

Hands of the Cause of God:  
Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm:

My first encounter with Rúhíyyih Khánúm was in St Thomas in 1970 when she and Violette Nakhjavani came for a visit.

We knew, of course, who she was, but it does not prepare one for the force of both her personality and depth. There was something about her that I could not put my finger on. After she left I thought about it a lot, and 3 months later it suddenly dawned on me, she displayed the quality of majesty. No wonder I didn't recognize it, I had never seen it manifested before.

However there was another side to her that anyone who has spent any time with her at all will agree, she had a very open, blunt way of expressing her opinion.

The first time I saw this quality was when she visited our home. The area where we did all our entertaining and visiting was on the second floor. At the top of the stairs was a large painting of 'Abd'u-Bahá that had been painted for us by a dear friend. She stopped in her tracks as she saw it, turned to me and said "burn it, there isn't an artist alive who can properly paint the essence of Abdu'l-Baha ". Wow! As I was a fairly new Bahá'í and didn't know one was supposed to keep ones opinion to themselves when around her, and just say "yes Ma'am", I started to give her arguments as to why I shouldn't do that. My closing and final point which I thought was the clincher was "but Rúhíyyih Khánúm, this was done for us in love"...she looked at me with a look mixed with annoyance and impatience, and said "Pat, people commit murder for love".

I did take it down as long as she was there, but could not bring myself to burn it.

When she left St Thomas, I could hear my heart breaking. I can still see myself standing at the airport watching her go. She suddenly turned around, saw the look on my face, came back to me, saying "oh Pat" with that same look on her face I had seen before, but leaned down and gave me a kiss on both cheeks.

She visited Barbados in 1972 where we had moved as pioneers. We asked her to dinner and she and Violette graciously consented. As she walked into the house she saw a modern painting hanging on the wall, stopped, looked at me and said "pat, did you have this in St. Thomas?. I said "yes Ma'am" you didn't like it there either". She burst out laughing...I gathered not many people talked to her like that, and thank God, she was not displeased.