

world. The Resurrection, promised in all previous scriptures, had taken place and man had been offered honour, glory and enlightenment if he would but heed the warnings of all previous Revelations of God's Messages, and search out the truth as revealed by the two latest Manifestations of God and His will.

Irrespective of whether or not man would accept this great challenge, the seeds of change had been sown and were beginning to germinate. "The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order", said Bahá'u'lláh. So man could accept the challenge and the honour, or he could heedlessly ignore it and lose his precious spiritual heritage, but he could NOT prevent the gradual establishment of the Will of God.

I have been a very privileged person, because I have lived during this 20th century - the Century of Light - and have been granted the bounty of being able to accept the challenge, and to become one of the humble labourers in the Cause of God for this age.

Because I was so much a part of the old order of things and have many memories of a way of life unknown to my grandchildren, the following are excerpts from an account of my life.

BEGINNING LIFE

At number 2 Hope Street, Newtown, Tasmania, on the 31st May, 1905, a child was born to Albert Edward and Alice Louise Street. There were already other children: in order they were John Alomes, Alice Louise, Ivy Evelyn, Edwin Albert and Nina Grace. This latest child proved to be the final one in this family because her mother, known by her sisters as Lou, died, and was buried on the day that the baby was three weeks old. In those days, people knew nothing of maternity hospitals: childbirth was something that happened in one's own home, the mother being attended by the local midwife and perhaps the family doctor - in this case, one Dr. Sprott. God bless my unknown mum. I was that small scrap of humanity - a very sturdy and healthy scrap. At first, there

had been
the choice of Kathleen for my name, but one evening, as my sister Alice picked me up, she
said "Hello dear little Kathy!". My mother, lying quietly in bed, reacted very quickly, "Don't say that!, it sounds as if you are calling her Catty!" And Kathleen was promptly changed to Muriel Gertrude. These names have stayed with me all my
life but of course, eventually, I exchanged Street for Handley.

EDUCATION

In my childhood in this country, education for all children was available, but not yet compulsory. There were still people who only felt it necessary for
a child to attend school long enough to gain the very basics of the three R's. If any kind
of family situation existed, or arose, all other considerations took precedence over the
need for a child to go to school. I was to go to school, but I only began to attend school
very soon after my eighth birthday. If my life were to be taken as an example, one would
wonder if maybe our present-day obsession of getting children into Play Groups and
Kindergarten whilst still toddlers may not be an overrating of this early exposure.
Bahá'ís will have to think about the statement of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that formal education
should begin at five.

When I did begin to go to school, I had already learned a great deal of the three R's: when this began I do not know but I think it must have been that
"I
wanted" to learn, and the adults around me patiently taught me those things that I
wanted to know. I learned how to recognise and write digits and this led to counting and
understanding numbers. In my days as a teacher I read much and met plenty of discussion
about the uselessness of children learning the mechanics of dealing with numbers before
they have full comprehension of their values. Before I went to school I could do quite
complicated additions. I am very sure that I did understand what I was doing and also
understood the values in units, tens, hundreds etc. insofar as we ever do understand
large quantities.

I learned in the same manner to play the piano, i.e. by the combination of my desire with the patience of my Aunties. I never did have proper tuition outside the home for this skill - it was achieved by sheer persistence and by going to my Aunts for help when confronted with something new or puzzling.

One thing for which I am truly grateful is that, even at an early age, I was never allowed to leave any task half-finished, and never allowed to ignore difficulties. In all my learning, I took responsibility for my own actions: things like repairing articles which I broke; apologising to people for discourtesy; learning to be able to make the first move in cases of estrangement, etc. These incidents became opportunities to strengthen the spiritual backbone as well as lessons about acceptable behaviour. Academically, if there was something I could not do, there was always someone willing to sit patiently with me till I could, followed by exercises geared towards "fixing" the newly-gained skill.

In those days, children commenced school when around six or seven years of age, they entered the first class and advanced one class per year. The end of Primary School was usually the end of all schooling for most children. I had commenced attending New Town State School in the middle of 1913, aged eight, and when I entered high school our normal expectancy was a four year course in whatever field we entered - in my case, a commercial course.

I spent 1923 as a Junior teacher 1924 was my College year, and in 1925 I was teaching in the Infant School at New Town State School. The odd thing is that I did not set out for a teaching career, but I am now very sure that a Higher Power chose it for me. During my C class year, I played hockey for my school winter sport and one of the younger teachers was our coach. She and I both lived in West Hobart so it became the habit for us to travel home together and we became very good friends. One day, she asked me what I intended to do when I left school, to which I replied that I hoped to get a good office

job of some kind. But she did not like that idea "Oh no, you can do much better than that. Why not become a teacher?" I was stunned - in my mind teaching was for people who were much more clever than I, and besides, here I was doing a Commercial Course, not the Teaching one. She did not give me time to think. Next day, she hauled me off to the Head's office and told him I was going to apply for an Education Department Scholarship and become a Probationary teacher. The application papers were signed, sealed, and away before I had properly caught my breath. I was about to set the world on fire as a Commercial Teacher at High School but even that was destined not to be. The Tasmanian Education Department Infant School Inspectress, Miss Amy Rowntree took only twelve Infant Students per year and she was extremely fussy about her "Girls". One only got into that college course by invitation. I was one of the chosen for the 1924 Course, and I felt extremely flattered and could not resist. And so High School Teaching was forgotten. I became a dedicated teacher and one way or another have been involved with education all my life since. It was because I had become so very education-oriented that I was led to do so much research on the Bahá'í Writings about Education, and as a result, I hope I was able to serve the Cause more efficiently through this interest.

RELIGION

In the days of my childhood, religion was of far greater importance in a home than it is today. Most people at least considered that they belonged to some church or other even if they only attended it for baptisms, marriages and funerals. Most of those who were regular attendants were devout. However, most people were very ignorant of other religions: if one spoke of another religion, one almost always meant another sect of Christianity because it was so fully believed that Christianity was the ONLY religion - all other people were heathen and all native peoples were pagan. Even as a child, this way of looking at people really bothered me. I was taught that God was loving and kind yet in

my mind, how could He be if there was no place in heaven for all those millions of heathen and pagans who had no hope because they did not go to Christian churches? There were a few times when I dared to ask about it but I quickly learned the question was taboo

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"You don't ask such questions; you just believe the Bible". This reply quietened my tongue but not my mind. In later years when I met up with the Bahá'í Faith, it was such a joy to discover people who did not call anyone Heathen or Pagan - at least, people were not debarred from heaven because they had been unfortunate enough to not know about Jesus Christ.

As far back as I have any records, my family on both my mother's and father's sides, belonged to the Church of England, and most of them to this day profess to be Anglicans. Things I did not comprehend I asked about at home during the week and usually received satisfying answers. I had my own New Testament and a couple of very old books of Bible stories over which I pored frequently. But no one could explain satisfactorily why, if all churches believed in Jesus, they had to be different, and all wrong except our Church. Why were the Non-Conformist churches regarded as almost irreligious because either they had no Communion Service or they observed it differently from us? Why was there such secrecy and innuendo about the Roman Catholics? Innuendo which suggested to a childish mind that strange things went on in the Convents.

All these questions gave me much food for thought but by and large I loved my religion and its standard of ethics grew to be my own standard of living.

One of the biblical facts which I absorbed from listening to the lessons as read in church services was that Jesus would return some day "on clouds of glory". The more I thought about this, the more I became convinced that this was about to happen and I would see Him. This would have been when I was no more than seven and so I saw the whole thing VERY literally. I was expecting Jesus, who had come at Christmas and would naturally do so again and because the Bible spoke of the

"clouds

of glory", quite logically I expected Him to arrive up there in the sky. One Christmas morning, as soon as I awoke, I was out of bed and off to the window, expecting

to see the Beloved up there in the clouds and I just couldn't accept that He was not.

Finally, of course, I had to accept my disappointment so settled for it to happen next

year. When next year was also non-productive, I most reluctantly gave up and got on with

the business of growing up. That would, I think, have happened in the years 1912 and 1913

- the years when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was so actively bringing the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to the West.

My original questions remained unanswered and as I grew older, and my horizons widened, I met people from other Christian backgrounds and I ventured into their

churches a little. So, by the time I met Everard, I was somewhat confused and ready to be

thoroughly influenced by him. He was totally disillusioned about Churchianity and after we

married, we only attended churches spasmodically, and that was only because we both knew

there had to be a "Right Way" somewhere and hoped we would eventually find it. Through this period, I came to believe that although the Bible contained a message and

lots of divine wisdom, it had become obsolete and in no way fitted the present day needs.

I had to live through almost another decade before I learned that He had returned in the

person of Bahá'u'lláh! Thank God we were led to find him.

MY LIFE AS A BAHAI

Everard Handley, who later became my husband, was forced through circumstances to leave school when he was only eleven years of age. The family then lived

in Zeehan - all except his father who was in Western Australia, he having gone there in

search of employment at the time of the failure of the Van Dieman Lands Bank in which

occurrence he lost all his money. It was fortunate for Everard that his family became

involved with a Mr Gordon Heywood who was a Cornish man then living in Zeehan, and who was

interested and occupied in various mining ventures. It seems that Gordon took

Everard

under his wing, encouraged him to attend the School of Mines and began to educate himself.

As Everard became more and more conscious of acquiring learning he developed a spirit of

search that invaded most areas of life. So he seemed to be for ever dabbling in new ideas

and "isms". To the end of his life in 1968, he was always keenly interested in new ideas. I remember how very excited he was towards the end of his life when he first

learned something of laser beams - he visualised their tremendous potential.

I met Everard at the stage in my life when I had discovered that

neither my Church nor any other seemed able to supply me with answers to the religious

questions which bothered me. At that time, he taught me a great deal about religion and

helped me to think more carefully and to read about such matters. Then came our marriage,

followed later by our family of five children, the first three of whom arrived all within

three years.

During 1940 or 1941, somewhere, Everard met up with the Bahá'í Faith and attended some meetings, which in those days were held at Battery Point. Its believed

Everard heard of the Bahá'í Faith from a man named Mr Gibson who was associated with the

Unitarian Church where Everard had been to some meetings. He did not talk about them with

me but only mentioned them casually. Now that I look back upon that fact, I wonder WHY he

neglected to do so because he was well aware that I had strong feelings about the need for

a renewal of Religious Teachings: this belief of mine had caused great disapproval from

his mother a few years earlier. Later, Gretta Lamprill persuaded him to "bring his

wife along to a meeting", and of course, we then discovered that we knew each other -

in two ways. Gretta was the Education Department school nurse and I had been a teacher

with whom she had come in contact. Also, we discovered Gretta and my eldest brother and my

two youngest aunts had gone to school together. In August of 1941 I was feeling unwell and

it was conceded that I really needed some kind of a rest. It was decided that I should go

to Sydney for a few weeks to take John to see his grandfather, because he was the only grand-son, and also because I had not seen my Dad nor my siblings since 1909. Whilst in Sydney, I met many Bahá'ís and attended several meetings. I became familiar with such people as Mother Dunn, Jane Routh, Charlotte Moffat, Maud Hall and the Bolton Family. By the time I returned home to Hobart in October, not only was I restored in health and reacquainted with my family, but also I had absorbed sufficient knowledge of the Faith to want to belong to it. In retrospect, I think I was influenced more by the love and friendliness of the friends, in which I blossomed, than by the Teachings, which I was too immature to fully understand, I'm afraid. Strangely enough, Everard seemed to see no necessity to "get involved". So we simply continued to associate, till suddenly, one evening in January 1942, at a fireside, Everard said to Gretta and Kit, "I'll join your Faith" - just like that! I, who had really been unhappy with our evasion, was stunned, but delighted, and we both signed our cards there and then.

[Not only did my parents become the fifth and sixth Bahá'ís in Tasmania, but my father was the first male Bahá'í and the Handley family was the first Bahá'í family in that state. -John]

QUEENSTOWN

Three years after accepting Bahá'u'lláh, in 1945, we moved to Queenstown to live. Because I wanted to find outlets for the teaching of the Faith, I became involved in various Committees such as Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Central School Parents and Friends, United Nations Association as well as a Study Group for women and a Musical Group. Very soon I was being pressured into being secretary for most of them. Because I had no notion of what was involved in acting as a secretary, I was very nervous about accepting such offices but for various reasons there seemed to be no other person available, or capable, or willing to take on such responsibilities so I just drifted into these tasks. In later years I was very glad that I had faced and accepted these

challenges, because I came to realise that it had all been in preparation for all the secretarial work which over the years I was called upon to do in various administrative situations within the Faith. At the end of the first year working for the United Nations Association, I was sent to Hobart to present our Branch report to the Annual Meeting of the State body. I remember that Kit Crowder and Greta Lamprill were very excited, because I had headed my report with a quotation from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and this presentation constituted a "first" for the Faith in Tasmania.

One of the inhabitants of Queenstown, an elderly Jewish man named Schapira told me he had lived in Haifa as a child and had known 'Abdul-Baha. He said that he and most of his friends, as children, had loved the Master because he always carried sweetmeats in his pockets and gave them generously to the children.

Unfortunately, during the five years of residence in Queenstown, we were unable to enlist any believers into the Faith but many people were introduced to it and no opportunity to speak of it was passed by.

During 1950 Everard left the Mount Lyell Mines where he had been employed as Chief Chemist for the past five years, and went to Queensland. Owing to various circumstances regarding employment, he moved from one area to another in that State for a couple of years, finally ending up in the Assay Office at the Mount Isa mines.

He lived and worked there for a few years, during which time he spread news of the Faith amongst many people, especially a few Aboriginal families with whom he became friendly.

One young lass in particular named June Barton he befriended and encouraged, to the extent of buying for her a violin and helping her with some of her studies so that she was able to enter and train in the Nursing Profession. He later moved to Townsville and used sometimes to travel to Cairns to have Feasts and other meetings with Marjorie Moore, daughter of Gertrude Squelch and mother of Ann (now Stark).

Owing to the uncertainty of Everard's employment whilst in Queensland, it was decided that I would settle in Melbourne. The Bahá'í Community in

Melbourne at that time consisted of about fifteen or so members, so there was a fair amount of activity going on, but Melbourne was a large City and these members were scattered far and wide across the whole Metropolitan area.

MELBOURNE

In 1950, when we came to Melbourne, as far as I can remember, the members of the Faith in Melbourne were:- Madame Holden Graham: Mrs Eleanor Wheeler: Mrs Ethel Sindrey: Mrs Adams: Mr Brown: Mrs Emily Easey (who had joined the Faith earlier as Miss Emily Millar): Mr Cyril Easey: Mrs Irene Cover: Mr Ron Cover: Mr, Mrs, and Selga Friedenberg: Mr Neil Riches: Miss Vi Hoehnke: Miss Nell Croke and a couple of others whose names I do not remember. There was also Mrs Una Collins and her daughter Patsy, living in Talgarno - Una was daughter of Eleanor Wheeler. Other members who came to, or joined in, Melbourne during the early fifties were: Beryl Harnish from New Zealand who eventually married and returned to New Zealand: Miss Jane Russell who also married and then became inactive in the Community. The Buckney family were investigating the Faith and finally Shirley joined but I am not sure of the exact time. Pioneers came from England and went to Warrnambool: they were Pat and Margaret Carey and young family. There was a Six Year Plan in progress which concluded in 1953 and the six goal towns for that plan were Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Warrnambool, Dandenong and Warnigul. The two latter towns were never settled in that period. Also by this time, Everard Handley had returned from Queensland and he and Babs Roper from Adelaide went to Bendigo. Vi Hoehnke, and Betty Anderson from Brisbane, settled in Ballarat. Betty returned to Queensland after six months and because he had contracted a thrombosis, Everard also returned to Melbourne.

A SIDE STORY

At various times during those four years we had travel teachers as well as various Bahá'ís from overseas passing through Melbourne. The travel teachers whose

names I can recall were Hands of the Cause Furutan and Faizi: Mother Dunn and Thelma Perks, Frank Khan, Lillian Wyss, Rodney Hancock, Vernon Mackenzie, Stanley Bolton Snr, Alvin and Gertrude Blum, and Dulcie Dive of the Cook Islands.

Betty Jackson came to live in Melbourne and spent much time at Rosstown Road. There was a Naw-Ruz Party, attended by Collis Featherstone, at the Johnson home in 1955. Betty was staying with me and after we returned home at around midnight, the phone rang. It was Collis to tell me that Bill and Jean had just declared their belief in Bahá'u'lláh. I was so excited that Betty, beside me, wanted to know WHY. And when she said, "You had better make that three, not two" then our ecstasy knew no bounds - three declarations at midnight!!

At Ridvan 1956, came news from the Guardian of the necessity to observe a new rule - that of the Areas of Jurisdiction of Local Spiritual Assemblies. Many Bahá'ís were concerned, some confused and even a few who openly resisted. At the Summer School which followed in Summer 1956-57, this became the main theme so that all who attended left the School understanding full well the implications and the administrative changes that were to be made. When once explained, the whole idea seemed quite simple and logical. I resolved to return to Melbourne, and invite all the friends to arrange to move into the City of Melbourne because the Guardian at that time regarded it as very important that there should be a Local Spiritual Assembly in every Capital City. Should this not work, then I intended to leave Carnegie which was not a goal town and go to one that was. Little by little, my meditation led me to decide upon Ballarat.

A SIDE STORY

So far so good but now, how to break this news to John, whom I thought would most likely resist it. By this time Christine had married and left home and Everard had returned to Queensland. Still at Yerrinbool, and after a very restless night, I left my sleeping hut at 5 am to go and have a shower. Outside, on the grass, sitting very disconsolately, was John. I asked "Whatever are you doing here?" Very

diffidently he answered, "Mum, can't we go pioneering somewhere?" Imagine my relief!

BALLARAT

Anyone setting out to pioneer for the Bahá'í Faith may as well recognise right from the start that there will be difficulties: Bahá'u'lláh needs very dedicated souls to open up Goal Towns and one can expect to be well tested for the position. All manner of little obstacles kept cropping up but when met head-on with prayer, all dissolved satisfactorily.

When we first went to Ballarat, John and I agreed to hold all Feasts regularly, and we carefully read all the minutes that had been kept by Vi and Betty four years previously. We began to insert small regular advertisements in the newspaper and to advertise regular Firesides. In the old Minute Book was a list of names of people who had been contacts of Vi's so we used this as a basis to be built up with our own. Dr. James, and Mrs Clare Pound were the chief ones amongst these friends of Vi's and they quickly became our own best friends in Ballarat.

That Drummond Street house was only a small humble dwelling, but at times we had some illustrious guests. Mitzitoshi Zenimoto was the first Japanese Bahá'í to visit Australia and he stayed with us together with Bill Smitts, an American who was living in Japan and accompanied Zenimoto on his trip to Australia. As a lad of fifteen Zenimoto had been living in Nagasaki at the time of the dropping of the nuclear bomb and people were fascinated to hear him speak of his experiences. He also explained that it was due to the destruction and suffering which he witnessed at that time, that he began to think seriously about life and to search for some meaning to it, and how this had led him to find and accept the Bahá'í Teachings. Hand of Cause Collis Featherstone, was a regular visitor as well as Hand of Cause Enoch Olinga from Uganda, Auxiliary Board members Thelma Perks, Nieu Tuatago from Samoa, Eric Bowes, Tusha KantiPaul, Howard Harwood, Stanley Bolton Jnr., Jeanne Frankel (who helped form the first Local Spiritual

Assembly in
the Cocos Islands), Pam Ringwood, Jim Maxwell from Adelaide and other Bahá'ís
far too
numerous to remember and mention. On one occasion we even had a day visit by
Universal
House of Justice Member Hugh Chance and his wife Margaret. Effie Baker was a
frequent
visitor also. During our last year in Melbourne the Regional Teaching Committee
had a
contact in Cressy, a Keith Brown, who had seen our Ballarat Railway
Advertisement, and had
written for literature. Whenever he was home he came to visit us and eventually
joined the
Faith in 1961 and came to live in Ballarat. Later he went to Cocos Island as a
pioneer.

After we had been settled for a couple of years, John and I decided to
take a booth at the Agricultural Show. Details are not called for here but I
would like to
mention some special assistance we received from the Concourse On High. We had
all our
material prepared and ready, including three full-sized sheets of three ply
wooden display
boards which we were wondering how we were going to transport out to the Show
Ground.
John, at his work, was talking to a man who had brought in a very small panel
van to be
repaired. The quote for repair was too high for him to consider worthwhile and
he said to
John "I'll sell it to you for ten pounds". John bought it, worked on it all
night and was able to use it the next day to transport the materials to the
show. This
tiny van proved to be the answer to all of our transport problems and when the
Show was
over, someone saw it and wanted it, so it was sold at a reasonable profit.

A SIDE STORY

At about this time, 1958, Everard became very friendly with a visiting
Persian family who were currently pioneering for the Faith in Indonesia and
they wanted to
come to pioneer in Australia. Unfortunately, at the time, Australia had an
immigration
policy called The White Australia Policy, and for some reason, Persians were
considered to
be coloured people and therefore unacceptable as immigrants. If once Everard
got the bit
in his teeth about anything he considered ridiculous or unjust, he could be as

stubborn as
a mule. This was one of those times. He decided that he would leave no stone
unturned to
make it possible for this family to come and live in Australia. All the details
would be
tedious reading, but amongst other things, Everard had three trips from
Melbourne to
Canberra to the Federal Department of Immigration before he was able to achieve
his
mission - they possibly grew tired of seeing him - and they offered him some
seemingly
impossible conditions. As it turned out none of these conditions caused any
problem -
because Bahá'u'lláh was on our side. Thus, Australia opened her doors, if
rather
reluctantly, to her first Persian immigrant family. And that very small
beginning prepared
the way thirty years later when Australia was able to offer refuge to many
badly
persecuted Bahá'ís from their homeland of Iran (Persia).

At one stage I was feeling physically very weary indeed. When I arrived
home one Friday afternoon I took one look inside the back door, and decided I
could not
bear it. Closing the door, I withdrew and took off again in the car, not
knowing where I
was really going. I ended up going to visit Clare Pound. As she opened the door
to me she
said "Oh! Muriel, you look so ill", but I replied "No, not ill, just very,
very tired". From there on the conversation went something like this. Clare -
"Sit down and I'll make you a nice cup of tea". Me - "Thank you, I would be
very grateful". As Clare bustled about preparing the tea she chatted to me and
I was
too weary to be fully aware of what she was saying but I did hear her say "I'll
join
you". Me - "That will be fine, I'd like that". I thought she was about to
join me in a cup of tea. Finally, she put her hand on my shoulder and said,
"You have
not heard a word of what I have been saying". Me - "Yes I have, you are going
to
join me with a cup of tea". Clare - "No, I am not. I am going to join you in
the
Faith. - I have been thinking lately how unfair it all is. I believe all these
beautiful
Teachings and do nothing and there are you and John working for them alone like
slaves". By now of course she had my full attention and I suppose I appeared so
stunned that she repeated it all again. And what was my reaction? I put down my

head on
the table and wept. After that I was so elated that I returned home to tackle
my tasks
with joy and vigour.

[This was the first Bahá'í declaration in Ballarat. Clare's grandchild
Heather Pym is one of our auxiliary board members. -John]

I took six months leave of absence from my work and went by ship across
the Pacific, through the Panama Canal to England to attend the First Bahá'í
World
Congress in London in May 1963. The trip home was eastwards through the Suez
Canal. This
was perhaps, apart from Pilgrimage in 1967-68, the most spiritually
enlightening
experience of my life.

At the end of 1967 I went on Pilgrimage to both Israel and Iran, and on
the journey did some travel teaching in various countries. Three weeks after my
return
Everard my husband died in the Austen Hospital in February 1968. In 1970, and
at the age
of sixty-five, I felt I could no longer do justice to the children by
continuing to teach
so at the end of that year I resigned. After retiring I again went overseas for
the whole
of 1971 (January 1971 to February 1972) travel teaching.

When I returned from Overseas, I moved to Geelong in June 1972. There I
lived in the Community of South Barwon till 1983. I then moved to Colac Shire.

[This is where she remained till her passing at age 88 on 22 March 1993. -John]

CONCLUSION

Maybe the best method of bringing such a history to a fitting end would
be my announcement that my life's ambitions were gratifyingly fulfilled.

In the first place, my career as a teacher was very satisfying and to
this day in 1986 I still have a deep interest in educational trends, especially
as I see
the Bahá'í principles and methods gradually becoming adopted. Up to date, we
have
translations available of one hundred and twenty-seven Tablets written by
'Abdul-Baha
about children and their upbringing. When all of this material has become
understood and
incorporated into, or I guess I should say - has become the basis of
educational
procedures, society will be well on the way to a loving, peaceful unity.

When I was very young, I considered the be-all and end-all of my existence was to marry and have children. But little did I dream where that ambition would take me. Little by little, the results of it have spread so that by the time I am now writing (1986) I have had a very full married life that included husband and five children. The next generation, i.e. grand children, number eighteen and now our family is blessed with a fourth generation of children.

And as for my childish conviction that I would live to see the return of Christ - well that has been fulfilled and has brought me joy beyond my wildest dreams.

Having recognised Bahá'u'lláh in 1941 as the Manifestation of God for this day and age,

I have had the bounty of more than forty years service in His Cause. Amongst other

privileges, this service has taken me around our globe twice, on pilgrimage to the Holy

Land once, to many parts of Asia whilst returning from Israel and Iran and once again to

New Zealand, to say nothing of the many trips taken to various States of Australia (all

except the Northern Territory). And the greatest advantages from these travelling

experiences have been those of gaining greater understanding of, and love for, all people

and deep respect for all of God's creation, together with a much deeper awareness of my

own self and my responsibility to love, and work for the good of humankind. For years I

have recited in the Dawn Prayer, given to us by Bahá'u'lláh; "Praise be unto Thee

oh my God, that we have wakened to the splendours of the Light of Thy knowledge...".

This, with great sincerity.

My final words are a thanksgiving for having been privileged to have lived during the period of history referred to in the words of Bahá'u'lláh, when He stated:

"The Revelation which, from time immemorial, hath been acclaimed as the Purpose and Promise of all the Prophets of God, and the most cherished Desire of His Messengers, hath now, by virtue of the pervasive Will of the Almighty and at His

irresistible bidding, been revealed unto men. The advent of such a Revelation hath been heralded in all the sacred Scriptures. Behold how, notwithstanding such an announcement, mankind hath strayed from its path and shut out itself from its glory."

But, He has also written:

"These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come."

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