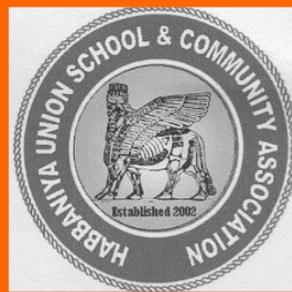


HUSCA

7th Issue
Vol. 4, No. 1
Spring-Summer
2005

The Magazine of
**HABBANIYA UNION SCHOOL &
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**



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

Bumper Issue

CLASS OF 1943



The third graduating class of *Raabi Yacoub's* Union School in Civil Cantonment of RAF Station of Habbaniya.

Sitting from left: Alice Rouwil Mikhael (Alamo, CA), Regina Gewargis Shabo (Toronto, Canada) *Raabi Yacoub* Bet-Yacoub, Headmaster (deceased), Mr. Jack J. Ingram, CC Superintendent and School Principal (deceased), Khawa Yacoub Abbona (London, England), Arpenik Onick Sanasarian (Glendale, CA); Standing from left: Qoryaqos "Kirk" Esho (deceased), Daniel Lazar Solomon (Modesto, CA), William David Shino (deceased), and Ewan Sando (deceased).

HUSCA Magazine

Editor:

Mikhael K. Pius
3504 Setrok Dr., Modesto, CA 95356, USA;
Tel. (209) 545-4120;
E-mail: mkpius@comcast.net

Administration Manager:

Benyamin E. Yalda
9350 N. Parkside Dr., Des Plaines, IL 60016;
Tel. (847) 296-7587; Fax (847)297-0303;
E-mail: benyalda@yahoo.com

Consulting Editor:

Basil K. Pius
218 N. Cottage Gr., Miles City, MT. 59301;
Tel. 406-232-0366;
E-mail: basilp@midrivers.com

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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 Hinaidi and Habbaniya and their local people. These maybe of a current or vintage nature and may be on any subject, other than politics—if it can be helped!

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**Skokie, Illinois, is the turf
and Holiday Inn Chicago-Skokie is the place
for the**

**6th Habbaniya Union School
& Community Reunion**

**The Reception Meal (\$15) will be held
on Friday, Sept. 16, 2005, from 7 to 11 pm,**

**followed by a picnic outing on Saturday
(weather permitting) or a cruise or city tour.**

**Dinner-Dance Banquet (\$40) will take place
On Sunday, Sept. 18 from 7 pm to 1 am**

**Both the Reception and Banquet
Will be held at Holiday Inn Chicago-Skokie**

Buy your tickets in time!

**For hotel reservation at Holiday Inn (Special rate \$89
per two-bed room per day), call 1-800-465-4329,
or e-mail mcotter@holidayinnskokie.com**

Mention code: HABB.05

For additional details see our circular letter 4.20.05.

**HUSCA Reunion Founding Committee
With representatives in California,
Canada, England, and Australia.**

Just Chit-chatting...About This Issue

This is the fourth year since we established our Association and launched our newsletter HUSA, renamed HUSCA Magazine a year ago. And this is the 7th issue, which is the first of two issues of this year. So far so good, as the magazine is making progress in both its format, content and membership. But I'm afraid we began the project somewhat late. We should have started at least ten years earlier when we were still in our middle age and both our energy and enthusiasm were still bubbling and gushing out like geysers. Also, we would have had enough time to document virtually all of the local history of Habbaniya in its various aspects. Today, fifteen years later, our generation is well into old age and the flow of juices is on the wane and the moans and groans are like a painful refrain. The interest is still lurking there, but it's not always easy to muster the required energy and enthusiasm. But we are trying to do the best we can for as long as we can. And may the Lord be kind to us!

I have set most of this issue in 11 points Arial instead of the usual Times New Roman. Times is prettier, but Arial is, I believe, more readable. We'd appreciate your reaction.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting one Sunday after church with Mr. Wilfred Bet-Alkhas, Editor and Publisher of the e-magazine ZINDA, at his home in Turlock. I also met his wife and had a chat with her. She is a beautiful Assyrian young lady from Russia he met in college and married last year.

I had listened to Wilfred in mid-1990s when he talked at length about internet and computer at an AANF seminar in Modesto and I was very much impressed by his know-how. He is a very successful and resourceful young man now with an abundance of energy and enthusiasm—and love—for his nation. He owns and runs a company doing computer work. Evidently, he makes a lot of money but he channels a good chunk of his profit—in the tens of thousands—into his labor of love for Zinda, without asking for financial help. And he pays all of his staff—no voluntary workers. He is an amazing man! He has plans also to have in the near future an Arabic and an Assyrian version of Zinda on the internet. And that's what I would call a real *umtanaya!* Not those who only talk about Ator and *Umtanayouta* and fleece our people and promote themselves!

I gave Wilfred a copy of the 6th issue of HUSCA. After a quick scan he expressed his appreciation of the work and offered to create a website on ZINDA for our magazine. He even promised to set all our old issues (No.1 through 6) on the internet. So if you are a surfer, you will soon find us through ZINDA. But I hope this privilege will not motivate some of our members to desert us!

Among other items, in this issue we have a special five-page report on Habbaniya and what's left of our people in and around the old hometown. The report, along with many pictures taken during recent years, was emailed to us last year by Dr. Sami Sharlman, who is (or was) a college teacher in Ramadi, the county seat 18 miles west. Sami is also son of the pastor of *Mar* Gewargis Church of the East in Habbaniya, Rev. Shummon Shmouel. The report, along with his answers to some 30 relevant questions subse-

quently put to him, were in Arabic language. Both were well translated into English by our Consulting Editor, Basil Pius of Montana. They have been incorporated into one article, illustrated with about two dozen pictures, as you can see in this issue.

We still needed answers to some more questions, as well as clarification of a few picture captions, but our emails to Dr. Sami were returned undelivered. A reader in Sacramento, *Shamasha* Elisha Yacoub Simon, who had worked with Sami in Habbaniya, tells us he has heard that Sami and his father and the whole family have recently left Habbaniya and are sojourned in Syria. This comes as no surprise because in the latter part of his report Sami indicates that their stay in Habbaniya may not last long because of the hardships, threats, and danger. We certainly appreciate his difficult situation as well as his efforts in making available to HUSCA the report and the pictures and we wish him and his family well. A glowing opinion of Sami has been given in the Letters column by Brother Basil Pius.

If you remember well, Fallujah in the 1950s was 18 miles (30 km) east of Habbaniya. Now it is only 15 km (9 miles) away. This will give you an idea of how much the town has expanded toward Habbaniya. Fallujah, the little town that was captured and subdued by two companies of Assyrian Levies and a handful of King's Own Regiment 64 years ago but which is now a thorn in the flesh of tens of thousands of American soldiers with all their ground and air fire power. Amazing how the world has changed!

Second of May this year is the "Golden" Anniversary of the surrender of Habbaniya to the Iraqi Government and the disbandment of the famous RAF (Iraq) Levies, popularly known as Assyrian Levies. We have an article on the Levies by Solomon S. Solomon in commemoration of this event and the writer has compiled another article on another aspect of Assyrian life on the air base.

We have also compiled, with some collaboration from the former Habbaniya tennis champion Andrew J. Simon of Ealing, England, a brief history of the tennis game in Habbaniya. You will find the five pages of text and pictures in this issue. We were hoping to have some balancing feedback from Andy's former counterpart, William Daniel of Fairfield, Australia, the singles champion. William, who suffered a stroke a couple of years ago, sounded well on the phone and promised to help. Unfortunately, he did not deliver. This is not uncommon among us Assyrians. Oh, well, we wish him well.

This issue contains 12 pages of readers' letters, or four pages more than the previous issue. In view of this we are obliged to go beyond our normal 32-page magazine. Since the postage for 36 pages and 40 pages is the same, we are taking advantage of this and making this number a bumper issue of 40 pages, i.e. eight pages more than the previous issue. Of course the postage

(Cont'd on P.37)

What's on your mind?

Express Yourself!

Dear Minny: Yesterday we received the 6th issue of HUSCA magazine, and it was a welcome arrival, just a few days prior to Christmas. As usual, it is chock full of memory-rich articles, photos, letters, etc. pertaining to people, friends, places, all having root and connections to our past life in Habbaniya and Hinaidi. Indeed, I found myself immersed in it and unable to put it down until I had practically "devoured" it from cover to cover!

Thanks to you principally, but also to Ben Yalda and Wiska, and also to your many subscribers and friends who continue to send letters and photos, and to those contributing articles, making HUSCA what it is: an inimitable, wonderful, magazine for us ex Hinaidi and Habbaniya residents.

Yooshia K. Poloss
Hollywood, Calif.

12..21.04.

>>> *Thank you Khaalu for your consistent appreciation, support and contribution.—Ed.*

Dear Mikhael, Thank you so much for your inspirational Christmas Wishes. Also, I wish to let you know that my copy of the latest issue of HUSCA arrived two days ago. Nowadays I am generally depressed by the terrible news from Iraq and what is happening to our people in the land of our forefathers, but HUSCA was one of the very few things that has cheered me up a little bit this Christmas.

Thank you my friend and best wishes.

Philimon
Elderslie, Australia.

12.24.04.

>>> *Philemon, we value your appreciation and support of HUSCA and thank you very much for the \$50 you sent through Ben Yalda.—Ed.*

Dear Mikhael

I wish you and your family a happy new year. May God of our fathers bless and protect you from all evil and may He in His wisdom look after us oldies.

Thank you for publishing parts of my letter.

I cannot help commenting on "Youki's" comments regarding Habbaniya. We all know that it was not all wine and roses. And even roses have thorns! However Habbaniya was a special part of our youth and growth to manhood. What we had was not luxury; it was misery: Unsatisfactory communal toilets and bath houses [with every 12 units for each sex for 36 families and, in some cases, for 72 families—Ed], no electricity, dirt roads, etc. But what we had was some kind of security, for our people had gone through horrendous sufferings in the last 100 years and even since the fall of the Assyrian empire in 612 BC. But especially since we became followers of

Jesus Christ almost two thousand years ago.

The last massacre of our people was in 1933 in Semaile and other parts of north Iraq. I and my family became refugees and were sent to refugee camps, *Campit Yakhsireh*.

At Habbaniya our people became proud, invincible. We had our own clubs, churches, etc. We defeated the Iraqi Army. Our football team was the best in middle east. We could do almost anything.

Youki mentions the suffering our people had during their long trek from Urmia, Iran, to Baquba in Iraq, running for their lives, starving, losing their children on the way, old people being chased and killed by Iranians, Turks and Kurds. It would have been a greater tragedy if the British had not been there (at Baquba) to shelter and protect us from the Arabs. But when our people got to Baquba Refugee Camps there was a world wide influenza virus that killed millions in the world as it killed many of our people. There was also cholera and other diseases that took their toll. As we say in Assyrian language *min nooral go tannoura* [Out of fire and into the oven—Ed]. Another thing: I believe *Rabbi* Yacoub School had passed its usefulness, for after the Iraqi government took over the school we started having Assyrians graduating as doctors, engineers, teachers, etc. That was not possible at *Rabbi* Yacoub School.

Keep up the good work you are doing.

Your friend

12.31.04.

Yul Bahram Marbo.

>>> *We thank you for your comments and we appreciate your support. I hope many more readers will give us their input.*

Yul, it's true that the British took care of us at the refugee camps for more than two years following our 1918 mass flight from Urmia, Persia, to Baquba, Mesopotamia. But we were their gallant smallest ally after they lured us, with empty promises, to their side to rise up and fight against the Turks. In addition, they also had future plans (or should I say schemes?) for us. They used us, to our detriment, to quell Kurdish and Arab uprisings and to help them control Iraq's oil, as it transpired in the decades that followed the disbandment of the refugee camps.

You're also right that Raabi Yacoub's school standard of education was limited to a middle school. But it instilled in our youth the basics of education with emphasis on English language—which also proved of benefit to the RAF in the long run. Only a handful of Raabi Yacoub's graduates were able to obtain private

high school education in Baghdad, but most could not afford it because of the low income the RAF paid their fathers, and so they would join the RAF workforce to help their families.

There were two reasons why our people could not obtain higher education at Government high schools and colleges during Raabi Yacoub's time. One was, in order to keep us dependent on them, the British had made sure that most of our people could not obtain Iraqi citizenship and were therefore considered refugees in their own country and as such ineligible to free government education. The second reason was that Raabi Yacoub's curriculum in English was set by RAF authorities. Because it included only an elementary Arabic language class graduates of the school had insufficient knowledge of Arabic to enable them to fit into Government schools and colleges, even if accepted. But after Raabi Yacoub's school was taken over by (or given to) the Iraqi Ministry of Education in 1944, the curriculum was converted to Arabic. Middle school graduates therefore could have their high school education at government schools at the neighboring towns of Ramadi and Fallujah and most of them also went on to obtained free college education in Baghdad (and even scholarships abroad), thus graduating (as you mentioned) as teachers, doctors, engineers, and other professions. This happened especially following the naturalization of Habbaniya Assyrians in masse after the British were expelled from Habbaniya in 1955. And why did the Iraqi Government make it so easy for Assyrians to become citizens only when the British were leaving? Because the British arranged this when they no longer had any use for the Assyrians and this was one way of dumping them!—Ed.

Dear Ben: Thank you for reminding me that my subscription to HUSCA has expired. I enclose a money order for US\$50 to cover my current year's subscription with the balance of \$38 to needy Assyrians.

I recognize and appreciate the unselfish and unwavering dedication of HUSCA staff for producing such a wonderful magazine. It brings back bitter-sweet memories of our younger years as we reminisce about old friendships and the harsh environment under which we survived. It is amazing how various ethnic communities with tribal, religious and cultural differences, living under very difficult conditions, transformed into a large family. If the term "melting pot" has any significance, then our transformation into one family was truly a melting pot phenomenon.

The word "Union" in "Habbaniya Union School" stands out prominently in my mind, merely because it signifies a unity of purpose. I attribute this word to the success of our transformation into one large family despite our personal views and traditions. How could I for-

get Raabi Yacoub's daily sermons of wisdom? He instilled in us a sense of pride, purpose, ambition and, most importantly, a sense of responsibility which has served our generation and our children and grandchildren well. The success of those who hailed, or whose parents hailed, from Habbaniya is a glowing testimony of their upbringing.

I thank you also for your sincere concern about my health, which has now improved considerably.

John Rovil Michael

12.22.04. Beaconsfield, Canada.

>>> John, we appreciate your very interesting comments and thank you so much for your donation. We wish many more of our readers would take the time to express their reminiscences and views and even comment on some of the material they read in our magazine. Meanwhile, we pray that your health will continue to improve and we wish you and your family happiness always.—Ed

Dear Friend Ben:

Thank you for the good work of HUSCA 6th Issue. Enjoy the special magic of the Holidays, Christmas and New Year. Enclosed is a check for two-year membership. [\$20.00].

Rovel S. Gorgis, Dr.

12.17.04. Skokie, Illinois.

Dear Ben and Mikhael:

Thank you for the second issue of HUSCA I received. It is a real interesting magazine. I always enjoy reading it, especially when you mentioned in this issue Coolie Camp, where I was born and raised. I'm very proud of it.

May God help you in doing such a good job. Thank you again and here is a check for \$15. Ten dollars is for my subscription and \$5 is a donation.

Eva DeKelaita

12.20.04 Norton Grove, Illinois.

Thanks, Ben, for reminding me. Is it ten dollars? [\$10 was enclosed—Ed].

Wish you a Happy Christmas and a 2005 filled with good health and all that you wish/aspire to.

Phrydon E. Badal

12.20.04. El Dorado Hills, Calif.

Dear Ben: God bless you both for this wonderful work. Keep it up and no more other responsibilities, Ben. Your true friend,

Sargon Aboona

12.20.04. Skokie, Illinois

Dear Ben: I apologize for missing the renewal date of

Cont'd on next page →

your wonderful magazine HUSCA. Enclosed is a check for \$30 for 2004 and 2005.

Samira and I love to read the magazine. I have not lived in Habbaniya, but through Samira and my late father-in-law *Raabi* Yacoub and his family, I had heard so much about the good old days you people had in Habbaniya that I feel as if I had lived there and knew you all.

Again I congratulate you and your team for the excellent work you are doing. We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. God bless you all.

Sargon Hermis

12.20.04. Pinole, California.

Dear Ben: Hope you all are doing well.

Thanks a lot for HUSCA magazine. I really enjoyed reading it, especially looking at the photos and remembering my old friends of our wonderful childhood life at our beloved Habbaniya.

Sorry I have been behind with my subscription. Anyhow, I am enclosing herewith a check for \$20. May God bless you all.

Akhshirash M. Jango

12.20.04. Newport News, Virginia.

Dear Ben: I am sending you enclosed herewith \$30.

Sargon Marano

12.21.04. Morton Grove, Illinois.

Mike, You and I have corresponded briefly in the past. I do not know you personally, but I know your brother Wiska from Baghdad. He was friend with my brother Yoseph (*Rab-Trema* Gewargis) Shabo, as you may remember.

I have an old picture of my 2nd grade class in Habbaniya school. I think it was taken in 1947. Use it as you please. Some of the kids in the picture I remember, such as Andrawis and Nathan (*Rab-Trema*) Odesho, Nimroud (*Rab-Khaila* Zaia), Fouad (Officer) Youaw. That is all I remember. Right after then we moved to Basrah.

I met Wiska at the bookstore your family had in Baghdad. I was then doing my Iraqi Army duty as a reserve officer in college at Moasker Rashid location. Right after my class I was deployed to active army units (stationed at Abu-Ghrep). The army deposed the King [on July 14, 1958—Ed] and Abdul Karim Kassim took over. I spent two and half years in Baghdad serving in army and that is how I met Wiska. He has remembered me from Habbaniya days and asked about my brother Yoseph.

My wife Juliet and I enjoy reading the Habbaniya magazine. Keep up the good work and God bless.

Ben (*Rab-Tremma* Gewargis) Shabo

12.22..04. Apex, N. Carolina

>>> *Thank you for the memories. Wiska would be*

pleased to read this. No, I have not met you or your brother Yoseph but I know your older sisters, Mary, Regina and Madeleine. Regina and I have been exchanging correspondence regularly since 1992. But you know something, I haven't met Regina or Mary in person since my schooldays in Habbaniya some 64 years ago and I made the acquaintance of Madeleine only through Regina when we talked on the phone at Christmastime.

As regards your picture, the copy print that you sent me would not scan well. I returned it to you and asked you for the original print. Unfortunately, I have not had a response from you. Sorry. But I could include it in our next issue, if you still care to send it.

Here's a brief letter from your brother Yoseph—Ed.

Dear Ben and Mike: I am enclosing \$75 for my subscription and the rest for any cause you deem worthwhile. Both "Wiska" and I live in areas disconnected from our beloved Assyrians, except for a magazine such as HUSCA. Thank you for sacrificing time and effort in publishing this magazine. I know it is a labor of love.

Joseph Shabo

12.22.04. Auburn, Alabama.

Dear Ben: Greetings; wishing you and your family a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year 2005.

Enclosed \$20 to cover my subscription and one to my nephew Johny Yousip Badal. Please mail his magazine to his garage [address given]. If possible mail him the current issue. Thanks.

Solomon Sawa Solomon

12.22.04. Lebanon, Tennessee

Dear Ben: We are sending you \$10 for our HUSCA subs.

Assyrian Universal Alliance

12.22.04. Foundation, Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Ben: Thanks to you and Michael for this HUSCA magazine. I truly am enjoying reading it very much, especially the reader's letters.

Good job. Keep it up.

Juliette Y. Abbona

12.23.04. Modesto, California

Dear Ben:

I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and health and happiness always.

Enclosed please find my check for \$50, being donation to this wonderful magazine. You are doing a wonderful job. God bless you and the rest of your staff.

Leon Sarkis

12.26.04. Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Ben: Thanks for your reminder. Enclosed is my check for \$30, which I hope will cover the HUSCA subscription for Cardo Benjamin and myself.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Ashour Marano

12.25.04. **Morton Grove, Illinois**

Dear Ben: Enclosed is \$20 for my subscription.

Sargon Isaac

12.27.04. **Skokie, Illinois.**

Dear Ben: I am enclosing herewith a check for \$20. Ten dollars for my subscription and another \$10 for subscription for my brother Emmanuel H. Purto, a new subscriber [address given—Ed]. Thank you.

Aprim H. Purto

12.28.04. **Modesto, California.**

Dear Ben:

Our best wishes and compliments to you and family.

Thank you for reminding me of my subs. dues and I am sorry for the delay. Herewith a check [\$10]

David S. David

12.29.04. **Chicago, Illinois.**

Dear Ben: Thank you for reminding me. Both of us wish you a Happy New Year with health for you and your family. Check included [\$10], with our love always. We have to talk some day soon.

Freidon Musafir

1.3.05. **Chicago, Illinois.**

Hi Ben! How are you and your family? Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

I am sending you this check [\$15] on behalf of my sister Roza for magazine. Give my regards to Leena and family. Good bye from your friend,

Pena Khanishan

1.3.05. **Modesto, California.**

Dear Ben: Enclosed is my check for \$15 for my subscription to HUSCA for 2005.

Please accept my condolences and sympathy, although very late, for the passing away of your mother. Also my apologies for not being able to attend the 7th Day mass you offered for her at St. Mary's Church. I was away visiting my younger brother who had surgery in San Jose, California.

We spent good times with your parents as next door neighbors back in the sixties in Almas area of Kirkuk. Your late parents were wonderful and good neighbors. We would spend our evenings playing cards, telling tales and jokes and drinking *chai*. May God rest their souls in peace.

Have a happy and healthy New Year.

Jersse (Eshai) Solomon

1.4.05. **Mt. Prospect, Illinois.**

Dear brother Mike, When you asked me first to translate Dr. Sami Sharlman's letter regarding your 29 questions, the first reaction was "Oh, what a time consuming job!" Also I was not sure if my Arabic was up to par to help me do it. Believe it or not, at one point I also remembered father Khamoo. I imagined him telling me something like "Naasha, what happened to all your college education? You certainly should be able to translate the document if you put your mind to it." Then I felt a sense of guilt when I thought of all the good work that you yourself do. You write intelligent pieces related to our Assyrian people, culture, history, friends, etc. and with enthusiasm too. You put out HUSCA twice a year, and that is no small accomplishment. Anyway, at that instant I felt encouraged to give it a try. I want you also to know that when I finished translating it today I felt wonderfully gratified and with a sense of self-fulfillment for sure. Not too bad for a guy who hardly uses Arabic language through the ages. So I thank you for the opportunity.

This special personal note about my impression of Sami himself, after studying his enlightening document:

I am overwhelmed with admiration for this man, not only because he comes through as a genuine Christian but also as a true spirited Assyrian. He sounds principled, sensibly protective, humble and patriotically nationalistic, resourceful, bright, ambitious, clever, conscientious, noble, appreciative, generous, and much more. There is a special vibration in his words that reflects his "intuitive grasp of reality" which I admire. I feel a special sense of affinity with Sami, vicariously as it is, perhaps because of all the personal challenges he is facing with dedication, his loyalty to Habbaniya and its former inhabitants, or maybe because he is speaking from Ramadi, where I too received my secondary education and enjoyed my soccer playing days and youthful excitement when our daily road from Habbaniya to Ramadi was not always paved with roses. But most importantly the guy has an amazing foresight, courage and faith. I salute him and his brave family too. We pray for their safety every day. One of these days I know I will be writing him a special letter, God willing, just to let him know how much I truly appreciate him. I will send you Sami's Arabic hard copy today via post office.

Thanks again.

Always, brother Wiska

1.10.05. **Miles City, Montana.**

Dear Ben: Thank you very much for the latest copy of HUSCA which has so many interesting articles. At the same time, I would like to congratulate you and Mr. Pius for the excellent work you are doing. Keep it up and God bless you. I send you my best wishes.

Ben Ishmaiel Yalda

1.4.05. **Ealing, London, UK**

Cont'd on next page →

Dear Ben: Enclosed please find \$US.20 for the renewal of my subscription to HUSCA for 2005.

Thanks to you and all who participate in a most beautifully presented magazine, and God bless you all.

John Aghajan

1.7.05. Mississauga, Canada

My dear Ben: I received your letter of last month which I read with sadness. May the Lord rest the soul of your beloved mother in peace and open the gate of paradise to her. I also reciprocate your Christmas wishes.

Thanks a million for HUSCA magazine, which I read with profound interest. I pray to the Almighty to grant you and your colleagues health, patience, tolerance, and wisdom to continue with your knowledge and know-how. How well I recall your smooth and silky face and smile from Habbaniya school.

I send you and your family my heartiest good wishes along with \$US.50 covering my subscription for 2005. Your old friend,

Andy J. Simon

1.10.05. Ealing, London, UK.

Dear Mikhael: I learned with great sorrow from HUSCA magazine about the passing away of Julius Shabbas. This most saddening news came to me as a shock as I had no idea he had been ill. Julius was loved and respected by all those who knew him. May he rest in peace and God bless his good soul and heal the hearts of his loved ones and his friends. I truly believe Julius was one of the top ten nice persons in the world—all his life.

Aprim K. Abraham

1.13.05. North Hills, California.

>>> *Amen!—Ed.*

Dear Ben: I herewith enclose a \$20 note bill to cover my subscription for this year and the remainder as a meager donation towards your team's commendable work in producing such an absorbing magazine.

My sincere regards to all the HUSCA staff.

Youel S. Tammo

1.19.05. Redruth, Cornwall, UK.

Dear Ben: As per details in my email of today I am enclosing herewith money order for US\$25 to cover new subscription to Jacob and Penny Yohanan [address given—Ed] and to extend my subs for a further year.

Thank you and God bless.

Romeo Hanna

1.19.04. Sydney, Australia

Dear Ben: Hope you and the whole family are in good health. Enclosed is a check for \$25, covering my subs for 2005-06.

Please let me know if I owe extra.

Emanuel Warda

(Undated) Redwood City, Calif.

Dear Ben:

Sorry for the delay. I enclose herewith the check for ten dollars for 2005 subscription.

It would be nice if you could throw some light on the forthcoming Habbaniya students' sixth reunion, telling me where and when you are planning to hold the reunion.

As you know me, I am always ready and willing to help.

With best wishes.

Peter Peyour (Pius Haddad)

1.24.05. Turlock, California

Dear Ben: I hope all of you are in good health. We are the same here. I am sending you a check for the magazine. Give my love to Leena and sweet Dorothy.

Many thanks for your good job done.

Mary David

(Undated) Daly City, California

Dear Ben:

Enclosed is check to renew subscription for my brother Wilson Rasha in Australia and for myself.

Please give my regards to Lena and Dorothy and Sargon and Almas.

Thank you and God bless. All of you are doing great job.

Janet Jacob

1.24.05. Morrisville, N. Carolina

Ben and Mike and everyone: Just to say those two words that say it all.. thank you!!

Happy New Year. All the best.

Naima [Ishmaiel] & Colin Reid

1.24.05. England

>>> *Good to hear from you, Naima! And thanks for the greetings—Ed.*

Dear Mr. Yalda: I thank you very much for your prompt action, sending me the three copies of HUSCA. May God bless you and keep you in good health.

I am sending a small gift [\$50] to help with the postage and membership for 2005. And thank you for the great articles about the late Julius Shabbas.

Shalim [Shabbas] Tattar

1.25.05. Pt. Richmond, Calif.

Dear Ben: Thank you for the wonderful memories in "HUSCA" and my condolences to you for the passage of your mother. Please keep up the good work.

I was touched to see my father's "Yosip's Chai-khana" pointed out on the aerial photo view of Habbaniya in the last issue of HUSCA. I like to mention also

that Matti Sogul, whose picture appeared in the graduating class of 1941&42, lives in Chicago and is in good health. He is my brother-in-law.

Enclosed is a check [\$100] for my subscription membership as well as for my sister Dr. Victoria Zado in London and my brother-in-law Mr. Matti Sogul in Chicago [addresses given—Ed]. Please mail Victoria and Matti copies effective with the current issue.

Best wishes. (Dr) Barina Yosip Zodo.

1.27.05.

Grand Blanc, Mich.

>>> *We thank you for your support and are pleased to note the "Dr" before the names of both of you two sisters. Good work! My regards to Matti Sogul.—Ed.*

Dear Mr. Mikhael: I am sending you a check [\$15] for your books "An Assyrian's Youth Journal" and "Assyrian Tales and Confessions." I am ordering them for my uncle, George, who knew you and your brothers from the bookshop in Habbaniya and bookstore "Crown" in Baghdad.

Aram Atniel

1.28.05.

Glendale, California.

>>> *Thank you very much for the check and your interest in my books. Please note that our Baghdad bookstore's name was "Coronet" not "Crown."*

I'm sorry I can't quite place you or your uncle from the sketchy information. Are you the son of the late Atniel Rab-Emma(?) Youkhanna or perhaps son of Atniel David, a friend and classmate in Ramadi of Wiska and the late Raphael? Or is your uncle George (sorry, I can't recall his last name), that rather quite, dark and handsome guy in Habbaniya?—Ed.

My dear Ben and Michael: I received your beautiful magazine and I thank you. I always look forward to it and enjoy reading it. It brings back all the sweet memories when I hear about all our friends. Thanks to our Lord all of my family members are doing well. I miss my [late] sister all the time, but thank God I am with my son and family. I have my two brothers [Nimrod and Homer Soski—Ed] close by, which is a blessing. I hope that you both will be healthy and be able to keep up the great job you are doing. I am enclosing a check for \$50. I wish you and your families a Happy New Year. May the Lord bless you. Love,

Lena N. Lazar

(undated)

Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

>>> *Thank you for your compliments, good wishes and generous donation, Lena. We realize how difficult it is losing a loved one so close to you as your late sister was and with whom you have shared happy memories. But time and the closeness of your other siblings and the love of your own children and other family members will, we are sure, bring you comfort and solace—Ed.*

Note: *The letters that follow are excerpts from a series of emails the Editor exchanged with Miss Gladys Warda, a 68-year-old mathematician, school teacher and literary person in Montevideo, Uruguay, South America. I have selected only those passages which I think may be of general interest to readers.*

Gladys was born and has lived most of her life in Montevideo. She taught at public high schools for 40 years and then had to retire. During the last 25 of the 40 years she also taught math in the school of economy. After she retired in 1998, she took up teaching in a private school and also in the School of Social Sciences of the University of Paraguay. As a hobby she sometimes works with retired lawyer Francis Sarguis of Santa Barbara, California, reviewing books for JAAS (Journal of the Assyrian Academic Sciences).

Gladys' Assyrian father was born in Zerini, Hakkiari mountains in Turkey. He came to Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1923 after losing most of his family members during the 1918 Assyrian mass flight from Urmia. He finally settled in Uruguay in 1930. Gladys' mother, an American, was born in Holland, Ohio, and came to Montevideo as a missionary in 1923. Gladys' future parents met in 1934 and were married in 1936. Her mother died in 1990 and her father in 1999.

Gladys was the co-reviewer with Mr. Francis Sarguis for JAAS of my first book Assyrian Tales & Confessions in 2000. She also reviewed my second book An Assyrian's Youth Journal in 2002. We began exchanging emails about a year ago after I sent her a copy of HUSA # 4, which included a reprint of her review of my second book—Ed.

Dear Mikhael, I want to thank you once more for sending me your magazine. I totally agree with your readers who write to you saying what a wonderful job you are doing. I imagine that for people who are somehow related to Habbaniya it must be great to read about other people and about events related to it.

I have a question for Youki. In his letter [HUSCA # 6] he says, "[...] my grandmother was poisoned together with about 600 women and children who had gone to the American Mission compound to escape from the attacks by Kurds, Turkomen and Iranians. The American Mission had contracted a Turkoman to supply the compound with flour. He had mixed juss with the flour and all had died from eating the poisoned bread."

It happens that my mother, who wrote about father's life, related a similar experience his family lived through. She wrote in first person (as if it were my father writing): "Soon after we reached Persia, a plague broke out, caused perhaps by wheat in bad condition found in abandoned houses and used on the way [...]. Our people died by tens and thousands". Do you suppose they

Cont'd on next page →

are both referring to the same incident? The similarity lies in the fact that the wheat—or the flour—was not edible and that people died because of consuming it. But Youki gives more details. Of course, my father was about eight years old when this happened, and he might not have remembered the exact circumstances, except the fact that most of his family died then.

Again, I thank you for your generosity in sending me your magazine. Best regards,

Gladys [Warda

1.7.05. Montevideo, Uruguay]

Hello Gladys! I received your envelop containing \$25 cash without a note. I assume this amount is a contribution towards the couple of copies of HUSCA I mailed you... I sent you the magazine with my compliments and there was no need for you to send money. However, since you have sent it, I will forward it to Ben Yalda in Chicago to deposit it into HUSCA account.

I don't want to impose the magazine on you for I know that like most of us you are a person with your spare time allotted to your specific interests. But if you do find the material or pictures of interest in our magazine, please let me know. We will be glad to use the money for a two-year subscription (2005-06). And I thank you for your appreciation of our magazine.

As regards your above-mentioned comment in regard to the mass death of our people due to contaminated flour, yes I do believe that your father's story and that of Youki's parents is one and the same. But as you know a story usually undergoes some changes when it is told by different persons. And I also believe that we Assyrians tend to exaggerate facts and figures a little bit!

It was of special interest to me to know that you did read my short story, "Blue Eyed Marganita!" But I wish you had given me your frank opinion of it, i.e. a sort of brief critique... Actually, even though I'm not really an accomplished short story writer, my favorite genre is the short story. And I'm always eager to know what opinion readers have of my stories. There are very few HUSCA readers who can or are interested enough to give a qualified [literary] opinion beyond "It is a nice (or wonderful) story and I enjoyed reading it."

Anyhow, I send you my regards and best wishes. Take care.

1.27.05. MKP [Editor]

Hello Mikhael, It's good to hear from you.

Yes, I sent you \$25...I know you have been sending me your magazine with your compliments, and that your intention never was that I should pay for it. However, I believe that your magazine, besides being very interesting, must have a high cost, so I thought I'd put in my "little grain of sand."...

And, as I said in my previous note, I do find mater-

ial of interest. For example, that incident of the contaminated flour touched me in a personal way, even though my father never had any relationship with Habbaniya.

...As to your story itself, I won't simply say, "It is a nice story and I enjoyed reading it" (although I do think it is a nice love story and I did enjoy reading it). In my opinion, the best aspect of the story lies in the descriptions that take a reader to that time and place. You are able to transmit, with all the details you offer, those circumstances to a reader from America (north or south) in the 21st century, so far removed from the situations you relate.

Best regards, and take care.

1.27.05. Gladys

Dear Gladys: I thank you for your reply and I appreciate very much your comment, especially about my story...

Well, since you do find some material of interest in our magazine, I'm asking our Administration Manager Ben Yalda to put your name on the subscriber's list for the next two years... I sincerely appreciate your interest and friendship. *Shlameh woo'shaineh*.

1.28.05. MKP

Dear Mikhael: I am sorry to hear about your health problems. It is true that when one reaches a certain age, things begin to seem uphill all the time. However, having projects and things to live for somehow make life worth living. In my case - although I believe I'm some years younger than you - I was forced to retire from teaching in public schools, but I was able to get a teaching job in a private school (and at the University), and I'm sure that keeps me alive. Not only the fact that I'm active, but seeing friends there on a daily basis gives me something to look forward to every day.

You'll have to tell me what "Shlameh woo' shaineh" means. I'm sorry to say my knowledge of Assyrian is very limited. I believe "shlameh" means something like "peace," but "woo-shaineh" is beyond me. Take care,

1.28.05. Gladys

Dear Gladys

...It is true that work in a way keeps one more active and energetic. It is also one way of socializing, if one's work does not confine him to himself. There are lots of people who wither away fast when they retire and don't know what to do with their time. But I did income work since I was 15 and until I retired 51 years later in 1993, with a break of a few years perhaps between jobs. And I have been doing a lot of work at home during these past 11 or 12 years. So perhaps it is about time for me to really retire--and do a few of the personal things I want to do.

"Shlama" means peace; "shlameh" means greet-

ings; "shaina" means security. "Shaineh" is the plural of "shaina"; "woo" stands for "and" but "woo' shaineh" with "shlama" I believe stands for "and good wishes." Of course I'm not an authority on Assyrian language, but I have an average knowledge of our language.

Gladys, I had an article based on a trip I made to N. Iraq 54 years ago published just recently in *Assyrian-American Voice*, which is an irregular magazine published by the Assyrian-American Civic Club of Turlock, probably the biggest Assyrian social club in the world boasting some 1,400 members. I had the first three parts published in previous issues going back to 1999. This is the last installment. I believe you will find something of interest in it. I tried to send [by email] all three pages at the same time, but the capacity was too much. So I'm inserting only the first page and the other two pages will be emailed separately.

2.2.05. MKP

Dear Mikhael: ...Sometimes, when I am working I feel very tired and wish I could just quit. But then, in vacation time, even though I have millions of things to do, I miss my co-workers. I mean, there's a lot to be said for the socializing part of work.

Thank you for the explanation of "*shlameh woo'-shaineh*"! I might still learn something of Assyrian!

I received the attachment of your article... it took a long time to download...could I ask you to mail them by snail-mail?...Thanks! *Shlameh woo'shaineh*,

2.3.05. Gladys

Hi Gladys! I know it takes a while for large-volume items to download... I didn't realize that your server is through your phone...I shall photocopy the article (I might photocopy the previous three parts as well, if I can locate the magazines easily) and mail the hard copies to you...

Take care.

2.3.05 MKP

Dear Mikhael: I just finished reading the page you emailed of your article. I tried to see how much of the Assyrian vocabulary I recognized, or remembered my father using.

I remembered: *chai* - tea; *qalya* - meat; *masta* - my father liked *masta* so much! He made it every chance he had. *Dawwy* - if I remember right - isn't exactly the same as *masta*; it's more like what you use to put in the milk to make *masta*. But I may be mistaken.

Thank you! *Shlameh woo-shaineh*,

2.3.05. Gladys

Hello Gladys! I air-mailed you this afternoon all four installments of my article on my trip to N. Iraq...Unfortunately,...I screwed up the sequence of the pages

But I have pencil numbered the pages to enable you to following the story from page to page without difficulty. Sorry.

As regard your Assyrian, you haven't done so badly. *Qalya* is cooked meat preserved in lard in jars. And *dawwy* is liquified yogurt, or buttermilk. [Incidentally, the little *masta* they put into heated milk to make *masta* is called *yimmat masta*, literally mother of yogurt]...

I had a good chuckle reading your closing salutation of "*shlameh woo'shaineh*!"

That's it, Gladys. Good night.

2.5.05. MKP

Hello Mikhael! I'm sure I'll be able to find a way to read your article! And I'll let you know as soon as it gets here.

"My Assyrian" is something I find quite interesting. When I was a child, and my father's Assyrian friends visited him, I could always tell what they were talking about, although I didn't get the exact words. Also, at one time I could repeat the whole 'Lord's Prayer' in Assyrian, from having heard my father repeat it so many times. And I can also remember the songs he used to sing, although I don't know what they mean. I think the words I recognize the most are the ones referring to food, like *masta* for example. Now that you explained what *dawwy* is, maybe what I remember is my father using that word for the buttermilk my mother used to make.

As to the writing of Assyrian, every single time I see something written in Assyrian, I feel as if I could almost read it, but then I can't of course. Sometimes I do catch a word or two, or recognize a name...

Shlameh woo-shaineh! (Another chuckle?)

2.5.05. Gladys

Dear Mikhael: Your envelope arrived yesterday. I see what you meant by the cutting and putting the whole thing together, and the need to number the pages!

These days I'm working on exams for school, so I haven't had the time to sit down and read it all yet. But I did start reading page number 1, and my first comment is that I remember the times when my father was ill, and he would say that if he could only drink some of that mountain water he would feel better.

Thank you very much for sending it!

Shlameh woo-shaineh, (I'm learning!)

2.12.05. Gladys

Hello Gladys! Thanks for your message and I'm glad that my envelope has reached you. Take your time in reading the article. It's ten-pages long and perhaps if you read it in morsels you would "savor the taste better." Ha! Ha!

Getting back to your previous message: When I asked an Assyrian middle-aged lady if she prayed daily

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she told me she didn't know how to pray. Since she couldn't read Assyrian, I wrote the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary for her in spoken Assyrian with English alphabet and with parallel English versions. If I'm not being pushy, I'm sending you as attachments the same prayers along with a printed version of The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic Assyrian (in Estrangelo alphabet) with a transliteration in English along with the English version of the prayer. As you know Hail Mary is used only by Catholics who revere the Holy Mother as the messenger between them and her son Christ, but if you are a non-Catholic you can skip Hail Mary. Of course you can also listen to The Lord's Prayer on the Assyrian internet websites to get the pronunciation right. If you have problem Googling the right websites, please let me know...

For now "Poosh Pshaina!" (Literally: "Remain in peace" but meaning "Good bye.")

2.12.05. MKP

Hi Mikhael! I'm still reading your article. I'm reading it in morsels, as you say, and savoring the taste!

Thank you for the Lord's Prayer. It coincides more or less with what I remember. I think what I remember most is the first two lines and the last one. But re-reading it, it is coming back to me...

Poosh Pshaina!

2.12.05. Gladys

Dear Editor, May I take this opportunity to thank you, your colleagues and all contributors to HUSCA magazine for a most interesting read.

In response to your further invitation on page 4 of the last issue (Fall-Winter 2004) to contribute articles, letters, photographs, etc., perhaps I might offer some [personal] suggestions:

Have any of your readers ever considered an oral family, school, or community history regarding life in Iraq in the 20th Century?

In 1985 lying flat on my back on the sofa recovering from a severe paralyzed disc, my lifelong friend visited me and said I might be interested to listen to two audiotapes of an oral family history prepared by him and two of his siblings.

It was fascinating listening to these tapes covering at least three generations of his family. Having known this family for 60 years I thought "I knew it all!" How wrong can you be?

My surviving sister and two brothers each borrowed the tapes and gave me their responses. One of my sister's sons is a talented amateur genealogist who explained that when researching family history, he found older members of the extended family were sometimes reluctant to put pen to paper (for a variety of reasons) but were quite willing to talk.

Before my recovery, I persuaded my siblings and my nephew to pay an evening visit to my home where I had set up the recording equipment. We then attempted to emulate our friends who produced the earlier tapes by recording our own oral family history.

As host, I acted as the coordinator and general factotum. At first my sister seemed shy and reluctant to talk knowing the matter was being recorded. Not so the brothers.

The starting point was for each one to give his or her earliest memory of life in the family. Once started, we tried to proceed (roughly) in some sort of chronological order. The first recording session ended and we were only "in our infancy." Clearly, further sessions had to be arranged.

On the second and subsequent recordings (one evening per week) my wife laid on some alcoholic refreshments, which seemed to loosen tongues considerably!

Suffice it to say, over a period of five weeks we finished up with ten one-hour tape recordings of both our nuclear and extended family histories. I made copies for each sibling which they could then copy for their own offspring.

The exercise (which was most enjoyable) revealed that one family members' account of "an event" spanned off another's memory and so the knock-on effect brought forth more information than we ever anticipated.

Time is of the essence! Oral history can only be saved or recorded when people are alive and well enough to participate. What knowledge, experience, information, culture, history and personalities must be stored in the minds of those proud Assyrians, et al scattered in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and elsewhere!

I believe such recorded oral histories could be transcribed by researchers or those with journalistic ability to give realistic accounts of life as it was in Iraq in the 20th Century.

A poignant reminder: My eldest brother, who participated greatly in the exercise, now has the onset of dementia; he cannot even remember the names of his grandchildren!

Best wishes.

**David Jones, Chairman
RAF Habbaniya Association**

2.2.05. West Knighton, Leicester, UK.

>>> *Thank you very much for your letter and your interest in our magazine. I'm sorry about your brother.*

You present a very interesting idea that is of general interest. But let us see how many readers have the resources, enthusiasm and energy—and time—to carry out such a project.

I know I have had this idea for many years, but have not been very successful at accomplishing it. Although I'm very keen to record the history of our family (and perhaps

write a memoir), I have not been able to achieve much, in this respect for a number of reasons, mainly because some knowledgeable members of our extended family live in far-away places and we can't all get together at one time. And to juggle each other's memory and obtain the best results, I believe the recording has to be conducted in group sessions. And time is slipping by unceasingly! I have already lost during the last several years two knowledgeable "historian" members with sharp memories.

Another obstacle is time. I have two dozen big reel tapes of family gatherings and chats in Baghdad from the mid 1950s through late sixties and dozens of family cassette tapes made in seventies as well as a dozen files chockfull of letters that contain useful dates and facts. But research requires time, as well as enthusiasm and energy. My enthusiasm has somewhat waned, my energy is sapped by my age (79) and the state of my health, and my time is in very short supply!

About ten years ago, when I was chipper, I bought a reel-tape recorder and decided to edit and transfer to cassette tapes the essential portions of the reels in my possession before they fell apart. I did this doggedly for several hours a day for several days and produced six one-hour cassettes. But I still had to do ten times that much, and the listening to plays and replays to decide which parts to transfer and which to eliminate needed patience and persistence and time, because the playing, replaying and editing and re-editing consumed a lot of time—time for which my journalistic activity clamored, not to mention other day to day activities. So I finally gave up, hoping to return to the project "when I have more time." That more time never came and the reel tapes are still lying in a box under my desk and I don't even know what is the state of their "health."

Regards and best wishes and thanks again.—Ed

Dear Benyamin: Thank you for HUSCA #6 with membership form. I am returning the completed form together with a money order for US\$12 covering my membership.

I wish you all the best of luck and success in your work toward promoting HUSCA Magazine and bringing Habbaniya memories back to life. I hope you will continue this valuable work of producing the magazine with inclusion of Assyrian Levies under the Habbaniya community.

My best shلامي to dear friend Sargon *Rab-Temma* Yacu d'be Aboona.

Shamasha Moshi Sargis Moshi
2.4.05. Hamilton, Ont. Canada.

Dear Menashi and Ben: Thank you for your Christmas and prayer cards. Eshaya and I were really pleased to hear from you. Also thanks for the excellent HUSCA magazine which we enjoy reading from beginning to

end. It reminds us of good old days.

The picture of [Habbaniya] Beauties you published was really a surprise to me. I don't remember seeing it before. Thanks to Andy [Simon] for sending the picture and many, many thanks to you and Ben. Without the effort of you guys we would lose the memories of our old days.

I was very sad to learn that Sabikky and Munny have passed away. Sabikky and I would walk together to work [in Habbaniya] every morning. May God our Lord bless their souls and the souls of all our loved ones.

I cannot figure out which one of the Beauties is the great grandmother. Hope to find out in next issue.

I live in Skokie. As you know I am married to Eshaya Hormis Isaac and we have three children, Florence, Franco, and Freddie, and four grandchildren, Paul, Claire, Peter, and Mary.

I am enclosing a donation of \$50 to HUSCA in memory of my late mother Youropa and my younger sister Anna Polus, along with a picture of myself with two of my children and my four grandchildren.

Thank you again and may God bless you and keep you in good health. Please take care and keep up your good work. Best wishes.

Abigail Eshaya Isaac.
Skokie, Illinois.

2.7.05.

>>> *Many thanks for your donation and phone call. It was good talking to you and Eshaya and knowing that Eshaya's health is much better now.*

Your and Eshaya's consistent generosity and support is always appreciated. We offer our prayers for the souls of your departed ones.

Avigil, you are the only one who has shown curiosity as to which of the "Habbaniya Beauties" (on back-cover of HUSCA issue 6) is the great grandmother. As far as I know, Panna (Aziz) Khanishan is the only great grandmother among the others. Way back in 1992, on our return flight from the First Habbaniya Union School Reunion in Chicago, Panna told me and Blandina that she already had one great grandson. But she was only around 60 then. Now she has seven of them, ranging between the ages of one year and 14 years. Can you beat that? And all of them are grandkids of her son Robert Khanishan, an Assyrian singer. Panna has two daughters too.

In her teen age Panna was a pretty and lively girl who stood out. But today she is a quiet matron who lost her husband Norman four years ago. Unlike her older and her younger sisters, she keeps a low public profile, but she is a generous and supportive person and you will usually find her at every Assyrian social (and political) function—i.e. if you look for her!—Ed

Dear Mr. Mikhael: First, thank you for the books. Uncle
Cont'd on next page —>

George (my mother's brother) is Armenian. His two older brothers are Ando, whose picture was in the Hinaidi play [Romeo and Juliet] in Nineveh Magazine, and John "Dada" Avakian. And my father was Esho "Tich." He worked for RAF as a clerk and played soccer in early years. His picture appeared in the team photo (United Eagles 1935-36 in Hinaidi) in the Habbaniya Reunion August 1997. He died in mid 1960s.

I hope this information will help, and thanks a lot.

Aram Atniel

2.9.05. Glendale, California.

>>> *Thanks for the information, Aram. Now I know who you are! I don't remember your uncle George. He might have been in a younger age group than I. But I did know your late father Esho "Tich" and have watched him play many a soccer game in Habbaniya. And I certainly knew your maternal uncles Ando and John "Dada" Avakian, rather well! I never saw Ando after I left Habbaniya in 1954, but John "Abracadabra" Avakian came to our bookstore in Baghdad once or twice in the early seventies. Both Ando and John worked with me once.*

Your uncle Ando—may God rest his soul in peace—was a smiley, affable and entertaining person. John was not very outgoing. To tease me, Ando called me "Muisik" (a Russian term). He was married to an Assyrian (John Isaac's sister-in-law) and had more in common with Assyrians than John. John was more Armenian than Ando. But he had a few Assyrian friends. During several of my eight years (1946-54) at the Air Ministry Audit Office at AHQ, John was the office typist. I remember John used to receive the Armenian newspaper "Heiranik" from America. I borrowed it a few times and even had a long letter published in it in 1953 as a commentary on a couple of Armenian short stories and William Saroyan, my favorite story writer. John's hobby was magic tricks.

Well, Aram, I thank you again for the information and hope Uncle George enjoys my books. Please remember me to John and perhaps George can pass my books on to John, who might connect with some of the stories.

I send you my best wishes—Ed.

Dear Ben: I hope you and your beloved family are doing well, as Doris and I are doing here. I am sorry for delay in sending my renewal of the subscription. My apologies. Enclosed is \$12 for the year 2005. Good luck in your endeavor. Keep up the good job. Hope to see you in Chicago during the Habbaniya Reunion.

Charles Ganja

2.18.05. Toronto, Ont. Canada.

Dear Ben: I hope you are fine in good health. God bless all of you for the good work. I enclose money order for \$20 being my sub for 2005.

George Younan

2.20.05. Etobrooke, Ont. Canada.

Mr. Benyamin: My greeting in our Lord. Hope you are in good health. I am sending you a check for \$10 for my annual renewal. Bravo for your great work. Go forward and the Lord will help you. May He help you and Mikhael to

be successful in your good work. Thank you much.

2.18.05

Shamasha Elisha Shimon

Sacramento, California.

Dear Mikhael: I just finished reading the 5th issue of HUSCA. I congratulate you with all my heart for publishing such a wonderful magazine.

I was a member of HBB (Habbaniya Bus Brothers) and was the left winger in the soccer team with your brother "Wisika," who was a great soccer player. Among our team members were Shimmon Ammanoel, Athnel Warda, Shmoel Lazar, William Youkhanna, and the late Albert Rasho. I would be grateful if you give me information about Habbaniya Bus Brothers. May be Wisika can assist you.

Incidentally I read a letter to the editor by Zia Moshi. He was an HBB member. I heard he had an accident. We all pray for his quick recovery and good health.

I am here in Modesto for few months with my sister Julliet [Julia Aboona], and will return to Chicago and later to Baghdad if conditions improve. My brother Youkhanna lives in Modesto, but at present he is in Qatar.

If any of former Habbaniya Bus Brothers reads my letter I will be very happy to hear from them.

(Dr.) Khoshaba Yacoub Aboona

Modesto email: vyalfaris@hotmail.com

2.22.05.

Tel. 209 529 1058

>>> *It was good talking with you and I hope to drop in to meet you and your wife and to visit my friends Julie and Abu Basil. I'm forwarding your email to Brother Wisika. He has more information on the subject. He has already emailed me that you called him and you two had a good chat. I'm sure you will hear more from Wisika.—Ed.*

Dear Minashi: I dare to write my comprehensive personal opinion and recollection with respect to the article by "Youki." [HUSCA #6]

Habbaniya was paradise of Iraq until it was handed to the Iraqi's. It is true part of our dwelling was poor, so it was in most parts of Iraq. Yes, we were surrounded by barbed wire and iron fence, but, this was for our safety and security. We were not watched by Iraqi Police. There was an Iraqi Police Post in the C.C., this post was strictly in connection with the C.C. Officer Commanding. We had *Chokidars* at the C.C. gate, but not inside. Levy Police were responsible only for Levy Lines and nothing to do with C.C.

"Youshiya Kakoo Poloos was a well self-educated person, he was employed by distinguished companies in Baghdad. In 1963 he had an Anglia car and his own property. He used to give me a lift to work and we were good friends. My brain does not take it that Youshiya shares the same expression. Yes, for Youki Habbaniya was a prison because he never socialized nor he was a sportsman; a very isolated person.

Rabi Yacoub's" Union School was taken by Iraq (not given) due to a short list of Arabic language and various political means.

Pastor Khoury Abdel Ahad (meaning Servant of God), and *not* **Abdul** Ahad, due to some misunderstanding with the Church he left the Catholic Church. It is sheer nonsense to say that he was married. He was never married! I know because he was my next-door neighbour at K-Type and he officiated at my marriage. He was living with his sister and her son, the latter a well educated person.

During war years not only Assyrians have lost their loved ones. War is always destruction wherever it has taken place, consequently we should not shoulder bitterness in this field.

R.A.F. employees were not poorly paid in those days. In 1948 I was a Grade II clerk earning ID.18/650 [about \$60 then—Ed] per month. My house rent was 300 fils [about \$1] per month [as a boarder living with your parents?—Ed] One egg cost three fils. Lamb meat Kilo was 90 fils, needless to mention other daily consumer products. My late wife and I used to save ID.8/000 P/M. When I left Habb in 1956 I was Grade I. My monthly salary was ID.36/650 P/M. Living in A-Type Rent ID.3/000 P/M. We used to save ID.15/000 P/M. Not bad "HA". Yes, Levy soldiers were poorly paid.

Most probably Habb was not Roses and Wine, but please bear in mind that Habbaniya produced too many good roots in various fields i.e. education, parents' guidance, fear of God, and exceptional sportsmen. Therefore, I am optimistic that Habb was second to Lebanon.

The vision that "Youki" has seen while having a shower, must have been of an angel, because not too many of us have seen an angel!

I have nothing against Youki, but these are merely my view and recollection.

Andy J. Simon

2/25/05 London, England.

>>> *Andy, I believe RAF did pay lower wages, and progress was very limited. RAF employees always got twice as much or more than what RAF paid when they were able to obtain employment elsewhere with Iraqi commercial firms and oil companies. For instance, when I left Habbaniya in March 1954, I was making under ID.25 as a Grade II audit clerk. I got a job as a commercial correspondent in Baghdad at ID.42, with a ID.7 increment three months later. But at the end of 1955 I switched to a family business that earned me many-fold ID.49.*

But, as you said, the most important aspect of our life in Habbaniya that we still cherish and long for, despite the housing, economic, political and other disadvantages we had, was the family unity and social cohesion which enabled us to practice and preserve our language, customs and traditions without harassment and to grow up to be, as a rule, physically active and resourceful and morally upright like our parents. And as John R. Michael writes in his letter on page 5, it was amazing how various ethnic communities with tribal, religious and cultural differences, living under very difficult conditions, transformed [as a rule] into a large family, despite isolated cases of tribal or ethnic friction. —Ed.

Hi Ben, I hope these few lines will find you and Leena in the best of health and good shape and enjoying life too. As for Margaret and myself, we have had a hectic time in the last three months due to having to buy a villa in Marquarie Grove Retiring Village and finally we have settled in and we are enjoying life again. I hate to move, as this is our third move in the last six years.

I am now pleased with myself to enclose herewith a money order for US\$30 to cover my next two years subscription for HUSCA Magazine, including a small donation. Sorry for not having attended to this earlier and I hope to see you guys in next reunion.

If the next Reunion happens to be in Canada, let me have some information on travel time and cost from West Coast to destination by coach and train because flying to Canada for us oldies would be very risky. Best regards.

Albert Aviqam Samuel

3.11.05. Tahmoor, NSW, Australia.

Ben: Sorry for the delay. [\$15 enclosed]

Fredoun Y. Benjamin

(Undated) Mt. Prospect, Illinois.

Dear Ben: Please find a money order for \$20 being my subscription for 2005.

I hope the next issue will be more in depth, containing more interesting articles. I would like to see the biography of a football player or any other athlete* in each issue of the magazine along with their picture in their golden age years.

Best wishes to you all.

David Ganja

3.25.05. Scarborough, Ont. Canada.

See stories in our section "50 years ago"—Ed.

Dear Ben: My daughter Anita is very much interested to join the readership of HUSCA and so I enclose check for \$10 for one year. Her address is: [address given—Ed]

Please begin with the next issue (Spring-Summer).

Aprim K. Abraham

(Undated) Los Angeles, CA.

Dear Mikhael: I just would like to thank you for the package of your various publications that you sent to me. I am enjoying every one of them as I have a chance to read them one by one. I passed few of them to my brother Avshalim and my cousin Isaac (Isso) Kanoon. I especially enjoyed the issue that shows the funeral service to my father's uncle, Khoshaba. They too enjoyed them immensely.

I am enclosing a check for \$200 for your wonderful service and also another one [\$50] for Mr. Shimshon Warda, who drove a long distance to bring me the package.

Thank you again, and I will look forward to any future publications from you. Please convey my greetings to your family. God bless you.

Peter D. Kiryakos [DDS]

4.27.05.

San Jose, California. ?

In commemoration of “Golden” Anniversary of disbandment of RAF (Iraq) Levies and...

Assyrian Levies march off into history and...

By Solomon S. Solomon



Rab-Emma Baijan Peeko marching at the head of an Assyrian Levy platoon in Habbaniya during WW 2

Habbaniya was the main British air base in Iraq between 1936 and 1955. Situated 55 miles west of Baghdad, it housed the usual buildings of a major air base within its seven-mile circumference fence. That fence had no military value. But it did keep marauding Bedouins out. The base was not only home to the Royal Air Force (Iraq) Levies and their families but it also housed several thousand civilians, employees and their families. The majority were Assyrians.

While the Levy Force was raised by the British Army in 1919 in Baquba, its real beginning came into being in 1922 when the RAF took over the responsibility. Between 1922 and 1928 this Force was organized into several battalions and sent to Mosul province to secure the North from rebellious Kurds. That mission being largely fulfilled, the Levies were moved south to the base of Hinaidi on the southern outskirts of Baghdad. Because the British felt it was better to move the base away from the Capital, the hot bed of Arab nationalism, RAF squadrons, Levy troops, and Assyrian civilians moved and settled during 1936-38 at Habbaniya.

By the outbreak of war in 1939 the Levy Force was 1250 personnel, consisting of the Force Headquarters and six companies at Habbaniya, and one company at Shaiba.

Wing Commander Jim Routledge writes that when Rashid Ali revolt broke in May 1941 the Assyrians stood firm and distinguished themselves in fighting in Habbaniya and as a result of this reliability it was decided to expand the Force. Six months after the revolt, the Levies had increased to 1600 men; a year later there were 6000* Levy soldiers. This Force provided defense for RAF bases in the Middle East. Some 300 were trained as paratroopers of which a company called The 36 Paratroop Company saw action in Europe. On 15th March, 1943, the Iraq Levies were renamed the RAF Levies, Iraq; and to mark their gallantry the troops were authorized to wear RAF Eagle Arm Badge. In 1945 the post-war size of the Levies was planned at 1900.

The Levies were disbanded on May 2, 1955 when the British closed their bases in Iraq and surrendered them to the Iraqi Government. The total number of the Force was 1107 men. Of these 515 were Assyrians, 384 were Arabs and 208 were Kurds. Of this number, 375 ex-Levies enlisted to serve in the Iraqi Army. This number included 195 Assyrians, 146 Arabs, and 34 Kurds.

Between 1953 and 1955 the RAF awarded the Levies the Medal RAF Long Service & Good Conduct with clasp RAF Levies, Iraq, for 18-year service in the Force. Of the total 302 medals awarded, 114 went to Levy Officers and 188 to Levy soldiers.

This and the next article are reprinted, with minor changes, from ZINDA eMagazine dated May 11, 2005.

...surrender of Habbaniya (and RAF Station, Shaibah) to the Iraqi Government

...Habbaniya becomes a bitter-sweet memory

By Mikhael K. Pius



May 20, 1956. Entering the Scouts Stadium in Baghdad carrying the guest Iranian flag, is the Assyrian National Team led by three of Habbaniya's most famous Assyrian soccer players who, with several others, became the cream of the Iraqi National and International teams following the handover of Habbaniya to Iraq in 1955. From right Ammo Baba (the greatest scorer ever who later led Iraq's national team as coach for many years), Aram Karam (Captain, with the most powerful kick), late Youra Eshaya (the English-trained "wizard" and a coach in Sweden). Behind Youra is late Ammo Samson (another great player), goalie Iskhaq Y. Iskhaq, William Shallou. Other team players: Youarish Iskhaq, late Hormis Gabriel, Youel Gewargis and Sargis Shallou (another two legends), Shimshon Daniel; Reserves: Edison Eshay David (long-time coach in California), Ben Shallou, late Kaako Shallou and Avshalim. Playing under the sponsorship of Assyrian Sports Club of Baghdad, Assyrians beat Taj Club of Teheran 5-4. It was a glorious moment of pride for Assyrians. Half a century later, Assyriska in Sweden, the pride of all Assyrians today, is carrying on the athletic torch for the nation.

Although Habbaniya was officially known as a Royal Air Force base in Iraq, it was popularly known for two things in particular, namely for RAF (Iraq) Levies, popularly called "Assyrian Levies," and for sports, especially football.

At the peak of Habbaniya era—at the turn of 1950s—Britannia still ruled the waves but Assyrians protected the British interests in Iraq and ruled the soccer and other sports fields of Habbaniya. When the British surrendered Habbaniya to the Iraqis and broke up the Levy Force in mid-fifties, however, they also severed their connection not only with the Iraqis but also with Assyrians they needed no more, sweeping up the Assyrians' four-decades of loyalty and service to them and dumping it into His Britannic Majesty's dumpster!

The British-Assyrian connection began way back in WW1, when the Assyrians were lured by British officials' empty promises of independence to rise up and fight against their overlords the Ottoman Turks and Kurds. And the Assyrians, simple people that they were, put their trust in the Allied Powers because they thought they were "Christians" like themselves. The result was a national disaster. In their moment of crisis the Assyrians were abandoned by both British and Russians and left to fend for themselves. Consequently, they were put to the sword by the Turks, overwhelmed in battle by superior numbers of their enemies, and chased from their homelands in Turkey and Iran down to Mesopotamia. There a good part of the nation became refugees in the protection of the occupying British Expeditionary Forces. And the British made sure that they remained refugees in their own original homeland to be used in the interests of His Britannic Majesty's Government as loyal and industrious cheap military and civilian labor forces for four decades—or until the Iraqi revolutionaries took power and kicked the British out of Iraq.

During the Assyrian-British "alliance," the Assyrian Levies in 1920s rid north Iraq of Kurdish rebels and protected and secured the borders of the fledgling Iraqi Kingdom until 1932; defended Habbaniya against the Iraqi insurrection forces in May 1941, thereby also foiling a German scheme to control the vital Middle East oil fields during WW2; protected the RAF air bases in Iraq up to

1955 and British installations in the middle East during the war; and generally served the British faithfully at a significant saving to the British Exchequer.

But it was the same breed of British protégés, three thousand unarmed defenseless Assyrians, who were slaughtered by the Iraqi Army in 1933 in north of Iraq as RAF airplanes flew over the scenes and took pictures of the atrocities for the British press while restraining the Assyrian Levies to go to their brothers' aid; the same breed of Assyrian warriors that empowered the Iraqi national soccer teams for almost two decades after "surrender" of Habbaniya; the same breed of Assyrians whose hundreds of villages and churches were bombed and destroyed in the crossfire between the warring Iraqi Army and the Kurdish "rebels" in northern Iraq after the mid-1960s; the same breed of Assyrians who lost tens of thousands of their young men in a senseless war waged against Iran by the brutal madman Saddam Hussain in the 1980s, a war in which Assyrians had no stake. And still today the Assyrians, the indigenous people of Iraq, are struggling to protect themselves and secure their rights to live as a people and make a place for themselves in the sun in their own God-given homeland.

Following Habbaniya's "Surrender" in 1955, the Assyrians first scattered all over the country to fend for themselves and, two decades later and thereafter, all over the world, mostly driven away by hardships, harassment and persecution. Assyrians can be found now in every niche and corner of the world, almost all of them resourceful and loyal for the country in which they live but still without a home they can call their own. Some are stranded and destitute in foreign countries, living on charity and hope of a better tomorrow.

To most of the survivors Habbaniya era evokes nostalgia of bitter-sweet memories. It represents a piece of their life in which they enjoyed a simple cohesive clannish social life of harmony, protected, ironically enough, by the British iron fences of the camps. And yet the same protective iron fences represent a bitter reminder of their betrayal, the denial of their human rights, curtailment of their freedom and the injustices done to them as a nation.

50 Years Ago...from our sports archives

Reprinted from *Assyrian Star* Magazine of May, 1955 and Beirut's *The Daily Star* dated April 26, 1955.

An Assyrian is Famous Soccer Player in Iraq

By M. K. Piyous



Ammo Baba receiving his trophy from H.M. King Faisal II following Bodyguards v Kirkuk's 2nd Army Division cup final at Scouts' Stadium in April 1955. (Pictures reprinted from clippings)

Baghdad—Amid deafening cheers and applause, a young soccer player scored 5 of the 6 goals against Kirkuk's 2nd Army Division in the Iraqi Army 6-0 cup final at Baghdad recently (April 13) and captured the admiration of tens of thousands of sports fans all over the country. For beside the 20 thousand who watched the game, many thousands more heard it over the Baghdad radio.

The admired scorer was Royal Iraqi Bodyguards' brilliant center-forward Ammo Baba, a 20-year-old Assyrian. Previously, Ammo had also netted Bodyguards' 3 winning goals against the visiting Taj Club of Iran; 3 goals that had knocked Royal Iraqi Air Force out of the cup; and 3 of the 6 goals that had beaten the Royal Military College in semi-finals.

Ammo is a terrific goal-getter. He plays with the spirit of a wild stallion and the cleverness of a fox. He moves with speed, agility and stealth and gives his opponents no chance to mark or tackle him successfully. His ball control is admirable and his strong nippy shots are executed with calculation. Though only 5'8", he has a graceful ability to leap high and the art to head the ball in the right direction.

"He's a star with an artistic shine!" wrote *Al-Akhbar*, Baghdad's biggest Arabic daily, while *The Iraq Times* called him "Iraq's star player."

Ammo is the third son of Baba Dawood and Nargis Harton (of Googtapa) of Habbaniya, where he used to play for the once strong RAF Employees' (Assyrian) Club. Though a popular player, he was hardly known outside his hometown. But since he was lured into Baghdad's Bodyguards' team in middle of last January his fame has rocketed and he has become currently the most talked and written about sportsman in the country.

The famous footballer is also a good basketball and volleyball player as well as field and track athlete. He recently won 2nd place in 440-yard hurdles in the Iraqi Army Athletic Championships and has an array of two dozen cups and medals bagged in local championships. ●

Iraqi Footballer in English Team

By M. K. Piyous

Among the thousands of men in Britain now aspiring to make a name for themselves in English football is a young man from Iraq who plays for the Bristol Rovers Club. The youngster is Youra Eshaya, a 20-year-old former inside-forward from Iraq.

Youra started with the Rovers Reserves last August and is now playing regularly at outside-right in the club's Western League team. This is a Third Division team, but anyone gaining a regular place on it means he is a top-grade player.

Youra is very popular with his teammates and his charming native customs and habits have won him the friendship of many British citizens, including the miners of Pensford Colliery where he works. There is one snag, however: his club officials think his size is rather against him. (He is five-foot-four.)

Youra arrived in Bristol in late last August [1954], when he was put on a trial period with the Rovers Reserves. He was received very well by his club ("He has a lot of football in him," was the opinion of Mr. Bert Tann, his manager) and was described as "a live wire" and "extremely fast and clever in possession" by *Bristol Evening Standard*. [a newspaper]



Ordered to leave

Unfortunately, Youra was staying in Britain on a month's visitor's permit and was ordered to leave the country on its expiry. But his club and the Bristol press were so impressed by his talent that his case was taken up by his manager with Sir Walter Monkton, the President of the Board of Trade, and with the Home Secretary by Mr. W.A. Wilkins, a Bristol City M.P. The support gained him two one-month successive extensions.

In early November Youra appealed to the Iraqi Embassy in London who helped him to obtain a labor permit allowing him to stay and work in England permanently. He then started working as a miner and continued playing for the Rovers in his spare time.

Second blow

But the lad soon received a second blow! He discovered that due to a ruling by the Football Association he was not allowed to play as a pro in the major leagues until he had had a qualified residence of two years.

Before going to England Youra played football and worked at Habbaniya. He started playing at a very young age and showed so much promise that while still in his teens the Habbaniya clubs fought over him. The RAF Employees' team won and Youra played for its team for five seasons till his departure to Bristol.

Chance of a lifetime

During this time Youra displayed pleasing skill in important matches in Baghdad, Basra and Kirkuk and his popularity spread all over Iraq. But his chance of a lifetime came when he played on an RAF-Civilian combined team in a match in Habbaniya against a crack side from the RAF Canal Zone in April last year. For among the thousand spectators was a RAF Command Transport pilot named Flight Lieutenant R.K. Weston, a football talent scout. Weston was so pleased with the youngster's play that he offered him a place on the Rovers' team. Youra jumped at the chance and RAF personnel came to the rescue and paid his air ticket to England.

In spite of his small size and the wearisome "come-back" appeals from his family and the Royal Iraqi Air Force (that is very anxious to have him on its team), the young footballer has decided to bide his time and is confident that he will eventually make the First Division one day.

[In memory of Youra Eshaya]

SNAPSHOTS Contributed by Readers



1939: Tree-climbing (especially to munch RAF's forbidden fruit) was the CC youth pastime. Three youths up in a tree near RAF British General Hospital playing Tarzan. The late Yonatan Aghajan is about to leap down "and grab the lion" as sidekicks Eshaya Isaac (right), coiled to join the tussle, and Mishael look on. Photo Courtesy Eshaya



2004: Former Miss Avigil Polus Jado of Levy Lines, Habbaniya (one of our 1947 "Habbaniya Beauties,") flanked by her family in Skokie, IL. From left, son Freddie and brother Franco's children Mary, Claire, Peter and Paul and Abigail's eldest child Florence. Her husband Eshaya Isaac was an auditor in Habbaniya. Courtesy (Mrs) Abigail [Jado] Isaac



1959: Former Habbaniyans at the late Avia Ewan's wedding at Nadi Faqir (Club), Baghdad. From left (little girl) Florence S. Philip, Maria Philip Lazar, N/K, Shummon Philip with son Philip "Pola," Victor and brother Wilson Hawil Lazar, and Awshalim Rovil and his late wife Emmama Lazar Rovil. Courtesy Ator Philip Khamo, Ealing.



1946: Players of a special hockey match between "Red-skins" (Indians and Assyrians?) and "Palefaces" (British), all AMWD employees. Those recognized: late William S. Tammo (squat. far left), Amrose Vincent (black jacket) surrounded by his sons, Allan and Teddy on his sides and (laying down) Clarence and Samir Vincent. Courtesy Samir W. Tammo.



1952: The Shallou family & friends at A-Type quarters in CC, Habbaniya. Standing from left : Melina Shmoil, Gewargis Shallou, Pnouel Shmoil, Babajan Warda (cousin visiting from Urmia), Shmoil and Qambar Youkhanna, Shimshon Shallou, Albert Eramia Benyamin, Christina (Shmoil) Shallou; Sitting from right: Daizy (Enviya) and daughters Elizabeth, Aani, and Margaret S. Shallou, Jane and Joan B. Shallou, and Mable Enviya Babilla. (Courtesy Sargis S. Shallou)



1937: A group near Kota Camp of early Assyrian sportsmen and pioneers of Assyrian organized soccer in Hinaidi, Iraq. Standing from left: 1. Jebrael Pius, 2. Not known, 3. Para Pius (a noted player with powerful long-range shots and a long-distance swimmer), 4. Young John Isaac (well-known all-round sportsman); Squatting from left: 1. N/K, 2. Yosip "Tich" Yahu, 3. Alosha Isaac (boxer too). Photo courtesy John Isaac, Turlock, CA.

SNAPSHOTS Contributed by Readers



2000: Dr. Sami Sharlman with his father Rev. Shumon Shmouel, pastor of *Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East* in Habbaniya. Photo courtesy Dr. Sami Sharlman. (See photos & article P.22)



2004: The Assyrian Cowboy from Lebanon, Tennessee. Our friend, writer Solomon Sawa Solomon and his wife Joan. Although he has never lived in Habbaniya, Solomon has contributed several articles and photos to HUSCA.



1945: Andy S. Simon (left), before becoming Habbaniya's champion hockey and tennis player, with Yooshia Kakko Poloss (LA) when they both worked at RAF Aircraft Depot. Photo courtesy Andy Simon.



Aug. 1944: The Air Officer Commanding, RAF Station Habbaniya, congratulating the 1st Habbanya (Iraq) Group Senior Boy Scouts and Girl Guides at a public parade. Courtesy Enwia Warda



Aug 1944: The Air Officer Commanding RAF Station, Habbaniya taking the salute of a company of Junior Boy Scouts as they march past during a public parade. Photo courtesy Enwia Warda, England.



1968: Maria Philip Lazar of Tel Mohammed and sons: Victor (left), William and Wilson "Raani" Lazar. (Courtesy Wilson Lazar, Denair, Calif.)



Three gentlemen from Habbaniya: Andy (left), Enno and Dawko.



2005: Ramiz Murad of Baghdad, grandson of former NAAFI Manager Murad Yonathan and Shumon Philip weds Assyrian girl in Syria. (Courtesy Wilson Lazar)

AN OPEN LETTER FROM AND ABOUT TODAY'S HABBANIYA

By Dr. Sami Sharlman
(as edited)

I present you my kind greetings from the bottom of my heart. May God protect you from all hatred.

In Habbaniya itself we have only ten Assyrian and two Chaldean families. But there are fifty-one Assyrian, two Chaldean and six Armenian families in Khalidiya, five km away, and two Assyrian brothers with their families live in Coolie Camp, adjoining Habbaniya. Actually one of the two families lives in *Mar Sawa Church* of Coolie Camp as caretakers (and guards) following the repair of the church building by donations sent by our Assyrian people in Diaspora, particularly from Canada, to *Mar Gewargis Church*. These funds were in turn turned over to *Mar Sawa Church*, plus additional contributions from *Mar Gewargis Church* itself and other Assyrians of Iraq. The assistance also helped in building a hall for the visitors from Baghdad and the house for caretakers Shmouel Andrews and his family.

We have ten Assyrian and five Chaldean families living in Ramadi, 29 km west, and two Assyrian and eight Chaldean families living in Fallujah, 15 km west, together with 14 Chaldean families in its suburb of Ameriya. Also there are two Assyrian families in the new Habbaniya Tourist City, built in the early seventies 20 km southeast of Habbaniya. So as you can see, our people are scattered in several nearby towns.

During the 1970s tens of hundreds of resident families of Kurds and Assyrians were forced to leave Habbaniya because they had no jobs and because they did not own their homes to compel them to stay. Most of the Assyrians moved to Khalidiya, but a few stayed on due to the cheap government home rental and because they could not afford the high rent elsewhere.

In 1970 the former CC bazaar was demolished and replaced by burnt-brick structures. The old CC outdoor cinema was turned into an ice-making plant until 1980 and then torn down and the indoor cinema building near police station was taken down only recently. A bigger Sunni mosque was built 250 meters away from *Mar Gewargis Church*.

The old school [Raabi Yacoub's Union School—Ed] was changed to a public school named Al-Qubz. But in 1973 the school was turned into a new youth center for special activities, such as national guard training, and other physical exercises for youth. And in 1985 the center was turned into two housing facilities: one for the then school principal Enwiya Oraha Khaninya, and the other one for a Kurdish guard of the old regime. There are now palm trees in the courtyard.

After the Gulf War of 1991 the Iraqi government demolished all the old Civil Cantonment and Levy Lines mud-brick housing, such as A, B, C, D, E, F, J, K, and other type of quarters built by RAF, and built instead 1000 new burnt-brick homes. But they remained unoccupied due to some basic construction shortcomings and were later vandalized. And soon after the fall of the old regime [in April 2003—Ed] the houses were taken over by aggressive people who came from different places because there was nobody stopping them. Today there are about a thousand families of Sunni and Shia Arabs and Kurds, Assyrians, and Chaldeans living together in harmony. But the general atmosphere is like that of "tamed cats." [I wonder what he means by this phrase?—Ed]

A few of the old buildings, however, were left untouched, such as the



Dr. Sami Sharlman with his little son Gewargis and, beside him, his mother, and his father, Rev. Shummon Shmouel, pastor of Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East in Habbaniya; On right Sami's wife and (we assume) the three girls are Sami's daughters, all of whom live in the pastor's residence at the church.

two Sunni and Shia mosques, *Mar Gewargis Church* of the East with Virgin Mary's Armenian and Assyrian Orthodox Church, St. Mary Queen of Peace Chaldean Church, *Raabi Yacoub's Union School* (which is now part of *Mar Gewargis Church* property), and the residences of the former Officer-in-charge of CC and his Assistant.

Although left with a very tiny congregation, St. Mary's Chaldean Church was still in use until the fall of Saddam's government. A priest would be sent from Baghdad to celebrate mass once a month, but not any more. Mr. Abdel Ahad Shammo is its caretaker now. The pastor of our *Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church* of the East, my father, Rev. Shummon Shmouel, holds the evening prayer on Virgin Mary's Day in St. Mary and the next day at *Mar Gewargis* for all faiths.

Mar Gewargis is still the same building, but with additions and modifications. When it was first built in 1936-37 it was divided into two sections: the first section had two Orthodox altars, one for Armenians and the other for Russian Orthodox Assyrians, with two separate entrances; the bigger section was *Mar Gewargis Church* of the East, with a separate entrance. But some 10 or 12 years later some additions were made, such as church school classrooms, yard, etc., on its northern side. And in 1982 more remodeling was done, using sold brick material around the entrance.

During 1983 to 1997 the old church classrooms were torn down and new sections were added, such as a large hall for mourners and public gathering and a residence for the priest's family, where our family has been living. In fact the previous government did help out financially for the project, when in 1999 new insulation, ceiling and floor tiles were fitted.

In spite of hard times, our *Mar Gewargis Church* never discriminates against any Christian denominations, thank God, whether Assyrians, Chaldeans or Armenians in regard to both worship and financial help the church receives. We all attend the same church when there is a mass and the financial aid received is shared by all the needy, even when the funds are earmarked for our church. This was Bishop *Mar Gewargis Sliva's* idea, after my father, Rev. Shummon Shmouel, ex -

plained that in Habbaniya we all worship as one church. Sometimes my father holds service at Virgin Mary's Chaldean Church, sometimes at our church, and other times at Mar Sawa in Coolie Camp. It is purely a spiritual gathering without concern to individual faiths.

In fact, *Mar Sawa* and *Mar Gewargis* Churches became models for visitors from Daura and Baghdad and Khalidiya, Ramadi and other parts of the province, and *Mar Gewargis* Church in particular became the center for Christian church masses, feasts and other religious services. *Mar Gewargis* is the only active church currently for all faiths. And it is not an overstatement when I say our Habbaniya church has become a unique house of worship where a genuine Christian unity has emerged.

At one time we tried to build a church in Khalidiya but were turned down by its community [Moslem community, I assume? —Ed]. As a result the people of the area became closely connected with our church services in spite of the prevailing *Amin* security challenge at Habbaniya main gate. Because the church is inside the air base, we had to obtain formal passes for visitors in advance. But we were unable to teach religion and our language due to commuting and financial difficulties. Also there was fear of being targets of anti-Assyrian campaigns, because there were a few agents among our people. But since our people were peaceful there were no problems.

Actually the teaching of our language stopped since 1983 when Daniel Yalda Slewo and nephew of Nenus were accused and arrested as *Zowaa* agents. One reason for stoppage was lack of money for pupils' commuting; parents could not afford it. The other was fear of repression, that our language teaching might be construed to be Assyrian nationalism. There was a campaign against *Zowaa* elements and Daniel Slewo was imprisoned during that time. He was then sent to the front line of the Iraqi-Iran war, but was set free after the war. Today he is the leader of *Zowaa* in Canada.

But in 1992 we appealed to the government to let us use one of the schools in Khalidiya in which to teach religion and our language. We obtained a special permission from the *Amin* and the Party itself but with stipulation that maximum pupils' age was to be 12 and number of classes only two. Although it was a challenge to undertake to teach. *Shamasha* Elisha Yacoub took the responsibility and was able to teach despite repeated threats and harassment. But to our surprise, a month later the government closed our school claiming that we did not have the proper permission from the Ministry of Education.

Since education was my obsession, in 1996 I was inspired to revive the work, despite my limited time. But we did not have the financial means until we asked for help. Our Sister Olga came to our rescue with some money. I printed special reader booklets and thank God we were successful to pull in our resources and I was able to attract both grown-ups and children to teach them *Surith* and Aramaic within two months. Then some people who were spying for the government accused me of being a *Zowaa* operative (which I was not) just because I was doing the Christian teaching. They kept watching my activity.

At that time I was writing articles for *Guithara for the Soul* and *Oupqa* magazines published by the dioceses of the two separate branches of the Church of the East in Baghdad and I was participating in all church functions held in the Capital to elevate the name of Habbaniya. In my writings I always mentioned the word "Habbaniya" next to my name to draw the readers' attention to our town.

But from that point on Mr. Enwiya Yonan, a trusted engineer, took over the financial responsibility. He had good contacts with the former Habbaniya Assyrians in Diaspora such as Mr. Andrious Mama in England, who was related to him, and others, who helped us. Thanks to them we were able to teach our language and religion until the start of the current war in Iraq.

Sadly enough after the fall of the old regime the general condi-

tions in Iraq deteriorated very fast, beginning with people's values and character. The camp became a daily target for thieves because there was no security. People were ransacking and stealing everything, from a nail to an airplane; lumber, steel, brick from the old British camp, and even from the mosque itself that was formerly British church. They stole the British Hospital fixtures, water purification system, and other things. It pained us to see the precious old memories of our Habbaniya fathers being stolen. Everyone around us was armed with stolen weapons, there was no law and order and we were helpless to stop the thieves and terrorists. In fact, at one time we didn't have even drinking water for two months. We had to haul it from Khalidiya, and we dug our own wells for other common uses.

As a result of this lawlessness, we were forced to obtain and carry weapons to guard our churches and houses. The truth is as we guarded our churches, God was guarding us. I believe only God's providential mercy has spared our lives to this moment.

If God does not build the house, in vain the mason toils; If God does not guard the city, in vain the sentries watch. (Ps. 171:1)

The American invasion has created a terrifying insurgency: everyday murders, kidnapping, ruthless bombing and more. I had a very close call myself. You must have heard about the kidnapping and killing of our parishioners William Keyser Napoleon (a translator for Americans) and his nephew Danny Is'haak Keyser. They were snatched right from their front door steps. This means that anyone who is suspected having any connection with the Americans is considered a traitor, because you are a Christian just like the American troops who blasted mosques, killed and arrested Moslem clerics, as they did in Fallujah.

After the fall of Saddam's regime, 35 families (25 Assyrian, eight Chaldean and two Armenian) left Habbaniya. They went to Jordan and Syria. This was the result of the insecure conditions. We are living now under some frightening daily conditions, which may not even be known to world media.

Frankly, I feel at this point that our residence in Habbaniya may not last very long because of all the frightening threats and dangers. No doubt you must be aware of all this from your own media lines. We pray that God may rescue and keep us from all the hatred and evil of this terrible scheme.

I believe from my heart that the former inhabitants of Habbaniya must have had a unique love for each other which must have spread out to other areas too. Maybe that is why the camp was named "Al-Hubbaniya." Quite a noble legacy! But tragically it is not so today anymore after the fall of the regime. Instead of the old sense of brotherhood it is hate and discrimination.

I also believe the fact that my decision to pursue higher education and to reach where I am today was the inspiration I felt from the former inhabitants of Habbaniya. They truly elevated Habbaniya's name in history.

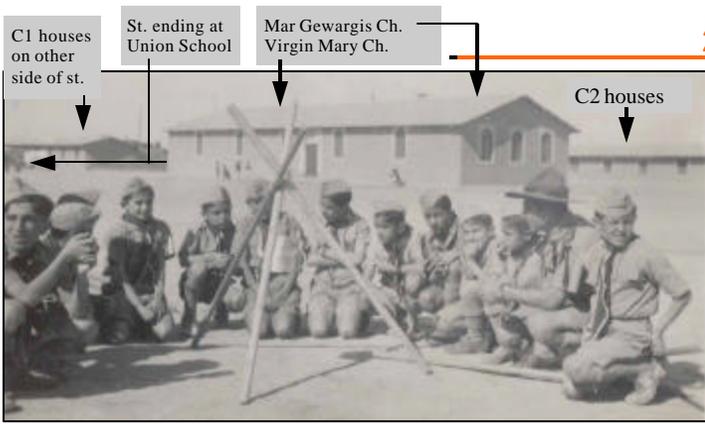
I have been always influenced spiritually by our bishops, and have been so touched by the holiness of churches here that I named one of my boys Gewargis.

I know most of the former inhabitants of Habbaniya have been very successful community people wherever they settled. One of our community's intelligent sixth grade students named William David* was declared number one student in the entire country three years ago. His grade point average was a perfect 100. He was from Habbaniya but today he lives in Ramadi. He smashed the old 1948 Julia Aboona's Liwa al-Dulaim record, and mine too, both of which I believe were in the 90s.

Pictures on next three pages →

Note: All photos with this article are contributed by Dr. Sami Sharlman, unless otherwise indicated.

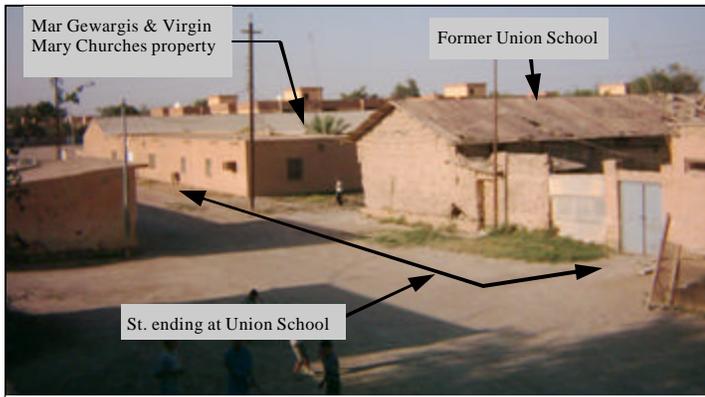
*We would like to get in touch with this person. Is there anyone who can help to arrange the connection?



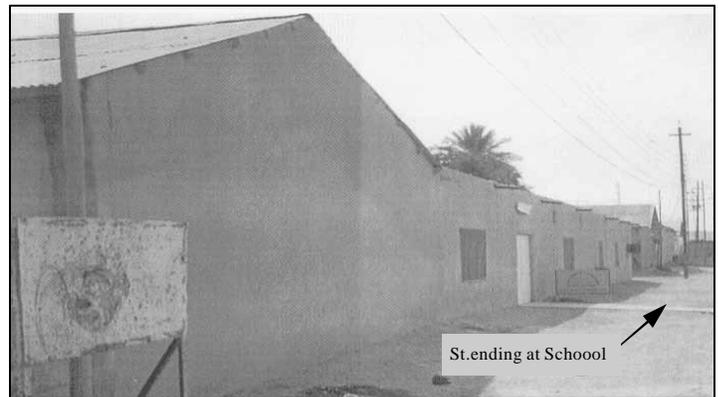
1942: (Group of Boy Scouts learning tenderfoot test). The original Mar Gewargis and Virgin Mary Churches building (background) before any additions and remodeling was done. Photo courtesy MKP.



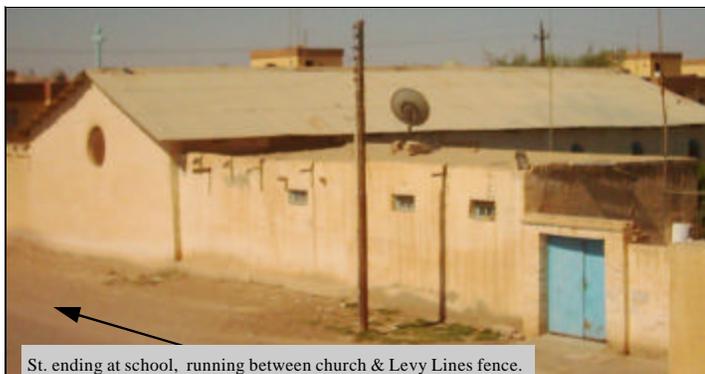
2000: Former school building with new trees. The flat-roofed part is apparently the western courtyard wall converted into living quarters within the courtyard to facilitate sleeping upon in summertime.



2000: Mar Gewargis & Virgin Mary church and former Union School buildings, with street running between them and C1 type houses. Note change of housing styles beyond church and school and on left of picture.



2000: Mar Gewargis Church facilities extended to almost join the former Union School building (at far right side of the picture). This is presumably the side facing west on the main street shown on picture on left.



Eastern side of St. Mary Queen of Peace Chaldean Church property with street running from Levy Hospital to Union School. Note tips of



1940: (Boy Scouts assembled for parade). This is one-third of Union School (4 classes) overlooking the other 4 classes, with kindergarten hall on right facing the wall and gate on the left. Photo courtesy MKP



2000: This derelict, "our castle" of 60-65 years ago, is former Habbaniya Union School now. The flat-roofed building (presumably living quarters) is a new structure built in the courtyard. Courtesy Dinkha Adam.



2000: Southern side of Mar Gewargis Church facing the school building. This part is where some of the additions and remodeling has been done. Courtesy Sh. Elisha Yacoub Shimon, Sacramento, CA.



CC Indoor Cinema bldg. (in center) before its demolition. The B-Types and street running east to west between them and Cinema are both missing.



2000: New Husainiya mosque (middle) with Mar Gewargis Church (left) and, on right, new homes where C2 lines used to be.



2000: Can you imagine this being a Habbaniya scene? Notice the abundance of palm trees —and cars where once bicycles abounded.



2000: Same scene as the picture on left, but from a different angle. Looks like this is a shopping area.



2000: Levy Hospital building (background), demolished last year.



2000: Some of the new homes built by the government.



Mar Gewargis from northern side where vacant lot was C2 houses



2000: Assyrians and Armenians (different faiths) praying at Mar Gewargis



1942: One of the main CC streets that went from north to south. It began from behind Levy Hospital, ran between Levy Lines western fence and A-Type quarters and Chaldean Church and between C1 and C2 quarters, past Mar Gewargis Church, ending in front of Union School at the other end. The houses on right are C1 lines, and C2 lines are on the left (not in picture). Photo courtesy Solomon S. Solomon, Lebanon, TN.



This is the end of same CC street on left. The far end of street between C1 and C2 bungalows is where the Levy Hospital was. The lower right corner is where the school gate was, through which the columns of Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, returning from parade, will enter. Mar Gewargis was just beyond the roof of the school building appearing on the upper extreme right side of the picture. Photo courtesy Lily Shabbas Neesan.



2000: This is the altar inside of Habbaniya's *Mar Gewargis Church*



2000: The altar inside of Habbaniya's *St. Mary's Queen of Peace Church*



2000: A classroom of the former Union School —now used as a chicken coop. How sad!



2000: "The other side of the school," writes Dr. Sami. We assume it is the eastern wall or the back of the school, with additions made.

Habbaniya Tennis Produced Assyrian Champions in Iraq

By Mikhael K. Pius

(with feedback and photos from Andrew J. Simon)



1944: First batch of tennis players in Civil Cantonment of RAF Station, Habbaniya, Iraq.

Standing from left: Wilson Warda, Mishael Shmaiel Azgo, Polus Rasho, Baba Gewargis Shallou, Yonatan "Nattu" Yonan, Shimon Youkhanna, Raabi Aprim Bet-Benyamin, Benyamin Yosip Gandalou, John Youkhanna; Sitting from left: Shmouel "Tittouna" Eshaya with son Gilbert S. Eshaya (an Iraqi international soccer player in late 1950s and 1960s), Fraidon Orahim Iskhaq, Shlimon Odisho, Benyamin Warda, Sargis Odisho, Babajan Malik, "Younka," Raabi Albert Babilla, Raabi Youkhannan Shimshon, Sargis Michael; Squatting, Etalius "John" Shawel, and Baijan Rasho. (Courtesy Raabi Albert A. Babilla, England)

Local organized soccer matches had their beginning in Hinaidi in early 1930s but, like hockey, just a few Assyrians played tennis in Hinaidi in those days. The game took hold in Habbaniya after the mid-forties when more and more local residents, including Indians and young Arabs and Kurds, took up a racket. The late forties and early fifties produced a number of high grade players among Assyrians, Kurds, Arabs and Indians.

Among the Assyrians, there were a number of top players, such as William Daniel, Andrew J. Simon, Etalius "John" Shawel, Youkhanna Odisho, and John Isaac, to name just a few. Khnania "Nanno" Bakus, Malco "Dick" Sargon, Jebrial Barru and Aram Karam polished their game after they left Habbaniya. Armenians had Abram Babayan and Baghdad Assyrians had Eramia Youshia.

There were several top grade players among Pakistanis and Indians, including the amazing sports family of Ambrose Vincent and five sons.

Kurds had a champion in Hassan Jumaa and two top-grade players, Ahmed "Salma" Mahmoud and his Arab partner, Jamiel Jowhar.

William Daniel won several local and national championships in singles and partnered with Andrew Simon the

pair bagged a number of local and national championships.

Hassan Jumaa was a local champion a few times and among Eramia Youshia's victories were YMCA's championship and Iraqi national singles, twice each I believe.

Etalius "John" Shawel, an earlier player who played his way into the younger top group, and Youkhanna Odisho both battled their way often into semi-finals and finals but without establishing themselves as first place winners.

But of all these players William Daniel and Andrew Simon as a team and William Daniel as a singles player dominated the championships. They were the cream of the crop of Habbaniya tennis and went on in mid-fifties to win Iraqi national championships, both in singles and doubles.

The following are brief extracts from some of the recalled and recorded matches played during the last few years of the RAF-era of Habbaniya:

? In August 1951 William Daniel and Andy Simon won the CC Doubles Tennis Championship 7-5, 6-0, 6-1 against Jamiel Jowhar and Ahmed "Salma" Mahmoud in CC. Andy Simon was the man of the day. "His elusive left-handed drives flashed across the net and whenever he advanced to the net he had the situation well in hand. His superb

Cont'd on next page →

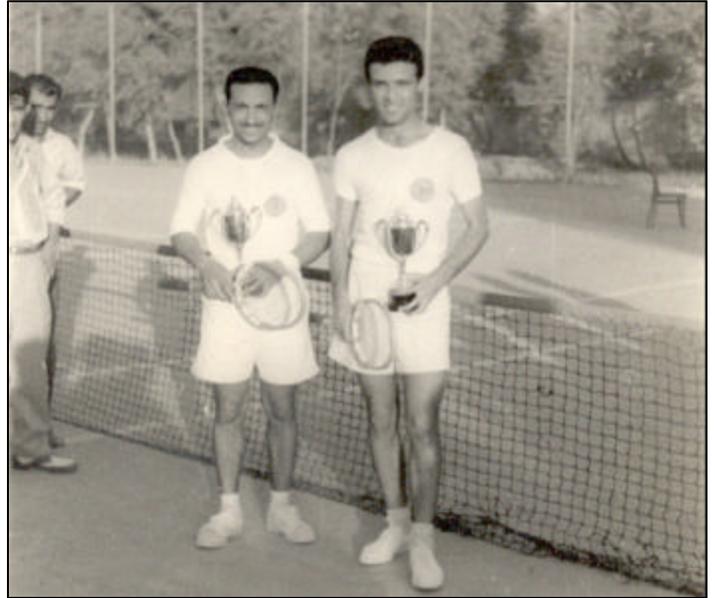
placing, with his partner's forceful service and powerful drives, brought about their victory."

This was the first local championship won by the team. The contest was between local players only. [Excerpt from MKP's report in *The Iraq Times* of 8/27/51]

? And in the singles Hassan Jumaa beat William Daniel, the previous year's champion and won the CC Championship.

"A defensive player at heart, Hassan's service and back-hand strokes were effective. All he had to do mostly was to place the ball and let his opponent smash many of his points into the net." (Excerpt from MKP's report in *The Iraq Times* of 8/27/51)

? At the end of October 1951 seventeen members of Assyrian Employees' Club of Habbaniya were guests of Al-Amir Athletic Club of Basra for friendly athletic contests. During the visit several doubles and singles tennis friendly matches were played off between the team of Andy Simon and William Daniel and others of Habbaniya and A. Vartanian and Avedis Markarian and other players of Basra. Although the Basra players put up a good fight, they were an



Aug. 1955: Playing for Assyrian Sports Club of Baghdad, Iraq's Challenge Cup winners William Daniel and Andrew J. Simon with their trophies, following the match. They defeated Royal Athletic Club's champions Abbas Abid and Ismaiel Qaiyarah 6-3, 6-2, 6-0.

made more mistakes. Daniel was not very confident at the net while Simon sometimes hit wild shots as though too anxious to finish off a point. However, Daniel's strong forehand drives were fast and low and Simon's volleying and "finishing" shots at the net chalked up their score." (Excerpt from MKP's report in *The Iraq Times* of 2/18/52)

A few days later, Hassan Jumaa won RAF Habbaniya Open Tennis Singles Championship 6-2, 6-4, against Etalius "John" Shawel. In the semi-finals Hassan beat William Daniel and Etalius defeated Col. Windeat.

"Hassan Jumma's victory was well deserved. His service was hard and fast and he had a strong forehand and backhand drive. Etalius' main asset was elusive placing, which had his adversary racing hard to cover. Etalius returned his



Aug. 1955: The victors on the left, William Daniel and Andrew Simon, shaking hands with the vanquished, Ismaiel Qaiyarah and Abbas Abid, following their Iraq's Challenge Cup final in Baghdad.



Aug. 1955: Andrew Simon and William Daniel, Iraq's Challenge Cup Champions, surrounded by their club's officials. From left, Constantine Amir, Hassan Jumaa (Kurdish champion player), Benjamin Gandalou, Ashur DeKelaita (Pres.) and Denist Youel Baba George (Sports Secretary).

easy prey for the Habbaniya champions, Andy and William, who won the matches in both the doubles and singles. (Extracted from Jacob Yeramian's report in *The Iraq Times* of 11/15/51.)

? In November 1951 the Royal Military College of Rustamiya, Baghdad, were "at home" to AMWD Club of CC Habbaniya for friendly hockey and tennis matches. Jamiel Jowhar and Ahmed Mahmoud, both of whom had superior hard service, beat Maj. Mahmoud Maharun and Cadet Farouk Abdul Rahman 6-0, 6-1 in a doubles tennis match.

? In February 1952 Andy Simon and William Daniel, winners of last year's CC Doubles Championship, won the RAF Habbaniya Open Tennis Double Championship 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 against F/Lt. Beatty and Capt. Honeyman.

"In spite of their defeat, Beatty and Honeyman played a more impressive game. Both possessed powerful strokes in serving and both were cleverer at the net, which they often used simultaneously. In addition, Beatty's tricky placing was admirable.

"Simon and Daniel gave them good competition, but



Andrew Simon received his Iraq's Challenge Cup from Major Abdul Majeed Ali, immediately following his and William Daniel's victory over Abbas Abid and Ismaiel Qaiyarah in Baghdad.

opponent's hard service with ease, but seemed to have difficulty at the net. Both players tried hard for every point, often dueling long from the baselines before one of them gained a point." (Excerpt from *The Iraq Times* of 2/27/52)

? In May 1952 Dick Sargon, formerly of Habbaniya, led a tennis team from Baghdad on a visit to AMWD Club of Habbaniya. Dick partnered with Eramia Youshia, both top tennis players in Baghdad, lost to Andrew Simon and William Daniel 4-6, 1-6, in a friendly doubles and Eramia lost 4-6, 1-6, to Hassan Jumaa in a singles.

"Dick and Eramia started off with a fine combination of hard service and accurate lobbing and got as far as 7-6. But William and Andrew, playing with their usual calmness and cross-court deep drives, took the set at 9-7.

"The second set proved more interesting. It was won by William Daniel and Andrew Simon at 6-3. This pair was in better form, especially Andrew who mercilessly smashed the ball from every angle."

Hassan Jumma—holder of the RAF Open Singles Championship—played against Eramia. Both players used their tactics; Eramia deadly overhead drive and cuts and Hassan Jumma powerful service and usual backhand chops. Hassan finally won the match 6-4, 6-1.

The other singles match between Dick and Andrew ended with one set each due to enveloping darkness.



From left, RAF players F/Lt Goddard and Cpl. Cabbolt third) with Andrew Simon and William Daniel, following a friendly match between the two pairs.

(Extracted from an unbylined report in *The Iraq Times* of 5/15/52)

? In October 1952 Hassan Jumma, 1951 title holder of both RAF Habbaniya and CC Championships, was defeated by William Daniel 6-1, 3-6, 6-1, in the semi-final of RAF Habbaniya Singles Knock-out Championship. He played hard to retain his title, but was outplayed by his opponent's hard and well-placed drives. (Extracted from C.P. Paul's report in *The Iraq Times* of 10/10/52)

? In October 1953 Andy Simon and William Daniel won the CC Doubles Championship against Mr. S. Edwards and Youkhanna Odisho 7-5, 6-3. But the next day William Daniel had a hard time beating Youkhanna Odisho 6-2, 4-6, 7-5 for the singles championship.

? After beating his doubles partner Andy Simon in the semi-final, in November William Daniel again won the RAF Habbaniya Open Tennis Singles Championship, once more beating last year's winner Hassan Jumma 2-6, 7-5, 6-3 in the final. This was William's eighth singles championship victory during the eight years he has been competing as an Amateur player.



Oct. 1953: William Daniel and Andrew Simon (squatting), winners of CC Doubles Championship against Youkhanna Odisho and Mr. S. Edwards (middle). From left: C.P. Paul, John Isaac (Umpire), Raabi Youkhanna Shimshon and Etalius Shawel, all tennis players.

"It was a well fought-out match which provided a grand show to the handful of spectators. Both players had a strong serve and much skill in the game. Williams's main assets were a strong service, hard and low forehand drives and out-of-reach placing. Hassan fought hard for every point. His strong elusive back-hand strokes, mixed with lops and chops, gave William some anxious moments. But his constant racing around to retrieve the ball to keep it in play wore him down. [Extracted from MKP's report in *The Iraq Times* of 11/25/53]

? Following on its heels, Andy Simon and William Daniel as partners bagged the RAF Habbaniya Open K-O Championship. They beat Hassan Jumaa and Etalius "John" Shawel 8-10, 7-5, 8-6 in a fiercely contested final. This was the fifth championship the pair was winning together as a team, it was an exciting game that drew much applause from the spectators.

"William Daniel, playing mostly at baseline, was especially good for his fast and hard straight and cross forehand

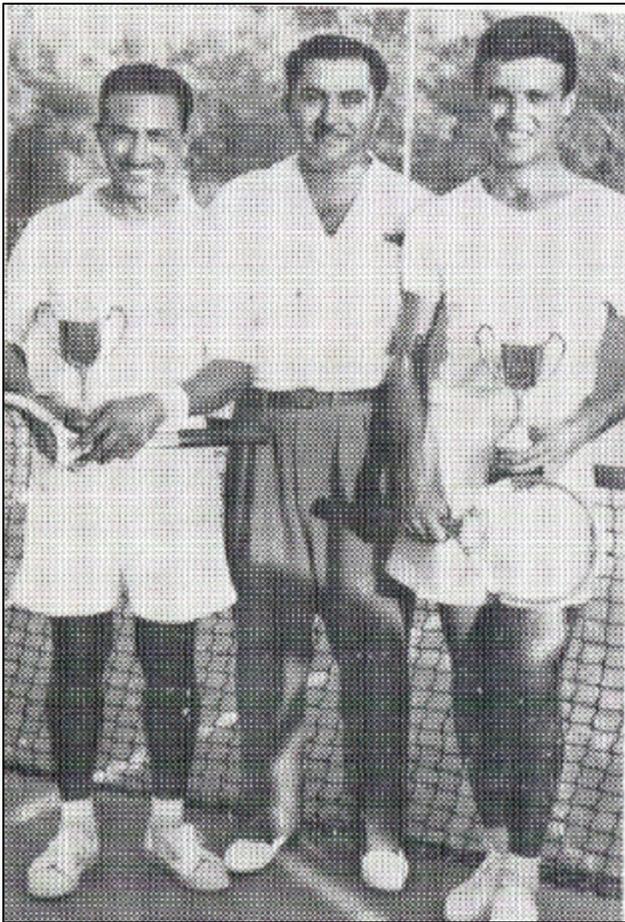
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drives that shot down the court like bullets, while Andrew Simon's left-handed chops, volleys and smashes stacked up their points." (Extracts from MKP's report in *The Iraq Times* of 11/26/53)

? Having lost to Baghdad's British Institute tennis team players two months earlier in all matches, the CC team came back in October 1954 to win most of the return contest matches: In doubles, William Daniel and Andy Simon beat Nasir al-Mudarris and Abbas Abid 2-6, 7-5, 6-3 and Jamiel Jowhar and Ahmed Mahmoud beat Dick Sargon and Ismaiel Qaiyarah 6-3, 3-6, 6-2. And in singles, strangely enough, Andy Simon beat Abbas Ali (a singles champion player) 6-2, 3-6, 6-2. But William Daniel, Hab-



Oct. 1951: Habbaniya group players who played friendly matches in Basra against Basra's Al-Amir Athletic Club team. From left, Albert Philip Rasho and Dominic Bann; Awisha David, William Daniel, Andrew Simon, Ahmed Mahmoud and Jamiel Jowher.



Aug. 1955: Iraq's Challenge Cup happy winners, Andrew Simon and William Daniel with Sports Secretary of Baghdad's Assyrian Sports Club, Dentist Youel Baba George. (Reproduced from A newspaper clipping)

baniya's prominent singles champion player, was soundly beaten by Abbas Ali 6-0, 6-1, while Hassan Jumaa, another top Habbaniya player, was beaten 6-4, 6-4 by Dick Sargon of Baghdad." [Extracted from "Our Sports Reporter's" report in *The Iraq Times* of 10/16/54].

? In two friendly matches played at Baghdad in August 1955, Andy Simon beat Baghdad YMCA's Raymond Vincent 6-2, 7-5 and Andy and William Daniel beat the Vincent brothers, Raymond and Clarence, 6-2, 7-5 in the doubles.

? Also in August 1955, Andrew Simon and William Daniel, playing for Assyrian Sports Club of Baghdad, beat

the five-week title holders Abbas Abid and Ismaiel Qaiyarah of Baghdad's Royal Athletic Club in a crushing defeat 6-3, 6-2, 6-0 in a challenge match to become the new Iraq's Doubles Champions.

"William was at his best, dueling at the baseline and hitting each ball with hard and well-placed drives that bounced off the court as hard as they were struck, while the left-handed Andrew mostly covered the net with tricky and fast tactics, "killing" and placing shots that chalked up their score and drew enthusiastic applause from the crowd.

"Abbas had the steady and polished style of a champion, but was handicapped by a partner who failed to play up to standard and whose weakness his opponents exploited to advantage. Cool as a cucumber, Abbas returned and countered with well-timed fore- and back-hand strokes and furious smashes. His partner's constant mistakes and their opponents' superior skill at times upset his composure. He tried hard to cover up for his partner, but William and Andrew forced the play upon Qiyarah time and again, adding points to their score."

Following the match, Assyrian Sports Club held a party in the victors' honor to a treat of *simach masgoof* [broiled fish] and cold drinks. [Extracted from MKP's article in *Assyrian Star Magazine* of October 1955].

?Unfortunately, on January 29, 1956, Andy Simon and



Aug. 1951. From left, William Daniel and Andrew Simon, winners of CC Doubles Championship against Kurdish Ahmed "Salma" Mahmoud (third) and Arab partner Jamiel Jowher.



A group of tennis players and fans. From left, Albert Rasho, N/K, Malco "Dick" Sargon, Francis Shaul, Ewan Warda, Malco's son Ashur, Youkhanna Odisho, N/K, Benyamin Gandalou, Malco's son Raman, N/K, N/K, Andy Simon. The rest not known. (Reproduced from a newspaper clipping)

William Daniel, still playing for the Assyrian Sports Club of Baghdad, were uncrowned of their Iraq's Doubles Challenge Championship by Capt. Ralph Watts (American) and John Cardell (English) of Baghdad's Alwiyah Club in a grueling 6-3, 3-6, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3, semi-final.

William played well at the base- and side-lines and Andy scored with fast moves at the net. William, however, sometimes spoiled play by trespassing into his partner's side and many of his low shots that were meant to skim the net failed to cross while Andy often smashed hard into the net or wide of the boundaries. The Assyrian pair sometimes had difficulty even returning Capt. Watts' powerful service and was often beaten completely by their opponents' out-of-reach placements, smash hits and drop shots.

The American-English champions went on to win the final too against Khanaquin Oil Company's team of Abbas Abid and Hassan Jumaa with three straight sets of 6-3, 6-4, 6-1. They had beaten al-Ameer Club's team of Abbas Ali and Nasir Mudarris in the semi-finals also in three straight sets, 7-5, 6-4, 6-3.

The following is the list of the names of all the Habbaniya tennis players:

? **Assyrian** players were Andrews Simon, William Daniel, Etalious Shawel, Youkhanna Odisho, John Isaac,



Aug. 1951: Kurdish champion Hassan Jumaa (third from left), winner of CC Singles Championship against William Daniel. Others: Andrew Simon, Mukhta Allosee Hassan, Jamiel Jowhar, Avimalk Yonan Orahim (Employees' Club Pres.) and Ahmed Mahmoud.

Malco "Dick" Sargon, Aram Karam, *Raabi* Youkhanna Shimshon, Khnania "Nanno" Bakus, Benyamin Yosip Gandalou, Youav Baijan, Jebrial Barru, John Youkhanna, Baijan Rasho, Sargis Odisho, Albert Phillip Rasho, Sargis Michael, Baba Gewargis Shallou, *Raabi* Aprim Bet-Benyamin, *Raabi* Albert Aghasi Babilla, Fraidon Orahim, Shlimon Odisho, Benyamin Warda, Yonatan "Nattu" Yonan, Shlimon Youkhanna, Babajan Malik, "Younka," Wilson Polus Rasho, Raabi Khamis Al-Bazi, Mishael "Tubby" Azgo.

? Among the **Indian** players were Mr. S. Asghar (who was local singles champion a couple of times in early 1940s), Mr. S. Edwards, Mr. C.P. Paul, "Col." Naquib, Mr. Vargas, Dominic Bann, Mr. Ambrose Vincent and his sons, Teddy, Allen, Clarence, Raymond and Samir, and a few others.

? The **Kurds** had Hassan Jumaa, and Ahmad



1944: Andrew Simon (right) with partner Allen Vincent (a left and right hand player), winners of CC Junior Competition.

"Salma" Mahmoud and **Arabs** had Jamiel Jowhar.

? The **Armenians** had a few, but top player Abram Babayan is the only one who comes to mind.

? Among the **RAF's British**, were F/Lt. Beatty, Capt. Honeyman. Flt. Lt. J. Freeman, W/O Garrison, W/Cdr. C. Seabrook, S/Ldr. Hammond, S/Ldr. Quitenden (Officer in-charge CC), F/Sgt. Ryan, Cpl. Howard, Flt. Lt. Morris. Of course there were others who played tennis in one degree or other, but don't know their names.

Note: This article is based on documented information available, and the recollection of a few knowledgeable persons, on the history of the last several years of tennis in Habbaniya. We do not claim that it is a complete picture nor that the list of names given is one hundred percent correct —Ed.

In Remembrance of...

...Anwar Yalda David, 67, a native of Habbaniya, a devoted family man and a patriotic Assyrian and American, who passed away at Memorial Hospital in Modesto on November 17, 2004, of a debilitating illness lasting three years.

His funeral was celebrated at Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East in Modesto attended by several priests of the community and a large number of people. Following his interment at Turlock Memorial Park a lunch was offered in his memory at the Civic Club, where more than a dozen family members and friends eulogized him.



Anwar was a prominent member of Civic Club and a nationally active Assyrian in the Turlock-Modesto community for many years. He served as Civic Club's Media Director, Corresponding Secretary and on the Directors' Board more than once. He was also once Vice-President for AANF. His son **Romel David** writes:

"Fourth of nine children, Anwar Yalda David was born in Habbaniya, Iraq on November 29, 1937 to Yalda David and Armounta Khnanisho. From a very early age he had a strong sense of responsibility; to help others and particularly his father in supporting his large family. After elementary schooling, he sought out teachers and took correspondence courses to better his English and he learned typing at the age of 13. He went to Basra hundreds of miles away from home and worked there, sending most of his wages home. But when he was stricken with malaria, he was obliged to leave his job and return home where his family took care of him.

"After he had recovered, he heard of an opening for a junior clerical position at the American Embassy in Baghdad. Although only 16, his eagerness and winning personality assured him the job. He worked diligently and was eventually promoted to a supervisor position. He was an ambitious young man and he strove to gain the respect and admiration of his family, friends and his Gangachin people.

"Anwar met Gladys, daughter of Khanum "Buzi" Qambar and Esha Yosip, at a local Cinema movie in Baghdad. They dated secretly for a year. Then he asked his father to ask Esha for his daughter's hand in marriage to him. Anwar and Gladys were married on December 15, 1956. They lived with his parents for a few years before they settled in their own home. In 1959 the couple was blessed with a son, Romel, and two years later a daughter, Rita.

"Although the Embassy's local staff was often questioned and harassed by the government security police following the Iraqi Revolution of July 1958, Anwar continued working at the American Embassy for several years. But when the Baath Party came to power in February 1963, he left Iraq eight months later and with the help of the U.S. State Department and Assyrian friends in the States he immigrated with his family to Modesto California.

"His first job in America was as an office clerk for Industrial Electric Corporation in Modesto. But he later obtained employment with the famous Gallo Winery, where he eventually achieved a distinguished career as a billing and shipping supervisor. In 1970 Anwar and Gladys were once again blessed with another daughter, Anita.

"Anwar was afflicted with diabetes for many years. His declining health caused him to take an early retirement. He spent the rest of his vital years loving and spoiling his grandchildren. He also loved to play backgammon with anyone who would dare to challenge him.

"His last three years were restricted to his bed and frequent hospital visits. His loving wife and soul mate Gladys remained vigilant by his side as his primary care taker to the end until he closed his eyes forever and left us all with a legacy of love and accomplishments.

"Anwar will be remembered fondly and missed terribly. He was a loving husband for 48 years and was the best father anyone could ask for

to his three children, Romel David and wife Sharlet, Rita Yonan and husband David Yonan, and Anita David and husband Frederick Backman and grandfather to his six beautiful grandchildren; He is also survived by eight siblings, namely Maxwell, Rouel, Emmanuel and Martin David, Soriya Adam, Maria Esho, Eileen Khamis, and Marlene Shammo, and a number of nephews, nieces and cousins."

May Anwar's soul enjoy eternal peace in heaven.—MKP

The Legacy My Father Left Me

Anwar Yalda David has passed on but the lessons that he taught me will live forever. He had an ability to break through the social bounds that confine us and entered into a place of raw honesty that many of us usually hide from. His was a special gift that allowed him to navigate through the hostile waters of society while maintaining his uncompromising vision of right and wrong.

In my father's world no one could hide. If there was a dispute between two people, you could be sure that my father would find a way to get those two people face-to-face to talk through their differences. My father taught me that compassion and tolerance for those who are different from us is of utmost importance for us to embody as Christians. While my father's belief in God and Jesus was unwavering he taught me that we must respect all peoples' religions and traditions in order to more fully understand ourselves.

My father taught me that through words we can achieve liberation, and that knowledge of our history as Assyrians and of the world around us would make us strong warriors in the battle against indifference. While my father embodied a true patriotism to America and the democracy it represents he was extremely critical of the policies that are still affecting thousands of Iraqis, specifically the Assyrian minorities that have been caught between the terror of Saddam and the horror of the DU laced bombs being dropped by America.

My father and mother taught me that a love shared between two people is the most sacred thing to be protected and nurtured. Above all else my father taught me to be a proud person that will always stand up for what is right. He would never submit to the will of anything that he found to be unjust and would maintain his integrity as an individual no matter how unpopular his views were. It was always his intention to use whatever resources were available to him to continue the betterment of his Assyrian community. My father began what could only be described as an Immigrant Action Center out of his home in which he filed papers and provided affidavits of support for a countless number of Assyrians seeking to share in the promise of a new life in America.

He saw his community not just as a people with shared ancestry but as an extension of his family. A devoted member of the Church of the East my father did not think twice before mortgaging his farm so that a new church could be built. He often used his position at Gallo to find employment for people, and using his resources he was successful in securing the donation of a building that today houses half of Bet Nahrain Organization. Everyone knew that "Bab" loved the microphone and was committed to the mission of the radio and TV station that has brought such fullness to our lives as Assyrians living in Diaspora.

Anwar and his wife Gladys were always involved in all aspects of the Assyrian community whether it be in the church or political organizations. His greatest wish was to see all Assyrians live in harmony with one another while recognizing the unique gifts and pride that our ancestry had instilled in us. In my fathers last three years he found great comfort in the friendships and words of Qasha Oshana Kanon and Bishop Mar Bawi Soro.

He could make anyone laugh with his unrelenting humor and when he and my mother would dance together the whole world would stand still for them. I will be forever grateful to God for giving me a father that was also a true gift to this world.—By Anita David Backman

In Remembrance of...



1985: A happy and proud Anwar (right) with his eldest and two of his three younger brothers at his daughter Rita's wedding. From left, Manuel, Maxwell and Rouel David.



1964: Anwar the host (left), honoring Mar Yosip Khnanisho at a home dinner in Modesto. Next to him is Malik Kheyoun "Joe" Yonan; Opposite is Aprim Bakus; third person is Nweia



1960: Anwar the community man, leading a *khigga* dance at a televised Assyrian show in celebration of Prime Minister Gen. Abdul Kareem Qasim's discharge from hospital following the assassination attempt on his life.



1958: Anwar (center) the clan-lover. Family members: From left, uncle Khoshaba David, father Yalda David, cousins Anwar (name-sake) and Edward K. David, mother Armounta, cousin Bittoo Yosip; Squatting: Sister Eileen, cousin Flora Esho and uncle's wife Maddy



Anwar (lower left corner) the party man, enjoying an evening out with his wife and his visiting father-in-law (middle right row) and some Gangachin cousins.



1985: Anwar the nationalist and speechmaker, at the Civic Club in Turlock.



1991: Anwar the affectionate and jolly grandfather with his son Romel's first son Adam and with wife Gladys.

In Remembrance of...

..Ewan Sarkis, 82, a former resident of Habbaniya, who died of a stroke in Chicago on September 23, 2004. His funeral services were officiated at Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East in Chicago and his remains were interred at Montrose Cemetery in Chicago. A memorial lunch was served to the mourners at the church hall.

The eldest of four siblings, Ewan was born July 21, 1922 to Atniel Sarkis and Sophia Benyamin. He spent the latter years of his youth in Habbaniya and was married there to Roza Chosheno.

Ewan is survived by his wife Roza in Kedzie, IL.; seven children, Shammiran Sarkis (Chicago), Wilson Sarkis (Sydney, Australia), Margaret Snell (Indiana), Sargon Sarkis (Des Plaines, IL), Shushan Bay, Ashur Sarkis and Johnson Sarkis (Chicago); brothers Aram Sarkis (Sydney), and Leon Sarkis (Chicago); and sister Emama Alexander (California, IL.?)

Ewan came to this country with his family in 1979. He was employed by Marvel Engineering in 1980. He settled in Chicago and lived and worked there ever since. Apparently Ewan was a simple man who had had no schooling and earned his livelihood as a craftsman. Leon tells us that his brother "was a decent man, liked by everybody in Chicago." Unfortunately, he said neither he nor other family members are able to furnish other missing details about his life.

May he rest in peace.—MKP

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...Ex-Rab-Khamshi Gewargis Zorzan, 98, of the former Royal Air Force (Iraq) Levies, who passed away peacefully in his sleep on August 23, 2004, in a nursing home in Fairfield, Sydney, Australia. He suffered for the last 30 years from Parkinson's disease, which restricted his normal activities.

A devoted member of the Assyrian Church of the East, he was well known for his crusading activity for the Church in Tel Mohammed, New Baghdad, Gailani Camp, Bayaa, and Daura Assyrian communities in Baghdad and was very close to the late Mar Youseph Khnanisho, the Metropolitan of the Church in Iraq.

Born in 1906 in the village of Azran, Shamisdin, Turkey, the late Gewargis was 11 years old when his family, along with thousands of other Assyrian families, were forced out of Urmia region in 1918 by their Moslems enemies. But because the Assyrians had collaborated with the Allied nations of Great Britain and Russia against Turks and their Kurdish allies, the bulk of the refugees sought protection in the camps set up by the British Expeditionary Forces

in Baquba, 30 miles northeast of Baghdad. Almost a third of the nation however perished on the long three-month trek.

As a young man in the 1920s Gewargis served for two years as a mounted gendarme in the newly established Iraqi Police Force in Arbil region. He then resigned and enlisted in the RAF (Iraq) Levies. He served for 22 years, gradually advancing through the ranks to Rab Khamshi, a 2nd Lieutenant.

Gewargis saw active duty during Rawanduz and Sulaimania Levy campaigns in the early years of the Force. In the May 1941 Battle of Habbaniya he was a platoon sergeant in No. 4 Company that attacked and beat back the rebel Iraqi Army forces entrenched on Habbaniya Plateau besieging the air base, and took part in the mopping up operations. His company was also involved in attacking and occupying Falluja town, suffering only a few casualties.

Because of his knowledge of Kurdish language, in his final years of service he was seconded as platoon commander to No. 25 Assyrian-Yezidee Company, stationed at Zubair, Basra. While on night duty as the orderly officer, he foiled a well organized robbery attempt of military equipment when five culprits were shot dead. He was highly commended by his Battalion Commander and by his Company Commander, Captain Rowland.

Gewargis was married to Shmonie Cheri Mirza in the city of Arbil, in North Iraq in 1924. God blessed them with seven children who were raised at Hinaidi and Habbaniya RAF stations. But after the RAF disbanded the Levy force and surrendered the air bases to the Iraqi Government in 1955, Gewargis and his family moved and lived in Daura township of Baghdad for 22 years. In 1975, however, he and his wife migrated to Australia to rejoin three of their sons who had preceded them a few years earlier.

Gewargis is now survived in Australia by his sons Youel (well-known soccer player and sportsman of Habbaniya and Baghdad from 1943 through 1962), Youash (aka "Teech"), Sankhero, and Sargon; daughters Youlia wife of Eramias Dinkha and Sooriya wife of John Rowil; eleven grandchildren; six great grandchildren; and one great great granddaughter. Gewargis lost his wife Shmonie in Sydney in 1985. He also lost a daughter, Younia wife of late Aprim Billa.

A legend in his own right, Gewargis was one of the very few Assyrian survivors of the Great War and of the trials and tribulations our people passed through during the last century. May his soul rest in peace.

—By Aghajan Jammo (as edited)



In Remembrance of...

...Yosip Patros Thomas, 82, popularly known as “Abu Jamiel,” who passed away at his home in Granada Hills, California, of a massive heart attack on December 16, 2004, and was laid to rest at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Hollywood Hills, two days later. His funeral services were celebrated at St. Mary’s Assyrian Church of the East in Tarzana by Rev. Gewargis Rasho who also eulogized the deceased and read out a short sketch of his life compiled by Mikhael Pius. Some 250 mourners attended the funeral and partook of a lunch offered in his memory at the church hall.



A memorial mass was also offered on the 40th Day for the repose of the deceased’s soul at the same church and was followed by a memorial breakfast at the church hall.

Yosip was born April 24, 1922, in Zakho, North Iraq. He was the eldest of six children of Mariam and Patros Thomas, both natives of Botan. He received his elementary schooling at the late *Raabi Yacoub’s* Assyrian and Armenian School in Kota Camp, Hinaidi, and his high school education at American School for Boys in Baghdad.

His first job was as a staff clerk at NAAFI Headquarters branch in Baghdad from 1942 till mid-1946, when he was transferred to NAAFI’s main HQ in Habbaniya. He worked in Habbaniya for about a year, but shortly before resigning his job, he was married in Baghdad on February 14, 1947 to Mary, eldest daughter of Esho Elia and Roomy Esho of Kirkuk. He also got a job in 1948 in the Kirkuk area (K3) as supervisor with Spinneys Limited, a British supply company. Soon after the July 1958 Revolution, however, Spinneys was forced to sell out to Iraqi nationals and Yosip and many others lost their jobs. He relocated to Baghdad and worked for Northern Oil Company of Iraq for a year. In 1959 he switched to a German construction company called Polenski and Zöllner. Yosip was a hard worker and a very shrewd dealer. He not only became the right-hand of its German director for most of his 25-year service but also made a small fortune in the process before he came to this country in 1983.

Yosip is survived by his wife of 58 years, Mary; six children, Jamiel Thomas (Toronto, Can.), Jamiela “Bulbul” Akhnana and Kamal Thomas (Modesto, CA), Marina Simon (Victoria, Can.), and Adnan Thomas and Elham Thomas (Granada Hills, CA); two brothers, Neesan Thomas in Damascus, and Benyamin Thomas in Baghdad; a sister, Juliet Bakko in Stevenson Ranch, CA; and 16 grandchildren. Yosip lost his second son, Jamal, in 1979; a younger brother Daniel, in mid-eighties and a younger sister Sammiran “Shamamy” wife of the late Koryakos early last year.

May the souls of all departed ones rest in peace.

—MKP

...Awia Yacoub Yousif, 78, former *Rab-Khamshi* in the RAF (Iraq) Levies, Major in the Iraqi Army and one-year *Qaimaqam* of Amadiya District, passed away at home in Morton Grove, Illinois, on February 25, 2005, and was laid to rest at Montrose Cemetery in Chicago. His funeral services, attended by more than 300 mourners, were celebrated by Archdeacon Aprim DeBaz, assisted by Rev. Shlimon Hezaqial, at Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East in Chicago. He was eulogized also by Rev. Shlimon Hezaqial at a luncheon offered in his memory at the church hall.



The late Awia was born December 26, 1926, in Bebeada, North Iraq. His father died when he was five. He and his mother moved to Sulaimaniya and lived with his uncle and family. When his mother died he moved to Habbaniya in October 1941, aged 15, and joined the RAF (Iraq) Levy Force as a private. He gradually moved up through the ranks and was commissioned *Rab-Khamshi* (2nd Lieutenant) in 1947. In 1944, however, he along with 36 others, were chosen from a group of 450 Levy personnel to form a special force called The 36 Paratroop Company. The company took part, with British counterparts of 11th British Paratroop Division in various World War II campaigns—including Palestine, Albania, Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia—during 1944-45, in which the Assyrian paratroopers distinguished themselves and suffered several war casualties. After returning from the war in 1945, he went to Syria and married Margaret Bercham. And following the surrender of Habbaniya to the Iraqi Government and the disbandment of the Levy Force in May 1955, in which Awia had served 14 years, he was among 32 Levy personnel accepted to join the Iraqi Army. He entered the Reserve Military College and after undergoing a six-month training course he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant by Royal decree. When he retired on September 27, 1972 after 17 years of service in the Iraqi Army he had attained the rank of Major, serving as *Amir Faseel*, *Amir Sineea*, *Mushab Mirwan*, *Amir Fowj*. After retirement, his service to the Iraqi Government was capped by a one-year term as the *Qaimaqam* (Administrator) of Amadiya District in 1975-76.

Awia was a very active person. He was a decorated sharpshooter and enthusiastic sportsman during his Levy years, participating in soccer, hockey, basketball and field and track games.

He is survived by his wife Margaret Yousif; children Romel Bet-Nimrod (Chicago), Albert Jacob (Huston, TX), Kardonia Dawood, and Ashur Jacob (Sydney), Alexander Jacob (Oslo, Norway), Virginia Jacob, and Evan Jacob (Chicago); by his first cousin, Yosip “Chopa” Yosip and family in Arizona.

May the Lord reward him in His Kingdom.

—MKP

In Remembrance of...

...Dinkha George, 78, a former teacher at *Raabi Yacoub's Union School* in Habbaniya and the eldest son of the late *Rab-Khaila Zaia Gewargis* the local commander of the former R.A.F. (Iraq) Levies died as a result of prostate cancer in Denver, Colorado, on March 17, 2005.

After funeral services officiated by his younger brother Pastor Ben George assisted by Pastor David George and Deacon Sanky George at Highlands Chapel March 21, he was laid to rest at Highland Mortuary in Northglenn, Colorado. Fifty family members and friends attended the funeral and a memorial luncheon held at the Community Hall in Denver when Pastor Ben George eulogized his brother.

The eldest of seven siblings, Dinkha was born January 12, 1927, in Mosul, Iraq to Zaia and Janey Gewargis. He received his elementary schooling at Raabi Yacoub's schools in Hinaidi and Habbaniya and finished his middle school at the American Jesuits' Baghdad College school. After that he taught beginners' classes at Habbaniya's Union School for a couple of years and then worked for the British Petroleum (BP) aircraft refueling service in Habbaniya. On May 10, 1948, he married Pamela Rowil Al-Maran, niece of the late Mar Yosip Khnanisho, the Metropolitan of the Church of the East. After the wind-up of RAF base of Habbaniya he worked at the British Embassy in Baghdad where he served as an Arabic-English and vice-versa translator for many years.

Dinkha and his family left Baghdad and joined his brother Pastor Ben George in Denver, Colorado, in November 1968. Because he could not find his proper professional niche in Denver, he took up non-skilled jobs such as a computer assembly line worker and security officer. Then in 1976 he moved with his family to Turlock, California, and bought and ran a grocery store for four years before selling it and returning to Denver, where he lived until he passed away.

Dinkha is survived by his wife of 57 years Pamela George; children Emmanuel "Manny," George (Northglenn, CO), *Shamasha* Sanky George (Modesto, CA), Marena Dinkha (Westminster, CO), Peter George (Northglenn, CO), Ravena Bradford (Brighton, CO) and Paul George (Northglenn); three brothers, Pastor Ben George and Nimrod George (Phoenix, AZ) and Ashur George (Turlock, CA); and six grandsons and five granddaughters.

His son Manny writes: "I have never known such a high principled man as my father. He had no illusions about right and wrong. He taught me that family and faith is everything in life. In the course of his life he always asked what Jesus would do. Now in my life struggle I always ask what Dinkha would do. He left us with no illusions about life. For this we shall be eternally grateful and we shall miss him."

May the Lord rest Dinkha's soul in eternal peace. —MKP



...Dr. Nerol (Nardin) Owdisho, 74, a well-known and respected person among the Assyrian community, who died at Doctors' Hospital in Modesto, California, March 27, 2005, following complications from surgery. His funeral services, attended by some 800 people, was celebrated by Rev. Edward Essabeh at Saint John's Presbyterian Church in Turlock and his remains were interred at Turlock Memorial Park.



The deceased was eulogized by several people among them Bob Arsanos, Janet Atanous, Dentist Vladimar Benyamin, writer Gewargis Aghassi, and a Persian physician friend, at a memorial lunch held at Civic Club of Turlock, and most Assyrian TV programs of the area paid tributes to his good nature, his works and deeds both as a physician and as a caring Assyrian.

Nerol was born May 12, 1931 in Garajalo, Urmia, Iran to William and Shaleit Owdisho. He had his elementary schooling and in 1950 graduated from high school in Urmia. He then attended the University of Teheran and graduated in 1958 with a degree in medicine. After serving his country, as an officer in the Royal Iranian Army, he started practicing medicine which included a position as a physician in the Ministry of Health in Shiraz, Iran. In October 1964 he was married to Nancy, the beautiful daughter of Yona and Yosip Minasof.

Nerol and his family came to America in 1984 and settled in Turlock. Nerol could not practice medicine for several years because his Iranian medical diploma was not recognized in this country. But he studied at home and sat for exam in UCLA in Los Angeles. He passed and was able to obtain a license and he opened his own medical practice in 1994. He served as a physician a total of 25 years in Iran and ten years in Turlock.

Nerol was a kind, generous, and caring person and served his patients and community well. He was the honorary medical doctor of the first Assyrian Health Fair held at the Assyrian Evangelical Church in Turlock and the supporter of the first Assyrian American community blood drive. He was a meek person and a caring physician and made everyone feel special.

Dr. Nerol Owdisho is survived by his wife Nancy; three sons, Emil, 37, Emily, 30, and Edwin 25, all of Turlock; brother Sargon Owdisho and sisters Nanajan Owdisho, Nellie Alkhas, and Lilly Ashuri, all in Iran.

May the Lord reward him in His eternal Kingdom.—MKP

We express our grateful thanks to the following persons who send in special contributions to HUSCA: Gladys David, \$200 (\$130 of it donation); Dr. Peter Koryakos \$200 (\$150 of it donation). We sincerely appreciate their exceptional generosity and pray that God may grant them and their families health and happiness always.

In Remembrance of...

...Asyat Rasho, 95, formerly a Habbaniya housewife,

passed away of old age at the home of her daughter Janet Jacob in Apex, North Carolina. She was laid to rest on February 7, 2005, at Apex Cemetery in Apex following funeral services officiated by Pastor David Newell and his wife Ina at the Apex Funeral home and was eulogized by her grandson, Homer Jacob, at a luncheon offered in her memory at a restaurant to a small group of family members and friends who attended the funeral.



The late Asyat was born in the village of Gangachin in 1910 to Rapqa Benyamin and Mikhael Rustam of same village. She arrived with her parents as a little girl in Baquba Refugee Camps in Iraq in 1918. Following the break up of Baquba Camps in 1920 and subsequently of Mandan refugee camps near Mosul in 1921, her family settled for several years with other Bne-Gangachin families in Menas Camp on the eastern bank of Tigris River in Baghdad, where Asyat was married in mid-1920s to Polus Orahim Rasho, also of Gangachin. Her husband worked for NAAFI in Hinaidi and the family moved, along with families of many other RAF employees, to Maratha Lines near Baghdad in 1932 and six years later to RAF Station of Habbaniya, 55 miles west. After Habbaniya was surrendered to the Iraqi Government in 1955, the family relocated to Basra. When her youngest daughter Eileen got married in 1956, Asyat went to Daura and lived with her. In 1957 her husband Polus passed away in Basra. Several years later, Asyat had problem with her eyesight, and despite an eight-month treatment by eye specialists in Vienna, nothing could be done for her. She has been completely sightless during the last 45 years of her life.

Asyat is survived by her eldest daughter Avigil Polus Enwiya and family in Modesto, CA; her son Wilson Rasho and family in Sydney, Australia; daughters Janet Jacob in Apex, NC, and Eileen George and family in Modesto, CA; by 12 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren; and by several children of her only younger sibling Raabi Sargis Michael who died a few years ago by car accident in Chicago—MKP

Just Chit-chatting...(Cont'd from P.3)

charge will go up by one ounce and the printing costs will also shoot up by some 15-20%. But God has nudged a few kind hearts to come to our aid with generous donations to meet the extra expense.

In order to have more space for feature articles and pictures as well as trim back the magazine to its normal page count, we are obliged to weed out in future some of the brief letters that only indicate the inclusion of payment along with greetings, and will print only those letters that express something of substance, such as a suggestion, opinion, or comment on the material in the magazine or passages of some expressive narration or description that relates to either the local people, the locale or an event or life in general in Hinaidi or Habbaniya. Of course we sincerely appreciate all the support and the compliments, and we will certainly list on a special page the membership fees and donations received. But anyone wishing to have their say published in future should, I'm afraid, have a little more to say than just "I enclose herewith my subscription fee and wish you the best. *Chaibo* to you and keep up the good work." And please no hard feelings!

Though with much regret, we have been receiving a fair number of bio-obituaries for publication. And even though it is always sad to hear that a loved one or an old friend or acquaintance has left us forever, we are also interested to know something about his or her life. So, please do keep sending us the stories in memory of your departed ones. (See published stories for details required or contact the Editor or the Administration Manager for a relevant questionnaire.)

Finally, in order to lift the veil of sadness from our hearts, let us rejoice in reading about the happiness of those relatives or friends who have been fortunate to attain and celebrate their special wedding anniversaries—25th, 50th or 60th. So far we have received a few anniversary stories only from relatives and close friends. So do send us your anniversary stories by all means. (Please study our published anniversary stories to have an idea of what kind of pictures and information is required.)

I guess that's all, folks. Thanks for reading us—and keep up the good read!—and hope to be still with you next time, God willing—**Editor**

**Hope all of our readers had a HAPPY EASTER
and a JOYFUL KHA B'NEESAN!**

HUSCA brings happy memories, pleasure, gratification

Dear Mike,

It rejoiced my heart to receive your letter and hear you on the phone. On our previous talk you sounded or gave me the impression that you were tired and I wondered whether we would see another issue of HUSCA Magazine. But I thank the Lord this time you sounded more like yourself, full of vigor and enthusiasm.

I always look forward with delight to receiving HUSCA Magazine, not only because it is compiled and produced by ex-students of Union School, though this in itself is a great achievement and worthy of great respect and honor, but just hearing about individuals we knew decades ago and knowing of their whereabouts and their circumstances, gives me, as a representative of the remaining ex-teachers, a sense of satisfaction.

For example, I was delighted to read the letter from Arpenick Onick Hovasapian from Glendale, California. I knew her late eldest sister Raabi Asho (Arshalus) and her late brother Tsholak who was about 8 or 9 years old when I first knew him. Her older brother Sourain and I worked together for a little while at Habbaniya. This brings happy memories of the past and a sense of gratification and pleasure. I trust that most of you ex-students or ex-residents of Habbaniya would feel the same while reading HUSCA Magazine. I therefore would urge all readers, yea all Habbaniya residents to subscribe to such a fine publication.

I was delighted to see a few other names like Michael Lazar Solomon. Michael and I were class mates in the Union School at Hinaidi in mid 1930's. Michael, your mother and mine were from the same village in Urmia. And again, Youshia Poloss and Shlimon Youkhana, Yul Bahram and others. It was nice hearing from and about Youil S. Tammo. I knew Youil from Habbaniya days when he was a little boy, but knew his older brother William and his sister Panna who was a nurse at Habbaniya and here in England. When in 1960 I was transferred from Shetland Isles, north of Scotland, to the county of Cornwall, S.W. of England, we met Youil who was studying for his degree in engineering. We were the only Assyrian family in that part of U.K. Youil and his girlfriend Margaret, who later became his wife, used to visit us regularly.

Youkhannan Petros from frozen Finland! It was good to see your picture with your granddaughter and read your letter. Did not you visit California about 5-6 years ago? or am I thinking of someone else! You look very well in the picture. However concerning your letter, to me it seems that you have gone out of the perimeter of Habbaniya...You may be right concerning politics and history of our nation. But some of the incidents you mentioned are new to me, and a few others I do not agree with. I don't think Habbaniya was a big prison. I would doubt whether you felt that way when you were living there. However we cannot judge or compare those values or standards by our present values or standards. It was the policy of the British Government to secure the camp. Even then, Dulaimi Arabs would sneak in and steal. I do agree with the editor's remarks. I felt more free in Habbaniya than when I was studying in Baghdad. Next time you write, please concentrate on the inside of the perimeter and leave the politics and history of the Assyrian Nation to politicians and historians. Please don't be offended by these remarks. After all, it is just a few friendly lines for members of the Habbaniya community to read. I don't think the editor would mind us having a chit-chat.

Mikhael, I hope you wouldn't mind me writing a few words of tribute concerning our deceased. It was through the media of HUSCA Magazine that I learned about the late mother of our Administration Manager. Ben and the Yalda family, I offer my condolence. The same goes to Dick Sargon's family re late Ramon; Gewargis Daniel's



1986. The Babillas with Shabbases and Jacobs. From left Sami and wife Lily Shabbas Neesan, late Julius Shabbas, Hubert Babilla, late Nina Shabbas Jacob, Jane and husband Albert and her sister-in-law Mariam, Peggie and late father Emmanuel Jacob and Timothy Sibthorpe; Squatting: Diklat and cousin Nadia Babilla and Samira Jacob Hermis.

family re Shlimoon, the Rohan family re their mum and the Adam family re Ilyakim. I have mentioned Tsholak's name earlier. But the person I knew a long time, though separated by continents and long periods of time, was the late Julius N. Shabbas. Even before Julius and I were born, my mother while still a teenager, together with my grandmother in one of the camps in Baquba, used to live in the same tent as Shabbas's family. Neither Nweia nor William were married then. The two families knew each other before we were born. But as most of us know, circumstances separated families, friends and relations. But thank God, Habbaniya once again brought some of us together. I don't want to go into details, but at least in our case, Union School and Habbaniya in general helped to bring old acquaintances and friends closer.

Although we had known the Shabbas' and Raabi Yacoub Bet-Yacoub's families from early Hinaidi days, Habbaniya made us closer to each other. In fact, our houses in 'K' type faced each other. When I started teaching at the Union School, it helped the friendship draw closer and eventually ended in the three families acting in the capacity of bestmen and bridesmaids for each other as circumstances permitted. This took place at least on six weddings. But when Jane and I were married the late Raabi Emmanuel Jacob and family lived in Baghdad while Raabi Emmanuel worked miles away. He could not be present at our wedding. Julius deputized for him as bestman and his sister Nina Jacob was bridesmaid. Once again we were separated by circumstances until 1996 when Jane and I visited California. My younger sister Anita and her late husband Timothy gave us a hilarious welcome party at her home in San Jose, and a few members of Shabbas's and Jacob's families were present. And Jane and I attended the late Julius and Violet's 40th wedding anniversary. I remember speaking a few words on that occasion. Julius was present at our 50th wedding anniversary, again held at my sister's house in San Jose. He usually shunned public speaking but on that occasion he gave a perfect speech. I do not want to add anything more for I doubt if anyone else could have said better than what Mikhael and others including my brother Hubert from Napa wrote or said about the late Julius. Mike what you have written on page 26 of Fall-Winter 2004 issue is complete and lacks nothing. If we were living in Nineveh, the capital of the once Assyrian Empire, Julius would be worthy of a statue erected in his memory and in the middle of the city. Thus and in all other ways some nations do remember their heroes. But our nation scattered all over the world does not have such privileges.

Native Habbaniyan Couple Celebrates Silver Wedding Anniversary in California and...



Bearded Wilson Lazar with his bride Nina at their wedding celebration, along with bestman Lazar Oshana and friends.

Nina and Wilson Lazar attained their silver wedding anniversary and celebrated the event with a restaurant dinner with their children and just a few close relatives. They were married in Chicago on February 16, 1980.

Nina is the youngest of ten children of the late Khammo Pius Mikhael and Soriya Kakko Poloss and Wilson, also known as "Raani," is next to the youngest of five children of Maria Pili-pous Shaul and the late Hawil Lazar. Both families are Bne-Mawana. Hawil "Jinja" was a Hinaidi-Habbaniya soccer player and track and field athlete in the late thirties and early forties.

Nina was born February 17, 1949 in Habbaniya. She had her elementary schooling at the Chaldean Nuns' school in Gailani Camp and her secondary education at the Carmelite Nuns' School at Southgate, in Baghdad. She received her five-year college education at the Sciences College in Baghdad, majoring in Chemistry. She has been working as a chemist for more than ten years for Fresenius Medical Care in Levingston near Turlock. The company produces dialysate for dialysis.



Feb. 2005: Nina and Wilson Lazar, flanked by their two sons, Raman, 23 (left) and Mark, 21.

She immigrated to this country at the end of 1978 after obtaining a green card on a six-month visit the previous year.

Wilson was born December 16, 1946, also in Habbaniya. He received his elementary schooling at Qidwa School in Tel Mohammed, Baghdad, and his high school education at Ildadiyat Tujara in Baghdad. Like his late father, Wilson was a good soccer player during his schooldays. He worked two years for a store in Baghdad before leaving in early 1972 with his older brother William to Lebanon, from where they came to Chicago in October 1972. Wilson worked as a machine operator in Chicago for 15 years and has been doing the same job here in Modesto for the last 16 years.

The couple have two sons, Raman, 23, and Mark 21. Mark is in his last junior college year and Raman is in his last college year, majoring in computer technology. The family relocated from Chicago to Modesto in 1988 and last October they sold their house and bought a new one in Denair, adjoining Turlock—**MKP**

...Habbaniya-born Groom Attains Silver Wedding Anniversary in Canada



Sargon and Isabel Ibrahim signing the marriage register on their wedding day in London, Ontario, Canada.

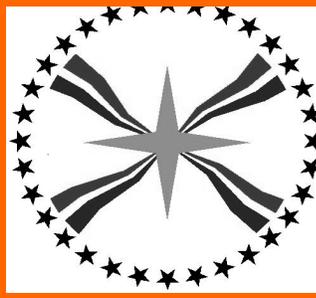
Sargon Ibrahim, a native Habbaniyan, and Isabel, a native Canadian, attained their silver wedding anniversary on June 28, 2005, in Brampton, Canada.

Sargon, also known as Sargis, is the second of the four children of Lujiya Kakko Poloss of Alberta, Canada, and the late Fraidon Orahim Iskhaq. He was born in Habbaniya September 3, 1951. Both of his parents lived two decades in Habbaniya and two in Baghdad before coming to Canada. Fraidon worked as a clerk for RAF for many years and was a former long-time soccer goalkeeper at Habbaniya, and Lujiya worked as a lead fabric worker for RAF during W.W. II years. Sargon graduated from the Jesuits' Baghdad College high school in 1968 and had three years of English Literature at Mustansiriya University in Baghdad before immigrating to Canada in 1974 through Lebanon. In Toronto he studied further and obtained a CPA in Accountancy and has been working for American Case Company since 1975 in a responsible position. All four Ibrahim siblings—Bernadette, Sargon, Zaia and Francis—have a very high IQ.

Sargon and Isabel met and were married on June 28, 1980. They now live in Brampton, Canada. Isabel is a nice lady, outgoing and sociable. She has a daughter by a previous marriage who is now married and has two daughters of her own.—**MKP**



מגילת הצעירים המבוגרים



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SENIOR SCOUT SECTION



1951: Senior Section of 1st Habbaniya (Iraq) Boy Scout Group.

Front row, from left: 1. Shmouel Kamar, 2. N/K, 3. N/K, 4. Anwar Yalda David, 5. David
 ——— 6. Alexander "Sando" Nimrod Khamo; Sitting: 1. Goliat Enwiya, 2. Youkania Sarmo, 3. Benyamin Esho Yalda (Section
 Scoutmaster), 4. Shimshon Gewargis Daniel, 5. Rehana Baijo Rehana; Back: 1. Rouel Jitto, 2. N/K, 3. N/K, 4. Newton Elisha, 5.
 N/K, 6. N/K, 7. N/K. (Photo courtesy Gladys David, Modesto, CA)

Note: would be glad to hear from readers who can identify the N/K (not known)