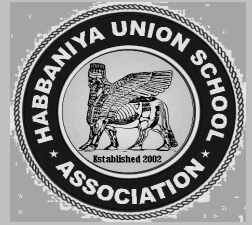


HUSA

Vol.2, No.1
Spring – Summer
2003

The Newsletter of HABBANIYA UNION SCHOOL ASSOCIATION



Motto: To inform, connect with and to preserve old ties between former schoolmates and between residents of Habbaniya "town"



Aug.7, 1927: Some former graduates, teachers and organizing committee members of Union School, founded in 1924 in Kota Camp, RAF Station, Hinaidi, Iraq, with Raabi Yacoub Bet-Yacoub as its headmaster.

Squatting, from left: Shmouel Orahim Badal, Youel Patros, Havil Lazar Polous, Italius Shawel, Yacoub Patros; Sitting: Shosho Shino, Mr. J.G.Dawson, Mrs. (Maryam) Dawson, Mrs.(Maninia) Ingram, Yacoub Farhat, Mr. Jack Ingram (Camp Superintendent), Raabi Yacoub Bet-Yacoub (Headmaster), Mrs.(Mirvat) Bet-Yacoub with son baby William, Raabi Elsie Oraham Badal, Name Unknown, Dr.Emmanuel Lazar; Standing, from left: Leon Youkhanna, Atam Sargis, Mansor and Philip Nimrod Benyamin, Raabi Mishael Sargis, William Shabbas, Jebrael Yosip Sayad, N.U., Back, from left: N.U., "John" (Moslem), Mishael Ishmaiel Azgoo, Polous Dooman, Israel Davida, Polous "Kaaru" Gewargis, N.U., Hindu Gewargis; (Picture reproduced from *Nineveh* Magazine) Judging from baby William (on his mother's lap), born in 1930, and from Havil's and Etalius's ages (both born around 1914), I believe this picture was taken in 1931 or 1932 and not in 1927--Ed

HUSA Has a Face Lift

Dear Habbaniyans & Friends:

Here we are again with another issue of HUSA—the third one. And the very enthusiastic reception all of you gave our second issue (see the outpouring of readers' "Expressions") inspired us to pluck away and compile even a better product.

As you can see, HUSA has a new nameplate. To set our hearts at rest, we would like to hear from you about the old and the new design. Tell us which one you prefer. We will adopt the new design unless we hear a plurality of posters popping up in favor of the old design.

Other new features are the boxed headlines with dark filling and the thick covers. We are hoping this will give the newsletter an enhanced visual appeal as well as a more "muscular" substance. A more important feature is that this issue has 32 pages, eight pages more than the previous issue and 12 pages [cont'd on P.22]

HUSA Newsletter

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The Editor welcomes from readers contributions of articles, letters, photos, documents, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia relating to former Hinaidi and Habbaniya and their local people. These maybe 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**

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are the writers' own and do not necessarily represent those of this newsletter or its Editorial Staff.

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Habbaniya Union School Association

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Shouldn't New Year Begin with Life's Revival and Christ's Resurrection?

Life's revival and Christ's Resurrection occur at springtime complemented by the celebration of Assyrian New Year (*Kha-b'Neesan*) as well as the Christian Easter!

How did the Assyrians decide the time, establish the Assyrian Year, and observe the *Kha-b'Neesan* (1st April) Festival?

Of course the mythical history of *Kha-b'Neesan* and the mode of its ancient celebration is too long to be narrated in the limited space we have. Suffice it to say, however, that the Festival, which was a very important aspect of Ancient Assyrian life, was celebrated fervently in a number of ways by both Royalty and the common people for 12 days. And today *Kha-b'Neesan* Festival has been revived during recent decades, with rallies, parades and parties.

As regards the Assyrian Year, it is common knowledge that Assyria was the Nation that gave the world much of its earliest civilization. And one of its many contributions was the science of astronomy. Assyrians were the people who first organized calendar, divided the year into two seasons of Spring and Fall, then into 12 months, into 360 days of 24 hours each, into hour of 60 minutes and minute of 60 seconds. And according to the translation of Assyrian cuneiform tablets retrieved, the year 4750 B.C.—as pointed out by the late John Alkhas—was the time of the end of the Assyrian Flood when new life began, because the flood had completely destroyed every living thing. So by adding the current year of Our Lord 2003 to the year of the Flood, 4750 B.C., we arrived at the current Assyrian Year of 6753.

And why did the Assyrians decide to celebrate their Festival in Spring?

Springtime is the time of awakening, of renewal, of resurrection of living things, of fertility, of growth. It's the time when all living things, man and plant, insect, bird and beast, awake from their winter "slumber," stir from their protective sluggishness, and burst with new vigor into renewed activity and the progression of life. It's the time not only to celebrate the mythical resurrection of the Assyrian god Tamuz from Netherland, but more important to us today, to celebrate Easter when Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, broke the chains of death and rose again to a new life, to an everlasting life in heaven—the life He has promised everyone who follows His teachings.

Spring is the time when the sown seed pops out of the sun-warmed soft soil to grow and nourish us with its abundant fruit; the time when the trees, stripped bare of their former garmented glory by the severe hand of the icy, wet and blustery winter, are graced once again with green leaves and colorful blossoms that sway in the gentle breezes of the season; when the flying fowls, chased away by the harshness of the inclement elements, have reappeared with sweet song and wing aflutter in both sky and tree to build new nests and produce... [Cont'd on P. 9]

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

Dear Mikhael,

I received my copy of the new edition of HUSA and read it from cover to cover. That speaks for its readability and the interesting and absorbing contents. I know you enjoy doing what you do best, i.e. writing and publishing newsletters, but you deserve a rest. So do have a good break, albeit a short one, and a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Joyful 2003.

I am always looking forward to hearing from you. Regards and best wishes.

Philimon Darmo
Daysdale, Australia.

Dear Ben:

Please accept our gratitude and appreciation of such elite editorial work that you have been conducting for so many years. Thank you and your colleagues for all the good work. God bless you with his endless, graceful love.

Enclosed is a check for \$50.00 toward our subscription.

Oshana & Marlyne Soro
Niles, Illinois.

Dear Mikhael:

Thank you very much for the book. I am enjoying reading it. As a matter of fact it is so interesting that one can identify with the persons involved and described. You will never believe it, but last night, I dreamt of Willy (the late Aviya Evan). He was walking on a crowded street. As he approached, he came over and greeted me. He was dressed in a khaki uniform (American style) and looked quite young. When I woke up, I started pondering on the dream. I realized that many of the anecdotes I read in your book must have remained in my subconscious and hence my dream.

I wish, I had known while visiting you that the mail you had sent me included your book. I would then have picked up some copies and brought them over. But as you mentioned in your letter, promoting a book written by an Assyrian is difficult, not to mention if it is written in English. Still, I would be glad if you would mail a copy of your book, with my compliments, to each of the following

four persons whose addresses I have indicated. [\$35 check was enclosed.]

Zia Moshi Youkhana
St. Augustine, Germany

Hi Mikhael!

I received your letter dated 27 August 2002 and the parcel box containing 62 copies of your book, *An Assyrian Youth Journal*, without any damage. Also I would like to thank you so much for your complimentary book. The sale of your book is going well and half of the quantity received is already sold. The rest will be sold within five to six weeks. Not only did I display the poster but I also put an advertisement for two weeks on Assyrian TV in Sydney. Also, with every copy I sold, I included a sketch consisting of Habbaniya, Union School, Civil Cantonment and Levy Camp and a diagram of Habbaniya.

I wish you, your family and your sisters and brothers a wonderful Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Jacob Miraziz
Cecil Hill, Australia.

>> *Thank you very much, Raabi Jacob. Your support is very much appreciated—Ed*

Dear Ben:

Let me begin this note with my and my wife's best wishes for the New Year to you and your family and to Mr Mikhael K. Pius and his family.

I am enclosing a small article about the *Mukhtar*-ship in Habbaniya in which I have said something about my late brother Murad. I hope you will print it in the next issue of HUSA.

I am also enclosing a check for \$24.00 to cover the renewal of my subscription and two new subscriptions in the names of Drs. Francis and Sharlet Murad and Edward and Hana Murad.

Pardon me for saying this, but if my article is not printed, please do not subscribe Francis and Edward for HUSA because I want Murad's son Edward and Murad's brother Francis to read about Murad.

Aprim A. Murad
Madison Heights, Michigan

>> *Your article about your brother is prin-*

ted elsewhere in this issue, but not because you set a precondition for buying two subscriptions. Rather to let you express your viewpoint as well as let us clarify one or two misconceptions.

I hope you read and enjoyed the copy of my book I mailed to you—Ed

Uncle Mikhael,

I very much enjoyed your book *An Assyrian's Youth Journal*. It took me about two days to work thru it. *Baba* and I were talking about it just the other day. (I got your e-mail address from him.)

Oh, thank you also for the Christmas card. It was very thoughtful. Anyway, I sometimes forget that you and my *baba* and the rest of your siblings were once teenagers going through many of the same struggles that the rest of us go through (including stresses of romantic love and insecurity). You tell wonderful stories and are a very good creative writer. I especially enjoyed the way you describe characters. I knew some of the people you wrote about, but even if I didn't, your descriptions are so good that any reader would feel a strong "connection" with your characters. Wonderful!

Daniel Pius
Smithfield, Virginia

Dear Ben:

Hope all is well with you and the family. Enclosed is a check for \$8.00 for the Habbaniya Union School Association magazine.

Cordial regards.

Julius Shabbas
Benicia, Ca.

>> *Julius Shabbas was the Editor of the distinguished magazine, Nineveh, for two decades, until 2000. He was admired and respected by his readers and distinguished himself as a top Assyrian editor. He has afforded this newsletter's Editor and Mr. Solomon S. Solomon and other writers unrestricted publication of their material, both in pictures and text, on Habbaniya and its people over a period of many years. While gratefully accepting his check as a donation, the HUSA Board decided to accept him as an honorary member of the Association without the obligation to pay a membership fee—Ed*

Express Yourself! (Cont'd)

Dear Minashi:

I received another issue of HUSA and enjoyed reading the articles in it, which so colorfully describe many events of times past. The comments of different people expressing themselves were encouraging and hopefully the circulation will grow into a healthy number to make it worth your while to continue publishing it. It is truly a gem, for when you pick it up you want to keep reading and reading and don't want to put it down. It is without doubt a huge effort on your part to write, re-create, collect, edit, and publish the articles in the magazine and then mail it to subscribers living in the States and abroad. [Printing, mailing and accounts are taken care of by Ben Yalda in Chicago—Ed.] The whole concept certainly generates a lot of nostalgic feelings as we remember the simple life almost all of us lived, specifically in Habbaniya and later on in Baghdad. This idea, too, serves as a reminder of our mortality as you look at the pictures of many people that have departed this world.

Please convey our love and regards to all the family members.

**Sargon Fraidon Ibrahim
Brampton, Canada.**

>> *Cousin Sargon is the son of the late Fraidon Abraham Is'hak, the long-time (1938-1951) goalkeeper of Tigers, Arsenal, and Employees Clubs and the C.C. Select soccer teams of Habbaniya—Ed.*

Dear Mike:

Among the many Christmas cards and letters we received was one from Babs' oldest brother, Bill Bolton. Beside his usual Christmas letter and Christmas card there was also a check and the following message: "Dear Babs and Basil, We keep getting nudges (from a guardian angel or the Holy Spirit) suggesting that we should be sharing in your care for brother Kooya. Enclosed is a check to help." The check was for \$500.00.

Actually it's no surprise, because the guy was pretty generous when we asked him to help Esho and Shammo during their days in a communist prison [in Estonia] in the early 1990s, remember?

What Babs and I are suggesting is that you send him a copy of your book and one to his sister, Sister Nancy. Kooya is

donating the enclosed check [\$100.00] to cover your costs and the rest for the needy Assyrians. Bill is retired now and should have the time to read the book. Sister Nancy is doing a lot of care-taking of the disabled and aging sisters. Anyway, we feel she and Bill will appreciate it and so will we.

And speaking of your book, our [son] Daniel is now reading it. During his telephone call yesterday he truly commended you for your "uncensored" expression of honest writing, especially your ability to present such powerful and convincing character images through carefully chosen words. He also was surprised to read about the wild period our late father Khammo went through during his younger Habbaniya drinking days in NAAFI. His other reaction was "How in the world did Uncle Mike manage to get through all his medical problems and never gave up the fight at a time when affording a doctor was so difficult!"

Daniel is hoping that this time he won't be called in for deployment in the crazy battle zone. He will know very soon.

**Basil K. Pius
Miles City, Montana.**

Dear Sirs,

With great enthusiasm your esteemed newsletter HUSA Fall-Winter, 2002, is hereby acknowledged.

I would like to wholeheartedly congratulate all the officials who are devoting their valuable time to bring such magazine into circulation, the Editor for his untiring efforts, retentive memories and collection of records and documents.

When going through the magazine, reading page after page, my eyes could not believe seeing such splendid photos and reading reprints of over forty years ago. The photos and the articles reminded me of our youth and how we used to pass our life in such desert, particularly in the dwellings we lived in.

I am proud to say that we Assyrians are clean and tidy people, even though our dwellings were made of mud bricks, without private toilets, running water and electricity. Only a small minority had the private facilities, while all the British personnel had all these facilities and their barracks, bungalows, offices and other buildings were made of baked brick and concrete and with central heating in winter and cooling systems in summer, not to

mention the recreation, entertainment and other conveniences and comforts.

I was delighted and impressed to read the last page about the late Haidoo Patros. This dedicated Assyrian hero deserves to be mentioned more often due to his daring efforts and heroism to his nation during his term as *mukhtar* at C. C. Habbaniya. I recall I once accompanied him to Ramadi when I witnessed how he was carrying on a bold discussion with Iraqi government officials in order to save the neck of two of our youths from conscription. He was a pillar of our community. Haido is gone but is never forgotten!

Finally, enclosed are a few photos for printing in your magazine if you deem them appropriate. Also I enclose a minor check [Pounds Sterling 10] to keep the paper work going, with my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Andrew J. Simon
Ealing, England.**

Dear Mr. Pius:

Shlama, and a Merry Christmas and Happy 2003.

First, I must apologize for not writing to you earlier. I did receive your book, "An Assyrian's Youth Journal," and I enjoyed it. My daughter who is 16 also read it. Of course, my mother (Lena Lazar) read it at least twice. Please accept the attached payment [\$25] and hope will keep me in mind on [your] future projects.

Also please note my new address. We have moved to a new place in Gilbert. We are closer to the Assyrian community now. The community is getting bigger day by day.

Thanks again, and keep up the good work.

**Fred Nimrud Rustam
Gilbert, Arizona.**

>> *Thank you, Fred, for your donation. Your mother was gracious enough to call me twice to express very enthusiastic appreciation of, and her candid sentiments about, both my book and HUSA newsletter, also mailing me a \$50 donation to cover the cost of the book and a bonus for my Assyrian needy project. She also talked with Ben Yalda in Chicago and subscribed to HUSA and made another \$50.00 contribution. And I've noted from Assyrian TV coverage how involved you yourself are in Assyrian community and nationalistic work—Ed.*

Express Yourself! (Cont'd)

Dear Ben & Mikhael:

I received the second newsletter a week ago. I cannot explain how much I enjoy reading it. I was very delighted to receive An Assyrian's Youth Journal a few weeks ago. I read it all in two days; it was fantastic! I was not able to write you at the time but I called you, Ben—to congratulate you, do you remember?—and I sent a small donation of fifty dollars for the people that you help. You are doing such a great deed and I am enclosing another check of fifty dollars to further thank you, Mikhael, for giving your time to inform us about all of our friends.

I pray to the Lord to give you health and wisdom and help you keep up the good work.

Lena Nimrod Lazar
Philadelphia, PA

>> *Lena Lazar is the widow of the late Nimrod Rustam Lazar. She is also one of four children of the late well-known former Rab-Tremma Soski Perroef who was assistant to Officer-in-charge CC for a few years in the late 1940s, after his retirement from the Levy Force.*

In memory of Lena's late husband Nimrod, a meek and mild school mate nicknamed "Qoqqoosh," who later became Habb champion typist, I'm reproducing here a school photo (from my family collection) taken at a time when he was in his early teens, as most of us were—Ed.

Dear Minashi:

I am very sorry for the delay. It appears that my check was lost in the mail. However, I am enclosing a new check [\$25] for the book and I have put a stop to the previous one.

Emmanuel Warda
Redwood City, Calif.

Dear Ben:

Thank you very, very much for taking time from your busy day to personally hand-deliver the HUSA newsletter to our home. You never fail to amaze me! Always busy yet very organized and so punctual. How do you do it?

The HUSA newsletter is great. I love it. Enclosed is the completed Membership Application Form together with a \$20.00 check for the subscription, wishing you and your family a very happy New Year.

Adeline Zacharia-Audisho, Skokie, IL.
True Habbaniyan (The Next Generation)

Dear Ben:

I am enclosing herewith a check for \$20.00 from my brother Youshia, who wishes to be enrolled in the Habbaniya Union School Association. He lives in Arizona and his address is...

Shamiran and I wish to take this opportunity to wish you and Leena and the family a very happy new year.

William K. Kannon
Modesto, Calif.

gratitude also to Civic Club of Turlock (50 copies) and AUA Library (39 copies), and to the Assyrian American Association of Modesto (25 copies) for their support to self-publishing authors like me. My thanks and appreciation also to Raabi Jacob Miraziz of Australia (55 copies), Brother Basil of Montana (52 copies) and Nephew Ashur George of Calgary (30 copies) for their efforts in selling my book as well as to those individuals—among the many who purchased my book—who generously sent in a donation too because of my pledge to send the profit to the needy Assyrians in Jordan.—Ed.



Oct.1941: Near the school building, five months after the May 1941 Battle of Habbaniya and two months into the 1941-42 Union School scholastic season, standing from left, Loudiyya Kakko Polus* (Mrs. Fraidon A. Is'hak), and Surain Onick Sanasarian* ("Jesse James"); From right, kindergarten teacher the late Youliya Shmouel (Mrs. Menashi Baddo), the late Nimrod Rustam (Lena's husband), and Davis Eshay David, the school Romeo; Sitting, from left, John ("Abracadabra") Avakian and his close friend Goliat Rasho. And standing in the center with the Cheshire-cat smile and rabbit ears is yours truly* These (*) three, along with more than a dozen others, among them Yacoub "Khouna" Youkhanna, Leonard Mishael Sargis, Aprim Billa, Sombat Iskhaq, Zaia Esho Yalda, June Wilkinson, William Kaplano Kannon, Manouk Karapet Duranian, Eshay Abraham Baba, and several others, were the senior class of 1940-41 and whose graduation from Secondary C Form (2nd High) in July 1941 was postponed due to the battle of Habbaniya. But only half a dozen of them graduated on July 22 of next year with the 1941-42 class. The other four students in the picture are 1941-42 seniors. All the other 1940-41 seniors, including me, didn't have the cool to cool their feet for another year to graduate. They found jobs and started working. (The original version of the 1942 graduation program is reproduced on pages 24 & 25—Ed.)

Dear Mikhael:

Enclosed is our check covering the cost of 62 books. I told Julius that I met you at the Shallous' wedding. He said thanks for the *shlameh*.

Best regards.

Sargon W. Shabbas
Hercules, Calif.

>> *I thank you very much, Sargon, and I'm very grateful to Assyrian Foundation of America (which is always helpful) for purchasing a quantity of my book. My*

Dear Mikhael:

Warm thanks for your thoughtfulness for sending me HUSA. Although it is late, I appreciate it very much and thank you again for all your writings and interest in our culture. God bless you and keep you at peace, happy and healthy at this holy season. Have a happy new year. This donation [\$100] is for your efforts. Love,

Shalim Shabbas Tattar
El Cerrito, Calif.

Express Yourself! (Cont'd)

Dear Ben:

Thank you for your letter of October 28, 2002. I apologize for not responding earlier. I would be very pleased to receive HUSA newsletter. As you are aware, I never lived in Habbaniya. I told Sargon this and he said that it is okay. I am enclosing a check [\$10] for the subscription.

I wish you all the best. Remember, I am always ready to help if needed.

Angel Kindo
Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Michael K. Pius:

Thank you very much for your letter of October 31, 2002, which I received today. Really I have not read much of the book, because what I read I have today dreamed. As you know, we all lived the same hard times and your sentences move our emotions.

I'm very proud of your strivings to put your literary ability in publishing books. Let Assyrians have a publisher to strengthen the links between the nation's families that are scattered around the world.

I enclose herewith my check for \$26 and hope that others will take the same step to encourage you to do more and more.

Shmoel S. Tammo
Roslindale, Massachusetts

Dear Ben:

Sorry for the delay. This is just a short note to say that HUSA newsletter is great. Keep up the good work and good luck to you. God bless you.

Enclosed is a check for \$25.00 representing my donation.

Toma Yousif
Skokie, Illinois.

Dear Michael:

Greetings. Your letter of October 29 came as a surprise. I have never heard of HUSA! Your newsletter and a copy of your book "An Assyrian's Youth Journal" never made it to Napa. Perhaps you mailed it to the wrong address. However, I am glad you think of me (as you put it) "as a hardcore ex-Habb chap." I admire your love, efforts, and contributions to the Assyrian cause, and I consider Ben Yalda as a brother.

Please do count on me for future help. [A \$250.00 check was enclosed, half of which I remitted to Ben Yalda for HUSA account—Ed.]

Hubert A. Babilla
Napa, Calif.

>> *After I wrote Hubert and mailed him another two copies of my book with another copy of HUSA, I received a Christmas card from him containing the following message—Ed :*

I have to apologize for my procrastination in replying to your letter. I guess it's either old age or *mahana* [excuse] being busy.

Mike, I enjoyed your book thoroughly, and I gave the extra copy you sent me to my sister, Anita. What a memory, man! The book brought out old forgotten memories. Good job, my friend. I should have made it clear. The \$250.00 was meant for you to help you in defraying your expenses of producing such a lovely book. I had not heard of HUSA. So now I'm sending \$100.00 for HUSA. You be the judge. Do whatever you see fit.

Hubert A. Babilla
Napa, Calif.

>> *Hubert also asked me to mail out a copy of my book to one of his closest friends in Australia, which I did. But because I felt he had already been over-generous, I contemplated the idea of returning the \$100.00 check to him. But during a phone conversation, I told his older brother, Raabi Albert, of my feeling. He assured me that his brother is a very generous person and thought returning the check to Hubert might not be the best idea and urged me to "go ahead and cash the check." —Ed.*

Dear Ben:

Your letter December 18, 2002, was received and contents noted with thanks.

Once again I would like to stress that myself and four others did not receive the first issue [of HUSA] at all.

However, the Assyrians of Australia are proud to be, and will continue to be, Habbaniyans and will not forget their brotherhood and friendship. During the 4th Habbaniya Union School Reunion we proved our friendship.

I do not wish to go into further discussion; I am enclosing my membership form with fee of US\$10.00 by direct post.

Regards.

William Daniel
Fairfield, Australia.

Dear Michael:

Sorry we are late. But toooo busy, i.e. Foundation, etc. Please do write more. Assyrians need people like you. Love.

[\$10.00 check was enclosed]

Bob & Flora Kingsbury
Clayton, Calif.

Dear Ben:

Many thanks for your letter of October 28. I was very happy to hear from you as a good friend and ex-Habbaniya neighbor.

Although I am not very much in favor of carrying out the annual gatherings of ex-Union School students for the simple reasons which I mentioned in my e-mail letter, I am nevertheless prepared to support the publication of a newsletter. Therefore, I am now sending you my application for membership together with my personal check for \$20.00 Canadian.

I would be very interested to hear your views on the remarks contained in my e-mail message. I am sure you will feel the same way I do, that we are faced with much greater problems, which will affect our future and that of the new generation of Assyrians. We ought to be involved in trying to work together toward a more unified and strong nation if we wish to survive and maintain our identity, our culture and our dignity. Those of us in Diaspora have a better chance of arranging ourselves in a unified form working together and creating private schools in USA, Canada and in other Western countries, to educate our children in Assyrian history, culture and in unity of our people as a nation and not divided, as it is at present, in various church denominations, in individual tribal affiliations and so on. This is a good cause to work for which has hopes of bearing good fruit for our next generation of Assyrians.

I look forward to hearing from you and meanwhile I wish you all good health, happiness and prosperity. Also wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

God bless you all.

Mirza Shmoil
Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Dear Mikhael:

I refer to our telephone conversation and as promised I enclose herewith the money order check for \$10.00 [for the book]. Regards.

Joseph Y. Sliwo
Morton Grove, Illinois

Express Yourself! (Cont'd)

Dear Uncle Minashi:

Thanks for the book. I regret that it has taken me so long to get a donation off to you, but you will find a check [\$20.00] enclosed for the Assyrians in Jordan. I wish I could spare more.

I also regret that I have not yet gotten around to reading the book. I have been quite busy with my two-job schedule since the summer, and business has not yet let up. In fact I have hardly had time to watch my beloved football teams including the Oakland Raiders and Notre Dame Fighting Irish...and you know I love my football! However, I am looking forward to finally sitting down with the book during the approaching Holidays. If it has the same sort of intrigue as ASSYRIAN TALES AND CONFESSIONS, then I'm sure I will enjoy it.

Things are, otherwise, going well for me. I have also started to plan on attending next summer's family reunion. I haven't seen any of my cousins in Appy's or Rafael's families in over a decade (or Yosip either for that matter) and would like to see at least some of them next summer, hopefully. And I hope all is well with you and yours in the Modesto Turlock area. God bless.

**Shumon "Keepa" Pius
Savage, Minnesota**

Dear Michael:

I congratulate you on your new book *An Assyrian Youth's Journal*. It is a work of love and great devotion. I hope you will continue to write more books. Many thanks for the book.

You have mentioned that you have sent me a newsletter; unfortunately I did not receive it. Enclosed please find a check for \$17.00 for two books. I have also enclosed a copy of Assyrian version of my book *The Eagle Who Thought He Was a Chicken*. Please give me your opinion on the translation. Two hundred books were sent to Assyrian schools in Northern Iraq. The Assyrian version is available for sale for \$5.00 plus shipping.

Regards, and may God bless you and your good work.

**Francis K. Khosho
Poway, California**

>> *Francis Khosho is also the author of Twin Rivers Bibliography.* -Ed.

Dear Ben:

Enclosed please find a membership application form for HUSA newsletter. It was sent to me by my aunt Lily Baba of London. She did in fact attach a \$10 bill with the form. But I am writing a check in her behalf for the same amount. At the same time I would like to subscribe for the newsletter. I have misplaced my application. Therefore consider this letter as my application. Here is my information...

I am enclosing a check for \$40 to cover her and my subscription dues. If you have any questions, please contact me.

**Martin Mirza
Wheeling, Illinois.**

Dear Menashi (Michael):

A copy of your newsletter came into my hands by courtesy of Enwiya Warda.

Before I go into general chit chat please accept my and Jacklin's sincerest condolences on the passing away of your dear wife Blandina. May the Almighty take care of her soul.

Congratulations for the interesting articles by you and the other contributors.

For a man of 78, it brings back to me many warm memories indeed. I will write you a long letter soon and certainly give you some additional thoughts that would interest your readers. Good luck for the future. Will try to contact you when next I am in Los Angeles. Rest assured.

**Hrand Y. Sayadian
Hertfordshire, England**

Ben:

Keep up the good work. [\$50.00 check enclosed.]

**Leon Sarkis
Chicago, Illinois.**

Dear Ben:

Many thanks for the notice about HUSA membership and for the first issue of the newsletter, both of which were handed to me by Dinkha Warda. Dinkha first mentioned to me about a couple of months ago that he had some material to give to me and he was going to leave it at the Club desk. But time went by and nothing was left. Dinkha's explanation was that someone had removed it and that he would get me some more, which he eventually did. Surprisingly, however, Dinkha never mentioned what the material was about.

Anyhow, please accept my apology for the delayed response and although I

am not a Habbaniyan I will wholeheartedly support HUSA. A bank draft for US\$24 will be mailed out later today for a three-year membership.

I would also like to commend Mikhael Pius for his excellent contributions on Habbaniya over the past several years and which I have immensely enjoyed reading. I have known Mike ever since my five-year employment at Coronet Bookstore during the sixties prior to my immigration to Australia. I visited him twice when I was in Modesto for a short stay in 1997.

Thanks again for extending membership invitation to me and you can rest assure that I will do my best that I will contribute if I come across any useful material through my regular research.

Shlameh w'eqara.

**Romeo Hanna
Bossley Park, Australia.**

Dear Mr. Pius:

I am in receipt of your letter regarding your new book and the note you had written about my late father Malko (Dick) Sargon. To say the least I am delighted that you have written and send me the letter and I would like to congratulate you on your great achievement. It is very difficult to find dedicated people to write and continue to write like you have done.

Enclosed you will find my check for \$50.00 to cover the cost of one book for myself and another one for my father-in-law Mr. Shimshon L. Essa who lives in Modesto. [address given--Ed].

Also if you have a copy of your first book, *Assyrian Tales and Confessions*, I would like to get one and I will send you the funds for that one as well.

Again best wishes and regards, and may God bless you.

**Ashur Sargon
Morton Grove, Illinois.**

Dear Mr. Pius:

Thank you for your note and the extracts from your new book. I enjoyed reading them. Although my family moved from Habbaniya to Kirkuk when I was 10, I do enjoy reading any articles and books about Habbaniya.

Enclosed is a check for \$50.00. Please send me two copies of your new book and donate the remaining to the needy Assyrians. May our Lord bless you and your financial support of those in need.

**Nathan Y. Michael
Glenview, Illinois.**

Express Yourself! (Cont'd)

>> *Thank you very much. Sorry, my first book is sold out, as explained in my personal letter to you—Ed*

Dear Mikhael:

Greetings to you and to your family. I received your letter and the details you relate about the days in Habbaniya. As we get older those earlier years become more memorable. Indeed, I recall the numerous occasions I passed by Coronet Bookstore in Babel Sharji which you and your brothers operated. Time truly flies!

I certainly agree that you have fine-tuned your English. Indeed your mastery of the language is quite impressive. I wouldn't be exaggerating to say that you are among the top Assyrian users of this foreign language. Your grammar, syntax, diction and the overall presentation are rather admirable.

I also commend you for pledging to assist our needy people although, like the rest of us, you have your personal economic challenges. But this is a duty imposed on all of us. I am also a regular contributor to the Assyrian Aid Society which disposes considerable amounts of money for the reconstruction of the infrastructure of Bet-Nahrain [North Iraq]. Incidentally, on November 15 in a dinner in San Francisco, \$150,000 was raised. By Assyrian standards, this is unprecedented.

I enclose herewith a small check for \$30 [as a donation].

In a few years I plan to retire and perhaps end up in Turlock where I have a brother, Pnoel Shamun. So you may find me as a neighbor within the few coming years.

Shlaman qatoukh w'ga bnai baita.

Bailis Shamun
Charlotte, North Carolina

Dear Ben & Family:

Thank you for your letter. I am sorry if I left it too late. I was reading your letter with tears in my eyes for being so lazy.

I am enclosing herewith \$10. It is my last \$10 of this year. So I don't know how I will manage for the Christmas. What are the plans for the next Reunion? Hope you will hold it in Chicago, the best place.

Lots of love and best wishes from Helen and me to you all. God bless.

Envia "Enno" Warda
Slade Green, Kent, UK

Dear Ben:

I hope you and family are well, along with Sargon Aboona and family. We miss you. Although the days you spent in London were very short, but for us they were like a dream. It was a very nice dream. We hope in future such moments will be longer and longer.

I am enclosing same draft check you sent me for \$20. Please cash it to pay toward the membership for HUSA for me and for Lewis Shlaimoun.

Tawer Michael
Ealing, London, UK

Dear Menashi:

Your letter and the article you published in HUSA newsletter on my past sports activities were both most welcome here. The newsletter will be kept with my other important and valuable documents as a souvenir for which I take this opportunity to thank you for a job well done.

I have read the whole newsletter many times with enjoyment and find in it many other pleasant memories, like Boy Scout photos at the [school] courtyard and the dance party at the Employees' Club. My grandchildren are also very delighted with the articles.

I will certainly be very pleased to be a member of this association and hope to contact others to join.

Thank you and say hello to Ben Yalda when you get the chance.

Youel Gewarges
Wetherill Park, Australia.

Dear Mr. Pius:

Thank you for your greetings. I am sending \$20 for the book "An Assyrian's Youth Journal" and I just like to tell you that I like your style of writing and the informed covering of that period of our life.

Thank you.

Aram Athniel
Glendale, California

Dear Minashi:

Thank you very much for your condolences on the passing away of my wife. Yes, she died 8th Feb.2001, a month after Blandina.

I received your book "An Assyrian's Youth Journal." [\$10 enclosed] It really is very interesting to remember the good ol' days; it takes you back to when we were young at heart and did not know what was going on. Life then was different. Although today we have more money and

and possessions we were happier in our young days.

I'm sorry I did not answer your e-mail much earlier because I lost my younger brother Elisha back in Kirkuk, and also in Chicago my brother-in-law, who was also my cousin. You should know him. He was Israel, brother of Jibba Hormis, Baghdad Assyrian [Sports?] Club's secretary in the '70s. Jibba is now in Sydney, Australia. As you say, the world turns and life goes on. May God rest Blandina's soul and give her eternal peace. I know you miss her a lot, as I miss Soriya.

Jesse (Esha) Solomon
Elk Grove Village, Illinois

Dear Ben:

Many thanks for your reminder letter dated 28th October and regret to say that Dinkha Warda appears to be sitting on the first issue of HUSA newsletter and membership forms, as both Zia and I have not as yet received the said newsletter and membership forms and I had to copy the form and your letter dated September 1 from Youiel Bahram's issues. Kindly ensure that future newsletters are mailed direct to our addresses.

Meanwhile, please find enclosed herewith a Postal Order for the amount of US\$10 to cover my membership and I look forward with much interest to the receipt of the next issue. Kindly pass my best regards to your wife and hope to see you guys again in the near future.

Albert Avikam Samuel
Cecil Hills, Australia

Ben:

Please accept the difference as a small donation and a thank you for all efforts of the good job done! [\$25.00 check was enclosed].

Ben Zacharia
Skokie, Illinois.

Dear Benjamin, the God bless:

Thank you very much for your very nice circular letter dated 1st September, 2002, and HUSA newsletter No.1 Spring-Summer, 2002.

After reading the letter and the newsletter, I just cannot describe on paper how I felt! First, the composition and phrases written in English language are excellent. There are few who could write as it has been written. Secondly, I was so happy to go back to about fifty years and more and remember all the happy days we had in

Express Yourself! (Cont'd)

the school and among the Assyrian community of that time, especially when I saw the picture of my ex-school headmaster, the late *Raabi* Yacoub—may God rest his soul in peace—remembering the school days when I was a student. I can say that he was an excellent headmaster. Included in the newsletter are many articles that remind us of the life of about 60 years ago—written excellently. As to your paras 5 and 7, we hope that the TORCH will be carried on for decades by generation after generation.

It is my great pleasure to become a member. I have completed the form and return it herewith together with the annual membership fee of \$10. Hope HUSA membership will grow in number and will continue for decades.

I close with my greetings and wish you and all the committee members all the best of health, love and faith and continued ability to publish HUSA.

Zia E. Yalda
Fairfield, Australia

Dear Minashi:

Reading the first issue of HUSA newsletter gave me great pleasure to see so many interesting articles and the encouraging response from various readers. I thank and congratulate both you and Ben Yalda for an excellent job. A *chaibo* is most appropriate and well deserving too.

Although my one-year subscription was mailed immediately on receipt of the first issue, I found no mention of this in your Letters pages.

Anyhow, I sincerely wish you both good health, thus enabling you to continue the splendid work undertaken.

Pius Peyour Haddad
Turlock, California

>> Your financial support for my book (\$20) as well as for HUSA is very much appreciated. Your contribution was not mentioned because it was not accompanied by a letter for publication. But you will recall I called and thanked you on the phone as well as sent you a personal letter of appreciation.—Ed.

Dear Mike:

I appreciate very much your printing my biography in the second issue of the HUSA. I find the newsletter—which I've read over and over—very interesting, informative, and is a reminder of our unforgettable youthful memories in good old Habbaniya. The layout is excellent, and the photographs of familiar faces and places, though not too sharp in some cases, are certainly acceptable.

I am also delighted to notice an increase in the number of pages from 20 to 24, and the enthusiastic and generous outpouring of readers' letters is an encouraging sign and a positive support for the newsletter.

I would suggest, however, that a heavier stock of paper be used for the covers to give the newsletter more physical substance.

I congratulate the Editor and Administration Manager and thank all those members who are contributing articles as well as those "Expressing" themselves in the letters pages.

You all deserve a big *chaibo!* Keep up the excellent work.

Zacharia O. Zacharia
Modesto, California

>> *You're welcome, "Zac the Sax!" And thanks for your generous support. Thicker covers for the second issue were actually ordered. Unfortunately, this wasn't done through an oversight. But this issue will definitely be "stiffer"—and maybe "muscular," too!—Ed.*

Dear Ben:

It was nice meeting you and your family. We enjoyed our stay in Chicago, but must apologize for not being able to visit you at home. Time was too short. Hopefully we will make it on next trip. Regards and best wishes to the family. Say Hi to Sargon and Almaz. We really enjoyed the tasty food at their home. Bye for now and God bless you all. [\$30.00 check was enclosed]

Sh. Michael Sheem Michael
Modesto, California

Dear Brother Benyamin:

We were very pleased when we received your letter with the Habbaniya newsletter. You are doing a very pretty work as always. May God help you always and give you health. We will be very glad to receive HUSA always and we are sending you a little something for helping our brothers.

Dear Brother, give greetings from myself and from my sister Amly to your family as well as to all the Committee members and their families; also to our brother Mikhael Pius. May God be with you, always.

Joe Aslan
Toronto, Canada.

Dear Ben:

Many thanks for your letter dated October 28, together with HUSA newsletter. We enjoyed the contents.

Herewith we enclose a postal check for \$8.00, hoping you will receive it in a good condition with your family.

Sorry for delay. We have had some minor operations, but all are now good.

Our regards to your family and friends.

Roza & Enwia Simon
Sydney, Australia.

Dear Mikhael:

I received your letter together with couple of leaflets [one book and four newsletters] concerning the unforgettable Habbaniya. Although we are dispersed all over the world we will never forget those happy days of our youth in Habbaniya of 50 years ago. Thanks a lot for your very interesting writing reminding us of our sweet Habbaniya. I still have good memory of Habbaniya. The three German Messerschmitts [airplanes] came very low over the Levies family bungalows. One was downed at Abu Fleis.

I am enclosing with this letter a check for \$8.50.

And thanks again.

Akhshirash Mammo Jango
Newport News, Virginia

Kha-b'Neesan and Easter [Cont'd from page 2] ...new life; when the warming fingers of the cloud-released sun coax out the insects and little animals to new life, as well as blaze down on the snows of tundra and on the mountains to melt them down into gurgling brooklets, gushing springs, rushing streams, roaring rivers and thundering waterfalls, all fresh water that quenches thirst and nourishes and revives both nature and creature. Springtime changes the environment's drab and dreary look to a light mood of color, scent and joy, and nature's gradual response to the season's generosity heralds an increase in spring activities. Shouldn't it be more appropriate, then, to celebrate the beginning of the year in the youthful spirit of April rather than in the severe age of January? Apparently, our ancestors thought so, and decided that the year should begin at the time when man and nature were both in tune and in harmony with the revival and rejuvenation of life. —MKP

Young Assyrian Achievers of Habbaniya Origin...



...Today's

A beautiful, shy but cheerful girl of 19 with an engaging quick smile, who was at first too modest to sit for an interview because she thought her father would brag about her, Cindy Mary Yalda is one of the brightest minds of today's young Assyrian generation. She is now in her first year in U.C. Davis (University of California) in Sacramento, California, studying premedicine, majoring in biology, and

intent on becoming a heart surgeon.

Cindy, who can, in addition to English and Spanish, speak, read and write a spattering of Assyrian (not a common feat among second generation Assyrian immigrants) graduated last year from Grace Davis High School in Modesto with a 4.0 GPA, No.1 among a class of 620 students, and was the valedictorian of her class. While in this high school, she gained straight A's and won the award for being the outstanding student and citizen for four years running, with no absences. She was the secretary for California Scholarship Federation during her 11th and 12th Grade years, and vice-president of Health Organization for Students of America. During this time, she was also active in school sports, particularly in volleyball and track and field.

She is today a member of the choir in Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East in nearby Ceres and of Campus Crusade for Christ in UC Davis.

Cindy was born January 31, 1984 in Chicago, Illinois, where she had her early schooling at Agnes and Baptist Elementary School. She is younger than her only sibling, 22-year-old Sabrina Elizabeth. When the family moved to Modesto, Cindy went to Prescott Junior Elementary School and finished her 9th through 12th Grade at Grace Davis High.

Cindy is the daughter of Eshaya Benyamin Yalda who was born in Habbaniya in 1948, and of Gladis Akhshirish, born in Baghdad. They now live in Modesto. Her father works for KPG Communications in Livermore, some 40 miles west, and her mother commutes 80 miles each way to work at Max Store in San Jose. And Cindy's grandfather, Benyamin, worked as cook and Barman, first at the RAF Guest House in Habbaniya and later at Alwiya Club in Baghdad. He and his twin brother Yosip were well known in Habbaniya for their look-alikeness and skill in *khigga* dancing. And Cindy's great-grandfather, Shindo Yalda, a rather sizeable man, was a *chokidar* (local guard) in Habbaniya.

When asked what motivated her to study medicine, Cindy said: "My grandmother. When I saw her in the hospital after her heart surgery, I decided to become a heart surgeon."

We are hoping Cindy will eventually make it as well as make a difference, not only to her native country, America, but also to her own people. —By Mikhael K. Pius

...Yesterday's

Albert Tattar was one of the Assyrian achievers. He had one of the brightest Assyrian minds of recent decades and achieved success at a relatively young age.

Albert graduated in 1954 from high school in Ramadi, a town fifteen miles west of Habbaniya, scoring the 2nd highest national marks in baccalaureate examinations. He was sent by the Iraqi



Ministry of Education to England on a scholarship and was paid fifty pounds a month for his living expenses. He returned with degrees in math and chemistry. In 1959, at the young age of 23, he was hired as a petroleum engineer by the Iraq Petroleum Company in Kirkuk. But less than two years later, he was drafted into the Iraqi Republican Air Force. After his basic training at boot camp, he served as a reserve officer for five years at Amadiya, mostly teaching high school, and was released with the rank of 1st Lieutenant. He returned to I.P.C. and was sent to Amsterdam for higher studies. Instead, he chose to rejoin his family that had since immigrated to Australia.

In Sydney, he studied and earned his M.S. and later Ph.D. in chemical engineering from the University of New South Wales, which university then appointed him senior lecturer of mathematics. He was also appointed President by the Nimrod Simono Foundation. The Foundation, managed by the Assyrian Australian Association, awarded scholarships to Assyrian students.

In Australia, Albert married Layah, daughter of Shumon and Khazala. She bore him two sons and a daughter. He also co-authored a text book under the title *An Introduction to Proofs in Mathematics*, published by Prentice Hall, and he wrote a second book titled *A Concept Building Approach*, which, for some reason, was unfortunately not published.

Albert was one of six children of Tattar Daoud and Sona Shamasha Younathan. He was born in 1936 in Gailani Camp, Baghdad, but grew up in the Civil Cantonment of the Royal Air Force Station of Habbaniya, where his father worked. He was a kind and gentle person, quiet and unassuming. But he had an extraordinary mind and was a credit to his family, his people and his country.

In February 1994, Albert was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Three months later, he was dead at the relatively young age of 58. He had a lot to live for, and his community is so much poorer for his loss, for he had a lot more to contribute to his nation and to his adopted country.

— By Solomon (Sawa) Solomon

A Personality Sketch**“BENYAMIN YALDA—ASSYRIAN”**

By Solomon S. Solomon



1991: Ben Yalda the family man: Posing with him at his home are, from left: his children John, Dorothy and Sargon; John's wife Nadia with son Jonathan; Sargon's son Mark on Ben's lap; Ben's wife Leena flanked by John's children Jennifer and Joseph; Sargon's wife Janine with son Michael.

Benyamin Esho Yalda, popularly known as Ben Yalda, believes that Assyrian people, with all their divisions, are truly members of one family and that every Assyrian man and woman should serve their people in whichever way they can without expecting any material reward. Early on he believed in responsibility and in the old adage “Sound mind in sound body.” Based on these convictions, he strived, during the years, to attain excellence in various aspects of his life, such as sports, boy scouting, church and social affairs, community work, going on to become a dedicated civic and church leader, a sports advocate, a writer, a planner and organizer and achieving prominence in almost all these fields.

The third of ten children, Ben was born on January 8, 1932, to Esho Yalda of Geramon and Asyat Badal of Quchanos, in Sulaimaniya, north of Iraq, where his father served as an Assyrian Levy soldier. The family moved to Levy Lines in Hinaidi, near Baghdad, for a few years and then in 1937 to Royal Air Force Station of Habbaniya, 55 miles west of the Capital, where he began his schooling at *Raabi Yacoub's* Union School the next year at the age of six. During his scholastic years and up to 1952, he was actively involved in sports and boy scout activities, becoming the scout-master for the Senior Scouts Group at age sixteen and gaining the affectionate nickname “Skipper” from his Group members for his motivating leadership. He

Benyamin Yalda—Assyrian (Cont'd)

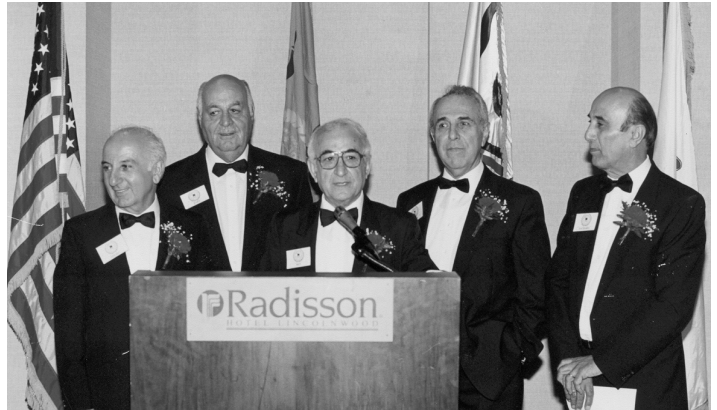
earned his AOC Scout Badge as well as thirteen proficiency badges in various Scouting activities. (AOC Badge was equivalent to the Queen's Scout Badge of England and Eagle Scout Badge of America.)

In 1952, Ben moved to Kirkuk, where he secured employment as a clerk at the Iraq Petroleum Company. Six months later he joined the only musical Assyrian Band in Kirkuk in which he played drums for three years.

Meanwhile, in September 1953 Ben married Leena, attractive daughter of *Usta* Younathan Mekhail of Sherabad and *Raabi* Regina Mekhail of Sangar, formerly of Habbaniya. The couple now has three children: Dorothy lives with her parents in Des Plaines, Illinois; Sargon with wife Janine and their two sons in Morton Grove, Illinois; and John with wife Nadia, two boys and a girl in Las Vegas, Nevada.

When Assyrian Sports Club was established in Kirkuk, Iraq, in 1964, Ben was one of the founders and later an Executive Committee member. The club was able to put up a first class soccer team, a volleyball team each for girls and boys, tennis teams and a basketball team, the latter winning Kirkuk's Basketball Championship in its first year. Its main purpose was to bring together all the community's Assyrians under one social roof with its sports activities, family gatherings, almost nightly bingo games and other social activities, some of which are remembered today by former Assyrian residents of Kirkuk.

In 1967 Ben was transferred to the Head Office of



1995: Ben the leader and the organizer, flanked by his four lieutenants (from left) Odisho Warda, the late John Baijo Rehana, Sargon Aboona and Zacharia O. Zacharia—the HUS Reunion Founding Committee—during a Reunion evening.

Iraq Petroleum Company in Baghdad. There he joined the Assyrian Sports Club, becoming an active member, mainly in its social functions. And two years later he was elected the vice president of the Executive Committee of St. Mary's Church of the East in N' Airiya w'Giyara in New Baghdad, when the construction of the church was carried out.

Ben immigrated to the United States with his family in 1977 and settled in Des Plaines, which has been his hometown ever since.

In 1983 Ben was elected Vice President of the Assyrian-American Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago. The next year he was invited to join the *Assyrian Star* Magazine Editorial Board and a year later he became an honorary member of the Assyrian Academic Society and was on its Journal's Editorial Board until 1997. He served both publications as Administrative Manager. In 1985, he also became a member of the Nomination Committee of the Assyrian National Council of Illinois and the chairman of its Registrar's Committee. In the same year he was also asked to act as advisor for Chicago's Assyrian *Kha B'Neesan* Organization as well as for Assyrian Athletic Club, which he willingly accepted.

In January 1988, Ben was elected President of the Executive Committee of the Assyrian Church of the East, Chicago Metropolitan Parish, for a two-year term. During his presidency, he was also entrusted with the position of Secretary for the Eastern USA and Canada dioceses and later he was appointed a committee member of the North America diocese, under the chairmanship of His Holiness Patriarch *Mar* Dinkha. Even before assuming responsible position



1951: Ben the Scoutmaster of Senior Scouts. From left, Emmanuel Shmouel Youkhanna, William Kambar, Mansor Benyamin Zoodo, Avia Nimrod Khammo, Ben Yalda and George Hormis Orahim

Benjamin Yalda—Assyrian (Cont'd)

Ben was always ready with constructive ideas and with assistance to the clergy and the church committee members for the betterment of the church.

During Habbaniya days, Ben was an all-around sportsman until a fractured leg in a soccer game in 1951 virtually ended his sports activities. This, however, did not prevent him from taking part in and finishing, with flying colors, a group Habbaniya-to Baghdad cycling round trip (55 miles each way) six months after his leg injury. And in Kirkuk he won the diving championship for two consecutive years.

Being a planner and organizer, Ben organized in 1989, with collaboration from Sargon Aboona, Odisho Warda, Eshaya Isaac, Shlimoon Youkhana and Alfred Daniel, a remembrance gathering in Chicago in memory of the late *Raabi* Yacoub Bet Yacoub (a scholar, poet, writer, and dramatist and headmaster and founder of Assyrian & Armenian Union School in Hinaidi and later in Habbaniya). After some publicity of the event through a video, illustrated articles by Mikhael Pius and the writer on Habbaniya, its people and Assyrian Levies started appearing after 1989 in *Nineveh* magazine of California under the Editorship of Julius Shabbas with additional shorter pieces, with period pictures, already being published in *Assyrian Observer* magazine of Britain. This aroused interest and set the stage for a series of Habbaniya Union School dinner-and-dance reunions that followed.

The first school Reunion, the semi-century, was held in Downtown Chicago on September 4, 1992. It was attended by 350 guests from various Assyrian communities in the world, about 100 of whom were



Sept.23, 1953: Ben the Bridegroom with his bride Leena at their wedding at IPC Recreation Center, Kirkuk. Bestman is the late Kenneth "Nanno" Bakus and his sister Liza. And accordion player is the late Jindo Odisho., all former residents of Habbaniya.

former students. It was a night of glowing nostalgia when dozens of school mates and friends were meeting for the first time in decades. The highly successful occasion induced a generally expressed desire to repeat the event every two or three years

A second one was held in Lincolnwood, Illinois, on October 14, 1994. But this was dubbed a party in honor of Habbaniya Union School teachers. Eight surviving ones were invited, but only four were able to attend.

1995 became the occasion for the 40th Anniversary of the disbandment of Habbaniya's Assyrian Levies, who became the theme for the next Reunion. It was called the 2nd Union School Reunion, and was held on 1st September in Lincolnwood again. Nine veterans, including an Assyrian nurse and a British Levy officer attended. They were presented with trophies.

All these reunions were planned, organized and held by the Organizing Committee in the Chicago area. Ben, looking fit and trim in a bow-tie suit, was in the middle of it all, leading his team and seemingly enjoying himself.

But the next three reunions were undertaken and hosted by organizing committees in other countries, and Ben and his committee then called itself the Founding Committee and acted as consultants to the overseas organizing committees.

The 3rd Reunion was held in August 1997, in Toronto, Canada, by a six-person organizing committee headed by Mr. John Aghajan. This was followed, three years later, by the 4th Reunion, held in Sydney, Australia, by a nine-member organizing committee, led by Mr. Dinkha Warda. And finally by the last Reunion (the 5th) hosted by six former Habbaniyans in London under chairmanship of Mr. Andrious Mama Jotyar.



1956: Ben the musician, playing drums for Andalus Band of Kirkuk at Albert Aslan's wedding at Sports Pavilion. From left: Warda Kheyu (tamborine), Ben, William John (accordion), Emmanuel Marcus (trumpet), Paul Marcus (Saxophone), and Henry Karam (standing) the wedding M.C.

Benyamin Yalda—Assyrian (Con't)

Ben, a favorite son of Habbaniya, had also lived in Kirkuk for two decades after leaving Habbaniya in 1952. So in co-operation with Awisha Lazar and Romeo Mirza, former residents of Kirkuk, Ben modeled on the pattern of Union School Reunion an "Assyrian School of Kirkuk" reunion, held in Skokie, two months after the 3rd Union School Reunion was held in Canada. It was hailed as a successful event.

Ben also was active in other areas. In February 1992, he helped Assyrian Academic Society in staging for 150 guests a poetry evening in the Anderson Pavilion Auditorium of the Swedish Covenant Hospital in Chicago, when Six Assyrian Poets participated; in December 1993, he was the chairman of Public Relations of the Central Organizing Committee in Chicago for the "1994 Assyrian Olympic Games;" and in August-September 1995 he was the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the Assyrian National Foundation hosting the 62nd National Convention in Chicago, Illinois.

After Ben retired in July 1996, he established his own company called American Global Trading Co. Inc., operating it from his home. He has been a member of the National US-Arab Chamber of Commerce as well as a member of the International Who's Who of Entrepreneurs for many years.

In October 1998 Ben was appointed the president of the *Mootwa* Executive Committee of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East by Patriarch *Mar Dinkha IV*. The *Mootwa* consisted of 23 members of the Church and was responsible for the

administration of four churches, namely, *Mar Gewargis*, *Mar Sargis*, and St. John's in Chicago, Illinois, and St. Mary's in Roselle, Illinois. His term expired in December 2000.

In August 2001 Ben worked for almost a year on compiling and printing a church directory of the churches and the clergy of the Assyrian Church of the East worldwide. His Grace *Mar Bawai Soro* is contemplating to include this in the Church Website.

In mid 2002, Ben and Mikhael Pius established the Habbaniya Union School Association and launched its first semi-annual newsletter, HUSA. Later, Zacharia O. Zacharia joined as the third HUSA Board member and the Association was registered with the Illinois Secretary of State as a not-for-profit organization. This issue of HUSA is the third one published and the membership is now about 200—and growing.

People find Ben Yalda a warm person, soft-spoken and friendly. He possesses a great store of energy, and yet he is cool and collected, always on top of things, and never overbearing or discourteous, but assertive in his ideas. Ben has given us many memorable moments. He has spent much time and effort in organizing these events, and yet he has never received any monetary rewards. He is generous with his time and money, spending out of his pocket to cover expenses.

When John Wayne died, U.S. Congress approved the issuing of a Gold Medal to honor him, but they couldn't decide what to engrave under his image until someone came up with the perfect description: "John Wayne—American." When the time comes to issue a Gold Medal for Ben I propose that it be inscribed: "BENYAMIN YALDA— ASSYRIAN."

When the cockroaches invaded a reader's house

Dear Uncle William Subhiyah:

I recently read with much compassion, your plea for help to solve your touching problem in fighting off the invincible ants that are pestering you. Oh, how my heart goes out to you, you poor martyr! But having little knowledge of the ants' behavior and no experience at all in fighting them, I regret that I am unable to offer help. In fact I am so obsessed with a similar problem of my own that I can't see straight. All I can do, therefore, is to sympathize with you and appeal, in turn, for help to my own plight. Perhaps some good reader will come up with a double cure for the plagues of both of us.

My problem is not ants, but a more abominable pest. The crawling, slimy cockroaches! Oh, how I wish you could see them, Uncle William! They come in all sizes, shapes and colors. There are large and small, fat and lean, black and red. And what

[Reprinted from *The Iraq Times* of July 30, 1953]

aggressors! They crawl out of everywhere and into everything. And nothing would stop them!

They crawl out of cracks and holes, from slits in the bathroom metal wall sheeting, out of the bath drain hole. They rumba across the bathroom floor, jitterbug on the kitchen table, feast in our tiny kitchen cupboard and get drunk in our crude icebox. The menacing creatures are everywhere and are threatening to run me and my poor family out of our own home—and perhaps out of this camp. They are invading even my peaceful dreams.

How can I—oh please how can I—fight off these crawling, slithering, skidding, skating, dancing, feasting, intoxicated, disgusting horrors and have some peace of mind? Doomsday is approaching! Hell is threatening to break loose! Oh, th...th...they are coming now! Help! Help! Helllllll...!

---A Habbaniya Reader [M.K. Pius]

From our sports archives

Joyce Cup Final Ends in Draw: Teams Share Trophy

By A. Vincent

The second replay between the RAF (A) Team and Employees [Assyrian] Club in the Joyce Invitation Hockey Cup final again ended in a draw, each side scoring twice. The previous two games also ended in draws.

The Employees Club pressed hard and took the lead in the 10th minute. Their lead, however, was short-lived, for a few minutes later the RAF obtained the equalizer. Right half Coward put Harper in possession and with the speed of a racehorse Harper, with a backhand stroke, scored from a neat angle.

After crossing over, the Employees were awarded a short corner and Aram Karam took the hit and scored with a very low hard shot.

This gave the Employees the lead in the 19th minute.

Midfield play ruled for some time and later the RAF stormed the Employees' goal, but good work under the cross by Zia Araboo rendered to naught all the attempts of the RAF forwards.

For the RAF Employees[?] Plowright later sent a through pass and Quandanborough scored the equalizer. The full time score remained 2-2. Extra ten minutes each way resulted in no further scores.

It was decided that each team should hold the Cup for six months. Winning the toss the Employees Club



RAF Employees' (Assyrian) Club team of Civil Cantonment of Habbaniya, Iraq, joint winners of Joyce Rolling Cup for 1951-52. Standing, from left: William Daniel, Aram Karam, Andrew Simon (Capt), Zia Araboo, Hormis Goriel, Etalius "John" Shawel; Squatting, from left: William David[Shino], William Kambar, Youel Gewar-gis, David Shlimon, and Andrious Mama [Jotyar]. Photo courtesy of Andrew Simon.

became eligible to hold it for the first six months.

This is the second time in the history of the Joyce Cup that the finals were played thrice. The last one was in the year 1940, when the AMWD [Air Ministry Works Department] Club and British Hospital game ended similarly and the cup was kept for six months by each side.

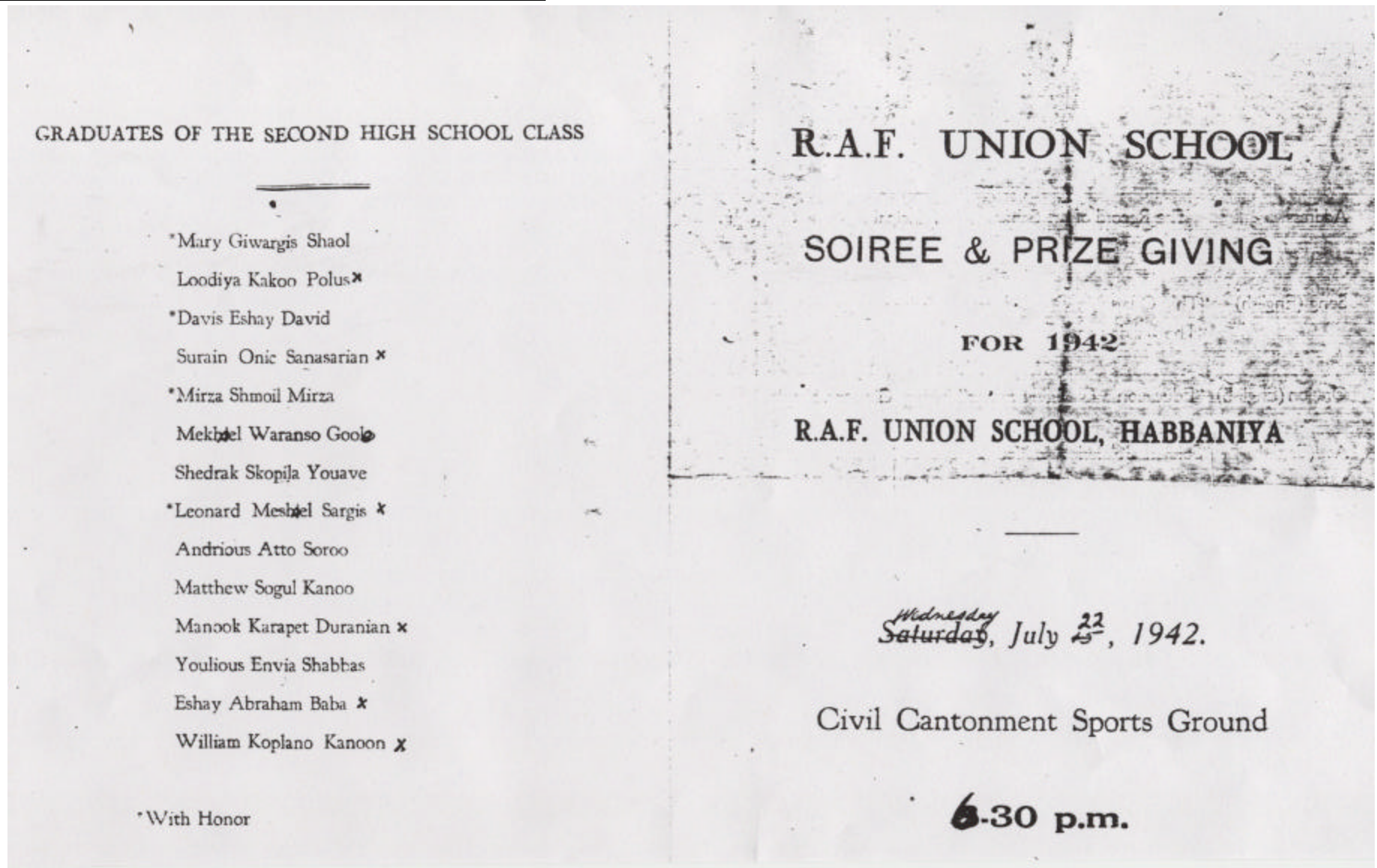
RAF "A" Team and RAF Employees (Assyrian) Club played good and determined hockey. The speed and the stick work of both the forward lines was excellent. Special mention should be made of the hockey wizards, Andrew Simon, Brown, Plowright, and Harper.

The Air Officer Commanding, Air Vice Marshal G.R. Beamish, C.B., C.B.E., after congratulating both teams, presented the trophy.

[This article (excluding the pictures) is reprinted from The Iraq Times of May 15, 1952. The original newspaper clipping carries two different action pictures of the match, contributed by M.K.Pius. Unfortunately, they are too faded to be reproduced. The present two pictures are reproduced from original print.—Ed]



This classic photo shows (in the match reported here) Employees' Aram Karam taking a swipe at the goal as Station's Lee dashes to stop him. Photo courtesy M.K. Pius

From our archives: Union School Graduation Program

This is a reproduction of the front and back pages of the original program (reduced by 25%) of the Habbaniya Union School's 1942 graduating class and commencement exercises. The names marked with an "x" are the only six, out of fifteen to eighteen, 1941 seniors who graduated with the 1942 class because of the cancellation of the graduation in 1941 due to the May 1941 Battle of Habbaniya. (See caption on page 5)

Programme

Address	The Record of the School	Principal F/Lt. J. Ingram
Song (English)	"That Quartet in Our Old Barn" "The Bulldog and The Bullfrog"	Quire
Oration (English)	"Education a Changing Power"	Mary Giwargis Shaol
Act (English)	"Soldier! Soldier! Will You Marry Me?"	Daisy Sami & Rajeena Giwargis Shaol
Oration (Assyrian)	"Knowledge"	Mekhail Waranso Goolo
Duet (Arabic)	"Students' Song"	Khava Yacub Khoshaba & Mary Giwargis Shaol
Oration (Arabic)	"True Education"	Leonard Meshael Sargis
Song (English)	"Love's Old Sweet Song" "Old King Cole"	Quire

Poem (English)	"Charge of the Light Brigade"	Daniel Lazar Shlimoon
Solo (Armenian)	"Midnight"	Apenic Onic Sanasarian
Poem (Armenian)	"The Wise Girl"	Vartuhy Yenok Zakarian
Oration (Assyrian)	"Character"	Mirza Shmoil Mirza
Act (English)	"I will! I will! Marry You"	Lilly Ervia Shabbas & Roza Aziz Eshaya
Valedictory (English)	"Our Indebtedness"	Davis Eshay David
Commencement Address		R.A.F. Education Officer

PRESENTATION OF PRIZES & CERTIFICATES

BY THE

Station Commander

Group Captain L. E. Forbes, M.C.

Recessional	"God Make Us Men"	Graduating Class
National Anthem		School

"GOD SAVE THE KING"

The inside two pages of the 1942 graduation program shown on the previous page.
(Program courtesy of Davis E. David of Modesto, California, one of the honor
students and the valedictorian of the evening)

A Hab friend tells us of his current life and recalls bits and pieces of history about himself and Habbaniya from...

F r i g i d W a r m F i n l a n d

Dear Mike:

I left Modesto [several years ago] on the spur of the moment. I was much depressed and lonely there. My sister in Chicago said “come over here.” I immediately bought a Greyhound ticket, disposed of useless things, paid my rent, packed my suitcase and left—without saying goodbye to anyone. I never say goodbye. I always remember a film I saw in Habbaniya called NEVER SAY GOODBYE. Goodbye to me is like GOODBYE FOR GOOD

I stayed in Chicago for a while, but I was not comfortable living on the charity of my sisters and sister-in-law. So my son [Andrew] in Finland arranged for me to rejoin the family under a family-reunion program. I am really very comfortable here, mentally and physically. The Finnish government and people are very kind and helpful. As refugees we do not pay for rent, electricity, water, heat, medicines, hospitals or doctors. My wife [Alice] and I get \$450 a month, which is more than enough for food. We even save a little bit and help some needy relatives abroad.

English is second language in Finland. Everybody speaks English. There are a number of libraries carrying books in English and other languages. I am now reading books in the small library here, where I live. Shortly, I will go to the Central Lib



December, 2001: Youkhanna (Youki) Patros Youkhanna with his wife Alice and son Andrew, all bundled up against the frigid, sunless winter of Finland.

rary and the Reading Library in downtown. Downtown is a tourist place with hotels, shops, bars, clubs and a large flea market where everything is sold cheap. I do not go to cinema as it is expensive here. I would rather spend my time reading a book. I have read most of the books by Michael Crichton. He is a fantastic writer! I can't put his book down until I finish it.

In Oulu it was very cold in winter and we chose to move to Turku where it is less cold and the summers are longer, and the air is clean and invigorating. And livelihood is cheaper, particularly vegetables and fruits. It is very cold here. Ten days ago it was 10C below zero. Since you have not experienced such temperatures you may imagine that it is difficult to move around. No it is not. Even 15 below people walk about and children play in the snow. They have special cloths for winter wear. I wear a track suit pants, two sweaters, a jacket and overcoat. Nothing to it.

Turku is a port. Many ships unload here. Among their cargos are fruits and vegetables from many countries and meat from New Zealand. Alcoholic drinks are very expensive. But I can afford to have an occasional drink at the local bar near our house. On the ship, on which we took a cruise to Stockholm, Sweden, recently, drinks were tax free and much cheaper.

You would be surprised at the quality of houses provided for us—we the refugees. All Assyrians and Chaldeans have a good life here. Some Chaldeans, for reasons I don't understand, hate the very name *Aturnaya* and do not mix with Assyrians. It puzzles me! We have a club here, about 10 families. We are allowed once a week to meet in a Lutheran church hall and twice

Frigid Finland (Cont'd)

a week in a city hall for sports activities. Sports equipment like ice skates, ice hockey sticks and balls, and other winter sports needs are paid for by the Social Services office.

Finland is a heaven for children. For each child a family receives an



December, 2002: Here's Youki again, relaxing on the settee in the coziness of his home, curled up with his Johnny Walker—for additional warmth

extra 100 dollars. More children more money. But Assyrians of today [unlike their parents and grandparents—Ed] do not produce more than two, and some, three children. But the Muslims here (and there are many!), produce six or more.

I am not interested in Habbaniya. To me Habbaniya was hell! I left Habbaniya in 1955. In fact I was angrily fired, and my family was evicted from K-type and we moved into C-type. The reason: I refused to go to England. I could not leave my parents who, since I had started working in 1942, could afford to eat rice, chicken and meat. Before that it was *nepukhta*, [molasses], beans, tea and dates.

You remember, I worked for FA&CA. [Office of the Financial Adviser & Chief Auditor, formerly Air Ministry Audit Office] at Air Headquarters. I was very good at auditing. I was promoted to Grade One clerk. My salary was ID 40 or 44* [a month], but I don't remember exactly. As Habbaniya was coming to a close the Chief Auditor, a Mr. U.S. Strong—who had especially come to Habbaniya to wind up the accounts before the handing over of the air base to the Iraqis—wanted me to go with four English auditors to Yemen to close down the RAF station [accounts?] there. I was offered British passport, and the rank of RAF sergeant. I refused, and that was when I was angrily fired and evicted from my “superior-type” house. I left for Baghdad and found a job at African-Iraqi, a British company. They phoned Habbaniya for approval. FA&CA was so angry that he denied approval. And he also denied me payment for 11 days leave I had not used, alleging leave was

a privilege and not a right. Later he pitied me [or perhaps had a guilty conscience?—Ed], and gave me the money. He also phoned African-Iraqi his OK to employ me and also gave me a very good reference.

A year later I left African-Iraqi and worked at United States Information Service. In 1963 I was chosen and sent to USA for a three-month orientation program [I still have three *Turlock Journal* clippings of your official visit in this area you mailed to me to Baghdad!—Ed]

Yes, I knew Murad in Habbaniya before he was elected *Mukhtar*. In Dora I was friendly with his sons and used to visit him in his home.

I left Habbaniya in 1955 before the Assyrians began to disperse and before Murad was elected *Mukhtar*. I had no passport to go to America [in 1963] and applied for one in Baghdad. Then my troubles began. I was shuffled back and forth from Security to *Tajneed* offices, three of them, and to *Tajneed* in Ramadi, where I saw *Mukhtar Murad* sitting with the *Tajneed* army officer. I showed my papers and *Murad* arranged for my case to be transferred to Baghdad so that I would not go back and forth to Ramadi.

I am sure I did not write the article on *Mukhtar Haidoo Patros* published in the *Assyrian Star*. [I did! But because *you* did the leg-work and supplied the feedback I had it published under your byline—Ed]. I could not write in 1956. I began to polish my English and improve my spelling after I worked for the *Baghdad Observer* in 1968. I have written several articles in that paper—all junk! [I have clippings of some of them. I wouldn't exactly call them junk; in fact they're pretty good—Ed.] As to who was a better *Mukhtar*, in my opinion both were great. Habbaniya Assyrians were

Frigid Finland (Cont'd)

uniquely different from Assyrians of other areas. They were frank, simple, generous, friendly, and always ready to help. They were respected by all—and by all I mean including Arabs and Kurds in Habbaniya.

Haido Patros was a close friend. He was a close friend to everybody. He was that kind of man. By everybody I mean he was liked by Arabs and Kurds as well. I used to visit him in Dora. He told me his experiences about the last days of Habbaniya and about Habbaniya Housing Cooperative Society for the Dora housing project.

In 1955, the British-Iraqi treaty allowing the British air bases in Shaiba and Habbaniya was coming to an end. Unknown to Assyrians, the British were negotiating to extend the treaty in order to keep Habbaniya airbase which had cost them millions of Pounds. Their arguing point was that they were there to protect minorities (meaning Assyrians) under the agreement signed with the League of Nations. They told the Iraqi Government that if they had to leave Iraq, the Assyrians would go with them. And if Assyrians left the country it would be embarrassing to the Iraqi government. So they [the Iraqi Government] gave the matter to [Interior] Minister Sa'id Qazzaz to deal with. (After the July 1958 Revolution, the poor man was tried by the notorious Colonel Abbas Al-Mahdawi's kangaroo court and was condemned and hanged!)

A British law had in fact come into force [prior to Habbaniya handover] granting British subject status to anyone who had worked for Her Britannic Majesty's Government for eight years or more.

And there were thousands of Assyrians and hundreds of Armenians and Kurds who had worked for the British for more than eight years. They, with their families, totaled more than ten thousand souls. The British had kept it semi-secret because the Second World War had left the British government almost broke and they could not afford to take all these thousands with them at one time. This law was known to only a few of their employees, among them Andrious Mama Jotyar, Yosip Gewargis and some others who had secretly obtained British passports and were keeping quiet about it.

So when Qazzaz sent his men to Habbaniya they asked a group of Assyrians: Now that the British were leaving Habbaniya, what did they want?

All the men looked at each other in surprise, as they hadn't the slightest idea what they as Assyrians in a group wanted. And neither did they know that the British had tried, unsuccessfully, to negotiate with the Iraqi Government to extend their stay under the pretext to protect the Assyrian "refugees," alleging that if they had to leave, the Assyrians wanted to go with them. And the British had not briefed the Assyrians as to what to say, because they knew, given the chance, the Assyrians would have opted to go with them, as since 1918 they were still refugees in Iraq and considered British stooges by the Iraqis and treated as such with contempt and discrimination.

So the hapless Assyrians blurted out to the police chief that they wanted nothing but *jinsiya* [Iraqi nationality certificate] so that they could obtain jobs. The chief of police pretended surprise and

asked them, "Don't you people have *jinsiya*?"

The Assyrian then told him that when they tried to obtain *jinsiya*, they were being shoved from one government office to the other for years without success.

"Is that all you want?" the chief of police asked.

The chief of police returned to Baghdad and informed Qazzaz that the only thing Assyrians wanted was *Jinsiya*.

Qazzaz promptly sent *Jinsiya* department staff to Habbaniya and opened an office in the Library [Civic Hall]. The Assyrians were told to bring a photo and a birth certificate from the church. The Orthodox and Nestorian churches issued birth certificates free of charge, but "*Kasha* Hurricane" [the late Fr. Goriel Koda] of the Chaldean Catholic church charged the Assyrian Catholics 250 fils—not a negligible amount in those days. And Assyrians entered from one door of the hall and left from the other in a matter of minutes with *Jinsiya* in their hands and an incredulous smile on their faces. (Later, however, the Iraqi government issued an official circular declaring that those *jinsiyas* were "a British certificate" not recognized by the government!)

There is no doubt in my mind that both Mukhtar Haido and Avimalk Yonan, president of the RAF Employees' (Assyrian) Club, spoke about the plight of the Assyrians after the British left. They pointed out that the main problem their people had was that they could not find jobs elsewhere in the country without Iraqi citizenship certificate

Actually, the Iraqi officials were relieved to learn that the Assyrians' demand was only for *jinsiya*,

Frigid Finland (Cont'd)

because they were given to understand by the British authorities that the Assyrians' wish was that they leave Iraq with the British, while our poor naive people had no idea what the British were engineering. Of course the Iraqis had no love or respect for the Assyrians. They would have loved to be rid of them, but their departure would have reflected unfavorably upon the Iraqi Government which had signed an agreement with the League of Nations in 1932 to take care of them as a minority and treat them as equal citizens. So the Iraqi Government not only organized the prompt issuance of Jinsiya to the Habbaniya Assyrians but also promised to loan them 750,000 dinars for a housing cooperative.

Haido and Avimalk did what they could about what they saw as their people's immediate need but did not know that they could have asked for more. The main problem was we had no capable political leadership [because it was not allowed by the Iraqi Government--Ed]. Although worried by their future prospects, the Assyrians were not really unhappy by the departure of the British. The British had used them since 1922 for their own economic and political purposes without giving them as a people anything good in return.

After the British handed over Habbaniya to Royal Iraqi Air Force [in May 1955], they organized the Habbaniya Housing Co-operative [as a poor consolation prize for the Assyrian nation, I suppose—Ed.] They borrowed ID.40,000 from the British Bank of Middle East and each family had to be a member of the Co-operative and had to contribute [a lump sum of] ID.100 and

five dinars a month. The British had negotiated with the Iraqi government to give a loan of ID.750 thousand to the cooperative. A committee was formed headed by Haido Patros. The committee went and picked the Dora lands for 200 fils per donum. [It was resold to Assyrians at 300 fils with a down payment of ID.390 and ID.670 (which amounts were later jacked up) on two classes of houses.] Contract to build cement-block houses [prefabricated] was awarded to a Dutch company. Building work had started on a few houses when Haidoo Patros and members of the administrative committee of the Co-operative went to Ministry of Finance to collect the ID750 thousand [loan]. On their way to the ministry they saw Iraqi soldiers lying on their bellies pointing rifles at the king's house. They did not pay any attention, because they did not know what was going on. The ministry officials told Haido Patros "Don't you know what has happened?" The July 14, 1958 Revolution had broken out! The king was killed. They returned home empty handed.

The Dutch contractor abandoned his work and fled. Work stopped on the construction of the houses. The contractor sued the Co-operative demanding payment for the work he had done. The Co-operative hired a lawyer who successfully defended the Co-operative. Later this prominent lawyer was assassinated by unknown persons.

The Co-operative was broke and began to sell plots of land to pay its debt. It took a long time before a Norwegian construction company called Jernbeton Trondhjem Ltd. was contracted for the work and things settled down while we [the Assyrians] continued to suffer.

Haido Patros was head of the Co-operative in Dora. After Abdul Kareem Qassem took power, Haidoo and his committee went to see him about the ID 750 thousand loan promised by the Iraqi government. Qassem insulted the Assyrians calling them *Furoughel Englees* (fagots of the British). They again returned empty handed.

Several years after I left Habbaniya in 1955, I returned for a visit when I was trying to obtain a passport to go to U.S. I observed that most of the [C.C.] houses were occupied by Iraqi military, police, and security personnel and other Arabs from Filluja and Ramadi. I learned that most of the remaining tiny Assyrian community was forced to move to Khalidiya [a tiny laborers' town just outside the Habbaniya iron fence] and all the Kurds were forcibly evicted from Habbaniya. Many Assyrians had, in the meantime, left for Basra, Kirkuk, K.3, [and Baghdad,] and for villages in the North.

After the mid-1970s, droves of Assyrians [including many of the several hundred families living in Dora—Ed] started leaving the country. In Dora there was a barber, called Solomon. He was an informer. [There always are a few Judases amongst us!—Ed] He would find out who was leaving Dora and inform the security police. Their names would be put on *man'ne'* (travel-ban list).

Solomon was very proud to be an informer and was friendly with some other men of his kind. Once they accosted an Assyrian woman in Bayaa. She screamed and an Assyrian neighbor came out and stabbed Solomon. His companions were afraid that if the higher authorities learned of their act, they would be in trouble. So they

Frigid Finland (Cont'd)

conspired to get rid of Solomon. One day he was driving, with his wife and son. A heavy truck smashed into his car. He was killed instantly and his wife's back was broken, but his young son survived unhurt.

These are some of my recollec-

tions about Habbaniya and Dora.

As I read history, I always make comparisons. I urge you to read EUROPE, a history by Norman Davies. [What! 1500 pages in small print?—Ed] The best history book I have read. Nothing in it about the Assyrians, but contains a lot of information about many interesting events in this ugly world. I know

we [Assyrians] have suffered, but not so badly in comparison with the suffering of some other peoples in other parts of the world. And we have survived and are not doing too badly in today's world. And that is good.

**Youkhanna Patros Youkhanna
Turku, Finland.**

>> *The above is an edited extract from a series of e-mails from Youkhanna. P. Youkhanna. "Youki" is a bookworm intellectual. In addition to being office mates for a few years in Air Ministry Audit Office in AHQ, Habbaniya, we have also been long-time friends, with some common interests—reading and writing in particular—Ed*

**Youki, I believe Grade One clerk's salary in Habbaniya started from just under Iraqi Dinars 30 (around \$100 then), with annual increments of one and a half or two dinars for a maximum limit of a few years. My salary (maximum) as a senior Grade Two clerk was just under ID.25 when I resigned in March 1954. And Sargis S.Shallou tells me that his salary when he left as a [evidently junior] Grade One clerk was only ID.27. —Ed].*

Cont'd from Page one (Editorial)

more than the maiden issue. So you see, we *are* making progress. But we have to point out that two-thirds of this issue is set in larger, 12-point print, for easier reading. That of course takes up a little more space. Nonetheless, we definitely have more material for you to read, not to mention the new interesting stories, articles and pictures. This is all good news.

But the bad news is that all this addition and improvement costs more money, both in printing and postage. Because we do not have at least 250 subscribers in USA we are paying the high first class mail charges, and each piece to overseas costs four or five dollars to mail. So we have been obliged to jack up the price of membership by a couple of dollars to try to fully cover our expenses, as Ben has explained to you in his recent circular letter. None of you complained about the initial price and some of you generous souls from good ol' USA even gave us a "bakhshish" to see us through. We are confident that you will come through again with the new membership fee.

As regards the contents of HUSA, Solomon snatched the lead this time by his "larger than life" personality sketch of no other than...our own Ben Yalda. And judging from the smirk on Ben's handsome face in the full-blown family lead picture, we know Solly's done the right thing. Ben has been doing a great job with the administration aspect of the newsletter and Solomon's shower of *shirniyeh* upon Ben's head for his past deeds is no soft-soaping, for Ben has proven himself, notwithstanding the fact that he has a tendency to try to hold sway over the whole domain. Ben also helped with some feedback for a couple of obituaries. And "Zac the Sax's" help in proof-reading the newsletter was a welcome assistance. He swatted quite a few "flies" that eluded me!

Old friend Youkhanna Patros Youkhanna's tit-bits on Habbaniya mixed with his own personal story, e-mailed from Finland, is a juicy chunk to dig into, while Sargon Gabriel's childhood nostalgia is something to muse over. Another amusing tit-bit is Aprim Murad's Iraqi boot-camp days, not to mention the several other pieces of interest, such as Habbaniya's Mar Gewargis Church and (what, again?) Qaasha Ablakhad; a fierce hockey match with an unusual result; two young achievers; Armenian music, dance and frolic; the questionable time of New Year; the aggressive cockroaches that threatened to overtake a home, just to name a few. And we have quite a conglomeration of "Expressions!" They were so many that despite pruning, had to use smaller print to keep the number of pages to a minimum—if seven pages could be called "minimum!" But we just had to give everyone a chance this time. I'm sure this initial outpouring of response, however, will gradually trickle down for the upcoming issues, leaving us more space to add other features.

Finally, we have to express, though regretfully, our disappointment that we haven't had any encouragement and support from many of the former Habbaniya families and friends, and especially from some of our former "star" sportsmen, for whom writers like me have been tolling the bells and blowing the trumpets for decades! In fact some in particular--among them a few fat cats in California--have clenched their pennies so tight that even a gorilla cannot pry their hands open! If it wasn't for the open-hand strokes of a few others, HUSA would've gone under after its first issue. But we're still not giving up on them. We hope some of them will wake up and smell the roses and make their contribution to HUSA, not only financially but will also send us relevant publishable material—in prose, in pictures as well as documented memorabilia.—**The Editor.**

An amusing account from Iraqi boot camp of the fifties**Memories of my Iraqi conscription days****By Aprim Ablakhad Murad**

While rummaging through my old photo collection, I found this picture of myself with my comrade in arms Mr. Benyamin Esho Yalda. It was taken more than half a century ago when we two, along with other young men of the local camps of Royal Air Force Station of Habbaniya, were serving a three-month conscription at Hilla Military camp in Iraq. It was the time when the country was a monarchy under the young newly crowned King Faisal II [who was toppled and murdered in the Iraqi Revolution of July 14, 1958].

I remember the day, January 1, 1951, when I and other fellow Habbaniyans reported at seven o'clock in the morning to our recruiting center in Ramadi, 15 miles to the west. We were given a medical examination, and were then transported to Baghdad and from there to Hill on an old train wagon. Our train arrived in Hilla at ten at night. An Iraqi officer who was waiting for us took us to the training camp, where we were settled in bungalows after midnight. We slept on a rough wooden bed and although the night was cold, we were given each only two blankets, one to spread under us and the other over us. We were 20 Assyrians in the camp, all from Habb.

Early the next morning, we were assembled in front of the military depot and were given our military clothing--uniform, shoes, and hat (*sedara*). Some of us found that the coats did not match the trousers, either in color or size! Some soldiers got two boots either

for the left or the right foot. But almost all those from Habbaniya managed to get more suitable uniforms of their own—some from the Levy soldiers!

The regular duration of the training period was three years, but if a conscript paid the government



1951: Aprim Murad (right), with Ben Yalda, as Iraqi conscripts in Hilla military training camp, near Babylon. "Istaaa'id!"

ID.50 (\$150 then), he could serve only three months. All the Assyrian boys paid the conscription fee and served only three months.

Our conscription salary was one and one quarter dinar (\$4.00) per month. On pay day, each soldier was forced to buy an Iraqi military newspaper for 200 fils, [one month subs?] and after other deductions, each of us ended up with only one dinar. But all of us Assyrians got financial help from our parents.

After living only a week in the training camp military bungalows, we were permitted, on request, to move out of the camp and live in a rented house in the city. Of course we had to go to the camp for the training every morning, except Fridays, the Moslem rest day. But we had an easier time in the city, because many of us Assyrian boys lived together in one house. After camp training hours, we spent our time with each other, sharing, chatting, playing games, going to the movies, and even singing.

After two months of military training, we had to practice firing live ammunition. Each one of us was given five bullets and was told to aim at a target 400 or 500 feet away. It was the first time I was firing live bullets. I knew I pulled the trigger, but I did not know where or what my bullet hit!

After our first month of training, we were told that King Faisal was coming to the city of Hilla to visit the ancient ruins of the city of Babylon and that we had to line the street in his honor. All of us soldiers lined both sides of the street, a couple of feet apart. When the king passed in a red open top car, he was hardly more than five feet away from me. There were loud cheers for him. That was one of the moments about my *jundiya* days I remember most! Those days when we were young and energetic have long passed away, but they certainly have left the memory of our Hilla training camp alive in our minds.

Chit-chatting about Habb friends

By Mikhael K. Pius

I received a couple of e-mails from Sargon Gabriel of London, Canada, in which he makes a few comments, tells a couple of stories and divulges some information about himself and his family.

Sargon is the eldest son of the late Levi Gabriel Oda. His father was employed by the Air Ministry Audit Office in Habbaniya until the late 1940s when he moved to Kirkuk, with his family, to work for the Iraq Petroleum Co. He was one of a handful of Assyrians and Indians who had attained the position of Grade A clerk in Habbaniya. Short and stocky with a muscular body, Levi was, I remember, a good shot-putter. But I'm afraid I know next to nothing about his history in Kirkuk.

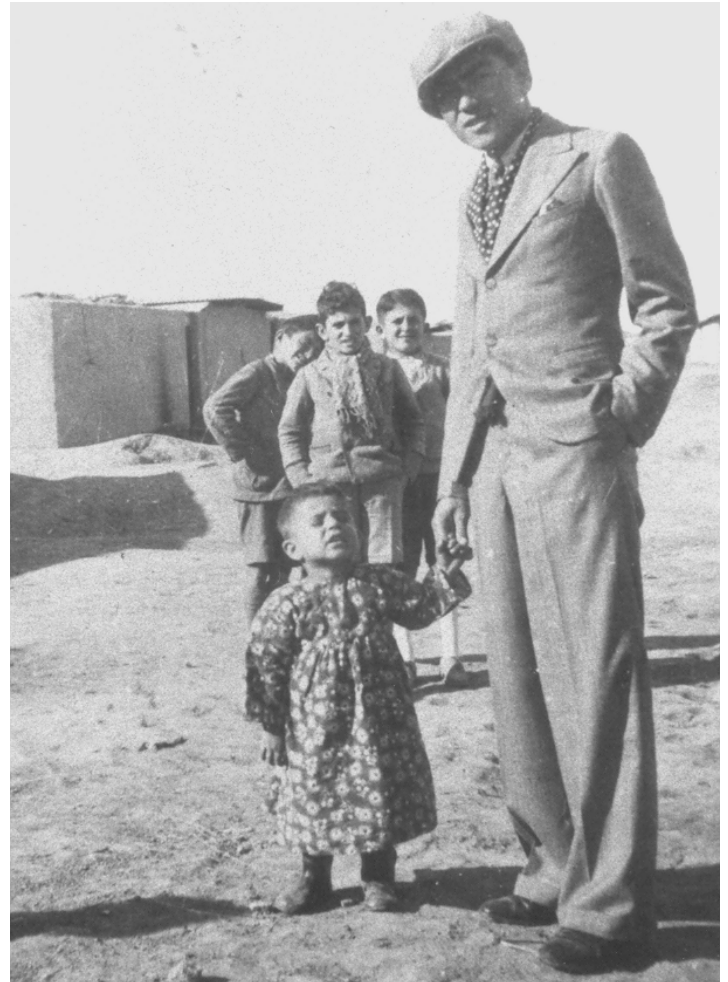
Sargon is married to his father's first cousin Shamiran. They have two married sons, Naramsin and Ramsin (classical Assyrian names!) and an unmarried daughter, Nancy. Sargon has worked for Kellogs [Corn Flakes?] in Canada for 25 years as electrical and instrumentation supervisor. He is now retired.

Sargon's letters contain some interesting passages—with some rather amusing highlights—which, with a little bit of editing, I couldn't resist making the subject of this feature. He writes:

"You have my gratitude for your consideration. I received your book, and your newsletter *Bil Khizmaany Wdosty* in memory of Para Pius. But I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the [Hinaidi] soccer team photo of my father with Havil ["Jinja" Lazar] and Para that you also sent me. The picture enlightened me and touched me so much that tears came into my eyes from both joy and sadness, seeing my father and Havil so young. The memories started shining like a candle in front of my eyes, as the picture made me see how full of life our lives really were and how much we have to be grateful for.

"I remember Para by name as my father would mention his going [in the late 1930s] to Lake Habbaniya with Havil, Para and William Shabbas, and what a good swimmer Para was. He would swim so far away from the shore that, according to my father, he would disappear.

"I also remember my mother's uncle Orku in Baghdad that Para had mentioned. In 1956 I had a soccer team in Kirkuk, called Assyrian Crescent. We decided to go to Baghdad and play against the Assyrian team. When Uncle Orku saw me in Gailani Camp he asked me what I was doing in Baghdad. I said that we had come to play soccer. This is exactly what he



1938: There you are, Sargon, in your *dashdasha*, clinging to the hand of the big guy (Havil's brother-in-law, Shumon Philip) near your home in A-Type "superior" quarters. Recognize the other three "big" guys gawking at you?

said: 'You think you will be another Para?'

"Para was a household name in our home. Whenever my father remembered his younger years it was always Havil and Para on his tongue. My father and I were more friends than father and son. He taught me the secrets of life when I was still a teenager.

"And when Para mentioned *arabana*,* I remembered how we as children would take the arabana horses to the River Tigris and give them a bath. That was in the mid-1940s, several years after we had moved from Hinaidi to Habbaniya. My mother [Anna] would take us to Baghdad to visit her kinfolk. That was the time we took the horses to the river. I was 9-10 years old. We would ride them without a saddle through the

Chit-Chattin' (Cont'd)

streets of Baghdad where King Ghazi Cinema used to be and where *Amana* bus stop was installed before the bridge at Bab Al Sharji was built. I would ride the horse barebacked, at the far end of its back, on its hips close to its rear end. That was a more comfortable place compared with the middle of its back where the backbone stuck up. It was very difficult to control myself from falling off because there was nothing to hold on to once the horse was in a gallop. You see there were two horses as a team per arabana and they were so used to each other that if one horse galloped its team mate would follow. All the way I would be swaying from side to side and trying to hold on while the horse raced at full speed. But I never gave up because of my ego!

"My mother's uncle Orko (Avraham) bought a Studebaker truck in the forties, but they kept the horses and arabana. Pasho, his older brother, used to operate an arabana, and Zimko, a relative, still had the arabana and the horses. Sometimes Isdo, another Bne-Tulloun, used to operate it even though he was crippled in both legs and could barely walk. He was a great *arabanchi!*

"Earlier I mentioned William Shabbas. His eldest son, the late Ashur [who 'drowned' in Masbah swimming pool in August, 1954] and I were very good friends. We used to go to Lake Habbaniya with our fathers, riding in the back of a lorry that used to deliver kerosene to Habbaniya residents. Then our fathers would start a spelling competition between Ashur and me. My father would ask Ashur to spell Mississippi and William would ask me to spell Louisiana. This would

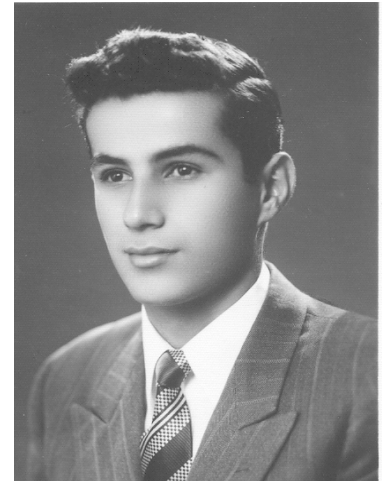
go on until we reached the lake. There was no winner because both of us were coached properly beforehand.

"The year we were in grade two in *Raabi Yacoub's* Union School, I scored 100 points in each of five subjects. Ashur did the same. That was the year [1944] when the school was taken over by the Iraqi Government. Every pupil was frozen in his last class. But the high marks I received would have enabled me to skip third grade and go on to fourth grade. But my father did not agree to this. So Ashur went on to third grade but I remained in my class, second grade.

"It's so nostalgic recalling those times!"

**After Mandan refugee camps near Mosul were closed down in May 1921 a good number of Assyrian families came down the Tigris River on kalaks (barges) and lived in various parts of Baghdad. Some of these found work with the British occupying forces and eventually relocated to Hinaidi laborers' camps—Kota Camp, Maratha Lines, and Levy Lines. Others built for themselves mud brick houses, some in (Jelu) Railway Camp and worked for Railways while still others in Gailani Camp among some Armenian families formerly from Baquba refugee camps. All of these made a living in one way or the other. But some of the Gailani Assyrians of "Targawer" origin latched on to horse-drawn arabanas and eventually became transportation businessmen. They made a living through this means for almost two decades until the growing motorcar transportation Industry gradually ran them out of business in the early 1940s.—Ed.*

In Memory of Ashur William Shabbas



Student Drowns in Swimming Pool

A 20-year-old student of the Baghdad College of Pharmacy, Sayid Ashour William Shabbas, drowned at the Masbah swimming pool yesterday evening.

When he went under, those around him thought he was just diving, but when he did not come up they were alarmed and pulled him out but he was already dead. [Reprinted from *The Iraq Times* of August 2, 1954]

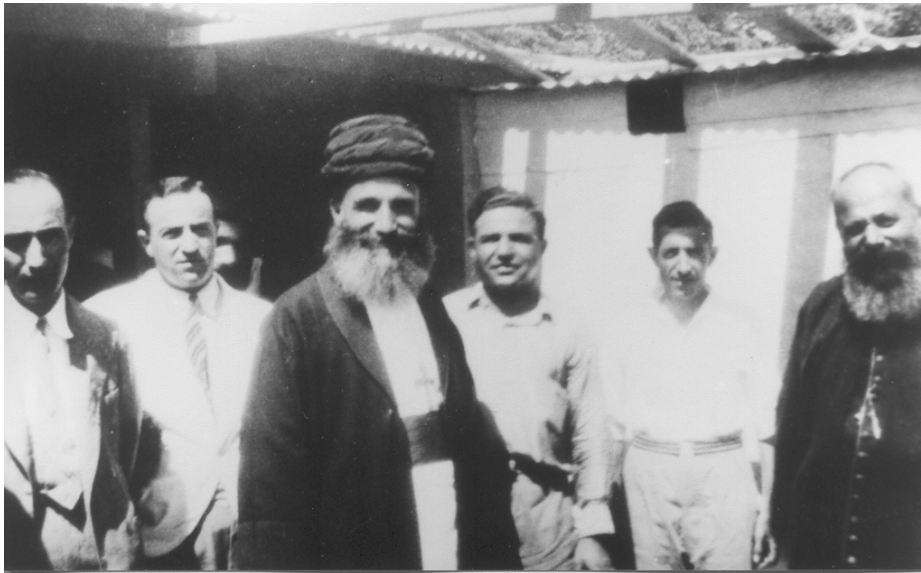
>> Ashur was a good swimmer, but it was thought he had struck his head against the concrete bottom of the pool in a deep dive, causing him to "drown." He was the eldest brother of Sargon, Daniel, and Sanharib Shabbas and of Shalim Tattar, Shammiran Huwe and Mariana Somo. Born in Maratha Lines, RAF Station of Hinaidi, Ashur had graduated in 1953 from Baghdad College (a high school run by American Jesuit Fathers) and had just passed his freshman exams at Baghdad's College of Pharmacy. Although he did not live long enough to become a pharmacist, his sister Shalim fulfilled the dream on his behalf. A patriotic and benevolent person, she owns a pharmacy in El Cerito, California, and she's well known in the Bay Area. His brothers are also actively involved in Assyrian national and humanitarian work.

Ashur was also first cousin of Nineveh Magazine's former Editor, Julius Shabbas, and of his several siblings, who also lost tragically a few years earlier a brother, Eliya "Elikko," a handsome youth with a sunshine smile.—Ed

The Church of the East in Habbaniya

By Solomon (Sawa) Solomon

While the British new Royal Air Force base of Habbaniya (then called Sin Adh-Dhiban) was being built in 1936, the first unit to move in was No. 30 Squadron from Mosul, and along with it came hundreds of its Assyrian employees. Among them was a dedicated Church of the East Christian by the name of Yosip Goriel of Tkuma Gawaye. Yosip used his house in the developing Civil Cantonment of the air base as a gathering place for worship and on occasion a priest would come from Baghdad to celebrate mass for a small congregation. Over the next two



This photo was taken on June 25, 1939 in C.C. Habbaniya in the yard of Murad Younathan, a NAAFI manager, during a visit by the Metropolitan to Habbaniya community. From left: Murad Younathan, his brother Morris (Maras), Mar Yosip Khnanisho, Bram Warda, Sliwo Suleiman, and Khoury Ablakhad Jerjees,

years, however, Assyrian employees of RAF arrived in droves from the former RAF Station of Hinaidi and other places and the parish expanded considerably.

In 1938 the Church of the East elders in the Cantonment petitioned Metropolitan Mar Yosip Khnanisho to appoint them a resident priest. Accordingly, Mar Yosip promptly appointed a *Khoury* Ablakhad Jarjees as the parish priest for Habbaniya.

Khoury Ablakhad, who had started out as a Chaldean Catholic priest, had joined the Church of the East in 1928 following a dispute with his own Church. He had served his adopted Church in Dohuk, North Iraq, until the 1933 Assyrian-Iraqi crisis when he was interned in Nasiriya for a while. After his release, he was living in Sinak in Baghdad.

Khoury Ablakhad arrived in Habbaniya in 1938 along with his caretaker sister Bebe. They took up residence in the house of *Shamasha* [Deacon] Khnanya Rehana who, along with Shamasha Warda Odisho, was raising money for the community church. Shamasha Khnanya was then living in a C-type house but later was allotted and moved, along with his two boarders, to a K-type superior house.

But shortly after, Shamasha Khnanya—who, incidentally, remained active in church affairs throughout his life—obtained better employment with the Khanaqin Oil Company in Khanaqin and left Habbaniya, leaving the occupancy of his house to Khoury Ablakhad and his sister. And his place as church dues collector was taken over by a Raabi Zirro Amro. Raabi Zirro and Shamasha Warda would jointly collect money for the church once a month, each household paying according to their ability.

Meanwhile, a long bungalow-type building had been constructed by Civil Cantonment administration near Union School. Two-thirds of it was allotted to Church of the East congregation and was named *Mar Gewargis* Church, and the other one-third was taken over by the Assyrian and Armenian Orthodox Churches.

In 1950, a church board was established for Mar Gewargis and Shawel Suleiman was elected president, with Yosip Jittoo as secretary and Deacon Sheem Mikhael as treasurer. The Church had a recorded 560 membership in C.C. which excluded the poor families who could not pay. Shammasha Warda and Raabi Zirro remained church dues collectors, with the stipulation of 50 to 150 fils monthly membership, depending on the number of workers per household. (It is worth mentioning here that a member named Zaya Zaya of Gawer always contributed each month one Iraqi silver rial [200 fils]).

We have a detailed record of the receipts and expenditures of Mar Gewargis Church for the years 1950 to 1952. But to conserve space, we

Church of the East (Cont'd)

will give you only the following averages for the three years just to give you an idea of the figures:

Receipts: (per year)

Membership dues..... ID.360/000
 Cross collections..... ID. 90/000
 Donations for coffins..... ID. 18/000

Expenses: (per year)

Priest's salary.....ID.220/000
 Electricity.....ID. 6/500
 Miscellaneous.....ID. 11/500
 Reception for Bishop & donations to churches & visiting priests..... ID. 40/000
 Building school rooms (1952) ...ID. 111/000
 Teachers' salaries(1952).....ID. 43/000
 Church custodian salary(1952) ...ID. 18/000

And the following are some of the important decisions taken by the Church Board:

- ✍ Taking of general census for church members in C.C.
- ✍ Building of a wall for the church yard.
- ✍ Purchasing of lumber for coffins.
- ✍ Underpinning of the church building walls with burned bricks.
- ✍ Building of three class rooms in the church yard.
- ✍ Refurbishing of the pastor's house.
- ✍ Adaption of the church yard to accommodate the holding of open-air church services during summer months.

Habbaniya by now had emerged as the main Assyrian center in Iraq, with other major Church of the East communities in Gailani and Jeelo Camps in Baghdad as well as in Kikruk, Mosul, Basra and in North Iraq. For 12 years Khoury Ablakhad conducted his duties with great ability and vigor, assisted by several deacons, among them Warda, Sheem, Menashi, Goriel, Esha, Hermiz, and of course Khnanya.

On August 1, 1950, however, Khoury Ablakhad Jargees left the Church and went back to the Chaldean Church just at a time when Metropolitan Mar Yosip was visiting Habbaniya. Mar Yosip was then requested by the Church Board to replace their resigning priest by Archdeacon Esho Bet Mar Sargis, who had been a long-time pastor of Mar Qardagh Church in Gailani Camp. According to their wish, Archdeacon Esho was appointed and arrived in Habbaniya on



Early 1950s: This photo was taken in C.C. Habbaniya at the funeral services of Khoshaba, uncle of Dawid Quryaqus. Clergy, from left: Archdeacon Akhikar Hajji, Mar Esho Sargis, Qaasha Esho of Coolie Camp and Shamasha Warda Odisho.

September 1, 1950 and Shamasha Goriel Suleiman was ordained priest to take his place in Gailani Camp. However, only nine months later, on May 12, Archdeacon Esho's uncle, the ailing Bishop Mar Zaya Sargis, passed away and his nephew was consecrated Bishop Mar Esho Sargis two days later to take his place. The Habbaniya parish was then taken over by Archdeacon Akhikar Hajji from Basra.

Weeks later, Board President Shawil Suleiman, with a few other Board members, went to Baghdad and invited Bishop Mar Sargis to pay their congregation an official visit. His grace arrived on June 16 amid a fanfare and was greeted by a great multitude in what became one of the most memorable days in Habbaniya history.

Some years later, Archdeacon Akhikar was assigned to Dora parish in Baghdad. His place was filled by Qasha Zomaya. But by then Habbaniya had seen its better days. **[Photos also contributed by Solomon]**

A Personal Viewpoint**Sailing the *Mukhtar* “Ship” in Habbaniya**

By Aprim Ablakhad Murad

I read with interest the story of the late Haidoo Patros. It is true he was a very good man and had, as the Assyrian *Mukhtar* in Civil Cantonment of Habbaniya, helped many Assyrians who needed his support in the government offices. I remember him also as one of the well known sportsmen. Every one in Habbaniya knew Haidoo and respected him.

I remember him very well because he was a good friend of my brother, the late Murad Ablakhad Murad, who was chosen to succeed Haidoo as Assyrian *Mukhtar* after Haidoo's departure to Dora, Baghdad, in about mid 1950.

The article in HUSA mentions that Mr. Patros left Habbaniya to Baghdad in late 1950. On the other hand, it says that he was involved in the Assyrian situation when the Habbaniya Station was handed over to the Iraqi Government. The process of Habbaniya handing and taking over took place in late 1956, and at that time Mr. Patros was not in Habbaniya. He was in Dora.

During the handover of the Station, and long before that, my brother Murad, had very strong friendly relations with almost all the responsible Iraqi officials in Rumadi and Habbaniya. He even had good friends in Baghdad government circles. So, what happened during those changing times, was that Murad, as Mukhtar, had played major roles in the Assyrian situation in Habbaniya, especially in the naturalization processes. Haidoo Patros could have helped.

Murad was never paid for his services, either by the government or the public. On the contrary, he had many times accompanied individuals to Ramadi and had, on top of his free ser-

vice, paid the round-trip taxi fares on behalf of individuals he accompanied.

In Habbaniya, almost every Assyrian was a patriot and many helped in a number of ways, but some did not have the publicity to surface. My brother was one of the Assyrians who had helped those who needed help, and many times financially. Oftentimes, many of the Assyrians, and sometimes non-Assyrians, who were arrested for no logical ground, were freed through the medium of my brother, and I am certain many Habbaniyans will remember this.

I am not trying to belittle the late Haidoo Patros. On the contrary, I highly respected him for his attention and help to the Assyrians. I know, for a fact, that all those who knew him have high respect for his memory. God bless his soul.

The late Murad migrated to USA in 1982 and passed away a decade later. May he rest in peace. Amen.

>> *While we appreciate your viewpoint, we're afraid the underlined portions of your article contain a few errors.*

It is true that your brother Murad was chosen to succeed Haidoo as Mukhtar after Haidoo's departure to Dora, but not in about mid 1950 as you allege, because, firstly, Haidoo was elected Mukhtar only in January 1954. Also, Haidoo was Mukhtar and very much involved in the Assyrian situation when Habbaniya was handed over to the Iraqi Government on May 2, 1955—and not in late 1956 as you state. (Your brother may have helped.) Furthermore, Dora's housing project was organized after the Habbaniya handover in 1955 and was officially opened on December 15, 1957

when the first batch of houses was built. (I have published proof of this.) It follows therefore that Dora township was not in existence in late 1950 and therefore Haidoo was not in Dora then as you allege.

Our article stated that Haidoo left Habbaniya to Baghdad in late 1950s, meaning closer to 1960. (You overlooked the “s” after 1950!) Haidoo was also appointed the chairman of Habbaniya Co-operative Building Society for Dora housing project in late 1955 while he was still Mukhtar and was one of the occupants of the first batch of Dora houses completed only in late 1957.

I know Murad was basically a businessman; he owned and operated the steam baths and the billiards room in C.C., among other things, in addition to his assumption of Mukhtar-ship after Haidoo resigned—in late 1950s. (1958 or 1959)

I enquired from half a dozen former older Habbaniya residents in this area about your brother. The consensus is that he was a good man and a good mukhtar. Evidently, your brother spoke better Arabic than Haidoo, and was more diplomatic, hobnobbing with Government officials, which was probably necessary to gain favor and influence. I am sure, as such, he must have done some good work for his “constituents.” But all my interviewees thought that Haidoo both as an efficient Mukhtar—in spite of his short tenure—and as a helpful and benevolent person was more than just a respected man and well-known sportsman. He was a dedicated civil servant, a courageous patriot and, in popularity, stood—in spite of his short figure—head and shoulders above most Habbaniya local leaders, including all mukhtars, before and after him. —Ed

From our Archives: Music and Dancing

Armenians at Habbaniyah Dance to Apollo Band

By Hrand Y. Sayadian



Armenian Apollo Band of Baghdad, on another occasion at Habbaniya. The young drummer (at the back) taking part this time is Manuel Jebrael, an Assyrio-Armenian resident of C.C. Habbaniya.

On Saturday, August 4, Civil Cantonment dance enthusiasts had the opportunity to dance to the music of Baghdad's foremost dance band "The Apollo" under the able leadership of Mr. Joseph Akkelian on the Piano-Accordion and supported by Baghdad musicians at Habbaniya.

They were Mr. Mehran on the trumpet and violin; Mr. Ardoosh on the saxophone; Mr. Harituoon on the contra bass and Mr. Joseph Santoorian on the drums. Also on the band was a recent Civil Cantonment's drummer, Mr. Solak O. Sanasarian.

This special dance was organized by the committee of the Armenian Relief Society of Habbaniyah in co-operation with the Education Committee. The dance took place on the Society's open-air dance floor. The garden and the floor were beautifully illuminated with neon and coloured lights.

There were about 200 guests present and on every face one could clearly see that they had come to enjoy this evening with Apollo playing. The dance started at approximately 8:30 p.m. with the band's signature

tune and continued up to 3:30 a.m.

Apollo played some of the best tunes. Some of them had never been heard in the Civil Cantonment and if it was not for their fatigue the guests were prepared to sit till daybreak.

As a special request from S/Ldr. and Mrs. Harris (Officer In-charge C.C.) Mr. A.B. Gregory performed the Russian dance 'Gazacho' with such skill that an en-core was called for. Also as a special request, Miss Keko and Hindo Sanasarian performed the well-known Armenian Folk Dance "Hayastan."

A spot dance was organized and the lucky winners were Miss Agnes Esho and Mr. Kako Gewargis. A lottery was held and the prize in this case went to Mrs. Gohar.

Master of Ceremonies was Mr. Suren D. Khojaian whose ability as M.C. cannot be disputed.

The Organizing Committee are to be congratulated for their excellent arrangement. **[Reprinted (except for the picture) from *The Iraq Times* of August 17, 1951]**

In Remembrance of...



KENNETH G. BAKUS, 84, passed away of natural causes at his home in Modesto on Sunday, December 22, 2002. Funeral services were officiated by Rev. Oshana Kaanun at *Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East*, Ceres, California, and burial was at Lakewood memorial Park in Hughson.

Kenneth lived in Modesto 41 years after emigrating with his family from Iraq. He worked for 22 years for Simpson Paper Company in adjoining Ripon as a lodge manager until his retirement in 1983. Following that he worked as manager for the Civic Club of Turlock for 12 years.

Kenneth, affectionately known to his relatives and friends by his nickname "Nanno," was born in 1918 during the Assyrian mass flight from Urmia, Persia, to Baquba in Iraq. He was the third of eight children of Soriya (of Aada) and Jebrail Bakus of Gangachin, Iran. He worked for the Royal Air Force and lived in Hinaidi and later in Habbaniya air bases for some years before moving to Kirkuk and then to Baghdad. He was a first class tennis player, and had won local championships during the early 1950s.

Kenneth is survived by his children, Henry and Anthony Bakus, both of Modesto, Fiona Hutton of Los Angeles, and Stella Gabriel of Sacramento; two brothers, Eli (Elisha) Bakus in Modesto and Eramia Gabriel in Kent, England; two sisters, Lucy and Leza in Iraq; and 12 grandchildren and one great grand-child

—Submitted by Eli G. Bakus

MARIAM (YUOPA) DARMO, 88, a former Levy nurse in Habbaniya, passed away December 27, 2002, and was laid to rest at Montrose Cemetery in Chicago. Her funeral services, officiated by her half-brother, Archdeacon Aprim De-Baz, assisted by three other priests, was held at *Mar Gewargis Cathedral of the Assyrian Church of the East*. Following burial, a memorial lunch was offered in the hall of the mentioned church for the hundreds of relatives and friends who came to pay their last respects.

Mariam, commonly known as Yuropa, was born January 1st, 1914 in the village of Eyil in Turkey. Her parents were *Shamasha Darmo Shmouel* and Victoria Yunan. While still a child, Yuropa's father was killed during the First World War. She and her mother—who was the daughter of the late Patriarch *Mar Benyamin Shumon's* uncle--were supported by the Patriarchal Family till her mother remarried.

When of age, Yuropa was married to Polus Jado, an Assyrian Levy soldier who died in 1937 at the young age of 28, leaving Yuropa herself a widow at an even younger age to take care of their three small daughters, Abigail, Margaret, and the late Anna Polus. After relocating in 1938 from Hinaidi Royal Air Force base to the newly established RAF station of Habbaniya, she started working as a nurse at RAF Levy Hospital. She forwent remarriage and toiled for many years in self-sacrifice to support and to raise her three daughters to adulthood in an honorable way. After Habbaniya was handed over to the Iraqi Government in 1955, some years following the marriage of her eldest daughter Abigail, Yuropa moved to Baghdad with her un-

married two daughters, who in turn assumed the responsibility of supporting and taking care of her. The family came to this country in 1976 and settled in the Chicago area, close to Abigail and family, who had preceded them. Fifteen years later, she suffered the tragic loss of her youngest daughter Anna Polus Jado at the relatively young age of 55.

On September 1, 1995, Yuropa and eight of the surviving members of the RAF Levy Force were honored at a reunion party by the Founding Committee of Habbaniya Union School Reunion for their long and loyal service in the Force. Each one of them was presented an award bearing the Levies' insignia.

Yuropa is survived by her daughter Abigail and husband Eshaya Isaac; grandchildren Florence, Franco and Freddie and great-grandchildren, Paul, Claire, Peter and Mary; her second daughter Margaret Jado; her four half-brothers, *Mar Narsai DeBaz*, Metropolitan of the Assyrian Church of the East in Lebanon, and Rev. Archdeacon Aprim DeBaz, George DeBaz, and Hormis DeBaz, all in Chicago; as well as five stepsisters.

Yuropa's family members express gratitude and appreciation to all the persons who offered condolences and sympathy on their bereavement.

—Submitted by Abigail and Eshaya Isaac.



It is with deep regret that we announce the passing away on April 18 of Kenarick, 65, wife of Ben Shallou, and on April 29 of William David Shino, 75, the late Raabi Janey Rizk's younger brother. Their obituaries will be published in the next issue of HUSA. HUSA staff offer their condolences to the families of all departed ones.

In Remembrance of... (Cont'd)

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of **BAIJAN ROHAN** on February 29, 2003, in Sydney Australia, at the age of **99**. He was a Royal Air Force (Iraq) Levy veteran who had served the British loyally for 33 years.



His funeral service was celebrated at Raban Hurmizd Cathedral of the Assyrian Church of the East and his burial took place in the Assyrian section of Pine Grove Memorial Park, followed by a memorial breakfast in Edessa Hall of the mentioned church

for some 400 people attending.

Baijan Rohan was born in 1903 in the village of Bati-moo, province of Shamizdin in Hakkari, Turkey. While in his early teens, he and his family, along with all Assyrian tribes of Hakkari, were uprooted from their villages following the outbreak of World War One and ended up as destitute refugees in Urmia, Iran. In the summer of 1918, they were driven again by their enemies down to Hamadan

and thence to the British refugee camps of Baquba, 30 kilometers northeast of Baghdad. He was one of the lucky ones who survived the atrocities of war.

In 1922 Baijan joined the British Assyrian Levies, and eleven years later, while serving in Hinaidi RAF air base near Baghdad, he married Panna daughter of Eshaya Mirza. He moved with his family in 1937 to the newly established RAF base at Habbaniya, 55 miles west of Baghdad. There he and his wife raised up their family which gradually grew into four daughters and two sons. Four years after the disbandment of Levies in 1955 the Rohans left Habbaniya and relocated to the new Assyrian township of Dora at the outskirts of Baghdad where they bought a house, living there until their immigration to Australia in 1980.

The late Baijan Rohan leaves behind his widow Panna, daughters Albania, Rapqa, Sarah and Ramziya; and sons Andrews and Youaw, with their families, all in Australia; and still living back in Dora is his brother Touma and his sister Khawa.

In Baijan Rohan's death, the Assyrians lost yet another rare link with *Atra d'Hakkari*, for he was one of the very few remaining eye witnesses to the genocide and atrocities committed against the Assyrian nation—**Submitted by Philimon G. Darmo.**

RAABI LUCY BABA KHOSHIB, 88, a former private teacher in Habbaniya, passed away on February 23, 2003, after a long illness. She was laid to rest at Montrose Cemetery in Chicago following funeral services, officiated by Chorbishop Athanasios Joseph assisted by Rev. Gewargis Toma, at Mar Sargis Church of the East of Chicago. Many friends and relatives attended the funeral and the memorial lunch that followed burial.

Raabi Lucy was born August 14, 1914, to Baba and Sarah Khoshib in Urmia, Persia. After the Assyrian exodus from Urmia to Baquba refugee Camps in Iraq in 1918, her family stayed in Hamadan where she began her schooling at the age of five under the supervision of the American Aid Society of Hamadan. She received her diploma from the American School for Girls in 1932.

In 1939 she came on a long visit to Habbaniya, Iraq, There she was married the next year to Hawil Polous Gewargis, a fire-truck driver. The couple lived in Habbaniya until 1959 where they had four children. During these years, *Raabi* Lucy gave private lessons in Assyrian and English languages at her home to many boys and girls of her neighborhood

When her family moved to Baghdad in 1959 Raabi Lucy continued to tutor Assyrian boys and girls at home. After her husband Hawil passed away in 1974, she secured a teaching job at Taqaddum School in Gailani Camp to help in the support of the family.

In 1989 she came to America to visit her son Polous and

her daughter Nancy and their families, but instead she obtained permanent residency and never returned to Iraq.

Raabi Lucy loved poetry. She wrote poems in Assyrian for different occasions. Some of her poems were published in *Nineveh* Magazine and she recited a delightful poem on Habbaniya—which was lauded warmly—at the Habbaniya Union School Reunion in Chicago, honoring teachers, on October 14, 1994. She was also a fervent reader of Scriptures, which she memorized and tried to apply to her daily life.

Raabi Lucy is survived by her four children: Polous, (and his wife Juliet and their three children) in Skokie, Illinois, Malkisdiq "Makkî" (and his wife Fransia) and Ronald (and his wife Farida and their three children) in Baghdad, Iraq, and Nancy (and her husband, Edward Malik and their two daughters), in Chicago, Illinois; also by her brother William Khoshib (and family) in Turlock, California, and her widowed sister Lisa (and family) in Australia.

Raabi Lucy will always be remembered as a loving mother, a poet and an educator.

May God bless her soul.

—Submitted by Ben E. Yalda.

