

And during all this she sat squeezing a rubber ball with her left hand, which had suffered some kind of injury and needed exercise.

On subsequent visits I was able to listen and put in a word or two. Both Marzieh and Harold were gracious hosts, but never came the offer of an overnight stay, even though I was traveling three hours in each direction. Later I learned that Marzieh was an insomniac and they never, ever had overnight guests. Years later, when she and Harold lived close to us in San Francisco, we housed all their company...quite a treat for us!

On one visit I brought up the subject of interruptions to the conversation, a view held by another, and she answered something to the effect that the most exciting conversations are full of interruptions! How could it be otherwise?

When she and Harold moved to San Francisco, I didn't give it a second thought. Little did I know that soon I would be joining them. In June of 1982 I moved to SF and contacted them right away. I dropped by frequently to visit them, in between job interviews.

They were always wonderful hosts and had myriads of stories to tell. Failing a subject, Marzieh would reach down to the coffee table and haul up a letter or photograph someone had sent and be off and running again with fresh topics to consider.

Once they moved to SF they remained in the same apartment on Sacramento Street, one block east of Polk Street. Interestingly enough, they had met years ago when both of them lived in a boarding house on Sacramento Street some 8-10 blocks distant. They had lived all around the world and then returned not only to San Francisco, but the very same street on which they met. Full circle.

Harold died in November of 1992 and Marzieh passed away in October of 1993 and left me with a legacy of missing her terribly.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

I knew Marzieh best during the last part of her life...the last 22 years and 8 months... from Groundhog Day in 1971 to her death on the 16th of October of 1993. While on the one hand I had great respect and admiration for her work, my primary relationship with her was personal and I never once hesitated to be myself in her presence...and that included giving her a "hard time" teasing her. One thing, which never failed to get a rise out of her, was to make a face at her. She'd complain to the others in the room, "Look, she made a face at me!!!" expecting that I'd be brought to shame and she'd receive some kind of justice...and I'd smile innocently and say, "Who? Me?" and as soon as the focus was off me, I'd make the face again.

She was short, walked in a shuffling kind of way (probably because her feet hurt or her shoes were too big or small), and was reticent in her physical presentation. She was sassy, smart and a terrific writer, translator and poet...but she just couldn't deal with the basics of living. For example, she only cooked breakfast and Harold cooked lunch and supper.. He wrote the checks.

Harold "took care of business". Together they would go over the galleys from the publisher of her latest book. He was her editor but shrank from any credit, always giving the full limelight to Marzieh.

She was a thrift shop junkie and dressed accordingly, with some type of good taste...erring in the direction of the flashy. Her signature trademark was her black fishnet stockings (she had great legs!). She loved jewelry. She always wore a wig...even the time we spent the night together in a motel when we went to Salinas to visit her sick sister...she still slept in the wig, although I daresay she might not have done so at home with Harold. I never saw her wear a hat.

Marzieh was quite bold when it came to teaching the Faith. Their home was always open for such an occasion. Sometimes she was not very subtle in bringing up the topic, but no one seemed to mind. She had a way of working the Faith into ANYTHING as witnessed by her account of the taxicab driver in New York. She'd traveled there some years ago to attend a funeral. After she entered the cab, the driver turned and asked her where she was going. She replied, "I'm going to the funeral of a man who was NOT a Baha'i".

Her life was sharply divided between the literary (and spiritual) and the practical. Her talks, which she typed out for each occasion when she was to give a speech, she read word for word. Although many folks highly praised her talk, I thought her delivery lacked the panache I knew she had inside. What they seemed to be reacting to was the legend of Marzieh and the content of what she had written...rather than the manner in which it was presented.

One time when she spoke, after she finished, she sat down next to a fairly new Bahá'í and whispered, "How'd I do?" She was always nervous speaking to a crowd but definitely came to life in her own living room where she was as natural as a person who had been brought up by a Victorian mother could be.

Physical proximity of others seemed to threaten her. The closest to intimacy with me that she ever got was kissing the tip of her index finger and placing it on my cheek. She said that she always wished that she was of a warmer temperament, but just couldn't do so owing to her upbringing.

Marzieh always had on makeup. Forever the lady...she always encouraging me to "maintain an air of mystery" in my marriage. Her personal advice often had cobwebs on it, but her advice about the Faith and her craft was right on the money.

One time after she'd given a speech at a nearby college, we retired to the reception following. The room was packed. I started off towards the other side of the room and was surprised by her small hand grasping mine. She saw me as her protector in that sea of bodies. It was very dear.

I was always a bit surprised when others of her friends told me how much she loved me. Her way of expressing love and my way were continents apart, yet after her death I realized that I probably was as close to being a daughter as she'd ever had.

MEMORY OF WENDY COLTON SCOTT

Thanks for the memory. I did get a chance to hear her talk once and I'll never forget what she said: "Baha'u'llah forbade the use of alcohol because in a technological age, befuddlement is the last thing we need." I've been using it ever since.

DISHES

Marzieh Gail gave me a most beautiful plate...UNDERNEATH A PLANT!!! The plant kicked the bucket but the plate is displayed in a place of honor on my kitchen wall. It is lovely and I often think of her when I see it.

Also, in her will she left me one of her paintings. I chose the one that hung on the wall behind Marzi as she sat on the sofa (her usual place when I visited) and I sat in one special chair that was "mine" and Harold, his, because of his bad back. In any case, every time I visited her, this painting was behind her on the wall, so I did my fair share of looking at it.

I also have her wooden silverware drawer insert. She painted little flowers on the sides of it as in her home in Keene, NH, she had painted circles of little flowers on each doorknob in the house.

Marzieh used to make her own stationery, cutting a piece of typing paper in half across the short side, turning the page so that it was rectangular with the long part on the sides, and painting a little picture up in the corner with some wise remark penned in beneath it.

Funny what memories are awakened by dishes.

ASHTRAY BY MARY LOU SUHM

One time when I dropped in without notice on Marzieh and Harold in Keene, New Hampshire, I admired a little brass frog. The frog's top flipped upward, and his bottom half was a little brass ashtray. Many a child has played with that frog since then.

I learned: Never, ever admire anything in the presence of Marzieh Gail. Next thing you know, it's yours. I'm glad I have it, though, because every day when I look at it, I'm reminded of her.

THE PEARL RING

The above info, Gayle hastens to add, is not entirely correct. Once, when Marzieh was showing me her jewelry, I was examining this and that. I have to tell you that her taste in jewelry was, for the most part, a bit more flamboyant than mine. There was, however, a pearl ring in her belongings...a pearl solitaire. I deemed it the most tasteful thing she had, except for her green stone Bahá'í ring. I hastened to comment on the beauty of the pearl ring. Marzieh construed that to mean that I wanted the pearl ring, which was NOT the case. From then on, when I telephoned her, she'd bellow down the apartment hallway to Harold, sitting in the kitchen, "It's Gayle T. She's calling to check my vital signs. She's after the pearl ring!!!"

Well, Kathy Curtis Babcock (a good, dear friend) and I went visiting Marzieh and Harold one day and Marzi brought out a wooden salad bowl with a slew of costume jewelry in it. "Help yourselves to anything there, girls," she magnanimously offered. Tickled, we rummaged around at the same time and lo and behold, if the pearl ring wasn't in the costume jewelry!!! I held it up with a delightedly greedy smile on my face and Marzi said, "Oh, that was in there? Yes, it's nice to have that ring which my dear Papa gave to me." Quick as a wink I turned my glance to her and said, "I, too, have a father who has died."

We had the most wonderful times together and I miss her terribly. No one in the world could ever take her place. Irrepressible, simply irrepressible Marzieh Gail!

BOOK

Marzieh Gail, in her book, AVIGNON IN FLOWER, quoted someone as saying "every head's a world". This has proven true for most, but the head of Marzieh Gail was a galaxy. The education she received was the finest of both eastern and western cultures, and that education took root in an intellectually fertile soil. Marzieh's education went far beyond the formal training she received, and ventured into realms from the ridiculous to the sublime. The saying "feet on the ground and head in the stars" could not aptly be applied to Marzieh. The "head in the stars" portion was Marzieh through and through, however she depended upon her faithful spouse Harold for much of the business of her feet being grounded. Although Harold was Marzieh's editor, he stridently refused any credit whenever anyone intimated that he, too, had "written" any of Marzieh's books. But the two of them were a team for over fifty years. He was her cook, her banker, her chauffeur, her helpmate and companion.

I was very touched once when Marzieh showed me a book, LAROUSSE'S DICTIONARY OF MYTHOLOGY, in which Harold had inscribed, "For Marzieh, my valentine of years past and future, Harold." That quietly undemonstrative inscription moved me far more than I can explain. Theirs was a relationship laced with mystery and romance. After I got married, Marzieh constantly showered me with advice on marriage. "Keep a deep sense of mystery," she'd counsel and I'd laugh, practical soul that I am. She'd say, "Aunt Ella (Goodall Cooper) was always giving us advice which we never followed. We'd laugh at it. Rich people don't give very good advice. It's not affordable!" Marzieh almost never had anything negative to say about anyone, but was always upbeat and accepting of any new person who might chance her way and such it was with me.

I first "met" her when I lived in Burlington, Vermont. She knew my father (Wayne Hoover) and I wrote to her, including a poem I had written about 'Abdu'l-Baha. She wrote back and we were off and running. Our first visit was Feb. 2, 1971...Ground Hog Day. What an "anniversary"!

One day when she and Harold were living in Keene, NH, I visited her. Please understand that the Gails had no telephone for the 18 years they lived in Keene. It made getting together something of an ordeal to plan. I'd write to her well in advance asking if such and such a date was okay for a visit, and

she'd send me back a postcard saying what time I should arrive and, although it was a three hour drive to her house, there was never any offer of overnight hospitality. That is something that the Gails just never did. (After they moved to San Francisco and bought new furniture, I happened to notice one day while visiting that the sofa was...a SOFABED! I indicated my discovery to Marzieh who swore me to secrecy. "Don't you DARE tell a soul!")

My story diverged. As I was saying, I went to visit her in Keene. I pulled up to their home at 63 Beaver Street and knocked on the door. Harold answered and said, "The bird has flown. Here's a map to find her." I ended up at the home of Vera Pierce who was having two housemothers from the University of Keene over for tea. Somewhat confused, I took the offer of a chair and a cuppa. The conversation went on for several minutes, after which Marzieh popped up and said, "Well, we must be going. We have things to do." I followed her lead and we left and got into my VW bug. She directed me through Keene until we came to a bookshop, and later an antique shop. She had our day planned, all right. She kept up such a steady stream of chatter that, amused, I asked her, "Got a lot of sleep last night, didn't you?" "Yes, how did you know?" Marzieh had a lot of energy in those days, but then, so did I, so we were well matched. As a remembrance of that day I have a finely macraméd window curtain pull with delicate turquoise colored glass beads which I bought at the antique shop we visited together.

Marzieh was a lot of fun. She was fun to be with, fun to banter with, and it was fun to be let into her world, as I was from time to time.

One day we were riding the bus in San Francisco on Van Ness Avenue. We came to a large building which had been used not so long ago as an auto showroom and, therefore it was grandiose in style. She pointed out two bears, which were sitting atop two columns on either side of the entrance. They were very high and could easily be missed. Marzieh had seen them though. "I call them 'the ineffables'" she confided.

One day she and I were riding on that same bus line when a woman sat down in front of us. For some strange reason we started talking about her hat...in French. It was a stretch for my high school French, but not for Marzieh who'd lived in France and was quite fluent.

On the day of the Loma Prieta Earthquake in San Francisco, Gladys Stewart went to Marzieh and Harold's apartment to check in on them. "They were both seated, dressed to leave. Marzieh had her handbag on her lap". Gladys asked how they were and Marzieh replied, "You know us immigrants are always ready to be shipped off."

MARZIEH'S SISTER HAMIDEH (AKA. BAHIIYYIH CORNELL)

One day I was going to pick up the Gails and take them to the Bahá'í Center in San Francisco because someone special was speaking, I believe it was David Hofman or possibly David Ruhe. When I arrived at the Gails' Sacramento St. apartment, I was met with a buzz of consternation. It seemed that Hamideh,

Marzieh's younger sister, had just arrived unannounced. Having heard of the guest speaker and wanting to attend, she had taken a bus from Salinas to San Francisco and, with nary a warning phone call, had simply shown up at their door. Marzieh was concerned that I might not have room in the car for Hamideh, but I did and so we left for the Center.

Hamideh was quite tired. She was not young, and the bus trip had worn her out. As the speaker began to speak, Hamideh dozed off. She was seated in the row ahead of us, directly in front of Marzieh. I was seated at Marzieh's left and Harold at her right. After the speaker finished, he called for questions and Hamideh arose, fresh from her nap and began talking.

"Make her sit DOWN!" Marzieh hissed to me. "I'm not going to make her sit down. She's YOUR sister. YOU make her sit down," I hissed back at her. Darned if Marzieh didn't stand up, grab the back of Hamideh's belt and plop her down in her chair...two persons who had met 'Abdu'l-Baha, two National Treasures, two squabbling sisters.

NOTES ON MARZIEH'S FAMILY

Marzieh was born the second child in a family of three children. Her brother, Rahim, was the eldest. Second came Marzieh and then Hamideh. All of the family hopes were pinned on Rahim, but at age twenty, he became mentally ill. The young hope of the family was diagnosed as being schizophrenic and he had to be institutionalized.

Marzieh's mother, Florence Breed, was heartbroken and quoted Shakespeare, from Hamlet, about Ophelia, "Sweet bells, jangling out of tune." The family's hopes fell on Marzieh's shoulders. She fulfilled and even exceeded their expectations, despite the difficulties of the times. Her burden? She was a woman in times of great prejudice against that gender.

Through personal connections she became a student at Stanford (many favors were called in to get her enrolled) and graduated with high honors and special commendations. The list of the people with whom Marzieh consorted reads like a page out of a Bahá'í Who's Who: Mark Tobey, Juliet Thompson, Martha Root, Marion Yahzdi, Guy Murchie, Amin Banani, to name a few.

My sense of Bahá'í history came alive one day when Marzieh was looking through several bags of thrift shop clothes I had bought (a brown paper bag filled was only two dollars). I showed her dress after dress and repacked them tightly by folding them lengthwise and rolling them into compact cylinders. She watched me for a while and then said, "Martha Root used to pack like that." It hit me like a jolt of lightning that she HAD traveled with Martha Root, just as recorded in Bahá'í history. But her quiet comment made it so REAL.

On the lighter side of things, one day Marzieh called me and asked if I knew how to sew. I told her that although I was no wizard I could hold my own. "What's the problem?" It seems that she had purchased a girdle in Keene, NH about three years prior and had finally reached the point of opening the package. She thought she had bought a panty girdle, but no. It was a regular

one. "So what did you do?" I asked. "Well, I cut off the bottom of a slip and sewed it onto the girdle to make it like a panty girdle." "All RIGHT, MARZIEH!" I responded with surprised enthusiasm. "But there's a problem. I can't get my other leg into it." I howled with laughter and asked, "Marzi, where were you when you tried on this girdle?" "In the bedroom," she replied. "And where was Harold?" "In the living room." "So Harold didn't get to see the look on your face when you couldn't get the second leg through?" Apparently not.

Well, she came to my house bringing the ill-fated girdle with her. The girdle was about ten inches across. (Why anyone Marzieh's tiny size would choose to be imprisoned in a girdle is beyond me! Later on she abandoned the practice and I'd like to attribute this attack of sensibility to my constant razzing.)

As I said, she came with the girdle and it was truly a sight to behold. She had cut a huge swatch of tricot nylon about eight inches wide and had sewn it, flaps on the OUTside, with huge, wandering basting stitches. The whole swatch was sewn sharply over to one side. It was no wonder she couldn't get both legs through! I took the girdle and said, "This is priceless. I'm going to keep this thing." She responded, "Now I don't want this girdle to become the flag of oppression against Marzieh in San Francisco."

I chose my first apartment in San Francisco to be close to the Gails. The three of us were six blocks apart for one year. After I married, we had a place three blocks from them for two years. We visited hard and often. We bolstered those visits with daily phone conversations. And when Marzieh went into the hospital to get a pacemaker, I was frequently at her side.

One visit to the hospital I took my little tape recorder and turned it on as she began to talk. I was open about this. However, Marzieh, having been raised in a non-technical era, remained unaware of my activities even after I got up to flip over the tape. About 45 minutes later she asked it that had been on. "Yup," I replied, "but we've only been talking about your father."

Days later she reminded me that she had mentioned a believer who had gotten into some mischief. Even though I thought it was hilarious, I agreed to bleep out this believer's name and she was satisfied. And it's a good thing I did because this believer later gained national acclaim in the Faith. I later contacted him and asked him if the allegation was true. He denied it and I have no reason to disbelieve him.

HAMIDEH'S DEATH

There came a time when Marzieh heard that her sister Hamideh was not faring well. Marzieh, Harold and I discussed it and I suggested that this might be a good time to pay a visit. She had no idea how she might get to Salinas. I said I could take her. She cottoned on to the idea and a plan was made. I rented a car to insure that car failure wouldn't be in the cards for us, and made reservations at a Motel 6 for us to stay one night since I didn't know how much this trip might take out of Marzieh. On the trip down we had such fun. We sang songs in the car and swapped stories. When we pulled into the parking lot of

the Motel 6, Marzieh was thoroughly impressed that not only had I known the way to the motel, but that we had a room reserved for us, not too heady an assignment, but something she never used to do and therefore a wonderful thing to her thinking.

That evening we went to the hospital and saw Hamideh. She couldn't speak very well at the time, but Marzieh continued to talk to her. After the hospital we got something to eat and retired to the motel. Both of us got into our nightclothes.

How the next subject came up I cannot recall, but we ended up talking about shooting rubber bands. Marzieh had no idea such a possibility existed. To remedy this huge gap in her knowledge, I demonstrated that fine childhood art. I pointed to a patch (about 12 inches square) on the curtain and told her I was going to hit it. She looked at me. I said, "Don't look at me. Look at the square." She was some impressed when I hit my mark.

Then I stood at the foot of her bed. She was sitting up and leaning against the headboard. I gave her a rubber band and stood at the foot of the bed, holding up her robe. "Now hit this," I said. She tried and tried until success was hers. Actually, ours. I was pretty excited, too.

The next day we went to the hospital and there was a note scrawled to a nurse, "I dreamed my sister was here." I saved the note and gave it to Marzieh later. Hamideh and Marzieh had a good visit that time.

While they were talking, it occurred to me that the hospital would have a hard time reaching Marzieh by phone, should the necessity arise. I advised them that her phone was usually plugged in from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. or so and perhaps again briefly in the afternoon. "Well," I said, "why not write my phone number down just in case."

Sure enough, some weeks later I got a call at 5:30 on a Saturday morning. Hamideh had passed on and the hospital had been unable to contact the Gails. The hospital staff said that arrangements needed to be made to remove her body. I asked what their time frame was and they said two hours. Two hours! Here I was, just barely awake (but waking up ever faster) and three hours away from the hospital! I called the Dragnas, a Bahá'í family in Salinas who had mentioned an undertaker there with whom the Bahá'ís had done business, and got that party's name. Then I called the undertaker and made arrangements. I knew that Hamideh had military benefits of about \$2,000 for burial purposes.

At that time such an amount wouldn't make a sizeable dent in most funeral costs. The mortician was a very cooperative gent and gave me information as to the costs of different cemeteries in the area, as well as contact people and their phone numbers. I spoke further to him about coffins, stressing that the Gails didn't have the wherewithal to pay anything over the allotted amount from the military.

We ended up finding a suitable coffin and plot within Hamideh's means. Also, we set a tentative date for the funeral, which was to be graveside.

Before I knew it, 8:30 a.m. had rolled around. I continued to try the Gails until 10:30 a.m. with no luck. Finally I gave up and drove over.

Their living room window gave out onto the street, but three storeys up. Since their doorbell was their telephone, unless their phone was plugged in, contact was limited to hollering up from the sidewalk. When I got back to the front door and rang them, Marzieh answered and said, "Is it Hamideh?" Me: "Yes". Her: "Is she dead?" "Yes." And after she rang me in, as her receiver went to the hook of her phone I heard her say, "Oh, Bund, Hamideh's dead. NOW what are we going to do?" I was so touched by that. Practical things were NOT something Marzieh was good at and here loomed the prospect of making final plans for her sister.

When I gained entrance into their apartment I told them what I had planned so far and their gratitude was palpable. We confirmed the tentative burial date and the other plans I had made, all, of course, subject to their approval. One of the Bahá'ís of Salinas went to the cemetery and checked out the plot. The verdict was positive. Nice area, etc. Marzieh later selected readings for the service and my husband and I made plans to take Marzieh down to Salinas for the funeral.

Once we got to the gravesite, she asked about opening the coffin so that she could place a Bahá'í ring on her sister's finger, and did so. She was unaware that I was taking photos. She was composed during the whole service and read her passage clearly. The day was clear and windy. The gravesite was on the top of a hill and the climate was cooperative.

After the service we returned home to San Francisco. This time I knew that the trip could be made in one day. Some months later I referred to all the fun we had on our (first) trip to Salinas. "Yerp," muttered Marzieh, "nothin' like a burial to cheer you up."

MARZIEH AND THE FIFTEEN CENTS

One day I was visiting the Gails at the Sacramento St. apartment and I had to use the facilities. I was in the process of excusing myself when Dale Southerland, also visiting, said, "Don't forget to leave a dime on the tank." Being a good American (i.e., if some is good, more must be better) I fished around in my coin purse and came up with a dime AND a nickel. In the bathroom I rethought things and said to myself, "He said a dime." Not wanting to go to the trouble of putting the nickel back into my purse, I deposited it in a wooden box the Gails kept on a bookcase just outside in the hallway.

Little did I know at the time, but Harold was watching. The next time I saw Marzieh she said to me, "These are the actual coins. They are not substitutions." She had taken the cardboard top of a box of paper clips and had scotch taped the nickel and dime onto it. At the top she had pierced a hole and to it had tied a piece of hideous day-glow pink ribbon. She handed me the thing and I laughed and put it in my purse without another thought.

Our next stop was a thrift shop. We made our purchases and were waiting in

line. I couldn't help but notice that Marzieh stood ahead of me, her purse gaping open, a pickpocket's dream. Not being able to resist such a temptation, I rustled around in my purse and came up with the fifteen cents. Plunk, it went into her purse. Marzieh was at my apartment not too long after that and after she left, what did I find under a pillow on the sofa but that dangd fifteen cents!

We were off and running! I visited her and put it under her pillow on her bed. She left it somewhere in my house. Then I thought, "I'll get her". I mailed it to her apartment. Several days later when I returned home from work I noticed a large manila envelope on my bed with "Gayle Thorne" written in the Bahá'í Center secretary's (Mary Johnson at that time) handwriting. "Ooohhh, something from Mary..." I thought. Opened the thing and inside was the envelope I had mailed to her. She hadn't even opened it!!! Instead she had slashed through her address and had written "Please forward to San Francisco Bahá'í Center" and the address. Then she called Mary and sweetly asked if there was some way she could get the envelope to me. My husband was on the Assembly and at the Center on a weekly basis. Mary asked him to take the envelope to me and he did so.

Later Marzieh had a dog in Palo Alto send me the fifteen cents in the mail, complete with a photo of the dog as well as an actual paw print.

It was near this time I had an accident and spent two months in the hospital. Marzieh, ever gracious, spent more time with me on the phone and supplanted this extra contact with occasional letters. One day we were speaking and she asked if anything had come in the mail. "No, Marzieh, the fifteen cents hasn't come yet." Couple of days later my husband brought the mail and there it was....it had been to the Canary Islands and she had asked Peggy True to send it to me from there!

That evening Roxanne Terrel visited me and I told her the story of the fifteen cents. "I'm going to Fiji next. Do you want me to mail it to her from there?" I quickly agreed and gave it to her.

Next day I told Marzieh it had, indeed, arrived. "I'll tell you what," she conspired, "let's each take a dollar and add it to the fifteen cents and give it to the Fund."

"Sorry, Marzieh, but it's out of my hands." Quickly she shot off, "You gave it to Roxanne Terrel and she's going to mail it from Fiji !!!!!" How she could so quickly draw the correct conclusion was beyond me, but she did it.

Later on we were at a dinner for about 20-30 believers in a restaurant. Shahla Maghzi, then about 11 or 12 years old came to me at the table and asked if she could put the fifteen cents in Marzieh's pocket. Well, I didn't have the actual thing on me so I fished out another fifteen cents. Marzieh caught her in the act. Mission impossible.

Barbara French, seated at Marzieh's left, asked me what was going on. I told her and she asked for the coins. Plunked them right into Marzieh's left pocket.

That night Marzieh called me and really let me have it. "Absolutely despicable to try to employ the services of a CHILD!" she vented. Further abuse poured from her lips. I let her empty. When at last she was quiet I said, "Why don't you look in your left pocket." Oh, the spewings that came forth after that. She was really kicking herself that I'd had the best of her.

"I'm not worried about the fifteen cents, Marzieh," I told her one day. "I know that I'm going to win." "How?" she asked. "I'm going to put it in your coffin!!!" She knew I had her. Alternately I had thought that I might have it encased in a brick sized rectangle of acrylic with a sign inside saying, "Property of Marzieh Gail" and she thought that was rather creative.

When Marzieh did die, I didn't have the heart to part with the fifteen cents.

MARZIEH'S DEATH

After Harold died in November of 1992, Marzieh became more and more detached from this world. It was as if she were a photograph doing the opposite of developing...she began to fade. It was necessary to have someone live with her.

Since Harold had been such an assistance to her, there were many things she was not able to do for herself with any degree of competency. As a matter of fact, I used to joke with her that if Harold should die first, she had to come to live with us since she only knew how to cook breakfast. But should she go first, Harold could choose where he wanted to live because he knew how to fix lunch AND supper.

Nushin Mavaddat was instrumental in finding first Tanja Sargent and then Elena Bey to be with Marzieh, cook her food, and see to her general needs. Tanja cared for her for about 10 months prior to going to China to teach English. Elena was with her for only a month or two before Marzieh passed to the next world.

It was arranged that she should move to a boarding house in San Francisco. It was a small place that offered quality care. Marzieh went to supper there and spent one night. She died the next day. I found out about her passing when I called a Hourolain Maghzi on October 16, 1993 and asked how she was. "Not so well since our Marzieh passed." I had to get off the phone quickly and cried and cried. I had hoped to be with her when she died, or at least to have some sort of warning. Not to be.

I called Elena who told me that the Friday night dinner at the boarding house had been wonderful. Marzieh was animated and witty and wonderful to be with. At dinner she told the others there about the Bahá'í Faith. She retired to her room and Elena read from the Kitab-i-Aqdas until Marzieh fell asleep.

The next day she passed out around 11:30 a.m. and was taken to the hospital where she revived and again was articulate and witty. Shortly thereafter she died. "But her nails were beautifully done" said Elena, a fact that would have carried much weight with Marzieh.

Nushin was handling arrangements for Marzieh's funeral. I called him to ask

about the washing of Marzieh's body. I knew I had to do more for and with her than just attend her funeral. I found out the time and place of the preparation of her body and ascertained that my presence would be acceptable.

So on a Saturday afternoon in October, five women gathered to do the honors: Beshrat Radpour from the East Bay, Marzieh's cousin Faeri from San Jose, Hourolain Maghzi from San Francisco, Hourolain's daughter-in-law Charleen Maghzi from San Francisco (there at Hourolain's request so that Charleen would know what to do when it came time to wash Hourolain's body) and me.

Although I did not expect opulence in a room reserved for the washing of bodies, I still was very taken aback at the plainness of the surroundings. The small washing room was carved out of a larger room...a garage with motorcycle parts all around. The only thing of dignity and class in the garage was the magnificent coffin Nushin had selected for her.

We retired to the room designated for washing bodies and began our prayers. This was extremely difficult for me. There on the porcelain slab, wrapped in white plastic, lay the tiny parcel that had once been my Marzieh. When the prayer book was passed to me I waved it on, unable to control my quiet but violent crying. Others finished their prayers and Charleen lovingly handed me the prayer book and pointed out one sentence for me to read. I did so, but it was difficult.

The other women were preparing for their task by donning hospital gowns and rubber gloves. I asked Charleen, an R.N., if it was necessary to wear rubber gloves for health reasons. I was pleased when she said it wasn't necessary because I wanted to touch Marzieh, my skin to her skin, with nothing in the way.

We began to unwrap the body and when I removed the part covering her face I gasped, "She looks like her sister!" Marzieh, the consummate artist, had, through the assistance of makeup, wigs, and a liberal dose of her ever-important "mystery", managed to stave off the effects of ageing far better than her sister, who was less vain than she. The wig was off and the animating effects of her soul were no longer there and she truly looked her age.

The women began to work, as did I, at washing the former home of Marzieh's precious soul. They began to sing in Persian. Marzieh's cousin had brought a hair dryer and after the women had washed her hair and they were drying it, the women were murmuring, "Oh, Marzieh Khanum" (lady) "your hair is so beautiful!" No one that I ever knew had seen it for years. She always wore her wigs.

Marzieh's cousin had brought rose water and white silk. The body was annointed with the rose water and the silk was cut into five pieces: one for each limb and one for the torso and head. White satin ribbon was tied at the wrists, ankles and neck to keep the silk in place.

Once the body was wrapped, I moved closer to it, scooped under her upper torso and gave her the hug I could never give her while she was living. ("I was raised in the Victorian era. I simply am not used to it. I wish I could be

warmer, but so it is.")

Although I had kidded with Marzieh about putting the fifteen cents in her coffin, I couldn't do it. I couldn't part with the memento. But I wanted to put something in that would mean a lot to both of us. She was very happy that I had named my daughter after her.

One time at the San Francisco Baha'i Center she was seated near the back of the auditorium on the aisle when we came in and our little Marzieh passed her. Kathy Curtis bent to greet "Big Marzi" and was told, pride streaming from her every pore as she motioned towards my little girl: "Named after Me, you know."

So I decided to put something in her coffin that would last. I had had my daughter's picture taken at KMart. They had provided a kit to make an ID card for a child. It was sealed in plastic and contained information about her, height, weight, thumb print, address, etc. That's what I slipped under the pillow in Marzieh Gail's coffin.

The next day was the funeral. In the past I had heard people say, "I did my grieving before" and I always thought that they must be the coldest of people. However, now I knew that liberating feeling. I was free of my immediate grief and could tend to others who needed me.

The funeral was beautifully planned by Nushin Mavaddat who'd had much experience in planning tasteful and impressive programs at the SF Baha'i Center in the past.

After the coffin was moved to the place of burial (just up the hill from the Mortuary's chapel where the funeral was held) throngs of people surrounded the gravesite. Prayers went on and on. Just when it seemed as though it might be over, another prayer would come. It was as if the people gathered there to pay her homage just couldn't let go of her. However, at last it ended and her body was entombed next to that of Harold, her life-mate.

BABY PICTURES

Marzieh Gail was full of mischief. Once she told me that she used to hang around a bunch of women who were perpetually circulating pictures of their babies, grand babies, etc. So, she put a picture of a baby in her wallet and showed it with pride. AFTER all the ladies had gushed over "Marzieh's baby", she said, "You know who that is? Adolf Hitler." Was she a piece of work or what?

BUG

Many moons ago (before children) I went to Maine and visited with my friend Sandi Rhode Mangan (LaVerne Rhode's daughter) for a week. Her daughter, Alexa, had found four baby birds and had been trying to nurse them to continue living. I got in on the deal, taking raw hamburger and rolling it up to look like worms (knowing they had the capability of ingesting that shape) and fed them multiple times during the day and the night. I left a light on near them for warmth. Well, one died before I got on the case and then another one bit the dust. The

two surviving ones looked hopeful, but one finally died. The other was robust. I asked Alexa if I could take him back to SF with me and she consented.

I was concerned over laws regulating the transfer of living things state to state so smuggled him onto the plane. When I went through the metal detector, he was smuggled in the valley between my breasts in my bra. I should have left him there. I think the cold air on the airplane did him in.

He made it home and I took him to Feast the next morning. Marzieh was enchanted by him. She held the cottage cheese carton which contained him and marveled and marveled. By this time I'd named him Bug. That night he died. Marzieh was so grieved that she took a small, flat and rounded stone and in nail polish wrote "Bug" on it for a headstone. While I buried Bug in our back yard, I kept his headstone as a memento of Marzieh.

HUGGING MARZIEH'S SHROUDED BODY

From a member of Baha'i Women Converse came this question... What was it like to hold Marzieh's shrouded body? That was so touching when you wrote that in your earlier post. A Victorian woman, indeed. And yet so much more.

I knew it would be my only chance to hug her body. It was tender and warm, although she wasn't warm at all.

I'd had multiple dreams while she was living, dreams wherein she was fused to the right side of my body in such a way that her shoulder fit right under my right arm. We went everywhere that way, including swimming. I saw it as a protective move on my part. She really did need a lot of protecting since her forte was writing and that is about all. Couldn't even write a check. She was so sweet and sassy and smart and I miss her so. Never will there be another like her. I know that this is true for all of us, but somehow it seems more lonesome in the case of "Big Marzi". That's what we called her after my daughter was born. Big Marzi didn't quite stand five feet tall and one day I said, "Look how long it took for you to be called "Big Marzi," and she said, "Aw sharrrrrup." The r's were rolled.

MG'S SPEECH ON FEB.14TH, MARZIEH GAIL APPRECIATION DAY AT THE SF BAHA'I CENTER.

Good Morning, The quotation we just heard is quite beautiful isn't it? It's indeed a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak today. I am very much interested in the objectives of the Cultural Integration Fellowship: namely to build bridges of understanding between the peoples of the world and the appreciation of the many similarities between the diverse religions.

Speaking as an individual, and not as an official representative of the Baha'i Faith, I would like to share with you a few remarks regarding the Baha'i Perspective on the realization of unity in diversity in a global community; to discuss what makes Baha'is hopeful of the future, and finally what would be religion's agenda in the 21st century and beyond. As you may know there is no clergy in the Baha'i Faith which teaches the Independent Investigation of Truth.

The reason for our being here today goes beyond the personal, it is to think about the world. Obviously the world has shrunk into a neighborhood, but many people are still looking at it in the old way as if were divided up into unconnected people.

As one woman said, she did not approve of the United Nations, because there are too many foreigners in it! Well, there are now too many foreigners all over the globe. The message of Baha'u'llah is thus highly relevant to our times:

"Regard ye not one another as strangers... The Earth is but one country and mankind its citizens "

Just a couple centuries ago it was extremely difficult for people to relate to giving up national sovereignty in favor of unity. The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, Shoghi Effendi, has written that "welding the American States into a single federation...(was) a task infinitely more complex than that which confronts a divided humanity in its efforts to achieve the unification of all mankind."

Here in the United States, there is one language coast to coast, there is one currency. They do not stop you at the frontier of Pennsylvania and search your luggage, the frontiers are invitations instead of barricades. Now such a condition is perfectly suitable for the entire world.

The other day, I was talking to my friend Gayle Thorne, baby-sitter extraordinaire, I said to her 18 month old child, Parisa, "be a good girl". Gayle said, "I don't tell her that. I don't want her to know she has an option!"

We really do not have an option anymore, if we are to survive. Since we are living in a new world, but still dealing with it in old fashioned ways, with old ideas which don't work, we simply have to develop a new world outlook. Baha'is believe that our Teachings provide the necessary new outlook, the new philosophy to match the new one world-globe.

I recall a statement - a while back - by an official on TV about something or another. He said: "If a change occurs, this would definitely mandate a re-assessment of the situation". Now, certainly, all of us on earth are mandated to reassess the situation. It's no use pushing the blame off on to the leaders. The people are also responsible and must create a climate of united world opinion. We already have this in the Baha'i system which is developing around the planet.

Society is gravely ill. Of the homeless, a recent article in the New Yorker says that "knowingly or not, we are creating a generation of diseased, distraught, undereducated and malnourished children who without a dramatic intervention on a scale for which the nation seems to be entirely unprepared for, will grow into the certainty of unemployable adulthood." That applies only to the United States, but now imagine what the rest of the world is like!

Baha'is believe that God - the Unknowable, has dramatically intervened in human affairs by sending two prophets, His Herald the Bab, and the Founder

Baha'u'llah, to 19th century Persia, Who have addressed the problems of modern times. We believe that only a religious Faith can reform mankind. And you may well say, which Faith? The answer is all of them together. The Baha'i Faith accepting them all, provides a meeting ground. No previous Faith can do the work alone. Each one is authentic but each is divided within.

Many will tell you that religion has caused so much harm in the world. Why bother with it? Why not humanism? Well, humanism does not work. It has no dynamics. The trouble with humanism is that people are human. Only a transcendent power that we all acknowledge can subdue our aggression and make the world safe for humanity.

In the words of Baha'u'llah:

"Religion is the radiant light, an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the people of the world... Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue and the lights of fairness, of justice, of tranquility and peace cease to shine".

Now the proof that God exists is the strange phenomenon of the Prophets of God. The only way to explain Them is that They are telling us the Truth. They are not personally ambitious because They chose a path that leads to Their own ruin. They are not crazed, because after They leave the world philosophers study Them down the ages, so They must be intervening in history as They speak on behalf of a stupendous Higher Power. This is the only way you can explain the success that Baha'is are having in the world. We believers know that it is not our doing. It is the Will of God at work fulfilling the prophecies of Holy Scriptures gone before.

Baha'is believe in the fundamental oneness of religion and progressive revelation. That is, religions follow one another down the ages, always have and always will.. Each Divine Educator brings a renewal of religion suitable for their time. The Prophet's main Message is The Golden Rule which is one and the same for all of them. If we agree that children should be educated gradually, with different teachers, according to their age and capacity, then we can also agree in that humanity has had to go through a process of growth as well, and God, in His infinite love and wisdom has guided us in accordance to our ever-changing needs.

The Baha'i Faith is a restatement of the divine purpose for humanity. It comes not to abolish past religions but to connect, unify and fulfill them. Its goal is the purification, the unification and the spiritualization of a morally and spiritually bankrupt society now hovering on the brink of self destruction.

As it has always happened when a new religion appears, the clergy tried to stop its spread. This Faith had to spread across the world with its Herald put to death and its Founder cut off in a prison city on the Mediterranean sea. From the onset, that is in 1844, the believers of this gentle Faith were the victims of cruel persecutions by the fanatic clergy ruling Persia. Over 20,000 were martyred because of their belief in the Baha'i Faith. These persecutions are

still ongoing in our days. The appeals of U.S. presidents and resolutions from the congress and other governments notwithstanding, hundreds more have been jailed and killed, especially the professional class. Young college girls have been hanged. Some of the them have been burnt alive. The wars in the Balkan states and Caucus to name only a couple, once more bring to us the cry of the people for peace, justice and unity.

Today, whenever voices are raised to protest what is going on in Iran, or some other country, the leaders of those countries say that their Internal Affairs are being interfered with. There is no one outside to protect the citizen from its government, because there are no effective supranational institutions.

What the Persian martyrs are saying is: It is time for Humanity to rise up in unity and call a halt. Call a halt to the old and establish the new universal system for peace as set forth in the Writings of Baha'u'llah.

So many in Americans think that God has forgotten humanity, because if He had not forgotten, He would not let these horrible things happen. The Baha'i martyrs by their actions are telling the human race that God remembers and has sent His Messengers and His martyrs to build world peace and that there is one God, one human race, one global world.

What is needed in this global village of ours is a balance between the material and the spiritual, the scientific and the ethical, man and woman, etc. A sustainable global civilization cannot emerge until this balance is achieved. Religion must play a critical role in infusing spirituality in a despairing world. If religion is to do this successfully, it must conquer differences and become one. Thus religion itself must be one and global.

The Baha'i Faith recognizes this ethical imperative as the most important task facing humanity in the next millennium. The teachings of Baha'u'llah have imbued the human psyche with a planetary vision of its true nature and motivated it to direct its full potential for the welfare of humanity as a whole.

Baha'u'llah teaches that this expanding vision of ourselves as a unified race - the human race - is predicated upon the gradual unfoldment of a process of ethical education begun since the dawn of history by the spiritual impulses set in motion by Krishna, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed and now for our age, Baha'u'llah..

We need a religion which matches the times so that we can get along with one another, locally, nationally and internationally. We need a religion free of religious, racial, sexual and economic prejudices. We need a religion which will foster justice, peace and which will unite the peoples of the world. Earlier Faiths addressed earlier ages and earlier problems. Only through renewed religion can we free ourselves from ourselves and carry forward an ever advancing civilization.

The Baha'i Faith is the first religion to promise peace in its time. The others refer to peace as something in the distant future. Jesus prophesied war and

rumors of wars. Mohammed prophesied Great Tribulations before the coming of the Lord. That is in Surih 89 (the surih of daybreak).

But for Baha'is the time is now. When religion is weakened and divided it is restored by a new Prophet of God carrying the teachings needed for our times.

Baha'u'llah has left us an immense body of Writings to guide humanity for the next 1000 years when a new Messenger will appear again to renew religion.

Life is short, we cannot leave all the responsibilities, opportunities and achievements to others. We need to look for truth with a searching eye. I feel it is important for each one of us to ask ourselves what would be the fundamental basis for creating justice, peace and tranquility within our own heart and mind, our families, our cities, the nations, the world?

Justice is important because one cannot build a civilization just on love or forgiveness, but on justice.

Baha'u'llah writes:

"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."

Baha'u'llah addresses the needs of the Global Community based on three fundamental verities:

1 - THE UNITY OF GOD The Baha'i belief in the unity of God means that the universe and all creatures, forces and realities within it have been created by one single super-human and supernatural Being.

2 - THE ONENESS OF HUMANKIND Baha'u'llah wrote: "Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch." "So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth."

3 - THE ONENESS OF RELIGION Baha'is believe that divine revelation is a continuous and progressive process, that all the great religions of the world are divine in origin,

Other principles of the Baha'i Faith:

- The Independent Investigation of Truth (There is no Clergy)
- The essential harmony of Religion and Science (Two most potent forces in human life)
- The Equality of Women and Men ("The World of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female
- Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God)"
- Universal Education

- Spiritual Solution of the Economic Problem
- Elimination of Prejudice of all kinds
- A universal auxiliary language
- Universal Peace upheld by a world government.

What message other than this could possibly bring peace today?

Baha'is believe this is the dawn of a New Era, the coming of centuries of enlightenment when individuals and society depart from their traditional mindset and - either as a result of an act of will or because of a calamity - start searching for new answers.

The Baha'i Writings express the Glad Tidings and the vision the New Era as follows:

"This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of unity. The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion..."

As mentioned earlier Baha'u'llah was a nobleman in 19th century Persia. Because of His Teachings He endured imprisonment and exile for 40 years. The ascension of Baha'u'llah took place, in the prison city of Akka, Palestine, on May 29th, 1892 in the 75th year of His life. He has left us an immense body of Holy Writings, informing us of God's Will for this Day as well as the relevance of His Message in connection to the requirements of the modern world, its outreach to all the peoples of the world and the fulfillment of the prophecies of earlier Faiths.

In addition to offering us a world-embracing vision, Baha'u'llah's Writings give great emphasis on the need for individual transformation. This is where we need to start. World peace is not somewhere out there, it starts within each individual. We cannot depend on government legislation, or economic progress, or military conquests, or technological advances to change our hearts and our values, to create love and compassion - or to reduce the anguish in our souls.

So our task is twofold: one is individual transformation and the other: developing a world-embracing vision. It is through daily interaction with Holy Writings and service to humanity that each individual can best realize his or her potential spiritual growth and play a role in God's will to unify mankind. Today we can be the champion builders of the edifice of future generations. Today we can be the dawnbreakers giving light to a despairing world.

For those who feel that the earth is one country and humanity its citizenry, I am sure they will find themselves right at home in the Baha'i community.

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