



Panchgani Assembly as her "parent" and made no decision without first informing the Assembly or consulting with it. She always did her utmost to carry out the wishes of the Assembly and was absolutely obedient in every way.

What a shining example Joy became to all — young and old alike. She was a radiant spirit, always smiling, happy and uncomplaining. Joy was truly a "joy" to everyone.

She visited our family on many occasions, and became like a family-member and "grandmother" to our three children. She had a wonderful sense of humor that everyone loved. Many times, especially at the dinner table, she would have everyone laughing. She was so well-read that she could converse on almost any topic. Her mind was unbelievably sharp, and she read almost constantly, sometimes as many as five Bahá'í books at a time, taking notes from each one. While reading those books she was also studying Persian and Marathi, and almost always had those books with her too. She loved trees, flowers and birds, and at times would sit on our patio for long periods drinking in the beauty of nature.

Largely through Joy's efforts a new Bahá'í Center was purchased in Sangli, a Spiritual Assembly was established, and children's classes with more than 100 youngsters attending were held regularly. Joy was named an assistant to Auxiliary Board member M. Jawn-mardi, and in April 1983 was elected chairman of the Spiritual Assembly of Sangli.

Joy's only real concerns during her stay in India were an inability to communicate as well as she would have liked (she communicated with love), and a desire to be buried in a Bahá'í cemetery. She often spoke of this, to which I would say jokingly, "Joy, if you ever feel you are going soon to the next world, just get on a bus and come to Panchgani. We have a lovely cemetery here for you." She would laugh and reply, "That's a fine idea."

Joy Munson was a living example of the fact that love and steadfastness can alone win souls to this Faith. That is precisely what happened to her, and the waiting souls did indeed come knocking on her door. She would lovingly invite them to the Center, prepare a cup of tea for them, and give them literature about the Faith in their own language. She was the essence of a true loving spirit in that whatever happened, and with whomsoever she came in contact, she always saw the beauty and the good qualities and overlooked poverty, disease, and flaws in character.

As the years passed Joy came to love the New Era Bahá'í School in Panchgani, its staff and its students. One day, as we strolled across the campus, she said to me, "Oh, I love this school and the children so much! I wish I could do something for them."

As it happened, a second floor dormitory was to be built, but funds were not available. That evening, we discussed the matter with my husband, Ray, who was principal of the school. Joy became quite excited, and left early the next morning for Sangli, saying she would return in a few days. Checking her bank account, she found to her dismay that she had only several thousand rupees

there. The following day, however, a letter arrived from her son, Victor, who was living in California. "Mom," he wrote, "you have \$12,000 just sitting here in the bank. Why don't you put the money to good use somewhere?"

Again. Joy's prayers had been answered. She arrived in Panchgani the next day, her face beaming, and said, "Well, it's all set. Let's write to Victor right now and explain about the new dorm." Within a few weeks \$10,000 was received and work was begun on a new girls' dormitory. Munson Hall, which was opened in September 1983 for 30 girls.

In February 1983 Joy returned to the U.S. to see her four children, and the Munsons held a family reunion in California. After visiting for two months with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Joy boarded a plane for Bombay, arrived there unannounced, and traveled eight hours by bus to Panchgani to be with her friends there.

My son, Kirk, and I were pleased to welcome Joy as a guest in our home for 10 days until we left India to return to the States on May 10. Two days after we left, she fractured her hip and underwent surgery in Poona. The operation was a success, but on May 26 Joy's heart failed and she passed away. She was 81 years old.

Joy spoke often of her death, and looked forward to that glorious journey. She passed away at her pioneer post, had a lovely funeral, and was laid to rest in the beautiful Bahá'í cemetery at Poona.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to know Joy Munson were deeply influenced by her example of total detachment, sacrifice and steadfastness, and will miss her greatly.

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