

Made more exciting, more vivid. Or perhaps the pilgrimage is a kaleidoscope -- where familiar things take new and fascinating form and beauty beyond imagination -- constantly changing -- yet still a different view of the same things. Bits and pieces of odd common things suddenly forming a masterpiece that shall never be recaptured except in memory. And from that moment on, you can never see a bit of red brick or a flower petal without remembering that it could be a part of a star.

And so, that first day of March, our taxi carried us on toward our dream. As many times as we've heard of the pilgrimage -- as many pictures and maps as we've studied -- it's amazing how imperfect our understanding was of what was there. Mount Carmel. I can hear myself saying it, "The Baha'is own the slope of Mt. Carmel." I had envisaged a neat and tidy high foothill ... with clusters of houses and shops hemming its bottom, with the Baha'i gardens sweeping up an entire side and the Queen of Carmel, the Shrine of the Bab, as its crown and the Archives building close at hand. "That's Carmel," our drive said! And we looked, our hearts skipping a beat. But we saw no clusters of houses, no gardens, no Shrine. Just a mountain. We looked at each other in disbelief and then tuned in on the voice of the driver as it drone on... "We'll be coming to the Shrine in another twenty miles or so..." Carmel is a range! Twenty-three miles long! As we drove on, we learned that there is not only the hotel that we'd heard of on the top of "the Carmel" -- but an entire village, "Upper Carmel." Only the hotel is visible from below and that's why, I suppose, we'd not suspected it. The driver took us through Upper Carmel -- past the supermarkets, the apartment houses and banks, past the Dan Hotel, around a curve -- and THERE IT WAS! That golden dome -- the emerald gardens with the famed cypress trees now grown into tall sentinels. Surprisingly, the gardens were on both sides of the broad curving street. We suddenly turned through some gates into a drive and down a narrow lane and there, waiting for us at the door of the pilgrim house was that dear familiar figure, that angel, that Hand -- Mr. Faizi! His eyes shining with tears, his face radiant, he embraced us and said, "Ah, I have been waiting for you for so long..." We were home.

Almost immediately we were surrounded by members of our Baha'i family whom we had not met before, whose names and faces we did not know, but whom we had loved for a long time -- our fellow pilgrims. The Persians were first. There was a tiny woman, old, beautiful, who had lived in Ishqabad, Russia. Her husband, a teacher there, had been sent to prison for 7 years and she and her daughter were banished to Iran, all because they were Baha'is. The daughter had died of a broken heart because of her separation from her father and when, at last, the husband was released and rejoined his wife, his health had been so damaged that he, too, soon passed away. The little woman is now pioneering in Kurdistan. And then there was the lovely young Persian girl -- smart, efficient -- returning to Shiraz after 2 years in England -- a granddaughter of the famed Salman -- who received many of the messages in the early days and would memorize them and then eat them -- lest they fall into enemy hands and in some way be misused. Salman -- who, after a number of

messages, heroic deeds, immortal acts -- finally sent back a delightfully human plea for "Shorter messages, thinner paper." This had always been one of my favorite vignettes of the beginnings of the Faith, and now here we were, wrapped in the arms of Salman's granddaughter! There was the darling little stocky old woman, with grayed hair firmly drawn into a knot and bandana vainly trying to cover it, who would take center stage on any occasion, standing with feet firmly planted and launch into some hilarious and lengthy story. There was no need for translation to make it funny -- the twinkle in her eyes and the drama of her presentation did all that. Obviously a peasant woman of no schooling, she was totally at home with her fellow pilgrims -- some of whom were renowned professors, doctors and the like. And there were so many others. The young couple presently living in Turkey, he, studying to be a doctor, she, to be a singer. Old. Young. Plain people and sophisticated ones. All with an inner beauty that shone forth constantly.

There were 14 "Easterners" and 7 of us from the West. We three; a wonderful New England woman, a long-time Baha'i, Olive Schlessinger; Ida Jurgenson from Los Angeles who defied her 70 plus years as she climbed the hills and demonstrated in other ways perhaps the youngest spirit of us all; Ann Constant and Phillip Hinton-Lever, a young couple soon to be married. They were darlings, he, a Shakespearean actor from South Africa and she, a dancer from London. They were barely out of their teens -- a handsome pair -- so gay and yet so deep in their devotion to the Faith. Well, that was "the lot of us."

There are two pilgrim houses, only yards apart. The larger one is for the Eastern pilgrims -- with its bedrooms and the kitchen off three large central rooms. the foyer, the dining room and the third that I will always think of as the tea-room-- for it was there that we all gathered after meals for coffee and tea and talking. A large square of a room it is with seating lining its walls, a huge coffee table in the middle, a few pictures on the walls -- and that's about it. We Westerners shared the smaller house which was simply 3 small double bedrooms, one single, a bath-and-a-half and a middle hall, onto which all the doors open. It was terribly relaxed -- much like a dorm at college -- with everyone bobbing in and out of the other's room at almost any moment to share the story of some precious event -- or to show a treasure -- or just to talk. Scheduling of the bathroom time became a merry event -- what with 7 of us, one tub and our washing to do besides keeping our selves in order. Rumor had it that it takes 14 days to get things back from the Israeli laundries so none of us dared chance it. After the third day, we discovered a clothes-line in the back yard so the bathroom decorations diminished somewhat. All the pilgrims met together for meals, socializing after meals, afternoon tea and before bed. Until about two years ago, the Western pilgrims stayed at the bottom of Carmel. Although they were allow to come and go into the Shrines at will, the distance was great and the climb terrific. There was little togetherness with the Easterners then. It's wonderful this new way. We wouldn't have missed getting to know those dear ones for anything. Somehow

language was no problem even when a translator wasn't present. We all knowe [sic]

what was most important in the other's life and shared the awe and deep happiness of being in this heaven. Words are not always as important as we think they are.

And so, on that beautiful March day, after we'd settled our belongings and had had the intricacies of the plumbing, heating, etc. explained to us, we went in to have tea with the friends. Margaret Chance, whom we had known for a long time, nearly caved our ribs with her wonderful bear hug. She and Mrs. Hakim, both wives of members of the Universal House of Justice, had come to bid us welcome. Margaret explained that we wouldn't see any of the members of the House until after we had met them as a body. They are constantly on guard to see that personality doesn't get involved with the Baha'is thoughts of the House -- that it is the institution that's important, not those who serve it. It's not easy. Each one of them is a spiritual and intellectual giant. We would have to be much more than human not to love and revere them. Soon Hand of the Cause Paul Haney came in. Sweet Paul -- so tall and thin and beautiful. His sandy hair is quite grey now. His collar frayed, his trousers patched, his eyes aglow, his thoughts constantly on serving -- serving -- any and everyone. Paul took us to the foyer and showed us where the keys to the Shrines are kept. We were to go in any time we wished, day or night. And then he took one of those huge keys -- perhaps 7 or 8 inches long -- and led us to the Shrine of the Bab. I'm sure that you've all seen pictures of that magnificent gold-domed building -- but perhaps you didn't know that it houses not only the remains of the Bab but also, in another room, those of Abdu'l-Baha. But this first time we would go only to the Shrine of the Bab. Only! How many times we have heard pilgrims returning in the time of the Guardian telling of how they had said to him, "Shoghi Effendi, how wonderful it is to be on the Pilgrimage to see you." And he would look very stern and say, "The pilgrimage is to the Holy Shrines!" And when you are there, in those most sanctified spots, you know that this is true. Any portion of the rest would be worth the trip -- but the rest is bonus.

We had heard a myriad stories of the reactions of those who had made this visit. Some felt nothing, others were overwhelmed by the power -- even to the point of being struck to their knees. Others wept. We did not know what to expect. Paul carefully explained that there was no ritual to be observed. That everyone is free to act and react in his own way -- and this was as it must be. We were to take off our shoes before entering. Everyone does this, even the tourists. As we walked the 200 or so yards from the Pilgrim houses and through those lovely gardens, we recalled that the red stones on which we trod had been hand-ground of used roof-tiles by the Guardian -- that each plant and tree and urn and figure had been carefully selected by him with such love. Mr. Haney spoke of some of the difficulty in the building of that overpowering edifice -- done during the midst of the war when everyone had said it was totally impossible to ship the marble from Italy. He spoke of the golden tiles of the dome carefully selected in Holland -- that they were glazed, not gold

leaf as so many thought -- for the Guardian wished beauty, not costliness. There is a rumor in Israel that under one of our buildings we have a swimming pool that is filled with gold and that that is why we are able to make things so beautiful. Heavens, how funny. If only they knew of the sacrifice that went into putting it all in. Actually, the Shrine of the Bab is the first building in the world to which members of every racial, national and religious background in the world contributed. It gave us great satisfaction to know that we were among those people.

We paused and looked across the Bay of Akka -- to that ancient and holy "silver city" -- clearly visible beneath the blue skies. And suddenly, the key was in the lock of the huge old white door and it slowly swung open. The room was large, white, without furnishings but for two enormous classic white alabaster urns that served as lamps. Under foot the floor was soft with layers of Persian carpets, rich and lovely beyond compare. There was an archway, thinly veiled, leading to another room. The threshold was laden with flowers -- in vases and petals strewn across the length of it. Beyond, crowned with a magnificent crystal chandelier, was the resting place of the Bab -- that radiant Youth, that Herald, that Primal Point, that Martyr Prophet. I cannot tell you exactly what was there. Vases, flowers, Persian rugs, things like that. Strange that I cannot remember each detail. Or perhaps it is not strange at all. For what was there was much more than the senses can account for. But there was a scent. A special one, disassociated from the flowers -- as there was at each of the Holy Places that we visited. And here, a sound. A strange reverberation that touched every atom of you when the prayers were read or chanted. Even your own voice did not sound like yours here. It was almost like your voice went out, became refined and was only then returned to your ears. Only one more thing can I say about this experience. About the prayers. One would think that in this place above all places it would be easy to pray. But for me -- and I later discovered for Maury and Elena as well -- it was difficult. Of course we said them -- but it seemed almost a mechanical thing. Out of place. An interruption. Here was a place for just "being". Here was total peace and happiness. In the gardens it was a different thing. There the prayers came as naturally as breathing -- with joy and abandon -- impossible to stop. Odd. Or was it just unexpected?

The time came for us to leave and Mr. Haney quietly led us out -- back to the pilgrim house and to lunch. The meals were wonderful fun-times. We all sat at one enormous table and were served family style -- quite appropriately. The meals were excellent. A mixture of East and West and ingenuity, I imagine. There were always the disks of absolutely delicious Arab bread, slabs of butter and cheeses, crisp salads and some mysterious main dish followed, almost always, by great golden oranges the size of grapefruit. California and Florida can bow their heads in shame -- they are totally outdone by the size and flavor of Israeli citrus! At lunch, we were always joined by at least one of the Hands, Mr. Faizi or Mr. Haney. And afterward, as we retired for our coffee or tea, they sat with us, answering the barrage of questions, reaching into the depths of their knowledge to explain some obtruse facet or delighting us with

little-known stories of the Faith. At dinner, we were joined by one of the Hands plus a member of the House -- a different one each night -- so that we could get to know each one personally and they, us. The spirit was completely as friends or family getting together, with not a tinge of "you are being honored by the presence of..." They constantly repeated, "The pilgrims are the lifes' blood of the Holy Land..." and responded to us as though we were honoring them. And the laughter, my word, the laughter! Jokes flew about constantly -- and in all languages. Some of the sack-cloth types I know wouldn't have believed it. Fun and Holy Places don't traditionally go together -- but what a combination they make!

After lunch that first day, Mr. Haney took us into the Shrine of Abdu'l-Baha. It was much the same as that of the Bab -- and yet totally different. It is smaller, warmer, comfortable -- as Abdu'l-Baha was -- with majesty and yet modest. It had its own scent -- its own peace -- its own beauty. As with the inner shrine of the Bab, there was enough simplicity of structure to please the Westerner, enough ornateness in a few of the vases and lamps to make the Easterner happy -- and a feel that cuts through all boundries and satisfies everyone. We had prayers there -- and time for quiet -- something to feed on. Too soon it was time to leave and again Paul gently led us out.

There was unscheduled time then so we went down into Haifa to buy some needed things of the tooth-paste variety. We had a fine time browsing, getting lost just enough to make it fun, taking the funicular up the hill, looking, listening and pinching ourselves to be sure that we really were there.

When we returned, into the Pilgrim House there suddenly popped those two pixies, Ethyl and Jessie Revel! What special people they are! Sisters -- probably in their sixties or seventies -- who, about 15 years ago had been called to Haifa by the Guardian to help with secretarial work, and who have been there ever since. Their love and devotion is legend. Tiny Jessie -- perhaps 4 1/2 feet tall, sweet round happy face that beams constantly -- eyes a-twinkle -- with beautifully kept grey hair as her crown. Ethyl -- taller but stooped shouldered -- more severe of face and demeanor -- but her eyes and wry sense of humor belie the role she assumes. And so there they were -- hugging us -- bidding us welcome -- telling us how much they look forward to the pilgrims' visits -- saying that they are being so selfish to take so much of our precious time. We gave them the greetings of so many -- I'm sure everyone in their acquaintance feels that, even with a brief meeting, they have gotten to know them intimately. We delivered gifts sent via us by a long-time friend. And then we sat, for the first time of many, enthralled by the priceless stories of their many years in the Holy Land -- of the Guardian whom they all but worshipped -- the Hands -- the Universal House of Justice -- of the various pilgrims who had come through the years -- of great moments in Baha'i history. And of Abdu'l-Baha. Oh, how they love Abdu'l-Baha! But all too soon, it was dinner-time and they scooted home. Such cheery little angels they are!

After dinner, Violetta Nakhjavani came to drive us to Number 7, Persian Street. To a Baha'i, this address is magical as is Number 10, Downing, to a Britisher. Much more, really. For this was the house of Abdu'l-Baha -- where he lived and where he died -- and after him, the Guardian had used it for his home. Now Ruhyyih Khanum, Hand of the Cause, widow of Shoghi Effendi, lives there -- among all those memories. It cannot be easy for her.

Meeting Violetta was an experience in itself for she proved to be not only a rare beauty but to have all those qualities that could be envied -- but are, instead, most gratefully saluted for she wears them so unconsciously. Again a small woman, perhaps out of her twenties but with the vitality of a teen-ager and the dignity of a queen. Quiet in depth -- bubbly in humor -- a scholar -- a person of complete understanding -- a proud daughter (of Hand of the Cause Mirza Banani) -- a proud mother (of two lovely children) -- and a proud wife (of Ali Nakhjavani, member of the Universal House of Justice). Happily, we were to see more of Violetta.

And so it was that we went to "Number 7". It's a large house, inside a courtyard, with a broad bank of steps leading to its wide portal. The door was opened by a thin middle-aged Persian woman whose plain face, framed by a scarf thrown over her head, was lighted from the inside by the warmth of her complete devotion. Her demeanor was totally humble. Her clothing was rather ugly -- she limped a bit, I believe. She greeted us in Persian and bowed and gestured us into the vast reception room. Square -- white -- simple -- with a huge round table in its center and doors or curtained arches lining the walls. From nowhere came a voice -- down-to-earth, not quite English-English, not quite American. "Ah, you've finally come. Do come in and have some tea and we'll talk." Maury murmured, as we walked, "What a lovely house!" A laugh accompanied the quick response, "You're not an architect, are you?" The voice belonged of course to Ruhyyih Khanum. I'm not sure I would know how to even begin to describe her. She is rather tall -- with long light-golden-brown hair which is usually done up and covered. At times, she looks more tired and sad than almost anyone -- at others, animated, interested, full of humor. The transition sometimes takes but a moment -- a remark -- a thought. She is not one you can -- or would want to -- dismiss from your mind. You remember her -- her face -- her voice -- her laugh -- her words. As most of you know, she was Mary Maxwell, born in America of Canadian parents. The stories of her birth, childhood, youth and of her marriage to the Guardian are fascinating. Everyone who knew her then always managed to use the terms "full of the dickens" and "high-spirited" about her. I think they are still appropriate. She is strong in her beliefs -- sure of herself -- absolutely frank -- bored with sham -- impatient -- and with all, devoted and reverent but never in a phoney way. She loves to be "just a person" but has lived so many lives in her half-a-lifetime and is so many things to so many people that it is difficult for her to be thought of that way. She led us through one of the vast curtained arches into a charming and again large room. Its three sides were lined with a divan -- much like a long window-seat. We paused to look at some framed pictures. One, particularly, burned itself into my memory. An enlarged copy of the head of

Shoghi Effendi as a tiny child. I'd not seen it before. A round sensitive face completely dominated by enormous eyes -- so deep -- so knowing -- so beautiful. And there was, too, a photo of the Guardian just before he died -- in 1957. A wonderful picture. She had just bought a new camera and was trying it out, she explained. Usually, he refused to allow his picture to be taken as he tried in every way to avoid having the Baha'is pay attention to his person. But this time, he had just smiled and asked her if she had gotten a good one. Indeed she had! A candid shot. Not the picture of an internationally respected spiritual giant, Guardian of a Faith -- rather, a snap-shot of a husband who loved and admired his wife. A sweet and special thing to see.

There were just 5 of the Western Pilgrims and our hostess. Two of our number, the young English couple, had had a delayed flight and arrived the next morning. Mrs. Nakjiavani had disappeared as soon as we arrived and the little servant came in and out, serving and then disappearing. Our conversation was rather general. Ruhiiyyih Khanum spoke of her recent trip to India -- of her love for the Indian and African people -- of her hope to return to those continents. She asked us about how the Faith was going in our various home areas and expounded on a favorite theme -- her impatience with the Western mind -- so brilliant and well-trained but used to make excuses, to rationalize and organize instead of to act. She gave each of the women a small vial of attar of roses -- that heavenly and penetrating scent. Ida, when she received hers, asked if she might have another as a mainland friend has asked her to get him one. Ruhiiyyih Khanum said, "Good heavens, does he think this is a shop? I've only enough for one around." Then we spoke of trivia -- laughed about the various countries' driving "skills" and so on. She spoke at length about her aversion to the Baha'i habit of embracing everyone in sight -- and then, as we left, embraced us all. It was about midnight then. Ruhiiyyih Khanum had seemed really sorry that the time had come for us to go -- for she is a bit of a night-owl -- but it was the fasting time and she had to get up before dawn. Mr. Faizi had explained about the fast in relationship to the pilgrims when we first arrived. We were not allowed to observe it while there -- for we were all travelers and travelers may be exempt. But more than that, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for almost everyone and the Guardian had said that nothing should mar a pilgrimage -- that every moment must be experienced, savored. Many who fast find that their minds are sometimes not as keen during the mid-afternoon as they normally are -- or they may get headaches. Some find certain food distasteful during the time. Many reasons. And so it was that at every lunch the Hand who joined us sat with us and watched us eat. They always joked about it -- turning their plates upside-down as one does with glasses when beverages aren't wanted. And later, when we were asked to tea with various people, they would fix us delicious goodies -- special things they loved -- and could not join us in eating.

And so had passed the first day of the pilgrimage. So full it had been. It was chilly and we filled our hot-water bottles and snuggled down into our beds. We felt waves of extreme happiness and wonder at what had been and what

was to be.

Breakfast, we discovered, was an informal affair -- everyone arriving when he liked (within reason) and serving themselves from the great bowls of hard-cooked but hot eggs, of succulent stewed prunes, those marvelous oranges, plates of Arab bread, the butter and cheese, preserves, boxes of dry cereal and so on. It was gay and relaxed. The friends would slip in late -- or out early -- to pay a quiet visit to the Shrines. As eight o'clock neared, on some mornings, we would go out to photograph and visit with the members of the Universal House of Justice who gather, three times weekly, for prayers at the Shrines prior to their deliberations. On other mornings, if nothing was scheduled, we would wander about the gardens or help with the guiding, or do whatever else we liked. The Gardens and Shrines are open daily from 9 to noon and a surprising number come. It is one of the top tourist attractions in Israel and busloads come in a constant stream. As I had mentioned before, the Baha'is do not teach in Israel -- but it is permissible to answer the questions put by the tourists -- and then if they request it, they are given addresses in their home-lands where they may investigate further. School groups come too. And the children spill out of their busses yelling and shouting as school children the world over will do -- but they quiet down immediately as they enter the gardens -- and even the tiniest, seem to understand and are reverent. Neighborhood children come, too. Many come repeatedly, regularly. They just come in and stand and are quiet for a long time -- and then they leave. Margaret Chance told a darling story of two such who often come. Brothers. One, perhaps 8 and the other only about 3. From their clothing, it is evident that they aren't well-off. One day the tiny one was wearing some new shoes -- fancy black and white ones with pointed toes -- too big -- but new. And he wanted to go into the Shrines but he didn't want to take off his wonderful new shoes. The big brother pleaded with him, commanded him, scolded him and received nothing but howls for his trouble. Finally, the big brother gave a sigh and picked him up and carried him in. (Another Solomon in the making?) Incidentally, guiding is the only way in which the pilgrims are allowed to help while they are guests in the Holy Land. We were not even allowed to clear the table. And so, for this opportunity to serve, we were most grateful.

During the late morning of that second day, Paul Haney came to take us to the Monument Gardens. When I say "us", it normally is just the Westerners -- because of the language thing it was only practical that we went in two groups. Also, when there was transportation involved, it would have been most difficult for all of us to go at once as there is a dearth of cars. And so Paul led us to the upper gardens -- near the Archives building, to the lovely monuments of Navab, wife of Baha'u'llah; of His young son who had died while they were in prison and of the eldest daughter of Baha'u'llah, sister of Abdu'l-Baha, whose title is the Greatest Holy Leaf and who is considered the holiest woman of the Baha'i dispensation (as are Mary in the Christian and Fatimih in the Islamic religions). Such lovely monuments -- prototypes of classical beauty. They are slender white marble columns forming a circle and

surmounted by a simple shallow marble dome. In all they are, perhaps 12 feet high and the circle is 4 feet in diameter. The only identification is, for each, a small bronze placque that lays flat on the ground within the circle. These were shown to us and something of the history of the persons buried there reviewed. Then Paul explained some of the history of the gardens themselves -- how the land was acquired, how and when the gardens were planned by the Guardian -- for whatever we saw, the Guardian had personally planned, supervised and, often, physically done. We saw the place where Baha'u'llah had pitched His tent (a fulfillment of prophecy) and a circle of cyprus where He had stood when He instructed Abdu'l-Baha about building the Shrine of the Bab. It was a glorious morning.

After our lunch -- with both Mr. Haney and Mr. Faizi present -- Harriet Wolcott came to drive us to have tea with the Universal House of Justice. Dear Harriet -- whom we had known so well for so many years. She and Charles had been in Los Angeles when we were investigating the Faith -- had been so much a part of our pre-Baha'i lives and our Baha'i baby-hood. What a different life she is now living than that she had led as the wife of a successful composer, conductor, arranger in Hollywood -- as the wife of the head of music at MGM -- with the parties and premiers. And, except for her loneliness for her children and grandchildren, she seemed completely happy. No regrets.

The Universal House of Justice is presently housed in Number 10, Persian Street -- just across from Abdu'l-Baha's house. It had been the Western Pilgrim House for many years -- but was now remodeled to make room for the necessary council chambers, offices and the like. Again, we were led into a vast reception room. This was one occasion, other than at the pilgrim houses, when all of us were together. There were about 30 or so chairs arranged in a large square. We were invited to sit down leaving chairs vacant here and there. As soon as we were settled, the members of the Universal House filed in. As they approached, that most memorable moment of the London Congress leapt into my mind -- as it had so many times since that April day in 1963. On that day, at that time, the members of the first Universal House of Justice were announced -- and called to the stage. They stood there all in a row -- these same men who were now approaching us -- tears streaming from their eyes. I don't recall anyone ever having looked so beautiful -- having evoked such respect and confidence. If I believed in such things, I would swear that they were surrounded by an aura of white light. All 6,000 of us there in the Royal Albert Hall stood as one. There was total silence for a few moments . I don't think anyone breathed. Then a roar of applause broke out -- and lasted for fully 5 minutes. It was a long time before composure was regained and the business at hand could be dealt with. And so -- now in the house at 10 Persian Street -- there they were again. Walking around the group -- introducing themselves as they went. I carefully inspected the familiar faces as they came by -- and was relieved to see that they all looked extremely well and happy -- their two years of staggering work had not weighed them down. When they had met everyone, they sat with us. Hugh Chance was to be the spokesman that day with Hushmand Fataezaam translating. Hugh greeted us on behalf of the House

and explained its functioning. It has no officers. Each week they rotate chairmanship -- on an alphabetical basis. Again, this is to retain the importance of the House itself and to minimize the role played by those 9 men serving it. All letters are sent out simply signed "The Universal House of Justice" and sealed for authenticity. They normally meet for 3 days a week to deliberate on the various things that fall their lot -- and indeed these things are various. From personal problems of local believers (normally the function of a local spiritual assembly) to physical management of the properties and handling personnel, dealings with the government, making plans for the Baha'i world, counseling and guiding the 69 National Assemblies throughout the world and on and on. It is impossible to believe that 9 men could deal with such a quantity and variety of things -- so efficiently -- so perfectly. But they do. Or rather, the House does. The other three days (they allot themselves a day of rest a week -- but often don't take it) they work on the various "departments" -- investigating a phase, preparing synopsis, recommendations, etc. to present on the days of consultation. It was explained that their consultation is much the same as it is on any level -- more informed to be sure -- but with the diverse opinions very freely expressed. It is only in the decisions where the promised guidance comes. Much of what Hugh explained we had known, much we had not. He then introduced their small staff -- translators, secretaries for various languages, etc. -- many of whom double in brass several times over. And Fugita was introduced. Fugita -- a legend in his own time. A tiny Japanese man -- in his nineties, I think -- one of the first Japanese to accept the Faith -- whom Abdu'l-Baha had called to come from America immediately after the first World War to help him in the gardens -- who had remained all those years to serve. A wonderful figure he is -- all 1/2 feet of him, wrinkled, weather-beaten, smile-lines permanently etched into that fascinating little face. He and the other members of the staff served us tea and cookies. When he got to us, Maury said to me, "They look so good, I don't know which to take." Fugita instantly rejoined -- "Why don't you take them all?" And then he laughed and laughed. We were really taken aback -- for somehow, he didn't look like he could speak English. But of course his was perfect -- as was his Persian and Japanese. What a delightful man -- with so many memories. The stories surrounding him are legion. He once asked the Guardian if he couldn't do a part of the gardens "his way" and the Guardian pointed to a spot at the top of the upper gardens -- and said that that could be his to do with as he liked. Apparently the Guardian went to "Fugita's garden" often to meditate -- and to survey the rest of the area.

After an hour or so of informal chatting -- with the members of the House moving from one group to another -- we returned to the pilgrim houses to get ready for dinner. That night Amoz Gibson joined us. Amoz, too, we had known rather well before his election. He is a beautiful American negro -- a humble school-teacher -- who had spent some years on an Indian reservation in Arizona teaching -- who had been on the NSA of the United States for several years and who had, with his family, attended the London Congress en route, he thought, to pioneer in Africa. It was not quite such a transition for them other than the

awe of the new field of service. They had already uprooted themselves. But for the others the election had meant great personal sacrifice -- giving up homes, businesses, friends and family -- and with no idea how long they would be living in Israel. The next election will be in the spring of 1968 -- and, of course, no one knows who will be elected then. They are sustained but not salaried. Food, housing, etc. are paid for -- and there is a living allowance of well under a hundred American dollars a month. With prices as they are in Israel, you can imagine how far that goes. Believe me, they are not living in luxury! And so Amoz talked with us on that second night -- of the word just received from his wife -- then, with their tiny daughter, on a teaching trip in Africa -- and of his intended trip to South America. He planned to take his two sons with him -- and how excited they were at the prospect! His wife, incidentally, is a teacher too and teaches some of the children of the House members and Hands at their informal summer school there.

During the after-dinner time, the Easterners always passed goodies that they had brought with them -- deliciously fragrant and exotic candies, nuts and the like. One night a Turkish woman disappeared into her room and returned with a large bottle of cologne. She went to each person in turn, gestured for us to hold out our hands, and proceeded to pour -- not a drop or two -- but a whole handful! It was quite a problem to know what to do with it -- but we patted it on everything we decently could in mixed company and just let the rest evaporate. You've never smelled such a fragrant bunch -- nor have you seen anyone more pleased than that dear woman was!

The next morning, after breakfast, we were invited to join the members of the House at their prayers in the Shrines. Again -- there is no way to describe the experience. Various ones read or chanted prayers -- some were standing, some sitting on the floor, some of the Persians were kneeling, their foreheads touching the floor -- whatever was natural to them, this they did. The girl who was studying opera chanted first -- and there was no doubt that the voice is, indeed, the only perfect instrument. Then the familiar voice of Charles Wolcott, firm, quiet; then the little peasant woman; then others. Then a moment or two of silence before Ali Nakjiavani chanted the Tablet of Visitation. I have mentioned the special sound that is there -- in the Shrine of the Bab. Never was it so evident -- it seemed to surround you -- to permeate every atom of your being, as though there were no barriers -- as though sound were meant to be felt as well as heard.

As we left and walked down the pathway, little Jessie Revel linked her arm through mine and I asked her if, when Ali chanted, it was not much as the Guardian sounded. She replied that, except for Ruhyyih Khanum and Ali himself, everyone who had known Shoghi Effendi well thought that this was true. This, of course, would not be surprising for Ali had grown up in the Guardian's household -- had had his education supervised by him, had been close to him for so long. What a person he is! Young, handsome, wise, humorous -- so many things. He and his wife, Violetta, were some of the first to teach in Africa and I recall so well sitting in the Wolcott's home in Los Angeles some

10 or so years ago listening to a letter about some of their trips -- taken under totally impossible conditions -- and of the victories that came from them. The Africans had known that they were different. Until they came, no white had come into their villages, into their huts and eaten with them from their common pots -- full of stews made of things unmentionable to us. True, the missionaries had come to Africa for years and years -- but had always built their own places, cooked their own food -- and then invited the natives to come to them. The Africans asked the beautiful young newly-wed couple why they had come and the Nakjavanis had simply said, "Because we love you." "But why do you love us enough to eat with us?" And then the story was told to them -- and the first tiny torches were lit.

After the visit to the Shrines, the morning was unscheduled and we three had a glorious time wandering through the gardens, climbing up, up, up to Fugita's Garden. The hillside is very steep indeed -- and even to walk up the paths is not easy. What it must have taken to lay out the paths with such perfect symmetry! And then to carve these gardens out of the rock and the rubble -- to plant them. And then, high, high up on the very top of them, there is a broad flight of stairs and an iron gate that marks the end of the now-developed area. Beyond that -- Fugita's garden. What a sweet contrast it is. It is barely noticeable, really. The native trees have been pruned here and there to perfect their line -- boulders have been cleared away but some have been left and arranged as only a Japanese could. A tiny patch of flowers planted here or there in perfect relationship to the things around it. Well worth the climb! And how amazing to think that Fugita still scrabbles up there to tend his garden! We sat on those high steps for a long time -- silent -- drinking in the scene that lay before us: The expanse of the emerald gardens, the classic beauty of the Archives building, the sun reflecting like a beacon from the dome of the Shrine, the "King's Highway" -- a tremendous flight of stairs leading in a straight path from the Shrine of the Bab to the foot of Mt. Carmel and joining a street that leads directly to the shore of the Bay. Our eyes followed the line across the Bay -- to Akka.

And it was to Akka that we would go that afternoon!

After lunch with Mr. Haney, we all went to our rooms and packed -- for we were to be gone for two nights. "Take just a few things -- and hot water bottles," we had been told. Apparently there was no heating where we would be staying and, whether we slept with the bottles or not, we would need the warm water that remained in them in the morning -- to wash with. We giggled when we heard this -- but we took them.

At about 3:30 we piled into the cars. Again Paul Haney was to go with us -- to remain the first night and into the afternoon. Then Mr. Faizi would come. We took the long drive around the Bay -- and past the ancient city of Akka -- with its walls of yellow mud bricks. We would be back the next day to see it. Several miles beyond, we saw the aquaduct -- first built by the Romans and repaired and put into use again at Baha'u'llah's request -- thus ensuring the water supply of the city. Suddenly to our right, we caught a glimpse of

the Mansion of Bahji -- and again, our hearts began to pound. We turned off onto a side road -- and then turned again -- and then we were coming fast upon another spiritual and physical oasis in a barren land. How had we not realized that here, too, were vast gardens? Somehow we had expected the Mansion and the Shrine to be just there in the middle of a few clumps of trees, a few flowers. Not so. Rather, perhaps 2 acres of beautifully laid-out formal gardens with the paths of crumbled stone, the low neatly trimmed hedges, the urns, obelisks, eagles, the lamps with their fat round globes -- all manner and kind of plants beautifully blended -- and again with the rows of cyprus sentinels. Far beyond, it was explained, the Baha'i holdings extended -- but time and money were not now available to develop them. Again, this is a prime tourist attraction of the area. And at the heart of this beauty lay the Mansion and the Shrine. For it was to this place that Baha'u'llah came and spent the last years of His life. Although He was still under technical arrest, He was at last allowed to leave the confines of that grim prison city of Akka -- after not seeing verdure for some nine years -- after more than 30 years of exile and prison. Here, in the very building where Baha'u'llah lived his last years, we were to stay.

The Mansion is a large, gracious two-story building, the second story of which is the living quarters. It is in a rectangular shape with mighty arches forming the lower story wall and sheltering the walkway that surrounds the building. The second story also has a walkway all around -- with smaller archways supporting the red-tiled roof. The walls of the actual building have simple and lovely restorations of the original panels painted above the windows. They are done in the Persian tradition -- and blue seems to dominate the color scheme. The Mansion had been built only a few years prior to Baha'u'llah's occupancy -- but its owner had fled during an epidemic and left it vacant. Abdu'l-Baha had been able to rent it for His Father for practically nothing, and later it was purchased. Interestingly, the man who built it had inscribed over the doorway the prophetic words, "Greetings and Peace be upon this Mansion! Its beauty will increase down through the ages. Within its walls wondrous and strange things will take place; things which all the pens of the earth shall be powerless to describe."

Mr. Haney led us up the stairway and into the central hall -- now so familiar a portion of the architecture of the area. A spacious room -- with tables and pictures of historical events, with documents marking official recognition of the Faith throughout the world -- with books in the numerous languages lined in cases -- and so on. It is here, we were told, that the Universal House of Justice comes when there are particularly momentous decisions to be made -- to pray at the Shrine of Baha'u'llah -- the HOLiest spot in the world for the Baha'is -- to meditate -- to deliberate and to make the decisions that will guide the Baha'i world.

Lining the ample hall are doors to the various rooms. Each one has a theme -- the Esslemont room, the Queen Marie room, the Guardian's study, etc. The history and tokens of these people are housed in each -- somewhat like the

rooms in a museum -- and yet not at all like that -- for the rooms are to be used. It was in these rooms that we were to sleep for the two nights. There were beds, dressers, chairs, desks. Bowls, vases and so on were sitting about as they might be in any home -- but when one handled them -- and casually examined them one might, as often as not, find a tidy bit of lettering on the underside that read "original". These were the very things that Baha'u'llah used! Only later would we really comprehend it all -- only in retrospect. There was so much!

On the walls were some of the original writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah! And then -- there was Baha'u'llah's own room. It was on a corner -- and so situated that from the windows, one can see across the Bay and to Mt. Carmel. This was the room into which Edward Granville Browne was ushered in 1890 -- an event which he has so beautifully chronicled for the Western world. There was the low divan that lined the walls. There were some of the personal effects of Baha'u'llah -- His taj -- His toilet articles and so on. And on the floor, atop the Persian rugs, was His mattress -- just as it was when He passed away. Such a tiny mattress -- all covered in white linen. It is hard to think of this Person -- such a spiritual gargantuan -- as being housed in such a small human frame. And beside the mattress were His slippers -- a dark smooth cool leather -- with the back bent forward to make them scuff-like -- so typical of the Persian manner, we were to discover. More than anything else, the sight of those slippers remains etched in my memory. This room was to be left open to us -- at night a lamp would be left burning there -- so that we could go in at our leisure -- to linger as long as we liked. A bit of so-called modernizing had been done in one small portion of the building some years before. At the back entrance -- formerly the kitchen, I believe, a sink had been installed -- of the shallow kitchen variety -- with but one spigot -- for cold water, of course. There was a drain-board, basins, a rather bad small mirror and hooks for towels. Off this were the two toilets in their small stalls ... a Western one and an Eastern one. Another revelation -- I'd not known that there was a difference. But indeed there is. The Easterners think that we're quite unsanitary to use a chair-type device -- for theirs is like a shaped hole in the floor -- foot-treads to the sides -- the whole unit being made of porcelain in many cases. One squats. And no paper. But always a pitcher of water. I did not ask about the intricacies of the whole procedure -- but only drew my own conclusions. Later, when we went to Iran, we grew used to all this -- but here, Mr. Haney mercifully assigned the Eastern section to the men, the Western one to the women.

After our initial somewhat hurried introduction to the Mansion, we went down to the gardens for awhile -- then it was time to pay our first visit to the Shrine of Baha'u'llah. Again I am at a loss for words. We had so recently toured the grandiose cathedrals of Europe. We had lived for two days in the shadow of the richly beautified Shrine of the Bab. Here was the holiest spot on earth to millions of people -- and would be to billions more. Physically, what was it like? Actually, the Shrine itself is a simple single-roomed building -- perhaps 20 feet or so square -- large sand-stone

coloured brick or cut stone -- with a red-tiled roof. But for the usual Persian rugs, vases and lamps, it would appear empty. Joining it -- and overlapping the corner of it by perhaps three feet -- is another building, more accurately described, I imagine, as an indoor courtyard. This room is fairly large, rectangular but for a raised anteroom at one end, white, and is totally dominated by its central planting that leaves an expanse of only about a 4 or 5 foot carpeted area on all sides of it. This garden contains alabaster vase-lamps, plants of different sorts and, on the corners of it, luxuriant asparagus fern that climbs on wires nearly to the ceiling. Just under the high ceiling and completely around the room is a triple row of foot-square windows through which the sunshine pours -- giving such a feeling of lightness -- of airiness, delicacy and true beauty. It is into this room that the Pilgrims come. First through some lovely hand-carved doors, then into a short entrance hall. One turns to the right then and sees, at the end of the semi-corridor formed by the garden, the place where the building intersects the Shrine -- a simple narrow door -- with a low flower-strewn threshold. The door is open and only a thin veil of golden net separates you from that sanctified spot.

Here too, we had prayers, all of us together. But, as at the other Holy Places, things seemed most right when I came alone -- or when just Maury and I visited them. Here, at the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, the feelings that we had had before were intensified many times over -- if that was possible. The peace and serenity of the place was complete. Not thinking, not praying, not meditating -- just "being". It seemed a most natural thing. As Maury and I first went there -- just the two of us -- that a pair of birds found an invisibly broken pane and flew in, to become wrapped in the joy of it with us. They sang so beautifully -- and flew so freely -- as we were singing and soaring inside.

There is nothing more that I can say about the Shrine of Baha'u'llah -- except that I think, perhaps, a tiny glimmer of understanding of what the next world is made of was allowed, momentarily, to shine through my consciousness.

We had dinner that night with the caretakers of Bahji -- who had so lovingly greeted us upon our arrival. They are the Wardes -- dears -- whom we had also known on the mainland -- and met again as they journeyed through Hawaii. Their quarters are attached to the above-mentioned building -- which, in its turn is only a few hundred feet from the Mansion. It is humble, cheery and ever so home-like. The dinner was again delicious -- and afterward we sat about and chatted, heard stories and so on. Soon it was time to go to our rooms for the night.

In the morning, after a hearty breakfast, we were taken to Akka -- first to see the prison where Baha'u'llah had been kept. It is now a hospital for the mentally ill -- but the cell where Baha'u'llah was incarcerated has been given to the Baha'is and is so denoted by a small bronze plaque with which we had by now become familiar "Baha'i Holy Place." The prison itself is the one which stopped Napoleon -- and the ancient cannon balls, still embedded in the walls, give silent testimony to that bit of history. In more recent times,

it played a part in the making of the State of Israel. (Does anyone recall it in the picture "Exodus"?) For the latter reason, the State intends to gradually turn the entire building into a museum -- as they already have done with the wing in which Baha'u'llah's cell is found. Mr. Haney cautioned us not to talk with anyone as we went through the grounds -- lest we get involved with the "trustees" who are allowed to roam at will within the walled confines. So, silently, we went -- up the recently added outside iron steps to the corner cell-block. At the top of the stairs we paused and looked around -- at the even now sterile appearance of the surrounding "old city" -- with its people doing many of the things that they had done in the same garb and the same way that they had done them more than a half-century before. We entered the building -- and looked at the tiny pair of cells that had housed the combined number of 72 Baha'is -- under circumstances that were unbelievable severe. Mr. Haney took a large key from his pocket and thrust it into the old lock that kept us from entering Baha'u'llah's cell. It was so small. The solid walls had been recently whitewashed. Bare. The one small window could not be seen through well. It was through this window that Baha'u'llah waved his handkerchief so that those early Pilgrims, who had walked for 6 months coming from Iran, could see some sign of him from beyond the moats before they turned around and made the arduous journey back home. It did not seem possible that Baha'u'llah had survived His existence here for over two years. Baha'u'llah -- born Mirza Husayn Ali -- Prince of Nur -- raised in luxury -- health already broken by his previous deprivations, from having been poisoned. But survive He did. And from this miserable place, He wrote His letters of command to the crowned heads of Europe!

We next visited the "sea-wall" where Baha'u'llah had been landed after the stormy voyage across the sea in that tiny ship -- carefully selected because there was little chance that it could withstand the voyage. (How simple it would have been if the whole lot of them would have gone down!) Then on we went through narrow little cobble-stone streets -- with barely inches to spare on each side of the station-wagon -- seeing this house, that area, that square -- all portions of the history of the Faith. We went to the little garden, once an island in the river, that Abdu'l-Baha had rented for his Father, and sat there on those quaint old benches and ate the luscious tangerines that grow all about. We saw the small cottage where He had stayed so many times, being loathe to leave the area of natural beauty after His years of starvation for it. His bed was still there -- this time not a mattress on the floor, rather a very high though small old-fashioned bed -- again dressed in white linen. From the Ridvan Garden -- for it had been named that after the Garden of Ridvan (Paradise) in Baghdad where He first publicly proclaimed His message in 1863 -- we drove to the House of Abud, situated in the shadow of the prison. It was to this house that Baha'u'llah had been moved following his years of strict confinement. A fairly large house it was -- but certainly not large enough for the numbers of people who were confined there. At first 13 of His followers of both sexes were confined to one tiny room. Later more rooms were made available to them. Here, too, was the place where Abdu'l-Baha

had been married. The landlords had taken pity on the newlyweds and broken through a wall to the adjoined building to allow them a room to themselves. The building was made of the usual mud-coloured brick and when we entered, we first came into a large barren courtyard and went up some steep steps to the living apartment. We were told that, although others were eventually allowed to come and go at times, Baha'u'llah stayed in that upstairs apartment for some 7 years! We had lunch in the central room of that remarkable house -- and then went through it -- again having the history with which we were so familiar live for us. Strange how one's mind's eyes conjure up images that are nothing like reality -- how differently I had pictured this house. On our way back to Bahji, we passed the "Crimson Hill" -- so named because in the springtime it becomes a sea of scarlet anemones.

Mr. Haney went back to Haifa then and Mr. Faizi was to come in time for dinner and to stay with us for the remainder of our time there. Although Mr. Haney had done a masterful job of explaining the various things to us, he had so often used the rather stock phrase "ask Mr. Faizi about that". For indeed Mr. Faizi is an historian of great note -- but not the dry kind in any way. His stories of the past are liberally spiced with personal notes and tremendous humor. Professionally he is an educator. He came from the city of Qum outside of Tehran -- the seat of Muslim learning where all the great Mullas are trained. His family had long been scholars of Islam -- and he and his brother -- when they became Baha'is -- became objects of persecution as is the lot of Baha'is there even today. Nearly anything you ask of him, he can immediately pull from memory -- but always giving references "This is spoken of in such-and-such a book or tablet -- or this was documented on my visit to such-and-such". They make a joke of his knowledge quite often there in the Holy Land. One of the first questions people ask when they see some Haifa gardens laid out as 8-pointed stars is "What is the significance of the eight-pointed star?" "Ask Faizi" is the quick reply. And Mr. Faizi's quick reply is, "They're easy to make and they're pretty." When you ask him the significance of prayer beads, he says, "Oh, they are toys." (And we found in Iran that he is right. All the men there carry them -- and when they are nervous, take them out and play with them -- fingering them, twirling them and so on. Much like a rubbing stone, I suspect. Certainly better than biting one's nails!) Mr. Faizi denies any special talents and explains that Persians' memories are trained from childhood. By 8 or 10, the Muslim boys are expected to know the entire Koran by heart -- as they feel that one cannot quote any one passage -- rather must take their Bible as a whole. You will find that a story told by one is told by another verbatim. Mr. Faizi explained that this was also the manner of learning in the Jewish tradition and that that is why the bible was enabled to come to us in such a pure form after so many many years of being word-of-mouth.

There was a bit of free time to clean up when we returned -- to visit the Shrine alone -- to walk in the gardens. I was doing just that when, suddenly, from out of the back door of the caretaker's house came Ruhiyyih Khanum! What a delightful surprise! She said, "I thought I'd just pull some weeds until

supper-time. I can't bear seeing weeds in the gardens." So she and I squatted down and pulled weeds for about an hour. What a relief that was -- to do something -- however small. I mentioned that and she laughed and said, "I really think we should start a tradition for the pilgrims -- that they must pull 19 weeds before they go into the Shrines to pray each time. I think their prayers would get to heaven quicker. But of course, we can't do it because some of the pilgrims are so blind with the joy of being here that they would pull up all of the tiny new plants and leave the weeds." We chatted about this and that but mostly went about our work in silence. Violetta Nakjiavani, who had driven her and Faizi out, soon joined us. Then Mr. Faizi came around the bend -- with Elena and Maury listening to some fascinating story or other that he was telling. Ruhyyih Khanum called out, "Come and join us." But Faizi went right ahead with his story -- so she muttered to him, "I guess there will always be those who work and those who tell stories." He laughed back at her tease and said, "Ah, yes, Khanum, we all must use our particular talents."

Dinner was very informal and gay that night. Ruhyyih Khanum told us about this and that incident in her life there in the Holy Land, about the Guardian -- and then asked us again about how had we first heard of the Faith -- about how things were going at Program and Publicity Committee, I inadvertently said, "We were just in the middle of planning such and such when along came a rash of Holy Days..." She shrieked with laughter and she and Violetta almost fell off their chairs. When she had recovered enough to talk, she gasped, "Good heavens, it sounds like measles!" Later, as we were sitting around having tea, she asked us how we liked her ear-rings. They were quite long antique jet ones -- very attractive. We had noticed them, liked them and told her so. She said, "Good. I bought them recently in Italy but hadn't worn them. I knew I could get away with them with this group of pilgrims." We took this as a great compliment -- she could relax with us. Apparently most of the Persians, particularly, would be shocked if she was even the tiniest bit frivolous with them -- they expect the widow of the Guardian, as they had the wife, to be a great lady and always on "proper" behavior. I am sure that during all those years, it has been most hard on her to be reserved and dignified. She is such an alive person, full of mischief, a great tease.

After she and Violetta returned to Haifa, Mr. Faizi took us on another tour of the Mansion -- and told us in detail about so many of the things here. We kept him up for hours, asking for explanations of this and that. I had such a feeling of being a little child again, sitting in grandma's lap and begging, "Tell me another story." And as then, there was always another -- presented with such tender love.

The next morning we discovered that his indulgence of us had cost him a bit of health, that he had caught a dreadful cold. His health is not normally good as he is a diabetic and has heart trouble. But through his sneezes, he carried on. The only bright spot in it was that he now had to break the fast and joined us in lunches. After breakfast, we packed up our belongings again, bade the Warde's farewell and paid our last visit to the Shrine. Oh, how

difficult it was to leave that heaven! I have written so little of it -- probably because it meant so much. Only one thing softened the pain of the departure -- and that was the deep knowledge that we could return again and again in perfect memory. And the passage of time has proven this true. How often, now, when in prayer, one is suddenly "there" or in one of the other Holy places. As clearly as the first time. It is not a picture consciously conjured up. It just happens.

En route back to Haifa, we were to stop at Mazra'ih -- a short distance from the Mansion and also outside the city walls. Baha'u'llah had stayed here two years immediately prior to moving to Bahji. The Solimis live there now -- a marvelous Baha'i family. He is in charge of overseeing the gardens and many of the other physical things involved in the Holy Land. She helps any and everywhere. The house itself was far from grand -- but so much better than the previous one. Spacious by comparison -- and surrounded by informal gardens and trees. There is a stream near by. We went into the house and the Solimis had the table prepared for our luncheon. We talked for awhile before eating, Mr. Faizi entralling us with the typically delicious stories of the place. Afterwards we were led up the steep stairs to Baha'u'llah's quarters. Here were several rooms used by members of the family. Here again was a small and simple bedroom with a few of Baha'u'llah's personal belongings; with the small bed with white linen. And here, again a pair of those cool leather slippers beside the bed -- but this time lovingly filled with violets by the Solimis. We paused and looked and remembered and had prayers before going downstairs again. Before we left, Mr. Solimi brought us each some of the violets that had been in the shoes. What a sweet and precious gift.

Oh, quickly here I must insert that we had also visited, while at Bahji, the room in which Abdu'l-Baha stayed when he visited his Father. How could I have forgotten it? Such a warm and dear room it was! Full of the things that he had used -- toilet water still on the dresser -- books worn with use -- so many little things. And this was the scene of a story told by the Nelsons. They had had their children on pilgrimage with them and, while they were visiting this room, their youngest became tired for it was her nap-time. Paul Haney, who was with them, very unceremoniously tucked her into Abdu'l-Baha's bed, saying, "Abdu'l-Baha loved children -- and he was very practical. He would be pleased to have the little one nap here."

What a welcome we received upon our arrival back at the pilgrim house on Carmel! The Persians greeted us with wild embrace and tears of joy streaming down their cheeks! One would have thought that we had known each other from childhood and had been apart for years! They kept trying to ask us what our "pilgrimage within a pilgrimage" had been like and we could only say, "You must wait and see..." for they were to leave two days later to experience what we had. We knew how deeply we had been affected. How much more it would mean to them -- for they knew the history so much better -- many of them having had relatives who were connected with the places that we visited. They could read for themselves many of the things that we had had to have translated. There

could be no way that we could tell them.

That night the strangest giddiness came over all of us at the dinner table. What a transition! I don't think it mattered why, but it started with dear Ida wanting to save the orange peels to use in candying as a treat for us all. She started dictating just how we must peel the fruit to leave the peel intact -- and it got funnier and funnier to us. We roared over nothing and the Easterners watched us and tried to figure out what was happening -- tried to meticulously deal with their oranges in the same way we were without knowing why -- and, of course, that made it funnier yet. It was one of those times of delightful insanity when everything was hilarious and we couldn't stop. We finally got embarrassed and left the table and went outside -- only to have Maury and Phillip break into a soft-shoe routine. We were uncontrollable, but happily recalled that Abdu'l-Baha had called laughter the medicine for the soul. So we enjoyed the medicine to its fullest until it had done its good deed and finally subsided. Once more this was to happen to us -- when we came back from the Archives building several days later. And we found that the Easterners felt it too when they returned from Bahji. We "asked Faizi" and he said that it was very natural -- that we had been through terrific spiritual experiences -- that it was a way of release.

Later that evening, the members of the Universal House of Justice and their wives all came for prayers together -- and then for tea and goodies and chatting. It was a lovely relaxed evening -- and we got to know some whom we hadn't had an opportunity to really talk with before.

The next day was Saturday -- Shabat for the Jews -- and the day that the members of the House are supposed to be at leisure. The Chances had asked if we three would like to see some of the Christian Holy Places while we were there and we did, to be sure. So they picked us up at 7:30 in the morning and off we went. The first stop was at Megiddo -- where we resumed our avocation of poking about in the ruins. It was here, you recall, that Solomon had stabled the horses for his 1,400 chariots. A fascinating place -- with layers of ancient history now being discovered -- actually seven cities, one on top of another. There was a small museum there describing what they had done and were now doing. Many of the things were well preserved -- a stone manger just as it was so long ago; portions of the stable walls; a marvelous water system with its great pipes made of brick -- so many things. But we couldn't see all that we wanted for we had much ground to cover. We were to be back in Haifa by lunch-time.

On toward the Sea of Galilee we went, seeing as we went the marvelous work that the Israelies are doing as far as planting is concerned. There are infant forests planted on nearly every vacant acre. The hills look green from it and one knows that it will be a beautiful land one day. We saw many donkeys along the road; surprisingly to us, Arabs in their native dress; often, in the fields, the large black tents of the Bedoins; only once did we see a couple of camels with their riders. We came upon the River Jordan, blue and wide in some parts, often bordered closely with trees -- and then to the Sea of Galilee. We

stopped there and Maury ran down the steep pebbly bank to dip his hand in and bring some sprinkles back to us. It seemed odd to see families casually boating and swimming and fishing there. I recalled how I had, as a child, treasured a small vial of that water, given to me by a visiting missionary, and how, when it accidentally slipped out of my hand and broke, I had felt that I had committed an unpardonable sin. We saw at a distance the Mt. of Olives and later circled Mt. Tabor. Nazareth was our "big" stop and we wandered about as long as time would allow. It is, today, much as it must have been in Jesus' time. Tiny narrow cobbled streets -- no more than 4 or 5 feet wide -- with an 18-inch wide depression in the middle for the donkeys to use and for waste. It was terribly crowded -- people and animals jostling each other to get through -- many walking in the middle trough. It was very noisy as people hawked their wares from the tiny open shops that lined the streets. There were shops for brass and beans and sandals, squawking chickens and foodstuffs in a lovely disarray. Great platters of deserts made of honey and nuts were liberally displayed on the street and would have tempted us more had it not been for the swarms of bees and flies that were helping themselves. The good and the foul smells mingled together curiously. Perhaps the only things of great religious import that we saw there was Mary's well -- and what a disappointment! It was small and dirty and full of used kleenex and other litter. Such a shame that a place that means so much to so many should be treated this way! We paused briefly in one of the gift shops and bought some little carved animals for the children and then were on our way.

We arrived back at Haifa a bit late for lunch, finished quickly and prepared for another of the many memorable experiences that are a part of the pilgrimage -- a visit to the Archives. Happily, Violetta Nakjiavani was to be our guide. Most of you have seen pictures of the Archives building, I'm sure. It is a replica of the Acropolis -- so perfectly proportioned and stately! The huge bronze doors were swung open to reveal a single tremendous room with the one window at the far end extending to the ceiling. It is made of stained glass of simple design and rich hues of blues and purples -- and flooded the room with coloured light. The building has enclosed stairways going up both sides of the door end and the sides have narrow balconies. There are rich rugs on the floors that are so dwarfed by the size of the room as to look like scatter rugs. Lovely delicate cases -- many antique -- line the walls and are carefully placed. These were being purchased in London by the Guardian when he was struck ill and died. Many had told him that they were too small -- that they wouldn't look well in that room -- but he insisted -- and, of course, he was right. There were a few tables too and, other than these, only three enormous and breathtaking crystal chandeliers.

Violetta took us from case to case explaining to us what we were seeing. Again, it is completely impossible to tell of these things fully -- I can only mention a few. There are articles of clothing worn by the Bab and Baha'u'llah -- even a bit of the blood-stained and bullet-ridden shirt that the Bab was wearing when He was martyred in Tabriz. There were pen cases, books, jewelry and so on that had been theirs. There were the portraits of the

Bab and Baha'u'llah and the photograph of Baha'u'llah that can only be seen here -- for they are carefully guarded lest copies be made and, in later years, the followers will forget the Message and concentrate on the Messenger. We are constantly warned about this -- that superstitions can creep in so easily. When I first became a Baha'i I wondered about the keeping of the archives -- why it should have any importance. But being there -- seeing the things, it is easy to understand. How much better one can understand the history of the Faith when one sees these things. No word-picture, no telling, can show so much. It's why we have museums instead of just libraries, I guess. Most meaningful, most important of all the things displayed there were the actual tablets of the Bab and Baha'u'llah! Imagine! There was one that particularly startled us -- a letter written by the Bab to Baha'u'llah! One Prophet of God writing to Another! It would be, but for the time element, as though one were viewing a letter lovingly addressed by Moses to Christ. We saw, too, the "Bab's Address to the Letters of the Living", the "Hidden Words", so many of the Writings we have lived intimately with for so many years. We wondered that there was so much original material -- and later learned why. When Baha'u'llah wrote things, the originals often would be kept and copies made, reviewed by Him, signed, sealed and sent. Another thing of great interest to us was that Baha'u'llah's penmanship could not be forged -- for the simple reason that, following the poisoning in Baghdad, His hand shook for the rest of His life -- making his script impossible to copy. The impact of all that we saw was tremendous. We were exhausted by it. Several hours of total concentration, trying to remember this detail and that -- and all things closely related to the thing we love most -- the Faith.

Mr. Faizi joined us for dinner again that night -- together with David Hoffman -- member of the Universal House of Justice, British, scholar, publisher of George Ronald books (Sears, Townshend, etc.). They stayed on for tea as the dinner guests (hosts?) nearly always did -- to talk. Ida's candied orange peel was made by then and she passed it proudly. It was delicious -- made even better, I'm sure, by the laughter it had engendered.

The next day the Easterners went to Bahji and it seemed particularly quiet. We missed them. Little was scheduled for the day -- so we did our chores, wandered about the gardens and then went into Haifa for a bit of shopping and browsing. Again we witnessed the great respect shown for the Baha'is there. We would ask to look at this or that momento of the Baha'i gardens or Shrines and they would ask "Are you Baha'is?" And when we said that we were, they would say, "Oh, then cut 25% from the prices you see -- the Baha'is are fine people, we like them to come here. So many people come to Israel to take -- but you have given us our greatest beauty." This attitude we saw evidence of so often and in such unexpected places and ways.

In the afternoon we were invited to Charles and Harriet Wolcott's for tea. How nice it was to be with them again -- just the four of us -- after so many years. The furnishings were so familiar to us -- first from their home in Hollywood, then from their apartment there -- then from the National

Administrative Headquarters in Wilmette where they moved when Charles had been elected as secretary of the U.S. NSA -- and now here, half-way round the world. It had been home each of those places -- and now it was home again. The apartment was, to American standards, far from convenient or elegant -- but considered very nice and modern there. And it did have one distinct advantage. From the front balcony one could see all the Bay of Akka and, down the hill and to the side a bit, the Shrine of the Bab! The grand piano was there and Charles sat down and played for us. We asked Harriet if there was time for him to do anything with his music -- and she said that there was not -- that he did play for himself often to relax and they attend the symphony when they can -- but that is it. That saddened us though it did not surprise us. He has such talent! We saw the latest pictures of their children and grandchildren -- heard some family tapes -- and, when the mail came, Harriet let out a "Yippee!" She had gotten 5 letters -- the most, she said, in any day since they moved there. Several were from people we knew and she shared them with us. One was from their daughter, Sheila, and was full of plans for their visit to Haifa in the summer. Charles and Harriet were looking forward to it so eagerly! Pilgrimages are not arranged for the summer season -- to give the Holy Land a bit of a rest -- and because of the excessive heat. And so that is the time that the families of the residents come to visit. Much too soon, the afternoon passed.

After dinner that night, the Chances and two other couples who work there -- the Kents and the Kabans -- showed some marvelous and rare slides of the Holy Places in Iran -- foreshadowing what was to come for us. The next morning was at leisure again. At lunch, we were joined by Paul Haney and Hushmand Fathezaam. I had known Hushmand's brother, Shidan, quite well in California some years before -- while he was a student there. How well I recall the shock we all felt when the word reached us that Shidan's father, a prominent physician, Chairman of the Assembly in Tehran, had been murdered because of his service to the Faith. He had been called to a home supposedly on a medical emergency one night late. They lay in wait for him at the front door. Shortly after that, Shidan returned to Iran and then went on to Africa. Hushmand served in India and became the secretary of their National Assembly. We did not meet his wife until we got to Iran where she had been called because of illness in her family. She is a most chic and talented person. Prior to moving to Israel, she had had her own dress designing house in Delhi. Hushmand is young (late thirties, I suspect) humble, loving and with such capacity! Again, no aloofness there ;-- at first meeting, he is warm and interested as a close friend. When Paul asked if he wanted to join us on our afternoon excursion, he jumped at the chance to -- as he said -- play hookey. We went to see the Temple property. What a spot! It is the promontory on the end of Mt. Carmel -- from which one can see both the Bay and the Mediterranean. It is a large plot of land -- much larger than we had imagined. There is nothing there yet -- but a couple of abandoned bunkers. We counted over 13 varieties of wild flowers underfoot as we wandered about. The spring air was heavy with their scent. The story behind the acquiring of the land is quite

interesting. It had belonged to the Catholic church from some hundreds of years. The Guardian saw it and decided that that would be the perfect spot for the House of Worship -- so he made a fair offer for it -- which was promptly and flatly refused. Somehow the government got wind of it and went to the Catholics, asking them to sell it to us. They said that the Catholics had had it for hundreds of years -- and what had they done with it? Nothing. But the Baha'is had had their properties for only a little time and had made them the most beautiful in all of Israel -- perhaps in all of the Middle East. Rather grudgingly, the sale was agreed upon. The Pope himself had had to sign the bill of sale. Plans are being developed for the edifice that will be built there.

We went then to the Cave of Elijah -- or at least one of them. There was an old church built around it and a stairway down to the shallow cave -- just under the alter. There are several Caves of Elijah close at hand, we were told, and much controversy over which is the right one. Abdu'l-Baha said that undoubtedly Elijah had stayed in all of them and more at one time or another -- how foolish people were to fight over such a thing. From there we drove along Panorama Drive -- seeing other Baha'i property and the view -- and on to the small Baha'i cemetery. We paused there to have prayers at the graves of Millie Collins and Horace Holley. Some of the graves are very old -- those of the earliest believers.

After our "outing", we had tea with those dear Revel sisters. They shared such precious stories of their experiences in the Faith -- and showed us many pictures that we had not seen before -- of Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardian. Again we were amazed by their vitality -- this pixie-pair -- and basked in the warmth of their love.

That evening Ruhyyih Khanum joined us at dinner -- and spent an hour or so afterwards talking with us. Before she left, she came up to Ida and with a great twinkle, handed her the second vial of attar of roses that Ida had asked for -- "From my shop."

Again the next morning we had unscheduled time and the Chances asked if we would like to join them on a short trip to Akka -- as they were to take pictures for a friend. We jumped at the chance! What a reprieve! To be able to see the prison, the House of Abud, Mazra'ih and Bahji again, even so briefly! When we arrived at Bahji, the Persians were just leaving. They hugged us -- but they were silent -- hearts much too full and too heavy for conversation. We understood. Oh, how we understood!

During the drive back to Haifa, we recalled Baha'u'llah's prophecy that this then desolate area would one day become a thriving metropolis -- that the cities would grow and meet, circling the Bay. The prophecy is well on its way to becoming a reality already. After lunch, we went again to Number 7, Persian Street. This time, we were to visit the room of the Master -- Abdu'l-Baha -- the room in which he lived during the last portion of his life and the room in which he had died. It is in a corner of the building --

and, as with his room at Bahji, it was warm and cozy -- full of homey reminders of him; a dog-eared book about the California Redwoods by Muir -- that he adored; binoculars through which he constantly watched the erection of the original Shrine of the Bab; a bit of his favorite rock-candy. Stories again flooded our memories as we looked ;about this friendly welcoming room. It was not hard to picture him here.

Ruhiyyih Khanum had greeted us on the steps as we arrived -- dressed in a peasant skirt and dress -- hair loose, down her back and partially covered with a bandana. "Come in and make yourselves at home," she had said, "I'm terribly busy because I'm having the Fatheazaam children to dinner and I'm all involved in cooking. We all take turns, you know, when their mother is gone so they won't be too lonesome. I'll be back as soon as you've visited the Master's room." And then she had disappeared.

As we come from the Master's room, there she was again. "Oh, dear, I wanted to have custard for them and I've never known how to make it." Ida quickly volunteered to teach her and so we were all invited into the kitchen while they went at it. Ruhiyyih Khanum proudly showed off the barn of a kitchen that she had just done over herself. When Margaret Chance first came to the Holy Land, she had been asked to look at it and to suggest what could be done. Margaret told us that she had just gasped "Nothing! It's impossible!" But Ruhiyyih Khanum had been determined and, doing nearly all the work herself, including hammering, painting and wiring in a light fixture, had made it into a most charming place. The once gargantuan, high ceilings, cold single room had been divided into a pantry, kitchen and breakfast room -- old furniture and odds and ends had been painted gay colours and it had turned into one of the coziest places imaginable. While she and Ida addressed themselves to the custard, we wandered out into the garden -- again a charming and relaxed place. We suddenly heard a strange cry -- and low and behold, there was a pen of peacocks! Ruhiyyih Khanum is a nut for animals of all kinds and, after the death of the Guardian, began collecting anything she could get her hands on. Once Leroy Ioas, I think it was, was her house guest and when he went to take a bath, discovered an alligator in the tub! On her recent return from India, Paul Haney, with others, met her at the airport and she asked Paul if hew would carry a small box for her. He tucked it under his arm and, while he was walking along, suddenly felt it move. He told us that he had let out a blood-curdling yell and jumped a yard. "Oh never mind, Paul, it's just a little mongoose," she said. There was a little cottage in the garden -- almost like a doll's house -- that was Fugita's home. He came by while we were there -- fairly being dragged along by his beautiful black cocker spaniel. We told him that we had clammered up to his garden and he was terribly pleased -- and chatted about it while before he continued on his way. Soon the custard was in the oven and we gathered together in the sitting room once again for tea and gaaz -- a marvelous Persian candy made of pistacio nuts. Conversation jumped from one subject to another -- from eye exercises to archeology to eating habits to deeply spiritual things to history and on. The time sped by and soon we had to hurry back for dinner. But not before a quick trip to the kitchen

revealed that someone had turned on the broiler instead of the oven and the custard had become a black-topped soupy mess! "Ah, well," our hostess said, "it was a lovely afternoon anyway. They'll just have to be content with cookies."

As this was our last official night of the pilgrimage, the Hands and many others came after dinner to have prayers with us at the Shrines and to visit. Quite late, the Chances spirited us off to their apartment to show us some moves of their families, travels and the London Congress. The next morning we went into Upper Carmel and, in spite of warnings, I went to the hairdresser. You have never seen such a place! And this was the best in town! It was just plain old-fashioned dirty. People wandered in and out -- the operators were in house dresses or slacks and bedroom slippers. Combs and brushes weren't washed between customers. I got hysterical. Over my protests, I got a bouffant "do" which was profusely lacquered with something that obviously was intended for a table-top or an alcohol-proof tray. Maury and Elena had wandered around the town and had had a fine time. They had gone into a bank to cash a check and somehow had found themselves being ushered into the president's office. He had a question. When he asked the Jews about their Faith, they eagerly told him, as did the Christians and he was at first incredulous (as I'm sure you-all are), then understood and was impressed. He said that he loved the Baha'is -- that their integrity was exemplary. Then Maury and Elena went to a coffee shop to sit awhile over a cup. An older man, owner of the shop it turned out, engaged them in conversation and, as soon as he heard that they were not tourists but Baha'is, launched into a story of his coming there, penniless, sleeping in parks, unable to get a job. One of the Baha'is there had lent him enough money to get started on when his own people wouldn't. He would never forget it. And so it is in Israel -- a constant reminder of the importance of living the life.

Lunch that last day was with Mr. Faizi -- now almost recovered from his cold -- and Dr. Hakim -- the only elderly member of the Universal House of Justice. As I understand it, Dr. Hakim had been the one who attended Abdu'l-Baha at the time of his passing -- had lived for years in the Holy Land and served the Faith in many ways. We were to fly out that afternoon late and so, upon advise, called to reconfirm our reservations for the third time. Yes, we were booked on the flight. Could we reconfirm our reservations out of Iran to India as well, we asked? Oh, the flight you are on is not allowed to let passengers disembark in Iran -- you will have to go on to India immediately, they said. We nearly panicked! Mr. Kent, who deals with all such things for the pilgrims, was not at all surprised. This was typical, he said. He went down into town and got it all straightened out. We would leave on a later flight and everything would be all right. We got a cable off to the Sabets immediately telling them of the change and, since we would be arriving in Tehran at about 3:30 a.m., we would go directly to the hotel and see them the next day. Some of the Iranian pilgrims were to be on the same flight -- and insisted that they would see us safely to our hotel. Some who were booked out earlier had said that they would stay at the airport for 5

hours to see that we were all right when we landed! It took much persuasion to get them to abandon the idea. Can you imagine an American returning from a long hard flight after an extended trip offering such a thing?

We had a bit of time with the Wolcotts again and then packed up, went to the Shrines and, immediately after dinner, bid a tearful farewell to all those who had gathered to see us off. Several of them pressed into our hands copies of pictures we had admired, addresses, small gifts. It was hard to imagine that we had been there only for such a short time -- at this place of our dreams -- for it was more like a lifetime. So much had transpired. As we climbed into our taxi, we wondered how many of these dear faces we would see again -- but in wondering, we knew that we would never really leave each other for we were bound together in a special way -- linked eternally through the precious experience we had shared.

We were silent as our taxi lumbered on toward the airport.

METADATA

Views1240 views since posted 2025-10-07; last edit 2025-10-07 02:50 UTC;

previous at archive.org.../tyler_pligrim_notes_1965

Language

English

Permission

fair use

Share

Shortlink: bahai-library.com/7088

Citation: ris/7088

select Collection:

Archives

Articles

Articles-unpublished

Audio

Bibliographies

BIC

Biographies

Books

Chronologies

Compilations

Compilations-NSA

Compilations-personal

Documents

East-asia

Encyclopedia

Essays

Etc

Excerpts

[Fiction](#)
[Glossaries](#)
[Guardian](#)
[Histories](#)
[Introductory](#)
[Letters](#)
[Maps](#)
[Music](#)
[Newspapers](#)
[NSA-documents](#)
[NSA-letters](#)
[Personal](#)
[Pilgrims](#)
[Poetry](#)
[Presentations](#)
[Resources](#)
[Reviews](#)
[Scripts](#)
[Software](#)
[Statistics](#)
[Study](#)
[Talks](#)
[Theses](#)
[Transcripts](#)
[Translations](#)
[UHJ-documents](#)
[UHJ-letters](#)
[Video](#)
[Visual](#)
[Writings](#)

[home](#)

[sitemap](#)

[series](#)

[chronology](#)

[search:](#)
[author](#)

[title](#)

[date](#)

[tags](#)

[adv. search](#)
[languages](#)

[inventory](#)

[bibliography](#)

[abbreviations](#)

[links](#)

[about](#)

[contact](#)

[RSS](#)

[new](#)

— Pilgrim Notes (Used by permission of the curator)