



Our Maiden Issue of HUSA—Here It Is!

Dear Fellow Habbaniyans:

Ben Yalda informed you in his recent circular letter that we were putting out a newsletter relating to the former Habbaniya and its local people. Well, here it is!

The newsletter will be a semi-annual for a start, with at least sixteen pages of text and pictures. But if God wills it, both the frequency of publication and the number of pages will be increased for future issues.

The newsletter is intended to serve the former Union School students and teachers and their family members in particular and local Habbaniya residents in general. It is hoped that it will be a line of communication, the presenting, recalling and sharing of information and memorabilia of the past and keeping abreast of the present. It is intended to contain text and pictures of special current events as well as of a vintage nature. These will be reprints from the past and fresh copy from the present. They may be snapshots, old documents, articles, stories, anecdotes, jokes, letters to the editor, brief obituaries, and so on. But they all must have some bearing on Habbaniya and its people.

For this maiden issue, we're fending for ourselves, but I'm afraid most of our material will be reprints from the past, though we have some pictures of interest too. But it is our hope that for future issues, you, our friends and readers, will contribute a good part of the material for the newsletter. So we urge you all, and especially those with a "sharp pen," to dig into your memories and scratch away!

Perhaps some of you have managed to "smuggle" your photo albums out of Iraq. Among your collection you might find a few captivating pictures that depict some aspect of Habbaniya and the life there in those CC and LC days.

May be, for instance, a picture of the CC gate through which at least a coupla thousand RAF employees cycled, strode or stumbled in an' out each day to gain their daily bread. Or an action shot of one of those soccer games that shot up our pulses to 120 and which just might recreate the roar and the frenzy of the moment in our ears and mind. Or perhaps an unseen snapshot of one of those spectacular Levy parades or Boy Scout and Girl Guide jamborees. Or even a pose of a smiling figure, affording us a background view of those mud brick homes or unpaved streets (as the one published on page 14) on which, in earlier years, our feet, or bicycle wheels, generated slush and sludge in winter rains and a cloud of dust in the summer months. And those of you with stories to tell, will also gain our appreciation. Tell us a funny anecdote about one of those earlier weddings that were held under a canopy between two C-Type or D-Type lines when Shimshon Shallou was noted for *sabakhta* collection. Or perhaps you have a picture of Shakry, in her colorful Tiari dress and bejeweled and multi-feather bedecked headdress, adorned with all sorts of bangles and spangles that



The first Ex-Habbaniya Union School committee. From left, standing: Eshaya Isaac, Alfred Daniel, Sargon Aboona, Odisho Warda, and Shlimon Youkhanna. Sitting: Almas Aboona, Ben Yalda, Leena Yalda and Ampolia Warda. (Spouses of Eshaya, Alfred and Shlimon are absent.) They organized and held a party in memory of the late *Raabi* Yacoub Bet Yacoub, the school headmaster, at *Mar* Gewargis Church of the East hall in Chicago in 1989. It was attended by six members of *Raabi* Yacoub's family from California and some 200 former Habbaniya school students, family members, and friends living in the Chicago area.

shimmered and flashed in the sunshine as she bobbed up and down and shook her shoulders and shimmied (and kicked a cloud of dust!), leading the line of dancers to the blaring and booming music of *zoorna w'dawoula*. But don't forget to write at the back of each photo or on a piece of paper the date, brief description of the event and the names of the people in the picture.

Before I wind up this column, I'd like to point out a few things about the compilation of this newsletter. First of all, my boss Ben Yalda and I have been in constant touch, by phone and e-mail, and he has given me a very warm helping hand despite his incredibly busy schedule in regard to the upcoming Reunion. Being an amateur in PC operation (I used a Mac for several years), I had to learn a lot of tricks "on the way" and my teacher was my nephew, Mark Lazar. Despite that, the darned machine sometimes drove me nuts. It simply refused to do what I asked her to do and stood her ground! So you may find a few things amiss. But I'm sure I'll be able to "break in" the monster for the next newsletter—by the will of God, not mine, of course!

So until next time, take care and, if you're going to the Reunion in London, have a blithesome time in Blighty! —MKP

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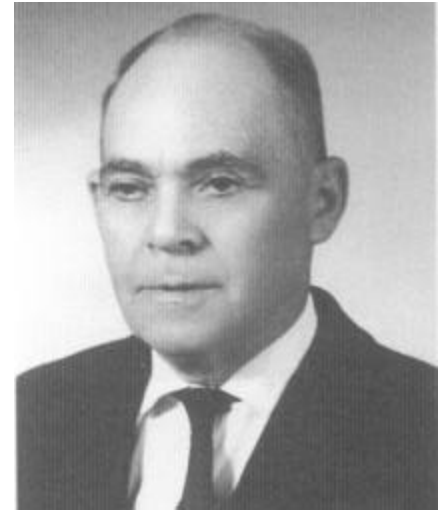
The Editor welcomes from readers contributions of articles, letters, photos, documents, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia relating to Hinaidi and Habbaniya and their people. These may be of a current or vintage nature and may be on any subject, other than politics—if it can be helped!
Deadlines: March 31, and September 30.

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Raabi Yacoub in his late forties

In Dedication to *Raabi* Yacoub Bet-Yacoub 1896-1988

Raabi Yacoub Bet-Yacoub was popularly known as "*Raabi* Yaqu." But his official name was J. Jacob. He was the headmaster (1924-37) of Assyrian and Armenian School in Kota Camp, Royal Air Force Station of Hinaidi, near Baghdad, and of RAF Union School when the air base moved to Habbaniya 55 miles west of Baghdad in 1937 and until the school was turned over to the Iraqi Government in 1944.

He was a prominent and celebrated Assyrian educator, a powerful orator, a musician, a poet and writer, a playwright, actor, director, and producer. And in later years, he along with his two sons, were involved in sewing-machine and shoe businesses in Baghdad.

Raabi Yaqu translated several of Shakespeare's plays into Assyrian. A few, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venice*, were staged in Hinaidi. In Habbaniya he also staged a few plays, among them *Arshin Malalan*. His plays were performed by his students, but he himself wrote or translated the plays, directed and produced them, designed the costumes and ordered the stage props, and even had roles in a couple of them. He was well versed in Assyrian, English, and Armenian languages, and also knew a little Arabic and Turkish.

Raabi Yaqu also wrote many speeches, poems, essays and plays of his own, but never had the opportunity to publish them. He left these with one of his two step-daughters in Baghdad when he emigrated to US in 1971. Sadly enough these were eventually lost.

Through his son, the late *Raabi* Emmanuel and with assistance from RAF former Scouters, *Raabi* Yaqu established in 1939 in Habbaniya the first Assyrian Boy Scout and Girl Guide movement, which flourished independently for a decade after his school was taken over by the Iraqi Government.

Raabi Yaqu was born in the village of Gulpatalikhan in Urmia, Persia, in 1896, three months after his father died. He was taken, along with his mother, into his maternal grandfather Zaia's home and raised lovingly in an Assyrian atmosphere. After finishing his early education, he studied and graduated in 1917 from the American Mission College, known as *Madrashata d'Qalla*, in Urmia. During 1919 and 1920, he taught school in the refugee camps and served for a short period in the artillery division of Agha Petros's army in Hamadan, Persia.

Raabi Yaqu had only one sibling, an older sister, Shushan. To his grief, he lost contact with her in the confusion of the Assyrian mass flight from Urmia in 1918. He was overjoyed when he found her and visited her 63 years later in Iran while on his way to this country. Accompanied by his family members, he visited her and her family again in Los Angeles several years later, before she died, after she too had immigrated to this country.

Raabi Yaqu lost his mother Marganita in Baquba refugee camps in January 1919. The next year he met and married Newart (nicknamed Mervart) Khachador, a widow with two daughters as well as a son she lost during the Urmia flight. *Raabi* Yacoub and Mervart were blessed with three children of their own—the late *Raabi* Emmanuel Jacob and William Jacob, and their younger sister, Samira Jacob Hermis. They had three others that they unfortunately lost in infancy. And in 1965 *Raabi* Yaqu lost his wife Mervart in Baghdad, and five years later he came to California to rejoin his children and their families.

The premature death of his eldest son, *Raabi* Emmanuel, in 1986 greatly affected him. His health gradually deteriorated and he finally passed away on Christmas Day, 1988, exactly 92 years to the day he was born, being spared the agony of the death of his second son, William, five years later.

Although a strict disciplinarian and a very formal person, *Raabi* Yaqu was a loving and caring father, a highly respected member of the community and a teacher who took joy in the achievements of his students. He inspired his students to a virtuous life and to be zealous Christians and patriots.

Raabi Yaqu was fond of music. He played the violin and loved reading and writing.. He was always clean, neat and well-groomed and loved dancing and social life in general, in which he was usually the organizer. But he was a man of faith too, and read the Bible almost daily. He has left an indelible impression on the minds of both his descendants and his many surviving students.

This maiden issue of HUSA is dedicated to his memory. May his soul rest in peace —MKP

What's on your mind?**Express Yourself!** (By e-mail or letter)

Dear Mike,

When you asked me to write about Habbaniya days I was delighted. I immediately thought of the beautiful song by Evin Aghasi which begins "My sweet-heart Habbaniya, our separation has left me racked with pains." But I knew I had to narrow it down. So I wrote "Flashbacks from Habbaniya-Ramadi Days" and Images of Teachers from Habbaniya Days," which I am now sending you. I enjoyed writing them very much.

I asked my wife Babs if she had any opinion about the mighty Assyrians that I was to quote. She looked at me and said "I like Assyrians because I am married to one. Most of the Assyrians I know are very handsome, especially the men. They are also fun loving."

Then she went on: "Unfortunately, there are Assyrians who spent too much time sitting down either in front of their computer or at the table talking about old times. They need physical activity more than so much reminiscing." Finally she added, "But, then, most of the Assyrians that I know have had very happy childhood, so why not talk about it?" [You made your point Sister-in-law! But I think the reminiscing and story-telling is, basically, what has kept our Assyrian language and culture alive after 25 centuries of oppression and persecution by various races in the Middle East. MKP]

I also ran into Sister Janice Holkup of Seattle yesterday who was visiting my good neighbors, her parents John and Lillian. She is a high school art teacher. We talked about the Assyrians and she surprised me by how much she knows about us via her parents [through you and Babs I assume?] and your newsletter, *Bil Khizmaany Wdosty*. I did jot down some of her comments and will send them in soon. [See letter from Sister Lillian below]

In the meantime, don't work too hard Mike. With your load, I know you are taking on quite a challenge to produce this new newsletter for Habbaniya Union School Association. But I have the feeling that many readers would love to make connections through the newsletter.

Take care...

Your brother Wiska,
from good old Miles City, Montana

>>Thank you good brother for your letter and the memorable articles and pictures. I'm very sure that most readers, and particularly your old friends, will connect and find your articles captivating. I appreciate your ever ready assistance and support.—MKP

Dear Menashi:

Thank you for your letter dated June 10 [requesting relevant contributions of literary material and pictures for HUSA newsletter]. I think this is a grand idea. Truly you are exceedingly energetic. May the Almighty keep you that way for a very, very long time.

As for me, I believe the contents inside my skull have gotten rusty and are badly in need of cleaning and oiling! So I don't think I have anything to contribute for HUSA at present. However, when the first issue of the newsletter comes out, I shall see if I can contribute anything in a small way.

In the meantime, I wish you and HUSA every success. Regards and best wishes.

Aprim K. Abraham
North Hills, Calif.

>>Aprim Kambar Abraham, a very old friend, was known in our Hinaidi boyhood days as Aprim "Goora" (Big Aprim) and in our Habbaniya adulthood days as Aprim "Dosta" (Pal Aprim). He was a frequent contributor to *The Iraq Times* letters column in the 1950s. Once he quoted George Bernard Shaw and alleged that Englishmen had no common sense because as babies they were raised on cow's milk. About the same time, I published an article against the Assyrian custom of paying *nigda* (monetary dowry) for a bride because it was a hindrance to marriageable young men. Both pieces achieved some "notoriety" because they kicked up a storm of controversy in the Letters column. Some readers even made fun of Aprim. But Aprim had the last laugh when he closed the controversy with a letter stating that his Englishman and the cow's milk comments were merely a joke. He really had the readers gaping! —MKP

Mr. Mikhael Pius

I have never met you in person before but my family has. My parents John and

Lillian Holkup have been Basil's and Babs' neighbors for over 34 years.

You may remember my family at your big Assyrian Celebration in Miles City, Montana, in June 2000. Later on I was filled in about the exciting events such as the Assyrian food, the music, the Assyrian folk dancing and all the fun. I was sorry to have missed it because I live in Seattle. Actually I did read your colorful newsletter [*Bil Khizmaany Wdosty*] afterwards.

You may be surprised to know that the same newsletter was read by a high school class who were studying World Cultures. It is an excellent source of information for us the Americans. I am an art teacher but I enjoy knowing about other cultures.

Last week I was visiting Miles City and had quite a nice visit with your brother Basil. He is quite an active and resourceful person in Miles City community. My parents have taken his Mideast Culture class and have enjoyed all the cultural activities that go with it. We think Basil is a very entertaining and outgoing person.

I am sure that your current newsletter will be just as appealing as the one I read two years ago.

Keep up with your creative work and spirited literary contributions. God bless you.

Sister Janice Holkup
Seattle, Wash.

>>Being egoistic like most human creatures, I was very pleased and elated to read your appreciative comments. Thanks a lot.

Active and resourceful—and a very nice and outgoing guy—that's Basil for sure. As a brother, I may be prejudiced in his favor, but he really *is* the best there is—bolstered by a faithful (in both meanings of the word), kind and compassionate wife! No wonder the whole little old Miles City likes him—I mean them.

I'm not sure if Basil has told you that I'm self-publishing next month a little book (136 pages including 43 relevant self and family pictures of a vintage nature) called *An Assyrian's Youth Journal*. I believe it's the first book of its kind by an Assyrian and I think you'll like it. This is my second book published. —MKP

(Another letter on next page)

Express Yourself (Cont'd)

Dear Mike:

It was an unexpected pleasure to hear about the eminent publication of a quarterly, or even bi-yearly, magazine [news-letter] for ex-students and teachers of the Union School, yea for most residents of the former British Royal Air Force base at Habbaniya.

I am certain that the title H.U.S.A. (Habbaniya Union School Association) is very appropriate. But I have noticed a great percentage of those who attend the Union School reunion parties, are either too young or too old to have attended the school. I wonder if it will not be more appropriate to call it H.U.S.R.A. Habba-niya Union School and Residents' Association.

I would not be surprised if every ex-student, yea every resident would ap-

prove, cherish and contribute towards the newsletter. Certainly the task of publishing it would carry a great responsibility. I hope there will be many students and residents who will contribute stories, both general and personal, in order to keep it going. Because of the dispersal of Habbaniya residents throughout the world, the magazine will, I assume, have a universal distribution. This, I am sure, will implicate most ex-Habbaniya residents.

I believe it is a marvelous idea. It will keep us more informed about each other. Certainly, our Reunion gatherings gladden our hearts as we come together and sometimes meet a few old friends we haven't seen for decades. And our respect and love for each other overshadows our differences, whether tribal or denominational. The newsletter would further encourage

and unite us with closer bonds of friendship as we exchange news and views.

Che'bu (bravo) to the minds that de-vised such a thought. It rejoices my heart to hear of such undertakings being carried out by the former students of our beloved Alma Mater Union School. Please enlist me among the first subscribers.

[*Raabi*] Albert A. Babilla
(Ex-Student and Teacher)

>>>Your suggestion to change from HUSA to HUSRA is reasonable, but it will have to be considered by the Committee. Actually, when the Reunion first began ten years ago, it was intended for the former students and teachers of Union School along with their family members and friends, including former Habbaniya residents. ---MKP

Chit-chatin'...about friends

I recently asked a few Habbaniya "writing" friends to contribute material for this newsletter. One was Regina Jones. She e-mailed me back: "Michael, thank you for having faith in my writing ...but I'm sure you will compensate for all of us."

When I recently sent Brother Wiska to read a couple of Regina's long e-mail messages to me, he wrote me that he was delighted to read the letters, and he had some nice comments to make, such as: "She is not only a bona fide soul of Habbaniya era but also she writes nicely and honestly—down to earth, simple and from the heart."

However, since you put it that way, Regina, I guess I might as well write a little bit for and about you:

Regina and I have been pen pals for almost 10 years. It started with a letter she wrote jointly to Editor Julius Shabbas and me in late 1992 after she had read in *Nineveh* Magazine my articles on Scouting movement and other subjects on Habbaniya. We've exchanged an average of two or three letters a year. My late wife Blandina also enjoyed reading her letters. But during recent months we've discovered the expediency of e-mail communication.

Regina is the second daughter of the late *Rab-Tremma* Gewargis Shabo of the former Royal Air Force (Iraq) Levies. I remember Regina when she and her life-long friend Khawa (Yacoub Aboona) Pearce were two of the younger fetching teenagers at school. They being daughters of high-ranking Levy officers some of us coy guys ogled them only from a distance—sometimes through toy binoculars! Since then, I met Khawa again in 1992 Reunion in Chicago (she "baptized" me "Meesha") and I met her a second time with her sister Julia and their husbands in a picnic here in Modesto at the end of last May. I've seen Regina's picture in recent times, but 1941, when I left school, and Habbaniya for four years, was the last time I saw her in person.

When we began corresponding fifty years later, Regina was living with her husband Leslie Jones, an Englishman, in Tasmania, the southern tip of Australia. She wrote me they had a nice house with a big garden containing various kinds of fruit trees. She apparently had a green thumb and took a lot of pleasure in cultivating the place. She raised flowers and she and Leslie even enjoyed fresh grown "vegies" from a patch she tended. She seemed happy in her life. Can you imagine, she even kept a horse on the place. But, then, being daughter of a *Rab-Tremma* who sometimes inspected his troops on horseback, Major Gewargis must've taught his little girl horseback riding, who knows!...Just kiddin'.



Oct.2000: Regina Jones, the former golden-haired Regina Gewargis (second from left) flanked by her younger sister "Maddy" (left) and former pretty girl Juliet David with husband Ben Gewargis Shabo, during their Habbaniya school reunion visit in Sydney Australia.

Chit-chatting...about friends (Cont'd)

Anyway, Regina now lives in Canada. Let me quote you from a couple of her recent letters about her current "agricultural" life and other things:

"Maddy [her younger sister Madeleine] and I have been very busy lately. The weather suddenly warmed up—at last—and we quickly went to the patch we rent from the City Council and prepared it for planting our vegies. The Council digs the ground for us, and they have water laid on too. Each patch is 50ft x 50ft, enough to grow a lot of vegetables for salads. I quickly put in seeds and we

bought tomato and cucumber plants and put them in. Everyday we go and put a few more in, and water them, as it is very dry and warm now. The seeds have germinated now and I feel I am back in Tasmania working with the soil.

"I love gardening and growing our own vegetables. In Tasmania I never bought vegies and fruit. I had everything; several varieties of apples, pears, plums, apricots and peaches and lots of soft fruit. The fact that I can grow a few vegies here gives me fulfillment. It is like your writing; the day you give it up, you will go."

Regina and "Maddy" are also active in tennis, golf, bowling. "We go to Senior centers to participate in activities," she writes. "We both like playing bridge and take lessons. As this game needs cultivating we use our memory brain. We also do line dancing. It's good for us."

Regina's good life in Tasmania came to an end when she lost her husband in October 1996. A couple of years ago she sold her house and immigrated to Toronto, Canada, to be closer to her siblings. She now lives in an apartment with Madeleine. Regina and Madeleine have now turned into gusty tourists. They were in Sydney for the 2000 school reunion, and they went on a trip to Los Angeles last year, to see their old friend, former Arpen Onick Sanasarian and family in Glendale. And this August, they along with their eldest sister Mary and her daughter Elizabeth are going on a touring holiday in Canada. They will fly from Toronto to Seattle, Washington, and then rent a car and drive to the Rockies, Vancouver, and finally Calgary. Regina's sister Mary has expressed a wish to visit my aunt, former Lujiya Kakko Poloss, and family while in Calgary. Aunt Lujiya is the widow of the late Fraidon Orahim, the long-time Habbaniya goalkeeper many oldsters will remember well. Aunt Lujiya and Mary graduated together from Habbaniya's Union School in 1942. It will be quite a treat for my aunt—and for the Shabo girls I'm sure—to meet again after several decades!

Mary lives with her family in Chicago, but I've forgotten where her two brothers Ben and Yosip are, whether in this country or in Canada. Mary, a beautiful girl, married Khouna Kaako Mirza, a handsome quiet guy who was, I believe, power house engineer in Habbaniya and in-charge of the power house in Baghdad. Sadly enough, Khouna also passed away in 1996, a couple of months after Regina's husband Leslie.

I know Regina's brother Ben is married to my old friend Eshay Orahim Baba's pretty younger sister-in-law, former Juliet David. But I hardly know anything about Yosip. After reading copies of Regina's recent e-mails sent to me, however, brother Wiska had something to write me about Regina's brother Yosip:

"Yosip was in my class during Principal [Istad] Antwan's reign. [In 1946 and onward.] Yosip was a popular and smart guy in school, just like his sisters. He was also a troop leader and had a very likable character and fine leadership qualities.

"Actually there was an undeclared rivalry between Yosip and myself in class. For one thing, *Mudeer* Antwan was very skeptical about me and brother Rafael because we had come to his school as transfer students from a Catholic school in Baghdad to begin our fifth grade. Remember? So he kept a close eye on us just in case we did not perform up to his expectations. For another thing, God had given me a positive competitive spirit—a gift both in school and in sports. I had to compete against the best, and it paid off. That certainly surprised *Mudeer* Antwan, and it might have even changed his mind about the Catholic schools for the better. I will never forget the day he finally commended me for my school work in front of the student body, shook my hand warmly and handed me the special scholastic achievement gift-pack from the Ministry of Education, following our sixth grade government-administered exams!

"I am not sure how or what line of business Yosip followed after school. But I imagine he has done quite well wherever he is. Please ask Regina or Madeleine to convey my best wishes to Yosip. I am not sure if he will remember me, but I do remember him. He had his own band of friends, among them Cholack Oonick, David Israel, Rehana Baijo, Gaggi *Rab Emma*..?etc. HAPPY DAYS OF YOUTH ARE A JOY FOREVER!"

Well, fellow Habbaniyans, this is all for now. Hope to chit-chat about other old Hab friends in the next issue. ----MKP

Copies of Habbaniya Union School Reunion AD BOOK will be available at the 4th Reunion party taking place in Heathrow Park Hotel in London August 3. It's a beautiful little memento of the Reunion, concerning our former school and Habbaniya and its people in general. And it's only \$2.00, to cover printing expenses. Some of its contents are:

Short speeches and letters from school and Reunion members + Ads from our Assyrian businessmen + Program of the Dance and Dinner party + Detailed program of both tours (European and Lourdes) + A Sketch of Habbaniya Union School Reunions by Mikhael K. Pius + Biography of Raabi Yacoub Bet-Yacoub by Julius Shabbas + A brief history of Assyria + Songs and poems in Assyrian language + A record of world population + Census of Assyrians worldwide + Directory of the guests' names, addresses and phone numbers

In Australia: ANZAC DAY 2002 Remembered

“Our Assyrian Allies March for First Time”

For the first time ever, a contingent of Assyrian ex-servicemen, and women, took part in the traditional Anzac Day march. In total, 43 [46] members of Fairfield’s Assyrian community marched, including 18 ex-servicemen, 16 sons, 10 daughters, and two grandchildren of ex-servicemen.



“They all wore medals received for service during both world wars,” said Dinkha Warda, Fairfield’s Australian Day Citizen of the Year, who also marched in the Assyrian contingent.

“The Assyrians are comrades in arms and served with Australian troops in the 1915 to 1918 war,” Mr. Warda said. “While Allies were fighting in Gallipoli, their Assyrian allies were fighting the same foe on the Eastern Front.

“Assyrians in the Royal Air Force in World War II were behind breaking the Nazi golden triangle in the Middle East in 1941. This was to prevent the Nazi from controlling oil fields in Middle East,” Mr. Warda said. [Reprinted from the Australian newspaper *Champion*, dated May 3, 2002.]

Editor’s Note: Mr. Dinkha Warda, who is the Australian representative for HUSA, writes us further on the subject: The

Anzac Day 2002 march was held on George Street in Sydney, on Thursday, April 25. The group of old Assyrian veterans who participated in the event marched proudly, even if feebly, wearing the medals they had earned during World Wars I and II for their bravery and loyal service to the British, while the marching off-spring, representing the deceased Levy servicemen, were visibly proud of bearing their valiant fa-ther’s or grandfather’s medals and marching on their behalf on such a great occasion.

It was a truly thrilling and memorable occasion not only for the surviving veteran Assyrian heroes and the participating representatives but also to every Assyrian as he or she saw or watched his or her countrymen and countrywomen taking part in the historic pageant, a pageant that included the legend that was once the Assyrian Levies of Iraq.

From our Archives—Sports

Habbaniya Club Holds First Canal Swim Contest

By Youshia K. Paul

At Habbaniyah, last Sunday, the R.A.F. Employees Club held the first Canal Swimming Competition in which 13 young swimmers took part. The two-mile course ran from the upper Regulator to the Habbanyah Bridge.

The competition was won free-style by Yowil Bahram [Marbo], a sturdy and muscular athlete. He finished in 42 minutes, and was nearly 100 yards in front of the runner-up, Akhsheerish Mammo [Jango]. The rest of the swimmers lagged so far behind that they either gave up or continued to struggle

on with no one paying any attention to them.

Yowil set the pace at the outset, and the many fans who accompanied him on both banks of the Canal boosted him with wild cheers, songs, and encouragement. He set a hard and steady speed until halfway downstream when, at the last turn, the sight of the bridge packed with hundreds of men, women, boys and girls, gave him added spurt and his arms rose and fell like pistons.

Amid tumultuous cheers and clapping from the happy spectators, he proved himself one of Habbaniya’s champion swimmers.

Both Yowil Bahram and Akhsheerash Mammo received trophies from Miss Jane David, a member enthusiast, on behalf of [RAF Assyrian] Employees’ Club.[Reprinted from *The Iraq Times* of Saturday, Sept. 22, 1951]

Assyrian Women Helped Britain's War Effort

by Mikhael K. Pius

Tens of thousands of Assyrian Levies and civilians served the British in Iraq during the Royal Air Force four-decade era in Iraq. The era officially ended on 2nd May 1955 when the Royal Air Force Stations of Habbaniya and Shaibah were handed over to the Iraqi Government. Among those who served were a small number of Assyrian women workers at Habbaniya. Of these, a handful worked in clerical positions, some toiled as domestic servants for British officers' families and a small group was employed in a semi-skilled capacity. This latter segment was the women fabric workers.

The group consisted of 32 ladies, all of them Assyrian except for a few Armenians. Several were housewives, and a few of them were widows of men killed in the May 1941 Battle of Habbaniya. But most of them were maidens. They worked at the Aircraft Depot Fabric Shop. Their main duty was patching up and repairing military tents used by the British and Indian troops stationed in Iraq during World War II. But they also operated heavy duty electric sewing machines to sew up flags, upholstery, curtains and pillow-, mattress-, and cushion-cases and a few other similar items used by the R.A.F. personnel and their families and by the Army units.

The group was hired in the spring of 1942 and worked until after the war was over. Most of them were dismissed at the end of 1946, but a few were retained until the Iraqi Government took over Habbaniya in 1955.

The women were paid starting salaries of four Iraqi Dinars (equivalent to about \$16) per month, with paltry annual increments. Two of them, Beatrice Avraham Elyas and Lujjiya Kakko Poloss, as lead workers who spoke better English, had reached higher salaries of 1D.12 at the time of their dismissal in 1946. But the group as a whole was provided with free commutation, in an open lorry, between the Civil Cantonment where they lived and the Fabric Shop, a round trip of three miles.

Working alongside the women were also ten Assyrian fabric and paint craftsmen, the main workforce of the shop. They and the ladies all worked under the local supervision of Baaba Mirza, their senior charge hand. But the women were overseen by a woman assistant, a Takouhee Rubin Youkhanna, and the shop was under the control of an RAF non-commissioned officer. The Assyrian craftsmen's job was to measure and cut airplane cloth from a silk fabric, "dress" the airplanes with the fabric, cover it

up with red dope and then coat it with a silvery paint for both appearance and camouflage.

The women machine-stitched the silk fabric covering and sometimes also helped the men in the fitting, fastening and painting jobs. And one of the men, Mishael Khnania, specialized in the repair and folding up of parachutes. The airplanes were actually shipped in big wooden boxes from Britain in manufactured sections ready to be assembled at Habbaniya. First, the Assyrian artisans would fit the unmounted wings with the silk fabric casings, fasten them by airborne stitches, brush paint them three times with red dope and then paint them over in silver. Likewise, the fuselage and the tail of the airplane would also be sheathed by the silk fabric and painted over with the red dope and the silver paint. Then the completed wings would be installed onto the airplane at the hangar.

And finally, after the engine had been tested at the Aero-Engine Repair Shop, where, incidentally, about 15 other skilled and semi-skilled Assyrians worked with R.A.F. technicians, the block would be mounted on to the airplanes, ready for flying after the markings were also painted on.

The women workers were hired for the Fabric Shop as a supplementary

work force to help the British war effort after the developments in the Middle East and North Africa changed the pace of World War II, necessitating the concentration of British troops in Iraq and generating heavier air traffic at the R.A.F. bases of Habbaniya and Shaibah. And this came about, to some extent,

as a result of the 1941 Nazi-inspired rebellion in Iraq and the Battle of Habbaniya that followed on its heels.

In early April 1941 the pro-British Iraqi Monarchy and its government were toppled from power in a coup-d'etat by the radical, pro-German Premier Rashid Ali Al-Gailani and his Golden Square officers. And at the end of the month, in a dispute with the British Authorities on the landing and movement treaty rights of their troops in Iraq, he dispatched a massive mechanized force to the plateau overlooking Habbaniya, laid siege to the air base and on May 2 started shelling the Station from one mile away after his troops were bombed by RAF airplanes. But after a losing battle against Assyrian Levy and British Army sorties from the outnumbered defenders of the garrison, and as a last desperate stand, Al-Gailani called in German airplanes into Iraq to help. They bombed the Station at four different targets on May



Assyrian Women Fabric Workers of Habbaniya, 1943

1st row, kneeling (1 to r): Wartanoush Krekorian, Sophia Yosip, Shamiram Elyas, Nina Baaba Mirza, Beatrice Avraham Elyas, Almas Cheechu Sheenu, Souriya Shumoun, Melina Sultan Enviya; 2^d row, standing (1 to r): Simeenar Babayan, Yevnik Neeshanian, Najeeba Skharia Zaako, Mariam Yedgar, Lujjiya Kakko Polous, Faheema Dawood Iskhaq, Beatrice Orahim, Nally Babajan, Malcheh Jindu, Parmaneh Jin du, Khoshibu Israel, Zakiya Petros Baaba, Battu Mammu; 2^d row, sitting (1 to r): Christina (last name unknown), Layia Avraham, Nina Yacu, Vardia (last name unknown), name unknown; back row, standing (1 to r): Takouhee Rubin Youkhanna, Khammeah Gamliel, Roomeh Eshay, Judat Ishmaiel, Naano Daryawosh, Christina Aram.

Assyrian Women Fabric Workers (Cont'd)

16, doing considerable material damage and killing a number of RAF personnel and Assyrian workers. But the siege was soon broken, the Al-Gailani forces defeated and the Monarchy restored to power.

Needless to say, the Assyrian Levies, who also lost some men in their daring onslaughts and mopping-up operations, played a gallant and vital role in this British military operation in saving the air base and preserving the Middle East and its oil resources from Nazi domination.

The Battle of Habbaniya and the Axis air incursions into Iraq also jolted the Allies to the strategic importance of Iraq and its British-controlled oilfields as well as to other oil-rich regions in the Middle East. So in a short time, British forces swarmed all over Iraq and the small flock of wobbly RAF airplanes at Habbaniya and Shaibah gave way to swarms of more efficient and powerful aircraft fit to handle bombing missions, troop move-

ment and possible enemy air incursions like that of the German airplanes that rattled Habbaniya to the teeth!

And this increase in British troop concentration and air traffic was probably what made the employment of the group of Assyrian women fabric workers necessary to patch up, sew and repair the British Forces' relevant needs and to help keep the fleets of RAF war machines "dressed" and disguised during the war!

Note: The author is indebted to Fraidoun Orahim Is'hak and his wife Lujjiya (nee Kakko Poloss) of Calgary, Canada, for their assistance in supplying and verifying useful information and identifying most of the persons in the picture. Thanks are also due to Najiba (nee Skharia Zaako) Yonan of Turlock, CA, and another former Fabric Shop worker who wishes to remain anonymous. [Article reprinted from *Nineveh Magazine* #1-2/1990]



From a childhood visitor of Habbaniya, our good friend "Solly" from the Lebanon of Tennessee, comes a story that will make you smile and ponder at the same time:

Drama that produced coffin-supply tradition

From: Solomon (Sawa) Solomon

In 1946 a group of dedicated Assyrians of Habbaniya decided to produce a play of the life of Joseph the Dreamer, the son of the Prophet Jacob. But they were not quite sure of the story line and how the script should go. So they went to the learned ones at their church, *Mar Gewargis Church of the East*, to acquaint themselves better with the story of Joseph's life. There they met one of the deacons, *Shamasha Warda Odisho*, who gladly offered to help them with their project. But *Shamasha Warda* suggested to the group that they pledge the profit from the play to purchase lumber to make coffins for the dead of the Church community. The Group thought about it for a moment and agreed that it was a noble idea, and two members of the group, *Mikhail Yacoub* and *Mishael Shamasha Sheem*, undertook to write the script.

When the script was ready, the roll of the Pharaoh was given to *Shamasha Warda* himself and that of *Jacob* to *Khezakiah Adam*. *William David*, a young but more school-experienced "actor," assumed the more demanding roll of the main character, that of *Joseph*. Other rolls were assigned to other members of the group, among them *Kuriakos*, *Kurish Malik*, *Sargis*, *Odis ho*, *Patrus*, *Daniel Lazar*, *Maqsud Goriel*, and *Aprim Hawil*.

The various rolls were memorized and learned and after a few rehearsals, the play was finally staged on August 17, 1946, at the Indian Club, in the Civil Cantonment. A fairly large crowd paid a fee to see the play which, after expenses, netted a sum of thirty dinars. [about \$100] Not a whole lot of money, but a fistful at the time when very few RAF-employed Assyrian in Habbaniya made that much in a month. Encouraged by its modest success,

the play was performed in the *Levy (Family) Lines* a week later. Unfortunately the poor attendance did not produce any financial gain this time.

Anyhow, the profit of 30 dinars was handed to *Khoury Ablakhad*, the parish priest of *Mar Gewargis*. He was told it was for the purchase of lumber to make coffins for the dead of the parish.

Khoury Ablakhad, however, had two years earlier petitioned the RAF for a donation of lumber supply from their sources for making benches for his church, but had not received a response. So one day the *Khoury* dared to ask for an appointment with the Station Commander and, accompanied by an aide, went and saw him. The high-ranking RAF officer, a Group Captain, received the *Khoury* with due respect to his clerical rank. And after hearing his request, he assured the priest that his need would be met. And sure enough, soon after, an RAF truck dumped loads of wood in front of the Church.

Rev. *Ablakhad* first asked several voluntary Assyrian carpenters from his parish to use some of the lumber to build benches for the church. His will was done. And the thirty-dinar profit from the drama and the remaining RAF lumber were thereafter used in producing coffins for the deceased of the parish, as and when the need arose.

So what did "Joseph the Dreamer" and Habbaniya Assyrians have in common? Coffins for the dead! But together they also initiated a custom that became a tradition for many years in the Assyrian Church of the East in Iraq!

HISTORY OF RAF HABBANIYA

**Baghdad 55 miles,
London 3287 miles**



A Habbaniya landmark, the signpost on the cross-roads to Falluja and Baghdad on the east and to Ramadi and on to Syria, Lebanon and Palestine on the west, with London 3287 miles away “as the crow flies.”

When the Turks were defeated at the end of the Mesopotamian Campaign of WWI, the British were given the mandate to rule the *villayets* of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. It was a very hot land, inhospitably unhealthy and with very few facilities. It was a land populated by many different races and with many tribal factions and sheikhdoms.

The size of the country and poor communications required a large British Army and the climate and disease took their toll. The rebellions of 1920 showed there had to be a better way and Lord Trenchard, father of the Royal Air Force, proposed that the RAF could control the country at a fraction of the price of the Army. His suggestion was eventually accepted and in 1922 Air Vice Marshal Salmond took over with eight squadrons of aircraft, RAF Armored Cars and the Iraq Levies. They were based at Hinaidi cantonment on the outskirts of Baghdad and with other airfields, principally at Mosul and the infamously inhospitable Shaiba.

In 1931 Iraq became independent, although heavily influenced and controlled by the British. It was no longer acceptable to have an RAF station in Baghdad and the treaty allowed for a major base west of the Euphrates. Thus Habbaniya was born. The site was chosen because there was water from the Euphrates, a flat area for the airfield and the lake for flying boats and recreation. It was also considered an ideal defensive position (true—it is in the official files) but how wrong that proved to be in May 1941.

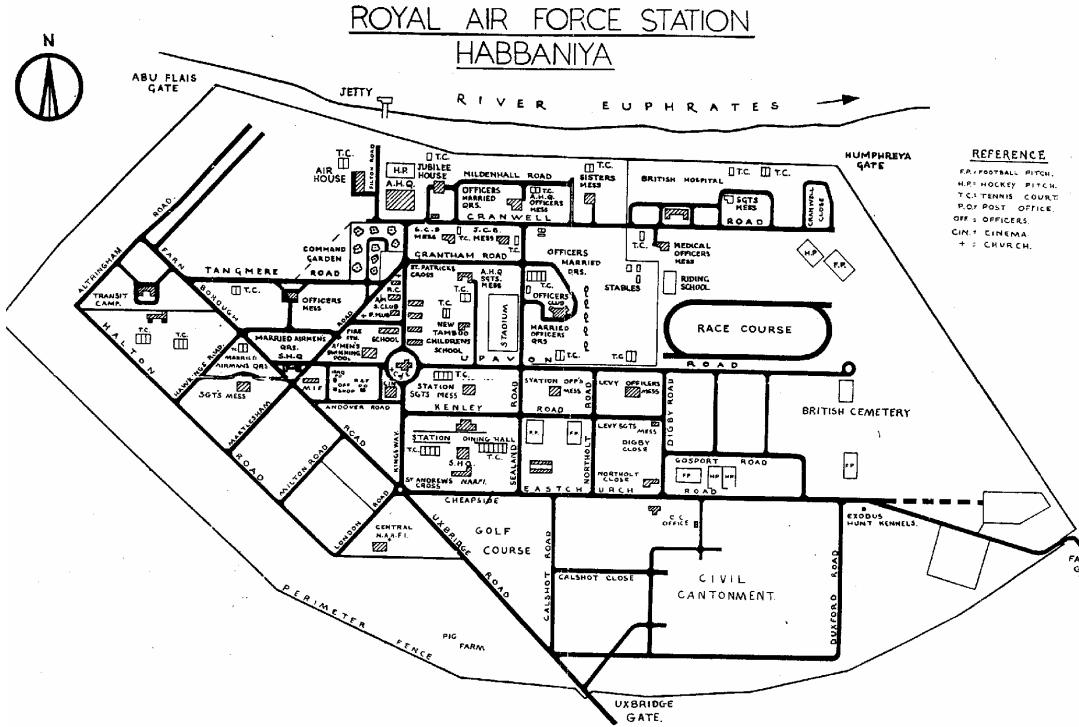
Construction began in 1934 and the main contractors were Messrs Humphries of Knightsbridge and because of this the workers' village became known as Humphreya. It was still known by that name in 1959 and was administered by the Civil Cantonment.

The air base was originally known as RAF Dhibban* after the nearby village but as this translated into something to do with flies the name was changed in

May 1938 to the more appropriate RAF Habbaniya. This is supposed to be for the Arabic for *of the oleander*. Nothing could be more true because Habbaniya truly became a camp of beauty with its shaded avenues of Eucalyptus trees, hibiscus and oleander shrubs, rose beds, ornamental gardens and green lawns.

The first operational use of the airfield was in October 1938 when 30 squadrons moved in and then all true various units at Hinaidi transferred to Habbaniya with the station fully open from March 1937.

Control of Habbaniya passed on to the Iraqi forces in May 1955 but remained very much in use by the RAF. Sadly the Iraqi revolution in June [July] 1958 made the RAF presence untenable and the RAF Ensign was finally lowered on 31st May 1959. [Courtesy RAF Habbaniya Association website, 2002]



Habbaniya in the heyday of 1954 and much the same from '36 to '55

* The pronunciation Dhib'ban (flies) is incorrect. I believe the correct pronunciation in Arabic is Dhi'ban, and the RAF Station was originally named after the nearby Arab village, *Sin Al-dhi'ban*, which translates into “tooth of the two wolves.” And Habba'niya in Arabic means raw seed. —MKP

A Sketch of Habbaniya and Union School

By Mikhael K. Pius

During its Royal Air Force era (1936-55), Habbaniya was a British air base in Iraq. It was a four-square-mile fenced-off area lying on a low flatland. By its northern fence flowed the Euphrates River and a mile away from its southern iron perimeter lay a range of hills with a four-mile wide plateau running down to the shore of a body of water called Lake Habbaniya.

Habbaniya's main military area, called Station, with its aircraft hangars, burnt brick, concrete and steel buildings—stores, workshops, offices, billets, messes, officers' family residences, and so on, with well-planned lush gardens, tree-lined and metalled roads, various sports and recreation centers, hospital, and many other necessary facilities and conveniences of creature comfort, were occupied, controlled and administered by some 10 to 12 hundred RAF personnel and British civil servants.

The air base was guarded by a battalion of RAF (Iraq) Levies, mostly Assyrians, with some Kurds, Arabs and Yezidis, strengthened many fold during the turbulent 1920s and the World War II years. The general work for the function of the air base was carried out by some two thousand local civilian employees—clerical, skilled and menial. These local workers, with their families, were fenced off into two camps situated in one corner of the air base barely larger than half a square mile. The larger camp was the Civil Cantonment and the smaller one the Levy (family) Camp. The camps were administered by a British official with local staff. Twelve to 15 thousand people in all, of various races and religious cultures, were crammed into this cramped space of lines upon lines of tight mud brick houses. Most of the dwellings had one or two 10-foot square rooms with a same size open courtyard, with communal water supply, toilets and baths, and had no electricity. The streets were bare of shrubbery or trees and were sparsely paved.

The majority of the inhabitants was Assyrian, with some Armenians, Indians, Kurds, Arabs, Yezidis and a handful of other races, all working for the RAF. The whole population thrived and lived together in relative harmony.

Assyrians and Armenians were displaced peoples who had fought on the side of the British during the Great War and had been driven out of their lands by Turks, Kurds and Persians. The air base was under the complete control of RAF, headed by an Air Officer Commanding (normally an Air Vice Marshall), for two decades (1936-1955), a state within a state, before it was surrendered to the host government, Iraq, in 1955.

During its early seven years, there was only one eight-class elementary school for the children of the two local camps. It was located in C.C. The school, RAF Union School, was under the control of the RAF authorities. It was the continuation of the former Assyrian & Armenian Union School (1924-37) in Kota Camp, the biggest of the five local labor camps attached to the former RAF Station of Hinaidi, near Baghdad. The school was established in 1924 and headed by the late *Raabi* Yacoub Bet-Yacoub, with a four-class elementary branch (1932-37), ran by one of his graduates, the late *Raabi* Espanya Shimshon Barkhu, in Maratha Lines, two miles away.

When the RAF Station, with its local camps, relocated in 1936-37 to Habbaniya, 55 miles west of the Capital, both schools were closed down. But *Raabi* Yacoub was given charge of the new school in Habbaniya—renamed RAF Union School—by the C.C. Superintendent, a Mr. Jack Ingram, who was also the school's honorary principal.

The arch-roofed, mud-brick school building, covered with corrugated iron sheets plastered over by mud like all other houses, was constructed in a square shape. Three sides of the square were classrooms and the fourth was the large courtyard wall with the gate in the middle. The side facing the courtyard wall was a long hall for the kindergarten class. On the left wing were the Armenian-language classroom and the classrooms for the first three general grades, Primary A, B, and C Forms. And on the right wing were the other four classrooms, Primary D Form and Secondary A, B, and C Forms. *Raabi* Yacoub had set his office in Secondary A Form classroom. A big vacant lot behind the school building was the general play and sports ground, mainly for soccer, basketball and for Boy Scout and Girl Guide training and parades and other athletic activities.

Union School was composed of several hundred students and a score of teachers. *Raabi* Yacoub was the headmaster. The bulk of the student body and the faculty was Assyrian, with an Armenian minority and just a few Indian students. A few Arab teachers were added later on, but most Kurdish and Arab boys were schooled in their mosques, the Sunni and the Shia. The general school curriculum was in English, up to the Junior High level, with special classes in Assyrian, Armenian and Arabic languages, plus grammar and Bible classes.

The school was an important aspect of the life of both the Assyrian and Armenian communities. In addition to providing boys and girls with their basic education, it instilled in them Christian values. It was also the training ground for some of Habbaniya's finest athletes and sportsmen, a few of whom attained not only local but also national and international fame, particularly in soccer and tennis.

Raabi Yacoub's administrative excellence, general knowledge and theatrical and literary expertise gave birth to drama in the school and the community at large. His annual school commencement exercise evenings were the pride of the pupils and their parents alike. And under the leadership of his son, the late *Raabi* Emmanuel ("Ammo") Jacob, he introduced in Habbaniya—and probably in the whole Assyrian world—the first organized Assyrian Boy Scout and Girl Guide movement, which achieved, with the expertise of British Scouters, a high standard. And when the RAF surrendered the school to the Iraqi Ministry of Education in 1944 and *Raabi* Yacoub and some of his staff resigned from the school and left Habbaniya to pursue other careers, the Habbaniya Scouting movement continued and flourished independently, under RAF supervision, until its disbandment when the air base was taken over by the Iraqi Government in 1955.

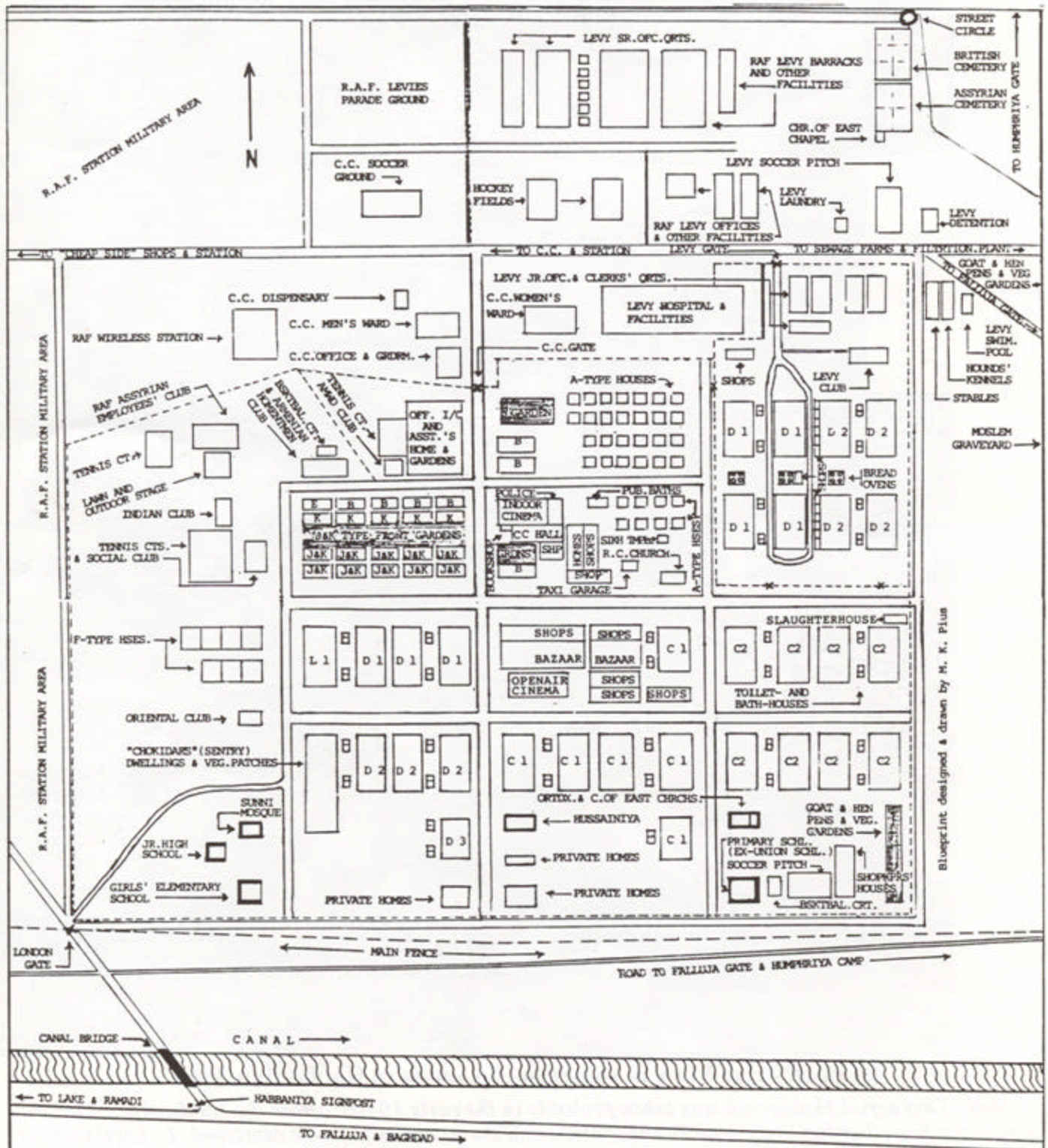
This, in a nutshell, was Habbaniya and its Union School. Habbaniya in which, over the years, tens of thousands of As-

Scetch of Habbaniya and School (Cont'd)

syrian Levies and civilians lived, worked and some died, and in whose loyal and gallant defense in May 1941, they contributed—though barely acknowledged by the beneficiaries—outstanding service to the British war effort and to the Allied victory, not to mention their loyal service during two world

Wars. And its Union School, in which hundreds of young people received their basic education and who, despite their becoming cheap fodder for the RAF labor needs, attained high cultural standards, while some more fortunate ones acquired higher education elsewhere and made their mark in the world.

Civil Cantonment and Levy Camp of Habbaniya



From our archives—the military**Assyrian Levy Force of Iraq Disbanded**

By M. K. Piyous*

BAGHDAD: The termination of the Anglo-Iraq Treaty of 1930 on 30th of last March [1955] brought the military career of the Royal Air Force Iraq Levies to an end and the Force was officially disbanded on 2nd May, the day the air bases of Habbaniya and Shaibah were ceremoniously handed over by the RAF to the Iraqi Government. When they shed their handsome uniforms the Levy local strength was 1060 men, comprising of 250 Arabs, 320 Kurds and 490 Assyrians.

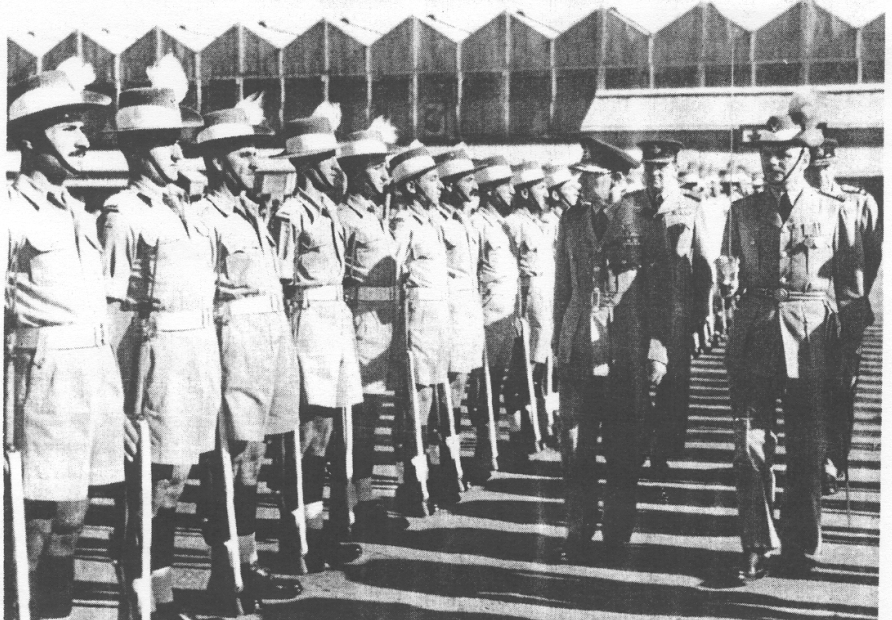
Levies were employed as a local military force under the British command to guard the British airbases and other military installations in Iraq allowed under the Treaty. Its local officers were commanded by R.A.F. officers, who took their orders from the Levy Force Commander, now Group Captain A.B. Riall. Their local commander, *Rab Khaila Zaia Gc-wargis* came under the direct command of the Force Commander, who in turn received his orders from the Air Officer Commanding of the two airfields, Air Vice Marshall H.H. Brooks.

During their 34-year history the Levies have rendered loyal service to the British Government. They distinguished themselves both as an efficient guard unit and as a well-trained fighting force, gaining the praise of many High Authorities. Their good reputation for field drill often won them the privilege of being detained as guard of honor to high-ranking visitors to the two RAF Stations as well as took them to London in 1946 to participate in the Victory Parade.

“We have not forgotten the Levies and civilians who for many years have given faithful service for the R.A.F. in Iraq,” said the current British Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden, then Foreign Secretary, in a speech in the House of Commons on the announcement of the termination of the Treaty. “We hope that many of the Levies will join the Iraqi Armed Forces and that many of the civilians will be able to continue in employment at the airfields.

“I can assure the House,” he continued, “that we shall care for those who do not, including the Assyrian Christians, and on this respect we have the assurance and co-operation of the Iraqi Government. We will arrange for pensions, gratuities, vocational training and resettlement in Iraq of all suitable cases.”

Accordingly, the Levies are being paid service remunerations. Those who are eligible for further service are being accepted in the Iraqi Army if they wish while those who are past middle age are being recruited for skilled work at the airbases. To date, over 400 Assyrians have joined the Army. The recruits are undergoing six months’ training course. After they successfully complete it, they will be given the respective ranks they held in the Levies.



The smart sharp RAF Iraq [Assyrian] Levies, as guard of honor, being inspected by a high-ranking RAF official accompanied by the Force Commander (right) and others.

The Levies have a turbulent and colorful history. The Force was originated in 1921 at Dohuk in northern Iraq by the British Army with a few hundred Assyrians. Early next year they were placed under the local command of *Rab Khaila* David De Mar Shimun, father of the present Patriarch of the Church of the East

The Force was at first employed as bodyguards to British political officers in Iraq. A few years later, the RAF took over from the Army and the Levy mounted troops gave way to the infantry and their number steadily rose to 5,000.

During the first nine years they were used in a number of British campaigns in Iraq, among them: In 1923 as advance guards to the British and Indian troops in their advance into Kurdistan. And the following year they were rushed to the aid of the Upper and Lower Tiari and Tkhuma tribes who were forced out of their homes by the Turkish Army at the northern border of Iraq. Assisted by the British and Indian troops, they beat back the Turks and reinstated the tribes. In co-operation with the Iraqi Army, from 1926 to 1930 they fought and quelled the rebellious Kurdish Shaikhs, such as Ahmed of Barzan and Mahmood of Sulaimaniya. Then the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 changed their status to military guards. In 1933 Battalions Nos. 1 and 2 stationed at Diana and Sulaimaniya respectively were combined into one unit.

In late April 1941, tens of thousands of coup d’etat troops of

*Now known as Mikhael K. Pius

Assyrian Levies Disbanded (Cont'd)



Early 1950s: *Rab Khaila Zaia Gewargis*, local commander of the Levies

Rashid Ali Al-Gailani laid siege to Habbaniya. The several hundred strong Levies played an important role in the defense of the Station and the restoring of law and order to the Baghdad Government.

During World War II Levy units served on duty in Persia, Lebanon, Egypt and Palestine and a well-trained paratroop regiment was dropped over Greece and Italy where a number of men were killed. During this time the Levy strength had fluctuated considerably and many Kurds and Arabs had drifted into the service. In 1946 the nomenclature of the Army units was changed to squadrons to conform with the RAF Regiment procedure. They were split into two wings, No. 1 at Habbaniya and No. 2 at Shaiba, both supported from a headquarters and a medical wing at Habbaniya.

The Levies owed much of their recent good reputation to their sagacious Assyrian leader, Commander *Rab Khaila Zaia Gewargis*, who is of the Lower Tiari tribe. The *Rab Khaila* is now 55 years old and has been in continuous service for the last 33 years. Several Assyrian great leaders have served in the Levies during the years.

Rab Khaila Zaia Gewargis joined the Force on 23rd March, 1922 as a private. Evidently a good soldier, his progress was rapid: He was promoted to corporal after three months and to sergeant six months later. Early the next year he received the rank of *Rab Khamshi* in which rank he served until 30th June, 1936.

Rab Khaila Gewargis is the holder of eleven service medals, including the Member of the British Empire, the Order of the British Empire and the Iraqi Action Service Medal of Kurdistan. He is now retired and plans to settle in Baghdad. He is a British subject.

Rab Khaila and Mrs.[Chany] *Gewargis* have four sons: Dinkha, 28, who is married to *Mar Yosep Khnanishoo's* niece and works as a clerk in Baghdad; Benyamin, 26, who,

after completing his studies in Atlanta Union College, South Lancaster, Mass; recently joined the U. S. Army and is stationed somewhere in Texas; and Nimrood, 18, and Ashur, 12, both students at Habbaniya. [Reprinted from *Assyrian Star Magazine* of Sept. 1955]

A view from a distinguished Assyrian intellectual and former Kirkuk resident, who looks at former Habbaniya and its Assyrian people with keen interest and concern:

H a b b a n i y a w a s a w a y o f l i f e

By *Philimon G. Darmo, Australia*

When you listen to former Habbaniya Assyrians talking about their memories of Habbaniya, they sound as though they are talking about a civilization that lasted thousands of years, like their people's ancient civilization. But we all know the Habbaniya experience lasted a mere twenty years, 1937 to just beyond mid-1950s, or just over a decade after the Second World War ended.

When Habbaniyans talk about their environment and living conditions, you visualize a Garden of Eden, with mansions littered along tree-lined boulevards. Habbaniya did contain tree-lined, well-paved boulevards with manicured lawns and comfortable and solid houses with all modern conveniences of the time. But that part of Habbaniya, the British Royal Air Force Station, was built for the exclusive use of the RAF personnel and their families. The majority of the some 12 to 15 thousand Habbaniya's local inhabitants, who barely scraped a decent living, were crammed in the fenced off Civil Cantonment and Levy (family) Lines—an area occupying only a small fraction of the air base. They lived on top of each other in mud brick houses that were a little more than hovels, with communal baths and toilet facilities, unpaved roads, and no electricity. But, then, when you really listen to these Habbaniyan reminiscences, you realize that these people are not talking about a city of boulevards and mansions and of material wealth, but about a simple way of life.

Despite their limitations, Habbaniya Assyrians fashioned for themselves a way of life that gave them all the happiness and all the sense of fulfillment they needed in a relatively short period of time. The focal point of their lives became a happy and united commu -



One of the many tree-lined, well-paved boulevards in the RAF area of Habbaniya.

Habbaniya was a Way of Life (Cont'd)

nity, with different aspects of life, living in harmony with minorities of a few other races. They ran their own Church, which linked them to their 1950 years of Christian heritage; they formed and ran their social functions, whether weddings, parties or festivals; and with watching and learning from the British, they engaged in various sporting activities that produced such legends as Aram Karam, Youra Eshaya, Ammo Baba, William Daniel, Andrews Simon, and dozens of others in soccer, tennis, hockey and other sports, not to mention the more important legend that was the Assyrian Levies who, with their civilian brothers, faithfully served the British and their interests in Iraq for more than 35 years.

Another milestone of Habbaniya was its Union School in the Civil Cantonment, under the able principalship of the late *Malpana* Yacoub Bet-Yacoub during Habbaniya's first seven years. The school taught the young generation of Assyrians to pursue the paths of education and self-improvement. Albert Tatar, who was granted the second highest high school marks in the country, was one of many examples.

I heard Albert used to do his school homework under the dim street light by the cramped dwelling where he lived with his parents and siblings. That same young Albert ended up a professor of mathematics at the University of New South Wales here in Sydney, Australia. Sadly for our tiny nation, however, Dr Abbo, as he was affectionately known, passed away prematurely in May 1994.

Personalities like *Malpana* Yacoub (or *Raabi* Yacoub as he was commonly called) and other Assyrian educators instilled in the young generation the desire to learn our language and the art of drama, to be proud of their heritage, and to preserve some aspects of our cultural life, such as the traditions of *Kaalu Sulaqa*, *Nusardel* and *Somikka*. Habbaniya was also one of the numerous cradles for nurturing the spirit of *omtanayoota*, during recent decades, through the formation of the nationalistic movement *Khet Khet Allap*, (*Khoubba Khoyada Attouraya*), or Assyrian Love and Unity, in the 1940's under the leadership of *Usta* Moushi Khoshaba. Activities such as these contributed to the weaving of the fabric of the Habbaniya way of life.

Another positive outcome of this simple way of life was the pursuit of self-improvement and advancement, which our young men achieved with vigor and dedication while in the employment of the British RAF. They learned the English language well and acquired a variety of skills, through practical on-the-job training and correspondence courses, in many fields of endeavor. This enabled a lot of them to secure well-paid jobs and careers when they eventually relocated to Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk and other places, after the winding down of Habbaniya and departure of RAF from Iraq.

I am not a Habbaniyan myself. My memories of Habbaniya are confined to a couple of short visits in the 1950's to my uncle, Archdeacon Akhikar Haji and his family, who lived in one of the "superior" houses, in K-Type quarters, near the Assyrian Employees Club. But I have often urged people like Andrious Mama Jotyar and Mikhael Pius to document and chronicle the experiences of Assyrians in the humble environment of Habbaniya. Both gentlemen have achieved a great deal: Andrious through his magazine *The Assyrian Observer*, and Mikhael through his articles and books. Mikhael's editorship of the *HUSA* Newsletter will be another recording and preservation of Habbaniya history and its achievements.

My hearty congratulations to all members of Habbaniya Union School Association on the occasion of the imminent publication of the first issue of their newsletter *HUSA*. With Mr. Mikhael Pius, one of the most trusted and capable guardians of the Habbaniya memory, as its founding Editor, supported by his colleagues in the Association, I know *HUSA* is in good hands.



A dirt road near Mar Gewargis Church of the East, running between C-1 and C-2 type lines of attached houses. A private car was a rare sight in local camps because the only cars operating in Habbaniya were the passenger-sharing taxis running between Habbaniya and Ramadi, Falluja and Baghdad. Bicycles were the main mode of local transportation within the air base.

MIKHAEL K. PIUS'S SECOND BOOK

AN ASSYRIAN'S YOUTH JOURNAL, is out now. It's a 136-page, 13-year intimate private diary about his life as a youth and about the people around him, interwoven with the local history of Habbaniya in the forties and fifties. It's illustrated with 43 relevant memorable pictures of a vintage nature. The first book of its kind by an Assyrian author, it's a bold venture in Assyrian publishing. Copies will be available at various Assyrian communities; or can be mailed for US\$ 7.00 + \$1.50 postage within U.S. For mail orders, overseas postage rates or other information, please write to: **3504 Setrok Dr, Modesto, CA 95356-0290**; or E-Mail to M1420@netzero.net; or call **Tel #209-545-4120 (Please don't hesitate to SPEAK IF RECORDER)**. Check or M.O. to be made payable to publisher, **Mr. JOE M. PIUS**. Like Mikhael's first book, *Assyrian Tales & Confessions*, profit from this book will also be donated to the needy Assyrians in Jordan, through the Assyrian Foundation of America. Be generous and buy a copy for a small donation. **Enjoy a good book as well as HELP OUR NEEDY PEOPLE.**

In response to a hue and cry I raised to a few “writing” friends, Brother Wiska came to my rescue with the two memorable stories and the snapshots that follow:

Flashbacks from Habbaniya-Ramadi Days

By Basil (“Wiska”) Khammo Pius

The year was 1950. Our young group of boys and girls from Habbaniya had been attending Ramadi secondary schools daily by bus. It was a 30-mile round trip, rather tough, especially in winter time. During the course of the first year a small number of our fellow students dropped school because of the physical hardships and an unwelcome attitude by the ultra Muslim conservatives in Ramadi. But most of us persisted to the finish line. Some just barely made it, but thank God just the



1952: Al-Liwa al-Dulaim Secondary Schools Select Soccer Team. From left, Squatting: Hassan_____, Shmouel Kamar, Wiska Khammo [Pius], Mar’ee Yahya, Athniel David; Back: Asst.Coach (name not remembered), Shmouel Lazar Essa, Khoshaba Slevo, Hadji Taweel (driver), Wilson Polous [Rasho], Sargon Enviya, Yourish_____, Khoshaba Yacoub[Aboona], and the would-be famous Iraqi International soccer player and coach, Ammo Baba. (Notice, nine of the players are Assyrians)

same, and thanks to our supportive and caring parents too.

Our Habbaniya masters, the British, did not bother to help us, for whatever reason, by establishing a small high school in our little “town” of 10 thousand inhabitants. Perhaps they did not want us to be too educated, who knows!

And how did we ever survive the bus ordeal every single day? It was God’s will, no doubt about it. There must have been also a strong sense of goal attainment, along with physical and mental endurance. In addition, I believe the fact that we all came from a small tightly-knit, sports-minded, Christian community was a positive factor. And that is my focus here.

One day in the same year a soccer match between our team (Habbaniya Bus Brothers) and the local Ramadi classmates’ team was arranged. It was to be played in Ramadi. Naturally, there was fire, excitement and tension in the air. We all realized that this was more than just a soccer game rivalry. So we prepared ourselves mentally too. I believe a handful of the girls on our bus also came out to cheer us up that afternoon, bless

them! At the end of the game we were the ecstatic winners. We trashed them 6-0, and miraculously none of us was seriously hurt either! We had managed to escape the wrath of their big “bulldozer,” the rough intimidator, Mar’ee Yahya.

From that day on, we became well known guys in Ramadi, not just in its school but in its town too. Surprisingly enough, the Ramadi fans liked us for our sportsmanship, soccer skill and entertaining play. That definitely gave many of us courage and hope to move on.

Just as important, it was at that point when several of us were selected to represent the state team, *Muntakhib al-Liwa al-Dulaim*, for the country’s high school soccer honors. Mar’ee Yahya was on the team too. In addition, Youash Giliana [Tamras] and Ammo Baba and a few other of Habbaniya’s local rising stars were also selected as school students, even though some of them were not attending school at all!

I believe strongly that the soccer team competition eventually created a sport spirit and friendly atmosphere for us in Ramadi, perhaps beyond the ethnic and religious line and scholastic pursuits. It gave us something to look forward to besides school education, as we made our wearisome [15-mile] daily trips to Ramadi and back in a rickety old bus. It became a matter of asserting our self-pride and having fun in the process. I have a feeling that many of us at the time dreamed of fame and glory. And why not? We were a group of young and ambitious souls.

Anyway, I have often thought about those daily ventures to Ramadi and back. Culturally speaking, **(Cont’d on next page).**



1950: Habbaniya Bus “Siblings” in palm grove. Front, from left: Arees____ and William Khoshaba; Middle row: Sham-miram William Shabbas, Benyamin Khoshaba, Waghinak Serkisian, Rakhi *Raabi* Aprim, Shmouel Kamar, Abu Zaid (driver); Back: Athniel David, Clarence Vincent, Zia Moshi Youkhana, Shalim William Shabbas, Shummon Emmanuel, Wilson Warda, and Wiska Khammo [Pius].

Habbaniya-Ramadi Flashbacks (Cont'd)

it was a self-enriching once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for most of us. For example, we came to know the poor sheep herder as he entertained us on the road by proudly blowing his wailing lamentations on his bamboo flute; we risked our reputation by stopping by a dense palm tree grove on our way home in the late afternoon to help ourselves to a few dates, only to be offered, free, the cream of the crop by the generous Arab farmer; we listened in utter astonishment to the personal accounts of some daring polygamist Arab men; we learned to stand up straight during a funeral procession and in solemn respect until a cortege had passed; and we sat in the crowded all-male *chaikhana*, tea house, for a *finjan* of the strong tasty Arab *chai*, a game of backgammon, and perhaps a *nargeela* [of tobacco] sniff. Undoubtedly, it was a hands-on education for us.

It seems like we were always a bunch of starving kids in those days. In fact, some well-off fellow Muslim classmates (like sons of local sheiks) occasionally felt sorry enough for us

to invite us to their homes for delicious hot lunches. The odd thing about the elaborate lunches was that we never met the women of the house to thank them for their culinary skill. That became a hot topic for our personal conversation because we could perceive them peeking curiously at us through their lattice-work partitions.

In conclusion, I want to say this: I have been amazed to realize that most of us who managed to finish Ramadi High School have contributed well to our world at large. Among the two dozen or so that I know there are reputable doctors, pharmacists, oil engineers, civil engineers, mechanical engineers, accountants, business pros, teachers, social workers and computer wizards, just to name a few.

That's not bad at all, is it?

PS. Congratulations to all of you "Habbaniya Bus Brothers"—boys and girls! It was great to believe in your dreams!



From our archives--Drama

“Mirza Praidon” staged in Syriac by Cantonment Club

By Andrious Mama [Jotyar]

The Civil Cantonment Social Club staged, for the first time, ‘Mirza Praidon’ a drama in four acts in Syriac by kind permission of Officer Commanding CC Squadron Leader M.J. Harris. Produced by J. Jacob principal Union School Hinaidi and Habbaniya for many years and directed by Mr. John Shimshoon ‘Mirza Praidon’ lasted for about two hours and filled the audience with laughter and amusement.

Mr. George Yohkana acting as Mirza Praidon did his best to put life in his leading roll throughout the show. Mr. Paul (Charlie) was Isa Beg. Miss Janet Shmouel was Moorasa Khanim. Miss Nasko Smaiel acted as Banafsha Khanim Mr. Philip Kamar was the servant (Kambar).

Mirza Praidon was a wise and young man from the city of Ispahan in Persia who intended to marry a girl as wise and young as himself. He asked his best friend Agha Narman to advise him on the matter. However, he was told to pray to Almighty God in order to reach his intended aim.

So Mirza Praidon prayed accordingly until one night he dreamt that his ring was exchanged with that of another girl and consequently would marry her after some difficulties.

Banafsha Khanim a young and beautiful girl from the city of Damascus similarly dreamt that her ring was exchanged with that of a handsome young man named Mirza Praidon. Surprised at her vision she told her parents, who strongly rejected such a senseless dream, as she was promised in marriage since her birth to the son of Iskander, a faithful friend of her father Isa Beg. After a short time Mirza Praidon traveled on foot and camel from Persia to Damascus on which journey he encountered some difficulties such as

fighting and killing a giant devil and set to freedom a number of devils' victims, etc., and finally reaches Damascus safely. At Damascus he wandered from house to house in the form of a Darwish, to find his unknown mate in life. In a certain house he meets his fiancée and her family. He pointed out in his many Darwish songs the reason for being a Darwish and of his wish to marry their daughter.

Moorasa Khanim agreed to Mirza Praidon's intentions and asked him to send a delegate in accordance with the custom. The delegate's request was harshly treated by the Isa Beg, who alone rejected the marriage.

After a secret meeting on the subject it was decided by all the family that the girl should marry Mirza Praidon whom she loves and in addition decided to work a plan in order to force Isa Beg to agree.

Isa Beg puzzled in this matter shouted at his servant Kamar to bring him as usual a bottle of wine and his pipe. Kamar, the leader of the plan, entered struck with panic and said to his master: ‘the delegate has now come fully equipped to kill you.’ Isa Beg hearing this unexpected attack was terribly scared and asked Kamar to find him a shelter to hide.

Kambar, according to plan, immediately brought an empty sack for him to hide in. So Kamar put his master inside the sack and tightened up its gap and with a stick he himself struck the sack in which his master lay hidden, until Isa Beg from inside the sack shouted ‘For heavens sake I give her, I give her’. In conclusion he blamed himself for opposing the consent of the two young lovers and asked the family for an immediate wedding. [Reprinted from *The Iraq Times* of May 26, 1953]

Image of Teachers from Habbaniya Days

By Basil (“Wiska”) Khammo Pius

I remember my very first year at *Raabi* Yacoub’s primary school in 1941, the year before our family left Habbaniya for Baghdad. It was that and the subsequent years of my early education in the Iraqi government educational system that left me with some indelible images of school days.

Naturally, not all the images that impacted my adolescent years are pleasant experiences. I suppose each one of us has had his/her share of those unwholesome and uncomplimentary moments which we would rather forget. Having said that, let me describe one of my youthful spirit-lifting impressions—my admiration for my early teachers’ dress code.

I was always impressed with the teachers who were dressed tidily and looked professional. In those days, most men and women teachers that I can remember came to school in proper



1950: Hab Students in Second Year at Ramadi High School. Front, from left: Wilson Warda and Yosip Eramia [Ben-jamin], Second row: Can’t remember names of first two; Waghinak Serkisian, Hormis Hassamo, Wiska Khammo [Pius], Clarence Vincent’s head, Shmouel Shawil, Arees, Hadji (driver); Top row: Brother Rafael, Mishael, Albert Tattar, Shmouel Kamar, Shummon Emmanuel, Wazgain Serkisian.



1951: Habbaniya Students in Third Year at Ramadi High School. Standing in the center is our Egyptian Chemistry teacher. Five of the students are wearing neckties, including me, squatting at the front right.

and respectable clothing. Men wore good looking suits or sports jackets with nicely pressed pants, shirts, and a la mode ties; women in graceful dresses, delicate blouses, colorful sweaters, blue or gray flannel skirts and shining dress shoes. I admired them for their gentle looks and consistency each day they came to school to teach us. In fact, some of those teachers became my secret role models. I’ll bet good old Socrates himself would have envied them too.

One of those teachers was *Raabi* Khamis DeBaz, my respectable English teacher in the fifth and sixth primary grades, following our family’s return to Habbaniya in 1946. He certainly was not a “flashy” dresser but he dressed like a teacher, down to earth, in suit and tie. He was well groomed in spite of his kinky hair. I used to tell myself “Wouldn’t it be a dream come true if one day I too became an English teacher like my *Raabi* Khamis?” Actually, my admiration for my teachers’ dignified look continued through high school. I had the good fortune of having male teachers at Ramadi High School who taught well and looked sharp. Three of them, from Egypt, were prime ex-

amples in their respective fields. I looked up to them because those teachers cared enough to look their best—dignified and professional. In fact, many high school students, including me, followed their dress code example. There was something appealing about it, aesthetically and intellectually.

Well, my dream was fulfilled when I became a teacher of English in 1966 in America and I have treasured the experience ever since. I have also enjoyed looking like a teacher, just like my teachers did more than five decades ago.

Yet in recent years, most of my colleagues have assumed a different mode of dressing in school. Actually, today in America the teachers’ informality regarding dress code in school is rampant, so much so that sometimes it is hard to tell the difference



Feb.1942: Another picture of proper dress code in my school days, in support of your point, Basil. Posing are half the score of Habbaniya Union School faculty staff. Front, from left: *Raabi* Albert Babilla, Youliya Shmouel, Katrina “Nurse,” Yosip Amir, Janey David, Maral Parhat, Emmanuel Jacob; Back, Khamis Al-Bazi—your favorite teacher— Iskhaq Dawod Sa’or—my fvorite teacher—and Aprim DeBaz—MKP

Image of Teachers (Cont'd)

between a college instructor and a *farrash*, janitor. Many of today's teachers delight in wearing sloppy jeans, T-shirts and tennis shoes to class.

I suppose there is validity in the argument "It is not what you wear that matters but how you teach." What I'm saying is that a teacher should always look neater than his students. It is a big plus, and it adds to the dignity of the teaching profession for

sure. It is like seeing your doctor in his/her white smock; there is an aura of respect about them.

I admire and thank my former teachers for being my great role models. After all, it is a universal experience for students to remember those who touch their lives one way or another. It is particularly inspiring when the image is bright and beautiful!

Life Sketch of a Local Priest

Khoury Ablakhad of Habbaniya **From Solomon (Sawa) Solomon**

Commonly called "*Khoury*" by the Assyrian population of Habbaniyah this priest's full name was Father Abdul Ahad Jargees Quallo. He was born in Alqoush and baptized Lewis Jajjoo, and was the maternal nephew of Chaldean Catholic Metropolitan Mar Eramia Timotheus (1848-1929). In his early years, he stayed close to his uncle and took interest in the Church, becoming a deacon in his teens. When his uncle was assigned to head the diocese of Zakho and Dohuk in 1908 deacon Lewis Jajjoo accompanied him to assist him. Six years later, in 1914, his uncle ordained him a priest and gave him the new name of Father Abdul Ahad Jerjees Quallo to serve as the pastor of Mar Gewargis Church in Zakho. Shortly thereafter, the Metropolitan decided to rebuild the old, dilapidated church, and Pastor Abdul Ahad undertook to oversee the project. Unfortunately, soon after, the Great War came along and work had to be suspended. Work was resumed in 1919 and finished two years later.

When Metropolitan Mar Eramia Themoteus retired, he was replaced by Mar Aziz. But in 1928, Father Abdul Ahad, who had worked tirelessly for the Church, was passed over for a Bishopric promotion in favor of a Patros Aziz. Consequently, he left the Chaldean Church and joined the Church of the East. From that time on he became known as *Qaasha* (and later *Khoury*) Ablakhad. He lived for a while in the house of my paternal uncle, Goriel Sulaiman (who in later years was ordained priest and served both in Mar Gewargis Church in Habbaniya and in Mar Qardakh Church in Gailani Camp). The house was situated on the hill of Gary Basy in Dohuk, and the two remained neighbors until the Iraqi Army massacre of Assyrian villagers in North Iraq in 1933. During this Assyrian and Iraqi crisis *Qaasha* Ablakhad was arrested in Mosul, along with many Assyrian notables among them *Qaasha* Iskhak Rihana of Gardi and *Shamasha* Skharia *Qasha* Esha of Mar Bishu. They were deported to Nasiriyah, and released only after the dust of the dastardly "storm" had completely settled.

Shamasha Warda Odisho recalls that when the Assyrians of Hinaidi moved to Habbaniya in 1936 they asked Metropolitan Mar Yosip Khnanisho to send them a priest. Mar Yosip assigned *Khoury* Ablakhad as pastor of Mar Gewargis Church of

the East in the air base of Habbaniya. Accompanied by his sister Bebie to take care of him, the *Khoury* moved and settled in one of the "superior" type of houses in the Civil Cantonment. When his sister left Habbaniya, he moved in with his nephew George Quallo's family.

During World War II years my uncle Goriel, then a deacon, ran a grocery store business in Habbaniya as well as resumed his close association with *Khoury* Ablakhad. Meanwhile *Shamasha* Warda Odisho and the *Khoury* worked together to build Mar Gewargis into one of the finest Assyrian churches in Iraq at the time. In 1950, however, during the Chaldean Patriarchate of Mar Yousif Ghanima (1948-1954), *Khoury* Ablakhad left the Church of the East, the reason for which is not known to this day. He returned to the Chaldean Church and assumed once again the name *Khoury* Abdul Ahad. He was made parish priest of Telesqof, where he served for five years. My uncle, who was ordained *Qaasha* Goriel Sulaiman to replace *Khoury* Ablakhad in Habbaniya, paid him a farewell visit in Alkosh in 1953. He was accompanied by two members of his church board. Two years later, *Khoury* Abdul Ahad was transferred to the Chaldean Parish of Amara, in Southern Iraq, which had a very small Christian community. And in 1956, while working on a construction project for several months in Amara, *Shamasha* Warda was pleased to spend many pleasant occasions with his former pastor and friend.

In 1970, Metropolitan Mar Yusif Babana of the Diocese of Zakho-Dohuk asked *Khoury* Abdul Ahad to come and serve in his own old Parish of Zakho. He

arrived in Zakho in April of that year, but in the fall of 1973, both *Khoury* Abdul Ahad and Mar Yousif Babana pass away within days of each other.

May they both rest in peace.



Khoury Ablakhad
in late 1940s

Material for this article came from the following sources:

- ? A book by his Grace Metropolitan Mar Yusif Babana
- ? The book *The British Betrayal of the Assyrians*, By Yusif Malek
- ? Conversations with Deacon Warda Odisho.
- ? Statements by the late *Qaasha* Goriel Sulaiman.

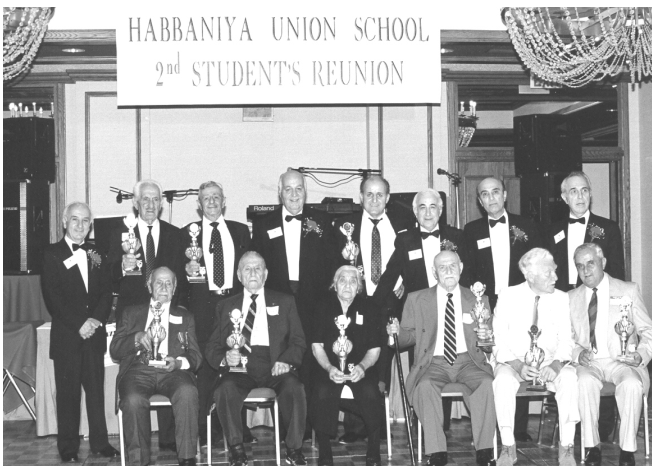
Views and Muse from Past Habbaniya Union School Reunions



1992: First Reunion held in Chicago. Former student Khawa Aboona Pearce “lectures” the late *Raabi* Janey Rizk, who listens agape (“Little girl, what a long tongue you have!”), while the late Blandina Pius watches, listens and presides over the heated finger-pointing proceedings.



1992: Another scene from First Reunion. Former Habbaniya’s Assyrian Dance Band members William David sings while Andrious Mama (proverbial white suit) rattles his tamborine as Ben Yalda and Odisho Warda listen and watch—and wonder.



1995: Second Reunion. Former Levy veterans, and Reunion Founding members with their commemorative trophies and presents. (“Pist! I say, old chap Rab-Camshi Mooshi, don’t you think these blocks twiddled us?”)



1995; “California representative” John Isaac nudges his complacent “bodyguard” to get away from him, as he grimaces through his speech at the Second Reunion in Chicago.



1997: Founding Members, and Canadian Organizing Committee headed by John Aghajan with some former Habbaniya students and residents, posing with their awards, trophies, and presents at the Third Reunion held in Toronto, Canada. The group also includes “achievers” in various activities during Habbaniya days. Congratulations, comrades!



Oct.2000: The Australian Organizing Committee members of the 4th Reunion held in Sydney, which set a record for large attendance. Front, from left: Dinkha Warda, Chairman, *Raabi* Jacob Meraziz, Roza Simon, Zaia Shawil, Youil Marbo. Back: Sankho Hammo, Youash Tamras, William Daniel, Secretary, and Wilson Rasho. Well done, Auzies!



Scenes from Habbaniya Union School Reunions



Sept.4, 1992: Students and Teachers of the First Reunion, held in Chicago, IL. Sitting on floor, from left: Benyamin Yalda, Jack Younan, Envia Warda, Madeleine Shabo. First row: Davis E. David, Parmany (Nadersha) Landi, Margaret Nadersha, Rakhy (Sheem) Malik, Leena (Soski) Lazar, Beatrice (Awhrahim) Menashi, Jane (Shaul) Putrus, *Raabi* Vergin (Patros) Sargon, *Raabi* Janey (David) Rizk, Khanna (Ammanuel) Youkhanna, Awigil (Polous) Isaac, Louiza Qasrani, Khawa (Aboona) Pearce, Alice (Roovil) Baaba, Lois (Roovil) Baito, Awigil (Shmouel) Zaia, Jane (Babilla) Polous, Second row: Zacharia O. Zacharia, Andrious Mama Jotyar, Shimon Putrus, Helen Shaul David, Pius Zussimas Joseph, Jack Adams, Eshaya Hormis Isaac, Michael Warnso Malik, Liza (Aziz) David, John Bajjan Rehana, Juliet (Aboona) Abbona, Nimrud Rustam Lazar, Akhsheerish Mammo Jango, John Isaac, Maria (Shaul) Malik, Philip Benjamin Malik, Lilly (Shabbas) Neesan, Shameram Parhat, Paul Nimrod Benjamin, Wardeh (Yosip) Baza, Julia (Warda) Boyle, Ludiya Youkhanna, Helen (Shlemon) Aiwaz, Fahima (David) Aiwaz, Sandra (David) Baba, Blandina (Ewan) Pius, Eshay Abraham Baba. Back row: George David Mar Yohana, Moshi Shindo Baadu, William David Shino, Benyamin Menashi, Joan David Shino, Panna (Aziz) Khanishan, Awia Nimrod Khammo, Leena (Yonathan) Yalda, Julius Nwyia Shabbas, Shlimon Youkhanna, Andrious Al-Bazi, David Shlimon David, Nathan Al-Bazi, Aram Shaul Youkhanna, William *Raabi* Jacob, Odisho Warda, John Roovil Michael, Mikhael Khammo Pius, Youel Aghasi Babilla, Johnson Jacob, Sargon Yacoub Aboona. Some students and teachers left before this picture was taken, among them: *Raabi* Dinkha Zaia George, *Raabi* Khamis DeBaz, Mary (Gewargis) Mirza, Esha Erkhwiwam, Margaret Polous Jado, Shoushan (Kambar) Abraham, Daniel Lazar Solomon, Yosip Youkhanna, Edward Nimrod Khammo, Fraidon Abraham Iskhak, Mirza Shmouel, and several others. (Names set in parenthesis are maiden names.)



Oct.2000: Harbour Bay Bridge, Sydney. Fourth Reunion overseas visitors, posing from left, back:1.Leena Yalda, 2.Name not known,3 Heleny Zacharia, 4.nnk, 5.Janey Hammo, 6.Angie Antar, 7.Almas Aboona, 8.Youlia Nissan, 9.Reswaina David, 10.David Antar, 11. Maddy Khosro, 12.Susan Worthen. Squatting: 1.Ben Yalda, 2.Nancy Minasof, 3.Najeeba Yonan, 4.Ashur Marano, 5. Zacharia O. Zacharia, 6.Yosip Murad.

Fourth Reunion lady overseas visitors, on a rest and refreshment stopover during tour to Capital City of Canberra, Australia. From left, front: Almas Aboona, Leena Yalda, Heleny Zacharia, Liza David. Back: Name not know, Janet Jacob, Florence Isaac, and her aunt Sophia (Isaac) Toma.

