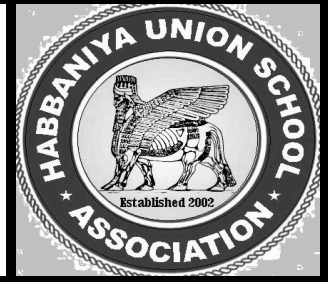


# HUSA

4th Issue  
Vol. 2, No. 2  
Fall-Winter 2003

The Newsletter of  
**HABBANIYA UNION  
SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**



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



**1936: Back row, (left to right):** 1.N/K (Not Known), 2.Nikola Lazar Solomon, 3.Amma Toloo, 4.Wardeh Yosip Sulaiman, 5.Flora John Odisho, 6.Avigail Daryawosh, 7.Nahapet Kerikor, 8.Killich Toloo, 9.Babajan Iskhag, 10.Shumon Pilipous (Philip), 11.Avikam Shlimon (Jacob), 12.Shiba Benyamin, 13.Daryawosh "Suro" Orahim, 14.Lucy Jebrael Bakus, 15.Dalaleh \_\_?; **2nd row:** 1.(Half face only), 2.Yacoub Shlemon (Jacob), 3.N/K, 4.Fraidon Orahim, 5.Avimalk Yonan Orahim, 6.William Nona, 7.John Youkhanna Yonan; **3rd row:** 1. Awisha Gewargis Mirza, 2.N/K, 3.Nonu Moshi. 4.N/K, 5.Yosip Gewargis, 6.Eshaya Hormis (Isaac), 7.N/K, 8.Vraish (Tikkin's son), 9.N/K, 10.Fyodor Orahim, 11.N/K, 12.William John Odisho, 13.Meshael Lazar Solomon, 14. Minashi (Mikhael) Khammo Pius, 15. William (Avia) Ewan, 16.Warda Pera, 17.Saada \_\_?, 18.N/K, 19.Aprim Kamar (Abraham); **4th Row:** 1.Sampier Barkho, 2.Avisha Yonan Orahim, 3.Skharia Ziano, 4.N/K, 5.Ezaria Akhko Oda, 6.N/K, 7.N/K, 8.Jameel Kareem, 9.N/K, 10.John Avakian, 11.Surain Onik Sanasarian, 12.Pnouel Lazar Essa, 13.N/K, 14. Daniel Iskhag, 15.Eshay Orahim Baba, 16. Aram Iskhag (?), 17.Lewon Orahim, 18.Avia Arkhivam; **5th row:** 1. Espanya Barkho, 2.Jameela \_\_? 3.Anna Gewargis, 4.Lujiya Kakko Poloss, 5.Maria Sami, 6.Mariam John Odisho, 7.Raabi Youkhanna S.Barkho, 8.Raabi Espanya S. Barkho, 9.Sandra Chiari, 10.Esther S. Barkho, 11.Nina Nweia Shabbas, 12.Soriya Shaul Sulaiman, 13.Lily Nweia Shabbas, 14.Najiba Kamar (Abraham), 15.N/K, 16.Gamliel Ezaria Pera.; **6th row:** 1.Blandina Ewan, 2.Peeda Eshaya Pera, 3.Marjanta Zaia Toma, 4.Glodia Shaul (David), 5.Heleeny Shlemon (Jacob), 6.Christina Khammo Pius, 7.Azra Hanna Hammiky, 8.George Youkhanna Yonan, 9.Andrious Yosip Sulaiman (Simon), 10.Youshiya Arkhivam, 11.Wilson Khoshaba (Isaac), 12.N/K, 13.William Daniel (?), 14.Loas Jebrael Bakus, 15.Iskhag Shlemon (Jacob); **7th row:** 1.Yonan Toloo, 2. Sophia Lazar Solomon 3, 4.N/K, 5.Daniel Lazar Solomon, 6. Fyodor John Odisho, 7.N/K. 8.Eliya Nweia Shabbas, 9.Toma Zaia Toma, 10.Meshak Kamar (Abraham), 11.Shidragh Kamar (Abraham), 12.Aprim Khammo Pius, 13.Wiska Khammo Pius (?); **Lying down:** 1.Youlyous (Julius) Nweia Shabbas, 2.Shalim William Shabbas, 3.Youwii Eshu.—Photo courtesy Abigail & Eshaya Isaac. Feedback of names courtesy Lily Shabbas Neesan, Lujiya (nee Kakko Poloss) and her late husband Fraidon A. Is'hak, Aprim K. Abraham, and Mikhael K.Pius.

## **RAABI ESPANYA'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL in Maratha Lines, Henaidi, Iraq**

By Mikhael K. Pius

Raabi Espanya's elementary school, one of the early Assyrian schools in Iraq, was established in Henaidi, in 1932 as a branch of the main school, Assyrian & Armenian Union School founded in 1924 in Kota Camp. The school was opened after several vacant Indian Military bungalows called Maratha Lines were occupied in early 1930s by some fifty families of Royal Air Force local civilian employees. Raabi Espanya Shimshon Barkho was appointed

the teacher to run the school.

Maratha Lines was a series of several long military bungalows, with common bath-houses and latrines for each gender, a couple of small grocery shops, a few women's underground bread-baking ovens and a hard-ground soccer field. Each bungalow was divided into six or eight "houses." The division was made by high partitions of *hassireh* (rush mats).... (Cont'd on page 26)

## HUSA Newsletter

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The Editor welcomes for consideration from readers contributions of articles, letters, photographs, documents, newspaper clippings, or other memorabilia relating to former Henaidi 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**

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### **Habbaniya Union School Association**

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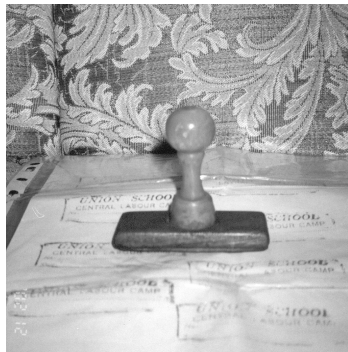
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## **Raabi Yacoub's Rubber Stamp**



This picture shows the school rubber stamp used by the late Raabi Yacoub Bet-Yacoub during his seven-year tenure (1937-44) as headmaster of the Habbaniya Union School. Before he left Baghdad to rejoin his family members in California in 1972, he gave it, for preservation, to Jacob Miraziz, one of his former students. Raabi Jacob Miraziz in turn surrendered the rubber stamp to Mr. Benyamin Esho Yalda (as Chairman of the Founding Committee of Habbaniya Union School Reunion) at the Fourth Reunion held in Sydney, Australia, in October, 2000.

**Thanksgiving & Holiday Greetings**  
We offer our thanks to all of you members and readers for the support you've given HUSA during the two years of its existence. We hope you've had a Happy Thanksgiving and we offer you our greetings and best wishes on Christmas and New Year's Day.

From:

**Ben Yalda, Mikhael Pius, Zacharia Zacharia, & Basil Pius**

## What's on your mind?

# Express Yourself (in a letter or email)

Dear Menashi:

I sincerely apologize for this delay in replying to your letter of October 21, 2002. It was due to an unexpected overstay in Chicago caused by long delays by, and construction problems with, the Assyrian contractor remodeling my Chicago house. Furthermore, on my return to Arizona on Christmas Eve, I became seriously ill with a virus and spent most of my time in bed, consulting doctors and rushing to hospitals. I have therefore been unable to write and thank you for sending me a copy of your new book, "An Assyrian's Youth Journal," which I enjoyed reading from cover to cover.

Menashi, dear, I admire your writing and love to read every piece you write. I recall [from Audit Office days] I was very impressed by the very first short story you wrote sometime in 1947 or 1948 about the experience you had on a trip from Habbaniya to Baghdad. I knew then that you had both the interest and the talent to write. You have a gift and I believe your other family members are blessed with this, including [your brothers] Basil and the late Appy, and also [your maternal uncle] Youshia Polous and [your late cousin] Awia Ewan.

I am always more than glad and willing to support your writing efforts. I enjoy your writing and I read an issue over and over. Your writing is both interesting and well written. It is the duty of every Assyrian to encourage and support, and to contribute toward, periodicals and books produced by any sincere fellow Assyrian.

Although late, I enclose herewith a \$100.00 check, with my respect and best wishes, toward your book. And I have already subscribed to HUSA, through Ben Yalda when I was in Chicago.

I am continuously afflicted with a series of health problems, but have now recovered from the virus and have been given another chance at life, which I consider a gift from my Almighty God.

Thank you again, and with all best wishes to you and the family. God bless.

**Benjamin Menashi**  
(3/26/03) Scottsdale, Arizona

>>> *I am very grateful to you, Ben, and appreciate your support, both moral and financial, the latter being rather overly generous. As you know, I've called you a few times to enquire after your health. The last time I called, last year, I could not reach you. I'm always concerned about, and pray for, relatives and friends who are in ill health, because I really know what it is like to be in poor health. I wish you the blessings of recovery.*

*Christ, how did you remember the story I wrote from that long time ago?! I'd forgotten about it myself. But believe it or not, I still have a file of my early writings. Curious, I dug it up and read the original 1948 manuscript, as edited in pen by an RAF English instructor named Cruickshank, who criticized a few of my stories while I, along with my best friends Eshay Baba and Simon Putrus, were taking advanced English lessons at RAF Station School. Boy, what an amateurish work that story and my others of the time were!—Editor*

Dear Mikhael:

I'm enclosing a letter for HUSA [see page 22]. I'm also sending one to *Nineveh* and *Assyrian Star* Magazines. I had hoped you would do this job as you are well-known in Assyrian circles, but since you haven't done it I decided to write about it.

I hate the holding of Assyrian New Year (*Khab Neesan*) celebration on April 1, which is April Fools' Day!

I also take this opportunity to point out a few trivial errors in last HUSA:

1. In "AMWD," D stands for Directorate and not Department.

2. On Page 27 "Adaption" should read "Adaptation." Many people make this mistake, including me at one time.

3. Baijan Rohan's death on February 29 was wrong, because February was 28 days in this year.

4. Graduation certificate was not on pages 24 and 25 as stated in the caption on page 5 but was on pages 16 and 17.

You may have already noticed these But just in case you haven't.

**Aprim Kambar Abraham**  
(6/16/03) North Hills, California

>>> *Unfortunately, I have just noticed these errors, and I stand corrected. You've got a hawk's eye, Aprim Dosta!*

*In regard to your item 2, however, although "adaptation" is more common, "adaption" is also used. Look up the Dictionary—also with a Hawk's eye!*

*Actually, Baijan Rohan's date of death should have been November 29, 2002. It was incorrectly stated in the email I received. But neither I nor my colleagues, Zacharia Zacharia and Ben Yalda, who proofread the newsletter, realized we weren't in a leap year, nor did we spot the other errors. Sorry! But no matter how careful one is, a few errors still slip by.*

*Aprim, do you want to apply for the job of HUSA proofreader?—Ed.*

Dear Minashi:

Greetings! I wish to thank Aprim Murad's short biography of *Mukhtar* Murad, a full story requires a large book of this good man. [Well, Solly, you are a writer!] I remember back in 1955 when Murad called my uncle *Kasha* Goriel of Baghdad and told him that the British were auctioning material from Saint George Church in Habbaniya and if he needed anything. My uncle said just a bell for the church of *Mart Maryam* in Dohuk, which lacked one. Next day Murad was in our home in Baghdad with a handsome silver bell. He said it cost five dinars. Whereupon my uncle paid him. Murad's dedication to the church is illustrated in the fact that once in America, he worked hard to establish a church near Detroit. Huge sums of money were donated by him, his children, brothers and their spouses, and the Church of *Mart Maryam* was established in Warren, Michigan. May he rest in peace.

Enclosed some photos. Can't yet find the group photo of Air Ministry Works Department [Directorate!] employees, but I am enclosing a photocopy.

Wishing you continued success.

**Solomon Sawa Solomon**  
(6/16/03) Lebanon, Tennessee.

>>> *I talked with Rev. Benjamin Benjamin, pastor of Mart Maryam Church in Warren, MI. He confirmed that the Murad family was indeed one of the founders of the church and rendered much assistance in the project. He expressed his gratitude to the Murad families.—Ed.*

Dear Mr. Yalda:

I received with great anticipation Vol 2, No.1 issue of HUSA newsletter yesterday.

Cont'd on next page

**Express Yourself (Cont'd)**

Although never lived in Habbaniya, I have this unbelievably strong tie to Habbaniya and its people. If I were able to go back in time, I would love to go to Habbaniya as an observer, historian, reporter. And if I had time, I would dedicate at least two years of my life to meet with, interview and document the lives and memories of all who lived in Habbaniya and collect all written, printed documents, photos, etc. and establish a Habbaniya museum!

I will mail you a check for \$40, for my subscription renewal and a gift subs for my cousin, Johnny Warda. I wish you would mail him all three issues. [address given] Johnny is working on building a miniature of the Habbaniya [air] base.

I am very interested in the photo on the cover of this issue of HUSA. Is it possible to get a copy of the photo when I'm in Chicago next week? The late Jebrial Yosip Sayad, who was related to my wife's father, is featured in the photo. His widow, Kathy Sayad, would be very interested in the photo. I was privileged to have had the opportunity to make the dream of the late Jebrial Sayad come true when in 1993 I produced an audio cassette tape of his recordings from 1933.

**Esha Emanuel Tamraz**  
(5/27/03) **San Jose, California.**

>>> *Further to Ben Yalda's personal reply to you, the photo you refer to, was reproduced from 3rd Quarter 1989 Nineveh Magazine. I'm sure Kathy has already seen the picture as her husband the late Jebrial Sayad was a long-time Nineveh subscriber. Incidentally, the audio cassette of Jebrial's 1935 songs you reproduced for him was made possible, I believe, by a rare audio cassette tape I gave him, because he did not have his own recordings. I dubbed the tape in Baghdad from our family's copies of Gebrial's 78 RPM records just before I immigrated to this country in 1981—Ed.*

Dear Ben:

Greetings. Many thanks for last HUSA. Enjoyed reading latest news and pictures of one or two Assyrians I might have known in my service days at Habbaniya.

Thanks for returning my check [in Sterling]. Will an International Money Order [in dollars] drawn on Barclays be acceptable? If not, will have to send you cash. Either that or come over on holiday. Sorry for all the hassle, but in this day and age one would think spending money on a good cause would be easy. Regards to all.

**Mike (& Younia) Goodwin**  
5/23/03. **London England.**

Dear Mike:

Thanks for sending me your book, *An Assyrian's Youth Journal*. Once I started reading it, I couldn't put it down. It is your journal, but it certainly evoked my own memories of life in Habbaniya.

Incidentally I saw [your brother] Appai in Turlock a year before he died. He reminded me that the last time we saw each other in Habbaniya was probably in 1949. We were sitting on a bench near the Catholic Church telling jokes and stories and his brother Wiska came out with a good one:

There are two fellows, each claiming to be the best liar in the world. Finally, one of them decides to challenge the other for the first place. He, along with his entourage, walk to the other side of town, and he knocks on the door of his competitor. A young kid opens the door, and the man says "I have come to challenge your father for the first place as a liar."

"Sorry, my dad had a call that the sky had come apart from its seam and so he went to stitch it together, using a needle and a thread."

At this point, the challenger turns around and starts walking briskly away. His followers ask him why he is leaving. "Well," he answers, "if the son is this good a liar, there is no way I can compete against his dad!"

Here's a check for \$50.00 to cover the cost of your book and some of your other variable expenses. Keep up the good work

**Sargon S. Malik**  
(7/8/03) **Arlington Heights, IL.**

>>> *Thanks a lot for your donation and for the smile your joke has undoubtedly generated on many faces. Incidentally, was the big liar the great "Macano" of Habbaniya who "re-paired" a flat tire on an airplane while it was in flight?—Ed.*

Dear Ben:

Greetings and thanks for sending me your HUSA. The contents were interesting and bring back happy memories of our teenage days. Good work and bravo to you all and keep it up.

I would kindly request you to please send me a copy of "An Assyrian's Youth Journal." Enclosed is my check for \$50 to cover the cost and the Book. The balance is a small donation for your esteemed newsletter.

Wishing you all the best.

**Andrius Attu Soro**  
(6/6/03) **Wetherill Park (Australia)**  
>>> *Andrius, a Hab school mate, is Bishop Mar Bawai Soro's father—Ed.*

Dear Ben:

Thanks for your letter of May 18 and the HUSA journal, which I found of immense reading value and at the same time to rekindle memories and times we have had at the Union School. I wish to convey my sincere regards to Basil K. Pius who was known as "Whiska" and who was a classmate in the fifth and sixth Primary school grades along with his brother Raphael. I heard Raphael has passed away and I offer my deepest condolences.

I am sending you my check for US\$25.00 to cover my membership for the years 2003 and 2004.

I send to you and your family my best wishes as well as to my mates, should you meet with them.

**George Stephan**  
(5/23/03) **Ealing, London.**

Dear Ben:

Thank you for the third issue of HUSA newsletter.

While turning over the pages I was shocked to see my late grandfather Khoshaba's funeral service photo. I am grateful for reminding us of the memories of old days.

Once again I thank you and Mike for the excellent job you are doing. Enclosed is a \$20.00 check donation.

**John Tamras**  
(5/29/03) **Lincolnwood, IL.**

Dear Ben:

Thank you for your letter of 18th May and the third issue of HUSA.

I congratulate you and Minashi for producing this newsletter for the students who attended Habbaniya Union School and for all those who lived in Habbaniya, where all of us spent our younger days among friends, in harmony, as one big family

I am enclosing my membership subscription of U.S. Dollars 12 for 2003. I became a member in November 2002 and paid my subscription to Minashi when Regina and I met him at Helen and Zacharia's home in Modesto when we were invited for dinner. We had a good holiday and en-

**Cont'd on next page**

**Express Yourself (Cont'd)**

joyed reading the newsletter. Keep up the good work.

**(6/3/03) Edward Nimrud Khamo  
Slade Green, Kent, UK.**

Dear Ben & Mikhael:

I received the Vol. 2, No. 1 newsletter and you don't believe how many times we have gone through it and still we enjoy reading it again and again. You gentlemen are doing the best, kept it going God bless you.

Enclosed is a subscription for the year, and our regards to you and your families.

**John & Lowas Aghajan  
(7/9/03) Mississauga, Ont.(Canada)**

Dear Ben:

I apologize for the delay in responding to your letter dated May 18, 2003. I was unfortunately out of the country at that time. I am extremely delighted in the improvement of the Habbaniya newsletter. I look forward to seeing further improvements in the subsequent issues, as I consider it as a part of our Assyrian history.

I enclose a money order for US\$15.00 toward my 2003 subscription.

Best regards to you and your family.

**David Ganja  
(6//23/03) Scarborough, Ont. (Canada)**

Hi Mr. Yalda:

The enclosed US \$.12.00 is the membership fee on behalf of my father who lives in England. [Address supplied]

**Charles Yalda  
(6/03) Brompton, Ont.(Canada)**

Dear Ben:

I enjoyed reading the recent issue of HUSA with the improved appearance and it really makes a lot of difference. The picture on the cover is very impressive and a great conversation piece. One can spend hours talking about it. All those real people, who today represent our past, were indeed the present of their time. I have close relatives in the group, but most of them are now deceased.

I am sending you a check for \$50.00 against my subscription and for a subscription for my brother Michael in Oakville, Canada. Please use the balance as a donation. Next year, please send me a reminder to renew the subscriptions.

I commend you on your ceaseless efforts for devoting so much time and talent to keep HUSA alive and well. However, it

should not surprise me too much because you always do everything very well. You are a valuable Assyrian despite the fact that you are a...according to your late mother-in-law(Just kiddin').

**"Danny Boy" L. Solomon  
(6/23/03) Modesto, California.**

Dear Ben:

Thank you for HUSA magazine. It is very interesting. You and Minashi are doing a good job. It involves a lot of communication and planning. Minashi is such a good writer. I enjoy his stories and the way he writes.

I am enclosing a sum of US\$.22.00 to cover my and my sister Mary's subscriptions for one year.

I enjoyed the article on you and your family, you all look good and the grandchildren are so nice. God bless them for you.

**Regina (Gewargis) Jones  
(6/5/03) Thornhill, Ont. (Canada)**

Dear Ben:

I received the HUSA newsletter Vol. 2, No. 1, 2003. We are grateful to you and we appreciate your efforts in producing the newsletter, and it really was a great surprise in seeing each other at the 5th Habbaniya Reunion in London. So thank you again and best wishes to you and family and all friends. I am pleased to enclose the subscription renewal for another year for myself and my brother Tawar Michael.

**Lewis A. Shlaimoun  
(6/16/03) Ealing, London (UK)**

Dear Ben:

Thank you very much for the 3rd Edition of the Habbaniya newsletter.

I read with interest letters from students and friends and it is wonderful to know that such friends are still about and well.

Enclosed is \$30 for my 2003 subscription. Keep up the good work and God bless you all.

**Mr (& Mrs) Moishi Badou  
(Undated) Slade Green, Kent (UK)**

Dear Ben:

I thank you for the HUSA newsletter Vol. 2, No. 1, being the second issue I received. I am enclosing a \$10 check for 2003 subscription.

Annie joins me in sending you and

your family our warmest regards.

**Wilson Shallou  
(5/31/03) Modesto, California.**

Dear Darling Ben:

Thank you very much for magazine I love reading. Here I am sending \$15.00.

Love you always. My love to Leena.

**Youlia (Shaul) Falconer  
(undated) Modesto, California.**

Dear Ben:

Herewith please find my check (\$10) for renewal of membership for 2003.

**David S. David  
(5/23/03) Chicago, Illinois.**

Hi Ben

This check [\$24] is for my 2003 subs and my brother in England, a new member. Can you please mail in Spring and Summer issue. It had [in it] my father's picture (Shumon Philip). We would appreciate it very much.

**Helen (and Ed) Yohanna  
5/27/03. Mississauga, Canada.**

Dear Ben:

Sorry for delay. I will email you about what I think regarding the face lift of HUSA. [\$12 check enclosed]

My regards to your family.

**Shamiram Hermes  
5/28/03 Daly City, Calif.**

My dear Ben:

Enclosed is a check for \$40 for our subs dues and the balance as a donation to HUSA. Keep up the excellent work.

**Shimshon & Jane Essa  
5/28/03 Modesto, Calif.**

Dear Mr. Yalda:

Enclosed please find a check for \$40 for my subs to HUSA. Please add my cousin Johnny's name to your subs list.

**Esha Emmanuel Tamras  
San Jose, Calif.**

Dear Ben:

Please accept this check [\$15] as my subs for this year. Best regards.

**Gloria Marano  
6/23/03 Morton Grove, Illinois.**

The enclosed check [\$15] is to cover Cardo's subs and mine. You guys doing a great job.

**Ashour Marano  
5/28/03 Chicago, Illinois.  
More letters on next page?**

**Express Yourself! (Cont'd)**

Dear Ben:

Enclosed herewith a check for \$25.00, covering a two-year subscription (2003/4).

My best wishes to you and family...my best regards to Minashi and his son.

**Emmanuel M. Warda**

5/29/03 Redwood City, Calif.

Dear Ben:

Enclosed please find my check for \$50. It's always a pleasure hearing from you. Keep up the good work and God bless.

**Pius Joseph**

5/24/03 Roselle, Illinois.

Dear Ben:

I just want to thank you and Menashi (Michael) for all that you are doing.

I just returned from Iraq. I was working for the Department of Defense (U.S. Army) as an interpreter. I was supposed to be gone for a year, but I stayed only three months. I was mostly in Tikrit. In the beginning I was at Taji Airport, 20 minutes from Baghdad which I was never able to visit. It was too dangerous!

Please accept my humble donation—give the rest to the needy Assyrians.

**Shamiram S. Huwe**

(Undated) Athens, Ohio.

Dear Ben:

Thanks a million for HUSA Magazine...really very interesting to read.

I enclose herewith a check for \$10. God bless you, go forward with your magazine.

**Akhshirash M. Jango**

6/2/03. New Port, Virginia.

Hi Ben,

You're doing a great job. God bless.

**Sargon Aboona**

6/5/03 Skokie, Illinois.

Ben:

Keep up the good work. \$50 check enclosed.

**Sam Elias**

**Chicago, Illinois.**

Hi Ben:

Enclosed you find a little check [\$50] as donation. God bless you.

**Ashur Sargon**

8/3/03 Morton Grove, Illinois.

Dear Ben:

Thank you for your letter. Herewith my renewal dues for one year (\$10 check)

**Yooshia K. Poloss**

5/29/03 Hollywood, Calif.

Dear Ben:

The enclosed check for \$10 is for renewal of my subscription for HUSA Newsletter—which is fast becoming HUSA Magazine, if it hasn't already.

Congratulations and best wishes.

**Aprim K. Abraham**

8/8/03 North Hills, Calif.

Dear Ben:

I had misplaced your letter. Hence the delay in remitting my subscription fees, which I thoroughly regret.

Keep up the good work. We are proud of you and all those who have devoted their time and effort in producing the newsletter.

**John R. Michael**

6/16/03. Quebec, Canada.

Dear Ben:

Enjoyed latest issue of HUSA with the enjoyable articles and "Express Yourself" clips. Keep up the good work. Will be looking forward to the next issue with fresh articles.

Please use the additional money for any worthwhile cause. [\$40 enclosed]

6/26/03 **S. Ibrahim**

**Brompton, ON.Canada.**

Dear Ben:

Please find enclosed the sub and a donation for membership of HUSA as promised [\$20]. Sorry for slight delay but we all went away on holiday for a bit of sun and sand. Hope all are well. Regards.

**Mike Goodwin**

6/13/03. Ruislip Manor, UK.

Dear Ben:

I hope you don't mind my calling you Ben, but that is how we knew you some 50 odd years ago. I thank you for HUSA Vol. 2, No. 1. But I have already received this number some months ago...

However, I am enclosing some photos. Some were taken at Habbaniya, others at Daura, which I consider an extension of Habbaniya. I hope you will find them of interest.

**Benyamin Ishmaiel Yalda**

7/28/03 West Ealing, London, UK

Hi Ben

I am sending a check [\$10] for HUSA Magazine. Please give my love to your family. Best wishes for good job.

**Mary David**

6/4/03. Daly City, Calif.

Dear Ben:

Thank you for sending me copy of HUSA. I am enclosing check for \$22.00 for subs for me and my brother Wilson. Thank you again for being good friend—you, Leena and Dorothy, Sargon & Almas.

**Janet Jacob**

6/8/03. Streamwood, Illinois.

**Notes from the Editor**

*Dear Readers and Writers:*

1. *The HUSA staff is very grateful to all those of you who have supported us with your letters of encouragement and literary and monetary contributions. Without that, it would not have been possible for us to continue publishing this newsletter. And to go on publishing and constantly improving our product, we need your continued support. In fact we need additional members to support us, because as it is we are barely making it—primarily through the donations of a few generous members. Such needed additional support should especially come from hardcore Ex-Habbaniyans and particularly from those we have been featuring in HUSA, some of whom, sorry to say, are not yet members. Also, a number of membership fees are now overdue. So please take care of this matter without obliging us to go to the task and expense of writing each of you personally, as we are trying to cut corners to keep within our budget. And writing and mailing letters is an additional expense—and work.*

2. *We wish also to remind our readers (and writers) that Ben Yalda is the Administration Manager and Mikhael Pius is the Editor. Mikhael Pius is responsible for the editorial work (compilation and editing of the newsletter) and Ben Yalda is responsible for its administration (printing, distribution and accounts). All matters relating to membership and payments, therefore, should be addressed and sent to Ben Yalda and matters relating to publishing (articles, photographs, letters-to-the-Editor, etc.) are to be addressed and sent directly to the Editor, Mikhael K. Pius, and not through Ben Yalda, otherwise this entails unnecessary extra work for Ben and additional postage expenses on material forwarded by Ben to Mikhael in Modesto. But because Ben is a popular personality, readers may write about him in letters for publication, if desired, but such letters should be addressed and mailed to the Editor and not to Ben Yalda. (Our addresses are on page 2)*

*And thanks for your co-operation.*

## A Visit to BOAC at Lake Habbaniya

By Mikhael K. Pius & Aprim K. Abraham

British Overseas Airways, later known as BOAC (British Overseas Airway Corporation), had a branch at Lake Habbaniya, in Iraq, during the World War II days. It was established soon after the war started in 1939 and was closed down, when its purpose was served, two years after the war was over in 1945. The facility was called BOAC Rest House.

The purpose for the facility was to help the British war effort by transporting freight as well as important passengers, mostly in transit, such as kings, heads of states, statesmen, high-ranking officers, and VIPs like Agha Khan, most of whom were destined to the Mediterranean, Africa and India and Pakistan. There was a small airport called Muthanna in Baghdad, but the British provided their own facilities.

The Airline used seaplanes that landed on the Lake. There were two kinds; one was silver colored and was called flying boat and the other one was dark brown called Sunderland. Passengers and freight were transferred from the seaplanes to motorboats that carried them to the BOAC facilities on the shore (and vice versa). Passengers and freight destined for Habbaniya were then carried by motor transport to the air base, five miles beyond the hills.

Most passengers were in transit at the Lake. After having a meal and short rest they were returned to the seaplanes to continue their journey. Lunch and dinner boxes were provided by the facility for the transit passengers for long flights. Some of them stayed overnight. When there was an overload of transients, some were transported to and accommodated overnight at the rest camp in the RAF air base.

There were a number of Assyrians of Habbaniya (many of them Bne-Gangachin), who worked for BOAC. Among the BOAC staff were: Benyamin Yosip Gandalo as head clerk, Orahim Lachin as accountant, and Baijan and Lazar Iskhaq Rasho, Khnania "Nanno" and Aprim Jebrial Bakus, Mishael Lazar Solomon and George Quryakos were traffic clerks.

Aprim Jebrial Bakus, Alexander \_\_?, and Aprim Kamar Abraham were operations clerks. Polus Kamar Abraham, who later worked for the RAF Special Investigation Bureau in the air base, was a catering supervisor. At the same time, Jebrial "Zamara" Yosip Sayad, who was a head clerk, was transferred to BOAC office in Teheran. Zussimas Shamasha Yosip and Yonatan Atanous Mirza were storekeepers and Sandra Benjamin was the typist. Many others worked for BOAC, among them Baba Rustam, Shimshon Orahim Rasho and a few Armenians.

Traffic clerks were responsible for preparing passenger  
(Cont'd on next page)



1945: A Group of Habbaniya young women, on an excursion to Lake Habbaniya, visiting the facilities of BOAC. From right: Sandra Benjamin, Victoria Yokhanna, Zabet Odisho, Rachel Yokhanna, Selma Katto, Camille Katto, Jameela Orahim Odisho, Regina Gewargis. Sitting: Benyamin Yosip Gandalo, his little boy with Aprim Jebrial Bakus. Photo courtesy Victoria Yohana of Skokie, IL.



Visiting girls from Habbaniya posing with BOAC staff. From left, Benyamin Yosip Gandalo, Sandra Benjamin (BOAC typist), Regina Gewargis, Zabet Odisho, Baijan Iskhaq Rasho, Rachel Yokhanna, Victoria Yokhanna, Selma Katto; Jameela Orahim Odisho, and Camille Katto. Photo courtesy Victoria Yohana.

### Visit To BOAC at Lake Habbaniya (Cont'd)

and traffic lists, and operations clerks sent and received messages by codes (Bentley's, and the top secret by Cipher Code).

There were many blue color workers in the facility: cooks, waiters, barmen, laundry women, boiler men, a gardener (Nimrud Benyamin), Arab night guardsmen, a number of coolies and several people who laid out flare paths (lights) on the surface of the lake for night landing of flying boats. There were also six truck drivers, an English station manager and his assistant, and five other British department managers.

Some of the senior staff, such as Benyamin Gandalo who were married, were accommodated, rent free, in a dozen unfurnished company houses close to the company complex, which also consisted of Company offices, bar, kitchen, laundry, and messing and accommodation rooms for the British staff and for overnight passengers.

A few months before shut-down, Benyamin Gandalo and Aprim Abraham were transferred to BOAC office in Baghdad as traffic clerk and operations clerk, respectively. And eight months later, the Iraqi Airways took over the handling of BOAC flights. Those Assyrians who had *jinsiya* (Iraqi nationality) were taken over by the Iraqi Airways and those who hadn't were sent home.

The co-author of this piece, Aprim Abraham, was one of the ones discharged. He returned to Habbaniya and in three months learned Morse code and worked for the RAF as a wireless-telegraph operator, a top-paying technical job then. And after Habbaniya was handed over to the Iraqi Government in May 1955, Aprim learned Teach-Yourself Pitman's Shorthand, left Habbaniya and obtained a short-hand typist job in African & Eastern Co. in Baghdad at a relatively higher salary.

In addition to its use as a landing and take-off site for BOAC seaplanes, Lake Habbaniya, which was five miles from Habbaniya across a plateau and a range of hills lying a mile off the western and southern fringes of the air base's iron perimeter fence, was also used as a safety valve to receive and dispose of the excess waters of the bloated Euphrates River during the flood season.

In the spring of 1940 the air base was exposed to a flooding threat when the inhabitants of both the British and the local camps were evacuated and encamped for about three weeks up by the hills



Some BOAC staff at Lake Habbaniya in summer uniform in April, 1945. Standing from left to right: Baijan Iskhaq Rasho, Aprim Jebrial Bakus, Lazar Iskhaq Rasho, Khnania "Nanno" Jebrial Bakus; Sitting: George Quryakos, Mr. Baker (Station Manager), Aprim Kambar Abraham. Photo courtesy Aprim Abraham.



Another picture of the Habbaniya beauties on an excursion, visiting BOAC "diggings" in 1945. From front, Victoria Yokhanna, Rachel Yokhanna, Regina Gewargis, Camille Katto, Jameela Orahim Odisho, Zabet Odisho, Selma Katto, Sandra Benjamin (BOAC typist), George Quryakos, Aprim Jebrial Bakus. Photo courtesy Victoria Yohana of Skokie, IL.



Some BOAC staff, posing in winter uniform in front of Muthanna Airport in Baghdad in December 1946. From left: Aprim Kambar Abraham, Tawfiq (driver), Shimshon Orahim Rasho, Benyamin Yosip Gandalo, Yonan Orahim Odisho, and a British official—Photo courtesy of Aprim Kambar Abraham of North Hills, California.



### Visit to BOAC Rest House (Cont'd)

until the danger was averted. So after the mid-1940s, beginning at the north-eastern part of the lake, a relief canal was dug all around the western, southern and eastern boundaries of Habbaniya that flowed down into the down flow of Euphrates River at its eastern curve on the far side of Coolie (or Humphriya) Camp.

Unlike the British camp, the local camps in Habbaniya had no swimming pools, except for one for Levy personnel. So during the summer months, the sluggish, clear and placid waters of the canal were a popular “pool” for the local swimmers, especially young men, diving off the canal bridge, holding long-distance swimming contests as well as hobby-fishing in its water.

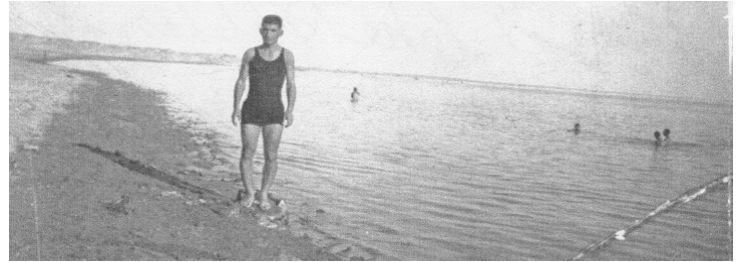
But the main summer recreation facility was the lake itself, for swimming and sailing. The British had allotted for themselves a choice secluded spot, which was rocky with deep clear water. There they sunned themselves, dived off the rocks and splashed to their hearts' content. Upon a mound at the beach, close to the BOAC Rest House, was the RAF Boat Club, with a NAAFI canteen\* to provide them with food and drinks. Some RAF officers had private sailing boats at the club site and some of the robust ones sailed their boats even during the cold season.

The local inhabitants of Habbaniya were confined to a lower flat sandy portion of the lake beach about a mile away, which many local residents frequented for swimming and picnicking with family or friends. Some came cycling as individuals or in small groups, others brought the family in a taxi, while still others came in festive groups of families or neighbors in a shared hired bus. A few stout ones even made the five-mile trip on foot. But they all came to escape a sweltering summer day in their crammed and uncooled homes in the cantonment, to swim, frolic and to ease off their stress, eating picnic lunches and slices of water-cooled, sweet and juicy watermelons and cantaloupes, topped off by cups of samovar tea. <<< **(For some of Aprim K. Abraham's amusing anecdotes of BOAC time, see page 22)**

\*The NAAFI canteen was managed by the Editor's father, Khammo “Nappo” Pius, from 1938 through late April 1941, when it was ransacked, along with the BOAC facilities, by the Iraqi Army during the siege of the airbase. And as an early teen-ager, the Editor would occasionally accompany his father to help at the canteen as well as enjoy the luxury of a sneaked dip in the British swimming hole.



Khammo Pius (right) is seen with his assistant in his little NAAFI canteen at RAF Boat Club at Lake Habbaniya. Circa 1938.



A general view of the local beach at Lake Habbaniya. In the foreground, Para Pius, an outstanding long-distance swimmer and renowned soccer player. Just off Para's right shoulder is where the BOAC and Boat Club facilities were located. Circa 1939.



The group of visiting beauties from CC Habbaniya basking, on the sly, on the rocks of the luxurious British-only swimming hole, at Lake Habbaniya. Photo courtesy Victoria Yohana. Circa 1945.



Picnicking at the Lake's local beach are a group of relatives. Sitting, from left: Sarah M. Yokhanna, Zabeth Odisho, Regina Gewargis, Yosip Gewargis, Najeeba and Raabi Khamis DeBaz and their little son; standing, Helen Gewargis and daughter Madeleine. Photo courtesy Victoria Yohana. Circa 1945.

A Personality Sketch

## Native Habbaniyan is Noted Assyrian Achiever in Sweden

By Mikhael K. Pius

In last July and August my daughter and her husband, my son, my two younger sisters and their three grown-up boys and I made a trip to Holland and Sweden to visit our sister, Christina, and her children. In Goteborg (pronounced Uteboré), Sweden lies the grave of the late Youra Eshaya, the former Habbaniya and Iraq International legendary soccer player. One of my intentions was to visit the grave, on my return trip to Holland (from Huskvarna through Goteborg Airport), take a couple of pictures of the it and write a story about Youra. Unfortunately, I was unable to arrange the visit. But I had previously the opportunity to meet and conduct recorded interviews with a couple of Assyrian public figures. One of them was a former Chaldean Catholic-educated Assyrian priest turned co-bishop of the Assyrian Church of the East and the other one was *Raabi* Mikhael Marogil Mammo, a noted Assyrian educator and man of letters in Sweden—who happens to be also a native Habbaniyan.

In addition to his mother tongue Assyrian, both Western and Eastern dialects as well as the Aramaic version, *Raabi* Mikhael is also proficient in Arabic, Swedish and English. He has been an educator in the Swedish educational system for well over two decades, teaching Assyrian, Arabic and Swedish to immigrants from the Middle Eastern countries.

He is an author, journalist and poet in Arabic and Assyrian and is, since last year, the Editor-in-Chief of the well-known Assyrian multi-language monthly *Khouyada* Magazine, published in Sweden and containing material in Assyrian (both Eastern and Western dialects), Swedish, Arabic, Turkish and English languages. The magazine has a 1000-copy circulation and is distributed in 35 countries.

*Raabi* Mikhael compiled an Assyrian Reader in three parts titled *Leeshani* (My Language), which was approved, printed and adopted into the Swedish school system by the Swedish Board of Education in the late 1980s. The fourth part is also ready, along with two children's exercise books, for printing and use. His Reader, is also used by Assyrian educators in more than 15 other countries.

The noted writer and educator has also been active in Assyrian national and social affairs. He has been the chairman of Assyrian Babel Society in Jöngköping (Young-

shopping) for 25 years running (he resigned last year) and was for eight years vice-chairman of *Khouyada* of Assyrian Clubs in Sweden, a federation of 32 Assyrian and Syriac organizations, having been consistently a member of its central committee. He has travelled abroad and taken part in various Assyrian conferences in Greece, Holland, Russia, London, U.S.A., speaking on language and literature and methods of teaching and was conferred with honorary membership of Assyrian Society of Greece. He represents teachers in Jönköping and foreign teachers in the Swedish Lawyers' Union. He has gone on teachers' tours to some countries as well as participated with Union

members in visits to Lawyers' unions in other countries. Also, he runs, jointly with four other persons, an internet website in Arabic language, uploading stories, poems and articles. Set up by the Swedish Ministry of Education, it is a government program for mother tongues of various ethnic groups in the country. *Raabi* Mikhael is working on having website set up next year in Assyrian language.

*Raabi* Mikhael Mammo was born (1948) and raised as a boy in Civil Cantonment of Habbaniya and Humphriya (Coolie) Camp. His father, who worked as an AMWD supervisor, was Marogil Mammo and his mother was Nazhat Gulla. He received his elementary and high school education in the Habbaniya school system from

early 1950s to mid-1960s. He then completed a two-year course in the Ramadi Institute of Teaching and studied two years law in Basrah University. After that he taught school for eight years, in Habbaniya and Falluja.

Mikhael showed an early interest in writing. Because all of his schooling was in Arabic, he had a special skill in the language. He published his first article at age 14. After that, he wrote in earnest and gradually succeeded in placing poems, short stories, and articles in Iraqi periodicals.

While a student in Basrah University in late 1960s, he became columnist for a page called "University" in a periodical called *The South*. The column was made up of editorials he wrote and poems and articles he received from some of his University friends.

In 1968 he published his first book in Arabic when he was 20 years old. It was on doing research and was sold to teachers and other literary people. And his second book



*Raabi* Mikhael Mammo (left) with the author, Mikhael Pius, during their meeting in Huskvarna, (Jönköping), Sweden.

### Native Habbaniyan (Cont'd)

was a collection of poems, translated into Arabic. Mikhail's intention was to show the public that the contemporary Assyrians had their own culture and educated people. Unfortunately, although he had obtained the Ministry of Education's permission to publish the book, the censors blocked its distribution! Mikhail has since written more than two dozen books, ten of which have been published.

During the few years the Iraqi Government granted Syriac-speaking people the so-called educational and literary rights in April 1972, Mikhail, helped by Shmouel Dinkha (currently pastor of Mar Yosip Assyrian Church of the East in San Jose, California), had a 20-minute weekly radio program called "*Mowhowta*" and a 30-minute television program called "*Tpakyateh*" (interviews with Assyrian literary figures) in the Assyrian Section of the Baghdad Broadcasting Station. The program was also taped and sent for airing on other Stations in the North, such as Mosul, Kirkuk, etc.

When his cultural ability was established, Mikhail became for a few years—until 1976 when he left Iraq—a member of Baghdad's noted Assyrian Cultural Club. (The club's social and political activities made a noticeable impression on the Assyrian community during the 1960s and mid-1970s until Saddam Hussein's growing power and over-reaching arm clubbed it into submission.) Mikhail was appointed Secretary for the club's quality dual-language (Assyrian and English) magazine, *The Cultured Assyrian*. (Shmouel Dinkha also worked for the magazine)

In the meantime, a group of literary Assyrians had formed a writers' union, which was joined by many Assyrian writers and poets. They ventured into publishing a few books in Assyrian language. Because they were wary of attracting government attention, the word *Atouraya* (Assyrian) in the title of one book called *Neesan d'Khoyada Atouraya* (April of Assyrian Unity) was written in cuneiform writing. This was suggested by Shmouel Dinkha.

In a co-operative work at this time, Shmouel helped Mikhail in his Assyrian and Mikhail helped Shmouel in his Arabic and the two also collaborated in producing a page called *Al-Thaqafa Al-Ashouriya* (The Assyrian Culture) in the Kurdish newspaper *Al-Ta'akhi* (Brotherhood). This was Mikhail's last work before he left the country due to both personal as well as political security reasons caused by his ethnic work as an oppressed man of letters.

When Mikhail arrived in Sweden in 1976 the first thing he decided was that if he was to achieve success, he had to broaden his educational horizon and learn the Swedish language well. And he did both, consequently achieving a high degree of success. He took advanced Arabic classes (60 points) in the University of Stockholm and then in University of Jönköping. He also studied media—journalism and direction—80 points, in high school in Jonkoping during a few years. At the end of his studies, he secured a position teaching Assyrian language a few hours a day

while he was intensely studying the Swedish language. His Assyrian teaching time was gradually increased to 30 hours per week.

When Mikhael started teaching, he was the only teacher, but there are now ten teachers of the Assyrian language. At first he taught only Assyrian. But later he also taught Arabic, as well as Swedish to new foreign students who did not speak Swedish.

After years of knowledge and experience of the Swedish school system, he decided to produce an Assyrian Reader that was more suitable and compatible with the country's policy than those available for teaching our language. The result of two years of work was his three-part Reader mentioned previously.

Raabi Mikhail submitted his books for opinion of some of the noted literary men, learned in our language, such as *Shamasha* Gewargis Benyamin d'Ashita, Raabi Benyamin Gandalo, Archdeacon Youel Yonan, Rev. Shmouel Dinkha, Raabi Akhtiyar Benyamin Moshi. Unfortunately, there were differences of opinion among them in some instances in regard to grammar and spelling. So he decided to fall back on old sources of language for help.

After that, Raabi Mikhail realized that the Assyrians did not have Assyrian story literature for children. He wrote simple story books with parallel translation in Swedish. He hopes that they will also be parallel-translated in the languages of other countries where we have big Assyrian communities.

As a teacher, Raabi Mikhail's next step was to inspire our children in high school to use Assyrian language. He promised good marks to anyone of his students who wrote a poem or little story in Assyrian language. Many responded and their output was compiled in a little book titled *Little Stories from Sweden*, which will be published and sold and the profit distributed to the various authors of the book. Raabi Mikhail has already received requests from Australia and Denmark proposing that they reprint the book for their communities' children

Raabi Mikhail's next thought was to encourage Assyrians to learn to read and write in their own language. In Sweden the government has granted every immigrant the right to learn and practice their own ethnic language and has provided educational facilities for this, even providing a tutor at home. But they cannot be pressured into learning. They have to be willing—or encouraged or coaxed into learning. The government, thank God says Raabi Mikhail, has now upgraded the Assyrian language to the level of another subject as part of the school curriculum.

As an incentive, Raabi Mikhail told his students that he was going to arrange a tour of the British Museum in London to acquaint them with the civilization and culture their ancestors have left them and that anyone attending Assyrian classes regularly and achieving high marks will be eligible to go on the tour. The incentive worked and many students attended Assyrian classes and did well and earned their tour tickets to London, paid for by the Swedish Ministry of Education.

Raabi Mikhail has been exchanging ideas with a few of the literary Assyrians in Russia. They also send him prose and poetry for analysis and printing in *Khoyada* Magazine. He is planning to take time off next summer to hold seminars for six weeks in Tatarstan, Georgia and Armenia to teach Assyrian teachers the proper way to teach the Assyrian language.

Raabi Mikhail considers our language the most important aspect of our nation. "Language is the soul of a nation," he says. "The nation is the body, and its language is its soul. If the language dies, the nation becomes a corpse." <<<

# A page from the Assyrian Levy History

By the late Ex-*Rab-Khamshi* Youarish Darmoo of Targawer

(As translated from Assyrian language and edited, in July 1997, by Mikhael K. Pius)



**Youarish Darmoo, Drum-major of RAF (Iraq) Levies Military Band in Henaidi, Iraq. Circa 1936**

On May 1, 1921, the British began enlisting Assyrian soldiers into its army, which they called Assyrian Levies. It was one brigade: 4 battalions and a pack battery, battalion in size, under the command of General J.J. Brown.

The local commander was *Rab Kaila* (Force Commander) David Bet-Mar Shumon, father of the late Patriarch Mar Eshai Shumon, and each battalion was under the command of one *Rab-Tremma*, equivalent to Lieutenant Colonel. The Force was made up as follows:

1. 1st Battalion was made up of Arabs, guarding the British interest in Basra, Margil, and Shaibah.
2. 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions were composed of Assyrians, who were guarding the Iraqi border with "Kurdistan" in the North.
3. Each of the three Assyrian battalions was composed of four companies, and each company was four platoons of 50 men each, totaling some 2400 personnel in all.
4. Each battalion was commanded by a *Rab-Tremma*, each company by a *Rab-Emma*, equivalent to Captain, and each platoon by a *Rab-Khamshi*, equivalent to a Lieutenant.
5. 2nd Battalion was commanded by R-T Yacoub son of Malik Ismaiel of Upper Tiari.
6. 3rd Battalion was commanded by R-T Daniel son of Malik Ismaiel of Upper Tiari.
7. 4th Battalion was commanded by R-T Malik Zaia Malik Shamisdin of Lower Tiari.

8. The Rab-Emmas were:

Ezaria Tamraz

- Gevo\_\_?, of Lower Tiari
- Gewargis Shabo, of Tkuma
- Malham Oda, of Gawer
- Makhsud Mikho
- Malik Hormis
- Malik Khnana, of Tkuma
- Neesan Kaaka, of Shamizden
- Polu Eliya, of Eeyil
- Raabi Shayin, of Baz

Shlimon Malik Ismaiel, of Lower Tiari  
Toloo Yacoub, of Sarra  
Yosip Khiyou, of Upper Tiari  
Zaia Booza, of Upper Tiari  
Youarish Shammu of Mar Bishu

9. These 15 *Rab-Emmas* mentioned above commanded the 12 companies and a battery.

10. I cannot remember all *Rab-Khamshis*, but I can name 42 of the 48 Assyrian platoon commanders, as follows:

Attu Soro of Marbishu  
Baiju Peeku, of Gargan  
Baiju Rehana, Gawer  
Barkhu Hormis  
Daryawosh Shamasha Khammo, of Baloulan  
Eramia Qouryaqos, of Barwar  
Eshu Kando, of Upper Tiari  
Eshu Sapar, of Barwar  
Eshu Yonan  
Gewargis Toma, of Lower Tiari  
Iskhaq Rehana, of Gargan  
Jindo Shamasha Lawando, of Upper Tiari  
Khananya Talya, of Upper Tiari  
Lazar Bet-Koka, of Lower Tiari  
Malik Lowku, Tkhumy  
Moshi Kokha Youkhanna, of Margawer  
Nimroud Shamasha Khammu, of Baloulan  
Odisho Dadisho, of Upper Tiari  
Odisho Hormis, Lower Tiari  
Odisho Lawando, of Lower Tiari  
Odisho Malik Naatu, of Diza  
Orahim Bet-Aboona, of Jilu  
Orahim Yonan, of Tkhumy  
Pithyou\_\_?, Lower Tiari  
Raabi Sando, of Urmia  
Rovil Bet-Matran, of Nochiya  
Shamasha Khaninia, of Upper Tiari  
Shamasha Khoshaba, Upper Tiari  
Shamasha Qaasu, of Marbishu  
Shawil Darmu, of Eeyil  
Sheba Warda  
Sheema\_\_?, of Targawer  
Shimshon Yosip, of Marbishu  
Soski Peroeff, of Eroovan  
Stepu Neesan, of Diza  
Timatiyos Barkhu, Sapna

Cont'd on next page

## Levy History (Cont'd)

Warda Esho, of Marbishu  
 William Shamasha Shlimon, Qoudchanis  
 Yacoub Khoshaba Bet-Aboona, of Alqosh  
 Yakhanis D'Malik Khammu, of Diza  
 Yosip Warda, of Diza  
 Zaia Gewargis, Lower Tiari

During the years 1924-26, there were also some Iraqi border guards on duty with the Levies. But they came under the command of our Colonel.

In 1932, when the Levies had a problem with the British and laid down their arms, the British brought out two battalions, one to replace our 3rd Battalion and the other in place of 1st Battalion. Thereafter we received Mar Shimon's reconciliatory letter and we were reinstated.

After that, the British began to prune down the Levies Force when the Iraqi Government was able to take care of their borders. They discharged a great deal of the Levies, leaving only four companies.

Shortly after that the British recruited one company made up of Kurds. It was commanded by a Rab-Emma who was Tawfiq Sadiq's son, assisted by four Rab-Khamshis: Bilal\_\_\_, Ameen Hassan, Sa'id Ali, and Darwish\_\_\_. They also brought up one Arab company from the 1st Battalion in Basra. This was to make sure that if we Assyrians had a second thought the British would fall back for support on the two Arab and Kurdish companies.

Some months following the Battle of Habbaniya in May 1941, when the loyal Assyrian Levies guarded the air base gallantly, the British once again began recruiting Levy soldiers in great numbers, Assyrians, Kurds and Yezidis. The Yezidis were commanded by Shaikh Shamoo and another Shaikh. They even went to Syria and reinstated most of the former Assyrian Levies according to their previous ranks.

After the increase of the Levy Force to more than 10,000 soldiers some *Rab-Khamshis* were promoted to *Rab-Tremmas* and were sent to command a group under the command of a British Colonel. At that time there were no battalions, only companies.

As soon as each company was formed, it would be trained in Habbaniya and be sent out to a certain locality, such as Tel-Avainat, Tel-Tammar, Giyarah, Kirkuk, Basra, IPC, Palestine, Lebanon, Cyprus, and other places where needed. Most of us senior NCOs were promoted to *Rab-Khamshi* rank to command platoons of such companies.



Levy recruits drilling before being issued with uniforms. Two men could be identified: one at head of line is Rab-Khamshi Gewargis "Gaggo" Gewargis, brother of the last local Levy Commander, Rab-Khaila Zaia Gewargis. To his left is Zacharia Al-Bailaty.

During World War II, the British recruited a voluntary paratroop battalion, with some Kurds. This was commanded by R-E Lazar Adam, assisted by R-Ks Shlimon Malik Bukku, Moshi\_\_\_, Odisho Barwarnaya, and Iskhaq Rehana who later became a priest..

Following the end of the WWII in 1945, the British began once again to prune the Force, gradually disbanding all the recruits enlisted during the war and leaving only four companies in Habbaniya, consisting mostly of the original 400 senior personnel, including a Kurdish company, with the Arab 1st Battalion in the Basra area.

During the Battle of Habbaniya, there was at the air base one Kurdish company, and an Arab company was also brought out of Basra. But these two Moslem companies did not take part in active battle against the Iraqi Forces but were kept as a defense force at Habaniya.



R-E Baijo Peeko, leading a troop of Assyrian Levies during a drill in Habbaniya in 1942.

**Above two photos are courtesy of Solomon S. Solomon of Lebanon, Tennessee.)**

A Personality Sketch

# Story of an Assyrian Nurse of Habbaniya

By Mikhael K. Pius

Lily Orahim Baba is a handsome lady, rather sizable as an average Assyrian woman. And she has a sad face that is seldom brightened by a smile. Perhaps she has had a tough life that has driven away the smile. Or maybe the pain and anguish she's handled in her work have molded her woebegone expression.

Lily has been a nurse for most of her active life. As such she has seen a lot of pain, suffering and death. That may have had some adverse effect on her personality as a human being. Furthermore, she had to deal with her own family's trials and tribulations—illness, pain, death, grief, as well as divorce and unhappiness in her own and in her family members' lives.

Lily was born December 20, 1930, in Sinak, Baghdad, Iraq, to Orahim Baba of the village of Digala and Soriya Shimon of Eryava, both in Iran. When they met and married each other in Baghdad, Lily's father, who worked for the Royal Air Force in Henaidi, near Baghdad, was a divorced man with two small children (who were kept by their mother), and Lily's mother was a widow with a two-year-old son. After they married, they had a son and four daughters together. The first daughter died in infancy; the second, Beatrice, a widow with three children now, lives in California; the third, Nelly, died of cancer aged 38; Lily is the fourth; and the fifth, Jonathan Ibrahim, a divorced man with two children now, is afflicted, like his mother, with dementia, and lives alone in Canada. Their half-brother was killed by a car in Baghdad.

In 1937, when Lily was seven years old, her family moved to the Civil Cantonment of the new RAF Station of Sin-Adh'dhi'ban (later renamed Habbaniya), 55 miles west of Baghdad. There she went to *Raabi* Yacoub's Union School for the next six years, also joining the Girl Guides. But she left school in 1943 after completing Secondary A Form, two years short of graduation (from Middle School). Two years later, aged 15, she started working at the RAF Civil Hospital in C.C. and continued in the 1<sup>st</sup> Habbaniya Girl Guide Group as a Ranger. After a short training period at the hospital she became a nurse. Her matron nurse was the late Katrina "Nurse" Lazar, and Na'ima Ishmaiel, an outgoing and popular girl, was one of the nurses working with her.

After attending to the Cantonment's sick for seven years, however, Lily left for Baghdad in 1952 and worked as a theatre nurse and midwife at Meir Elias Hospital.

In 1953 her father relocated the family to Kirkuk. Sadly enough, the next year he fell ill and died within a week. Lily left for Kirkuk and got a nursing job at the company's hospital. To earn enough to support her family, she also took on part-time nursing work in the evenings at a Dr. Khayat's Clinic.

In 1961, Lily suffered another tragedy when her mother, afflicted with dementia, fell into a coma for three days and died. Shortly after this, her older sister Nelly was diagnosed with cancer. Lily took her sister to Baghdad for surgery and treatment. While taking care of her, she worked as a supervisor nurse and midwife in one of Baghdad's top hospitals, Faidhi, and in 1967 she met and married Ibrahim Benjamin. After several years of caring for her ailing sister, however, Nelly eventually died in 1969.

Lily transferred to Al-Samarrai Private Hospital. On three oc-

casions she was required by her employer to accompany private patients to London, Germany and to Morocco for specialized treatment. But in 1972 she terminated her employment with Al-Samarrai and went to London with her husband to advance her nursing career.

In London she worked at King Edward's Hospital from 1973 to 1979 and then switched to Ealing Hospital where she served another sixteen years. Finally, after 50 years of taking care of the sick and the dying and lending aid and comfort to her family members, she retired in 1995. Before that, however, other unhappy events caught up with her. Her half-brother, Alexander "Sando" Rashid, was overran and killed by a car in Baghdad in 1977 at age 54, and in 1982 her apparently unhappy 15-year marriage ended in divorce.

During the 50 years she was a nurse, Lily has also traveled widely—to the United States, Canada, Australia, Italy, Germany, France, Singapore, Lebanon and Iran—in connection with her professional work. She has studied courses and attended medical seminars. She was granted British nationality in 1981 and earned a diploma in Practical Nursing from the University of Chicago. She was also given certificates of appreciation by London's Ealing Hospital for 23 years of service, and by *Mart* Maryam Assyrian Church of the East in London for six years of voluntary work for the church.

Lily now lives in London, alone. "After so many years of active public and domestic service at home and abroad, I now find life without an occupation quite lonely," she says. But she seems to trust in God and has several hobbies that keep her busy at home, such as cooking, crochet, knitting, and she produces very beautiful tapestry work that should, I'm sure, bring her satisfaction and sometimes brighten her sad face with a smile when she views it in her home.

But one of the joyful events in her life was meeting in 1985, while visiting in Modesto, California, a young man (Danny David Benjamin) she had helped to save fifteen or sixteen years earlier when he was a two-year-old patient at Faidhi Hospital in Baghdad.

"I was having lunch at the hospital," Lily says, "when the boy's grandmother, Nubar [wife of Shawel Benjamin], ran to me in panic. 'The doctor told me my grandson is going to die and that I should take him home. Please come and help me!' Nubar pleaded."

"I hastened to her grandson, who looked lifeless in bed with a very high temperature. I immediately placed the boy in a tub and covered him with ice and then called another doctor who examined him and prescribed proper medication. Soon after the boy's condition improved and he asked for milk. A few days later he left the hospital, a healthy boy."

**Editor's Note:** I know there were some dedicated medical workers at CC Hospital and that the medical facilities RAF provided to the local population did help many people. But I regret to say that there were also indifference and negligence on the part of some staff, both local and British, and that the overall medical facilities available left much to be desired. Both my sister Christina and I each had a bad experience when confined at the hospital, I in August 1947 and she in April 1951. I've recorded both events in my book *An Assyrian's Youth Journal*, in which I've called Flight Lieutenant Kenny (see picture), a visiting RAF doctor, "a hard-drinking, nasty s.o.b." (In hindsight, however, I should be grateful that F/Lt. Kenny kicked me out of the hospital because I had the temerity to question his medicine, otherwise I would have surely died in Habbaniya without discovering, in Baghdad, Dr. Papken Papazian, who has given me already a lease of almost 55 years on my life.)

And I wouldn't be surprised if Dr. Gulik Pasha, a Pakistani Muslim physician in-charge of the hospital in earlier years, hadn't "killed" a few of our people by his kind of doctoring! <<<



Lily (front) as Ranger in the 1st Habbaniya Girl Guide Group. Circa late 1940s.



Nurse Lily during her last few years at CC Hospital. Circa late 1940s.



1985: Reunion with patient she helped to save in Faidhi Hospital 16 years ear-



CC Hospital head nurse Katrina Lazar (left), nurses Naima Ishmaiel and Lily Baba, with visiting medical officers: On left is F/Lt. Peter Kenny. Names of other two not known. Circa late 1940s.



1995: Lily (front) in the operating theatre in Ealing Hospital, London, in the year she retired from nursing.



A sample of Lily Baba's many beautiful framed tapestry hand works now adorning her flat in London. (These should be seen in their true colors)



Lily (inset), with Patriarch H.H. Mar Dinkha, Mar Odisho Orachim, Bishop of Europe, and Women's Auxiliary Group of Mart Mariam Assyrian Church of East in Ealing, London, in 1994.

# SOME SNAPSHOTS FROM THE PAST

Contributed by Readers



AHQ, the RAF “Pentagon” of Habbaniya, where dozens of Assyrians clerked in its various departments: Audit, Intelligence, Accounts, Equipment, Engineer’s, Drafting, Movement, etc. Offices. Photo courtesy Jim Allison, Carlisle, England.



Group of Habbaniyans visiting Babylon pose in front of Lion of Babylon. The only face the Editor can recognize is that of Yosip “Chopa” Yacoub (dark suit). Photo courtesy Doris, daughter of Israel the C.C. Photographer. “Where had all these beauties been hiding themselves?”



Soccer Referee, Andy J. Simon with William Yosip (left) and late Yosip “Ossi” Elyakim just before a 1964 match at Dora. “Well? What are you guys waiting for?” Photo courtesy Andy Simon, Ealing



Yerjanik Babayan up in the air at the C.C. Field and Track Championship meet in 1945 as Boy Scout Lazar “Kanna” tries to puzzle it out. “Is he flying, or what?” Photo courtesy Enwia Warda of Kent.



“Cookie, anyone?” British nurse distributing goodies to the Habbaniya Girl Guides at a Christmas party on Jan. 9, 1945 doesn’t seem to be making much of an impression. The attention of Agnis Esho and Valance Sultanian (by corner of tray) and other gals seems to be focused on those handsome Rover Scouts out there. Photo courtesy Enwia Warda.



1945: “Hey, we’re on our way to Haj!” Group of Habbaniya Boy Scouts on the road to Baghdad to embark on a Palestine Tour. From left: Michael Roy, Mikhael Waranso, N/K, N/K, Lazar “Kanna,” Athniel Y. Narsai, three Not Known, Daniel Lazar Solomon, and Natniel “Natto” Yonan. Photo courtesy Enwia Warda.



## Some Snapshots from the Past (Cont'd)



"Boy, did we have a soccer team!" Posing after RAF (Aircraft Depot) Equipment Accounts beat Stores Equipment 2-1 on 1/22/48. Back, on left: Not Known, Sgt. Roberts, Cpl. Lee, William David, Sgt. Morgan, Etaluis Shawel; Front: F/Sgt. Ryan, Wilson Khoshaba Isaac, LAC Richards, Cpl. Mooney, and Andrew Simon. Photo courtesy Andy Simon, Ealing, England.



"Hey, we're RAF Aircraft Depot staff too!" Or maybe the cheering crowd, eh? Assyrian clerical staff, from left: Yakhanis Lazar, Baaba Shallou, Daniel Lazar Solomon, Hormis Goriel, Youliya Shaul, Shmouel Jitto, Avigil Polus Jado, Arshavir \_\_\_, Loas Rovil, N/K, Eshay Youash, N/K. But aren't the two kids too little for RAF peon work? Photo courtesy Abigail Jado Isaac of Skokie, Illinois.



Oct. 1964. Avişam Shmouelkhan (white hair) posing with an "ushera" in Ramadi, 15 miles north of Habbaniya. Standing 1 to r: Sargon Aboona, Anisa Avişam, Noel Miraziz, Baba Miraziz, Israel Miraziz, Margaret Samuel, Minania Miraziz, Blandina and Avişam Shmouelkan; Front: Youbert \_\_\_, child, Gilbert Avişam, Leonard Miraziz, child, Shlimon Malik, Albert Avişam, Aram Shaul and Vicky \_\_\_. "Are all these *shuhoud* for *jinsiya*?" Photo courtesy Albert Avişam Samuel, Sydney, Australia.



"Look, Ma, I'm dancing!" Ben "Khouna" Ishmaiel Yalda and group enjoying one of the cool sparkling summer dancing nights at Employees' Club in 1953 or 1954. From left, Babajan "Bajo" E. Benjamin with Battu Nimrod Benjamin, Ben Ishmaiel Yalda with wife Beatrice, Albert Philip Rasho with \_\_\_, Francis Shaul with sister Youliya. Swing it! Photo courtesy Ben I. Yalda, of West Ealing, England.



Our Two that got away. Beautiful smily Naima Ishmaiel (left) and tall and handsome Clara Avişam nestling with their English husbands while *Raabi* Jenny David clowns for special effect as they pose in an English home backyard—in the sixties? Photo courtesy Albert Avişam Samuel.



Barmen, cooks, waiters and dish-washers of the early Henaidi NAAFI canteen days. Standing, from left: Gewargis Mirza, next 4 N/K; Sitting: Odisho "Smooga," N/K. Havil "Jinja" Lazar, N/K, Akhko Oda; Sitting: Shaul Benjamin and Khammo "Nappo" Pius. Circa early 1930s. "Hey, the BORs are waiting for their "beea and samigees"!"

# Assyrians March in Anzac Day 2003

By Dinkha Warda\* (as edited)



A contingent comprising former Levy soldiers of RAF (Iraq) Levies and offspring of dead ones, displaying on their chests their or their fathers' service ribbons and medals, took part April 25, for the second year running, in the Anzac Day March through Sydney streets. It included a former sergeant of No.1 Assyrian Paratroop Company which was under the command of a Squadron Leader O'Sullivan, now living in Perth, West Australia. And among the thousands of spectators were many from the Assyrian community, waving Assyrian flags and cheering and applauding in joy and support.

Following the parade, the contingent of Assyrian veterans and representative offspring and many supporters returned to St. Mary's Church, where an evening prayer service was conducted by Rev. Kivarkis Atto for the repose of the souls of the fallen soldiers who sacrificed their lives for their cause and for humanity in general. The participants were then treated at the church hall to a round of applause and a tasty meal of Assyrian dishes crowned by toasts of wine.

The Assyrian Levies and the Australian Military have good reason to commemorate this memorable day in remembrance of fallen comrades, for both have fought the same foe in two world wars.

During WWI, the Assyrian fighters were "The Smallest Ally" of the Allied Powers. They bravely fought against the Turkish, Kurdish and Persian forces supporting the Turkish-German-Austrian Axis powers. Following the war, the British used them to guard their installations in Iraq, to put down Kurdish and Arab revolts and to protect the

fledgling country's borders. Assyrians Levies played an important role in defeating the 1941 Axis Golden Triangle Plan to link Nazi Germany with the oil-rich Persian Gulf, as planned by Iraqi Prime Minister Rasheed Aali Al-Gailani after he revolted against the government of King Faisal II. They also guarded important Allied military installations throughout the Middle East during WWII years and a paratroop company took part in clearing the last German resistance pockets in Yugoslavia along the Adriatic coast, taking some prisoners, as well as fought against communists in Athens (Greece) and Albania, sacrificing many fighting men during all these military operations.

Assyrian immigrants from Iraq started arriving in Australia in mid-1960s They were followed by waves of others, among them Assyrians from other M.E. countries, during the ensuing years, especially after mid-1970s and following the Gulf War of 1991 to escape harsh economic and political conditions in their countries. Today the Assyrian immigrants number more than 30 thousand persons, almost all of whom are Australian citizens, loyal to their adopted country. It's a fact that Assyrians all over the world are always loyal to whichever country in which they live. <<<

\* Mr.Dinkha Warda was awarded April 21, 2003 the Centennial Medal by Australian Government for services to his community.

## Ben Yalda Visits Australia



A get-together with Ben Yalda, Habbaniya Reunion Founding Committee Chairman, and Australian Habbaniya Reunion Committee and friends. From left: Wilson Rasho, Zia Shawel Gewargis, Raabi Philimon Darmo (guest), Ben Yalda, Roza Simon, William Daniel, Dinkha Warda, Zia Yalda (guest), Albert Awiqam Samuel (guest), David Israel (guest), and Youash Tamras.

To visit his seriously ill 95-year-old mother (who later got better), as well as some family members, Ben Yalda, HUSA Administration Manager and Chairman Habbaniya Union School Reunion Founding Committee, spent one month in Sydney, Australia, during June and July. He was wined and dined by friends and groups.

Accompanied by Raabi Philimon Darmo, Board member and Secretary of the Assyrian School Project Committee, he met in Sydney St. Hurmizd Assyrian Primary School's principal, Mr. Wayne Pettiford, who gave them a tour of the school and explained the various aspects of the institution. Ben was also taken by Mr. Dinkha Warda to visit Assyrian Diqlat School where he met the school principal, Mrs. Carmen Lazar. Following refreshments, the trio visited school classes in session.



Ben with St. Hurmizd School officials: From left: Mr. Wayne Pettiford, Raabi Philimon Darmo and (right) Raabi Jacob Miraziz who is also a school board member.

Also, Ben met with HUSR's Australian committee members and friends (see first picture above). It was decided, to save on high postage charges, that Mr. Dinkha Warda would in future receive HUSA copies by bulk mail from Chicago and place them in Nineveh Club in Sydney for collection of individual copies by subscribers, He was also wined and dined by Mr. Dinkha Warda and Mrs. Carmen Lazar at a party held at Nineveh Club in his honor. The party was also attended by the Diqlat School teachers and staff. Ben was presented with a plague by Mr. Dinkha Warda, as president of the Assyrian-Australian Association, and with a club honorary membership card by Nineveh Club president, Mr. Shimon Haddad.

**From our Archives: DRAMA REVIEW** (Reprinted from *The Iraq Times* of November 9, 1953)

# Habbaniya Employees Club Stages Second Play

By M. K. Piyous

A harassing problem staring many a family in the eye today is the incompatibility between young and old folks. It leads to discontent, bitter quarrels, heartbreak and often home break. Around this fresh, modern theme Mr. Meshaiel Lazar [Essa], the prolific Assyrian dramatist, has built his second drama *Away O' Bnoony* (Parents and Sons), a play in four acts, produced this year by the RAF Employees' (Assyrian) Club, which was staged recently at the Civil Cantonment of Habbaniya.

Though not without its flaws, the play was lauded heartily. Very pertinent to the time, the story was an eye-opener and carried a homely philosophy. The author had handled his material very well except, for the dialogue,\* which I thought was somewhat literary. A simple Assyrian dialect would have been much more natural and effective.

The story, which contained both humor and pathos, was about the life of an average present-day Assyrian family. It consisted of Uncle Gewargis and Aunna, their son Raman and his bride Klimia. The family was quite happy—until the arrival of the bride! Then young and old ideas clashed and conflict resulted, dampening everyone's happiness.

Klimia, foolishly vain, strained to lead a "modern" life. Wishing to live alone with her husband, she resented the presence of her in-laws. After eight years of persistent nagging and wailing she finally turned her husband against the old couple, whom he mercilessly turned out in the cold.

Then a year later, misfortune broke in: Raman lost his job, his seven-year-old son Sargon, grieving for his affectionate grandparents, became very ill and the young couple began to harass each other. Raman appealed to his old friends for help, but they all turned their backs to his plight. The family slumped into a miserable existence for a whole year, selling most of their household possessions to keep alive. The foolish

couple, seeing the disloyalty of their friends, finally realized their own blunder. They hunted out Raman's parents, confessed to them their guilt and begged their forgiveness. The old couple generously offered the desperate "modern" couple the money they had saved during their "exile," and their return restored their grandson's health and the wiser family once again lived together in harmony as a true family should do. The play was

directed and produced by the Club's Dramatic Section. Costumes were designed by Mr. Baba Mirza, make-up artist was Mr. William Shimshon [Shallou], promoter was Mr. Enviya Shimoon and the stage was managed by Mr. Shimshon Lazar [Essa].

The setting and lighting effects were picturesque and the costumes, though a few not quite consistent with the story, were very colourful. Sound effect was, however, sadly lacking.

All the cast of ten, consisting of Mr. John Iskhaq, Miss Margaret Gewargis, Mr. Davis Eshay [David], Miss Marta Babajan, Mr. Shmouel Yosep, Mr. & Mrs. Enwia Warda, Mr. Ammanuel Yosep, Mr. Dawid Yosep and Miss Liza Aziz, played their roles well, except when an

occasional act inclined to indifference.

Acting by Mr. John Iskhaq as Uncle Gewargis carried much warmth and his hoarse voice was very consistent with his old man's character. Young Shmouel Yosep as Sargon warmed his way into the audience's hearts with the genuine pity he aroused. Mr. Davis Eshay and Miss Marta Babajan as Raman and Klimia, and Miss Margaret Gewargis as Aunt Aunna were quite convincing. Mr. Enwia Warda playing Raman's hard-boiled, Western-minded chic friend Johnson, was very much alive and amusing, and Dawid Yosep's character as Sarkhadun the bookseller, whose efforts to sell Assyrian literature to Raman and Klimia met with haughty jeers, was quite fitting. <<<

**The young are apt to be foolish and inconsiderate. They forget the debt they owe their parents and repay generosity with ingratitude. They find out sooner or later, however, that they were wrong and if honest, or desperate, they get up enough courage to admit and try to efface their mistakes.**

\* *In my opinion dialog, even in today's Assyrian plays, is sometimes inconsistent. For instance, characters playing members of the same family tend to speak in different colloquial dialects. Husband speaks a literary Assyrian, wife a Targawer dialect, (sometimes exaggerated for a humorous effect) and children speak some other Assyrian dialects. Actually, they are speaking in their real-life clannish dialects and not in character with their roles. Of course it can happen that each of the two spouses are portrayed of a different section of the Assyrian nation, but there should be some indication in the play that this is so. And the children should speak either in their father's dialect or in their mother's, depending on whose language has influenced them most. And sometimes even a single character mixes his speech with colloquial and literary Assyrian.*

*Also, often dialog in Assyrian stories is mostly not only literary and fluent but also grammatically correct, regardless of the educational standard of the characters depicted. Of course, literary Assyrian language has the advantage of being instructive to our people, especially in this time of living in galouta. But when it is not in its right place, it reads or sounds stiff and unnatural. Only cultured characters should be allowed to speak flawless literary Assyrian. Also there is too much focus on lecturing and exaggerated patriotism, oftentimes hypocritical. Sometimes a book or a play should be produced solely for entertainment and enjoyment, and I believe authentic dialog in line with characters portrayed will help to enhance such feeling.—Ed*

**From our Archives: SOCCER** (Reprinted from *The Iraq Times* of February 5, 1951)

## C.C. Beat Police in Hard-Fought Game

By George George

A very impressive football [soccer] display was given at Hab by CC players and their visitors from the Police School [of Baghdad] on Friday.

The referee's whistle was the sign for a CC tidal wave of energy. It was so strong that the Police had to crowd around their goal, steadily on the defensive.

Having made a break through, CC made terrific efforts to score, but the police got the ball away and came near to scoring at the other end. The CC backs stood up to it well, and the pressure was the other way with the police backs clearing any way they could, mostly over the spectators' heads.

Every time the ball flew high crowded roared "windy," calling on

CC to "do something." But the frantic efforts only resulted in open play. It was now very near half time with no score.

Only five minutes after the second half began, the crowd roaring support for the fast moving CC inside-left, Aram [Karam], who co-coming on at a terrific speed, sent the ball into the Police net, nearly tearing it off its poles.

This looked like the beginning of the end for the police, for the C.C. have a reputation that once they score they go on doing it.

But only another five minutes had passed when the ball was coming down the field with the same flashing speed at the feet of the Police players. Fahmi passed it on to Saadi, who turned the ball

to Surain the Police center-half, who whacked it straight in.

This very unexpected development made the Hab spectators shout still louder for real CC action. There was some rough play and Aram tried two shots, but both were held by the skillful Police keeper Ismaiel.

Victory was in the balance with both sides trying everything they had. At last in a frenzy of excitement, Aram came out with another straight drive, hitting the ball so hard that it went between the head and the uplifted hands of the Police goalie, before he had time to react. Now, almost on time, the Police fought hard for the equalizer, but failed.

### Varied Views from Hab Game

Here are some of the opinions of the members of the Habbaniya reporters' league about the C.C. v Police game, reported yesterday:

**Khoshaba Kamar**—Both teams played very fast, skillful football up to the interval but the second half C.C. played fast, open football and for fully three-quarters of the half stormed the Iraqi Police defence in a do-or-die effort similar to that which overthrew the Royal Bodyguards at Baghdad. The Civil Cantonment players took chances and shot from all distances and all angles.

**Vincent**—Outmaneuvered and outpaced for protracted spells during both sessions, the Police made Herculean efforts with a fine combination of their forwards—Surain, Rashid, Gailan v Jabbar but were well kept at bay by the C.C. defence—Sargis Shimshon [Shallou], playing in his best form was always there to break up their moves. Aram Karam was easily the best forward on the field. Kako [Gewargis Shallou], the C.C. centre forward, was conspicuous for his judicious distribution and well directed kicks. YounYoura [Eshaya] and Yowil Gewargis, were always menacing the Police defence with their clever

short dribblings and quick passing. Jalil and Sattar Majid, were the best backs seen at Habbaniya in a long time. Ismaiel, the Police goalie was vigilant and bright [brought] off several plucky saves. Likewise the C.C. goalkeeper Avimulk Haider came out with flying colors. For their victory, the Civil Cantonment were in no small measure indebted to the deep defenders, Hormis Gabriel, Captain, Zia [Shawel] and William Kamar. The Police played a clean and sporting football and were good losers. **Minashi K. Pius**—A few words of praise to the Police team would not go amiss for the gallant fight they put up. Special mention is due to the two full-backs, the goalie and the centre-forward, who impressed the Hab spectators. Well done, Police, and keep up the good work!

**Emmanuel Joseph**—Two goals in 20 high-pressure minutes whacked a whacked-looking police. Without singling out any particular player in a great team performance, what a grand left back William [Kamar] has turned out to be. Also Sargis [Shallou], C.C. centre-half, who could switch play from defence to the centre, and saved his side from complete rout against the police forwards.

Personal Opinion

# Is Assyrian New Year April Fools' Day?

asks Aprim K. Abraham

The following is an extract from a newspaper in Los Angeles dated April 1, 2002:

"The generally accepted explanation is that April Fools' day started in France in 1582, the year the Gregorian Calendar was instituted to correspond more closely to the solar year, and the New Year's Day was moved from April 1 to January 1.

"Because communications were slow in the 1500's, it was years before many people found out or believed that the New Year had changed dates, and those people continued to hold traditional New Year's celebrations on April 1. That led others to ridicule them as "fools" and sent them on a "fool's" errand to try to make them believe something false was true.

"Eventually, the ridicule evolved into a tradition of prank-playing on April 1, and by the 18th Century the custom had spread to England, Scotland and the American colonies."

More than 420 years have now passed since the New Year's Day was changed from April 1 to January 1 and we Assyrians still have not found out about this change. We are the only ones now left to be ridiculed as "fools!" By priding ourselves to clinging to *Khab'Neesan*, we are only showing the world our ignorance. Let us wake up from our deep slumber, redress this embarrassing problem, and follow the rest of the civilized world by holding future Assyrian New Year's Day celebrations on January 1, or alternatively, on March 21, which is I believe the original Assyrian New Year's Day. In my opinion, January 1 would be more appropriate with the times. However, I would be glad to hear other people's opinions.

Just because March 21 is Persian and Kurdish Nowrus Day, it does not necessarily mean it cannot at the same time be the Assyrian New Year's Day.

The next Assyrian New Year, Kha-b'Neesan, is of course 6754, next year.

>>>*Of course Khab'Neesan is an Assyrian historical tradition, but the date is controversial and has been a bone of contention for many years between certain Assyrian groups, primarily between the Bet-Nahrain Organization of Ceres on one hand and Zowaa, the*

*AANF and the rest of Assyrian organizational bodies on the other hand. Bet-Nahrain contend (like you) that April 1 is April Fools' Day while the rest allege that March 21 is the Kurdish and Persian Eed-al-Nawrus festival and not Assyrian New Year, and neither party is willing to come off their high horse.*

*We Assyrians have never been able to come together on much more serious matters, such as uniting all of our people under one name, let alone on the date of the celebration of a festival, the reason being the conflicting personal ambitions of some of our so-called leaders.—Ed.*

## Anecdotes from BOAC Days

### Jebrial Sayad's "April Fool's Day" Joke

During the two-week siege of Habbaniya from last week in April to second week in May 1941, the BOAC Rest House was occupied by the Iraqi Army. Jebrial Sayad and Benjamin Gandalo and his family were arrested and taken to a Ramadi jail, 15 miles west. Jebrial, however, denounced the British and told his captors that the Assyrian Levies had mutinied against the British authorities and had killed many British officers, including their chief, the AOC. Delighted with this news, his captors soon released him and Benjamin and his family, all of whom then holed up in the town until it was safe to return to Habbaniya following the complete routing of the Iraqi Army later in May.

### Polus Abraham Goes to Court

Shah of Iran was once a night guest at BOAC Guest House. Polus Kambar Abraham, who was the BOAC catering supervisor, told him that he was an Iranian subject and took very good care of him during his short stay. In appreciation, the Shah gave Polus a written testimonial and told him that if he ever came to Iran to come and visit him at his palace. Not long after, Polus did indeed go to Teheran to visit his cousin William Nikola Baito. One day he told his cousin to prepare to accompany him on a visit to the King. Of course William thought he was just kidding. But Polus assured him that he was quite serious and away they went to see the Shah. And sure enough Polus's note gain them an audience with the King himself. But as to what they talked about is still a secret that has not been revealed!

### "Aprim Abraham, watch those diamonds!"

Once Aprim Abraham received a secret message from an incoming BOAC plane stating: "200 Kilos of Agha Khan's diamonds on board."

An Old Story

# How Yosip *Dusakhchi* Was Saved from Hanging

By Youkhanna Patros Youkhanna

In 1927 or 1928, Yosip (who was later nicknamed “Yosip *Dusakhchi*”) had killed an Arab in Gailani camp. He was tried in a Baghdad court and sentenced to be hanged. The judge was a Turk.

While Yosip was in jail, my father, who was jailed on trumped up charges, was with him in the same cell. Yosip had no one to care for him and so my mother would visit them and take them both clean underclothes and food. My father and mother both told me this story.

When the Turkish army attacked the Assyrians, starting from Gawar village in 1917, their goal was Baku oil fields and their path was through Urmia. The invading Turkish army, which was under the command of Austrian officers headed by a German General, was defeated by Targawer, Margawer and Gawer Assyrians. The German general sent a telegram to the *Vali* [governor] of Baghdad requesting that the two Turkish divisions that had defeated the British in Kut and Amara be immediately sent to him. They were rushed from Baghdad to Mosul and from there to the front near Urmia. Meanwhile the Germans had introduced into the battle for the first time Howitzer mountain guns. When the two divisions arrived they were initially able to dislocate the Assyrians from the mountain passes with the help of those big guns. But it was a very cold winter and the Turkish Army had come from Baghdad without heavy winter clothes and almost no food. Furthermore, they met with stiff resistance from the Assyrians and they finally gave up fighting. About 800 Turkish officers and soldiers surrendered to [the Assyrian General] *Agha Patros Elia*. The

Turkish officers knew *Agha Patros* because he was formerly the Turkish Consul in Urmia. So they decided it was safer to surrender to Christians than to Kurds, Turkomans, or Persians who might mistreat or even kill them.

*Agha Patros* distributed the Turkish POW's among Assyrian families and ordered that they be fed and treated kindly. Five Turkish officers were placed in the house of my mother's uncle who was *Kokhaya* (Chief) of the *Saatluvi* village. My mother was annoyed at *Agha Patros* because he had ordered her not only to feed the Turks at a time when there was food shortage but also to provide them with *mazza* and *arak* too!

She said one day *Agha Patros* and the five officers were sitting in front of the house drinking *arak* and eating *mazza*, when bullets began to fall near them. *Agha Patros* told the Turkish officers not to worry. He ordered his men to drive the attackers back, and a few minutes later his armed men attacked and drove away the attackers.

Shortly after the assassination of Patriarch *Mar Benyamin Shimun* [by the treacherous Kurd “*Simku*” in the spring of 1917], the Assyrian people were in disarray and began to flee toward the British Forces in Hamadan and then on to Baqu-ba. *Agha Patros* distributed the POWs among the fleeing Assyrians. My father, a young man then who spoke Turkish, told me about this. He also said that the Turkish prisoners were given arms and fought alongside the Assyrians against Kurdish and Iranian marauders until our people reached Baquba. At Baquba the British took over the Turkish POWs and exchanged them for British POWs captured by the Turks in the Kut and Amara battle where the British had lost 20,000 men.

Yosip *Dusakhchi* had two young Turkish officers in his care. He refused to give them up, saying that *Agha Patros* had ordered him to return them to their families safely. So he fled from Baquba with the two officers and they walked north toward Turkey. After many days, they finally reached the home village of the two

prisoner officers who happened to be brothers. They arrived at midnight and when the door was opened the father of the two officers shouted with joy and all his family rushed out and could not believe their eyes because they had thought they were dead. It was a very emotionally joyful reunion. Yosip stayed three days as the houseguest of the Turkish family before returning to Baquba.

Following the dispersal of Assyrians from Baquba [in 1920] and later [in 1921] from Mundan refugee camps, Yosip *Dusakhchi* settled, along with many other Assyrian families, in Gailani camp where he happened to kill the Arab in self-defense.

Some time after Yosip's death sentence, the sentencing judge told his wife one morning that he was going to witness that day the hanging of an Assyrian murderer named Yousif. It was one of those miracles that sometimes happen, for when the young wife heard the words “Assyrian” and “Yousif” she felt something. She told her husband that she wanted to go to the jail with him and see the condemned man. At first the judge was reluctant to take her. But she insisted, and the judge, being an elderly man who had recently married the pretty young woman and brought from Turkey, did not want to displease her. So he took her along.

When they arrived at the prison and the wife saw the prisoner she rushed and embraced him. The judge and other officials were horrified, because Moslem women wore *abaya* and could not show their faces to strange men, let alone embrace them! But she turned and told her husband that this was the man who had saved her two brothers during the war and brought them home safely. She also swore to her husband that if he hanged the man she would leave him and go back to her family. The judge had no choice. So he arranged to delay the execution and after a while found a reason to change the sentence to a short term in jail.

Both my father and Yosip *Dusakhchi* were released after serving a few months in prison. <<<

**BOOK REVIEW (Reprinted from *Journal of the Assyrian Academic Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 2003)**

**Mikhael K. Pius, An Assyrian Youth's Journal, Artistic Printing, Modesto, CA. 2002, 93 pp + Introduction, index, photos [30 pp]. (\$7.00 + \$1.50 postage [in USA ; \$5.00 overseas])**

Reviewed by Gladys Warda\*

"A personal diary," writes Maurice Debesse in *The Juvenile Crisis of Originality*, "is the first expression of **being**; it is written with the intention of establishing an image of the newly discovered **ego**." Pius's book, as its title implies, is the journal he started to write when he was 14 years old and continued for the ensuing 14 years. In it we find, supporting Debesse's definition, a deep insight into the personality of the author, his problems, his dreams, his frustrations. It is impossible to read the diary without feeling a profound empathy for its author. His sincere introspection and his effective transmission of it in writing produce a deeply moving story.

However, for an Assyrian reader there is much more to this journal than its psychological and personal aspect. The Civil Cantonment of Habbaniya and its neighboring towns and cities, the historical facts that are described, the mention of exact places and dates, are all of considerable importance to anyone interested in that time and that region. This appeal is undoubtedly enhanced by the latest incidents which have taken place in Iraq.

Habbaniya, we learn on pages xiv and xv of the *Introduction*, "was a four-square-mile fenced-in British Air Force base in Iraq. It was the mid-1930s replacement for the abandoned smaller RAF Station of Henaiddi, near Baghdad [...]" Pius concludes his description stating: "But the British residue was finally swept out by the Iraqi Revolutionary Government at the end of 1959 [...], leaving in the Assyrian mind only a cherished but bittersweet memory of Habbaniya and the RAF authorities."

The superiority of the Assyrian fighters, a concept dear to many Assyrians (as Werda explains in "*The Flickering Light of Asia*") is expressed by a teenage Pius when he says (page 5), "*The Iraqi Army could have captured the air base[...]. But apparently they were scared to make an open ground attack[...]. They knew the fighting record of the Assyrian Levies!*"

Pius's aim in this book is not a political one. However, the "*bittersweet memory of Habbaniya*" mentioned in the *Introduction*, at one point seems more bitter than sweet (age 27): "[...] Habbaniya and its predecessor He-

*naiddi, the haven for some of our stranded people [...] [are] the nests of British Imperialistic exploitation of both Iraqi and Assyrian people and the betrayal of our tiny persecuted nation's loyal trust*".

This distressing state of affairs in Habbaniya is reinforced on page 83, in a 1952 entry, "*The Assyrian community as a whole is now regarded with suspicion and distrust.[...] The general outlook is that it's getting worse every day.*" And in 1953 (page 86) his conclusion is: "*We have always been martyrs to someone else's cause.*"

Of course, after reading this a reader will return to the *Introduction*, and in fact, Habbaniya didn't only leave "*a bittersweet memory*". "*It was [...] an imperialistic watchdog guarding the British oil interests [...]*".

Assyrian life isn't only Habbaniya and its entourage. We discover that Pius's family has its rows, and that (page 40) "*my father, like most Assyrian fathers, is rather autocratic at home.*" (our emphasis). We also find a very interesting description of marriage customs among Assyrians (page 76 and following pages). Another surprising fact for people who live in this day and age is that Pius as a father suffered an acute disappointment when his first-born child was a girl. This reviewer can't help but be reminded of her own late father!

The revelations Pius makes in his journal help us understand much better his task as a writer. In the first place, his urge to write appears in his early teens and continues throughout his whole life. Unfortunately, he had to quit his high school studies as a consequence of the Battle of Habbaniya in June 1941. Later on he took both English language and writing courses. After having some articles published and after suffering several rejections, he stopped writing in 1956 and resumed his efforts 25 years later.

His book "*Assyrian Tales and Confessions*" was reviewed in JAAS Vol. XIII No. 2. With this journal in mind, a reader can perceive the underlying facts when one knows about Pius's lung-related health problems and his struggle against his desire to smoke. Among the stories he wrote in his youth, he mentions stories about dogs. This reminds us of Pota, the loyal dog who lies down on his master's grave.

Besides his inclination towards writing, Pius always wished to go to the United States. (He reached his goal in 1981). In a 1941 entry (page 7) we read, "*I realized that*

\*Ms. Warda is a mathematician and a frequent contributor to the *Journal*.



## Book Review (Cont'd)

*America stands for a permanent home for the uprooted, homeless people like us Assyrians; [...] an opportunity for success and a better quality of life".* He reinforces this idea all along his journal. For instance, in 1943 he feels, "*fed up with this country, its backwardness, the nasty people we encounter sometimes, and the humdrum life we are leading*".

As we have noted above, he studied English. His learning of the language was strengthened by the correspondence he held with American pen pals. However, when he contacted one of these friends several decades later, in 1994, they agreed to "*keep in touch, at least with an annual Christmas card*". This fact brings up the concept of the possible change in the "*quality of life*" an immigrant experiences in a new country. This particular pen pal who induced his comment (page 29), "*I'm really tickled pink!*" when he received his first letter from her, only merits "*an annual Christmas card*"? This seems such an "American" way of life, different from the values he surely fostered in his teens. This reviewer is not implying he lost his value, but America perhaps changed them.

Nevertheless, we must mention Mikhael Pius's present continuing interest in his prior years and Assyrian experiences, as evidenced by his work as editor of HUSA, the *Habbaniya Union School Association* newsletter. This magazine could very well turn into a sequel of "An Assyrian's Youth Journal" in the sense of collecting more facts, incidents or memories of that time.

A word must be added about the use of English language. His journal was initially written in English, as the back cover of the book confirms, showing a photocopy of a page of his diary. If we compare his original wording with that which is finally printed, we notice he introduced certain changes. It can be safely implied that some editing was done. In this reviewer's opinion the book would have benefited from a closer revision. In spite of this fact, the language used does have its charm. It is truly amazing to find so many American idioms. Besides this, one of Pius's assets is his ability to describe places. The description of the city of Erbil (page 56) is remarkable.

This reviewer is confident Pius's journal will be of interest not only to Assyrian readers, but to all those who care to learn more about the time and place Pius describes first-hand. This concept is reinforced if we take into account the dramatic changes suffered recently in the sites Pius de-

## Sales account of my book *AN ASSYRIAN'S YOUTH JOURNAL*

I thank all the individuals who bought my book and especially those generous ones who sent in donations. I also thank six Assyrian organizations who bought my book in quantity, namely Assyrian Foundation of America of Berkeley (62 copies), Civic Club of Turlock (50), AUA Library of Chicago (39), Assyrian American Association of Modesto (25), Assyrian American Club of Flint, Michigan (4), and Assyrian National Association of Connecticut (3). I also mailed complimentary copies to 26 other Assyrian organizations and a number of noted individuals. Unfortunately, none of them responded in any kind or manner. I even reminded one honorable president of a club in person and he brushed me off with "Yes, yes, I will consider it!"—but didn't.

Of the 778 copies printed, 615 copies were distributed. Of these 99 were mailed out with compliments; 128 were sent, with a solicitation letter, to individuals, mostly friends and relatives; 350 were sold in wholesale; and 38 were returned unsold. Because the profit from the book was pledged for Assyrian needy in Jordan, four of the 94 complimentary-copy recipients thoughtfully sent in a total of \$142.00 or an average of \$35.50 per copy. Of the 128 individuals who received my book, 99 of them sent in a total of \$1760.50 or an average of \$17.78 per copy and the other 29 people (among them a few noted Assyrians) did not bother to send even a thank-you note. Mention of the good names and donations has been made in the Letters column of this and previous issues of this newsletter.

My special thanks: to my brother Basil Pius who sold 54 copies in a small Montana town where he is the only Assyrian, sending \$635.00 (average \$11.76 per copy); to my nephew Ashour George who sold 30 copies in Calgary, Canada, where there are only about a dozen Assyrian and Chaldean families; and to Raabi Jacob Miraziz who sold 55 of 62 copies in Sydney. Compare Montana with Toronto, where we have at least 1000 Assyrian families. Toronto "could" sell only 6 copies! Where there's a will there's a way.

My good friend Skharia Odisho Zacharia was kind enough to lug along with him to London in August 2002 one heavy box (62 copies) to be sold at the Habbaniya Reunion. Unfortunately, despite Ben Yalda's influence my other "good friend," the commander-in-chief of the Reunion, Andrious son of Mama Jotyar, MBE, who had already received a complimentary copy from me and whose magazine I've been supporting for more than two decades—despite our literary and journalistic differences—had other thoughts. Evidently displaying his authority he had obstructed the sale of my book, I was told, and not a single copy was sold! (I expect Andy will deny this in the typical Andy Mama style!)

The 350 copies wholesaled brought in \$2293.31 or an average of \$6.55 per copy. The receipts for the total 615 copies distributed was \$4,216.81.00 and the printing, postage and other expenses invested by the publisher, amounted to \$2557.65, leaving a net profit of \$1659.16, which amount is being remitted through the Assyrian Foundation of America—the most dedicated and reliable Assyrian organization—to the Assyrian needy in Jordan. Most of the 150 remaining copies will be donated to the various Assyrian churches.

The profit from my previous book, *Assyrian Tales and Confessions*, was not pledged, but my son sent through the Foundation a profit of \$500 in 2002 to the Assyrian needy in Jordan—MKP.

### Raabi Espanya's School (Cont'd from Page 1)

The partitions were of course not soundproof. They made instant communication between neighbors easy. But sometimes "instant communication" also caused instant problems between neighbors when they overheard each other.

The camp was a small community of several dozen families totaling a few hundred inhabitants, whose able men worked at the adjoining RAF base. They were mostly Assyrians, with a few Armenian and several Indian and Pakistani families. The camp was "inherited" from the British Indian troops that were billeted in the bungalows during the years of the occupation of Iraq at the end of the Great War. Raabi Espanya's school was one of the shorter bungalows, off the southeast end of the rows of the residential bungalows. The school building had formerly been used as a Hindu temple by the Indian soldiers.

*Raabi Espanya*, who was a graduate of the Assyrian Union School in Kota Camp, was appointed by Raabi Yacoub Bet-Yacoub to teach at the beginners' school in Maratha Lines. Raabi Espanya was a disciplinarian. He was in his twenties. Just under medium height, he was a slim and handsome man. He had a rich crop of auburn hair, which he parted at the left side and combed it over to the right. He had groomed a *taata* (cock's comb) on the front top of his head that made him look cockish. And his face had a striking resemblance to Charlie Chaplan's. It was solemn, but his Charlie Chaplan-like mustache gave him an amusing look. He reminded me very much of my father, who resembled him and had the same type of mustache, which was a popular style then. And like my father, he was a rather stern and strict man. But he was a good teacher and had a pretty penmanship.

*Raabi Espanya* taught the children the rudiments of reading and writing. And he would hold class spelling competition to improve his pupil's spelling ability. The pupils would stand shoulder to shoulder. Each one would try to spell his or her way to the head of the line. The pupil spelling a word correctly would slap the faces of misspellers and overpass them in the line. This was meant to punish the wrong spellers as well as to goaded them into doing better the next time.

*Raabi Espanya* also held reading-aloud-in-class exercises. He would ask each time one pupil to stand up and read aloud a certain part of the lesson. Anyone bungling would receive two or more switch lashes in the open palms of their hands. Or they would be ordered to kneel down for a certain period of time.

*Raabi Espanya* ran his school under the supervision of the great teacher, Raabi Yacoub, who was also a noted disciplinarian. Raabi Yacoub was then the headmaster of the main school situated at the Central Labor Camp, popularly known as "Kota Camp."

Kota Camp was also inhabited by the RAF local civilian workers and their families. The population was pro-



A rare picture of Maratha Lines. On right is a part of one of the residential bungalows, with a few of the wooden, home-made, rickety bedsteads people slept on in summer. The building immediately beyond the three school children is Raabi Espanya's school. On the upper left corner is part of a second bungalow with detached houses (behind the trees) where a few Indian families lived, among them the Sharmas of Habbaniya. (In foreground is Basil "Wiska" Pius [now a retired college instructor in Miles City, Montana] in front of his family's "house,") . Circa 1936.

bably a couple of thousand people. The large majority was Assyrian, with some Armenian families too. Both races were Christians, who had fled to Iraq from Ottoman Turkey and Persia in the Great War. They were driven away from their homelands by the Moslem Turks, Kurds and Persians and had become refugees under the British protection in Iraq. They, and especially the Assyrians, "the Smallest Ally," had fought bravely alongside the Allied Powers against the Moslem Turks and Kurds.

Kota Camp was like a small town, or big village. It had individual family mud brick houses of various shapes with small private gardens and alleyways instead of streets. It had a small church and a big school, mentioned previously, and a British civil administration office, with a superintendent, to oversee the camp.

The camp was nicknamed after its administrator, a Mr. Jack J. Ingram. Mr. Ingram, a middle-aged man, was married to a younger pretty Assyrian lady named Minania. He was a former Quartermaster in the British Army. The word "Kota" was an Assyrian corruption of the word "Quarter," as pronounced by the British, and hence the nickname.

Kota, or Mr. Ingram, was also in-charge of Maratha Lines. But he had a resident deputy, William Shabbas,

### Raabi Espanya's School (Cont'd)

who collected rent and took care of other matters connected with the camp. William was father of Sargon Shabbas, former president of Assyrian Foundation of America. He was also uncle of Julius Shabbas, former Editor of *Nineveh Magazine*.

At the time Raabi Espanya's school was established, it had only a few dozen pupils. But in later years it grew into more than one hundred boys and girls. Most of them were from Maratha Lines. But there was a handful from Kota Camp and from Assyrian Levy Lines. Levy Lines camp also had a beginners' school. It was run by another Assyrian teacher named Raabi Sargis Shumon. But for some reason some Levy pupils walked down one mile to study in Maratha Lines school and others three miles down to the main school in Kota Camp.

Levy Lines camp was made up of three sections: A Lines, B Lines, and C Lines. They were a series of long military bungalows. These bungalows held several hundred Assyrian Levy soldiers and officers with their families. The Levies were an able but low-paid local military force. They were recruited by the British from among the Assyrian refugees in 1921 after the British occupied Iraq at the end of the Great War. They were smart soldiers and excellent fighters. They guarded vital British installations in Iraq. The British also used them to police Iraq's borders before Iraq's independence in 1932 and to put down rebel Arab and Kurdish tribes.

The Levy camp was one mile northeast of Maratha Lines camp. Kota Camp was more than two miles down the road to the southeast. And between the two local camps lay the RAF Station of Henaidi with its aerodrome, hangars, billets and other installations and facilities. Henaidi was about five or six miles east of the city of Baghdad.

Raabi Espanya's school had a kindergarten and three primary classes. Raabi Espanya taught all four classes himself. He taught two languages: English and Assyrian, including grammar and arithmetic. Occasionally, his younger brother, Raabi Youkhanna, who was a teacher too, in Kota Camp, assisted him.

The school building had no separate classrooms. It was one large hall in which the teacher taught all four classes by turn, in two shifts of morning and afternoon. Only the teacher had a chair and desk. All pupils sat on rush mats on the floor. Each pupil had brought a *doshakta* (homemade cushion) upon which he or she sat, cross-legged, in their socks or stockings or barefooted, because everybody had to leave their shoes outside the door.

When school was out for the day, or at the 30-minute daily recess, the pupils would stream out of the door in a rush. They were a rowdy and noisy lot. They pushed and jostled each other and squealed like piglets. They dashed to the clusters of shoes "parked" just outside the door on the walkway. There would be shoes of various sizes and

styles, shapes and makes and in different stages of wear and tear. The children would clamor to find their shoes to put them on for a quick get-away.

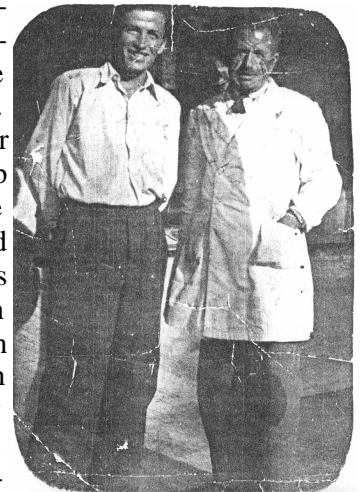
After finishing Raabi Espanya's school, the "graduates" would attend the bigger school in Kota Camp where they had to go through three upper classes of "higher education" before they actually graduated from middle school.

Both schools closed down after the 1937 scholastic year ended in summer when RAF Station of Henaidi was being handed over to the Iraqi Government and when the RAF and its employees were in the process of relocating to a new airbase at Sin Adh-Dhi'baan (later renamed Habbaniya), 55 miles west of the capital. Raabi Espanya found work in the Levies as a clerk (and also tutored private pupils at his home) and Raabi Yacoub, assisted by a score of teachers, took charge of the new school, Union School, in the Civil Cantonment of the new RAF Station, serving the children of both the Levy and civilian camps until the summer of 1944 when the school was taken over by the Iraqi Ministry of Education. (For a brief history of Habbaniya Union School, see the first issue of HUSA, Spring-Summer, 2002))

This picture taken in Habbaniya in 1940 shows Esho No-

## The Barbers of Habbaniya: Father & Son

tali [left] and his father Notali Esho in front of their barber shop in the Cheap Side area by the airplane hangars. [In the RAF section of the air base.] This barber shop served the personnel of the Royal Air Force until the end of the war, when it was moved to the main bazaar in the Civil Cantonment. In 1950 Notali died and his son operated the shop until May 1955 when the air base was turned over to the Iraqi government. Esho now resides in Skokie, Illinois.—Submitted by Solomon S. Solomon.



>>> This picture is reprinted from a photocopy and not from an original photographic print. It is the Editor's belief that this picture was taken several years later than stated, i.e. after mid-1940s, because in 1940 Esho the son was barely into his teens.

The Editor would be interested in a picture of and story on Elisha the barber of CC. If his children or others have his picture and knowledgeable information on Elisha "Barber," please get in touch with the Editor. (See address on page 2). Elisha "Barber" Tamraz was a colorful personality in CC.

And any picture of any of the local camps of Henaidi would be welcomed by the Editor for consideration.

## In Remembrance of...

...**William David Shino, 75**, who passed away in his home in Chicago April 29, 2003, after a long debilitating illness. He was Victoria Shino's husband of 53 years and the younger half-brother of the late *Raabi* Janey David [Risk] who worked at the CC Office and was a well-known person in the local camps of the former Royal Air Force Station of Habbaniya, Iraq.

William was laid to rest at Montrose Cemetery in Chicago on May 1, following funeral services celebrated by Corbishop Athanasus Joseph assisted by Rev. Dr. Gewargis Toma and Rev. Antwan Latchin at *Mar Sargis Assyrian Church of the East* in Chicago. After burial, 200 relatives and friends attending the funeral partook of a memorial lunch served at the church hall. William was eulogized by Corbishop Athanasus and by Odisho Warda, a friend and committee member of the Habbaniya Reunion Founding Committee.

William was born in Mosul, Iraq, on July 1, 1928. His father was Dawood Shino of Derbandt, Targawer, Persia, and his mother Panna Yosip of Anhar, Urmia. The same year, the family relocated to Kota Camp attached to RAF Station of Henaidi, near Baghdad, where William's father found work.

William was nine years old in 1937 when his family moved to the new RAF Station of Sin-adh-Dhi'ban (later called Habbaniya), 55 miles west of Baghdad. There William continued his elementary schooling in *Raabi* Yacoub's Union School in the Civil Cantonment. He studied six years, joining the Boy Scouts introduced in the school in 1939. After graduating in 1943 (junior high), he started working for RAF, at 115 Maintenance Unit of Aircraft Depot, first as a junior clerk. He served the RAF 13 years, in the meantime getting married on June 10, 1950, to Victoria, daughter of Sabiha and the late *Raabi* Jebrial Babella of Kirkuk.

William, a debonaire, gregarious and popular person, was an active member in the local community of Habbaniya. While working, he continued in the 1st Habbaniya Boy Scouts Group, as a Rover, for several years, was a player of organized soccer, hockey, and ping-pong matches and would take part in boxing, cycling, and other athletic competitions such as running, jumping, etc. He was also a musician and the vocalist for the Assyrian Band and other Assyrian musical bands. He had a strong voice and was nicknamed "the Balalaika Singer." Also he took part in some local Assyrian dramas staged in the Cantonment, and he sang

with the band at the Reunions arranged by former Habbaniya Union School students in Chicago in recent years.

William left Habbaniya, with his family, in 1956 and settled in Baghdad. There he found employment with the American Embassy, where he worked for 33 years.

During this time he lived eight years in the city and 25 in the Assyrian township of Dora, where he also established a presence, until he and his family immigrated to Chicago in the year 1990.

William is survive by his wife of 53 years Victoria and five children: Raymond Shino and family and Rebella Desire and family in Chicago Ramona Samuel (born in Habbaniya) and family in Tennessee, Rebecca Oartel and family in Los Angeles, and Rhonda Khidan and family in Arizona. He also leaves behind seven grandchildren, and in Chicago his younger brother Wilson Shino and family and three sisters, Joan, Judath and Julie Shino.

A coffee memorial in his memory was arranged by Ex-Habbaniya Community Group of Modesto & Turlock. It was held at the Assyrian American Association of Modesto on Sunday, June 1, 2003 and was attended by about 50 former Habbaniya residents and friends. It was basically organized by Shimshon Warda, with the club committee approval, and assisted by a few friends—Mikhael Pius, Zacharia Zachaira, Davis David, and Ben Yalda. Shimshon also broadcast on the club's weekly TV program William's obituary announcement, including several of his pictures contributed by the friends mentioned, as well as taped the coffee memorial gathering as a memorial gift to William's family.

**By Benjamin E. Yalda & Mikhael K. Pius**  
(More Obits on P. 30)





1944: William Shino the Athlete, high jumping in a track and field meet in Civil Cantonment of Habbaniya. Photo from Envia Warda



1944: William the Boy Scout. From left, William Shino, Daniel Lazar Solomon and the late Israel K. Gewargis. Photo: Ben Yalda



1953: William the all-round sportsman. Some of RAF Assyrian Employees's Club all-round sportsmen. Squatting, from left: Ammo Baba, Edison David; Sitting: William Shino, John Isaac, Hormis Goriel (Soc.Capt), Albert Babilla (Prez), Andy Simon (Hoky.Capt), Youra Eshaya, Davis David (S. Sec); 2nd row: Ben S. Shallou, Emmanuel Yosip, Avimalk Haidar, Albert Rasho, William Daniel, Ben Esho, Babajan Eramia, Sargis S. Shallou; Back: Etalius Shawel, Wilson Polus, Yacoub Youkhanna, Baba Esho, William S. Shallou.



1944: William as clerk. Assyrian staff of RAF 115 Maintenance Unit Equipment Accounts. From left, Eshay Youash, Slemon Youav Malik, Wallace Yosip, William, Youel B. Marbo, Avshalim Malham, Andy Simon; Sitting: Yosip Yacoub, Michael Zaia, Wilson Khoshaba Isaac, Ardash Hartounian. Photo from Andy Simon. (Sorry, Boys, I had to stretch you up a little bit in order to bring your picture in line with the other pictures!)



1946: William with Seven of the score of Rovers of 1st Habbaniya Boy Scout Group. From right, standing: William, Zaia Yalda, Baba Yosip, Arsen Sayadian; Davis David, Polous Yonan, Shlemon Israel.



Mid-1960s: William singing at a social party in Baghdad. Saxophonist is his brother Wilson and accordionists are the late Babajan "Sa'atsas" Yonan and Avshalim Daniel. Photo Ben Yalda.

A sum of \$150 was donated to HUSA by Abigail Isaac and her sister Margaret Polus Jado in memory of their mother Mariam (Yuropa) Darmoo and their sister Anna Polus Jado. The gesture is very much appreciated. May the souls of their beloved ones rest in peace. HUSA Staff.

### **In Remembrance of...(Cont'd)**

...**KINARIK SHALLOU, 65**, who died on Good Friday, April 18, 2003, after being comatose for two months following a heart problem. Funeral services were held April 23 at Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East in Ceres, California, officiated by Rev. Oshana Kaanon and his deacons and with participation from all Assyrian clergy of the colony, including Bishop Mar Bawai Soro and Rev. Yeghia Hairabedian, the parish priest of Armenian Orthodox Church in Fresno, Ca. The service front of the church was crammed with bouquets and garlands of expensive flowers and some 500 mourners partook of a lunch offered in her memory at the Civic Club, following burial.

During the church services, Rev. Yeghia spoke, in English, about the deceased and her family whom he knew personally. He also dwelt on death in general, on our faith as Christians, and on good Assyrian-Armenian relations in the course of history. Mar Bawai Soro then spoke briefly, first in English and then in Assyrian, extolling Kinarik's virtues as a young wife-and-mother neighbor he knew when he was a young boy.

At the memorial lunch in Civic Club, *Shamasha* Albert Benjamin, a maternal nephew of the Shallou Family, spoke about this family and gave a sketch of Kinarik's life, praising her for her compatibility and love for her husband's family and people. "The big Shallou Family in Habbaniya was not wealthy," said Sh. Albert, "but they had a treasure, which was love for each other and for their neighbors and friends...And all Shallou daughters-in-law were good women. 'Kinno,' like her mother-in-law, was Armenian, but when she entered her father-in-law's home, she became like one of his daughters, completely adapting to the Assyrian family and adding love and harmony." Kinarik was a friendly person who loved helping others. She spoke Assyrian fluently, loved travel and happy occasions and was a regular church goer.

Her son Jonathan, cousin Arshak and others also spoke and expressed their sentiments. Sh. Albert then thanked everyone and the memorial was concluded by Rev. Yeghia in English and Armenian, emphasizing the friendship and harmony between Assyrians and Armenians and winding up with a prayer.

Kinarik is survived by her husband Ben Shallou, the vice-

president of Civic Club; children Jonathan, Johnny, and Jeffery Shallou and Yona Shallou Kochari and their families, including eight grandchildren, all of Modesto; sisters Arpenik Khachik, Aghawnik Shammass, Archouik Gary, and Anahid Baijan; brothers Raafi and Armen Boudakian; maternal uncles Aramais and Arshavir Koudakian and several cousins, all present at funeral.

Kinarik was born in C.C. hospital in Habbaniya, Iraq, on December 12, 1938. (Her husband, Ben, was also born in the same hospital three days later.) She grew up and had her elementary education at the Government school in Habbaniya. In 1957 her family move to Baghdad. Next year she obtained work in a British chain supply store called Spinneys, where Ben Shallou was working. Although the two had met in Habbaniya, their love connection actually began at their working place and they were married on March 5, 1959. All their children were born in Baghdad. She raised them, according to Sh. Albert, "in the fear of God and in the same love she showed for her in-laws."

In 1973 the Ben Shallou family, along with his aged parents, sold their property and went to Beirut, from where they emigrated the following year to this country. Ben and his family have been Modesto residents for most of these years. A closely-knit family, all of their four children were married here to Assyrians, two of them to close relatives.

The Shallou men—Sargis, William, and Ben Shimshon Shallou and their late cousins Baba and Kaako Gewargis Shallou—were formerly known basically for their soccer prowess, and they've also been lucky (or maybe choice-wise) than most people in love and marriage. But lady luck smiled on Ben Shallou from a different direction when on April 18, 1987 she gave him the three-million dollar California lottery jackpot win, making him, unlike his father and uncle, one of the financially richest Assyrians in this colony! Unfortunately, the very same date, 16 years later, was also the saddest day in his life when his luck ran out and he lost his beloved wife. —**By Mikhael K. Pius**



...**NANAJAN ODISHO, 80**, formerly of Civil Cantonment of Habbaniya, who passed away in Turlock, California, July 12, 2003, after being in ill-health during recent years. Her funeral was celebrated by Rev. Jamiel Warda at *Mar Addai* Assyrian Church of the East in Turlock. She was eulogized by her third son Sargon Odisho (a Los Angeles Assyrian stage actor) during a memorial lunch for 150 mourners at the church hall.

Nanajan was born in 1923 in Alwaj, Iran. The eldest of seven children of Maral and Iskhqa Moishoul, she was brought to Habbaniya in 1940 and was married to Eshay Odisho, who

worked for the Royal Air Force in Habbaniya as a storekeeper since the establishment of the air base in 1936. The family left Habbaniya in 1956 and settled in Baghdad. Eshay worked for another two decades for various construction and commercial firms in Baghdad, Mussaiyeb and in Derbandi Khan in North Iraq. In early 1980 the family left Baghdad for Athens, Greece. But five months before the family was accepted for admittance to the U.S. as refugees in November 1980, Eshay died of cancer.

Nanajan is survived by six children: George and Ninos and families (Modesto area); Sargon and Johnny and families (Los Angeles); Florence Yacoub and family(Arizona) and Violet Aziz and family (Ainkawa, Iraq); three sisters, Shushan Khosrov and Julia Ardashidh (L.A.), and Khawa Babajan (Iran);sixteen grandchildren and six great grandchildren.—**By Mikhael K. Pius**

## HUS Reunion Founding Couples Attain Their Golden Wedding Anniversaries



**Young Leena & Ben** on their wedding day in Kirkuk, Iraq, on September 21, 1953.

**Lucky couple!** Benjamin Esho Yalda, HUSA Administration Manager and Chairman of Habbaniya Union School Reunion Founding Committee, and his wife Leena, completed their 50 years of married life on September 21, 2003. Ben just loves to organize and hold parties, but he decided to forego the celebration of the second biggest day in his own life (next to his wedding day) because of the fact that his eldest son Sargon is absent in Iraq with the American Forces, serving his country.

Third of ten children, Ben was born in Sulaimaniya in North Iraq on January 8, 1932 to Asyat Badal (now 95) of Quchanos and to the late Levy Sergeant Esho Yalda of Jeramon, Lower Tiari. And Leena, eldest of four children of the late *Usta* Yonatan Mikhail of Sherabat and *Raabi* Regina Younan of Sangar, was born Nov. 26, 1933 in Baghdad. Both families lived in Habbaniya for many years.

Ben and Leena have a daughter, Dorothy Yalda, and two married sons, Sargon and John, and five grandchildren. (For a bio-sketch of Ben, see Mr. Solomon's article in the previous issue of HUSA)



**Mature Ben & Leena** 47 years later, at HUS Reunion in Australia on October 21, 2000



**Young Odisho & Ampolia Warda** on the day of their wedding at K-3 Station, Haditha, Iraq, on 7th November, 1953.

and their children on November 7, with a sunset-candle-lit dinner at Allgauers Restaurant in Glenview, Illinois, in celebration of their Golden Wedding Anniversary.

Third of eight children, Odisho, formerly of Habbaniya, was born in Diana, Ranwanduz in North Iraq, to the late former RQMS Warda Enwia (Serial #13!), a soldier in the Iraq (Assyrian) Levies for 29 years, and to the late Surma Yacoub, both of Marbisho, Turkey. Ampolia, a sole sister of an only brother, was born in Mosul, Iraq, to the late Moshi Goriel Narsai and the late Malchi Daoud Awrahim of Tiari in Turkey. Odisho is one of the founders of Habbaniya Union School Reunion.

The couple has five children, Olivia, Sargon, Gloria, Peter and Paul, seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

"The blessings of our Lord Savior Jesus Christ," says Odisho, "the love of the family, the cherished memories shared with dear friends of our youth, are the ingredients that nurture the essence of our life."



**Ampolia and Odisho Warda**, 50 years later, in Glenview, IL, on Nov. 7, 2003

**Congratulations to both lucky couples!** The Editor welcomes news items like these from our readers. But they should be only in celebration of Silver (25 years), Golden(50) or Diamond (75) Anniversaries. (For Editor's address see page 2)



**Assyrian Levy kit inspection by Captain Elkington (leaning), accompanied by *Rab-Emma Baijo Peeko*, a decorated Levy officer.  
(Photo courtesy Solomon S. Solomon)**