

ARTICLE

The Guardian's Resting Place

Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Cause of God, was referred to by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament as "the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin surging seas". He passed from this earthly life on 4th November 1957, in London and, according to the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Guardian was laid to rest within an hour's distance of the place of his passing. (For an intimate and detailed account read *The Passing of Shoghi Effendi*, by Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum in collaboration with John Ferraby).

Rúhíyyih Khánum, in *The Priceless Pearl*, writes the following of her dear late husband's resting place, "In 1958 his grave was built of the same dazzling white Carrara marble he had himself chosen for the monuments of his illustrious relatives in Haifa, a simple grave as he would have wished it to be. A single marble column, crowned by a corinthian capital is surmounted by a globe, the map of Africa facing forward - for had not the victories won in Africa brought him the greatest joy during that last year of his life? - and on this globe is a large gilded bronze eagle, a reproduction of a beautiful Japanese sculpture of an eagle which he greatly admired and which he had placed in his own room. No better emblem than this symbol of victory could have been found for the resting-place of him who had won so many victories as he led the hosts of Bahá'u'lláh's followers on their ceaseless conquests throughout the five continents of the world."

When Shoghi Effendi was interred, London's Great Northern Cemetery (since renamed New Southgate Cemetery) was larger than it is now. Over the years parts were sold off for development, and it was in response to this process that a sizeable portion around the Guardian's Resting Place was subsequently bought for the Faith so that it could be preserved and developed suitably.

The cemetery opened a new entrance and the one through which the Guardian's funeral cortège passed fell into disuse. The gates and pillars of this entrance were purchased by the National Spiritual Assembly, acting on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, and a long process to have them reinstalled in a more suitable place came to fruition in 1998. Under the project management of David Lewis the gates and their supporting pillars were removed, cleaned and repaired, and erected at the head of the straight avenue that leads from the funeral chapel and car park to the Guardian's Resting Place. The chapel/car park area was also redeveloped in a joint project of the Bahá'ís and the cemetery authorities. The result is both the preservation of an important piece of Bahá'í history and a positive enhancement of this very special area." (Bahá'í Information Office).

Visitors to the BIO Web site will find information relating to the Guardian's Resting Place. There are photos of the restored gates in their new position at the head of the avenue leading from the funeral chapel to the grave as well as the photograph of the Resting Place on this page. These can be downloaded for use. For those anticipating a trip to London, the Web site also gives directions for visiting the Guardian's Resting Place and the National Hazíratu'l-Quds: <http://www.io1.ie/~isp/se/>

The Funeral

Emerald beneath and crimson above
The green of life and the martyr's blood
We spread for thee in our great love.
We bore thee high on a flood of tears
With the sighs of our hearts,
The devotion of all our years.

We could not look upon thy face
The wound of death to us too deep
But all felt wrapped within thy grace,
The grace of deeds thou didst do
So patiently, heartbrokenly, so long
Our father, our guide, our brother true.

We gazed upon thy grave new-made,
A thousand hopes and dreams
Deep with thee in it we laid.
Bent backs, bowed heads, hearts eaten
With remorse at works undone,
Our very souls and minds beaten
Down by conscience, grief and love,
Each asked what part he or she
Shared in this visitation from above.

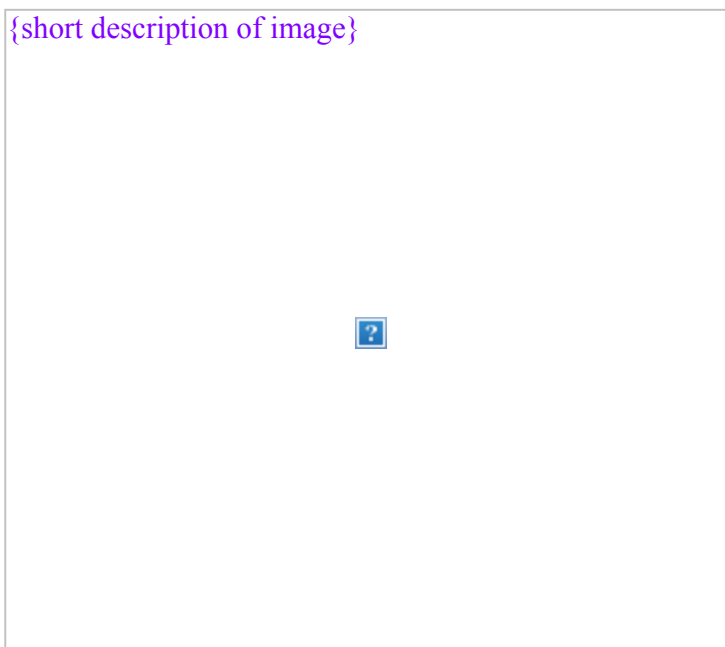
Thou wert given to us long ago By One greater than thyself; Thy worth we never came to know Until the casket small under the rain Lay bare before our gaze; Thyself within never to rise again And greet us with thy radiant smile, Thy flashing eyes, thy dimpled cheeks, Thy voice that could beguile The hardest heart, the hardest head.

We knew thee not beloved Till all farewells were said And each one bowed or placed his kiss, Not on thy cheek so warm and dear, But on thy casket - only this.

We knew thee not beloved one Until thy soul took up its flight, Thy mortal journey done. We knew thee not beloved one Till we strewed thy rooted grave With sacred flowers, and said, "'Tis done".

Gone from our gaze, our touch We mourn deep, deep inside. What men lose they value much.

Rúhíyyih Khánum 12th December 1957 published in "Poems of the Passing"



Taken from the Web site: <http://www.iol.ie/~isp/se/>

HOW I BECAME A BAHÁ'Í

"The Eagle has Landed"

"One Small Step for Man! One Giant Leap for Mankind!" As those words were heard around the world I was making the biggest decision of my life - my first step, my giant leap in my spiritual journey.

The place was San Antonio, Texas. The date was 20th July 1969.

I had woken that morning planning to go to church, but as usual I was late. Oh, well, I thought I would go next week. At least, I could go to the Bahá'í fireside at 1pm. Listening to the television reporting the progress of the first lunar landing I kept hearing Walter Cronkite saying, "This is the beginning of a new era for mankind." Smiling to myself, I thought, "If he only knew!" I had just read "Bahá'u'lláh and The New Era" by John Esslemont. I knew that the Bahá'ís were working for the real new era when all men would realise that they were one - one race, one family and living on one planet.

Suddenly I didn't want to be on the outside applauding their efforts, I wanted to be a part of their working force, working to unite this planet in love. It seemed to me that only when the hearts of men were changed that the world could change. Feeling that wonderful fire burning in my heart I knew I had to be a Bahá'í. I knew also that

there was only one declaration card in the city and I knew where it was to be found. I had to get to that house and sign it before someone else did. I didn't care that it was a selfish thought for I felt I had to do it NOW.

I arrived at the house only to find that my Bahá'í friend was really upset because some Bahá'ís had misused her hospitality. She was saying, "After all I did for them. They could at least have said thank you, don't you agree, Catherine". "Yes", I said, "but I want to talk to you, Nezzie." "Forget about them. I really want to talk to you!" I insisted. "You are probably right," replied Nezzie. "Come into the kitchen. I'll make us some coffee. Now, what was it you wanted to talk to me about?" "I want to sign the Card." "What did you say?" "I want to sign the CARD!" "WHAT?" "I WANT TO SIGN THE CARD!"

Nezzie started to scream and hug me. We began to jump up and down. The card was found and with trembling hand I read it and then signed it knowing that I had made a pact with God and a commitment to serve His Cause to the best of my ability. I could not pronounce Bahá'u'lláh's name, as for 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, well, that was beyond me, but I knew that this Faith was from God and I had pledged to obey the laws and ordinances and "by gum" I was going to try hard.

I was now a member of the Bahá'í Faith, had taken up the torch to help build God's "Kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven" I now had a purpose. My "Eagle had landed".

Catherine Watson - Catherine is currently working at the Bahá'í Information Office

From cynicism to certainty

For many years I searched for the truth, a truth that would satisfy my soul. I attended different religious groups. I read and studied many books, but always I found something missing and I wasn't satisfied. Due to circumstances I left my home in the north of England and moved to Cheltenham to be near to three of my sons. My eldest son, David often visited me along with his wife and children. He told me about a prophet from Persia who was named Bahá'u'lláh, who was the manifestation of God for this age. I said I wasn't interested in Eastern Gurus, and that I was eagerly waiting for the return of my beloved Jesus, whom I loved dearly. "Mother" said David, "He returned in 1844." I was devastated. I had missed the event. Still, I thought, maybe it was another tale. But was it?

A few days later David invited me and my other two sons to a meeting in Bath organised by the local Bahá'ís. I didn't want to go, but the three boys went, leaving me to enjoy a peaceful day on my own. When they returned in the evening they told me how great it had been, and that they had met some lovely people there. "We didn't have to take our shoes off either." said Tony.

A couple called Terry and Barbara Smith had been at the meeting and promised to send Tony a book called "A Thief in the Night", by William Sears. A few days later the book arrived. Tony was busy with exams and so he passed it on to me. That night I sat down to read it, for an hour or so, but I couldn't put it down. I went to bed, but couldn't sleep for thinking about it. Suppose it was true? It tied up with a lot of the Bible prophecies. I was really excited. My spirit stirred within me. Had I found the truth at last?

I decided to pursue the matter and wrote to the Smiths for further information about this Bahá'í Faith. They sent me more books, which I read avidly. Mrs Madeline Hellaby wrote giving me an address of a friend of hers, a lady by the name of Gloria Faizi, who was a pioneer in Hereford, and suggested that I should visit her. One Saturday morning I hopped on a bus to Gloria's home. She lived at the very top of the building and as I climbed the many steps I wondered what kind of person she was. Timidly and with apprehension, I rang the doorbell. The door opened and there stood a small lady, who smiled sweetly and invited me into her home. We had dinner together and talked about this new religion. She invited me to come back the next day with David for further discussion. Still, I was determined not to jump into this religion without a lot of thought.

Gloria talked of many aspects of the Bahá'í Faith and showed me pictures of the Holy Land. Although I hadn't intended to declare my belief in Bahá'u'lláh so soon, being in the presence of so beautiful a soul moved my spirit so much and I knew this was the time and the place where my life had taken on a new meaning. I was born again. I was a babe in the New Era of Bahá'u'lláh. The date was 8th March 1970, Mothering Sunday.

Hilda Black (At 83 years-young Hilda has just pioneered to Wrexham)

