

Sheridan A. Sims, Sandra Sims Fotos

Barbara Helen Rutledge Sims was born on April 17, 1918 in San Francisco and raised in various communities in the Bay Area and San Joaquin Valley in Central California. She was the second of five children. She was a third generation Bahá'í; her grandmother Mary (Mollie) Burland, and her mother, Helen Burland Rutledge, were guided to the Faith by John Henry Hyde Dunn and Clara Dunn (the Duns later established the Faith in Australia and were appointed Hands of the Cause).

Our mother received much of her early Bahá'í education at the Geyserville Bahá'í Summer School, north of San Francisco, and she periodically returned there to attend programs as a young adult. One of her favorite Geyserville memories was of Agnes Alexander, one summer day in 1953, telling her listeners about the faraway pioneer post to which she had first gone in 1914: Japan.

When the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, issued his call for believers to serve in the first Global Crusade (1953-1963), our mother felt a strong desire to become a pioneer. Through the bounty of Bahá'u'lláh she was able to fulfill her desire in December of 1953, when she left California for Japan with her husband, Charles A. "Sandy" Sims (who was not a Bahá'í but had been born and raised in Japan), and her daughter Sandra. (A son, Sheridan, was born a few years later.)

The early years in a country rebuilding after war were particularly difficult, but eventually our mother found employment with the U.S. government, which, together with the English language teaching she continued until a few months before her death, provided the material means for life in Japan.

Barbara Sims was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tokyo in 1954 and served for many years on that body. In 1957 she was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of North East Asia, and in 1974 she was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Japan, serving until 1993. She was secretary for many years on those Assemblies. She also served on a number of national committees, developed the National Archives, volunteered in the national office and on the staff of the Publishing Trust, went on teaching trips around Japan and to other Asian countries, and wrote Bahá'í histories of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Macau and Tokyo, and her memoirs.

Although life as a pioneer had its hardships, our mother considered the bounties of service to infinitely outweigh them: bounties such as membership on the National and Local Assemblies, association with Hand of the Cause Agnes Alexander, participation in six International Conventions in the Holy Land; and assisting the many Bahá'í dignitaries who visited Japan for proclamation or consultation. Many of her fondest recollections were of the times spent with these persons, such as Amatu'l Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum and Hands of the Cause Ramatullah Muhajir, A.Q. Faizi and Collis Featherstone. She often mentioned the inspiration and knowledge gained from being in their presence.

In turn, by her example, she instilled in friends and family an abiding

appreciation of the importance of steadfastness and the inevitability of sacrifice in service to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

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