

just as an angry mob broke down the front door.

Mr Khadem stayed overnight with us. Jim and Jackie shared a small bedroom and we slept in the living room, giving Mr Khadem our bedroom. He was extremely tired so we wanted to ensure he had a chance to rest undisturbed.

Unfortunately, when I rose to dress for work I had no clean shirts and my clothes were in that bedroom. What to do? I reasoned that if I knocked quietly on his door, if he was awake, he would let me in. If he did not answer, I could assume that he was sound asleep, and sneak in and get the shirt.

Knocking quietly produced no response so, quietly as possible, I snuck in and tiptoed across the room. Just as I opened the drawer, poor Mr Khadem woke up, saw this shadowy figure lurking in his room and got a great fright.

Over the years I occasionally met him at large conferences and he always remembered to ask for Eileen and the children by name. I don't know how he could remember so many people in detail. I was asked to give a workshop in Oakville and wrote to Mr Khadem asking if he would like to send a greeting to the friends there. He sent such a loving greeting that everyone was moved. He told me that he was sorry not to be there to sit with the group and learn from me. In all my life, I never met a more humble man.

I suppose that it is more than coincidence that it was at a National Convention in Winnipeg, where Mr Khadem raised the call for pioneers that led us to pioneer to Yellowknife. The power of love can move mountains.

John Robarts

Sometime during 1960 Hand of the Cause John Robarts passed through St Catharines on a cross Canada tour. He was speaking with Baha'is only, encouraging them in the use of prayer and stressing daily use of the Prayer for Canada, the Tablet of Ahmad, and the Long Obligatory Prayer. As I was not a Baha'i at the time, I was unable to attend his talk. Around 1964 we were living in Niagara on the Lake and I was asked to give a talk about the Baha'i Faith to a grade eleven class at the high school in Virgil, near Niagara on the Lake. I wanted to convey to the students something of the global reach of the Faith, so I wrote to Dempsey Morgan in Vietnam, Mr P.N. Rai, Secretary of the National Assembly of Baha'is of India (whom we had met at the World Congress in London, England in 1963) and to Mr Robarts who was now pioneering with his wife in Rhodesia (now called Zimbabwe). I asked all of them to send a greeting to the class and say something about where they lived.

In the letter to John I started off saying "You don't know me, but I lived in St Catharines when you came through there in 1960". John replied "Of course I know you. We all prayed for you in St Catharines, as you were still clinging to your old outworn rigging."

John Robarts influenced our lives several times and in most loving ways. On one occasion we attended a Baha'i Summer School at Sylvan Lake, Alberta, and John was one of the featured speakers. Eileen and I had decided that in the light of the needs of the Baha'i Fund, Baha'is should not have life savings, but

should donate it all. We approached John with this proposition, expecting him to confirm our ideas, but he said "Of course Baha'is should have life savings"

John came on a teaching trip to Yellowknife in 1969 and we were wondering how we could use him effectively. We got press and radio interviews lined up and debated whether to hold a public meeting with him. The public meetings we had seemed to have zero results, but we thought that for the sake of prestige, we should hold one anyway, to show the flag. The Baha'i friends dragged out old friends to the meeting, some coming for the first time, others who had been around the Baha'is for years without showing any signs of wishing to join.

John gave a good talk, not a brilliant one, but one I had heard him give many times before. After the talk he mingled with the audience, while we had coffee, and I saw in a little group in one corner that someone was signing a Baha'i membership application card. This was unusual and exciting. A little later he was in a group at another corner and we saw that someone else was signing a card. It went on like that, some people who heard of the Faith for the first time that night and others that had been around Baha'is for many years all were signing Baha'i cards. By the end of that evening the Yellowknife Baha'i community had six new members.

We had been living in Yellowknife for four years and Eileen's health had deteriorated. At the time we did not know what was the cause but we were feeling the need to get away from the hostile climate, and yet as Baha'i pioneers were feeling guilty about the idea of leaving our post. The teaching efforts had been successful and the Baha'i Community had grown from one to thirty four. We had been eagerly anticipating further growth. What to do?

We met dear John Robarts at a summer school in Banff and discussed it with him. What was his advice? Stay at your post? Buy your grave? No. John said "Of course you must look after Eileen's health. Its your first priority. You have done wonderfully well. Others can carry on the work you have started."

When we left Yellowknife we had a short vacation in Niagara on the Lake, the area we had left when we pioneered north. While there we were fortunate to be able to attend a public meeting at which the well known Baha'i scholar and author Stanwood Cobb was speaking. When we were introduced to him after his talk he shook Eileen's hand and immediately said "You are very ill. You must get the best medical attention immediately." I don't know how he could tell that from a handshake, but the doctors in Sudbury took 18 months, treating her for symptoms, before she was sent to Princess Margaret Hospital and diagnosed with a very advanced case of Hodgkin's Disease. Her illness was caused by arsenic which occurred naturally and leached into the Yellowknife drinking water.

John Robarts was a first cousin to another John Robarts, a statesman and onetime Premier of Ontario. "Our" John was grand story teller. He once told about a visit he had with George Townshend in Ireland. George Townshend was a brilliant man, sometime Canon of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin and

Archdeacon of Clonfert in Ireland before becoming a Baha'i. Townsend had written several fascinating Baha'i books including Christ and Baha'u'llah, Heart of the Gospel and The Promise of All Ages.

In correspondence, George told John that there was a man he was teaching about the Baha'i Faith but seemed to be making very slow progress. He invited John to join them if he was ever visiting Ireland. John was a highly placed executive in the insurance business and a member of their prestigious Million Dollar Round Table.

Eventually John was able to visit Ireland and was invited to lunch with George Townshend and his friend. This man, like George, was highly educated and a scholar and as John told the story, their conversation was way over his head and he did not have much to add to it. Eventually George had to go to the washroom, and while he was gone, John asked the man if he had ever considered becoming a Baha'i. "Nobody ever asked me," was the reply. John asked him if he would like to be a Baha'i and the man said he would be delighted to become a member.

When George Townshend returned from the washroom John, with a smile said "I think your friend has something to tell you!"

After telling this story John said "Baha'is are very good at teaching the Faith. What they are not good at is closing the deal!"

Dear John Robarts eventually developed Alzheimer's and passed away after many years of dedicated and inspiring service. Some years after this a young Baha'i from Africa by the name of Dumang Moncho arrived in Sudbury where he was preparing to study geology at Cambrian College. The Baha'i telephone line was not working and Dumang placed an ad in our local daily newspaper, the Sudbury Star, saying "attention Baha'is. I am new in town and would like to get in touch with the Baha'i community." By good fortune I saw the ad and contacted him. He was a delightful man and he and I became fast friends.

John Robarts and his gracious wife Audrey had taught the Faith to Dumang's parents when the Robarts were pioneering in Rhodesia. Audrey used to phone me periodically from her home in Quebec to get an update on how Dumang was progressing. She was well into her 80's at this time and was telling me of plans she had for teaching trips. I said to her "How can you take on this responsibility at your age?" and Audrey replied "John won't leave me alone."

Tarazullah Samandari

In early 1968 we had a very distinguished guest in Yellowknife, a Mr Samandari who was travelling with his son, Dr Samandari. Mr Samandari was over ninety years old and was a Hand of the Cause and the last man alive to have known Baha'u'llah. He was a tiny man and wore a long black coat and a very long scarf when he arrived at the Yellowknife airport. It was forty degrees below zero and we anticipated a slow moving old man., but when his feet hit the ground he moved so fast we had a hard time to keep up with him.

One of his functions was to authenticate the handwriting of Baha'u'llah, and he spoke little English, his son Dr Samandari acting as his interpreter. Dr Samandari was now a man in his fifties. Mr Samandari had spent much of his life travelling, living out of a suitcase and I understood that he had not seen his son since he was fifteen years old. The Baha'is in Yellowknife were deadly afraid that Mr Samandari might die while with us, and none of us any idea of how to handle a funeral for such a unique person.

Our son little Robert showed up at all the meetings that were held, sitting in his little baby chair, and Mr Samandari referred to Robert as "my faithful friend" Virginia Evans was a young Baha'i who worked as a waitress at the Yellowknife Inn, and she was approached by some natives in the hotel lobby asking "who is the holy man?". They had a sense that someone special had arrived. When he visited our home I offered him the "lazy boy" chair, but Mr Samandari declined, saying that was a chair for old men.

One of the meetings that we held was very strange. Among those present was Chief Jimmy Bruneau, Chief of the Dogrib Nation who was over 80 years old, and still ran a trap line and hunted and fished for a living. He spoke no English and was almost deaf. Someone attending spoke Chipewyan and English, another could speak Chipewyan and Dogrib and Mr Samandari spoke Farsi and Arabic. Mr Samandari gave a talk which sentence by sentence Dr Samandari translated into English, then it was translated into Chipewyan, from that into Dogrib, and finally someone shouted this version into Chief Jimmy Bruneau's best ear.

Mr Samandari told us how at the age of 16 he had lived in Acca and had been present when Baha'u'llah attended a feast there. His stories were simple but touching, such as how Baha'u'llah went round the group at the feast and personally gave each person a flower. We were all sad but relieved to see Mr Samandari leave us and it must have been one of his last teaching trips as he died within the year, leaving the world bereft of this wonderful living link to our Baha'i history.

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