



religious bent. One day Dr. Kunz, who was possessed of a deeply searching mind, said to Anna. "Let's go and hear Albert Vail speak on a new philosophy . . . something about a Bahá'í Faith." So they went, along with their good friends Edwin and Annie Mattoon. They soon found themselves regular students in a class on the Bahá'í Faith given by Albert Vail, a Unitarian minister, and an eloquent, inspired teacher of comparative religions. Mrs. Kunz recognized Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for this day almost at once. During this period (1914-1915) she became an enthusiastic Bahá'í. The exact date is not known, since in those early days no one signed a membership card. Through her enrollment she became one of the founders of the Urbana Bahá'í Community, a community which served as the seed-bed for the growth of many devoted teachers of the Faith, among them Allen McDaniel, Genevieve Coy, Flora Hottes, and Beatrice Ashton.

As a young woman, Mrs. Kunz was somewhat frail and delicate. At times she suffered from severe headaches. As a newcomer to the United States she was determined to master English, a task she found trying and time-consuming. Despite ill health, timidity, the burdens of caring for small children, and the emotional strain that resulted from life in a new culture, she quickly showed signs of leadership, administrative ability, firmness, and steadfastness in the Faith. She studied the Writings assiduously, and resolved to live her life according to the Teachings. A beauty of spirit radiated from her, which was felt by those around her.

In 1921, when her husband took his sabbatical leave from the university, Dr. and Mrs. Kunz sailed to Europe, then on to Egypt, and ultimately to Haifa for pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines, where Dr. Lutfu'lláh Hakim met them and guided them to the various Holy Places. At Tiberias they attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; this was the pinnacle of Mrs. Kunz's life. She adored 'Abdu'l-Bahá; he became her Exemplar and her Master. In an article in the *Star of the West* in September 1922, she wrote:

Abdul Baha's family keeps open house all the time. . . . They live a life of great simplicity; their life is a reflection of Abdul-Baha's life. Their thoughts are with him always; they love him with a deep abiding love; they serve in his footsteps and for his sake serve all mankind. Many a precious lesson was taught to me while in this household. Often I was surprised to see that, in spite of their restricted life, these women uphold a truly broad attitude towards life in general; they know no narrowness; they are all-inclusive and therefore heavenly.

She wrote of meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá on March 27, 1921, in a hotel at Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, where He used to go for rest and a change of air. "It was a bright and luminous Easter morning when the Master called us into his room. . . . Though I feared to approach him, after his loving words of welcome this fear vanished. . . . we sat before our Master, in a little room, with only the most necessary furnishings, on top of the hotel, with a view' of that blessed lake. His look seems to go into one's very heart. Yes, he knows his children and their need. As I think of him now, I always love to think,

first of his great simplicity, his marvelous humility which knows of no self-existence, and last . . . of his boundless love. To us his outward appearance seemed similar to that of the old Hebrew Prophets, his humility, his simplicity and love were like the Christ. This boundless love conquered the hearts at once. Abdu'l-Baha talked to us with a ringing, piercing voice which will forever sound in my ears."

On Monday, March 28, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was given a photograph of the Kunz children and He gazed at it for a long while. His face lighted up and he said: "They have bright faces. They will be real Bahá'ís because they will have a Bahá'í education. They will become good Bahá'ís." Later, He revealed a wonderful prayer for them which is recorded in Star of the West.

On Monday afternoon, March 28, He spoke these words: "This lake is very blessed. His holiness Christ and the other prophets walked along its shore and were in communion with God all the time and spreading the divine teachings. Now, praise be to God that you reached this land safely and we met one another on the shore of this same lake! You will receive great results from this visit afterwards. You will become the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity. You will release the hearts of the people from the intense darkness of different prejudices, so that each soul may love all the people of the world, without distinction. Just like a shepherd who is affectionate to all his sheep, without preference or distinction, you should be affectionate to all. You should not look at their shortcomings. Consider that they are all created by God who loves them all."

Mrs. Kunz returned to Urbana with renewed zeal. She served for many years on the Spiritual Assembly of Urbana, much of the time as chairman. She also served on many committees, and was for many years a delegate to the National Bahá'í Convention. Through her attendance at these annual meetings in Wilmette, she became well acquainted with the Bahá'ís of America. Each year during convention Corinne True invited her to lunch; how Mrs. Kunz loved those small intimate gatherings in the True home, where there was time to speak of the spiritual realities of the Faith. The friends respected her knowledge of the Teachings, her wisdom, and common sense. At times she became fiery in defense of her opinions. Occasionally she served as speaker for a particular event, but on the whole she preferred to find other opportunities for service. At age 50 she took up typing, to increase her ability to serve her beloved Faith.

Mrs. Kunz, a strong personality, demanded the highest standards of performance from herself and from those around her. She raised her two daughters to be Bahá'ís. They were trained by a strong disciplinarian who knew only one path and would have no deviation from that path. Her admonition, repeated frequently to her daughters, was: "Have the courage to be different." Anna Kunz was family-oriented. the integrity and warmth of the family circle was vitally important to her. Throughout her life she remained close to her daughters and their families, adored her five grand-children, and was proud of her distinguished sons-in-law, (John O. Honnold, a professor of law, and

eventually a member of the legal staff of the United Nations in New York, and David S. Ruhe, a professor of medicine, and subsequent member of The Universal House of Justice).

The Kunz home was a haven of peace, restfulness, beauty, and hospitality for all who came there. Dr. Kunz entertained Rabindranath Tagore and other philosophers and scientists. Not only were Bahá'í classes and meetings held in the home, but also a steady stream of Bahá'í teachers spent the night there: Carl Scheffler, Philip Marangella, Albert Windust, Sarah Walrath, Fannie Knobloch, Louis Gregory, Zia Bagdadi, Corinne True, Allen McDaniel, Horace Holley, and Dorothy Baker. Dr. Kunz relished the company of attorney Louis Gregory who was a frequent visitor, and Dr. Bagdadi, a dynamic and brilliant man who was willing to engage in long philosophic discussions in which Dr. Kunz delighted. Maintaining these many Bahá'í activities in the Kunz home was not always easy, as Dr. Kunz felt his wife was too involved with the Faith. Sometimes she accompanied him to church, and she did everything in her power to make his life peaceful and happy.

Mrs. Kunz was thoughtful of people in small and large ways; she took time to listen to them and was perceptive of their inner needs and aspirations. She often said, "Think of others and forget yourself." She liked to remember others with flowers, home-baked cookies, small gifts. At age 43 she learned to drive a car, and one of her services was to drive around Urbana gathering the friends for the meetings.

In the personal and intimate details of her life she was a complete Bahá'í: cleanliness, neatness, frugality, and meticulousness were her hallmark. Her house was polished and clean; her person was immaculate. Her spirit, humble and pure, knew the power of prayer. Her prayer book was always at her side; she prayed many times each day and loved to share the prayers with her family and friends. "May we have a prayer together?" she would often say.

After the death of her husband Mrs. Kunz was free to pioneer. She offered her services to the beloved Guardian. In July,

1947 at the age of 58, she left New York to return to Switzerland, thus beginning a new phase of her life as a pioneer for the Faith. She settled in Berne, one of the goal cities of the Second Seven Year Plan, where Shoghi Effendi wrote her as follows:

I welcome your arrival in Europe and particularly in Switzerland where. I feel, your work will be of the utmost value. You will surely be blessed and sustained in your historic task, and I look forward to the day when through your exertion and those of your devoted collaborators the first Spiritual Assembly will be established in that land. Persevere in your magnificent mission.

She worked tirelessly towards the establishment of the Spiritual Assembly of Berne. After this goal was accomplished, she returned to Urbana in 1949, feeling that she was needed there. Shoghi Effendi wrote her as follows:

The services you have rendered the Faith are truly remarkable and deserve the

highest praise. I feel truly proud of your achievements, and am grateful for the spirit that so powerfully animates you in the service of our glorious Faith. I will pray ardently on your behalf, that the Beloved may abundantly reward you for your accomplishments, to enable you. in the years to come, to enrich the splendid record of your services to His Faith and its institutions.

The pioneering spirit had taken hold, and when news reached her in Urbana of the urgent needs in Switzerland, Mrs. Kunz felt restless and torn. She wanted to be near her children and her grandchildren: this was her personal longing and wish. What should she do? She wrote to Shoghi Effendi seeking his advice. For a long time there was no reply. She was relieved. Then came the stunning message: "proceed as quickly as possible to Switzerland." She was crushed. In October 1952, however, she valiantly set forth once again, this time settling in Zurich, a goal city. In the spring of 1953 she was elected a member of the newly formed Italo-Swiss National Spiritual Assembly. and to her consternation she was elected Secretary of this historic 12th National Assembly, a post which she held for nine years. (Now she understood why in mid-life she had taken up typing). At the request of Shoghi Effendi she moved back to Berne, although she would personally have preferred to remain in her splendid apartment in Zurich. At Ridván 1962 the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland was formed and Anna Kunz was again elected Secretary . She continued to serve on the Swiss National Assembly until she neared her 80th year. After being reelected in 1969 she asked to be excused from service because of age, and because her health was slowly failing.

Teaching the Faith in Switzerland was not easy—the people were highly conservative. tightly bound by traditions and customs of church and ancestry—and sometimes she became discouraged. When one of Anna's old school friends embraced the Faith, she was overjoyed. She urged other pioneers to come to Switzerland. They came because she encouraged them. But the natural beauties—the mountains, lakes, glaciers, and charming villages- —were a reward for those who arose. Anna prayed fervently and studied the Writings daily, and was able to impart hope and assurance to those who worked with her. "Whereas formerly they were as moths, they became as royal falcons . . ." The breaths of the Holy Spirit confirmed her again and again. She was a reed from which the pith of self had been blown.

Among her favorite selections from the Writings were these words which she quoted repeatedly:

There is a power in this Cause—a mysterious power—far, far, far away from the ken of men and angels: that invisible power is the cause of all these outward activities. It moves the hearts. It rends the mountains. It administers the complicated affairs of the Cause. It inspires the friends. It dashes into a thousand pieces all the forces of opposition. It creates new spiritual worlds. This is the mystery of the Kingdom of Abhá.

In 1957 she flew to London (her first airplane journey) to attend the funeral of Shoghi Effendi. Like many others she had always harbored a desire to be in

his presence, but alas, she had waited too long. His sudden passing was a terrible blow .

In 1963, 42 years after attaining the presence of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, she returned to the Holy Land, this time to fulfill the historic mission of participating in the election of the first Universal House of Justice. How Haifa and Akká had changed! Yet the same spirit of power and love emanated from the Holy Shrines at Bahji and Mt. Carmel as she knelt in prayer at the Holy Thresholds.

Her last years were marred by a series of illnesses, yet her spirit was ever radiant and bright. She gave up her cherished apartment, and moved to a nursing home in the suburbs of Berne, where she died peacefully in her sleep on August 10, 1973. The Universal House of Justice cabled: “Deeply grieved passing Anna Kunz steadfast distinguished handmaid Bahá’u’lláh her associations beloved Master devoted pioneering services Europe over extended period unforgettable. . .” She lies buried in the Schosshalden Cemetery in Berne, her pioneer post, where she remained until the end.

Countless messages were received from the friends throughout Europe and America who loved and respected her. and were heart-broken to learn of her passing. Again and again she was characterized as a “noble woman”, "a magnificent lady", "a true Bahá’í in word and deed." The National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland wrote the following: “The wonderful and fruitful services rendered by our highly esteemed Bahá’í sister to the Swiss Bahá’í Community as a Bahá’í teacher and member of our National Spiritual Assembly will never be forgotten. Her absolute dedication to our beloved Cause, her humbleness and loving kindness were an example to all of us. . .” Services were held in Berne, Rome, Urbana, Wilmette, at the Bahá’í Cabin at Teaneck, and in Langenhain, Germany (more than 30 young Swiss Bahá’ís journeyed by bus to Langenhain to pay their last respects). Prayers were said for her in Ireland, in Peru, in the Solomon Islands, at the Shrines in Haifa and 'Akká.

The Hand of the Cause Ugo Giachery, who served with her on the Italo-Swiss National Assembly, wrote the following remembrance to the Universal House of Justice:

Once more in the course of this year we must offer you our deepest condolence for the loss of a much loved and distinguished collaborator: Mrs. Anna Kunz, whose services in this continent shall be remembered for many decades to come. Having come to Switzerland during the Second Seven Year Plan, she was elected to the Italo-Swiss National Assembly at its formation on Ridván, 1953, becoming its Secretary until the election of an independent Swiss National Spiritual Assembly. The writer was also a member of the Italo-Swiss National Spiritual Assembly for the same length of time, and had the opportunity and privilege to work side by side with her and appreciate her sterling qualities, her deep love for the Cause and the high sense of responsibility in discharging the duties of the 12th National Assembly of the Bahá’í World. Her kind and loving attitude towards everybody. her wise and humane approach to so many novel problems, made of Mrs. Kunz one of the very best national Secretaries in

Europe. We mourn her loss, but pray that her noble soul may reap the reward due to those who labored so faithfully for the Cause of God.

Anna Kunz served the Faith with distinction, dedication, and dignity for almost 60 years. She lived her life with firmness, humility, orderliness, and spirituality. She inspired her family and friends with hope and faith, and "lived the life" as delineated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Grant then, O my God, that Thy servant may consort with Thy chosen ones. Thy saints and Thy Messengers, in heavenly places that the pen cannot tell nor the tongue recount.

Bahá'u'lláh

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