

Chapter 4: BARBADOS: October 1971 - March 1976:

The first time I spent a length of time in Barbados was in August 1970. I had planned a three week teaching trip asking a few youth to join me. My daughters, Lynn and Judy, a young



friend of ours, Michael Fanning, from Carmichael, California and a youth from St. Vincent, Don Providence, settled in a small village called Newbury. It was in the middle of the island and a delightful place to be. On the first night, after everyone had

gone to bed, Michael called out in a strange, worried voice. We rushed into his room and he was pointing to the ceiling. We looked and the ceiling was covered with tiny blinking lights... fireflies... Michael had never seen them before.

We began the next day going around and inviting people to a meeting that night. In these early days, there were not the distractions one has today. No television, cell phones, and very few land line phones, you usually had to go to the police station to make a phone call. So that night we had a packed house! My favorite guest was an older lady who came to the meeting each night carrying her chair on her head. She wasn't going to have to stand like so many others.

We did end up enrolling many new youth in the Faith.

Near the end of project Frank was to make a visit to join us.



Ethel Harris, a pioneer from St. Croix with whom I had been teaching here the year before was also joining us. As great luck would have it, Hand of the Cause of God, Enoch Olinga was also making a visit to Barbados. Frank and Ethel arranged their flight to travel with him from St. Thomas.

The flight was scheduled to have a short layover in Antigua. Frank knew that a young American pioneer family, Joyce and Jody Owen were serving the Faith there. Frank suggested a visit to them and Mr. Olinga was delighted to do that. They reached the house, knocked on the door. Joyce answered and when she saw who her visitors were, she was first shocked

and of course then delighted! A visit from a Hand of the Cause of God is a great honour.



Before they left Antigua, they had lunch at the airport. The young waitress served them and Mr. Olinga said to her that he knew what tribe she was from in Africa. She drew herself up, and said clearly "I am from Antigua."

After arriving in Barbados, Mr. Olinga was taken to the house of American pioneers, Karen and Phil Wood in the parish of Christ Church. I wanted so much to see him and invite him to talk at one of our meetings in Newbury.

When I arrived at the house he was resting, but hearing Karen and I chat, he came out to join us. He looked so tired that I hesitated to ask, but I did anyhow. He looked at me and asked me what it was like in Newbury. I thought a minute and said to him "Where you are staying now is like the city. Where I am staying is like the country." He broke into big smile, jumped up saying "Let's go!"



It was a wonderful meeting that night. Not only did all of our neighbors come, but also Bahá'ís from around the island. The meetings were all outside and he talked about the greatness of this time and how long it was destined to last.

After the meeting, the delighted Bahá'ís gathered in our small house chatting for a long time. Mr. Olinga suddenly pointed at me and said "I want you to move to Barbados." We were all startled and especially knowing how very hard it was for pioneers to stay in Barbados, we all laughed. Mr. Olinga raised his voice and said "I have the power to make this happen." We all stopped laughing and I for one, was dumbfounded. A note should be made here that one year later our family came to Barbados as pioneers and stayed five years. Frank eventually got a position teaching Science and Math in the public school system.

In the early part of 1971, a mass teaching project was planned by the National Spiritual Assembly to be an international endeavor. Having a very small amount of money

in the National fund didn't seem to be pertinent. Nevis, a small island in the middle of the island chain was the first choice for the project. I was chosen to coordinate the project.

In 1971, an investigative trip to Nevis was made but no venue suitable for a project of this size was available. I then traveled to Barbados, to see if a site was available there. I first went to St. George Parish as it was in the middle of the island, and I had just last year held a small, successful teaching project in nearby Newbury. I also found a good sized building with lots of built in bunks, a large dining room and a big kitchen. Perfect! It was currently empty as it was the housing provided for cane cutters during the season.

The Continental Board of Counsellors had been approached and asked to send someone to help us. They graciously sent an Auxillary Board Member, Ruth Pringle. This woman turned out to be one of the most able, dedicated, devoted Bahá'is I was ever to have the privilege of knowing. She was a chatter, talking all the time and everything she said was interesting. Rúhíyyih Khánúm called her "...a brilliant Bahá'í".



The National Assembly of the United States was also approached. They sent us a team of 3 Bahá'is, Van Gilmer, Shirley Yarbrough and Jim Taylor. They were all experienced mass teachers having taught in several projects in the States. Van and Shirley were musicians as well. They were also welcome in that the majority of the overseas teachers preciousy seen were white however these Bahá'is had some colour to their skin.

Jim Taylor looked at our new housing, turned to the other members of the team and said, "Well, we've come full circle".

TEAM WITH SOME FRIENDS IN ST. GEORGES' - 1971

Left to Right: Leroy Wharton, Ruth Pringle, Judy Paccassi, ---, Amanda Wrighton, Shirley Yarbrough, Van Gilmer,



Pat Paccassi, Shirley Howard, Tony Harmer, Leon Sternberger, Errol Sealy, Don Providence, Diane Bourne, Mr. Lorde, Karen Wood

Local Bahá'ís were also asked to participate in the project; Errol Sealy, Fitzgerald Callender, Diane Bourne and Leroy Wharton from Barbados, Don Providence and Shirley Howard from St. Vincent, Amanda Wrighton from St. Martin and Tony Harmer, a youth from St. Thomas. My daughter Judy, also a youth was part of the team as well.

Other teams arrived at later dates as a follow up. The New Era Trio, Charles and Sandi Bullock and Jeanne Rebstock from the United States, came in September to join the project after the first three weeks of the project were over and the original team left. Jim Taylor, Ruth Pringle and I stayed after the initial project. This group began to work on consolidation, but teaching also was involved, resulting in many more enrollments.

One of the new Bahá'ís, Burleigh Eastman, worked as a full time teacher. He went out five days a week and never came back without enrollment cards. It was later found that it would have been better to send him out accompanied by an experienced teacher. Many of those who had been enrolled did not really understand what they were joining.



L to R: Phil Wood, Ruth Pringle, Karen Wood, Burleigh Eastman, Frank Paccassi, Pat Paccassi

This project was so much fun. All the members of the team grew to love each other and the people of Barbados. One could not have asked for a more unified group. And the teaching was so easy, people were very receptive to the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. In 3 weeks we had enrolled 500 new believers. There is nothing more satisfying or exhilarating than teaching the Bahá'í Faith. And when those whom you are teaching also accept His Message, this is icing on the cake. Every day teams went out to reach new people, and invite them to the nightly meetings.

The music was great. Shirley and Van singing together transformed everyone who heard them. One time we had arranged a radio broadcast for them. They started singing "Oh Bahá'u'lláh, oh Bahá'u'lláh" and just could not stop. The music and the words and the love that generated it were captivating. I can still hear the sweetness of those voices.



A lot of media exposure was available to us in those days. As I explained before without a lot of outside distractions, even media access was easily obtainable.

Many of the new Bahá'is from the village began working with the team in the teaching work. This brought credibility to the Message brought to Barbados by "strangers". A hard core of local Bahá'is developed and remained steadfast.



One of the favorite stories was about a young enrollee named David Watkins. He was 11 years old and on fire with the Faith. His first spiritual children were his grandparents. He also enrolled about 30 of his friends, a lot of whom were older than he was. What a sweet child he was, his love of Bahá'u'lláh was so strong that others could see, understand and embrace!

Another of our favorites was a blind man who was living in the village. He was in his house where Shirley Yarbrough was teaching another person near his window. He could hear them and later told us that he knew that everything she was saying was true and he wanted to join. He remained a steadfast and devoted Bahá'í.

The plan was to start teaching in our immediate area and then to move outward. At the end of the project in December all the 11 Parishes had new Bahá'is.

Two Teaching Conferences were held. The first had 30 participants representing 1 Parish. The second had 67 participants representing 6 (of 11) Parishes. A cable was sent to the Universal House of Justice. In turn the Universal House of Justice sent a cable expressing their joy at the new believers who were arising to promote the Faith.

It was so unfortunate that the rest of our consolidation plan which was dependent upon the use of the schools as meeting places did not materialize. The Anglican Church at that time controlled all public schools. They of course were not happy with our teaching results and refused permission to use the public schools.

A bonus I received during the project was the news that on 21, August Hand of the Cause of God Dr. Varqá was on a plane that had a short layover in Barbados. I had found out however that he was unable to leave the plane. I immediately contacted the manager of the airport requesting permission to board the plane during the layover to talk to Dr. Varqá. Much to my surprise and delight, I received it, but with strict instructions that I and only I could board the plane. The whole team went out to the airport hoping to catch a glimpse of him.

The plane landed, passengers got off and I was told I could now go on board. I started out, looked back, seeing Ruth's face. It had such longing; I could not resist and beckoned her to join me. Dr. Varqá was in the doorway, waiting for us. Ruth and I stood there gazing up at his handsome face, with his

shining eyes and soft voice. He talked to us until it was time for us to leave the plane.

We both floated back to the team. They immediately demanded to know what he had said. I looked at Ruth and she looked at me. It soon became clear that neither of had really been listening; only gazing. The team was furious! They said "You two talk all the time and now when you have something we really want to know, you don't talk." I can't say I blame them, I would have been furious too.

In December we planned to organize a teaching project in St. Vincent with a team of youth from Barbados. One seeming drawback however was a threatening volcanic eruption on the island. I was not in the least bit doubtful about going ahead with our plans. I did however end up having to visit each youth's parents with reassurances.

Here are the teams who were involved in the project:



L

to R: myself as coordinator, Richard Miller,

Myralene Moore, Monica Braithwaite, Errol Sealy as trainee youth coordinator, Leroy Wharton, Burleigh Eastman, and Lynn Paccassi.

Hendrick Branch and Don Providence from St. Vincent joined the team later in the project. Iris Guinalls de Maul from Puerto Rico came to help as well.

We again picked a village in the central part of the island. There was a two story building available for us. The upstairs was furnished as an apartment but the downstairs was empty. We tried to get beds for the boys, but none were available. Some slept on cardboard, Errol Sealy slept on a crate of empty



soda bottles, covered with cardboard. But never a word of complaint was

heard.

Being youth their boundless energy allowed them to work from early morning right through nightly meetings. The youth were able to attract and enroll many new youth in the Faith.

This project as all others do had its low points. The one in this project, in my estimation, was one rainy night when we decided to cancel the night meeting. At one point there was a prolonged knocking on the downstairs front door. I would not let the youth go and answer it. I thought it was some youth wanting to hang out with the team. The knocking persisted. I went downstairs to see who it was and inform them there was no meeting that night. Annoyed, I opened the door and standing there, very wet, and very, very annoyed, were some of the St. Vincent Bahá'ís who had come from town to join the team for the night meeting. Oops!

We also traveled to different villages during our stay there. One night in particular stands out in my mind. We went to Chateaubelair, one of the villages at the Northwest end of the island.

We hired a transport minibus to take us out and pick us up after the night meeting. The meeting itself was very successful, lots of interest and some enrollments. After the meeting we waited and waited for the transport to come for us. Finally after deciding we would probably have to walk, the transport arrived.

The roads at that time were totally unlit, there was no moon that night and this was a winding road at best.

The driver met us on the road. As soon as we entered, it became obvious to all but one of the boys that the driver had too much to drink. To make it worse he had brought his girlfriend with him, who was doing her best to get his full attention. Then in the back of the transport, the unaware boy, who was a talker at all times and being excited with the meeting, could not keep still. The rest of the team realized the drivers' condition and were very silent, praying I hoped, but

not him. To make it worse, the driver was constantly turning around to hear what he was saying. I finally turned around to him and said in a low, serious voice, "If you don't stop talking, I am going to have the boys stuff your mouth with a sock!" Silence. Now we could all pray, and by the grace of God we got home safely.

The most outstanding occurrence however, was the day when the team consulted about reaching our teaching goals. There had been a let-down and nothing was really happening. I wanted to come up with something that would inspire and encourage. I told them if we make our teaching goals we will send a cable to the Universal House of Justice. These were for the most part new Bahá'is, but they were inspired and energized. A few days later when the goals had been reached, the whole proud team went into town and sent a cable to the Universal House of Justice.

A few days later we received an answering cable;

"Overjoyed outstanding success Saint Vincent Mass Teaching Express our warm commendations West Indian Team Their praise-worthy efforts STOP Urge immediate follow up deepen new believers begin process development prospective new community STOP Assure prayers Shrines your devoted labours expand Faith."

The rest of the project went smoothly! The team went home to Barbados, happy and satisfied with their teaching efforts on St. Vincent.

After the mass teaching project had ended in Barbados in December 1971 it became obvious that with the 2200 enrollments over a 6 month period, more help was needed to work with the consolidation plan. It was a plan that had been devised by Ruth Pringle. When I was on Pilgrimage in 1972, Ian Semple, a member of the Universal House of Justice, commented on it at a meeting with the Bahá'is stating that it was one of the best he had ever seen.

Frank and I consulted and we decided to move to Barbados to help with the consolidation. He quit his job, he and Lynn packed up the house, and I went ahead to find us a place to live.

The family, Frank, Pat, Lynn, Judy and Grandma Snyder arrived in Barbados in October 1971. For this move we had to leave our registered French Poodle, Robbie, behind with a family who was happy to get him. Barbados law at that time required that all pets brought into the island be sent to England for a six months quarantine period.

I had found a nice house in the parish of St. Andrew. It was on the opposite side of the island's capital. I'm not sure if my decisions to live as far away from capital cities was by conscious thought or not, but in the majority of moves, that is exactly what I looked for in all of our moves as well.

Our landlady, Mrs. Rock, owned many businesses on the island, including pre-fabricated houses. The yard where they put them together was next door to our house. In looking back, I find it hard to believe we lived there for five years with no trace of annoyance from us at the noise that business had to have generated.

Mrs. Rock was a really nice lady. When we had to leave Barbados going to St. Vincent for a short period after having used up our visa extensions to stay, she let us leave all of our belongings in the house and didn't charge us rent while we were gone. All of us felt sure we would eventually be able to stay in Barbados. Another time, I had gone to pay our rent, and she began to talk about how high prices for everything had gone up. I began thinking "And so is our rent about to go up". But, she concludes by saying "So I have decided to lower your rent". Never before, nor since, has that happened to me or to anyone I know!

Frank began looking for a job in Barbados. The first place he applied was a company listed as H.A.R.P., meaning High Altitude Research Project. This would seem to be a job for which he was highly qualified, having worked in the space industry in California. He went several times to talk to them,

but was never offered a job. Years later we were told that they had heard it was a United States CIA operation. If so, no wonder they hadn't hired him.

He then began to apply for a teaching position in Science and Math, as he had a degree in Physics. But there was not much luck there as well. We did have some savings from St. Thomas and lived on that until it was gone. Then Foreign Goals subsidized us until Frank got a job teaching in the school system. It was a lot cheaper to live on Barbados at that time with an exchange of \$1.98 BDS to one United States dollar. For example our weekly food bill was \$35.00 BDS dollars a week.

During the 1971 mass teaching project, Ruth Pringle started to encourage me to go on Pilgrimage. That had never entered my mind and besides Frank was not working. After my first resistance I decided that it was a great idea and applied. Much to my surprise I was given a date right away to come in February 1972. Frank still didn't have a job.

Then, Hand of the Cause of God, Dr. Muhájir made one of his lightning trips to the island in January 1972. Because he was in and out of islands so quickly, I asked him if he knew what the friends called him. He said "No" I replied "The lightning Hand" He laughed and said "Do you know what they call me in India?" I said "No", and he said "The missing Hand."

When he heard that I was going on Pilgrimage, he immediately began to encourage me to make a travel teaching trip around the world at the same time! Wow.

As much as I disagreed, he persisted and as he was leaving the island, and we were in the airport having a cup of coffee, he began to outline where I should go, how long to stay and what to do in each place. He told me where I should teach and where I should learn. He also said "...and you must be back for your National Convention."



L to R: Pat, Karen, Dr. Muhájir

Karen Wood another pioneer was also there, and as he began to give his outline, she began scribbling furiously on a napkin. It was the only piece of paper she could find.

I went into a semi-state of shock. It was simply too much to process and certainly way too much to expect to materialize. But that did not stop Karen and I from taking it to our travel agent, Mr. Ince. I told him that I had to be back by the middle of April. He looked at it and said "Oh Mrs. Paccassi, a trip like this could not be possible. You are traveling to fourteen countries. The schedules just won't work." Karen and I stayed with him and he reluctantly agreed to try.

Several days later, he called and told us "It was amazing. I tried and tried to book the flights from Barbados and home again. But it wouldn't work, so for some reason, I decided to try it backwards, and all the flights fell into place!"

Wonderful, but Frank still doesn't have a job, and savings just about gone.

At this point, I had to begin to send my passport to countries where I would need a visa to enter. The last country I needed had an embassy in the United States. Off it went.

During my wait for all this to materialize, Bahá'í life went on as usual. One of the things that happened was a teaching trip to another island. However the tricky part was going to be how to get back into Barbados without my passport. In those days, travel was much easier and more relaxed. People who were waiting for disembarking passengers could go outside on a second story balcony to wait and watch for them. I got off the airplane, slowly making my way to immigration, organizing my

story as to how I didn't have a passport. I heard a voice calling my name, looked up at the balcony. There was Frank and Bill Nedden waving to me. I went over and Frank waves my passport in the air, and drops it straight into my hands. Hurrah, another problem solved. But Frank still didn't have a job.

I am always amazed and surprised the way things work out when one relies on God. Dr. Muhájir arrives in January, rearranges my Pilgrimage itinerary to now go around the world and my flights are booked. Frank still does not have a job. A few weeks before I am to leave, a check arrives in the mail. It was from St. Thomas and reflected a check for retroactive salary payment of the time when Frank worked in the US Virgin Islands. It was exactly the amount I needed to go on my trip, with a little bit left over! I started on my trip, happy and full of joy. What a remarkable man Frank was! He had no problem with my going on Pilgrimage using funds sent to him.

I had been told by Dr. Muhájir that I should be back in Barbados by April 1972, the date of the formation of the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of the Windward Islands.

The stories from this trip around the world have been put on a DVD by Joyce Olinga in 2013. It is called "Pat Paccassi's Incredible 1972 Global Travel Teaching Trip". It is available at Olinga Productions, PO Box 1423, Maryland HTS Mo or Olingaproductions@mac.com.

The last stop of my global trip was to the Bahá'í National Headquarters in Wilmette, USA, I met with Eileen Norman, secretary of the Foreign Goals Committee. I had great news for her in that I had found a job for Frank in Japan. Some pioneers owned an English speaking academy and were happy to have him as one of their teachers. I had looked in all the places I went, but this was the first solid lead and I loved everything about the country.

Eileen said that probably would not happen, as they had received a cable from the Universal House of Justice saying that we were to stay in Barbados. We were to be subsidized if necessary. I went into a real tizzy. This was news that was not easily assimilated! How they even knew about our not being able to find a job in Barbados was mysterious to me. My whole system collapsed and I caught the worst cold I had ever had in my life. But that sure settled our dilemma and stay in Barbados we did.

I did find out later that the Universal House of Justice had become aware of our predicament via the Foreign Goals Committee seeing it mentioned in the minutes of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Windward Islands, and again picked up by the World Centre seeing their minutes. This is quite a Bahá'í grapevine we have!

I arrived home in Barbados just before the Convention. It was a wonderful convention held at the University of the West Indies.



19 delegates from our islands, Barbados, St. Vincent, Grenada and St. Lucia were present. Rúhíyyih Khanum was the representative of the Universal House of Justice. Her cousin, Jan Bolles Chute accompanied her. They stayed 10 days and had extensive coverage from the media.

We also had the bounty of having Rúhíyyih Khánum and Jan Chute for dinner one night as well as Edson Branch and Don Providence from St. Vincent.



Seated L to R: Rúhíyyih Khánum, Grandma Snyder, Jan Chute

Standing L to R: Pat Paccassi, Edson Branch, Lynn Paccassi, Don Providence, Frank Paccassi

As we were finishing dinner, I asked Khánum if she would like another piece of Lasagna. She said yes, reached for it, paused and asked if we were having dessert. I replied "Yes" and she asked "What is it". I told her Lemon Meringue Pie. She sat back, telling me she would wait. Khánum also showed me how to put on the Sari I had bought in India. Forgive me, but these personal memories are so precious to me I feel I must share and it shows the very human side of great Bahá'ís not always seen.

At dinner that night Khánum asked about how it was progressing with our efforts to stay on Barbados. But as there was little to tell, she specifically asked me to let her know. But when we finally got the news that Frank had gotten a teaching job here, I couldn't make myself write her with this news. She had so much to do and so little free time, I felt really uneasy taking up her time with our news.



The next year we attended the International Convention in Haifa. The photo is L To R: Iris Guinals de Maul, Frank, ??, and me in Haifa.

I was walking in one of the large meeting rooms and across the room I could see Khánum. She looks up, spots me and in a clear, loud voice, says to me "You were supposed to let me know what

happened". Oops, I was embarrassed, stammered something and got out of her sight. The next morning she, in her opening address to the Convention, began going on about the need for good communication needed by the Bahá'is. Oops, now I've gotten a whole room of Bahá'is at International Convention hollered at as well me.

At the national convention in Barbados the first baby naming ceremony was held for Violette Suzette Marjorie whose parents were George and Norma Howard from St. Vincent. Rúhiyyih Khánúm was the witness to this ceremony.

Just before the voting for the new National Spiritual Assembly was to start, one of the delegates, in a long, roundabout way, hoping to sound delicate, began to ask if someone could vote for someone who was not really yet settled and was living on another island rather than where one's belongings were, etc. Rúhiyyih Khánúm finally broke in and in that tone of voice only she could muster, said "Of course you can vote for the Paccassi's".



Those elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of the Windward Islands were;

Seated: L to R: Phil Wood, Chairman, a pioneer from the United States, Frank Farnum, Vice Chairman from Barbados,

Rúhíyyih Khánúm, George Howard from St. Vincent and Frank Paccassi, Treasurer a pioneer from the United States.

Standing: Karen Wood, Secretary a pioneer from the United States, Auxillary Board Member Marjorie Harmer, a pioneer from the United States, Hazel Beckles, from Barbados, Carol Haynes, a pioneer from United Kingdom, Diane Bourne, from Barbados, Pat Paccassi, Recording Secretary, a pioneer from the United States.

In October 1972 the official name of the National Assembly had to be changed from the "National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of the Windward Islands" to the "National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of Barbados and the Windward Islands" as Barbados considered itself as a separate island not as a part of the Windward Islands. The National Assembly was also incorporated at the same time.

This was a very active National Assembly. It planned all different kinds of events to deepen, consolidate and encourage new teaching. One of these events was a Teacher Training Institute held in Barbados in December 1973. The venue was a large rented house in Martin's Bay.



Twelve students from three islands attended at the invitation of the National Assembly. The tutors were a distinguished and experienced group. A Counsellor, Rowland Estall, his wife Vivian Estall from Antigua, Auxillary Board Members, Shirley Mather from the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Hopeton Fitz-Henley

from Jamaica, and well known international travel teacher and pioneer, Shamsi Sedeghat from Trinidad and Tobago. Shirley Yarbrough a pioneer to Barbados and I were the coordinators.

It was a great institute, everyone learned and most of the students became good teachers of the Faith in their home islands. After the event was over, however, we were told that one of girls had become pregnant. Oh my! At all the following training institutes there was a lot more emphasis on chastity and purity.

After the Mass Teaching Project in 1971, Shirley Yarbrough returned a year later as a pioneer. It was a great blessing for Barbados. Most of the pioneers who had come before her had been white. Not only was she dark skinned in this dark skinned island, she had a wonderful, cheerful personality and a great singing voice. Everyone who met her immediately joined her vast fan club. She was able to obtain a teaching position as a music teacher, a job she kept until she retired. She later married Carl Ishmael, a Barbadian. She was also appointed in 1974 as the first Auxillary Board Member for the Windward Islands by Counsellor Rowland Estall. Her first appointment of an assistant was Errol Sealy, who later in life was appointed the first West Indian Counsellor for the Windward Islands area. As of this date, November 2018 she still resides in Barbados. Her husband, Carl, however, died a few years ago.



I should state here that I did not mean in any way to belittle the pioneers who were white. Indeed I have always thought it was a great way to demonstrate that not all white people are prejudiced. Bahá'is truly believe in the beauty of the oneness of mankind.

As this Nation Spiritual Assembly was elected in 1972 the members became eligible to participate in the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1973. We all wanted to go and cast our votes in Haifa, Israel!

It was in this time frame that our family continued to receive help in such unusual ways that it could only be part of God's bounty.

Frank and I were both delegates that year and we only had enough money for one air fare and expenses. I had been on Pilgrimage and taken a teaching trip around the world the preceding year. It was clearly Frank's turn.

When we had travelled from St. Thomas to Barbados, we had shipped all of our goods air freight. Everything had arrived safely except two boxes. Eventually we received a call from Eastern Airlines telling us that our boxes had been found. We went to the Cargo hanger; they took us outside and there sat our two boxes. They had been there the whole time, out in the weather. We opened the boxes knowing that whatever had been in the boxes had to be ruined as there had been a lot of rain recently.

In one box there were old clothes and miscellaneous goods. In the other box however, was Frank's collection of early Marvel comic books. They were water soaked and had lost most of their collectors value. Frank put in a sizable claim based on catalogue prices, but as the insurance claim did not arrive by return mail it faded from our memories. Yes, you probably guessed it. That is just what happened. The cheque arrived in time for both of us to be able to travel to the International Convention. I now regretted that I had earlier made such a fuss about Frank dragging around with us this large bunch of comic books!

Other pioneers arrived over the next few years. In 1973, Laurie Fanning, arrived from Grenada where she had been pioneering with her parents Pat and Chuck Fanning in Grenada. Laurie returned to the states to further her education and returned in 1976 staying until late in 1994. She also added much to the community, her music abilities and her marriage in 1977 to a local Barbadian, Errol Sealy, having made a statement that Bahá'is lived as though mankind was one, not just preach it.

In 1974, Roy and Cynthia Carlton, from the United States, also an interracial married couple arrived and served in Barbados

until Roy died in 1981. Cynthia stayed a few years longer. They first lived in St. Lucy, a goal parish and later served as caretakers at the National Bahá'í Centre. Cynthia would say about their teaching efforts in their parish far from the capital, "Every day we would sally forth to do battle".

In 1975, Emily Kramer, from the United States, arrived to serve here until 1978. She then moved to St. Lucia which was a goal island and lived in the village of Laborie. Emily had originally come as a Peace Corps volunteer, but spent time with Bahá'í work as well. She served on the National Spiritual Assembly and attended the International Convention in Haifa in 1978.

A sad-funny story with Emily happened when she was living in St. Lucia. She lived on a restricted budget and drove a car that reflected that especially when looking at the four smooth tires on her car. At one point during her stay a relative had died and left her a sum of money. The first thing she did was to buy a whole set of new tires. YAY, no more stopping all the time to get a tire patched. She went to bed that night in Laborie, woke up the next morning and went out to go to town. OH MY! During the night someone had stolen all four of her new tires replacing them with tires just as smooth as the ones she had just replaced.

After we left in 1975, Nell Gibson and Karen Lindley pioneered in 1978, from the United States. They settled in the St. Andrew Parish and lived in the same house in Belleplaine in which we had lived and loved for five years. I later saw Karen in the States and had an interview with her about their time in Barbados. At some point I hope to have all the interviews I took available for all to read. However, at this point, they are only on my tapes, DVD's and computer, plus copies which were sent to the Bahá'í World Centre Archives Department.

We had settled ourselves in Belleplaine, but Frank still did not have a job. He looked everywhere including schools, but nothing materialized. The extension visas we needed from the government to stay on the island were getting harder and harder to get. Finally, in May 1972 we were told we had to

leave the island. Oh my, but remember we had been told to stay on Barbados by the Universal House of Justice. No contest there, but now, how to proceed. We decided to go to the nearby island of St. Vincent.



When we got there, Mr. Edson Branch a local Bahá'í and good friend had arranged a place for us to rent. We moved in, and it wasn't more than a few days when our landlord came to us and told us we had to move out! What! Why? He told us that when he agreed to have us in his house he didn't know we were Bahá'is. Mr. Branch then graciously asked us to stay with him.

We stayed with him for a bit, but eventually rented our own house. It was a lovely house, overlooking the sea, but it was up a high hill, not uncommon in St. Vincent. We didn't have a car, so we all developed great leg muscles.

However it was in this house that two major things occurred. One, Grandma fell and broke her hip. While she was very brave and strong, eventually after we moved back to Barbados she ended up staying in bed. Always cheerful, never complained but was now bed-ridden.

The other thing was connected to the girls' education. When we moved from a United States territory to Barbados, a British based territory, the two education systems were not compatible.

While we were staying in St. Vincent, a young travel teacher, Marta Kelsey, about Lynn's age came on a teaching trip. She was from a well known and respected Bahá'í family in the States. She and Lynn got along very well. After much back and forth, it was decided that Lynn would go back to the states with her, live with their family and finish high school. It was not easy to let her go, but it was what was best for her at the time. After all, she could return to us at a later date.

As for Judy's education, I ended up home schooling her after we returned here from St. Vincent in September 1972.

It was during one of my trips to and from St. Vincent to Barbados for National Assembly meetings that I almost was

denied entry into Barbados. In line at immigration I was before an older man, all decked up in a white uniform complete with medals and tassels, quite unlike the ordinary immigration officer.

I showed him my passport which, due to my recent trip around the world contained lots of pages and entries. He scanned this carefully and asked in a belligerent tone of voice "Just where do you live?" Oh boy, if he refuses me entry into Barbados, I am in big trouble. So, I think a minute, waiting for an idea, then pull myself up to my full 5'1", and in the iciest, ugliest American tone of voice I can muster say "My permanent address is in St. Thomas, and I have a home in St. Vincent and Barbados!"

Now his face begins to change, you could almost hear him thinking, "Oh, oh, who is this lady?", and then his face changes more and it looks like he's now thinking, "Oh, oh, I could end up walking a beat in a remote part of Barbados again". So he then puts on a big smile and with a vigorous slam, stamps my passport and says "Have a nice visit".

When we left Barbados for St. Vincent, we left Karen Woods phone number as a contact with the schools where Frank had applied. One day, while in St. Vincent, a call came from Karen that she had just gotten a call and Frank was being offered a teaching position! YAY. Even though he had never taught school before, only working as an engineer they evidently felt his BS in Physics qualified him to teach Science and Math.

It was helpful to us as well as at that time there were not enough local people with advanced educational degrees. At one of the schools where he taught only he and the head master had a university degree. Another factor on Barbados was that those who did have degrees would not accept a job if it was not in their field. On other islands however we found that if a local person could not find a job right away, they would take a teaching position until one opened up in their field, but not on Barbados.

We happily returned and continued our five year stay on Barbados.

As there had eventually been 1500 enrollments from the recent project on the island and no places available to hold meetings, and very few Bahá'is who were working in the process, the consolidation of the new Bahá'is became daunting. We did the best we could and all of us spent as much time as possible going into communities and looking for the new Bahá'is.

Some of the time it was easy finding those who welcomed us and we would spend part of the time chatting, getting to know one another, and some time in deepening.

However, it was not always easy and once in a while even funny. Frank had an experience that over the years he and I would recall and still laugh about. Frank walked up to a small house in one of the villages, asking for one of the men whose name was on an enrollment card from the project. He waited and in due time a child who had answered the door came back pointing to the field behind the house saying "There he goes" and sure enough there he was, racing across the field pulling on a pair of pants as he went!

Another of my favorite responses was when a child again finally answered the door and we asked to talk to her Mommy, she said "My Mommy says she's not home".

But I think the most interesting and intriguing attempt at locating Bahá'is on that long list happened to Frank Fernandes. It was many years after we left Barbados. The National Spiritual Assembly had begun to make another attempt to reach the people on the list. Frank had always been an active teacher of the Faith. He was sent to a poorer part of the capital area to start there.

He relates that as he moved from house to house he became aware of a sound that had no origin he could see. It sounded like horses walking. He then noticed that when the noise stopped and he knocked at a door, it was a house where one of the people lived. During this process, one time when he knocked at the doors near where the sound had stopped, he did not find any more of those on the list. He looked around and saw a path leading in another direction. He started up the

path and the sound started up again. Here he found a few more people.

He walked a bit further and ahead saw a little-old-lady and stopped to talk to her. All of a sudden the lady looked up over his shoulder, her eyes got wide and her mouth dropped open and she saw through the "veil" those who were accompanying Frank. He looked around and he too saw the horses and riders that were with him that day!

The phrase that I thought of when I heard this story, which I didn't doubt for a moment, was "Mount your steeds oh heroes of God". (God Passes By, Pages 35-48 US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979 second printing; Pages: 412)

Our experience in the earlier days was that a lot of the new Bahá'is were not interested any more as we did not have a place where we could meet. Everyone asked "Where is your church?" Their experience in religion had not included going to someone's home to worship, not being expected to transform one's own character, nor to become involved with the process of helping others as well. A minister or priest did that.

A funny incident happened during an early visit of Counsellor Artemus Lamb. He was traveling with one of the friends in the eastern part of the island away from the capital. A car passed them and he exclaimed "That man looks just like John Robarts!" Now Mr. Robarts was a Hand of the Cause of God, and most certainly would not be expected to be seen riding in a car in a remote part of our island where no one, especially a Counsellor, would not know he was there! So the incident was forgotten.

It wasn't too long after that Mr. Robarts contacted the Bahá'is and said he was on the island and would be happy to meet the friends and the National Assembly.



Meeting with the National Spiritual Assembly:

L to R: Pat Paccassi, Errol Sealy, Shirley Yarbrough, Phil Woods, Carol Haynes, Ida McCray, Frank Paccassi, Hand of the Cause of God, John Robarts, Frank Farnum, Mozart Newton

The next chapter in the story has Mr. Robarts' telling us the story of his being in the other side of the island and seeing a man riding in a car which passed him and his wife, Audrey, on the road. Mr. Robarts said he had said to her "That man looked just like Artemus Lamb!"

Mr. Robarts family history in Barbados is very interesting. His grandfather was born on the island. While I am not sure of the time frame, Mr. Robarts said that he had been told that there was a big hurricane set to hit the island. His grandfather's mother was in her late stages of pregnancy and was very afraid. She went to a large outdoor oven that was used for baking bread climbed inside. During the storm, the child was born. Mother and child were unharmed and they named the baby Tempest.

One of the ways of community building that was tried was to hold a social outing called an Excursion. These were normally held by various groups at the beach and were always well attended.

In the summer of 1973 the National Spiritual Assembly decided to hold a Bahá'í Excursion. Notices went out via the local and only radio station called Rediffusion which was wired into all Barbadian houses.



Our notice said that a bus would pass the villages and the Bahá'is were invited to attend the event. Errol Sealy was asked to accompany the bus making sure that every village with Bahá'is was visited. At the appointed day, Errol set out on the bus and went around the island. He finally arrived at the beach site and he was the only one on the bus! None of the Bahá'is had decided to come, not even for an excursion. Oh my, had it happened to anyone other than Errol, I am not at all sure they would have survived it! That was a serious, embarrassing test but Errol only got stronger as his future appointment as a Counsellor proved.

And if that wasn't enough for that day, a few of the Bahá'í boys showed up drinking. Well, it was an Excursion wasn't it, not a Bahá'í meeting.

One of our fellow Bahá'is in Belleplaine, the village we had settled in was a gentleman named Reginald Barrow. He was an older man, very distinguished and well known in Barbados. For one thing he had been an Anglican Minister and was called by his religious title "Bishop" by all but the Bahá'is for as long as I knew him. His son was also the current Prime Minister of Barbados.

Reggie and Frank having a good chat.



He was a lovely man, kind, gentle, soft spoken, with something nice to say about everyone. He had become a Bahá'í in the United States. He was the preacher of a congregation in the Southern part of the country. When he heard of the Faith he joined immediately and brought all of his church members with him.

There is correspondence between him and the U.S. National where he indicates a desire to pioneer for the Faith. He did end up doing that and was in St. Vincent first, then eventually to Barbados.

As his former occupation as a preacher was no longer possible for him, he ended up teaching in a public school. He was also instrumental in helping Shirley Yarbrough get a position

teaching music in the school system as well. Just before we left Barbados, Frank was looking for a position in the same school where he and Shirley taught. If this job did not materialize we would have to leave the island, which we did not want to do. Frank and I were saying prayers one day when we knew that possibility was being considered. During the prayers, Frank stopped, looked up and said "I'm not getting the job". Sure enough, he didn't. But more on that comes later in this story.

Grandma Snyder went into Cardiac Failure in 1975 at the age of 90. Her doctor said she had about three months to live. I quietly had a carpenter start to make a casket from Green Heart, one of the hardest woods we had on the island and well fitted the description of what Bahá'ís should be buried in as stated in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Bahá'í Most Holy Book.

I also came to the realization that I had not even considered where we were going to bury her. Oh my. The only cemetery in Belleplaine belonged to and was behind the Parish Church. We did not exactly have any friendly associations with the Minister.

I then thought of our friend, Reggie. We called him and asked his advice as to what we could do. He immediately volunteered to talk to the Minister, and came back with the good news that she could be buried in their cemetery. I never did ask nor wanted to know what he had said, but I was sure happy with the results. We buried her the same day she died with the service in the Church. It was a lovely service and everyone was happy with it.

She was the first pioneer to die at her post in the Windward Islands. Not too shabby! Her tombstone has a nine pointed star, a quote from the prayer "Refresh and Gladden my Spirit" and identifies her as a Bahá'í Pioneer.

I still always ask the Bahá'ís to go to her grave site when they can and say some prayers for her. As I remember, her only hesitation in coming pioneering with us was that no one would ever visit her grave. I do imagine that where she is buried, many more visit her than if she had been buried in California.

I miss my Grandma, she was a lovely lady. All the time she lived with us, I can never remember her complaining about anything. That in itself to me is amazing. She also used to say the Table of Ahmad for me whenever I was on a teaching trip. So much of what I do or have done I am sure is the result of others who prayed for me. And I am very grateful!

Other recollections about Grandma include her "chatting" abilities. She loved to chat! Everywhere she went, as the saying goes, she never met a stranger. In the store, on the street, in an airplane and especially in local corner shops, she would "chat them up" as the saying goes here. We would be in an area where I had never lived before, nor had she, but the first time I visited any local shop, everyone knew my whole story...oh, it was a good thing she liked me!

She was in good health right up to the end. The only drawback in the last years was the broken hip where she ended up bedridden, but there wasn't any pain connected to that.

Another reason was that she would now have a proper Bahá'í funeral. For several years she had insisted that she was to be cremated when she died. It seems somewhere in her past a Methodist minister had told her to do this otherwise he said, the world would soon be filled up with nothing but cemeteries.

Nancy Cole-August, a pioneer to St. Lucia and a wonderful talented artist did an oil painting of me and Grandma. It hangs right where I can see it easily, and I always smile when I look at it.



Grandma and I had many discussions about her being cremated with neither of us changing our opinion. Some minister had told her that if everyone kept being buried, there soon would be no space left on Earth! When we moved to St. Thomas and whenever I went on trips, and visitors came she would talk to them about it as well. It seems one of the visitors suggested that she write the Universal House of Justice and ask them. WOW, OK...that would not have occurred to me.

But that is exactly what she did, and received a wonderful, loving overall explanation of what should be done and why. She immediately changed her position and was now OK with being buried. This letter was later published in the book "Lights of Guidance" compiled by Helen Hornby. It is letter # 669, Page 201.



Helen and her husband Charles Hornby had pioneered to Ecuador. I stayed with them when I was traveling as a companion to Meherangez Munsiff (in the photo) on her teaching trip to all the countries throughout South America in 1985. It was a great opportunity for me and a great trip; lots of fun, lot of laughter, met so many new wonderful people, saw Eloy Enello, and didn't even have to do the work, that was all Mrs. Munsiff's department.

Back to Grandma; when I think of this process that Grandma went through, I am awed. Here she is having become a Bahá'í on her 80th birthday, now serving as a pioneer in St. Thomas. Writes a letter to the Universal House of Justice asking about something she has steadfastly believed in for a long time. When the answer arrives, contrary to this belief, she immediately adjusts her thinking. Image learning the lesson of obedience when you are in your 80's!

I was so relieved; I had not been able to reconcile myself to having my beloved Bahá'í grandma cremated contrary to Bahá'í law. But had she written a will I would have not had any choice. God is good!

However there are others who were not so fortunate. When Reggie Barrow who had helped us so much with Grandma's burial passed away he was buried by his son as an Anglican, even though Reggie had written a will specially stating that he wanted to have a Bahá'í funeral and burial. Shirley Yarbrough did go to the son, who was still the Prime Minister asking that Reggie's wishes be carried out, but to no avail.

It was in either late 1975 or early 1976 when Frank gave one of the biggest surprises that he had ever done either before or since. I was at home eating my lunch and reading my book in

my bed, as I did usually. I heard his voice in the kitchen and was sorta surprised to hear him, though he did teach classes at the school that was directly behind us.

I looked up, he came charging into the bedroom and behind him was this lovely young woman. I blinked and he starts talking right away, saying she wants to hear more about the Faith. What, who is this and why would you bring someone into our bedroom anyhow, never mind to hear about the Faith?

It turned out that she was Yvette Clarke, one of the teachers at his school. They got chatting, and as one could expect, he began to tell her about the Bahá'í Faith. She was indeed interested and became a Bahá'í not too long after that. We did put her in touch with Shirley Yarbrough who also was very instrumental in teaching her the Faith.



Yvette soon began to serve the Faith in ever advancing ways. She was quickly appointed as an Assistant to the Auxillary Board Member; next she was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly and then was appointed as an Auxillary Board Member. All of this took place in less than a year. She was so capable and had such potential it was all laid upon her one right after another.

As I feared, there was too much pressure on her as a brand new Bahá'í. She also was engaged to a young man who was not a Bahá'í and not particularly open to it. She did try and went on teaching trips, etc. But it did become too much for her to handle and she was not seen around after that. I have always felt really bad about that and wished it had all been handled more wisely.

The National Spiritual Assembly began to look for Temple property in 1975 and by January 1976 10 acres of land had been found and purchased. It was located in the Parish of St. Lucy. The story connected to the purchase is a funny one. Phil Wood had the responsibility of looking for the property. It was realized that we had to think of somewhere not close to the Capital as this would be too expensive for our budget.

Phil knew this gentleman who owned land around the island and approached him. He was the one who did sell us the property. To begin with he gave us the locality and the price of the land. The Assembly liked both and agreed to the purchase.

When Phil told him the Assembly had agreed, the man paused, asked how many were on the Assembly. When Phil told him 9 people, the man, gasped, saying something like..."Good grief, man, how did 9 people ever agree?" Phil tried to explain the Bahá'í concept of consultation and unity, but felt the man never did grasp the concept.



L to R: Jackie Stratton, Emily Kramer, Pat, Eve Johnson after nailing up the "This is our Temple property" sign in St. Lucy Parish.

One really memorable institute I remember was one weekend session run by Hazel Lovelace from Alaska. It was based solely on the verse of Bahá'u'lláh's which starts with "Intone of my servants the verses of God..." We went over and over and over that same verse for the whole two days!

At the end of the second day I was so full spiritually-speaking that my head felt like it was going to burst. I went into my room to rest. About 5 minutes later Hazel came into the room and said to me "Would you like to say some prayers?" I couldn't believe my ears! I looked at her and said "Hazel if you open your mouth to start a prayer I will hit you!"

To this day that verse is still burned into my memory!

It was here in Barbados that I first met Shamsi Sedeghat.



She was a Persian Bahá'í who was currently pioneering in Trinidad. She was coming through the islands on a teaching trip and would arrive in Barbados shortly. I had been told by one of our Bahá'ís that she and I would clash and never get along. This is not a great way to look forward to meeting someone.

She arrived; we took one look at each other, recognized a kindred spirit and became immediate life-long friends. I loved

that lady. She was a teacher of the Faith of the caliber that I had never experienced before except for Ruth Pringle. She was fearless, and always dealt with those of the so-called upper class. Appointments were made for her long before she came with as many high ranking government persons and clergy as possible. She always carried a scrap book with her showing the other high ranking persons from other places she had visited. It was an impressive group, from Ministers of both government and religions, and included Presidents and Ambassadors of countries.

Media was also alerted and she was regularly on both radio and television once it arrived in the islands. Her interviews with the press always became an article in the local newspapers. In 1973 she also was able to obtain free Bahá'í radio programs which were still running in 1977.

I do hope someone gets her history down before she goes. Her record of service to the Faith is incredible. She told me her family had been asked by Shoghi Effendi to go to Cyprus. They were the first Bahá'is into the country since the Covenant-breakers who included Mirza Yahya had been sent there in the summer of 1868 by the edict of Sultan "Abdu'-`Aziz. This edit also condemned Bahá'u'lláh to lifelong imprisonment in `Akká, Israel.

This family was very strong. It would take a family of this caliber to withstand any negative effects left from covenant breakers. In later years she also served in Africa as the nurse to Hand of the Cause of God, Musa Banani.

When Frank was teaching at the school in Belleplaine one of his co-workers was a gentleman named Frank Fernandes. The two Franks got talking and as one would expect the Faith was brought up. The teacher was interested and asked to read something about the history of the Faith. My Frank came home and for a reason unclear to me at the time but was clearly guidance, took him the "Dawn Breakers". Now this is a book with several hundred pages, chilling events and some graphic photographs. It never, ever, would have been my first choice to give a new contact.



However it turned out fine, not only was Frank F still interested, he wanted us to meet and tell his cousin, Eve Fernandes as well. My Frank had already met her by a strange turn of events. He was hitchhiking, which was still safe and acceptable during that time frame. He was out on the road, sees a car coming, sticks out his thumb, then realizes it's a woman and not likely to stop. Later said she had never stopped to pick up men and she had her child in the car as well. But stop she did.

They got to chatting and she said her cousin Frank Fernandes worked at the same school as he did. I then met Eve and she and I hit it off and we became friends. Eventually I was giving her the same Bahá'í history outline that Maxine had used for me when she taught me. I figured it worked for me, why not her?

During the night session of our Bahá'í National Convention in 1974, I received a phone call from Eve saying she wanted to become a Bahá'í! Wow, "I will be right there" I said. I got to her home and her cousin Frank was there as well. I gave Eve her enrollment card which she signed right away. Frank says to me, "How about me, can't I join?" You bet you can, and he signed his card. I noticed two wine glasses on the table and felt I had to be sure they understood that alcohol was not allowed in the Faith. They both laughed and said, yes they knew, they just had one last drink to celebrate their becoming Bahá'ís.

The three of us then traveled to the Bahá'í Centre where Convention was being held. They walked into the Centre in the most reverent way one can imagine, it was like they were floating. I was behind them, holding up their enrollment cards so all would see and know what had just happened. It was a wonderful thrilling event. Those two became such strong Bahá'is. Eve became secretary of the National Assembly for years and Frank a strong active teacher of the Faith. To this day they still serve the Faith.

It was now getting time for us to leave the island. We could not get any more extensions as Grandma had died. No job had opened up, even though there was a big article in the local newspaper talking about the need for more Science and Math teachers needed in the school system.

We consulted with the National Assembly as we always did and asked if they had a preference as to which island we should try. They said that as Dominica had recently been added to this Bahá'í jurisdiction, he should try to get a position there.

Frank travelled there, and was hired right away in the Catholic Secondary school as one of their teachers had gone away for further education.

It was done...we packed, but I did not want to leave Grandma with no one to visit her grave site which was what she had feared. I appealed to the friends to:

Please do visit her once in a while.



We are now on our way to Dominica.