

Memories of Niagara Peninsula

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As I start to write this I wonder, who is ever going to read it? Very few, I'm sure. Therefore I will write this, not for an audience, but for myself, to recount those events and tell of people who were special to me and stand out in my memory these forty odd years later. If you read this, you will encounter names of people that mean not much to you, but everything to me.

As my job with Ewbank and Partners, Consulting Engineers in Toronto was in jeopardy because of a shortage of work, I applied to Foster Wheeler Limited in St Catharines, Ontario. They offered me a job as an estimator in their design department (at about \$500 per month) and I accepted. Shortly after agreeing to accept that position, Atomic Energy of Canada phoned, offering what sounded a more interesting, higher paying, high-tech position in Chalk River, Ontario. Until now my philosophy had been that companies would look out for their own interest and I would look out for mine. I was not a very ethical person at this period of my life, but suddenly I took the moral high ground and told the Atomic Energy people that I had accepted another position. They persisted and so did I until finally their representative said "I am not going to beg you," and I said "Fine," and that was the end of that. How different my life could have turned out had I accepted that job.

In Toronto, our apartment had been furnished for the vast sum of \$300, by haunting auction sales on Saturday mornings. Eileen and I were rather proud of that. We moved these few belongings at the end of November 1959 and I started work in December. We rented a small apartment in a large older house in the centre of St Catharines, near Montebello Park. On our first New Year my sister Isobel and her husband Paul paid a surprise visit and we welcomed the New Year together, just like old times.

Our landlords were a wonderful old couple, Lee and Susie Houston. Lee was a grizzled old man working for the General Motors plant and Susie was a homemaker. Lee was close

to retiring and both
of them loved baby Jackie and couldn't do enough for us. Jackie was christened
at the St Paul's
United Church with an old school friend of Eileen's, Mary Davy, and her husband
Ray acting as
Godparents. Somewhere we still have black and white pictures of that occasion.

Both Lee and Susie had stories to tell about rural Ontario life in earlier
times, providing a memorable
connection to a past we knew nothing about. Susie grew up in Orangeville and
told of taking a cow
to market in Toronto. Overtaken by darkness, she simply knocked on the nearest
farmhouse door,
and said I am Susie from Orangeville, taking my cow to market. Very naturally
she was welcomed,
invited to stay for supper, and given a bed for the night. In exchange for the
hospitality she was
expected to give them the news from her home community. The world seemed a much
kinder, more
trusting place in those days. Susie could remember seeing a headline in a
newspaper that Christ had
not returned. Apparently a date had been prophesied and set and He failed to
appear at the appointed
time.

On my first day at work, as I was introduced around, a lean handsome engineer
asked me "Are you
from Clydebank?" That was very close, only three miles from Duntocher, so I was
really surprised.
This was Charlie Grindlay, who was to play a huge role in our lives, and whom I
still love dearly these
forty odd years later. Charlie was a brilliant man, a deep thinker and
something of a futurist. On my
first lunch break he and I got into an argument which I apparently won -- won
the battle and lost the
war perhaps. Charlie proclaimed that truth was different, like light seen
through different coloured
glass, like a church window. I insisted that the truth was the truth, and that
was all there was to it,
it could in no way be different and still be the truth.

When Charlie left our group the rest of the men patted me on the back and made
a big fuss as I had
successfully argued with Charlie. It seems that they were tired of always being
on the losing end of
debates with him. Charlie belonged to some religion, but he seemed like a
really nice guy despite that.

We were new in town and it was Charlie who invited us for Christmas dinner and a house party afterwards. I told Eileen about the invitation and said that he belonged to some religion that began with the letter "B." Eileen was curious and suggested Baptist or Buddhist or B'nai Brith. I said that it sounded a bit like that. We had a marvellous time at the party. They played a lot of goofy games, including charades, until we were quite sore from laughing. Later, at home, Eileen astutely observed, "Those people have the same spirit that the early Christians must have had."

Charlie and I took to spending our lunch hours together, having wide-ranging discussions on world affairs, history and ethics. I was still on a spiritual quest of sorts since the big fall down Ben Nevis in Scotland, but I was still very macho and refused to use such words as "God" or "love" -- Charlie could use them, but not me. I recall a few years before this, one morning early at Paisley Technical College a young man had asked "Have you been saved?" I damn nearly jumped out of the window.

Of course Charlie was a Bahá'í and another really nice man, Don Dainty, also a Bahá'í, was head of the design engineering department. I took all this for granted. At the time I did not know what a blessing it was to be in such company. Two spiritual giants and one ethical midget. I have to think that God was looking out for me and steered me. Another very bright young engineer worked there named Michael Yovanovich. Mike was not a Bahá'í but had read widely in Bahá'í literature and loved the Faith dearly. It was to Mike that many turned to ask questions they did not wish to ask Charlie or Don. Mike later went on to MIT to design hydraulic systems for platforms in space and ended up with his doctorate, a professor of Engineering at Waterloo University. To this day I don't think Mike ever became a Bahá'í, but I don't know why. (Many years later I was counselling a young engineer in Sudbury, Ontario, going out of my way to be helpful to him. He said, "You remind me of a professor I had at Waterloo University." I asked "Would that be Michael Yovanovich?" He was amazed. "How did you know?")

Charlie soon invited us to join a study group in Niagara Falls where he lived,

discussing World Religions. They studied a book I still love, by Huston Smith. I knew very little about World Religions apart from what I had learned in comic books as a kid. This included such interesting things as sleeping on beds of nails, the Indian Rope Trick where a mystic plays a flute like a snake charmer, charming a rope to uncoil and stand vertically upright, at which time the mystic climbs up the rope to disappear completely at the top. I had a vague idea that Mohamed was a murderer and Confucius was someone that jokes were told about.

While my education as an engineer was quite advanced, in the fields of the humanities and literature it was sadly lacking; after all I had left high school at age fifteen. To my amazement I found the same spirit in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam as I had seen in Christianity at its best. The very same spirit. Taoism and Confucianism were all so profound too. It was a whole new world for me.

I read in Hinduism about the Fivefold Path in which the desire for material things was like a huge fire. Acquiring material things, rather than quenching the fire, was like pouring butter fat on it. This hit me very hard as I realized how I had changed from an ethical teenager to a man who so badly wanted to get "ahead." I did not like the man I had become.

We started going to fireside meetings in St Catharines, always bringing little Jackie along in a portable bed. There we got to know many people who remain friends to this day. The first noticeable thing at a Bahá'í meeting was the number of Volkswagens parked outside. In 1960 a new Volkswagen "Beetle" sold for \$1,588 and the upscale version for \$1,735. Firesides were held in the home of Doug and Ann Wilson. Doug had an important position in the Personnel Department of Ontario Hydro and told a couple stories I remember. When he was studying at Queen's University in Kingston he was the lone Bahá'í there. Someone who was at Queen's at that time commented "there was a huge Bahá'í community there when I was studying." Some of these Bahá'ís were like an army.

Doug had been an athlete while at Queen's, a sprint hurdler. He qualified for the Canadian Olympic Trials and figured that while he had no chance of winning since one man was much better than he was, if everything went perfectly he could finish second. He decided to pray about it, which in hindsight he thought was not a very spiritual thing to do for something so

trivial as a sporting competition. Finally, on the big day Doug got off to an excellent start and was leading the field, but he hit the last hurdle and finished second.

Ann Wilson was a wonderful hostess and was not a Bahá'í at this time. She always prepared foods that were favourites of her guests. I remember Don Dainty was very fond of buttermilk and she had that in too. Ann was also excellent at meeting new people and bringing them to the firesides where she made each person feel that he or she was a very special guest. Ann and Doug had a little boy named Bradley, a year or so older than little Jackie, who was very fond of Charley Grindlay. Bradley had a foghorn voice and would sometimes wake up in his crib wanting to see "Mustache Charlie."

The St Catharines Bahá'ís included Doug Wilson, Don Dainty and his wife Diana, Gale Burland, who had recently returned from living in Bermuda, Ted and Tiny Denholm, Ross Ransome and others whom I now forget. A group of seekers started attending firesides most of whom had a Foster Wheeler connection, including Doug Sheldrick and his wife Patty, Winnie Norton and her two sons, Paul and Dennie, and Eileen and I. One by one over a period of weeks or months all of us became Bahá'ís. Many others at Foster Wheeler were strongly influenced by this spiritual movement but never made the journey themselves.

Others joined the Faith in St Catharines about this time. One lady, Olga Earwaker, who was very talented in making silver jewellery, had been coming to Bahá'í events for a long time and was quite enamoured with the teachings. She had a neighbour named Claire Wolfle who was down in the dumps about world affairs. Olga told her "You can mope about it if you like, but you should know that the Bahá'í teachings can solve all those problems." Claire of course wanted to hear more, and got very excited about it. Then she asked Olga that critical question "If the Bahá'í Faith is so wonderful, how come you have never become a member?" Olga thought about this, and both became Bahá'ís at the same time and were joined by Claire's husband Walter.

Olga was a member of the St Paul's United Church in St Catharines and this

church had been losing a few of its members to the Bahá'í Faith. Olga told me a story of how the clergyman came to see her and she was telling him she had become a Bahá'í. She was rather nervous, but the minister for some strange reason was even more nervous and said he had to hurry away. It was afterwards that Olga realised that in her nervousness she had been fumbling with the buttons on her blouse and undoing them one button at a time. In hindsight, it is no wonder that the poor man ran off.

Now for a story that Eileen is doubtful should be told. While I draw no conclusions about it, it seems to me to be so strange that it should not be left out. It was Olga's church where the minister decided to deliver a service about the Bahá'í Faith, on the theme of "Modern Heresies." It was a Sunday night he delivered it and not too many people turned out, but most of the Bahá'ís showed up to hear what he had to say. He made some points about it "smacking of nepotism" (Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l Baha, and Shoghi Effendi being of the same family), how much money the temple in Wilmette must have cost that could have been spent to help the poor, and some other points I wish I remembered. Anyway at the end of the service he prayed to God, saying, "If we are wrong, give us a sign. Let us know clearly if we are mistaken."

That night St Pauls Church, one of the oldest and most historic in Southern Ontario, burned to the ground. It was caused by faulty wiring and no one was hurt. This was one of three times that such a thing happened. The other times were the Catholic Church at West Bay, Manitoulin Island, where a boiler blew up after the priest had attacked the Bahá'í Faith, and the St Peter's United Church in Sudbury, where Heidi Lakshman stood up and boldly told the members that she was leaving the church and had recognised Bahá'u'lláh as the return of Christ. There was no response but that church burned to the ground too. The Fire Marshal attributed that one to "an act of God."

All of those churches were rebuilt to be even more beautiful than before, but all in all, it is a very

strange tale.

Meanwhile in Chippewa, Joyce Edmonds had joined the Faith while her husband John was investigating it. John told of the two of them reading in bed, John trying to concentrate on God Passes By, rather heavy reading, while Joyce was making the bed shake as she tried to suppress her giggles reading Bill Sears' God Loves Laughter. John and I became Bahá'ís over the same weekend so we were some kind of spiritual twins.

Shortly after moving to St Catharines, we bought our very first car. We did not need one in Toronto as the public transportation was so efficient. I heard that a young engineer who worked at Ewbank and Partners in Toronto wanted to sell his car and was returning to England. He brought the car along for me to see, a 1953 Chevrolet, green and white. In Scotland we could never have dreamed of owning a car at this time, and I had no idea of how to drive, but we bought it anyway. It was very sad, the young engineer selling had terminal cancer and was going home with his wife to die.

A fellow engineer working at Foster Wheeler, a Dutchman named John ter Horst, kindly offered to teach me to drive, and his method was very effective. He drove himself to our house en route to work, and I drove us the rest of the way. We both went home for lunch so I got to drive in traffic four times each day, and pretty soon was confident enough to get a driver's licence.

This opened up new vistas for us and pretty soon we were able to take Jackie to the zoo in Buffalo, New York. Actually I suppose it was Eileen and I who went to the zoo as Jackie travelled there in a car bed. She became very ill while in Buffalo and we took her to a doctor who said she had picked up a virus. It turned out later she had picked up her mother's cigarettes, and eaten one. That could have been serious but she soon got over it. The zoo had a very cute baby gorilla whose keeper told us it had taken eight men to hold it down for its first baby shots.

One day I came home for lunch and saw a crowd standing in our street blocking my way. I asked what was happening, and was told it was a fire and that the Fire Department had

been called. Then

I realized it was my house they were staring at. I burst in to find Eileen safe, but an oil-filled pan of french fries was on fire. Eileen had turned off the burner but was at a loss about what else to do. I grabbed the burning pan and headed for the front door holding it in front of me. When I shoved the door open, the flames shot higher and blew back very close to my face, singeing my hair and eyebrows, so I was forced back and put the pan back on the stove, also at a loss what to do. Then the firemen arrived and one guy picked up the pan and walked out the door backwards with it. The solution was so simple, but it's hard to think when you are excited.

I resumed training, preparing for competition in the discus. Charlie assisted, tossing the discus back and marking the good throws. Much later I found he had a chronic back injury and that this effort cost him a good deal of pain. Sometimes I would go off on my own into a field near Foster Wheeler and practice, spinning around and throwing. One day a young woman who worked there cautiously asked me "What is that little dance that I see you doing in the field?" She had seen the spin, but failed to notice the discus. I suppose with the shout I gave when throwing hard, she thought I was completely nuts.

The best throwers in Scotland were throwing about 108 feet at this time and I had got close to 100 feet, so felt I was ready to compete. My first competition was in a sports field by Lake Couchiching, near Orillia, Ontario. In the changing tent a large man sat down on the bench next to me. I was very intimidated when I noticed as he bent over to tie his shoelaces that his arms were bigger than my thighs. This was Stan Raike, a Toronto policeman who was Canadian and British Empire champion and could throw more than 155 feet. I was humiliated in the competition, but Stan was a very nice guy and gave me a few pointers. He told me that nobody had used the technique I used for the past thirty years. I had learned how to throw out of a book -- an old book.

We had been in Canada for three years when Eileen's parents, always generous, sent her a ticket to

go back to Scotland for a visit with baby Jackie, about ten months old. We had been attending Bahá'í firesides for some time and I had come to think of the Bahá'í Faith as something that was really good for everyone else -- everyone else but me that is. While Eileen was away, I became very ill with an imbalance of the inner ear, leaving me seasick once again, very seasick. It took me two weeks to recover and I was really impressed when Don Dainty knocked at my door on his way home from work and handed me a chicken (cooked already). He said "I thought that you would not feel like cooking." It was a simple thing, but touched me deeply. Don was always a kind and gentle man.

While Eileen was away, I decided to become a Bahá'í -- or I should say it was decided for me. It happened on October 27, 1960, a Bahá'í Holy Day in fact. I had decided I was going to a movie that night. I still remember the title: "The Girl on the Golden Swing." I was reading the book by George Townsend called Christ and Bahá'u'lláh, and before going to the movie I took time to read the last chapter. I loved the book and totally agreed with it, and at the end Townsend asks "What are you going to do about it?" I had been going to the show, and had no plans to do anything about it, but since he asked, I realized that one by one, all of my barriers had been falling. Charlie had given me a prayer book (which I have to this day) and in desperation I started to read the prayers. I read all of them all the way through the book, then I felt as though a great big foot was on my rear end giving me a hearty push and impelling me to become a Bahá'í. I phoned Charlie, who was at Don Dainty's home celebrating the Holy Day. It was about 11.30 on a Friday night. I sounded so distraught that Charlie felt sure that something terrible had happened, maybe an accident to Eileen or the baby, and he came rushing over.

Charlie was extremely happy when I told him of my decision to become a Bahá'í. This was on the Bahá'í Holy day known as the Day of the Covenant, in the year 1960. I was 26 years old and had just become one of only about 750 Bahá'ís in all of Canada. Charlie insisted that I stay with him and his wife Florence that night, so we headed off for Niagara Falls where he

lived, Charlie leading the way in his Volkswagen and I following in my own 1953 Chevrolet. I remember thinking that I had to be very careful driving as I was very tired and emotionally charged. Then I thought "Nothing can happen to me. There are too few Bahá'ís and I am needed!" Just as that thought occurred I suddenly became aware of a Coca Cola bottle, standing upright in the middle of the road. I could not avoid it and it struck the underside of my car with a huge "bang." I realised that I had to change my way of thinking. I was not indispensable.

Early next morning, a Saturday, I had a golf date with Jack Thewliss, whose wife Ella was a Bahá'í. I did not tell Jack at the time about me becoming a Bahá'í but when he found out about it afterwards he said that he had noticed a big difference in me. It seemed to be based on the reduced number of swear words I used as I played golf. I may have retrogressed since then.

Eileen returned from her trip to Scotland with baby Jackie, who had changed so much during her absence that I did not at first recognise her. She was in the arms of a stewardess as Eileen cleared customs, and I saw this young child staring at me, but did not know who she was until Eileen claimed her. Jackie had learned to walk and talk and it was a long time before the talking slowed down. Of course I unloaded all about my newfound faith to Eileen. She had been through a bout with a Billy Graham campaign in Scotland some years before, and told me something like "I know what you are going through and I know it will come to nothing." It took Eileen about another six months to decide that she too was a Bahá'í.

For years I had been an agnostic. Perhaps the main reason I was not an atheist was for insurance purposes. If God existed, I didn't want to make him mad. For a few days after becoming a Bahá'í I would wake up in a panic thinking "My God. What have I done?" Then I would think more rationally about what I had done. The image that most comforted and assured me was remembering how Bahá'u'lláh, in a dreadful dungeon, cut the buttons from his clothing, semi precious stones, and sold them to pay for a funeral for his followers who had been murdered.

Doug Sheldrick and his wife Patty became Bahá'ís a couple of weeks after I did. Doug was about 25 years old, very athletic and also worked at Foster Wheeler in the Contracts Department. Doug had a serious problem as his eyesight was failing. He had qualified for a white stick and discounted fares on public transportation. He was legally blind, had difficulty reading the small print on contracts, and was soon going to have to quit his job. He had been told that nothing could be done. Then Doug heard about a possible eye operation in the United States and agreed to give it a try. Hearing about it later, it sounded like a fearful procedure which had to be performed while the patient was conscious, watching the needles being used on the eye. I remember all of the Bahá'ís along the Niagara frontier praying desperately for the success of the operation. Doug came out of it with 20-20 vision in the eye they worked on and went on to an illustrious career, both as a Bahá'í and in business, where he finally retired as Vice President of a major pulp and paper company in New Brunswick.

As I became involved in Bahá'í life, my life changed too, bursting with enthusiasm for something I loved and felt was so obvious and vital. I am sure I scared away many of my friends. I just could not stop talking about it. A few months passed and Ridvan was coming up, April 21, 1961. Eileen was still not a Bahá'í but we heard of a need for the town of Niagara Falls to make its numbers to form a local spiritual assembly. The Local Assembly of Niagara Falls had formed for the first time in 1960, but now three more Bahá'ís were needed in order to reform.

The adult Bahá'ís living in Niagara Falls at this time were Joy Carter, Vi Dutov, Charlie and Flo Grindlay, and Herb and Gerry Trip. Herb and Gerry Trip were mainstays in Niagara Falls. Maybe we all were. Anyway Gerry was a school teacher and Heb drove a locomotive for CN or CP.

John Edmonds had just become a Bahá'í and he and Joyce, who lived in nearby Chippewa, were considering moving to the Falls. One morning Joyce saw a large rat in her basement and took that as a sign that they should move. Despite the fact that Eileen was not a Bahá'í, she was willing to leave our nice apartment in St Catharines, and move to help make up the numbers, so

we ended up sharing
a very large old home in Niagara Falls with Joyce and John Edmonds and their
family, which then
included Jennifer and Timothy. We had daughter Jackie, and within a year or so
adopted Jim, two
years older than Jackie. All of us lived together in that house with their dog,
Shane, a large black lab,
who was soon joined by a West Highland Terrier puppy we acquired, and named
Charlie. Joyce,
John, Eileen and I were all about the same age, and for years Bahá'ís outside
our community could
not sort out who was married to whom. Some still cannot, but they are dying
off.

I endured a lot of good natured teasing from my friends at work about becoming
a Bahá'í. I was not
sure if I would manage the first fast I was undertaking. It was John Edmond's
first fast too and he
ate an enormous fried breakfast. The rest of us had uncertain stomachs early in
the morning and I
remember we built a small wall of cereal boxes around his plate so we did not
have to see what he
ate. John later said that he ate so much, he was still not hungry at supper
time. Eileen, on the other
hand, had been told that the sun would set at a certain time and when that time
rolled around the sun
was still high above the horizon. She watched it impatiently, saying that she
expected it to suddenly
disappear -- zoom!

During that fast my friend at work, Eric Ahermae, walked with me at lunch time,
deliberately taking
me past bake shops with their enticing smells. Eric was a proud Estonian and
John ter Horst, who had
helped me get my driver's licence, a Dutchman. Eric had a socialist bent and
John was politically
more conservative. Each loved the Faith for what they saw as the socialist and
conservative principles
it espoused.

At this time an extremely difficult Scotsman named Bill Orr worked with us at
Foster Wheeler. He
was the rudest person you could imagine, loud, aggressive, and argumentative.
He would cut people
off and slam down the telephone -- seeming to work hard at being really
unpleasant. After I became
a Bahá'í, for some reason he went out of his way to be particularly
unpleasant to me, and I resolved

to wear him down. If a conversation was being held, he would ignore anything I said, treating me as if I were invisible and insignificant. I continued to be pleasant to him for two years, then something strange happened.

A group of us engineers went on a tour to the new Richard L. Hearne Electric Generating Station in Toronto. It had new technology everywhere, including the toilet, where they had a birdbath type of sink for hand washing. It was there that Bill was peeing, thinking it was a large urinal, when he noticed someone washing their hands further around the sink. I laughed my head off, and Bill suddenly said to me, "I could become a Babi, but never a Bahá'í." No one had any idea that Bill had any interest or notion in anything about the Faith, but he had secretly been reading about it on his own. From that day forward he became a different person, although he was still rather direct.

Bob Steele was newly arrived from Scotland, another engineer at Foster Wheeler. Bill said to him "You should go to the big picnic the Bahá'ís are having at Queenston Heights." Bob asked "What are the Bahá'ís?" ... Now when we tell anyone about the Faith we usually start with things with which they will be in general agreement, saving some of the stickier points until the person at least knows a little about it and is somewhat attracted. Not Bill. He said "They have an annual fast, you need parents' permission if you want to get married, and they don't drink at all. If you are still interested after that, you will probably become a Bahá'í yourself." Well, his words were prophetic. Bob went to the picnic, later became a Bahá'í and now some 40-odd years later is still faithfully serving the Faith.

Bill, too, became a Bahá'í, and all of the people at work held their breath, watching the kind, thoughtful, polite man he became. They were waiting for the other shoe to drop, but it never happened. This was as close to a miracle as many of those people will ever witness. A few months later, Bill and his wife moved back to London, England where he became a mainstay in that Bahá'í community.

While living in Niagara Falls, I was saving my money in order to buy a pair of

golf shoes. You could get a pair for \$20, and as we did not have much money it had taken a while to have that much extra cash, but now I had it. Then something came up in the Bahá'í community where \$10 was needed for something important and I bit the bullet and donated half of my little savings. One day I was driving home from work, dropping Charlie Grindlay off at his home then going along Main Street in Niagara Falls I noticed a shoe store that was having a sale. I parked the car, walked back, and there in the window were golf shoes for \$10. This was unheard of. I just could not believe it. I went in and asked the salesman about the shoes and he said "We only have one pair." I asked what size they were, and sure enough it was size 11, my size. Feeling somewhat like Cinderella, I tried on the shoes -- a perfect fit! Leaving the store in a bewildered state, I thought, "I have never seen that store before. I wonder what is the name of the place?" Looking back over my shoulder, I saw in big bold letters above the storefront: GODSELLS.

Another incident centred around a Bahá'í named Roger Lilly, who lived in Welland. Roger was about four feet six inches tall, with a hunched back and totally blind. He gave a wonderfully inspiring fireside on the theme of the Lord's Prayer. Roger was giving his fireside at Herb and Gerry Trip's home in Niagara Falls. When I arrived, I looked in my wallet for some reason and found that I had lost a twenty-dollar bill. I was silently furious but tried to calm myself as I listened to Roger speak.

He told us how he had just lost his job which involved lifting and stacking a few cases of Coca Cola. He was fired because he did not have the physical strength to do that simple task. He went on to speak of sacrifice and how God took sacrifice from us and as far as he was concerned if God wanted more from him, He was welcome to it. I felt ashamed of my internal tantrum, realising what I had lost was so small compared to Roger, and I was able to come to terms with it. It did not matter. On leaving the fireside, having learned that valuable lesson I was walking along the garden path in the dark when I saw something blowing on the ground. It was my twenty-dollar bill.

The St Catharines Bahá'ís had been hosting a successful series of lectures on World Religions based on a Life Magazine series. The series was very well attended, with about forty people showing up for each lecture. One day Don Dainty showed up at my door and informed me he had laryngitis. Don was to be the guest lecturer on the religion of Confucius in two days time -- he asked if I could replace him. I knew absolutely nothing about Confucius, but reasoning that no one else at the lecture would know anything about it either, I reluctantly agreed to take it on. I slept very little in the meantime, studying night and day, and was very nervous on the night of the lecture. As I sat on the platform watching the audience gather I was horrified when a Chinese man sat in the centre of the front row. It all turned out rather well, as I later discovered he was a Christian who knew nothing about Confucius.

In Niagara Falls I usually played golf weekly. Don Dainty was an honest and fun partner. Whenever he had an unusually good shot, instead of acting cool as though he expected it, he would fall down laughing. I played with John Edmonds on one occasion. We had a very early tee time at Niagara Parks, a popular and beautiful course. John did not own clubs, so had arranged to borrow a set from a friend in Chippewa. We arrived in the right street but John was unsure of the address, so he ended up knocking on a door at 6 a.m. on a Saturday morning. It turned out to be the wrong place, so he had to apologise to a disgruntled and irate neighbour. He finally got the clubs and we were playing along when John took a mighty swipe and the head came right off the driver. John stuck the head in the bottom of the borrowed golf bag and played on.

It was an extremely blustery afternoon and I waited in my car as John returned the clubs to the owner. It played out through my windshield like a silent movie, as John knocked on the door, the man opened it, John started to apologise and explain about the damaged club then John turned the golf bag upside down to retrieve the head, tumbling out a huge number of score cards, golf tickets, pencil stubs and tees, which blew all over the manicured lawn and across the one next door where we had

wakened that householder earlier in the day. We were very glad to escape from there.

I saw in the "in memoriam" section of this month's issue of Bahá'í News (April 2004) that Bill Basset has died. There is a name from the past. Bill the best friend of Charlie (brother-in-law of Carol Bowie) and both became Bahá'ís in Niagara Falls at the same time, around 1962. Bill came to our flat one day where he gave me a hand bathing our West Highland Terrier also named Charlie. This dog hated being bathed. As soon as he got out of the bath, he raced outdoors into a neighbour's garden where he rolled on a pile of manure. Bill thought this was hilarious and later told his friend Charlie's mother the story. She did not realize he was talking about Charlie the dog, not Charlie, her son and had a strange image of us holding Charlie down and forcing him to have a bath. The rest of the story left her truly dismayed.

When the Bill Sears' book *Thief in the Night* was first published we decided we should promote its use. We discussed releasing hot air balloons with prize certificates inside but decided against that. In Niagara Falls we started a campaign to let all of the clergymen know that Christ had returned. We attended church service usually on a Sunday evening when it was least busy, visiting the clergyman afterwards, briefly trying to establish our sanity, and then let him know that this was one of our central beliefs. This information was not always received with joy, but mostly with a lukewarm remark like "That is interesting." An Anglican clergyman, Bob Blackwell, a very pleasant man, was the most impressive of the ones we met and liked to debate. When I was sharing the Faith with someone (such as Bob Steele or Bill Orr), I would often take them to meet Reverend Blackwell. I would point out to them, "You have heard our viewpoint about why you should become a Bahá'í. Now come and see this clergyman. Ask him to tell you why you should not do that." It worked very well.

Eventually the Bahá'í National Assembly sent Doug Martin along to ask us to call off this project.

They were very nice about it but their reasoning was that the clergy no more deserved to be singled out for special attention than the butcher, the baker, or the candlestick maker. They also encouraged us for our initiative as their job is to steer Bahá'í activity, as, if local groups are not in motion, it is not possible to steer inaction.

Speaking of Doug Martin reminds me of a story. Doug, has had a very distinguished career, first of all for many years as Secretary of the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, and more recently as a member of that most supreme Bahá'í body, the Bahá'í Universal House of Justice, in Haifa, Israel. In earlier times Doug was a high school teacher, teaching history in the town of Niagara Falls. He came back to visit on occasion, and once was asked to speak there at a public meeting. Doug was a well-known historian by this time, very knowledgeable in the history of the Christian Church. I was sitting in the midst of a relatively small group with Charlie Grindlay's mother, a devout Christian, on one side of me and a fundamentalist Christian lady on the other. Gail Burland introduced Doug saying that his talks were usually dynamic and surprising so we should fasten our seatbelts. Doug asked what we would like him to speak about, listing some options, then adding "I could speak about Christianity, but I prefer not to speak about something that is dead and gone, and nothing is dead and gone than Christianity." I tried, unsuccessfully, to sink through the floor.

Many parties were held in the Chippewa area, and this was perhaps our most successful teaching method. David and Flo Robertson were always front and centre at these, as were Ella and Jack Thewliss, Charlie and Flo Grindlay, Jeannie and Jim Mason, and Pearl and Alex Birrell. Except for Jeannie and Jim, all were from Scotland. Alex was a Glasgow man, kind, gentle, and perhaps the funniest person I ever met. We played simple games like charades, but Alex had a wit that could take your breath away. I remember one Hallowe'en party where Ella danced an amazing "Me and my Shadow" with a sheet as backdrop. Sometimes a serious comment can be funniest of all. I still remember David Robertson saying, "I really believe in life after death, but I'm not counting on it." In summer we had many picnics by the river in Chippewa, often being joined by Michael and Elizabeth Rochester and their children.

One summer most Bahá'ís in the Niagara Falls community were away at Bahá'í summer school with the exception of Joy Carter and me. We were running little short teaser

advertisements in the Niagara Falls newspaper for a few weeks. One evening Joy and I got together and decided we would pray until somebody telephoned us to ask for information about the Bahá'í Faith. In previous weeks we had some crank calls for a while and with one person all you could hear was heavy breathing. We got around them by putting two-year-old Jackie on the phone. She loved to talk at length and we could hear our crank caller breaking up at the other end. They never called back. Anyway here Joy and I were taking on a bold venture, determined to see it through to a successful conclusion. Starting at the beginning of the prayer book, taking turns, we worked our way almost all the way through, including such seldom heard prayers as "The Tablet of the Holy Mariner" until finally after two hours the telephone rang and there was a genuine inquiry.

Joy was single and shared an apartment with another single lady, Vi Dutov, probably the only Bahá'í in Canada at this time with a Doukhabor background. Vi had gone through a university in the teaching profession and was finishing a two year probationary period, teaching in Niagara on the Lake. Someone in the system did not approve of her, (probably because she was a Bahá'í), and her contract was not renewed. So after all that study and effort, it seemed that her life was in ruins. Short of funds, out of work, feeling really depressed, she decided to go to a Bahá'í summer school at Greenacres in Maine. Since she could not afford the fees, she went to work there for the summer as a waitress. In the course of her stay she met a fine man. I don't know what happened to her teaching career but they married and to the best of my knowledge, lived happily ever after. Somehow those adversities, taken in a good spirit can turn out well.

Studying the Bahá'í Writings provides people with a crash course in the humanities and a good knowledge of what makes society tick. Knowing nothing about philosophy, I started attending an ongoing philosophy discussion group which was held weekly in someone's home. This was not a Bahá'í group. The basis of their study was an excellent text by Marcus Long of the University of

Toronto. During the second session I attended, the discussion leader announced that it would be his last as he was leaving the area. The group asked me to take over as discussion leader and I boldly agreed. All I had read on philosophy until now was a half page about Jean Paul Sartre. The group continued very well for some months before breaking up for the summer. During the summer I was contacted by the YMCA wanting to know if I would facilitate a course on anthropology. They heard how well the philosophy group had gone and were very confident that I would do a good job, so I agreed. I had to ask Eileen after the phone call "What is anthropology?" They had a text book and extended play records with situations for discussion so that went off quite well too.

There is one last remarkable thing about the philosophy group. An electrician in the group dabbled with inventions. He brought along large black plastic bags asking us to try putting our garbage in them, and let him know how they worked out. He later adapted tearaway sections to use to tie the bags. I do not know if he was ever credited with the invention when plastic garbage bags became popular, but I certainly hope so. He was a nice guy.

Charlie Grindlay was both a wonderful Bahá'í teacher and a wonderful man. He was somewhat of a role model for me. Charlie volunteered for all kinds of tasks, so pretty soon had Eileen and I serving with him on the Ontario Teaching Committee, responsible for co-ordinating Bahá'í teaching activities throughout Ontario. We were still "wet behind the ears" but there were so few Bahá'ís in those days. The next year saw us serving on the Canadian National Teaching Committee with scant knowledge of Canadian geography, much less awareness of Bahá'í activities across the nation. Co-ordinating dates for travelling teachers was a bit of a problem and we sometimes set impossible dates for their travel between events and places, especially in British Columbia and Alberta.

In Niagara Falls we got involved in two major Bahá'í events. One was an annual picnic which had been going for some time before the 1960's, the other the Arts, Crafts, and Critics event which we in Niagara falls and Chippewa inaugurated. Both were to grow in size and scope

beyond those
humble beginnings.

In 1961 the Bahá'í Assembly of Niagara Falls was asked to host the annual picnic held at Queenston Heights, near Niagara Falls, a relatively small event. Queenston Heights had been the site of a major battle in the War of 1812, when the Americans tried to liberate the Canadians from the British, but they did not want to be liberated. The British General Brock was killed on Queenston Heights but the Canadians repelled the attack.

Abdu'l Baha visited Niagara Falls on the New York side in 1911, travelling there by train from Buffalo. He dipped His hand in the water of the Niagara River, then had a simple lunch of fruit. While in Niagara Falls, we participated in a commemoration in 1961 celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of that event. This annual picnic was a kind of celebration of that visit. It had been held for years before this, but always on a small scale. There was a tradition that regardless of the weather leading up to it, there was never rain during the picnic. I saw several examples of stormy mornings and sunny afternoons myself on the big day.

Of course Charlie Grindlay was at the centre of the planning and working, with us hard on his heels. I remember all of the men being asked to furnish old unwanted neckties for the children's three-legged race. That will give you an idea of how small an event it was. While we were few in number, Bahá'ís and their friends from both sides of the Canada-US border took the opportunity to get together, to enjoy each other's company. Over the years the picnic grew until I heard of ten thousand people showing up for it. I don't know if that figure is an exaggeration, but the last picnic I attended was huge. I heard that eventually it was cancelled because of the difficulty of providing insurance for the event.

Bahá'ís are asked to observe Intercalary Days (Ayyam-i-ha, March 26 to April 2) as days of hospitality and gift giving. Especially encouraged is giving gifts which are made, thus encouraging creativity. Realizing many Bahá'ís in our small community were engaged creatively during this time, we decided to reach out to the Niagara Falls community and stage an Arts, Crafts and Critics evening (we included "critics" to give a role to those not comfortable in trying to make anything), giving us a chance to see each other's creative efforts. It was open to the public, arts

and crafts by everyone
being displayed.

The first event, held in the home we shared with John and Joyce Edmonds, was very popular, so we repeated it the following year when even more people participated. A newspaper journalist who attended the event wrote an article about it in the local paper in which he observed "the art was interesting but the people were fantastic." After we left the area, other Bahá'ís developed this event, holding it annually for many years with a great deal of success. It was for a time held in the old courthouse at Niagara on the Lake, and may be going yet.

It is very encouraging to realize that by us simply making a start in both these programs, others with more skill and talent built them into something so successful.

Niagara Falls community was asked to plan a teaching trip for a very special lady. Her name was Ella Quant and she became a Bahá'í in 1903. Ella, who never married, was now 84 years of age, pioneering in Niagara Falls, New York, sharing a home with a "younger" woman, Marion, in her mid 70's. Ella was an inspiring person to visit, not only because of her connection with the past, but because of her simplicity and charm. She had witnessed the development of the Faith from very early days and over the years had personally received something like five letters from Abdu'l Baha and about thirteen from Shoghi Effendi.

The memory of which she was most proud was of having lunch with Abdu'l Baha during his visit to North America. Her account of this meeting is published in one of the Bahá'í World volumes. In 1911, Ella attained the presence of Abdu'l Baha, sitting across the table from Him, feeling very spiritual. Suddenly He looked directly at her and asked after the well being of a lady whom Ella particularly disliked. Her spiritual bubble burst as she realised that Abdu'l Baha had very kindly indicated that she still had work to do.

We feared the strain of a teaching trip would be too much for her but Ella could not be dissuaded. Eileen and I travelled with her and I remember her starting three different stories, each of which

seemed to be left unfinished, which I put down to her age and memory loss, but at the end of her talk she very nicely tied all of the stories together in a complete package.

I told the following story in my "Memories of Yellowknife" account, but it bears repeating. On those occasions when we visited Ella in her home, it became apparent that many people had given gifts to her, but she always gave them away, in the process transforming the original gift into something really special. During the first Intercalary Days that came along after we moved to Yellowknife I made a number of replicas of "The Greatest Name," a short Bahá'í prayer. I made these by buying 1/8 inch thick cork sheet gasket material, carving the shape out of the cork. With this profile mounted on a board I could make two pictures, one raised, the other inset. I then painted them gold and white and put them in a gold picture frame.

I sent one of these as a gift to Ella, telling our fledgling Yellowknife community how Ella always transformed a gift into something much better. A month or so later I received a loving letter from Ella thanking me for the gift and saying that she had given it away. A lovely young blind Bahá'í woman came to visit Ella. She had heard about the "Greatest Name" and always wondered what it was like. She was able to put her fingers in the shape and trace the outline of the letters. Ella gave it to the blind girl and hoped that I did not mind. While she never visited Yellowknife personally, Ella certainly inspired the early Bahá'ís there.

The last time I saw Ella was at the huge International Bahá'í picnic at Queenston Heights when she was in her 90's. She had Alzheimer's, her memory gone, and she did not recognise me, but told me that I had a very kind face. That was because I was looking at her and the love that I felt showed.

A group was gathered around her chair. She still remembered every detail of her story of the lunch she had with Abdu'l Baha and was telling it with a shining face. Ella died shortly after this. She was a luminous soul whom we feel privileged to have known.

About 1962 Charlie Grindlay and his family decided to pioneer to Iceland where

the tiny Bahá'í community was in difficult straits, primarily because of the activities of one of its members who was a recluse, living in the mountains in summer and in someone's garage in winter. This man was mentally ill and his imaginings and delusions caused no end of problems for the other four or so members.

Charlie came to the home we shared with the Edmonds in Niagara Falls to say farewell. We had recently got a little puppy, a West Highland Terrier, named Charlie (for Bonnie Prince Charlie).

Charlie Grindlay went upstairs to the toilet and meanwhile Charlie the puppy dropped through a broken return air vent in the floor and wandered off along the duct which led directly to the furnace.

Of course there were filters and other barriers which would prevent him from going into the furnace, but Eileen was unaware of this. Terrified, she started shouting "Charlie, Charlie! Come back Charlie'.

Charlie Grindlay must have thought that Eileen was overcome with grief at his leaving and came racing downstairs. All ended well though and little Charlie the puppy wandered back to the hole through which he had fallen.

1963 was a landmark year for the Bahá'í Faith. The Faith had met its many goals, becoming established in so many countries world wide that for the first time, we were able to elect the Universal House of Justice, the governing body responsible for Bahá'í activities around the globe. 1963 also marked the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the Bahá'í Faith. A World Congress was planned in London, England and Eileen and I determined to get there.

Having two young children, the idea seemed like a pipe dream, but a wonderful Bahá'í family, Ron and Edna Nablo, had moved to St Catharines with their three children. They were loving and hospitable and big-hearted Edna happily agreed to look after our two youngsters to let us get to the Congress. Ron was Industrial Commissioner for the city of St Catharines, responsible for attracting new industry to the town. They were kindly and attractive people, nice to be around for affection as well as intellectual conversation. Anytime I had a spare half hour, I spent it

drinking coffee in their kitchen. Anyway, they made it possible for us to get to this historical event.

About 6,000 Bahá'ís attended the event, which was held in the Royal Albert Hall. Accustomed to tiny Bahá'í communities, I had never conceived of so many in one place at one time. People had come from all over the world, many having made great sacrifices, including one lady from Cyprus who had sold her only cow to help finance her trip. A Dayak headhunter was there with his tally stick, a notch for each head he had taken.

Having had some experience working with Canadian aboriginal people, I was interested in others in similar fields of endeavour. I spoke to a man who had pioneered along the Amazon, where there were still headhunters and asked him how he went about it. He said "You have to get to them, before they get to you." Uncle Fred Murray, an Australian Aborigine, spoke at length. No one knew what he was saying except every now and then he said "I'm so happy, so happy." My face muscles ached from smiling by the end of the first day. We met wonderful people from Ethiopia, and the Scottish Bahá'ís who were mostly Persians in kilts. I probably could write a lot about this World Congress but maybe will save it for another time.

After the Congress we went to Scotland to visit family, and while I was so close, I popped over to Iceland to visit Charlie and Florence Grindlay in Reykjavik. I saw a pile of books in their hallway about four books across and maybe five feet high. These were copies of the book "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era" translated into Icelandic, which is a version of ancient Danish, close to that spoken by the Vikings. Iceland has the oldest parliament in Europe. At that time the value of their currency fluctuated with the success of their fishing fleet. Charlie and I climbed a mountain together, sharing our news and memories. Half of Reykjavik in 1963 was heated by water from their natural hot springs. All in all it was a very interesting place.

Hands of the Cause: We first met Hand of the Cause, Mr Zikrullah Khadem, in St Catharines. I was a new Bahá'í, Eileen having not yet declared. He came to our home for dinner before giving a talk in the

evening. I had heard about Hands of the Cause and understood them to be something like the disciples of Jesus. When I first saw this slightly ruffled looking man, I was a bit disappointed as he did not look very spectacular. No halo! He had been appointed by Shoghi Effendi in 1957 just months before the Guardian died and was extremely modest, having no idea why he had been chosen for this important role. When the Guardian asked him, he had said that he could not afford to accept this position as he had to work to make a living. Mr Khadem then showed us a little black purse wrapped in tissue paper which the Guardian had given him. This purse had belonged to Abdu'l Baha. The Guardian had told him that as long as he had this purse, he would never want for money, and that had turned out to be true.

Baby Jackie crawled all over Mr Khadem and he really enjoyed that. He told us a story about how when leaving Alexandria, Egypt, on a train, he shared a carriage with a priest. Many Bahá'ís had come down to see him off and they were obviously grieving to see him leave. The priest asked "Have you lived here very long?". Mr Khadem replied "I don't live here. I just arrived yesterday for the first time." He told us that the priest did not believe him. I must confess I did not believe this either, until the next morning after we had spent an evening with the St Catharines friends listening to this modest, shy man. As Eileen and I looked at each other over the breakfast table and thought of this loving man leaving, tears began to fall for us, just as they had in Alexandria, and no doubt in many other places that were honoured by his visits.

The next time we saw him, we lived in a small two-bedroom apartment in Niagara Falls. Mr Khadem had just returned from a visit to Iran, where the Bahá'ís were being terribly persecuted. He had escaped through the backdoor of a home, 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.

Sometime during 1960 Hand of the Cause John Robarts passed through St Catharines on a cross Canada tour. He was speaking with Bahá'ís 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 Bahá'í 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 Bahá'í 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 Bahá'ís 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 Robarts 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."

Eileen and I pioneered to Niagara on the Lake in 1963 which had only one Bahá'í at this time, Rene Bailey, an older black lady. She had been a nanny to a little girl in the southern United States, now adult and married a doctor. The couple moved to Niagara on the Lake taking Rene along as a faithful helper. Quite elderly by this time, Rene's health was not good.

Helen Hazen was very interested in the Faith and soon became a Bahá'í. She was married to Oz and had three fine boys, John, Ward and Bill, ages about nine, eleven and thirteen. The boys were courteous, intelligent and adventurous. I almost had a heart attack to see Ward swaying in the wind near the top of a huge old tree in their backyard. I remember Oz telling me that their neighbours were very quiet. Their property was adjacent to the Anglican graveyard. Helen was a school teacher and a real spark plug. Then, as now, she had many bold ideas on how the Faith may be advanced. We started children's classes for Helen's three plus our two children, Jackie and Jim. I was fortunate to be at Helen's home in Mitchell, Ontario in 2002, when her oldest son, Bill celebrated his fiftieth birthday. I found it very moving that Bill and Ward could still tell stories about events from those long ago children's classes.

Our faithful contact in Niagara on the Lake was dear Joan Moore, a very fine lady of English background. Joan had two sons, David and Michael. David was a quiet, scholarly boy who used to find arrowheads and musket balls around the fort in historic Niagara on the Lake. Michael was an outstanding sprinter, excelled in many sports and full of fun. He came to our youth dances and was very popular with the other kids. Joan supported many of the efforts we attempted, including starting a branch of the United Nations Association of Canada. We used to get together on Sunday evenings to discuss what was termed "the balance of power" between the superpowers, studying the threats caused by nuclear warheads, delivery systems and silos, using a book provided

by United Nations.

At this time the world was going through what was called "The Cold War." John F. Kennedy had faced down Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, who was trying to ship nuclear missiles to Cuba just a very few miles from the USA. For thirteen days the world teetered on the brink of World War Three.

Civil rights marches were taking place in the southern US, then John F. Kennedy was assassinated, then Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, then Robert Kennedy. The world seemed to be in a state of turmoil, but despite this, few people accepted the Faith as the viable alternative to war and social unrest. I don't know what it will take eventually.

While all these major world events were taking place, Eileen and I were plugging away in our feeble attempts to fix the world. I started the track and field club on the Six Nations Reserve (see another report about that) and it was going along well. I was trying to teach those kids to be proud of who they are, and in the tradition of long distance running, never to give up or give in.

The youth in Niagara on the Lake had very little available to them in the way of entertainment, and some of them were getting into trouble. A police chase of a stolen car at 90 miles an hour ended with a 14-year-old boy captured. He had taken his Dad's car to help his friend deliver newspapers! He was tiny and could hardly see over the steering wheel.

There was an old community hall behind our house on Luther Street, so we decided to start a youth club, and try to give them an outlet for their energies. We had weekly meetings with dances, snacks and games. Their ages ranged from 13 to 17 and a couple were a bit rebellious and out to cause problems. The oldest and the natural leader was a muscular boy, proud of his physique, so I got them into a wrist wrestling competition. After he had beaten the other youth, he turned his ambition in my direction, just as I anticipated. I was evasive, saying "No way, I'm too old for that" and so on. I finally let him talk me into a match. To his surprise I managed somehow to put down his arm. That brought respect -- from there on, he was very supportive and the other rebellious kids got in line.

We branched out into community projects with a points competition for performing acts of service, like assisting old people, cleaning up parks, etc. We rebuilt two tennis courts and got them back in service which gave them another alternative for activity. Meanwhile, we had heard about a group of black Bahá'í youth in Rochester in the USA and invited them over for a visit. Then we expanded to include the Six Nations Track and Field Club with the Rochester youth and the Niagara on the Lake club, and they all had a wonderful time together. Eileen fed the whole crew.

All of a sudden things came to a screaming halt. The Niagara parents did not want their kids associating with blacks or Indians. The word was out that we were COMMUNISTS. The worst thing you could say about any group at this time. A clergyman in Niagara Falls backed up this allegation, saying "I don't know much about them, but I do know this. They are a front for Communism!" We found out the lady spreading the allegations had already been in trouble with the law for slander. We thought about taking action, but after researching the Writings, decided to let it go and just wait to see what happened.

One parent was Lillian Penteluke, a close friend to this day. Her daughter Marlene, about fifteen years old, was a member of our youth club, and also our babysitter. Lillian went to the other parents and told them, "They certainly cannot be Communists, for they believe in God." One by one the club members returned and we carried on with our program.

A study carried out by students from Waterloo University at this time concluded that the only worthwhile organisation of this kind in Niagara on the Lake was our little youth club.

When World Religion Day came along, we thought it a good idea to get all of the various religious groups and churches together to pray for peace. This was a time before the ecumenical movement had gained momentum. The idea of getting together alarmed the clergy as they had never done anything jointly before. The main concern was "Where are you going to hold it?" Nobody wanted to attend the church or synagogue of another faith. The black church known as the British

Methodist Episcopalian

was most amenable, but made the others nervous too. Eventually they agreed to come if it was held in our home, so that was what we did. All the participants seemed to get along very well at the event.

Ron and Edna Nablo came to visit us one day in Niagara on the Lake. As usual they were helping someone out. This time it was by looking after a friend's very large Collie dog. He was black, brown and white with a large hook nose. We all went out for a walk when suddenly there was an uproar ahead of us. The dog had got into a fight with another identical Collie dog. Ron bravely waded into the fight, kicking away one combatant, putting a lead on the other, dragging him away. It later turned out that he had taken the wrong dog so the situation had to be rectified. No good deed goes unpunished.

Many wonderful Bahá'ís visited Niagara on the Lake in the early 60's. We worked together across the US border with the Chernievsky family, with the brothers John and Jim Yates, and Ella Quant. Agnes Harrison, an Inuit from Alaska, visited. She was the first Inuit to be appointed a judge in Alaska, appointed by President Dwight Eisenhower. Firuz Kazemzady came through. He had headed up Radio Free Europe and was now a special advisor to the US president on Soviet affairs. If there was a change in the Soviet hierarchy, Firuz had 24 hours to tell the President how the US might be affected. Author and historian Stanwood Cobb gave talks, as did Mehdi Firuzi.

I still remember Mehdi speaking in the village of Queenston. When he was attending school in Iran, his teacher said "We are Persians and our fathers before us were Persians." Little Mehdi thought about this and thought "It must be a lie. It is too obvious!" Then he thought about the various people who had occupied Persia over the centuries. "The Romans! I bet they did not bring along their wives!"

Returning from Yellowknife in 1969, we spent a week in Niagara Falls, where we attended a public talk given by Stanwood Cobb. After the talk he was introduced to Eileen. When shaking hands with her he looked suddenly very concerned. He told her she was very ill and should get medical attention

as soon as possible. It took 18 months of tests to diagnose, but the arsenic in Yellowknife's drinking water was in her system and Eileen was in the first stages of Hodgkin's Disease. How did he know?

Dear Nancy Campbell gave several talks in Niagara on the Lake, often despite severe pain from arthritis. Nancy was one of the leading ballet instructors in Canada and had taken her training in New York, where she lived round the corner from poet Kahlil Gibran. As a student, Nancy was in the library one day and heard a girl crying at the back of the bookshelves. Nancy asked what was wrong, and the girl said "I'm a Bahá'í and I'm supposed to tell people about it. I cannot find anyone who wants to know, and I feel like such a failure." Nancy said "Well, you can tell me, dear," and so began an illustrious Bahá'í career spanning more than fifty years.

We lived very happily in Niagara on the Lake, until in 1965 I was elected delegate to the National Bahá'í Convention in Winnipeg. The task of the delegates was to elect the nine members who would form the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada. During that convention Hand of the Cause Mr Khadem, whom we loved so much, raised the call for pioneers to go to the more remote areas of Canada and of the world. About twenty Bahá'ís came forward in response. I telephoned home to Eileen, then we offered to go anywhere in the world we may be needed. A few months later we were on our way to Yellowknife in Canada's Northwest Territories.

We had bought a beautiful two bedroom house in Niagara on the Lake for \$8,200, with a 30-year mortgage at 3.5 percent. The garden, which had been landscaped by a retired professional gardener, had a variety of blossoms which appeared in rotation for three seasons. At times the perfume was magnificent. There was never a harsh word spoken in that little home, and many wonderful people flowed through its doors. We have revisited the spot occasionally and one time saw this home, now forty years older, for sale at \$280,000.

I sometimes think of Terry Fox, that wonderful young man who had lost a leg to cancer. He was sure that cancer could be beaten and vowed to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research. He put his foot in the ocean on the East Coast then started out, running about thirty miles every day. All the way through the maritime provinces and Quebec he raised almost nothing,

then coming into
Ontario he caught public attention and was joined by Maple Leafs Captain,
Darryl Sittler and other
famous athletes and hockey players who jogged along with him for a few miles.
The money started
to pour in. He did not manage to run across Canada. Cancer struck him again and
he had to stop near
Thunder Bay, Ontario, where a beautiful statue has been raised to his memory.
He went home to die
with his dream unrealised, yet he raised more than twenty million dollars for
cancer research, and each
September the Terry Fox runs are held all across Canada, and continue to
generate millions every year
for cancer research.

In a way his story reminds me of our time in Niagara. We were young and
healthy, we had a dream,
and nothing seemed impossible to us. Dear Joan Moore and Helen Hazen have
continued to follow
that dream through family tragedy, illnesses and old age. This is true of Ann
and Doug Wilson, Doug
and Patty Sheldrick, Joyce and John Edmonds, Don and Diana Dainty, Herb and
Gerry Tripp, Charlie
and Florence Grindlay, Ron and Edna Nablo, and the others in this story. Some
are dead, some still
carry on but they never gave up, nor did Eileen and I. Just like Terry Fox, we
never saw its realization
but all of us continue to follow that dream.

In many ways our hearts stayed behind in beautiful Niagara on the Lake.

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— Memories of Niagara Peninsula (Used by permission of the curator)