

... description: 1952, Frances Edelstein - 1985  
author: Frances B. Edelstein  
title: 1952, Frances Edelstein - 1985 notes: ...

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### **Memoirs of**

**Frances B. Edelstein[1]**

**June 1985**

[^] From a copy typed by Mrs. Nancy M. Carr from the handwritten manuscript.  
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Even as a Bahá'í one always has a beginning unless born into a Bahá'í family and they, especially the Iranians, go back into a much older culture. I was not born into a Bahá'í family, but from the time I was a small child I wanted to live in New York City.

In 1912, when I was two years old the Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, arrived on the North American continent in the very month of my birth, April. Evidently the spirit always seemed to pull me toward the great city of New York, the City of the Covenant, which 'Abdu'l-Bahá also called the City of Light.

My forebears were English; founders of the eastern north shore of Long Island, when 20 families crossed Long Island sound in 1640 from New Haven, Connecticut where they had been living since 1624. I was born in one of those small Long Island towns, Mattituck.

My greatest desire always was to read. When I was small and only beginning to talk I would thrust one of my children's books at my mother and say "READ!" I gained many a new book because my mother would finally get tired of the same stories – upon entering school my first day was utter disaster! With disgust, I came home furious. Mother questioned me and I said "I can't even read!"

This great desire to read has been my salvation as I've read almost everything available of the Bahá'í writings over and over again, pondering them in my heart and soul-seeking their inner meanings.

The time came when I moved to New York to live and within a few months the message of this great Bahá'í Era was given to me.

My introduction to the Faith was a rather unusual one – through a friend, I met a spiritualist medium. I'd always had a great curiosity about such phenomena but much to my dismay, I learned nothing of it from her.

My friend went weekly for guidance (on) money and love affairs. The spiritualist continued to ask for me, but I had simply decided it was a waste of time. However, since she constantly requested to see me, I finally went again. She told me there was a message for me which she could not give but would introduce me to someone who could. Hence, a week later, I met Mildred Varnum, a Bahá'í. As soon as we were left alone, Miss Varnum said to me "Christ has returned." It was such a simple way to tell me and it didn't seem strange. I wanted to know when and where but told her I could not take her word for it; I must investigate it first. She said, "That is exactly what we want you to do." I arranged to go to my first meeting in Steinway Hall where the Bahá'ís had a center for years.

Later, when I asked Mrs. Weir (the spiritualist) how she knew I was ready, she said, "When you walked in the first time I saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá just above your head." She knew a great deal about the Faith but she also knew as a medium taking money she had no right to talk about it. But she knew Miss Varnum well and knew her to be the right one for me. Mildred Varnum was elderly and went back to Bangor, Maine, (where she came from) soon after she met me. She turned me over to Mathew Kasat. This was in March 1938. In six months I was signed up. Mathew went to Central America in the first seven-year plan and died a young man. His life is written up in the World books.

My life in New York after was interesting, as I became acquainted with Juliet Thompson – who lived at 48 W. 10th St. – and for a short time I lived there too. Her stories about 'Abdu'l-Bahá were fascinating. She had kept a diary (now printed). People gathered there weekly (or maybe every two weeks) to listen. Her ability for verbal portraiture was unequalled – no one could keep you spellbound as she could.

It was during that time that I also met the Kinneys, the Kelseys, Marjory Morten, Mountfort Mills, the ('Alí Kuli) Khans (Marzieh Gail's parents) and many, many others such as Laura Dreyfus Barney of "Some Answered Questions", Horace Holley and his wife, Doris, Genevieve Coy – who was administrator at Greenacre for some years.

These were all interesting people with vital and amusing information to share.

It was in New York that I first met Marzieh Gale and Mark Tobey who eventually became close friends.

In the last part of the first Seven Year Plan of the Guardian, my life as a pioneer began. First to Birmingham, Alabama, where two very interesting things occurred. Race was a big factor in those days and Mr. Louis Gregory came to Birmingham periodically. He visited both Negro colleges in Alabama and the churches and schools of Birmingham. Another itinerant Negro teacher was Joy Earl. They both stayed at the same place in the Negro section of that

huge city.

Upon my arrival, Joy was there and the friends asked if I knew her. I did – and she was ill. They thought it would be nice if I went to see her (none of them (white) had been (to see her)). (So) I phoned, then went to see her. She was despondent over the fact that the other (Bahß' s) had ignored her so to speak. Anyway, she said “Will you stay for dinner if this family says ‘yes’?” And I said, “Why not?”, of course. It seems they had never had whites in their home and felt the same towards them as most whites did of Negroes. They were a highly educated family (I have forgotten their names). He was a principal of a high school, she a church soloist with a beautiful voice who sang also at weddings and funerals. They agreed to have me sit down at the dinner table with them and Joy said, “You are making history! This never happened in this area.”

She (Joy) also said, “Next week, after I leave, Mr. Gregory will be here. Do you think you could meet him at the train?” A very naive Yankee said “Sure.” To meet Louis Gregory was a prospect I'd never thought would happen to me and I was ecstatic over the thought of it.

Another one of the Birmingham ladies with a car had the courage to offer to go also. When I say courage, I had no idea at the moment that it took that. The day of his arrival came and we met the train and Mr. Gregory [at a later period of time I realized that he had hardly ever been met at the train – and two white ladies must have been unbelievable to him.] But he was the most serene person outwardly that one could ever imagine – simply unflappable as if it happened all the time. We took him to the house where he was to stay and when I appeared with him, that lady couldn't believe her eyes, but said nothing.

My next move almost got me shot – and not by the Negroes but the white Bahß' s. As I left Mr. Gregory, I said, “We will see you at the meeting tonight.” (The meeting being the regular open fireside gathering.) His reply was, “Yes, of course – where is it?” I said “In the same place as usual.” He said, “I don't know where it is. I have never been to one.” I told him the address, but having been in Birmingham less than a month, I couldn't tell him how to get there. The lady quietly said to me, “I'll see that Mr. Gregory finds the way.” News travels fast, and by the time I reached my boarding place where I was staying with Martha Fettig and Nina Howard, Gertie (Gwerty) Blum had arrived and FEAR was written all over their faces and I was kindly given the facts of life in (about?) the Deep South.

In the end, I said, “Well, I don't understand any of this – the Oneness of Mankind is one of the principles – if you want to phone Mr. Gregory and tell him not to come, that's fine, but I surely won't.” Nina Howard, a newly arrived pioneer from Los Angeles, spoke up and said, “Frances, I am with you. I don't understand any of this either.”

So, with fear and trembling, I, with the others, went to the meeting. Everything went smoothly. Mr. Gregory spoke to all the Birmingham Bahß' s for the first time. Mrs. Myra Bryant came – a beautiful Negro woman of renown in the state,

who knew Mr. Gregory and had accepted the Faith. (Unfortunately, some time later, she resigned because the Bahá'ís did not live up to the teachings – a sad twist for us. She could have been able to spread it (the Faith) all over the state, because she was so well known.)

My stay in Birmingham was short, as the climate was humid and smoky, giving me asthma. So I was encouraged to leave since they had enough for an assembly (Local Spiritual Assembly). Asthma dogged me all my life until I was in my late sixties.

The next post was Sioux Falls, South Dakota. This was one of those vast prairie states where Lutherans were predominant and Sioux Falls was the home of Augustana Lutheran College. It took ]4 [sic; not clear if it is 14 or 4] years to have a native L.S.A. and I was there 7 years – being its first secretary. As I became more acclimated, I realized the impossibility of reaching out into all that vast expanse and pursued the idea of radio. We were one of the first pioneer states to have a radio program.

The radio station was comparatively new and its wave length reached just the state of South Dakota. We wrote our own scripts, picked music to go with it, and paid for it ourselves. It was a half-hour program on Saturday morning. One of our pioneers, Jean Stapleton, whom we lovingly called Stapie, was the best voice to broadcast. We were all tested. Mine (my voice) was good too, but since I was committewe chairman with many other duties I didn't want that one, and was more than happy to have Stapie, especially because she was Negro. All of this was at the end of the first 7-year plan and the beginning of the second (over 40 years ago).

Each year we had a both at the County Fair – and friends from Minneapolis sometime came down to help.

Once we took on a very individual race relations project. I was living with an elderly Augustana College professor and his wife. They were living on a meagre income and needed their living- and dining-room walls painted. Clarence Hughes, a wonderful Negro Bahá'í from Minneapolis, loved to house-paint. He was a chemist (at a time when there were no Negro chemists to speak of) and headed up the Labs of International Printing Inks (later merged with Allied Chemical). Doing inside paint jobs was sort of a hobby with him. He agreed to come paint (the professor's house) and stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Knox. The reason for this was she had expressed to me that she wondered how she would feel about Negroes on a personal level. So I took the opportunity (to demonstrate) and it worked like a charm. She and Professor Knox were so impressed with Clarence. Her summing up was that he was such a gentleman that she immediately forgot his color. Clarence had that quality – color always vanished when you were with him. As we know, everything begins with the individual.

During my years in Sioux Falls we had many special visitors – such as Amelia Collins, Mason Remey, Hilda Yen, Peggy True, who later in the Crusade with her husband, George, established the Faith in the Canary Islands as Knights

of Bahá'u'lláh. Harlan Iher (sp. ?) who later married Elizabeth Kidder and went to South Africa in the Crusade, Ruth Moffett and Monroe Ioas (brother of Leroy Ioas) were some of the others.

Life in those days of pioneering was a ploughing of hard soil – but we spent out time not only spiritually trying to make a dent, but also working to earn a living. I was fortunate enough to become a hotel auditor with many ramifications, but I earned more than most Hotel Clerks, etc., as I took on, little by little, more of the night work. It was war time, and help was scarce. The other friends found work in other ways. One, a hotel chambermaid, an elderly lady; another, a housekeeper for a widower; another frail little person who had never worked in her life lived in as a maid with a man and his wife. The work was very hard for her. And one and all never missed meetings – all observances were kept. We were there for one purpose – to establish the Bahá' Faith and its administrative order. Above all, we never missed contributing to the Faith (the NSA Fund).

We finally had about 14 people in Sioux Falls, but only two were locals. However, I decided I could move on if the National Teaching Committee permitted.

The next move was to Louisville, Kentucky, where they were having some difficulties among the believers. I was sent there as something of a “troubleshooter”. There were no Auxiliary Boards in those days. It was an experience which culminated in the troublemakers leaving most quickly and abruptly. The friends that were left, of whom two or three were locals, helped us decide to leave the soil fallow for the ensuing year – but also to burrow in for a siege – later to rebuild.

While there, I served on the District Teaching Committee for Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio I think it was. I also found an excellent job in the Credit Department of Sears, Roebuck. But, like Birmingham, the climate in Louisville was a continuous battle with asthma and the DTC felt I should go to a better climate. Eventually, I went back to Sioux Falls whose numbers had diminished. Insert A.

In Louisville, we were blessed with a visit from Agnes Alexander – not a Hand then, but like Martha Root, her years had been spent teaching and traveling, especially in Hawaii, her home, and Japan and China. She often accompanied Martha.

In 1950, the Guardian reopened the doors to pilgrims – and we in Sioux Falls (a jumping off place in those days) were the recipients of a visit from Gladys Anderson Weeden and her husband, Ben, upon their return after serving the Guardian at the World Centre for a few years. What a bounty! No one can imagine today what that meant in those times. It was at this time I was encouraged to request a pilgrimage but I procrastinated a bit until one of the other pioneers persuaded me and we went together along with her mother who had been urging her to do so.

I shall never forget that Sunday in September when the decision was made to

cable the Guardian for permission. His reply was as swift as lightning – it came at 7:00 AM the following Wednesday (three days later). The telephone rang and it said “Welcome December”. My legs turned to water and I sat down on the nearest seat, which were the steps going upstairs.

The first Holy Year started in October 1952. It was December, 1952, that we arrived in Haifa. From October to October 1953 the Guardian inaugurated the 10-year Crusade, 4 intercontinental conferences, and the dedication of the Mother Temple, the Holiest Temple ever to be erected. That year, I made a pilgrimage, attended the Temple dedication, and also the first Teaching Conference in the Western Hemisphere. In 1944, we had commemorated the Declaration of the Bḡb at the Temple in Foundation Hall. It was the culmination of the first Seven-Year Plan and I felt so lucky to attend that as a pioneer from Sioux Falls. In those days and years the Guardian set the pattern and plans for all that has ensued.

The Pilgrimage!! Our first move was to get passports and travel arrangements made. From a place like Sioux Falls, passports were applied for at the Post Office, but no one had applied for one in years – a novelty. The war was over but conditions in Europe still bore the heavy scars of devastation. The very first travel agency in that city had only just opened its doors in July so we were comparatively early customers going to Israel, no less. That took some doing. They could get us to Italy, and finally, through the Italian lines they got the necessary route to Haifa, Israel. We were to land in Naples, cross the boat [sic], and take a Mediterranean Line from Bari to Haifa. Bari had been the point of embarkation for the Crusades many centuries before.

We finally took off by car, drove to Fort Wayne, Indiana; took a bus to New York, and the Saturday after Thanksgiving, we sailed for Italy. In mid-ocean, we lost a propeller, limped into Genoa, were piled onto a boat train for Rome and Naples to Bari – a 24-hour trip with no sleep, nothing to eat and the extra luggage (except personal luggage) went on a “Slow boat to China.” It never arrived in Bari until we had long since sailed for Haifa. I had been asked by friends to take gifts of supplies to the World Centre. When I got back to Naples, I had to wait almost a week in Naples for it to be shipped there so I could take it to Rome, where Mrs. Giachery held it and arranged for future pilgrims to take it on with them, or to arrange to ship it with other materials.

My pilgrimage could fill pages.

The trip to and from was a life-time experience. It was my first trip out of the United States and on my way home I visited Naples, Rome, Basil, Switzerland, to see some old friends pioneering there – then on to Paris and home. Paris didn’t impress me but I stayed a few days to sight-see.

Upon arrival in Haifa, we were met by Jessie and Ethel Revel at the boat, taken to the Western Pilgrim House, where we met Leroy and Sylvia Ioas, Luṭfu’llāh Ḥakīm, and Mason Remey. Later, Rūḥiyyih Khānum came over to welcome us and take us to the Shrine of the Bḡb.

That first evening, as we gathered downstairs awaiting the arrival of our Guardian for dinner, I had butterflies in the pit of my stomach, and my heart was trembling – in short, I felt like dying rather than being ecstatic over this great opportunity. The inner turmoil was overwhelming and not one in the 13 days of my visit did I ever feel different when I was to sit down at the table opposite Shoghi Effendi.

One of the evenings after dinner, Jessie Ravel said to me, “I notice you don’t take notes.” I had made my mind up before going on Pilgrimage I wouldn’t take any notes. The ones I’d heard were most unsatisfactory and, and secondly, I thought it impolite to sit at the table as his guest and write down things on paper – so that is what I told Jessie. She said, “It’s very interesting, because just a few days before you arrived, the Guardian said he was going to stop having the pilgrims take notes.”

I’ve a short diary of things remembered that I jotted down – but I also realize if you had read and studied all he had written in his books and messages, he was going over them (at times). At other times, he talked of the four great Teaching Conferences to be held in 1953. February, Kampala – May, Wilmette – June, Stockholm – and October, New Delhi – and everything was geared to the coming Crusade.

It was obvious his main objective was to enlist an army for that Ten-Year Plan – his last and greatest, and the pattern and forerunner of all the plans to come. In one of his messages a few years before, he had said the Divine Plan of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would be accomplished by a series of plans – and so it is slowly and progressively taking place.

The most interesting things, aside from the greatest event, dinner with the Guardian, were projects done while there. Housekeeping things, such as readying the room in the Master’s house for Millie Collins’ occupancy when she returned; and moving her from the Western Pilgrim House in the dead of night. The bed was a brass bedstead in the room we had gotten ready, one used by Sutherland Maxwell, and I made a valance by putting some old ship’s curtains sewed on an old sheet under the mattress – this covered up everything packed under the bed. Closet and drawer space was meagre, so the space under the bed was utilized.

Then, Rúḥíyyih Khánum moved me from the room I was in into the room Millie had occupied for the duration of my pilgrimage.

In those days, we were taken to Bahjí for a day and a night. I shared a room with Ethel Revel who accompanied us. It had a single bulb hanging from the ceiling and when we put that out, it was pitch dark. Ethel had a flash light, thank goodness. I was up before dawn to go into the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh and stay as long as I wished – never will I forget that lovely place, all alone in the beautiful garden room at the threshold of the King of the World and be able to rest my head on that threshold, carpeted with a beautiful Persian prayer rug with flowers and petals scattered on it.

I went twice to the Shrine of the Báb – the first time with Rúhíyyih Khánum. There were the two other pilgrims as well, and Rúhíyyih Khánum chanted a prayer. Then, on Christmas eve, early, Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím took me again; and again I was alone, as he stayed outside. It was a special time as our pilgrimage coincided with Hannukah and the Mayor of Haifa had requested of Shoghi Effendi that the Shrine remain floodlighted for their Holiday. It was a first, also – It was more beautiful – the Shrine, not quite completed. They were waiting for the gold tiles to arrive – otherwise, it was almost finished.

The grounds everywhere were lovely. Shoghi Effendi being his own horticulturist. We saw his small palm trees being nurtured in a corner of his gardens on the grounds of the Shrine of the Báb – perfect little specimens, probably not yet a foot tall – to be transplanted when and where he wanted them.

There was another project I undertook. Rúhíyyih Khánum showed me her frozen food (deep-freeze) that had been shipped by one of the friends – and in it was a side of beef, 3 lamb carcasses, and three chickens. The beef and lamb had been purchased from the ship's supply house and was frozen on delivery. The purveyor had simply taken an axe, cut it in half between the foreleg and hind leg, and dumped it in. All of this uncut, unwrapped, dehydrating rapidly.

Having been a bookkeeper in a frozen-food locker plant in Sioux Falls, I spontaneously said it should all be cut and wrapped, otherwise it will be tasteless and locker-burned. Rúhíyyih Khánum said, "Put your thinking cap on and let's come up with something." I knew we needed waxed paper, but Rúhíyyih Khánum said, "This is Israel. We don't have waxed paper." The new state was destitute of most essentials, bread was unwrapped, carried under your arm from the baker. Anyway, I asked about wax of any kind and R. K. said, "I've plenty of candle stubs we can melt down." Which we did. Then we took the huge brown sheets of wrapping paper that had come in on the various shipments, put them on the ironing board, dipped a paint brush in the wax, spread it on the paper, put another sheet of paper on top, took an iron, and made waxed paper.

Then, the process of prying the frozen meat from the deep-freeze began. A few weeks before, someone had sent a complete set of screwdrivers of all lengths and sizes, so I took the largest one and pried the meat out, defrosted the locker, having heated water in every possible cook pot available, and placed three of these hot ones inside which soon melted all the accumulated ice. I washed it thoroughly, put the electricity on again, and left it while I supervised the cutting and wrapping of that frozen meat.

Having taken lots of cutting instructions, I could say more or less where to cut. We had a hacksaw and a butcher knife. To this day, I'll never know how it was accomplished. Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím and Mason Remey wielding first one and then the other (knife or hacksaw); Sylvia Ioas wrapped and marked it; we tied it with string that had been saved for emergencies whenever any came – same as the brown paper. It was all done in an afternoon and put back in the deep freeze without thawing – another miracle!



The chickens I cooked one evening for dinner. I fried them first, but they didn't get cooked well enough so I had to put them in a pressure cooker. LeRoy Ioas was amazed to think I could cook.

In those days of pilgrimage, we could do things and be helpful in general to a degree and it made for interesting times. Afternoon tea was usually served at the Master's house across the street where we joined the Persian ladies on pilgrimage. Their husbands or sons or brothers spent that time at the Eastern Pilgrim House, with the Guardian – then when he returned, he spent about 15 minutes with them (the Persian ladies).

The Guardian spoke nightly of the destructions of the cities and devastation everywhere. When asked what and from whence the calamities would come, he said it could be another great war or some terrestrial upheaval beyond the power of man. As we look around us we have seen the cities devastated by riots – both Newark and New York have large sections gutted by arsonists – and financial bankruptcy plaguing them to say nothing of the environmental pollution!! We have earthquakes, tornadoes, vast floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions all going on almost at once somewhere; along with wars – Central America, Africa, India's Sikhs, Bangladesh, Pakistan – the almost complete demolition of Lebanon and on and on. Yet the vast majority of humanity lulls itself deeper and deeper into a coma-like existence. At the time (1953) that he was talking of the destruction of cities, all we could imagine were bombs and war.

Shoghi Effendi was hoping to recruit an army for his Crusade – which was another main topic. He never made you feel compelled to enlist: it was a matter of being spiritually motivated and oriented – and the Crusade was world-wide, a gargantuan plan to the average Bahá'í at that time.

One evening the Guardian brought over the original map he had made for the 10-Year Crusade. It had not yet been printed. It is now found in the statistical compilation "The Bahá'í Faith – 1844-1952 Including Supplement for the Ten-Year International Bahá'í Teaching and Consolidation Plan 1953-1963." He spread it on the table for us to see and discussed the printing of it and the statistics which had not yet been decided on. It was finally printed in the USA by the Bahá'í Publishing Committee in Wilmette. He vacillated between Britain, US, or possibly India because he felt that our community often dragged its feet about getting things done. It's possible that all three finally printed the maps – I don't know for sure – but in December 1952 it was all up in the air and the first conference, Kampala, was in February.

Anyway, I've always been a map hound, and great on geography, and that MAP intrigued me to the extent that I swallowed my reticence and asked if I could keep it until the next night so as to see it in detail all by myself. I took it back to my room, rolled it out on the floor, got down on my hands and knees, and had a glorious time. I returned it the next night, knowing that eventually I would have my own copy when it was published. I still have it.

How could one eliminate the evening the Guardian asked Mason Remey for his drawings. The Guardian had asked Mason Remey to (draw plans) to enhance the exterior of the Shrine at Bahjí (which to date have never been accomplished). Mason brought them to the table which had been cleared of dishes. Shoghi Effendi swiftly rolled them out and at one glance and with a sweeping gesture of his hands said “They won’t do.” The drawings were swiftly rolled up and Mason was completely crestfallen. He asked Shoghi Effendi what he would suggest for a design, and the Guardian quickly told him he (the Guardian) wasn’t an architect. He said, “Mason, you are the architect. When you produce what I want, I’ll know it.” Mason Remey pressed as to ideas and finally the Guardian said, “I want columns” (which we now see on the Archives Building, Universal House of Justice seat, and the Báb’s Shrine). Later, Rúhíyyih Khánúm said, “Mason, Daddy didn’t produce anything at first for the Shrine and had to make several attempts before he got what Shoghi Effendi wanted.”

After we had been to the Archives, the Guardian looked across the table at me and said, “You have seen the pictures of Bahá’u’lláh today in the Archives. Which one did you like best?” As you know, there are two paintings and one photograph. I had banked on the latter for years, having heard about them from Juliet Thompson and Marjorie Morten. The paintings were, to me, very stylized and the photograph a great disappointment. I swallowed and within my mind I groaned – he had asked me outright, what could I say? He answered for me. “The photograph is a poor one, taken in Adrianople after He had suffered greatly.” (my notes)

After the dedication of the Temple, May 1953, I realized why he had asked. He had sent us a reproduction of the painting of Bahá’u’lláh in a red turban, beautifully framed as a gift which we all reverently walked past in the newly dedicated holiest temple in the Bahá’í world. Rúhíyyih Khánúm brought it with her.

A couple of days for a few hours, Rúhíyyih Khánúm and I spent picking up and stacking stones out of the ground from a plot next to the Western Pilgrim House that the Guardian had recently acquired and wanted to make a garden spot to beautify it. It had begun to be used as a dumping place so he purchased it.

One morning I’d slept late and felt a bit ashamed, but Rúhíyyih Khánúm came over to breakfast and sat with me to eat. She said, “I decided I just didn’t want to eat alone today.” We chatted at great length about her parents and her father’s relationship with Shoghi Effendi (most of which she included in *The Priceless Pearl*). She also told me of the Guardian’s times of great unhappiness and how it was difficult to get him out of bed in those periods of despair.

But R.K.’s bell-like voice often comes back to me as I hear her in retrospect address him as “Shoghi Effendi” – the tone of her voice caressed that name as no words of endearment ever could. It must have always soothed his burdened soul.

We experienced both the agony and the ecstasy on this journey to the World

Centre – the experience which overwhelmed us came on an evening when the Guardian had been going through his mail and was harassed with papers, papers, papers – too many papers. He said it was so with both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. On the last days of their lives their papers became too much for them.

In God Passes By, the Guardian has written of it on page 311 – thus we were thrown stricken, and gripped into an inner death-like panic. He then said “ – it is not that way with me, yet.” Rúhíyyih Khánum had left the table in tears. When she returned, he told her he had not meant to frighten her.

For myself, I mechanically sat down with unseeing eyes, ate my food, not conscious of what I was eating, finally I felt compelled to lift my head and look up to discover Shoghi Effendi's eyes boring into my inmost being. Then I drew a breath and began to feel alive.

In 1962, during the first Luxemburg summer school, I asked Mr. Leroy Ioas if the Guardian ever again referred to his passing. He replied, “Never again, before pilgrims.”

Although Pilgrimage is nine days, ours extended to thirteen. We had come by boat and a return boat was on the thirteenth day. Usually, the friends moved to a guest house or hotel but the Guardian kept us at Pilgrim House the entire time. In later years, I understand his generosity. Early pioneers had been hard to recruit.

The time had slipped by. We had lived for a time in another world and dimension. The night before we left, it was time to express our appreciation and farewells. As he took my hand, he said, “I will see you tomorrow before you leave.” Those present, members of the International Council, as well as myself, were a bit dumbfounded – especially ME. I was actually DUMB. It seems it had never occurred before. True to his word, he sent for us the next day as we waited to leave.

His parting words I write from my falling-apart diary: “Please convey to the friends my love and gratitude. The money they send will not go into the ‘gold dome’ crowning the Báb's tomb.

“Now you have been in Paradise and you must take it back to the friends for, to have it and not to share it – Well!!” and he spread his hands, as if to keep it to oneself is to lose it – . (In the passing years, it has troubled me to find few who are really interested in hearing about a visit to Haifa when the Guardian was alive.)

“Tell them of the map soon to be printed, also the statistics – impress upon them the vitalness of the Ten-Year Crusade.

“Tell them of the new gardens at Bahjí.” (At that time only about a month old.) There were other topics also – but those are the one I'll include.

He was so very charming – a handsome man with such a spiritual aura, a dignity of quality, integrity, and purpose. One felt split asunder at parting.

We boarded our ship in mid-afternoon and weighed anchor. It was New Year's Eve, 1952 – and 1953 about to enter – with it our World Crusade. THE PLAN was to become a reality with four great teaching conferences – Kampala, Wilmette, Stockholm, and New Delhi to introduce it.

My pilgrimage started at the outset of the first Holy Year, October 1, 1952 to October 1, 1953 (noted in the “Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950-1957, page 34), where he clarifies that the vision in that pestilential pit took place in mid-October 1852.

There is really much I could add to my trip over and back. I came home via Europe and embarked on the Cunard Liner Mauretania (sp?) in Cherbourg and was seated at the purser's table. In Cabin Class that's like the Captain's table in 1st Class.

The Purser was most interested that I had been in Israel and asked how I came to visit there, so I was able to give the message to all at the table; a young Spanish-British (?) aristocrat, a layman and wife of some Protestant denomination (one of those hell-fire and brimstone revivalists coming to tour North America?) for some group, and a high-ranking Episcopalian churchman who was coming to a church in Philadelphia in an exchange program. When the layman heard me say the Báb was from Írán (still Persia) he very rudely said, “ – from that terrible civilization? NO, Never, not acceptable!”

I said, “Well – didn't they say of Christ ‘can any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ ” The amused look on the purser's face as well as the gentleman of Episcopalian ranks told me I had scored!

Back in the United States, my father was dying of cancer so I spent 1953 taking care of family matters – trying to decide where best to situate in this country and tentatively planned for Jacksonville, Florida. In the meantime, I worked in New York City, helped to keep the center open in spare time, as pioneers flowed through.

I attended the dedication of the Mother Temple in Wilmette as well as the Conference.

That year our High School Graduating Class celebrated its 25th Anniversary which I attended in Mattituck, N.Y. They had heard I had joined a religious group and it seemed they expected some kind of a zealot, which I didn't turn out to be. At least that put a good foot forward for the Faith in a small town on the East end of Long Island.

There was time spent with Marjory Morten and Juliet Thompson again, as well as Marguerite Pumpelly Smith (Daisy to us). They were all nearing the end of their life span – but still able to enrich us with times of the past.

In 1954 (February) the Guardian made a request at the table in Haifa one evening to which Mr. Leroy Ioas, then sec'y general of the International Council, sent to New York City. It seems that the Guardian expressed the wish for

someone from the City of the Covenant (N.Y.) to go to the city of the Covenant-Breaker (Famagusta, Cypress) and one to go to the Fizan in Tripolitania (see page 269, God Passes By).

Thus it was that I went to Famagusta, Cypress in October 1954. In the summer of 1954 I was secretary at the Green Acre School. Those were hectic times.

Green Acre was an unforgettable experience. Genevieve Coy was head of the Green Acre committee and the teaching programs. How did I ever have brains enough to do what I did there? Genevieve was a master-mind at being in charge and no one ever felt it. Everything glided along – good classes, mostly good teachers, one of my duties was to assess every class once during each week. I was also in charge of books and book sales.

It was during 1953 and 1954 that I became well acquainted with Mark Tobey. He used to spend weeks in New York at the National Arts Club. That's where Marjory Moreten lived. Our friendship lasted until he passed away in 1976.

Mildred Mehl went with me to Cyprus. It turned out to be a rather poor choice but then – we learn as we live. We sailed October 4th on the Queen Mary for Southampton. The British NSA and British National Teaching Committee wished to confer with us. Cyprus had been allocated to United Kingdom as a crusade goal. They had already sent their pioneers to Nicosia, the capitol. This goal of Famagusta fell directly under Shoghi Effendi, The International Council, USA (because we were from that Bahá'í community), indirectly to Germany, as Greece was their goal, hence they were really responsible for the language – but we had nothing in Greek available.

We spent 4 or 5 days in London – from there on to Paris where I saw a friend – met Edith Sanderson, attended the Báb's Birthday during those four days, then on to Switzerland to see friends pioneering in Berne and Basil. From there we went to Vienna where we spent 2 weeks resting – seeing Margaret Lenz, a pioneer there, and met the Varguas from Vienna. On to Venice where we embarked on a Mediterranean boat for Cyprus. One of the Adriatic shipping lines, where we again bounced around like a match box on the rough seas going through the Corinthian Canal (as we did on the route to Haifa) skirting the Cyclades Islands, weaving through Dodecanese and finally arriving in Cyprus. Limassol was the port where we disembarked. There was no wharf. We climbed down a ladder into small harbor boats. In the dead of night, some 12 to 14 hours late.

We spent two or three days in Nicosia with the McKinleys – Hugh and his mother, Violet (both Knights of Bahá'u'lláh). They had filled the British goal in the capital city of Cyprus. Two other pioneers were 'Abbás Vakíl and his wife, from Baghdád. I think 'Abbás was originally from Turkey. His family were Iranians, I believe.

Jeanne Kranen at that time was governess to a small boy in the outlying countryside. (She was Dutch). Later she came into Nicosia to live. She brought into the Faith the first Turkish Cypriot, Hasan Shashmaz. 'Abbás Vakíl brought in

the first Armenian Cypriot (name forgotten). I eventually brought in the first Greek Cypriot in Famagusta, Nick Charalambous. He was from Larnaca but worked and lived in Famagusta. He worked for Mantovani shipping agents in the office. They also handle shipping for American Export Lines as well as the Italian boats plying the Mediterranean.

First we stayed at the Palace Hotel for quite a while as we took a prefab cottage on the rooftop. Then we separated. I lived in three places after that – all in town. My best teaching work of my entire life was done in Famagusta. One evening, I discovered a tarantula under there dressing table at the second place I moved to. It got the heel of my tough British walking shoes.

Day to day living in the Middle East was much different than we were accustomed to – but having been on pilgrimage I had seen something of what to expect.

The Guardian asked us to be careful and not to divulge our purpose for being there – so we had to think about what to tell the authorities. We needed permits to stay longer than just a visit. They had to be renewed from time to time. Our passports were always submitted with the request and we usually waited for weeks to get them back, which made us very nervous. At a later date when we had to renew, Mildred Mehl didn't have any luck but was ensnared into telling them she was there for the Bahá'í Faith. They came to investigate about 10:30 PM one evening. When they arrived, they saw our books; among them was one of the World volumes. They asked to look at it and we readily agreed. The books seemed to automatically open to "Appreciations". They flipped a page or two, found a letter written by Sir Ronald Storrs about the Faith and also one by Sir Hubert Samuels. Storrs had been governor of Cyprus and Samuels had been first High Commissioner of Palestine under the British mandate. The investigation ended before it started.

I decided after seeing the native craft of needlework and pottery if I could find an outlet to send it to that might be useful, which Government House employers thought an excellent idea. It fizzled, but somehow, the Guardian heard about it and found it amusingly impressive that a female should consider going into "commerce".

Valentinos Charalambous had become a very well-known Mid-Eastern potter; potting having been their family craft for centuries. He had squeezed permission from his father to send him to the Arts and Crafts School in London for three years, so he had become an expert modern potter. (His father was a traditional potter.) While studying, Val had spent a summer in St. Ives at the Bernard Leach Kilns. Leach became a Bahá'í through Mark Tobey, so Val had heard of the Bahá'í Faith from them. He was interested, but never became involved. I became fascinated with the potting craft: where the clay came from, etc; the designs he used. I have two of his plates; my sister has a plate and an ashtray.

My contact with Mr. and Mrs. Panos Panagidi continued for many years after I left Cyprus and they moved to London. Another was Mr. and Mrs. Anthony

Anthias who moved to Rhodesia. I still hear from her.

The list of contacts I made and gave the message to was included in my report sent to the International Center at the time of the end of the Crusade. The new Universal House of Justice sent many of us requests to give a report.

My contacts actually consisted of all the key people in Famagusta. One, Mr. Yianmakis, teacher of English and official translator for the Board of Education on the entire island, was among my contacts. He read much that I gave him. He also translated the Tablet of Aḥmad and the pamphlet, Christian, Muḥammadan, and Jews. The article was really ‘Abdu’l-Bah’s talk given in Temple Emmanuel in San Francisco.

Shortly after I came home, he was murdered on the streets of Famagusta by the EOKA guerilla gang which terrorized the island from 1954 to 1960 when Cyprus became independent.

The first June (1955) I was sent a formal invitation to attend the Queen’s Birthday celebration which takes place everywhere that is under the British flag (Union Jack). A hat and glove affair that takes place in the tropics at 9:00 AM before the hot noonday sun. A very impressive ceremony.

Another contact was an Armenian man, Treasurer for the entire county of Famagusta. I saw a great deal of him. He took us driving but couldn’t understand why we remained in Famagusta – so many more opportunities in Nicosia. I told him that some day I would explain specifically why I must remain in Famagusta. Time went on. Finally, he said again, “Why must you stay in Famagusta?” By this time he had read the “New Era,” we had discussed many facets of the Faith, and he was very open to it. (Always, one must remember that of all places, Famagusta and Cyprus were enemy territory to us.) I explained about Mīrzá Yaḥyá; much to my surprise, he understood the situation – but he also knew the family. They were paid every month from the Treasury as they had been by the Turkish regime before World War One. Each month, two very elderly ladies of that family came to collect their meagre stipend. As Treasurer, he did the “paying out” to all who were on the payroll. It had to be signed for.

The most interesting contact was the Barrister Turkish Muslim who represented the Turkish population of that area. Each factor had a representative to the British government. The Greek Cypriots were represented by their Bishop and the Armenians by their churchman. The Turks were not represented, that way they had a Barrister who had been educated in London. This man was married to an Irish Catholic nurse. She was seeking a religion that might have more common ground. The Bah’s’ Faith sounded like what she was looking for. It was arranged that I accompany Miss Hamilton, an English lady living there whom I had become acquainted with, to come to tea. It was a day during the Fast of Ramaḍán. The husband was at the Mosque when we arrived, but came in later.

We talked about the Faith, then when he came in, he excused himself for not

joining us for tea, as it was the Fast of Ramaḍán. I said, "Yes, I know." He was so surprised to find an American lady who knew about the Fast of Ramaḍán. At this point, the wife spoke up and wanted to know about monogamy. Her husband kept telling her he was lawfully allowed 4 wives, which she as a Catholic, could not accept. I don't think he really meant to take 3 others but kept telling her just the same. I said that we as Bahá'ís believed in monogamy and that although the Moslems were allowed 4 wives, Muḥammad had said that He preferred they have only one, but since they had been polygamists so long, he would allow them to have 4. The Barrister was so surprised at my answer and at the same time, his wife asked him if what I said was so. He said, "Yes." Then he asked, "You have read the Qur'án?" I said, "Yes." Well! That he could hardly take in! Then he said, "I'm a Barrister and you have to prove to me that your Faith is what you say it is. A Barrister must have proof." I replied, "In this case, you must find your own proof. This is something you must do for yourself. No one else can prove these things to you."

I left the island a couple of weeks later. Whatever happened to him I don't know.

Miss Hamilton eventually became a Bahá'í.

Three other contacts were the Librarian at the Public Library where I placed the "New Era" in English, the Headmaster of the Famagusta Elementary School, who in some way had heard of the Faith, and had written to Wilmette. In return, I got a letter from Mr. Holley – the man was interested in Rosicrucianism. He did read the Íqán while I was there. The other was the Head of Antiquities for Cyprus – Mr. Mugubub. His brother, as it happened, was married to an American lady. They lived in Chamberlin, South Dakota. Mr. Mugubub was Lebanese.

The Azalís weren't very active, but most had good jobs with either the government or the radio network. Yaḥyá's tomb was pointed out to me – very ill kept.

I was approached once in Kyrenia by someone who claimed to be from Lebanon – that is a Covenant-Breaker hotbed also – I felt an uneasiness but it went no further.

In Kyrenia, there was a health center of sorts – whom I contacted for herbal medicines. He turned out to be an Aḥmad Sohrab devotee. An Englishman, I think he was. At that time, the New History Society (as the Sohrab group was known) was trying to merge with the Azalís – strangely enough, they refused to be involved with him.

All the while we were living under political terrorism – murders, bombs, and constant curfews. We would scurry out for food, postage, and other errands such as books to read, then back. Curfew was from later afternoon at first to morning, then it got to be longer.

At that time I was living with a young Cypriot who worked for KEO Cyprus



wines and alcoholic beverages and his aunt. It was her home – a typical middle-east house, where the water for a bath was heated by a wood fire in the bath room under the tank of water. Clothes were washing in much the same way in a wash house in the back yard where a copper boiler was cemented in so that a fire could be built under it to boil whites.

I had a three-burner oil stove to cook on, and if I baked a cake it was over a primus cooker with a ring around the flame in which you placed a cake pan like an angel-cake pan. On this ring you put lots of wood ashes to protect the cake from burning before placing your cake on it. At times, I also cooked my meals on a primus – a one-pot meal of chicken or meat, vegetables, and water. Seasoned, it was very good.

Living outside of one's homeland is the most educational experience one can have. That, with an in-depth study of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, gives you the equivalent of a University education as 'Abdu'l-Bahá always said.

The Cypriots had a delicacy they always treated you with. It was fruit; peach, pear, orange peel, grapefruit peel, put down in heavy sugar syrup. They also prepared green walnuts and almonds the same way except they were put into a shallow well with some kind of preparation to soak for a long period of time before being cooked [sic] in the syrup with spices.