back. His reply: "You win. Love to Shoghi Effendi." Laurol missed the disaster of the dirigible "Hindenburg" on May 6 1937 when at the last moment she changed her travel plans.

Here one should also mention an important experience Freddie had in Haifa. He had joined the Guardian and a number of male pilgrims from the East to say prayers in the Shrine of the Báb. As they were all gathered, the Guardian suddenly asked for a chair to be brought in and offered it to Freddie. After their prayers Shoghi Effendi remarked along these lines, "You may have wondered why I asked for a chair for Mr. Schopflocher. Mr. Schopflocher is from the West and he is accustomed to say his prayers sitting down. I just wanted everybody here to know that our Faith has no ritual."

John Robarts from Toronto was a man of great dedication. At the start of the Ten Year Crusade he gave up a prominent business position and his beautiful home in Toronto Forest Hill and moved with his family to Mafeking in Bechuanaland. He could be forceful and persuasive. Conference participants once pledged to support a project by donating a certain amount. When the pledge fell short John called out, "Lock the doors, nobody leaves until we have the money." He also was very frank with his opinion. A school mistress who had been invited to a Baha'i event involved John in a long and serious conversation. "Tell me Mr. Robarts," she finally asked him, "what is the Baha'i attitude towards sex." He smiled and took a deep breath. "Why, they just LOVE it."

Much has been reported elsewhere about Rúhíyyih Khanum's dynamic and open personality, but the following anecdotes have probably escaped attention. Following the dedication of the House of Worship in Wilmette in 1953 she dedicated the graveside of her father, William Sutherland Maxwell and visited her family home in Montreal. Addressing a group of local friends she began,

“I understand that in this community everybody loves everybody else.” “Everybody” present felt complimented and nodded agreement. “That’s funny,” she continued with mock surprise and to the discomfort of her audience, “I don’t LOVE every Bahá’í. In fact, some of them I CAN’T STAND.” Later that evening I volunteered to run a complicated projector to show a new movie she had brought along of the Gardens and the Shrine on Mount Carmel. There was suppressed laughter from our audience when people in the movie were seen running around like Olympic speed walkers and trees were waving like in a storm. “Slower,” she ordered, “Slower !” But I thought I knew what was wrong and I had the machine already running at its slowest setting. “This is as slow as it gets, Rúhiyyih Khanum,” I said. “Mr. Liedtke, you just don’t know how to run this projector,” was her rejoinder.

I was still in the middle of explaining that it was not I, but the photographer who didn’t know his camera equipment, because in order to save film he had probably been filming at 8 frames per second instead of the normal 16, when it hit me that it must have been her who had taken the movie.



Ruhiyyih Khanum and Amelia Collins with friends from Quebec and Ontario visiting the graveside of Sutherland Maxwell at Montreal’s Mt. Royal Cemetery in May 1953.

In later years she visited British Columbia. The one and only Baha’i who was holding his lonely post in a northern community went to

the airfield to meet her small twin-engine private plane. He was worried how to address this honored lady. When Rúhíyyih Khanum climbed out of the aircraft he stepped forward, offered her his hand in greeting and with a loud voice called out Ya Bahá. That's when his dentures fell to the ground. Without losing a millisecond Rúhíyyih Khanum bent down, scooped them up and handed them back to him with the immortal words, "These must be yours."

In the picture below Ruhiyyih Khanum is seen enjoying a ride on a swing while visiting a First Nations Community in Alberta, Canada.



Shoghi Effendi The Guardian of the Faith

Although I never met Shoghi Effendi, he had signed his letter "Your true brother Shoghi." This is how I have always felt towards him. He had cautioned me not to take sides in my journalistic career, but to confine my efforts to reporting facts. And he had given the blessing of his prayer that the "Almighty may enable you to promote the best interests of His Faith." What I am sharing here are therefore second

hand reports from those who had the privilege of being in his presence.

All these friends described him as being small in physique and not particularly robust. A deeply caring person who carried the full burden of his high office as decreed in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament. Somebody who was incessantly slandered and attacked, even by members of his own family. When Shoghi Effendi died suddenly and quite unexpected in November 1957, I thought that he had died of a broken heart. All who met him could not believe how he, overwhelmed with work and problems, was still able to transform the former wilderness of Mount Carmel into a Garden of Eden and in the face of huge difficulties of the post-war world to erect the classic Archives Building and the beautiful superstructure for the Shrine of the Báb. Future generations will surely pause and marvel. The Hands of the Cause Ugo Giachery and Dhikru'llah Khadem could not speak about the Guardian without tears coming to their eyes. This was embarrassing to some, especially at large meetings. They often had to struggle to find words that were adequate to express their deep feelings. It felt as if they were urging us on to lighten the Guardian's burden through our deeds.

Amelia Collins felt an extreme affection for Shoghi Effendi. When she discovered the threadbare socks he was wearing, she gave him a large sum of money strictly for his own personal use. Instead he used it to build the Collins Gate in the Garden at Bahji. When I met her for the last time in 1953 in Montreal, she mentioned how very sad the Guardian always was and said, "I would gladly step into a cauldron of boiling oil to win a smile from the Guardian."

Also in Montreal, Rúhíyyih Khanum talked about the great burden that Shoghi Effendi had to carry. He had to be everywhere at the same time to strengthen the world wide community, to preserve its unity, and to issue directions for the rapid dissemination of the teachings. Next to many translations from the Arabic and Persian into a classic English, he wrote thousands of explanations, suggestions, appeals and letters, all with a fountain pen. Only in later years did he own a small portable typewriter. Surrounded by all his work he was under constant pressure by enemies of the Faith who were even trying to steal Baha'i properties.

Rúhíyyih Khanum was quite beside herself about the situation and allowed herself the remark, “I could slit their throats.”



The Guardian acquired this manual portable typewriter only after World War II. Prior to that time he had written all his books, translations, messages and letters in longhand with pencil or fountain pen.

Bert Rakovsky, a prominent insurance executive in Montreal, spent hours looking for “The largest bath towels money can buy.” He wanted to take them to Haifa as a gift for the Guardian, “because he would never allow himself this luxury.” I understand that Bert also took along a trunk full of choice delicatessen.

Emeric Sala from Montreal mentioned the Guardian’s concern that everybody automatically assumed that he knew everything and had

all the answers. "Dear Shoghi Effendi," somebody had written him, "do you think it is wise for me to marry Mary Smith?" How would he know, he said, when he had never met either of them. It seems that all of us long for somebody who will guide us safely through life and who will relieve us of our responsibility to make decisions. Then the Guardian heard from Emeric that his wife Rosemary Sala was on a teaching trip through Canada's Atlantic provinces despite winter weather and her suffering from bronchitis. She had told Emeric that since the Guardian had supported her idea for such a trip, it had to be his wish, so she better go, even if she didn't feel well. "How was I to know that she is ill," he almost shouted. "In her condition she should never have gone to the Maritimes, but to Florida instead."

The Passing of Shoghi Effendi

The Guardian died in his hotel room in London, England, early in the morning of November 4, 1957. He was 60 years old and had suffered a coronary thrombosis in his sleep. Ruhiiyyih Khanum had thoughtfully tried to lessen the blow by first sending a cable that the Guardian was "desperately ill" with influenza. The final blow reached us only on Tuesday evening November 5. - Half a century later, during a last visit with our artist friend Rod Willis, he reminded me of something I had never been aware of, but which he had remembered all these years. He said when I phoned him with the news of the Guardian's passing I had first enquired about his health and asked him to sit down. Only then had I passed the bad news. I was grateful that Rod told me this, because it reminded me that all our little deeds and omissions are inscribed on life's pages.-

The message from the Hands of the Cause that Shoghi Effendi had passed away without a successor confirmed what most of us had feared right from the start. Without a son and without any other loyal male descendant, there was no way that he could have appointed a successor without violating the explicit instructions in 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament. There would therefore no longer be a living Guardian. It came as a devastating tsunami that tore away our confident expectations for successive future guidance and raised the sickening specter of a community and institutions left to

their own devices. The remaining hope was an early establishment of the Universal House of Justice which Baha'u'llah had promised would be divinely protected and freed from error.

Nevertheless, there were some who believed that this sudden event might portend an early return of a Divine Manifestation. If 'Abdu'l-Baha's firm promise of successive living Guardians could be annulled by an Unseen Will, so could Baha'u'llah's promise that the next Manifestation will not appear before the lapse of at least one thousand solar years counted from Baha'u'llah's first intimation of His mission in Tehran's Siyah Chal dungeon in the summer and fall of 1862. Such beliefs were re-enforced by numerous Baha'i writings that stressed the inseparable union of Guardianship and Universal House of Justice as a "Twin Institution."

"Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh would be mutilated and permanently deprived of that hereditary principle which, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written, has been invariably upheld by the Law of God."In all the Divine Dispensations," He states, in a Tablet addressed to a follower of the Faith in Persia, "the eldest son hath been given extraordinary distinctions. Even the station of prophethood hath been his birthright." Without such an institution the integrity of the Faith would be imperiled, and the stability of the entire fabric would be gravely endangered. Its prestige would suffer, the means required to enable it to take a long, an uninterrupted view over a series of generations would be completely lacking, and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn."-The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 148. 348

"The Guardian... is bound to insist upon a reconsideration by them (the Universal House of Justice) of any enactment he conscientiously believes to conflict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of Baha'u'llah's revealed utterances."-Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 150

What Shoghi Effendi was writing here is rather alarming and may not be readily understood by many. He clearly implies that the members of the House of Justice could not only make a mistake,

but they could in fact go against the very essence of Baha'u'llah's teachings. When he describes such a dire situation he is of course speaking in the context of the Guardian's responsibilities in balancing the authority and power of the House of Justice.

In those dark and desperate years that now lie over half a century in the past, the alternative would have been to forgo the formation of a Universal House of Justice, because it would be unable to function exactly according to the instructions in 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament. However, the formation of the Universal House of Justice had been decreed by Baha'u'llah Himself in the Kitab-I-Aqdas prior to the directives and guidance given in later years by 'Abdu'l-Baha and by Shoghi Effendi. Abandoned and impoverished as the Baha'is of the world may have found themselves after the Guardian's sudden passing, they could not shirk their duty to obey an original command that was given our age in Baha'u'llah's Book of Laws. Baha'is the world over closed ranks to achieve this historic milestone. The arrival of the Universal House of Justice was greeted with gratitude and relief. After its nine members were introduced during the Baha'i Centennial Celebrations at London's historic Albert Hall, over six thousand believers from all parts of the globe rose and filled the great room with the joyful chant of the Greatest Name.

Do not go where the path may lead.
Go instead where there is no path
and leave a trail. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Some of those I met on my trail have been mentioned in these pages, but all too many were left out. Here, therefore, is a small attempt to make up for it. Since it would not only be unfair, but simply impossible to list them all in some order of merit or importance, I let the rule of the alphabet come to my help.

Martin Aiff was a colleague on Germany's first National Youth Committee. A few years my senior, he was the one who always was ready to jump in and tackle the inconvenient. His capacity for work and engagement had no limits. When word arrived that Canada needed pioneers, he immediately said he would settle on Prince Edward Island. In the end I beat him to it, at least as far as going to Canada was concerned. Years later I learned that in 1959 he, his wife Gerda, and their six small children, had settled at Windhoek in Namibia. Here, in the face of a harsh Apartheid policy, they did heroic work teaching the Baha'i faith to the Herero people.



A full half century later I learned from my friend David Bowie what had triggered their move. The Aiff's were on pilgrimage when over dinner the Guardian asked Martin in most disarming fashion, "Mr. Aiff, what were YOU doing during the war?" It was the last thing Martin wanted to be reminded of, let alone talk about. "I was in the army," was his minimal reply. It just wasn't good enough for Shoghi Effendi. "What were you doing in the army, Mr. Aiff" he wanted to know. - "I drove a tank." Still not good enough. "Where did you drive a tank, Mr. Aiff?" How could he tell the Guardian that he was blitzing through the desert towards Cairo, hoping to conquer Egypt and the Holy Land and reaching the Arabian oil fields. Instead, he simply answered, "I drove a tank under Rommel." "Ah, you were with Field Marshall Erwin Rommel in the Africa Corps? You were trying to conquer Africa?! Well, NOW is your chance!" - After this exchange where else could poor Martin go.

David and Carol Bowie lived in Ontario where Carol worked on the Auxiliary Board, while David spread the message North to Hudson Bay. They later moved to South Africa where fate intervened and took their wonderful daughter from them. They eventually returned to pioneer on British Columbia's sunshine coast. For many years David criss-crossed North America's West in his RV to share his near encyclopaedic knowledge of the Baha'i faith with countless friends who were living in isolation. He also became known as one of the most lucid presenters at summer and winter schools who was never shy to speak with authority on many topics that everybody was keenly interested in, but few were prepared to openly discuss.

Much has been written about Laura Romney Davis who became known as the Mother of Canada's Baha'i community. A diminutive lady with an ever present warm and friendly smile, she hosted regular "Firesides" in her Toronto home at 44 Chestnut Park. Next

to the Maxwell home in Montreal, it became Canada's best known Baha'i address. The number of people, especially among the younger generation, who were introduced to the teachings of Baha'u'llah, are legion. On account of her work as national secretary, Laura's reputation as a kind hearted, yet efficient worker soon spread to all parts of Canada and far beyond her borders. The community was indeed fortunate for her to reach the age of 95.

Here I must leave my alphabetical order to mention Rolly Totten, because wherever Laura went there went Rolly with his warm and loving smile. Laura recognized him as one of the most generous souls in our midst. There was nothing that hard working Rolly wouldn't do in order to help or cheer up a person in need. Everybody knew Rolly as a genuine friend and one absolutely did not care when somebody thought it was necessary to describe him as homosexual. Rolly lived the life of a true servant of humanity.

Cliff and Catherine Huxtable took the light of Baha'u'llah to the island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean. It is said to be one of the most isolated places on earth. This tiny, wind-blown piece of real estate, located 2000 kilometers from the nearest African coast, measures just 122 square kilometers or 47 square miles. When in 1815 after 10 weeks at sea Napoleon Bonaparte arrived there as an exile of the British aboard HMS Northumberland, he grieved as he first caught sight of the island, "It is not a pleasant place." Pleasant or not, St. Helena was destined to make Baha'i history as a place of extraordinary devotion and heroism.

Cliff, who came from the Uxbridge area some 50 kilometers northeast of Toronto, married Catherine Heward from Toronto. They were in their early twenties, but Catherine was already bound to a wheel chair on account of her advanced muscular dystrophy.

Catherine was beautiful and had the smile of an angel. It made it doubly painful to notice how she had to use her stronger left arm to help lift up her right hand when she greeted friends. Both Cathy and Cliff had finished their studies and when the call came for pioneers to settle in Saskatchewan, Cliff found employment there and they left. I can still remember their misty-eyed send off. Next, we heard that they had moved on, this time to British Columbia's Saltspring Island, located between Vancouver and Victoria.

Then came the incredible news that Catherine had given birth to a healthy baby boy and that they had decided to pioneer even farther afield to St. Helena. This remote island was a most unlikely place to be for Catherine in her severely weakened condition. I believe they settled somewhere near Jamestown where Napoleon once sent his cook to shop for spaghetti which was his favorite dish. Those of us who were left behind in the wake of their headlong quest for ever greater service to the Cause, prayed that they may continue to be blessed and protected and that their son may bring much joy to his parents. Whenever one remembers that frail, but so luminous young mother, one wonders if in a bygone era or in a different culture our indomitable friend would have been venerated as Saint Catherine.

Hundred years after the Covered Wagons once took pioneers to the Golden West, Ben and Mary Koltermann and their four young children age 2 to 14 repeated the feat in an under-powered Volkswagen camper as pioneers in the service of Baha'u'llah. They lived at Niagara Falls, Ontario, when they offered their services to the teaching committees of Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Only British Columbia replied. They were told that the community of Coldstream, outside Vernon, needed urgent help to maintain their Assembly.



They started out on August 15 1971 and arrived on September 1. Skirting Georgian Bay and Lake Superior on their 4000 kilometer long journey, Mary drove the camper and Ben followed in a small truck with their furniture. They camped and put up a tent en route just as the pioneers had done a century earlier. But then they went in search of land and gold, while Mary and Ben were searching for receptive souls. As it was still early in the day when they arrived in the Okanagan valley, they motored on to Kelowna to do some sight-seeing there. Holding his 2-year old daughter Tamara, Ben climbed up on a grandstand in Kelowna's park to get a better photograph of Okanagan Lake. That's when he slipped and popped his arm out of his shoulder socket. After a very painful treatment at the hospital they tried to find a number for "Baha'i" in the phone book and discovered that Elsie Gatzke was just having one of her famous all-night firesides only a short walk from where they were phoning from. Elsie welcomed the newcomers with open arms, because Kelowna urgently needed replacements for two Assembly members who had just moved out.

Ben and Mary decided to stay. Ben's condition had made it in any event impossible for him to drive back to Coldstream. Thanks to his well-timed mishap on that grandstand, Mary and Ben Koltermann have been the most well-known and respected Baha'i teachers in the area for the past forty-one years, at the time this is written.

Patrick and Brenda Pemberton-Piggott and their four small children Terry, Claire, Crispin and Andrew left their lovely country home in Pickering Township to go pioneering to Nigeria during the Ten Year Crusade. They went to Ibadan, a little over 100 kilometers north of the Capital city of Lagos. While teaching the faith, Patrick earned his living installing electricity and lighting in Ibadan's new stadium complex. Patrick and Brenda had come to Canada from Britain where Patrick had obtained his engineering degree. He was a stunningly gifted inventor and innovator, ready to tackle just about any engineering problem that came his way, while Brenda was an incredibly helpful people person who ran firesides wherever she went. It was to our loss, but it came as no surprise that the Piggott's had decided to give a portion of their lives to the people of Nigeria to help in the modernization of their country.

It was at the home of Alan and Evelyn Raynor in North York that Gisele and I said our vows back in 1954. The Raynor's and their three boys Douglas, John and Bruce were pillars of North York's fledgling Baha'i Community and it was largely on their account that the local Assembly had become incorporated which was quite unusual at that time. The other novelty was that our wedding was the first Baha'i wedding in North York and accordingly received special mention in the local paper. Evelyn was like a second mother to us, while St. George Spendlove, whom we shall be meeting shortly, gave the bride away. But before that could happen, the bride and groom were asked to present their parents written consent, which is a requirement for Baha'is. Everything came to a sudden stop and the groom was kept standing alone for several anxious minutes, as the bride ran upstairs to her room to rummage for her consent letter. She did eventually find it, or we would not have been married for 62 wonderful years as this is being written.



Our wedding. Evelyn and Alan Raynor are to our left, George Spendlove at right
At far left are "Sonny" Roberts sitting, Wes Huxtable standing, Craig and
Maude Weaver. Standing behind Alan in white dress is Emily Roberts, behind
her to the right is Ron Nablo, next to him Charles Roberts.

Suzanne Pawlowska and Hubert Schuurmann, who first saw the light of day in Poland and in Holland, became Baha'is in Winnipeg, met in Happy Valley, Labrador, and were married at St. John's in Newfoundland's first Baha'i wedding. A missionary of the Moravian Church became instrumental for them to meet in Canada's vast North when he told Suzanne "there is another Baha'i who works at Goose Bay air base". Their life together would be a constant moving from place to place while instilling in their four children a sense of the universal kinship of all people. Suzanne was a teacher, while Hubert initially was film editor for the Canadian Broadcasting

Corporation and later a producer of documentaries for the National Film Board of Canada. Over the next half century they taught the Eskimos of Labrador, lived in Greenland and then among the Lapps North of the Arctic Circle. Here Hubert produced his documentary "The Sami Herders." Another notable production was his "Healing Spirit" in which Deepak Chopra participated. The documentary explores the human journey through life and death, illness and healing. It poses the idea that healing goes deeper than simply curing symptoms. The Schuurman's year in Lappland was followed by moves to Eastern and Western Canada and to Newfoundland.

While on their distant outpost in Labrador, the Schuurmans suffered the heartbreak of the death of their 17-year old disabled son Tristan. During his all too short life Tristan had made many friends in many lands by his genuinely loving nature. As an accomplished writer, Suzanne was able to capture the essence of her son's life in her book "Tristan". Another of her books that she was able to complete in between her travels, was "Legacy of Courage", the extraordinary story of the life of her mother, Ola Pawlowska who became a Knight of Baha'u'llah. In later years Suzanne helped her mother in her move from Zaire in Central Africa to her native Poland where her mother lived for a short while before returning to Canada.

Every Tuesday night, week in, week out, for twenty years, St. George Spendlove hosted his famous Baha'i fireside at his Toronto home. That's roughly one thousand firesides to bring every facet of Baha'u'llah's teachings to many hundreds of his fellow citizens. George, as he was known to his friends, gave true meaning to both his names by spreading the love of Baha'u'llah and by slaying the dragon of ignorance. Yet, his feat which probably had no parallel in the history of the Baha'i Faith, was only the tip of the iceberg of his many tireless activities. Professionally he was curator at Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, a world authority on Chinese, East Asian, Indian and

European art, curator of the museum's Canadiana Collection, a sought after university lecturer, world traveler and author. In between he had helped in 1935 to establish the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles in London and he lent years of vital support to the Baha'i school at Green Acre, Maine.

Quoting from Volume XIII of *The Baha'i World*, George Spendlove combined in his life and work the deeply spiritual and the brilliantly intellectual. In all he did one discerned the qualities of his character – his restless curiosity, his integrity, his dislike of all pretense. Born and raised in Montreal, George suffered a severe concussion in World War I and lost most of his hearing. War's inner wounds were healed when he found the Baha'i faith through Sutherland and May Maxwell. When George first began studying the Baha'i Faith he got himself a large notebook in which to jot down, like a good scientific researcher, any question he felt could not be answered satisfactorily by the Faith. Thirty years later, he revisited this book and noted that there was not a single unanswered question left.

It was England's loss and Canada's gain when in 1936 George moved to Toronto to take up his museum appointment. He received this encouragement from the *Guardian*, "I wish to assure you in person of my deep appreciation of the work you are so devotedly accomplishing in Toronto."

I felt a very special affinity to George, because he was almost exactly my father's age and both had suffered almost identical war wounds before they were 20 years old. Facing a severe problem I once asked for George's advice. "Does your father love you," he puzzled me. "Of course he does," I replied. "Would he do everything to help you if it lay in his power?" – "Of course he would." – "Well, remember you do have a Father Who loves you dearly and Who is all powerful." – On the other hand, George would counsel people, "Be careful what you pray for. You might get it."

With his tank running on low, but with so much still waiting for him to do, it became a huge sacrifice for George to sit through the so-called administrative part of our Nineteen-Day Feasts and to endure the endless and often heated “consultations.” As mentioned earlier, George was very hard of hearing and carried a hearing aid. This offered an elegant escape. Whenever he had enough, he would suddenly get up and announce in a tired monotone, “I am sorry, friends, but my hearing is worse than usual tonight and I see no purpose in staying.”

George owned a small homestead outside Uxbridge with an old farm house, a sugar bush and a red painted Army surplus Jeep to bomb around in. He invited us to stay there when an ice storm left our home without power for over a week. We went to bed wearing coats, hats and gloves before George came to our rescue. Gisele and I used this period of seclusion on George’s farm to tackle a rather difficult German translation of George Townshend’s book “Christ and Baha’u’llah”. The Guardian had called the book “his crowning achievement.” When the finished product arrived back from Germany, we noticed the lavish praise that was given to one who was proficient in neither English nor German, but who had contributed financially. There was no mention of those who had communed long hours with George Townshend in order to bring his great vision to the German speaking world. It was another sad reminder that very little had changed. It was still money that talked and bought recognition. It was at this little island of tranquility in Uxbridge County where George planned to relax for a while after his impending retirement. Afterwards he planned to return with his wife to Korea, the Land of the Morning Sun, he had fallen in love with. He was so much looking forward to spend the rest of his life in his beloved Orient. He said he would probably first travel to Seoul. All was in readiness. The house had been sold, the furniture packed. Then came a sudden change of plans. George was released overnight from all earthly bonds, just weeks before he was scheduled to start on his long journey.

Ian Semple was a trail blazer of an entirely different kind. Rather than a pioneer to distant lands, he pioneered new attitudes and new vision, all of which could be much harder. Despite his hope to remain in the background he became at age 35 the youngest House member and served on this body for 42 years. Let's read what he said in London on January 28, 2006 about the impartiality that was strictly observed at the first election of the House of Justice in 1963, and about the real dangers of fundamentalism and the need for followers of Baha'u'llah to make use of their wonderful brains.

"The Hands [of the Cause] were very worried, because they were deeply concerned that nothing should go wrong in that election. There were some Bahá'ís at that time who had obviously set out to tour the Bahá'í world, donating things here and there and making themselves very popular and very well-known, and the Hands were worried that in some cases it was not genuine. Some people were very generous people, but in other cases there was a little electioneering going on. But the Hands thought 'What can we do? If we interfere it would be the same thing [electioneering in reverse], we must just trust Bahá'u'lláh'. None of those who were fiddle-faddling got elected... As part of that process of trying not to influence the ballots the Hands decided that no males at the World Centre would contact

the [voting] delegates. Only female Baha'is had contact with delegates. At one point I faced difficulty: Being Assistant Secretary of the International Baha'í Council I had to get in touch with [a delegate] who was also a member of the Council. We were going to have a Council meeting and I had to get word to [him] to join the meeting. He was staying in a hotel on top of Mt. Carmel. I went up there in the evening, and the only way I could think of getting a letter to him was to sneak through the bushes and the shrubbery up to the office of the hotel and pop it through the window to the staff and tell them 'Please give this to Mr. _ _.' Then I disappeared through the bushes back down again."

"Some people are very eager and sound enthusiastic, too enthusiastic. A fundamentalist is temperamentally someone who wants to stop you thinking. And of course that's where a sense of humour comes in, because you say this is

ridiculous. The way to stop getting into fundamentalism is to insist on thinking about things. Examine them. Remember what the Guardian wrote. I've heard some people say that independent investigation of truth is [valid] until you find Bahá'u'lláh; after that it doesn't apply. But the Guardian has written that Bahá'u'lláh has enjoined the independent investigation of truth upon His followers [and 'followers' are people who have accepted a religion]....You have the humility to recognise that you are a fallible human being and unless you keep thinking hard and investigating hard, you are not going to understand what Bahá'u'lláh said. You are going to misunderstand it, and that's fundamentalism: misunderstanding and misapplying a Revelation and insisting that you are right."



Some Participants of the Canadian National Convention in 1956

1st row Donald MacLaren, Roger White, Charles Jardine, Sherwood and Nora Moore, Douglas Martin

2nd row X , Alan Raynor, Catherine Heward-Huxtable, May Pallister, Jameson and Gail Bond

3rd row Erland Barr, X , Bert Rakovsky, Nancy Campbell, Jean Smith, X , James Norquay

4th row Lloyd Gardner, Brenda Pemberton-Piggott, X , Margaret East, Hedda Rakovsky , Peggy Ross, X , Joyce McLean

Catherine Huxtable is seen on this picture before she and her husband Cliff left to go to St. Helena Island

Donald MacLaren was a Canadian flying ace in World War I with 54 victories. He became first employee of Trans Canada Airlines, later Air Canada, and was first to suggest to the government where Vancouver International Airport should be located. While many had misgivings, he cheered my trip on the first jet.

Roger White (1929-1993) was 'Baha'i Poet Laureate' and writer who helped the faith out of its obscurity

Douglas Martin became a member of the Universal House of Justice 1993-2005



The Happy Gang of Stalwarts at Canada's 13th Baha'i Convention in 1960

1st row Norma Wiley, Violet Dutoff, X, Joyce McLean, X, X, X, X, Laura Davies, Nancy Campbell, Husayn Banani, Jan Vandervliet, Elizabeth Rochester, Tom Volguardsen, X, X, Tahirih Vatanparast, Sonny Roberts, Emely Roberts.

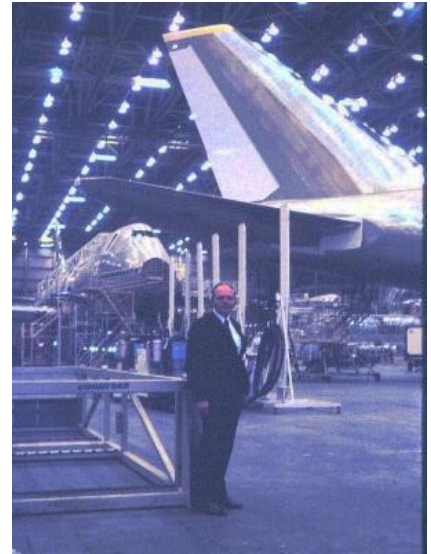
2nd row X, X, Gertrude Barr, Keith Liedtke, Helen Gidden, Ian Liedtke, Gisele Liedtke, Suzanne Liedtke, Audrey Westheuser, Hedda Rakosvsky, Ruhiiyyih Khanum, John Robarts, Peggy Ross, X, Muriel Barr, below her to the right wearing glasses is Winnifred Harvey, X, Amy Putnam, X, Beatrice Ashton, X, Pearl Hannah.

3rd row X, Fred Graham, Jean Graham, Jeannie Seddon, X, X, Dorothy Smith, May Pallister, Inez Hayes, Evelyn Raynor, X, X, X, X, X, Phoebe Wynen, Betsy Wynen, X, Dorothy Walsh, Priscilla Waugh.

4th row Gerald Robarts, James Norquay, X, Harry Liedtke, Douglas Martin, Vera Raginsky, Hartwell Bowsfield, Craig Weaver, Harold Moscrops, X, X, Doug Wilson, Tony Marsolais, W.J. Christie, X, X, Alan Raynor.

5th row Tom Garroway, Rollie Totten, Tom Gossen, Bert Rakovsky, Bill Waugh, Charles Jardine, Erland Barr, Rowland Estall.

The names of those friends who are marked with an X are after 53 years unfortunately lost to memory



Me and my Zeppelin in 1931
My first flight in a very early Messerschmitt in 1935
Watching the first Boeing Jumbo Jet built in 1969
Sleepy Rhein-Main airport in 1947
Celebrating the first airline computer in 1978



Rushing out news for the Associated Press in 1950



With Kiri Ratima of New Zealand, Carlos Pareiras-Horta of Bahia, Brasil and with Auckland's dare devil pilot Fred Ladd visiting Motuihe Island where German sea raider Count Felix Luckner was kept interned in World War I



Chicago 1958 With John Eichenauer

Family Picnic in Northern Ontario

At Frankfurt House of Worship with son Ian

Lighting a Candle for "The Century of Light"

Walking on Water...Almost

Remembering the Holocaust



Wert thou to speed through the immensity of space
And traverse the expanse of heaven,
Yet, thou wouldst find no rest
Save in submission to My Command
And humbleness before My face. – Baha’u’llah

Some sixteen years after my wartime premonition that bomber squadrons would be replaced by fleets of civilian airliners to shrink our world into a small neighborhood, I became a direct witness of this miraculous transformation. On March 1, 1960 a B.O.A.C. “Comet” jetliner took off from Toronto's Malton Airport to inaugurate the airline's new Toronto-London service. It was the first time that a commercial jetliner had started from Toronto and I had the unique experience of being on board.

I first heard about the possibility of jet travel in 1936 when I was nine years old and saw a book that showed an artist’s drawing of a “Jet Wing”. It was a giant aircraft wing without fuselage that was propelled at speeds of 1,000 kilometers an hour by six huge propellerless engines that protruded from the rear of the wing. The wing’s leading edge had large windows for lounges and staterooms of a size and opulence of those on the dirigible *Hindenburg*. Such dimensions had become a bench mark for any futuristic designs.

It made sense that my old friends the zeppelins would eventually be replaced by aircraft to take us in equal comfort across the Atlantic in three hours instead of three days by zeppelin. But my hope that these beautiful flying machines were just around the corner was dashed by an engineer who said one would first have to develop new alloys, because all known substances would melt under the heat and pressure of such “turbines”. He had no idea when this utopia might become a reality. But reality had already begun to happen with early experiments in England and Germany. The competition of World War II accelerated progress and by 1944 both countries had their first fighter jets. Today, when jet travel is so commonplace that people

look up twice when they see a large, propeller-driven aircraft droning through the sky, it is difficult to imagine the excitement and awe that gripped the large crowd at Malton airport to witness Comet's takeoff.



During the 1950's the North Atlantic was flown by Lockheed "Constellations" and by the Boeing "Stratocruiser". The New York - London speed record stood at eleven hours and thirty minutes. The route from Toronto to London went via Montreal, Gander on Newfoundland and Shannon, Ireland. The trip with its three stop-overs took on average of 16 hours. The Comet would dramatically cut all these times in half.

But it wasn't the breakthrough in speed alone that made the Comet a thrill, there was also the notion of risk. Metal fatigue had caused three Comets of an earlier design to disintegrate. Hand of the Cause Dorothy Baker lost her life when a Comet taking her from India to London blew up near the island of Elba. A re-designed stronger and larger Comet had taken its place. While the four engines were also built into the wing, that's where any resemblance ended. But in the mind of many people a Comet was still a Comet and a jet remained a jet and sooner or later it would blow up again. Before I left, some people wished me well as if they were uncertain of my safe return.

Comet's takeoff was a spectacular sight for anyone who had not seen a jet take off before. At the end of the runway the engines were

run up full throttle, the brakes were released and the aircraft shot forward. Half way down the runway it rotated and climbed into the night sky at an incredibly steep angle. Watching the takeoff from astern it appeared as though the plane was standing on its tail, borne on the red-hot exhausts of its four jet engines. Compared to the lumbering takeoff of a propeller plane this was an awesome and scary sight. There was no "noise abatement" in those days and the thunderous shockwaves made the eardrums tingle.

The flight plan called for a brief stopover at Montreal to pick up passengers and to fill up the tanks for the long Atlantic haul. The non-stop Montreal-London sector required a cruising altitude of 42,000 feet for maximum fuel efficiency.



As a non-smoker and a non-drinker were there any goodies left for Harry ?

Service on board Comet set a new standard of luxury. On this inaugural flight we were served by BOAC's senior stewards and stewardesses who had flown with Her Majesty the Queen and Sir Winston Churchill. Instead of meal trays, our tables were set with

Irish linen, Spode China and silver cutlery. There was a sumptuous selection of hot and cold hors-d'oeuvres including caviar and chilled lobster, hot consommé served from a tureen was followed by a selection of three entrees.

As dawn broke over the Atlantic we were invited to the flight deck.



Comet's "front office" was small and cramped for the four-man crew and there was a staggering array of dials and switches on dash, walls and ceiling. The lasting impression was the eerie quiet. There was a hissing ventilation noise and one could barely hear the muffled sound of the engines

which were located in the wing way behind the cockpit. The difference from a propeller plane with its penetrating, throbbing engine noise could not have been more dramatic. Also, there were none of the usual vibrations. Cruising high above the Atlantic at 42,000 feet it felt as though we were suspended motionless in a void. Above us the shadows of night were dissolving and far below, through the mists of dawn, we caught glimpses of the ocean.

After crossing the Emerald Isle and the Irish Sea we were looking down on England's ever so green countryside. "Ladies and gentlemen, we are just passing by Windsor Castle on your left," the captain announced as we were approaching London's Heathrow Airport from the West. The Royal residence swept past us like a pretty jewel in a green setting. And then we touched down on Heathrow's main runway, light as a feather. My flight certificate states that our total elapsed flying time from Toronto to London was eight hours and twenty-eight minutes. Just nine years earlier I had travelled by ship from Southampton to Montreal and it had taken eleven days of misery on stormy seas.



After our inaugural party had disembarked, I went to pay my respects to John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown, pioneers in the daring quest to connect the continents of the world by air. In June of 1919 they were the first to cross the hostile North Atlantic in an airplane. Their historic flight from Newfoundland to Ireland in a World War I Vickers Vimy bomber had taken sixteen hours and twenty-eight minutes. Eight hours more, *to the exact minute*, than it had taken us. But instead of flying from Newfoundland to Ireland, we had travelled all the way from Toronto

across eastern Canada, the Atlantic Ocean, Ireland and the Irish Sea to London, a distance of 5,710 kilometers as compared to their route of 3,550 kilometers.

The trail they blazed only forty years earlier we had followed in a fraction of the time and we had travelled in pampered luxury. This first flight on a commercial jetliner, more than any other event before or since, made me realize how much our world has shrunk, - quite literally overnight - and for better or for worse had become a very small place.

Atheists, Believers and Agnostics

In my experience most people keep their religious feelings to themselves. They avoid discussing them, because they are afraid of being judged either a fool or a bigot. Human nature craves security above all else. We seek it in food, shelter, influence, and very much in our acceptance by those around us. No wonder that we all find a measure of safety by keeping our innermost thoughts to ourselves. It came therefore as quite a surprise when somebody opened his conversation with me by firmly stating, "I am an Atheist." I immediately suspected that he was trying to make it clear to me right from the outset that he was not "into religion" and that he didn't wish to talk about it.

"Are you really," I feigned surprise. "It is very rare that one meets a person who actually knows that there is no God." "Well," he said "I wouldn't want to go that far. I don't know for sure, but I just believe that there is no God." "Oh," I said, this time feigning disappointment, "then you're really not an atheist at all, but only a believer like the rest of us, except that instead of believing in God's existence you believe that he doesn't exist. That would make both of us agnostics."

I have always felt a special kinship with those who call themselves agnostics. The dictionary describes them as persons who hold that the existence of the ultimate power and intelligence in the universe, such as God, and the essential nature of all things, are unknown and unknowable. In my school years I often ruminated about the Latin phrase "Scio me nescire," which means "I know that I do not know." Known as the Socratic paradox, this often quoted saying is derived from Plato's account of the Greek philosopher Socrates. It prepared me for Baha'u'llah's words in the Seven Valleys,

"God is, in His Essence, holy above ascent and descent, entrance and exit; He hath through all eternity been free of the attributes of human creatures, and ever will remain so. No man hath ever known Him; no soul hath ever found the pathway to His Being. Every mystic knower hath wandered far astray in the valley of the knowledge of Him; every saint hath lost his way in seeking to comprehend His Essence.

Sanctified is He above the understanding of the wise; exalted is He above the knowledge of the knowing! The way is barred and to seek it is impiety; His proof is His signs; His being is His evidence. –

My *personal* understanding of the last two sentences is that our own bodies and mental powers and the innumerable indicators of intelligence surrounding us are proof of the presence of some great unknown intelligence which some people call God or by some other name. Of many Baha'i texts on this subject, this one is my favourite:

Say: Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment.

Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence, ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise.

Were anyone to affirm that it is the Will of God as manifested in the world of being, no one should question this assertion. It is endowed with a power whose reality men of learning fail to grasp. Indeed, a man of insight can perceive naught therein save the effulgent splendor of our Name, the Creator.

Say: This is an existence which knowest no decay, and Nature itself is lost in bewilderment before its revelations, its compelling evidences and its effulgent glory which have encompassed the universe.

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh p. 142

In view of this very clear explanation, I find it frustrating and hard to understand why modern up to date dictionaries list the following 'synonyms' for those who profess to be agnostics: disbelievers, nonbelievers, unbelievers, doubters, skeptics, secularists, empiricists, heathens, heretics, infidels, pagans.

No wonder that people will try their best to avoid being placed into one of these somewhat disreputable categories by either just pretending to be staunch believers, or by defiantly professing to be atheists, when in reality they have been agnostics all along.

Most often, the reason that some people will not believe in a God is the world's unchecked injustice and cruelty. If there really was an all-powerful and all-loving creator, so they reason, he would step in and protect the truly innocent from all manner of pain and persecution. But he does nothing, letting even innocent little children suffer agonies and allowing their lives to be cut short. How can that be.

The answer to this conundrum is simple but it is also not very palatable. The world's travails, the injustices, the cruelties that abound wherever we look, have absolutely nothing to do with God the Creator. They have everything to do with humanity's behavior. Mischief, greed and cruelty do not represent God's Will, let alone His love. They are a mirror of our own self-made flaws.

We are told, and we are rather proud of it, that we are set apart from the amoebae and the beasts of field and forest and that we occupy a very unique place in the cosmos. Unlike any mineral - from the workings of the atom to the evolution of galaxies - and unlike any plant or animal, mankind has been endowed with the capacity of free decision making. While everything in nature must obey nature's laws absolutely, the sovereign power of man's intellect allows him to rise above nature's order to a point where we can even interfere with nature's original design. As is written in the Book of Genesis,

“And God said, Let us make man in our image...and let them have dominion... over all the earth... “

But nowhere does it say that if we abuse our powers or turn away from God's guidance that He shall be held responsible.

Hence, it is a cheap copout to blame God for our doings, especially when we don't seem inclined to give God credit for our inventions and success stories.

Perhaps it's like this: We've been called into being to master life's challenges during a time, at a place and in circumstances that were decreed

for us; to make full use of our given talents; to help our neighbors and to seek guidance through prayer, work and study.

Whether we like it or not, humanity has been given freedom of thought and action, for better or for worse. The only thing that stands today between our sovereign decision making power and the threat of self-destruction, are the protective religious laws that have been progressively revealed to mankind. They do not come with a guilt edged guarantee that promises for mankind's future happiness shall be fulfilled irrespective of human behavior, but they do promise that obedience to these laws are our best chance for peace and happiness. Here I am reminded of this word by Baha'u'llah:

*O Son of Being !
Love Me, that I may love thee.
If thou lovest Me not,
My love can in no wise reach thee.
Know this, O servant.*

A faithful adherence to the Laws of Nature

In all our scientific endeavors we take great pride in respecting certain laws. They are universally recognized as "Laws of Nature." Never ever are they to be ignored or fooled around with if we hope to succeed. The American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) whose thoughts were remarkably prescient of the coming new world order, wrote in his Essay VII, *"Nature is not democratic, nor limited-monarchical, but despotic, and will not be fooled or abated of any jot of her authority by the pertest of her sons."* -

We treat nature's laws with a very special kind of respect, because we know that they are not man-made and must therefore be free of error or deceitful design. Another good reason for our unreserved obedience is that strict compliance alone will assure success and avoid disaster. We wouldn't dream of rebelling against this sort of 'restraint', because we value scientific success. It enhances our physical comforts and security, it protects our health, gratifies our senses, and helps to fulfill our fondest dreams in a shorter time with less and less effort.

Appeals for spiritual progress, on the other hand, are not nearly as welcome, because they call for change in attitudes and behavior through conscious effort and personal commitment. Moreover, any beneficial results of such spiritual exertions are not immediately evident. The pursuit of physical sciences, by contrast, may appear to bring more immediate and tangible results, but their true fruits will only be seen when they deliver prosperity or ruin, depending on the inventor's or user's spiritual focus. In the meantime, it is, of course, less painful and far more convenient to treat both secular and religious laws as a smorgasbord of options from which to pick and choose according to personal preference.

But once again, the realities we see in the physical world are a dramatic reflection of those of the world of the spirit: The same rules of discipline that assure the success of science and technology also govern the spiritual well-being of humanity. Both rules reject preconceived ideas. They call for thorough, open-minded investigation and ultimately require humility and obedience to an existing higher law. There is really no reason to assume that humanity should on one hand be gifted to uncover the physical realities, but on the other hand be doomed to remain forever deaf and blind to the salutary influence of spiritual laws. The human being is perfectly equipped to access both sources of truth in order to benefit from those combined powers of wisdom that are present in a universe where so-called spirit and so-called matter are tightly interwoven. Every scientific discovery and every advance should therefore buoy our confidence that the triumphs of the human mind can indeed find a noble counterpart and necessary balance in the attainment of a deeper awareness of spiritual laws and, through their observance, in the refinement of human nature.

“ ...Until material achievements, physical accomplishments and human virtues are reinforced by spiritual perfections, luminous qualities and characteristics of mercy, no fruit or result shall issue therefrom, nor will the happiness of the world of humanity, which is the ultimate aim, be attained. For although, on the one hand, material achievements and the development of the physical world produce prosperity, which exquisitely manifests its intended aims, on the other hand dangers, severe calamities and violent afflictions are imminent.

“ ...When thou lookest at the orderly pattern of kingdoms, cities and villages, with the attractiveness of their adornments, the freshness of their natural resources, the refinement of their appliances, the ease of their means of travel, the extent of knowledge available about the world of nature, the great inventions, the colossal enterprises, the noble discoveries and scientific researches, thou wouldst conclude that civilization conduceth to the happiness and the progress of the human world.

“Yet shouldst thou turn thine eye to the discovery of destructive and infernal machines, to the development of forces of demolition and the invention of fiery implements, which uproot the tree of life, it would become evident and manifest unto thee that civilization is conjoined with barbarism. Progress and barbarism go hand in hand, unless material civilization be confirmed by Divine Guidance...”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selected Writings, p. 283

Later Years

In later years, one of our most promising projects was the annual presentation of a Race Amity Award. It was awarded to fellow citizens who had made outstanding contributions to racial harmony, education and social justice. These meetings were usually attended by some 250 guests from all walks of life and received wide media coverage. The gala format was a Sunday luncheon with artistic entertainment and speeches by the mayor and by members of parliament. The following excerpt from this author’s keynote may reflect some of the spirit of these events. They have helped to firmly establish in people’s minds the aim and purpose of the Baha’i faith.

“History proves that racial and religious hatred are the greatest foe to peace and progress. But this opens up for us the opportunity of a lifetime, namely to join hands and work towards a universal awakening of the human spirit. Think of it this way, a mere hundred years ago this opportunity did not exist, because the need for change

was still not absolute. And a hundred years hence, we shall hopefully have crossed the magic threshold into a new era of human behavior. A century from now, the great lesson should have been learned and much of what ails us today remedied. If not, I fear that our beautiful home planet may have been turned into a wasteland. The shift from blissful isolation to the present state of global interdependence was rather sudden. It has been a bruising experience for many people on earth. Today's condition of humanity was unthinkable when our grandparents were young. But few people on earth are better equipped to spearhead this change, than those who live in North America. The reason for this is that most countries still have a homogeneous society, while North Americans are people of every race, religion, culture and language background. They may not have learned to live in perfect harmony, but they recognize that racial and religious amity is definitely in everybody's best interest. North America's condition is unique and not at all commonplace among nations. But it foreshadows the future condition of the entire human race. America, Canada very much included, can be likened to a sociological laboratory for a future planetary society. Our quest for racial togetherness, therefore, does not just safeguard Canada's own internal peace and prosperity, but it sets an example for the rest of the world."

I wish I could relate here tales of instant and visible success. But there is nothing instant about trying to promote change of such immense magnitude, and very little of our efforts are easily visible. It seems that most of what we struggle for in life is not for now, but for a distant future. I dare say that by the time our actions bear fruit, should they be so blessed, we will have long left this plane. Any study of history proves that much of the efforts of pioneers and inventors were mainly for the benefit of future generations. Because he found precisely the right words for explaining this particular mystery, I may be permitted to quote Dr. Peter Khan at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on June 29, 2001.

“We... are the descendants of countless generations who over thousands of years have held alive the hope and expectation that the day would come when the Kingdom of God would be established on the Earth...Our sense of community will not only extend in space, will not only include those of times past, but we will also be in communion with those yet to come. We will become deeply conscious of the millions who are in the future, who are proceeding in the stream of time towards their existence on this earth, who are marching towards us from the future, who will take up the reins, who will come to assist us in this work, and we shall see our endeavours as laying the foundation for the unity and harmony they will experience in decades and centuries ahead. And through this vision, and through this sense of community, we will understand how deeply responsible we are for the welfare of generations yet unborn...”

Circa 460 B.C. the small Greek island of Kos became the birthplace of Hippocrates who is perhaps history's most famous physician. By rejecting superstition in favour of scientific observation, by classifying diseases, and by creating a set of moral and professional standards for physicians, he earned the title of 'Father of Medicine.' He also gave the world a code of ethics for physicians as embodied in the Hippocratic Oath. To this day, this oath is still sworn by graduates of many modern medical schools. Hippocrates was an inspired human being who two and a half millennia ago was ages ahead of his time. Can there be any doubt that he was imbued with what one would have to call a religious sense of mission towards his fellow men. It should be evident that he was not just working for the “here and now.” Beyond the primitive and often barbaric conditions of his time, he saw a world far in the future that was vastly different from the world that he was destined to

live in. His aim and purpose was a better life for all humanity. He *“understood how deeply responsible he was for the welfare of generations yet unborn...”*

This is what I have always regarded as aim and purpose of this wayfarer’s travels from place to place and of his journey from all the yesterdays towards the world of tomorrow.

GRATITUDE FOR THE PAST AN OBSTINATE OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE

God's Messenger returns to Earth
As day will follow night
But morning's mist, night's dogged trace
Still hides the rising Light
Shrouds nature in a golden haze
Till warming rays will work their might
And all can recognize His Face

One likes to call it fate, but I believe that it was God's grace that once led me to the followers of Baha'u'llah in those early years of my life. Not only were they able to open my heart to the teachings of the New Manifestation, but their personal lives convinced me of the truth of His claim. Some of these friends had met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in their childhood or their youth. They often spoke of their transforming experience. When I was just 19 years old I hardly appreciated the bounty of their companionship. Only in much later years did I fully realize how fortuitous the gift of their friendship has been.

Nothing else could have helped my observant, probing nature to accept the stunning claim of this new Revelation. Neither clever advertising and learned language, nor impressive hierarchies and well organized teaching campaigns would have persuaded me to take Baha'u'llah's stupendous claim seriously. All such efforts would have offered nothing new. These things were already all around me for the taking, paraded by hundreds of competing denominations and political organizations. Why would today young people two generations later react different, especially when they have become more skeptical under a daily barrage of hype and deception. I cannot help but think of these words by Shoghi Effendi:

“As long as people do not see in the Bahá'í community something they do not already have, they will not join in large numbers.”

These observations continue in the candid vein of my diary. They carry no authority, but may just help to give a gentle nudge to the rudder.

Analytical thought was the very quality that had allowed me to unmask the prevailing order as false and had prepared me to recognize the claim of Bahá'u'lláh. Just as I was being introduced to the Baha'i community, I came across these words of Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay about Self-Reliance:

“Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the outmost, — and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is h i s . In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility; then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else, tomorrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.”

Emerson's words were a confirming message in those post-war years when we were often called upon to defend with “good-humored inflexibility” the principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'llah, even while “the whole cry of voices was on the other side.”

Sixty-five years ago our boundless optimism and high expectations were based on the fact that very few people had ever heard about Bahá'u'lláh, let alone knew of His teachings. Not a single City Hall, school, university, or library, not a single major organization or science faculty had knowledge of the Baha'i Faith. Consequently, we anticipated great progress to lie ahead. Since there was neither an

internet nor funds for advertising, we concentrated on firesides and public meetings which frequently attracted several hundred people. These early successes promised bigger and better things to come. It was impossible to imagine that this message of salvation would not be embraced by increasing numbers of our fellow citizens with the same enthusiasm that we had felt. After all, had we not all shared the same sorrows and did we not all share the same high hopes for a better tomorrow?

Sixty-five years later, the faith is known in practically every nook and cranny on earth and has earned the respect of the United Nations and many other agencies. Through the World Wide Web the Baha'i library can now be read by millions of people from all walks of life, not just by a handful of scholars. With very few, but sad exceptions, today everybody on earth has access.

It would have been quite impossible for early Baha'is to even imagine this stunningly fortuitous state of affairs, yet its existence today has so far not resulted in numerical growth of the Baha'i community, especially not in regions that have benefited most from the advances in education and communication. The increasing access to information during the past few decades has encouraged self-study. It should help the teaching work, because the Baha'i Faith has always stressed the need for an independent investigation of truth. Driven by the unstoppable spirit of the age, literally millions of people have fully embraced this new approach to learning. It may explain a frequent reluctance to join tutored study groups by people of capacity who would be in a position to apply Baha'i principles to their particular fields of expertise.

A Universal Impulse

Developments in the human world hint at a cosmic impulse that was released by the Manifestations of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. It has brought sudden breakthroughs in science and technology. After centuries of relative intellectual quiescence, the knowledge explosion that began in the 19th century and has kept accelerating right to the present moment, can rightly be described as an intellectual mutation of our race. It has suddenly transformed every aspect of existence on our planet. It has removed the veil from the hitherto unknowns of microcosm and macrocosm and has literally handed humanity the keys to the forces of the universe. Aided by lightning fast computers with unlimited memories it has exploded knowledge and invention. It allows in any given year over a billion travelers to traverse in safety and comfort the world's oceans, deserts and mountain ranges at ten miles a minute, thus joining us together in a small "Global Village". It has given the world electricity that can turn night into day. It has mapped the 20,000 to 25,000 genes of the human genome to prove that we have indeed all been created "from the same original parents." No wonder 'Abdu'l-Baha praised science as "The first emanation from God toward man," "The means by which man finds a pathway to God."

However, the new cycle's central purpose - of which science and technology are but the necessary precursors, namely the fusing together of a strife-torn humanity through a world-wide religious and moral renewal, has so far remained unfulfilled.

The bird of humanity needs two wings to lift it into higher realms: The wing of science and the wing of religion. If one of these two wings remains stunted or is lame, the eagle of humanity will either crash or keep fluttering in the dust of superstition. With science well on its march, mankind remains strangely unfit to recognize and accept the remedy that is at hand for its transformation into a peaceful planetary society. The call was clear and straightforward:

“Baha’u’llah is the divine physician who diagnoses the world's malady; for the whole planet is ill and needs the power of a great specialist. Baha’u’llah’s teachings are the health of the world. They represent the spirit of this age, the light of this age, the well-being of this age, the soul of this cycle. The world will be at rest when they are put into practice.” - Abdu'l-Baha, Divine Philosophy, p. 85

But the manner this truth was sometimes presented, it has often fallen on deaf ears. Humanity’s inner compass, its subconscious orientation towards greater maturity, had changed through the unseen impulse of this divine evolutionary decree:

“O SON OF SPIRIT!

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.”

With this simple Command the human species has evolved beyond its earlier need for priestly authority and religious paternalism. From now on both would be shunned, like a healthy organism rejects a virus. A North American study of 2012 A.D. has revealed that despite an underlying faith in God over a third of all young adults avoid religious affiliation. They believe that religious organizations are too much concerned with money, power and rules. Today, with the accumulated knowledge of the ages at everybody’s fingertips, humanity has wakened to its capacity of free thought and independent investigation. This capacity needs to be understood and respected when proclaiming Baha’u’llah’s Message to an intellectually emancipated humanity, in order for His message to find acceptance. Like two perfect halves are forming a perfect

whole, the new message needs to be in perfect resonance with man's new intellectual receptivity.

"... A celestial fire hath been kindled in the very heart of mankind, and burns brightly in the Sacred Tree. Ere long its glowing flame shall set ablaze the souls of men and its light illumine the regions of the world." - Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha

"This movement eludes organization -- it is the realization of a new spirit. The foundation of that spirit is the love of God; and its method, the love and service of mankind. Many who have never heard of this revelation teach its laws and spiritual truths. These people are performing what Baha'u'llah hath commanded though they never heard of him. The power of Baha'u'llah's words is compelling -- therefore, you must know and love them. For instance, in the spring season trees burst forth into verdure, though they are not conscious of the sunshine, of the falling rain or the gentle breeze -- nevertheless, the power of nature urges them on to yield forth their fruits." - Abdul-Baha, Divine Philosophy, p. 14

As far as the numerical growth of the Bahá'í community is concerned, Shoghi Effendi wrote this:

"Not by the force of numbers, not by the mere exposition of a set of new and noble principles, not by an organized campaign of teaching -- no matter how worldwide and elaborate in its character -- not even by the staunchness of our faith or the exaltation of our enthusiasm, can we ultimately hope to vindicate in the eyes of a critical and sceptical age the supreme claim of the Abha Revelation. One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh."

"... God's ways and methods do not coincide necessarily with human devices and man-made policies. We should certainly exert our utmost in order that God's Faith may be widely proclaimed and firmly established. But we should under no circumstances be led to think that such a triumph depends solely or even mainly on our own efforts, however effective, united and fruitful they may be. We are but instruments in the hands of the Almighty and it would be certainly a sign of short sightedness on our part to believe that we are the controlling agents of the divine machinery of the Cause."

- Lights of Guidance, No 1349 p. 405

"...Many who have never heard of this revelation teach its laws and spiritual truths. These people are performing what Baha'u'llah hath commanded though they never heard of him..."

This thought was often cited by my friends when they first told me about the coming of Baha'u'llah. There was a conviction among Baha'is that the spiritual power of the new Manifestation will achieve its purpose to re-built our world even in the face of apathy and resistance by the broad masses of humanity. God would use as His instruments those who were spiritually receptive to His wishes.

It sounded plausible, because in bygone ages there always were some enlightened souls who acted of their own volition in the spirit of Christ before His teachings were broadcast in their regions. There also exists a parallel in the world of science when simultaneous breakthroughs occur at opposite ends of the world without researchers having had contact with each other. One calls it "Zeitgeist", or the spirit of the time. This presence of a pervasive, all-encompassing cosmic influence unmask the reliance in a "force of numbers" as a delusive crutch for having faith in God.

Lingering Traditions

The frequently cited link to Islam has many negative consequences. U.S. TV Personality and World Traveler Rick Steves, who has a following of millions of viewers, explained in one of his TV specials that the reason that the Baha'i faith is not accepted in Iran is because it arrived centuries after Muhammad whom Moslems worship as God's final messenger, "the Seal of the Prophets." Steves went on to suggest that in order to have a future, "if you are a Baha'i in Iran get out of the country." Instead of deploring the persecutions he made it sound logical why Baha'is are not welcome in their own country. Instead of using the opportunity to inform his audience of Iran's long and painful history and of the intolerable conditions that Baha'is are currently facing in a country whose rich culture he had just so glowingly described, he offers no plea for love and reason in the tradition of the great spirits of Iran's illustrious past. Instead he reminds his audience that this is Shia territory where there just is no room for Baha'is.

Such openly expressed views by a respected and well informed journalist are very damaging, because they repeat the false claim that the Baha'i Faith is a splinter group of Islam and not the Creator's gift to all humanity. This false impression is occasionally fed by our own well-intentioned explanations about our faith's beginnings. When in 2012 a supreme court in Germany ruled that the Baha'i community is a legal entity that falls into the public rather than the private domain, media reports that were based on our own handouts explained that the Baha'i Faith had originated as a splinter group of Shia Islam. It would be equivalent to describe Christianity as originally having been a splinter group of Judaism. One can imagine that such explanation would make few people in Germany want to be Christians, or to join the Baha'i community, especially when Islamic society is in disrepute. This aversion may be borne out by the fact that in the year 2012 there were supposedly 5,600 Baha'is among Germany's *81,726,000 inhabitants, or a ratio of 1:14,593.*

Another blindfold is the Iranian Diaspora which started in 1979. It resulted in a global dispersal of hundreds of thousands of Iranian Baha'i refugees. Remaining true to ancestral language and traditions just like many other ethnic groups, they have quite naturally introduced a different flavor into communities. Their allegiance to language and tradition was demonstrated by holding special continent-wide conventions for "Persian Baha'is." It sometimes created an impression that "Baha'i" is a Iranian religious community in exile. The idea that the Baha'i Faith is some Iranian sect that finds itself in conflict with Muslim law, makes it difficult for people to have feelings of solidarity and to come to its defense. The situation is sometimes seen as just another nasty internal and "typically Mid-Eastern" religious conflict which has little to do with the rest of the world. A recent vote at the United Nations condemning Iran's human rights record passed with a mere 69 nations in favor, 54 against and 57 abstentions. Out of 180 member states 111 either voted in support of the Mullahs of Iran or just stood aside and abstained. This dismal performance will not improve as long as the true nature of the Baha'i faith as an independent world religion in the service of all humanity is not understood.

Without digressing, this may be the place to mention another damaging misinformation, namely the often heard assertion that "Baha'u'llah was Persian." It automatically identifies Him with the land of Persia, its traditions, its beliefs, and, yes, with its deplorable condition as vividly described in the foreword to "Nabil's Narrative", a book also known as the "Dawn Breakers". Baha'u'llah, the Glory of God is a station that has no earthly origin. To identify it with any human culture or condition will inevitably reduce its magnitude and tarnish its image in the eyes of a seeker. It was the man named Mirza Husayn-'Ali who was born in Persia, but even according to His own testimony He was born "a man like any other." Baha'u'llah, The Glory of God, was the Title He adopted after He received His divine mandate. A manifestation should therefore never be identified with any particular country, region, culture or race. A Manifestation is the Great Mediator between the world of humanity and the Fashioner of the Universe, the Unknowable Essence. Its light has shone at different places through different personages: Through Gautama Buddha in India, through Zoroaster in Persia, through Moses in Sinai, through Jesus in Judaea and through Muhammad

in Arabia. They were all the bearers of the same recurring divine impulse, "...the changeless faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future."

Bearing in mind that during the early centuries of its existence Christianity was at first considered a splinter group of Judaism, it is important that we do our utmost by word and through our behavior to have the faith of Bahá'u'lláh recognized as a wholly independent world religion that is in no wise tied to any culture or tradition of the past. Many thousands of early martyrs who under the most horrific circumstances gave their lives precisely for this truth expect from us no less. Especially at this moment in history our word and behavior must never be allowed to confirm the slanderous allegations that have been brought against this sacred Cause since its earliest days, or give credence to the accusations that have been made against its most heroic servants.

The Universal House of Justice

Few of the Baha'is who at Albert Hall once greeted the newly elected members of the first Universal House of Justice are still alive today. Among those who are, some had envisioned the future House of Justice as a global gathering, akin to a global legislature whose members were of every race and culture and met united in prayer to set the future course for humanity. They remembered Abdu'l-Baha's words on page 171 in 'Some Answered Questions', where He promised the Universal House of Justice "*Protection and unerring guidance of God*" with the condition that it is elected with members "*from all the people.*"

"To epitomize: Essential infallibility belongs especially to the supreme Manifestations and acquired infallibility is granted to every holy soul. For instance, the Universal House of Justice, if it be established under the necessary conditions -- with members elected from all the people -- that House of Justice will be under the protection and the unerring guidance of God."

The condition that members should be elected “*f r o m a l l t h e p e o p l e ,*” - in contrast to *b y a l l t h e p e o p l e*, a requirement that was actually met, found little attention. Not only was the pillar of Guardianship missing when the Universal House of Justice was first established, but ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s requirement that membership should be universal in character seemed forgotten. Since the absence of a Guardian was an unalterable fact, a universal membership of the Universal House of Justice may have helped to unleash the full potential of the Baha’i world community. Today it is surprising that some Baha’is believe that the status quo of nine members, along with the current rules for their election and their tenure, were fixed by Baha’u’llah and ‘Abdu’l-Baha and can therefore not be changed. This claim is incorrect.

In a letter to the NSA of New Zealand dated 31 May 1988 the Universal House of Justice gave the following explanation:

“... in response to a number of questions about eligibility for membership and procedures for election of the Universal House of Justice, the Guardian's secretary writing on his behalf distinguished between those questions which could be answered by reference to the "explicitly revealed" Text and those which could not. Membership of the Universal House of Justice [namely that membership is confined to men] fits into the former category. This letter [from the Guardian's secretary] made the following statement:

“The membership of the Universal House of Justice is confined to men. Fixing the number of the members, the procedures for election and the term of membership will be known later, as these are not explicitly revealed in the Holy Text. (27 May 1940).”

This clarifies that fixing the number of members for the Universal

House of Justice, the procedures for their election and the terms of their membership, were not established in May 1940. They awaited a decision by a future Universal House of Justice, precisely because such details “*are not explicitly revealed in the Holy Text.*”

However, to make the formation of the first Universal House of Justice possible in 1963, preemptive and temporary decisions had to be made by the Hands of the Cause during the Interregnum period. These decisions were subsequently upheld by the Universal House of Justice. The membership of 9 had been adopted by the Hands of the Cause to parallel that of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies, but nowhere in the Holy Writings is the membership of the Universal House of Justice limited to 9. Once established, the Universal House of Justice had sole authority to finalize these decisions. It has continued since to have full authority to enact changes.

As Isaac Newton once discovered, pure white light contains all the colors of the rainbow, whereas missing color spectrums will produce a tinted and less bright light. Even after half a century the membership of the House of Justice remained limited to 9, and with a single exception had for decades predominantly members of Iranian and American background or descent.

A small membership also limits the influx of ideas and may be less conducive to change. Combined with long tenures which cement collegiality, collective views may become set over time and resistant to reconsideration. A small body draws judgments from only a small segment of a hugely diverse human family. At the same time a small membership is also more likely to be influenced by a vigorously advanced individual argument. A larger plenum on the other hand would raise the consultation to a level where a single persona would have less dominance. Even more important and of greater future promise, it would open the council chamber to the rich spiritual heritage of the people of Africa, Asia, the Pacific, the Arctic, the native populations of the Americas, of Australasia, and those of many other unrepresented

regions of the world. One cannot help but believe that a universal composition of the Universal House of Justice would attract increased blessings in the form of fresh inspiration which may more fully mirror humanity's collective response to the insistent summons of Baha'u'llah.

The need for a reappraisal of the number of members, their tenure and method of election, may become clearer by these observations:

- When the Universal House of Justice was first formed in 1963 it was elected by members of just 56 National Assemblies. Only 45 years later, in 2008, the number of National Assemblies had grown to 184.

- By the year 2018, the 9-member House had in the 55 years since its establishment – amounting to 495 years of individual service - 29 different members. This translates into an average tenure of 17 years. Three members served for over 20 years, one for 30 years and two for 40 and 42 years.

- The nine House members are elected with 1,656 ballots cast by the 9 members each of 184 National Assemblies. It is safe to assume that few electors are acquainted with those they were voting for and that they know them only by reputation. As a result, most House members were either re-elected or were known as members of the International Teaching Centre which itself is appointed by the House of Justice. Douglas Martin was in 1993 the last person elected to the House who was not an ITC member.

The Universal House of Justice will introduce change whenever changed circumstances will make this necessary. Current developments may suggest that every National Assembly elects one male believer in their country to serve a maximum of two 5-year terms on the Universal House of Justice. A second male believer is elected to serve as Deputy who would automatically take over in

case of accident or illness of his colleague. Those who are elected would be intimately known to the members of the National Spiritual Assembly. They would bring to the consultations at the World Center a first-hand knowledge of the conditions of their country and Baha'i community. With the help of modern communications they would maintain daily contact with their own National Office and serve as a two-way link between the Universal House of Justice and their home community.

Universal membership would promote an immediate and unbroken interchange of ideas between all national Baha'i communities. By participating in all deliberations and in ongoing mutual exchanges of ideas with the Supreme Body as well as between all national communities, every Baha'i community on earth, instead of sometimes remaining a distant, uninvolved bystander, would make the Universal House of Justice their own.

An Obstinate Optimism

Before I attempt to explain my obstinate optimism for the future, I must go back to the historic day at London's Albert Hall when the newly elected Universal House of Justice began its mission for humanity with these words by Baha'u'llah: "*...On whomsoever Thou desirest Thou conferrest the honor of recognizing Thy Most Ancient Name.*"

A profound acceptance of this verity and of the scriptural guidance that was repeatedly quoted earlier, are tied directly to that badge of honor. Obedience to these will give success a chance, while inattention may lead to failure, no matter how elaborate the plans or determined the effort. One cannot expect to heal a sick society without banishing its contagion. Since 'Abdu'l-Baha has repeatedly stressed that the Bible is of divine origin, we would do well to heed this warning in the Book of Matthew 9:17: "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the

wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.”

Perhaps the wisdom of this verse is too profound in order to be understood after only a cursory reading of the Bible. The New Wine are the spiritual teachings of a New Manifestation. The Bottles are their worldly application to reflect this new spirit in the world. One could describe the Baha’i Administration as just such a vessel. It was specifically designed by the Founders of our faith to contain the spirit of the current Dispensation and to give form to human governance. Should that vessel be made of re-cycled material that belonged to a former order, it would be unable to hold and preserve the spirit of the New Dispensation. The New Wine would simply spill out and the Bottle would lose its purpose entirely. What follows are elucidations by the Guardian on those new vessels that we were given to hold the spirit of this New Age of man.

“And now, it behoves us to reflect on the animating purpose and the primary functions of these divinely-established institutions, the sacred character and the universal efficacy of which can be demonstrated only by the spirit they diffuse and the work they actually achieve. I need not dwell upon what I have already reiterated and emphasized that the administration of the Cause is to be conceived as an instrument and not a substitute for the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, that it should be regarded as a channel through which His promised blessings may flow, that it should guard against such rigidity as would clog and fetter the liberating forces released by His Revelation.

“I need not enlarge at the present moment upon what I have stated in the past, that contributions to the local and national Funds are of a purely voluntary character; that no coercion or solicitation of funds is to be tolerated in the Cause; that general appeals addressed to the communities as a body should be the only form in which the financial requirements of the Faith are to be met; that the financial support accorded to a very few workers in the teaching and administrative fields is of a temporary nature; that the present restrictions imposed on the publication of Bahá’í literature will be definitely abolished; that

the World Unity activity is being carried out as an experiment to test the efficacy of the indirect method of teaching; that the whole machinery of assemblies, of committees and conventions is to be regarded as a means, and not an end in itself; that they will rise or fall according to their capacity to further the interests, to coordinate the activities, to apply the principles, to embody the ideals and execute the purpose of the Bahá'í Faith. - Shoghi Effendi on Bahá'í Administration

“Neither the local nor national representatives of the community, no matter how elaborate their plans, or persistent their appeals, or sagacious their counsels, nor even the Guardian himself, however much he may yearn for this consummation, can decide where the duty of the individual lies, or supplant him in the discharge of that task. The individual alone must assess its character, consult his conscience, prayerfully consider all its aspects, manfully struggle against the natural inertia that weighs him down in his effort to arise, shed, heroically and irrevocably, the trivial and superfluous attachments which hold him back, empty himself of every thought that may tend to obstruct his path, mix, in obedience to the counsels of the Author of His Faith [Baha'u'llah], and in imitation of the One Who is its true Exemplar [‘Abdu’l-Baha], with men and women, in all walks of life, seek to touch their hearts, through the distinction which characterizes his thoughts, his words and his acts, and win them over tactfully, lovingly, prayerfully and persistently, to the Faith he himself has espoused. - Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, p. 148

“O wayfarer in the path of God! Take thou thy portion of the ocean of His grace, and deprive not thyself of the things that lie hidden in its depths. Be thou of them that have partaken of its treasures. A dewdrop out of this ocean would, if shed upon all that are in the heavens and on the earth, suffice to enrich them with the bounty of God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. With the hands of renunciation draw forth from its life-giving waters, and sprinkle therewith all created things, that they may be cleansed from all man-made limitations and may approach the mighty seat of God, this hallowed and resplendent Spot.

“Be not grieved if thou performest it thyself alone. Let God be all-sufficient for thee. Commune intimately with His Spirit, and be thou of the thankful. Proclaim the Cause of thy Lord unto all who are in the heavens and on the earth. Should any man respond to thy call, lay bare before him the pearls of the wisdom of the

Lord, thy God, which His Spirit hath sent down unto thee, and be thou of them that truly believe. And should any one reject thine offer, turn thou away from him, and put thy trust and confidence in the Lord, thy God, the Lord of all worlds.
- Baha'u'llah, Gleanings p. 279

Such is the divinely ordained standard. My confidence in a sun-lit future for the world stems entirely from a conviction that all who have recognized Baha'u'llah, cannot help but order their inner lives and actions along these clear words of guidance.

The Road Ahead

Disappointments are mainly of our own making and nurture, when our firm expectations do not find fulfillment by a fixed date on our calendar. After World War II the date for world peace was believed to be the year 1963, but as crisis situations continued, this deadline was pushed back to the turn of the century. The turn of the century came, but the world continued in an uproar. Setting deadlines does not fall within our competence. We should liberate our minds from firm expectations, especially from deadlines, and leave the time required for human maturation to God's wisdom. If not, a self-inflicted burden will be our punishment. It will threaten to undermine our confidence, attack our health and vitiate our precious energies.

We often do not recognize a situation, even when it is staring us in the face. Just like one who is searching for trees in a deep forest. It seems that the world order of Baha'u'llah is far too great for us to recognize its magnitude at this time of its beginning. We are like wanderers at the foot of a giant mountain who are standing too close to estimate its true height. Shoghi Effendi wrote that the world order of Baha'u'llah will advance humanity towards its ultimate perfection over a period of 5,000 centuries, which is half a million years. We have just finished the first 1.5 of those 5,000 centuries and are already

impatiently expecting to see a world that shows the perfections that have been promised for this universal cycle.

When in 1912 ‘Abdu’l-Baha had placed the corner stone for the House of Worship in Wilmette, he announced that “The temple is already built.” But then came World War I, the inflation, the great depression and World War II. For many years one was ridiculing the Temple’s tar-covered foundation hall as an unsightly “oil tank”, and later the steel skeleton as “God’s Lemon Press”. It took 41 years for the House of Worship to open its doors. Today, with the benefit of hindsight, we believe that we have a better understanding of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words. He saw at the time that there were enough souls able or waiting among the unborn to bring the temple project to its successful conclusion. For ‘Abdu’l-Baha time was irrelevant. Did He not write, “In the world of God there is no yesterday, today or tomorrow. All are one.” This vision will banish any doubts, especially today when our hopeful expectations of seventy-five years ago still await fulfillment.

The seven Baha’i Houses of Worship that were completed in the second half of the 20th century on all continents and in the Pacific, have stood as “Silent Teachers” to two generations and to many millions of people. Everybody who saw them in real life or in pictures knew of their origin, admired their architecture, and many thousands visited, yet hardly a soul felt motivated to openly identify with their message. It remains an unexplained mystery of the times.

Two other important lessons should help us expand our view. They are from the Báb and from Shoghi Effendi, which we shall get to shortly. “All are His servants and all abide by His bidding,” taught the Báb. Everything that has been invented and developed by our fellow humans during the past 1.5 centuries of the New Era, and everything they continue to advance and to develop today, is an all-important contribution towards the foundation of a new world order. Without it we would never be able to establish planetary

unity. Should someone therefore ask where that new world order is hiding, it already reveals itself in humanity's intellectual and material achievements. Science is the precursor of the world of tomorrow. That's why 'Abdu'l-Baha' referred to science as "The first emanation from God to man." Today all of humanity is inhaling this new ozone. It influences not science alone, but all human endeavors. All are His servants, whether they realize it or not.

Just prior to his passing in November of 1957 in London, England, Shoghi Effendi was visited by William Allison who had the distinction of being the last Baha'i to visit the Guardian in Haifa. Shoghi Effendi, who did not make official visits abroad, urged his guests to share his comments with others. This was always deemed a great honor and responsibility. When Mr. Allison became aware that he had been the last visitor, he took particular care that his notes are accurate. They are found in the Baha'i Academics Research Library, Era of Shoghi Effendi, No 40. However, so-called Pilgrims Notes do not rise to the level of authoritative scripture and must be treated accordingly. William Allison wrote,

"One evening the beloved Guardian envisioned the future World Order of Bahá'u'lláh in terms that are difficult to forget. He began by saying that the Báb had announced the "Plan", Bahá'u'lláh established the Laws of the "Plan", and Abdu'l-Bahá laid out the "Blueprint." Now the Bahá'ís are in the formative phase of establishing the administrative order of the "Plan". ... Near the end of the formative period the nations will unite of their own volition and, with the non-concomitant expansion of the Bahá'í community, become merged into the fabric of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. There will be another Manifestation before this will happen."

There are mainly two reasons for including this in my recollections: Not unlike the development of an individual, the evolution of our species cannot be hurried. When we are told that we live in the embryonic stage of the World Order of Baha'u'llah, we should

remember that the 9-month growth of a human embryo is roughly one per cent of man's average life span. One should therefore be neither surprised nor disheartened at the thought that the embryo of the New World Order which has a life span of half a million years, could take 5,000 years until it has developed to a point when its full glory covers our planet. This is not meant to imply that humanity will continue to be steeped in conflict over the next five thousand years. Our race would probably succumb long before that should happen. What it could suggest, however, is that progress may be protracted when measured against a customary earthly yardstick of high expectations and quick results.

Secondly, there has been talk that Bahá'ís aim to replace elected government with a Baha'i state run by a theocracy. In fact, their ordained purpose is to share Baha'u'llah's message and to fashion a community that shall help all people from all walks of life in their collective quest for a peaceful and ordered global society. They fully recognize the difficulties, because today's generation, if not completely disenchanted with the record of "organized religion," often has real problems with the idea that even our highly technological age is in need of guidance by an Intermediary Who stands between humanity and its Source.

Here one should also consider the difference between the Baha'i Administrative Order and the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. The former pertains to the cohesive functioning of a world-wide Baha'i Community. It intends to establish a working model for a future global society, without being a government in waiting. The current administrative order, tailored to present-day needs and human capacities, may well be recast after the arrival of the next Manifestation. The administrative order should therefore not be confused with the much larger World Order of Baha'u'llah of which it is an integral part, but whose spiritual impetus lies behind all human growth and development, and which is destined to preside over a vast time span of five hundred millenniums.

The Procter Perspective

In May of 2006 I was invited to give a presentation about The World Order of Baha'u'llah at the Procter Baha'i Spring School. Procter is a small hamlet on Kootenay Lake in British Columbia, a few miles north of the town of Nelson. The school had the use of an old meeting hall. Like the rest of this erstwhile pioneer hamlet, its heydays had also long passed. We sat on stackable chairs typical for informal community events. The hall had a small stage and adjacent to the seating area was a kitchen over whose clatter a speaker tried to make himself heard.

How could one live up to the challenge of having everyone grasp the magnitude of the World Order of Baha'u'llah in a somewhat uninspiring environment that reflected a past glory, a present day mediocrity, but certainly not the immeasurable promise of the future. This is when "The Procter Perspective" was proposed to the audience. It tried to relate time spans which were nearly impossible to comprehend to distances that were easily recognizable and were expressed in metric values. For those not accustomed to metric measurements the equivalents in feet and inches are in brackets.

It so happened that our meeting hall was almost exactly 15 meters long and 10 meters wide (50 X 32 feet). This amounted to a circumference of 50 meters (164 feet). Since one meter has 100 centimeters with 10 millimeters each, 50 meters contained 50,000 millimeters. When the hall's circumference was measured in 164 feet, a similar breakdown resulted in 50,000 sections of $\frac{3}{64}$ of an inch in width.

Since it is written that The World Order of Baha'u'llah shall unfold over a period of 500,000 solar years, each one of the 50,000 millimeters around the hall's wall represented 10 years of human evolution. A whole century with an average of four generations of humanity shrank to a single centimeter ($\frac{25}{64}$ or less than half an inch) on our wall. The era that began 170 years ago in 1844 A.D.,

took up a mere 1.7 centimeters or 0.669291 inch to be exact.

As we were sizing up the 50-meter length of the four walls that surrounded our gathering, the puny section of 1.7 centimeters that represented the first 170 years of the New World Order came as a real shock: All the achievements and agonies of the six generations that have come and gone since the appearance of The Bab, all the astounding technical breakthroughs and inventions, but also all the wars and great social upheavals that have marked the birth pangs of change that is now influencing every aspect of human existence, all of it had happened within the width of a single finger that we placed against the wall.

As we contemplated that humanity had not even lived through the first two of the five thousand centuries of promised evolution towards an ever greater perfection, we appeared to ourselves like a colony of microbes that had just set out on its long trek around the auditorium wall. We had barely traversed the 2,500th part of it. Our first thought was how insignificant had been our progress so far when measured against humanity's future itinerary, and how plausible it seemed that at the start of this long journey mankind still remained infected with many of the shortcomings that had retarded its progress throughout history. Our other thought was how could the staggering scientific and sociological progress of the last two centuries continue for hundreds of thousands of years into the future. How much more progress could be possible? Then we remembered the words of Baha'u'llah that "*All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.*" This meant not just the humanity living at this particular moment in time, but humanity for all time. It included our distant descendants who will live ten thousand years, hundred thousand years, even four hundred thousand years in the future. All of them shall be called into being to elevate their souls by perfecting humanity's earthly existence, by advancing civilization to a level that will make our own behavior look downright barbarian, a future human condition that our minds cannot even imagine.

Such contemplations helped us understand the true measure of our present day limitations, instead of wrongly harboring wholly unrealistic expectations for instant perfections that would allow for no patience or forgiveness for errors. Just as an infant is born in a state that may be perfectly suited to the demands of childhood and growth, it has by no means reached a state of perfection that is equal to its destiny. Humanity as a species moves along a similar path. Its progress can also not be hurried. It would be short sighted to assume that we are perfect just because we were given a glimpse of a perfect future, to believe that everything that came before us was woefully unenlightened and that everything that will come after us shall merely follow in our footsteps. Such mistaken beliefs would diminish the rightful expectations for humanity's future potential. We must not be blinded by our own sudden progress, our conquests of time and space, or by our very recently acquired ability to discover what had always been in the realm of the unknown, and pretend that we have already built a world that twenty thousand future generations will inhabit. Far from it. We are meant to play a very specific role as the curtain rises on a new age: To recognize the oneness of humanity, the oneness of religion and its periodic renewal, the harmony between religion and science, and to reflect these new insights in our contributions toward human progress, be they large or small.

Beyond that, our far distant descendants will be facing their own challenges. Continuing on the path of evolution, progress will probably never be linear or even predictable. It may alternate with periods of stagnation, possibly even regression. The ideals held by a generation can be rejected by the one that follows. It may bear fruit only much later. As Baha'u'llah has revealed in His Tablet of Hikmat, centers of wisdom and learning will flourish to fade again and be replaced. Magnificent structures and cities will rise, but after a time they shall decay or disappear again altogether. Our still young planet will remain geologically active over the next half million years just as it has been active throughout recorded history.

There will probably be ice ages, pole reversals and tectonic events. Nothing will ever remain static. As long as Earth is a living planet there shall be change and renewal.

And what may happen at the end of this magnificent God-willed era of human maturity and perfection? According to Hindu scripture, physical humanity will eventually disappear and after a time of quiescence be re-created. 'Abdu'l-Baha teaches that the growth of a human embryo is like a time lapse copy of the evolution of man. Similarly, but in reverse, the stations in our individual lives may be a mirror of the physical and spiritual development of the human species:

O COMPANION OF MY THRONE!

Hear no evil, and see no evil, abase not thyself, neither sigh and weep. Speak no evil, that thou mayest not hear it spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great; and wish not the abasement of anyone, that thine own abasement be not exposed. Live then the days of thy life, that are less than a fleeting moment, with thy mind stainless, thy heart unsullied, thy thoughts pure, and thy nature sanctified, so that, free and content, thou mayest put away this mortal frame, and repair unto the mystic paradise and abide in the eternal kingdom for evermore.

And as I was attempting to explain this Procter Perspective to the audience, I suddenly saw my own total insignificance in the scheme of things when I noticed that by our newly discovered mental yardstick the thickness of the pen I was holding in my hand represented the eight decades of my brief presence here on earth.

The Empires of the Future are Empires of the Mind

- Sir Winston Churchill

The coming together of the human race whose early and painful steps we now witness, shall bear fruit in an emergence of a world wide science that shall be entirely oriented towards human progress. One of the most life changing consequences of this new world culture will be the abolition of armed conflict and a corresponding reduction of armaments and armed forces. According to latest statistics they currently number close to 100 million able bodied people in active duty, paramilitary service, or in armed forces reserves. Moral issues aside, this is a wanton waste of men and material that has bankrupted nations in the past and will probably do so again. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in the year 2015 alone the world has spent the equivalent of \$ 1,676,000,000,000 on “defense,” meaning on military manpower, infrastructure, armaments and munitions. With a world population of currently 7.4 billion, this translates roughly into \$ 226 for every single human being on earth. These statistics were updated for 2016. It is especially tragic that most of this treasure is being squandered by the “developed world” on which much of humanity’s welfare and future development must depend.

It requires little intelligence to imagine the blessings that will result from an end to this obscene hemorrhaging of the planet’s lifeblood: Universal education, better nutrition, housing and healthcare, a cleaner environment and further improvements in communication, commerce and most other aspects of life. It will all come about as a direct result of the current evolutionary surge towards a planetary fusion of the minds of men which will for the first time in recorded history create a single consciousness that is shared by all people. It will generate an un-fragmented spiritual and intellectual power that has never existed before and which will have the most far reaching consequences not just for our species, but for all life on this planet.

Baha'u'llah has announced that the human world is now entering its evolutionary stage of maturity. One should imagine this stage in the development of our species to be as different from past human existence as adulthood is different from infancy. He writes in Verse 189 of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Book of Laws:

We have appointed two signs for the coming of age of the human race: the first, which is the most firm foundation, We have set down in other of Our Tablets, while the second hath been revealed in this wondrous Book.

The Second Sign is explained in the Kitáb-I-Aqdas, footnote No 193: "Bahá'u'lláh enjoins the adoption of a universal language and script. His Writings envisage two stages in this process. The first stage is to consist of the selection of an existing language or an invented one which would then be taught in all the schools of the world as an auxiliary to the mother tongues. The governments of the world through their parliaments are called upon to effect this momentous enactment. The second stage, in the distant future, would be the eventual adoption of one single language and common script for all on earth." When one combines such future scenario with the already existing technical means of instant global communications, one appreciates the enormous benefits this will bring to human activity. Without international agreements in place, English is currently a first, second, or third language of over one third of the human race. In countries like China and India, English is no longer taught merely as "a foreign language," but as "a basic universal skill."

The "First Sign" is explained in footnote No 194 of the Book of Laws: "The first sign of the coming of age of humanity referred to in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh is the emergence of a science which is described as that "divine philosophy" which will include the discovery of a radical approach to the transmutation of elements.

This is an indication of the splendors of the future stupendous expansion of knowledge. The coming of age of the human race has been associated by Shoghi Effendi with the unification of the whole of mankind, the establishment of a world commonwealth, and an unprecedented stimulus to the intellectual, the moral and spiritual life of the entire human race."

One of the texts dealing with the transmutation of elements is in chapter XCVII of the Book of Gleanings of the Writings of Baha'u'llah:

...Is it ever possible, they ask...for copper to be transmuted into Gold? Say, Yes, by my Lord, it is possible. Its secret, however, lieth hidden in Our Knowledge. We will reveal it unto whom We will....Every mineral can be made to acquire the density, form, and substance of each and every other mineral. The knowledge thereof is with Us in the Hidden Book.

It is significant that Baha'u'llah calls this future discovery the First Sign of the coming of age of humanity. At the same time He calls it "*The most firm foundation,*" because it has, after all, the most far reaching consequences for man's long term survival prospects on this planet. While the "Second Sign", the adoption of a world language, is very clearly spelled out in the Kitáb-I-Aqdas, the transmutation of minerals is not. It cannot be a Law that needs to be followed, because its eventual discovery is entirely subject to God's grace. "*We will reveal it unto whom We will.*"

Here seems confirmation of what modern cosmology has discovered towards the end of the 20th century: All atoms are essentially made of the same "stuff", namely the protons and neutrons that form their nucleus, and the circling electrons. The one important difference in their makeup is the number of these particles present. It will determine the atom's property, whether it is oxygen, carbon,

copper, or gold. At some point in the future our race may be found mature enough to be given the knowledge to “produce” or to “alter” atoms at will and to use the discovery for constructive rather than for destructive purposes. This breakthrough would turn our planet into a limitless resource to fill every human need for all time to come. No longer would dwindling “non-renewable resources” cast a shadow on our long-term prospects, nor would we be forced to go burrowing deep underground in search of certain minerals. While hard to imagine, no substance would then be coveted any longer because it was scarce and therefore deemed precious. No longer would mineral deposits determine the so-called “Have and Have Not Nations”. Anything and everything necessary for our existence would be fashioned at will from the rich mother lode contained in the atoms of our planet. Man may eventually be given the keys to this divine alchemy once he has conquered his craving for material wealth. In the meantime, such material cravings may be cured by looming shortages that are brought on by unbridled consumerism.

Anybody who is inclined to decry such forecast as being wildly far-fetched and medieval quackery, ought to consider that already today many of our manufactured articles are mass produced by using artificial compounds that did not exist less than a lifetime ago. By manipulating and designing new molecular structures we are actually “creating” a whole new variety of so-called “man made substances” such as paints, bonding agents, miracle fibers and plastics that are frequently more durable and heat resistant than anything that can be found “in nature.” We produce synthetic fuels that store many times the energy of wood or coal, ceramic cutting tools sharper than steel, and space age compounds that relegate steel and aluminum back to the Bronze Age. Having thus attained the knowledge of creating new molecular structures, the next logical advance is the ability to alter the structure of the atom.

All such startling forecasts may seem utopian to those who happen to live at the early dawn of this process, but it does in fact follow certain familiar rules of evolution that we can see in nature and which we accept without much argument. The birth of a global sphere of human consciousness may be compared to the birth of earth's biosphere long ago when it transformed a dead globe into a living planet. This transformation took place after a long and barren period when the earth was a lifeless, radioactive furnace. No observer would have held out the slightest hope for our planet to change some day into a Garden of Eden and to harbor life in all its rich beauty and diversity.

Nevertheless, over the course of several billion years plant and animal life cooperated to create the necessary preconditions that allowed the appearance of man “...in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth...” For the next several million years an infant humanity dispersed to every corner of the globe and lost all contact with the original tribe. Conditioned by environment, available food sources and to a degree also by in-breeding, man's physical appearance gradually changed. Living in pockets of deep isolation he developed languages that no outsider would later be able to understand. The woes began just as soon as man's innate spirit of exploration brought fragments of the original family back together again to meet face to face. With the rarest of exceptions such encounters never resulted in happy reunions. On the contrary, people everywhere felt threatened by the “foreigner” and were racially intolerant and xenophobic towards each other. They saw in their strange counterpart the devil himself who either had to be exterminated or kept enslaved. And as if this difference of race and language was not enough to feed aversion and hatred, man made his faith in God, a faith he was convinced to be the one and only true religion, a justification for violence against the perceived infidel.

The new global paradigm of human solidarity will for the first time bring order to this ancient chaos and fuse the hitherto scattered and antagonistic pockets of human thought and worship into a single force that will be entirely focused on tending the planet, refining human nature, and raising the life of humanity to levels we cannot even imagine. Considering how the forces of a mutually supportive plant and animal life once created earth's biosphere, and how man's conflicting efforts and misguided ambitions are now threatening its health, the promised emergence of a global consciousness will not only put a stop to this degradation, but its unified intellectual powers will completely reshape the world's environment.

How very far we have travelled on this road towards a fusion of humanity's intellectual powers is demonstrated by today's hand-held devices that allow instant access to just about anything that has ever been invented, thought or written by millions of experts, scientists, philosophers and dreamers in whatever country and in whatever language. Nothing needs to be invented twice any more. Time wasted on fruitless experimentation is constantly shrinking. Also, for the first time in human evolution everybody has access to the religious teachings of everybody else to foster mutual awareness and understanding. Self-perfecting applications allow translations into all major languages. "This earth is one country and mankind its citizens" is instantly translated into Mandarin, Swahili, Malay or Czech, often with a clear audio one can listen to. Try it out yourself.

Despite wars and upheaval, the 20th century has given us a tiny taste of our future potential. In the social sphere, humanity has been struggling to deal with the challenge of a suddenly shrunken planet where we are crowded together in a small interconnected and interdependent neighborhood in which outdated paradigms of isolation and prejudice can no longer find a place to hide. Despite many setbacks and terror tactics, much progress has been achieved

to foster global dialogue and to put into place many organizations and innovative practices for knitting together integrated systems of global education, health care, research, manufacture and transport. Some of these efforts reach well beyond the horizon of immediate necessity. For example, it would have been quite inconceivable a mere generation ago for 119 heads of government to jet across the globe in order to sit down together as they did at Copenhagen in 2009 and consult on potential future dangers that are looming for earth's environment.

Apart from the many inventions that were mentioned here earlier, ambitious waterways, canals, long submarine tunnels, bridges and ocean causeways, have shortened the routes for trade and travel. It lies within the realm of the possible for high speed magnetic trains to traverse tunnel systems linking major cities, even continents. There is the concept of a future tunnel underneath the Bering Strait linking Eurasia with the Americas. Rivers have been dammed to control endemic flooding, irrigate vast stretches of countryside and generate energy. Genetic science has developed new plant varieties that thrive in colder climates, have shorter growing seasons and are more blight resistant. Huge strides are also in progress in medicine to improve the quality of life and to increase longevity. A revolutionary new biotechnology promises the growing of human tissues and replacement organs. Organ transplants may eventually become a thing of the past. This would eliminate waiting lists for transplants and by using a patient's own stem cells the risk of organ rejection will be reduced. When American "seer" Edgar Cayce first described such possibilities in the 1930's he was roundly ridiculed. Global efforts are underway to cut down on pollution. A seemingly unstoppable science and technology will lend further impetus to many such mega projects. Difficult as it is to visualize at a time when much of our national treasure still finances huge armaments and maintains opposing armies, the world's deserts will eventually disappear and so will the extremes of climate.

Inexhaustible sources of energy will desalinate ocean water and pump it where there are no natural fresh water supplies. The resulting greening of the planet will bring a gradual return to normal cycles of precipitation.

We shall probably populate this happy land in much smaller numbers and exchange an unworthy existence in overcrowded mega cities for a much healthier and more tranquil environment. Man will no longer seek relief from the pressures of work in idle diversion, sex, drugs and alcohol, but he will instead reorient his life where work is elevated to a form of worship and where much of his leisure time will be spent on expanding his knowledge and talents, on healthful recreation, on the arts and human refinement. Wanton procreation will yield to recognizing the blessings and responsibilities of parenthood. It will make the nurture and education of the young a focal point of our existence. In short, man will eventually become aware that not only is he today's torchbearer for those who toiled and struggled ahead of him while preparing the way, but also a guarantor for humanity's future.

The earth itself, once made habitable for man by the emergence of a biosphere, shall eventually be transformed into a state of the greatest physical perfection through the intervention of man's divinely gifted intellect.

The question which at the beginning of the third millennium presses on everybody's conscience, but which ought not to interfere with our cheerful commitment to positive change, is whether man's ordained ascent towards his sublime destiny shall proceed steadily, if slowly, but nevertheless uninterrupted, or if a fateful alliance of unbelief, rebellion and apathy will force a painful detour to his grand itinerary.

EPILOGUE

As was mentioned in the introduction, this narrative was initially undertaken for the occasion marking the centenary of Germany's Baha'i Community. Gisele and I returned to Germany in the fall of 2005 to participate in the centennial celebrations. On Sunday morning, September 11, we gathered for an hour of prayer at the former home of Consul Schwarz and his wife Alice. Here 'Abdu'l-Baha had visited on several occasions in April of 1913 to meet with early Baha'is and their friends during the eight days He spent in the area of Stuttgart. The building with its impressive façade stands at No 3 Alexander Strasse. It can be seen on Google Maps Street view. It is now owned by a law firm. They graciously opened the doors to the Baha'i community for this day of commemoration.



A pretzel breakfast in the former home of Consul Schwartz in Stuttgart marking the community's first century and sixty years of friendship. From left to right Ian Semple, Harry Liedtke, John Eichenauer and Dieter Schubert

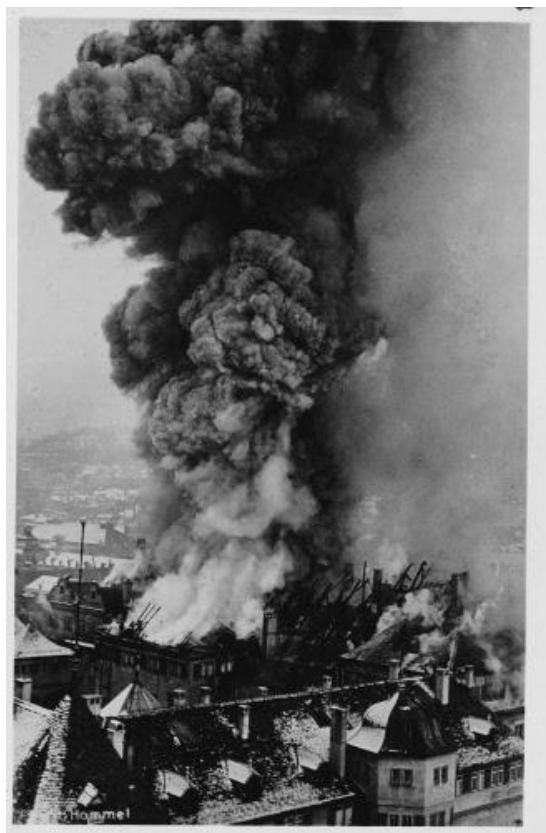
Here I suddenly realized that back in 1931, when I was just three and a half years old, I lived with my parents in a home that stood only two doors away from No 3. Right across the street there was a fine lookout from where exactly 18 years earlier 'Abdu'l-Baha had viewed the city's panorama. I often went there to ride on my scooter. Today I find it quite incredible that this remarkable coincidence should have completely escaped my awareness for six decades.

After I first met Stuttgart's Baha'i community in 1946, I regularly visited the home of the Mühlischlegels at 112 Alexanderstrasse, only a short distance down the street from the house at No 3. I often saw Alice Schwarz and her son there. On account of the post-war housing shortage they were rooming at the Mühlischlegels. It never occurred to me at the time to find out more about their former residence where they had hosted the Master in 1913.

As I kept thinking about the circumstances that had brought me to this neighborhood as a small child, the incredible coincidence that bridged time and geography became ever stranger and more unreal.

My father was an accountant at the head office of Siemens in Berlin. He was happy and successful and had no intention of moving. Back in those years very few people ever moved far from where they were born and raised. A transfer from Berlin in Northern Germany all the way to distant Stuttgart in Wuerttemberg was not only a geographic challenge, but also called for many unwelcome adjustments on account of differences in local habits and dialects. Also, Germany was in a deep depression and had a critical housing shortage. I have a long memory and clearly recall how mother and I spent many days looking all over town for a place to live. We could not stay at our hotel much longer. Some business connection eventually led to the splendid home of a certain Mrs. Bauhaus at No 1 Eugensplatz at the corner of Alexander and Wagenburg Strasse. We were lucky that she agreed to rent us two furnished rooms with kitchen and bath. We stayed there for almost a year.

Across the street from our new home was the “Eugenstaffel”, a series of impressive wide granite stairs as a pedestrian shortcut to avoid the long switchbacks of the streets that curved up the hillside from the city center below. At the same time it offered a beautiful lookout across Stuttgart’s broad valley. It was from here that ‘Abdu’l Baha had looked down on the city’s grand panorama.



Young Harry in 1931 at the lookout and the fire at Stuttgart’s Old Castle

My own memories of the scene are perhaps less pleasant, but certainly more exciting. On 21 December 1931 a great fire broke out at Stuttgart’s venerable Old Castle, destroying much of its interior. We watched red flames devour the roof structure and I remember seeing brave firemen standing at the end of long spindly ladders aiming water into the inferno. Later we were horrified to learn that three firemen had died in the battle to save the historic building.

The Old Castle was damaged again in 1944 when Stuttgart was largely destroyed in a series of 1,000-bomber raids. Stuttgart's downtown was completely rebuilt. Today you can see it in "Google Maps." Search for Eugensplatz Stuttgart and click on street view.

You will notice that the stone balustrade at the lookout remains unchanged. Except the trees have grown and the old mansion that once stood at No 1 has given way to a modern office building that currently houses the "Panama Werbeagentur", an advertising and marketing agency. I cannot help but feel that 'Abdu'l-Baha would be simply delighted to see how the invention of the internet enables everybody on earth to see the places where He had once visited.



Today's re-built Stuttgart with its Old Castle

My father considered Stuttgart only a temporary posting and had his eyes firmly set on head office. We left Stuttgart after two years, but to father's disappointment our next move was to Hamburg.

Meanwhile, my parents remained focused on a future in Berlin and they even acquired a building lot in a northern suburb of the city. When four years later in June of 1937 father was moved back to Stuttgart, he couldn't understand why. Moves were costly and rare and Siemens had never posted a man to the same place twice. Only a very handsome promotion sweetened his disappointment. How was he to know that a benign Will had masterminded our return.

Still, my first school day in Stuttgart was a day from hell. Before the reader accuses me of wild exaggeration, would he please read on. In Hamburg, then a city of well over a million inhabitants, I had jumped a year and after only three years of elementary school joined 29 other selected students in a special Gymnasium class. It was a heady experience for a nine year old to be recognized as sufficiently talented to get taught by a fine group of gifted teachers.

Three months later I landed in Stuttgart. Here my fellow students were at least one year, but some repeaters two or even three years older than I. At this early age a year or two means a big difference in physical and emotional development. Physique and advancing puberty took precedence over academic prowess. In Hamburg some of my fellow students were from Argentina, Italy, England and America. Here they were all local yokels. In Hamburg, where we had called it earth science, I had submitted a 70-page paper about the present conditions and future promise of Brazil. In Stuttgart, where it was chic to call this a "geography" lesson (which at first I didn't know what it meant), we had to recite the city's street car stops, a test which I promptly flunked on day one. When I first met my class teacher at the principal's office he stared at me as if I had come from Mars and when I said I was from Hamburg he let out an inarticulate "Ah-wah?" He introduced himself as "Preceptor Sieber", but I had no idea what a preceptor was. When he started explaining things to this newcomer, I hadn't the faintest idea what he was saying on account of his broad Schwabian dialect. The same went for my class mates. They crowded around me and kept bombarding

me with questions which I could hardly understand. I felt utterly helpless, completely out of place and reduced to a level of stark ignorance. When I got home that day I pleaded with my parents to take me back to Hamburg as “this place is worse than the colonies.”

Much of the joy had gone out of life. I constantly had catching up to do on account of the different school curriculum and also because of the difficulties I had with the local dialect. Mother even made me give up the piano, lest I should lose the school year I had gained in Hamburg. Even after several years I was still considered “an outsider” and had difficulty making new friends. But one of them was my friend Dieter Schubert, who just happened to live only three doors from us and whose mother just happened to have come into the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Baha when she was 14 years old. However, this good news didn’t reach me for another eight long years. As fate would have it, just a few weeks before our return to Stuttgart, on May 21 to be precise, the Baha’i Faith had been outlawed by the government in power and could no longer be mentioned in Germany.

But the mystic cycle of destiny had come full circle: We had returned to the place where the Seed had been sown years earlier and where it would have to lay dormant for the duration of the now impending apocalypse of war. In the meantime, we had been moved away from Hamburg where the air war gutted and pulverized our former neighborhood. We had also been prevented from getting to Berlin despite all my father’s great hopes and ambitions. In Berlin we would have faced untold misery during the war and for decades afterwards. Somehow we had been shielded from much greater dangers and were ushered to a place that was removed from war’s vortex where, moreover, the Message that would change our lives was waiting.

In retrospect, all my youthful anxieties and frustrations had indeed been a very small price to pay for such bounty.

Unity is not Sameness Sameness precludes Unity

This wisdom should be as obvious as is the light of day. Ever since Isaac Newton we have known that light does not consist of sameness, but that it has an infinite array of different colors. But these color components are so thoroughly harmonized that their “differences” disappear to the naked eye. If this were not so, we would all go crazy !

It is only when we shoot light through a prism that its differing components reveal themselves in all their glory. This process of dispersal is reversed when the rainbow colors are again shot through a prism and re-united into a single beam of what we call pure light. It is this latter spiritual prism that humanity urgently needs to discover.

The Eye of the Universe

Seen through the eye of the universe
our earthly existence is insignificant,
our body infinitely minuscule,
a mere handful of atomic dust,
feeble and ephemeral. –

Compared to creation's own eternity
our time on earth is but a flashing ember,
yet it awakens and illumines the mind and
thereby bestows a conscious existence which
is able to burst material bounds despite
frailty and transience of body. –

This lets us fathom, perceive, and sometimes
even penetrate the Great and Holy Enigma as
we stand in awe of a creation which gave us the
powers of comprehension and free will.

In return for these unique gifts, we are challenged
to renounce prejudice, apathy and sloth, and so
be able to accept a larger measure of truth, to
expand the realm of the known, and thereby
improve humanity's condition as our personal
offering to an unfolding universe. –

Deliberately placed at the center of the realm, where
the worlds of micro- and macrocosm meet, our so
singularly favored and rare position allows us a
glimpse into God's cosmic mirror, the sublime
spectrum from galaxies of the distant past to the
atom's innermost secrets. –

This majestic fabric is interwoven and synonymous
with time's endless and all-encompassing spiral,
from ancient beginnings which knew no begin,
to an end without end, a rebirth akin ...

Harry Liedtke