

# HUSCA

Issue No. 8  
Vol. 4 # 2  
Fall-Winter  
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"

**Super  
Issue!**

## CLASS OF 1944



**Fourth and last graduating class (Secondary C Form or 2nd High) from  
Raabi Yacoub's Union School in Civil Cantonment, RAF Station, Habbaniya.**

Back row, left: 1.Ezaria "Chucha" Yosip, 2.Pnouel Rohan (Kirkuk), 3.Esho Gewargis (deceased), 4.Sargon Yacoub Aboona (Skokie, IL), 5.Yosip "Yousipos" Samuel (Modesto, CA), 6.Zaia Raabi Aprim (Canada?), 7.Wilson Khoshaba Isaac (Chicago), 8. Allan Vincent (England), 9. Odisho Adam (Mosul); Middle row, left: 1.Lily Nweia Shabbas [Neesan] (Herecules, CA), 2.Loas Rowil Mikhael [Baito] (San Diego, CA), 3.Raabi Yacoub Bet-Yacoub, Headmaster (deceased), 4.Roza Aziz [Simon] (Prairiewood, Austrl.), 5.Peeda Eshaya Pera [Esho](Brampton, Canada); Front, left: Homer Soski (Philadelphia, PA), Ashur Gamliel Shlimon (Cheam, Surrey). Note: Sargon Y. Aboona and Ashur G. Shlimon graduated with honor. (Photo courtesy Sargon)

# HUSCA Magazine

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**Membership Subscription**

USA.....US\$ 12.00 per year;  
 All other countries..US\$15.00 per year  
 (HUSCA is a semi-annual periodical)

**Checks or Money Orders to be made payable to: Habbaniya Union School & Community Association and mailed to the Administration Manager**

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!

**Publication Deadlines:**

**March 31 and September 30**

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**Habbaniya Union School & Community Association**

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**May the glory of this Holy Season  
 Cast a glow upon your homes  
 And brighten your lives  
 And that of your family members  
 With love and joy  
 In the glorious birth of  
 JESUS CHRIST  
 And may it bring you all  
 Health and happiness  
 During the New Year,  
 At Kha B'Neesan  
 And throughout your lives too.**

## What's on your mind?

# Express Yourself!

Dear Sirs:

I haven't written anything so far for publication in our dear HUSCA magazine, but this 7th issue had so much impact upon me, that I decided to put in my share of memories of the good old Habbaniya days. I still have other stories to write about for future issues as soon as I get my material and senses together....old age, you know!

Yes, your new font Arial 11 in bold to fit the pages came in loud and clear even to this pair of (not so blind) eyes! And, it made good reading.

As to aging, wake up man, 79 is only a middle age configuration of today's life style. So, don't despair, brother. Keep up the extraordinary work you're doing, because you still have another two decades to go. How else will we be blessed without your devoted input and meticulous reports of events you privilege us with! This is from someone two years your senior, and listen to Big Brother, will you?

I hope you are keeping well and I eagerly look forward to seeing you at the September reunion in Chicago. Warmest regards

Enclosed is my check for \$20, of which \$10 is donation towards the cost of publication of HUSCA.

**Shlimoon Youkhana "Son of Churchill"**

**6.10.05. Rosemont, IL.**

>>> *Thank you for your Habbaniya memories. These are set as a special article on P.45-47.*

Dear Sir: I received yesterday the 7th issue of HUSCA. Once again the magazine is a treasure trove of fascinating photos, letters and information. All these bestir nostalgic memories.

Once again many thanks are in order to you and to your compatriots (Ben and Wiska) for putting out such excellent historical literature.

Enclosed is a check for \$30 to cover contribution to your Mawana Needy Fund in respect of myself and my daughter Angel.

Thanks a million. God bless.

**Uncle YKP (Yooshia K. Poloss)**

**6.8.05. Hollywood, California.**

Dear Sirs: Enclosed per your request of May 5, please find three pictures which we located of my father in his tennis days. Unfortunately, I do not know for sure the names of the gentlemen standing with my father, but I think the one on his right is Nasir Al-Mudariss, and the heavy set guy is George [George].

I am sure we have some more pictures but as your time is limited, I wanted you to have a few at least.

May God Almighty bless you and your family. Enclosed you find a little donation [\$50] for the wonderful

ASSYRIAN work you are doing, I hope many more Assyrians would be able to donate some time as well.

Best wishes and regards.

**Ashur [Dick] Sargon**

**5.25.05. Morton Grove, Illinois.**

>>> *Many thanks for your generous donation. As I informed you in my reply of May 30, I'm sorry the pictures reached me a few days too late—after issue #7 had gone to press—as they were required for our feature article on tennis appearing in that issue.*

*But I have created a special feature page in the upcoming issue for the pictures you sent. I need some basic information on your father, if you send it to me as per my Q & A form I'm mailing you.—Ed.*

Dear Sirs: Many thanks for the "bumper issue" of HUSCA. We had a good chuckle over the front page photo, captioned "Class of 1943." I looked so terribly solemn!

Arnold found the photo on the back cover more poignant since Youkania Sarmo was his chief clerk and right-hand man in the Levy M.T. He has found some snaps that he took on the occasion of Youkania and Argentina's wedding which might go well in your journal.

Of equal poignancy, Arnold send his respects to the memory of Awia Yacoub Yousif, particularly with regard to their friendship and rivalry as track and field athletes in Habbaniya. (Throwing the discus and javelin come to mind.)

May we congratulate the editorial team on the production of an excellent journal, packed full of news and nostalgia. We can only guess at the hard work that goes into its production.

It is the 50th anniversary year of our wedding on 5th August at Habbaniya. We only wish that distances were shorter and that more friends could attend our celebration.

We look forward to meeting you all at the Reunion this September in Chicago.

**Khawa Yacube Aboona (Pearce)**

**June 12, 2005. Ferndown, Dorset, UK.**

Dear Sirs: Thank you very much for your letter reminding me of my subscription dues for HUSCA. Enclosed is a check for \$50 to cover that.

I wish to thank you for your hard work in producing HUSCA Magazine, which we enjoy reading so much.

Our best regards to your families.

**William K. Kanon**

**6/13/05. Modesto, California.**

>>> *Thank you William for your donation and compliments. We hope your wife Shammiran has already recovered from her accident—Ed.*

Dear Sir: Shlama! In the beginning, I hope you are well and in good health. How is your work? I think you are busy.

Before three days, while I was reading the Habbaniya magazine one of our family friends visited us. When he saw the contents of the magazine he started remembering his old days there. He knew the people who lived there since 1950. He felt very happy and sad. So I think you have done a great task with this magazine.

God bless you, and thank you.

**Frankie Sarmo**  
**6.16.05. Melbourne, Australia.**

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for the polite reminder. My subscription [\$10] for HUSCA is enclosed.

I highly commend you and all the persons working towards this noble periodical. Your magazine serves as a shining beacon that enters our homes and cheers us all up with the good news of our Habbaniya happy days.

May you ever live long to carry on with the good work for your people who are always thirsty and in need of receiving the refreshing news of their good old youthful days in our former hometown Habbaniya.

God bless you and everyone else working with you, who is part of this enterprise, in producing such a beautiful magazine for the benefit of our Assyrian people, global-wise.

**Havil J. Michael, Shamasha.**  
**6/16/05. Chiswick, London, UK.**

Dear Sirs: A good issue, and a lot of memories came to my mind. Habbaniya of 1940s and 1950s was a good and active community for our people.

I hope all is well. Regards to the family.

**Bailis Shamun**  
**Undate. Charlotte, North Carolina.**

Dear Sirs:

My love and greetings to you and hope you and your families are in good health.

I can now give you the names of two of the persons not named in the picture of Senior Scout Section on last page of the last issue of HUSCA [#7]. They are: Back row, No. 5: Yonathan Patros Esho and No. 6 is Khoshaba Bahram.

I hope this information will be of help to you be-  
 is for you only. I have send a \$30 check for my membership to Chicago also. So please feel free to cash the check, and please tell me if it is less than what it

cause you too sometimes need help from other persons to furnish you with names not known to you.

*Poush pshaina* and may God grant you energy and health. Continue with your good work and may the Lord assist you.

**Sh. Elisha Shumon**  
**6.24.05. Sacramento, Calif.**

>>> *Thank you very much, Shamasha, for the information. It is much appreciate. I wish many more readers would take the time to point out to us when something is missing or amiss in our magazine.—Ed*

Dear Sirs: May God bless you for wonderful magazine and wonderful job. [Enclosed \$50 for renewal and donation.]

**Fiona & Yonathan Youash**  
**Undated. Huston, Texas.**

Dear Sirs: Sorry for the delay due to old age!! Great job. God bless you both.

**Sargon Y. Aboona**  
**Undated. Skokie, Illinois.**

Dear Sirs: Thank you for sending me HUSCA #7, which I received yesterday. It is better and better, I enjoy it. I am enclosing check for \$10 for my subscription, with my best wishes.

**Victoria Yohanen**  
**6.7.05. Skokie, Illinois.**

Dear Sirs: Enclosed herewith a check for \$50 for HUSCA membership from Sargon & Sonia Warda. Please arrange for current issue to be mailed to them immediately.

**Zac (Zacharia O. Zacharia)**  
**6.9.05. Modesto, California.**

Dear Sirs: Thank you very much for the latest copy of HUSCA. I am now pleased myself to enclose herewith a check \$30 to cover my next two years subscription for HUSCA Magazine.

Thank you again and my God bless you and keep you in good health. Please take care and keep up your good work. Best wishes to all of you and doing great job. Thank you.

**Andrew I Shino**  
**6.11.05. Chandler, Arizona.**

Dear Sirs: Enclosed is a check for US\$25 being my contribution to HUSCA.

I admire you a lot for what you do, keep the good work And may God bless you and those around you.

**Shlimon Khamo**  
**6.9.05. Morton Grove, Illinois.**

Dear Sir: Thank you for the seventh issue of HUSCA.

which I read with interest. The contents, which I find, are performing a roving ambassadorial function in bringing us into communicative contact worldwide. I hope for the continuous success of the HUSCA.

I enclose my check for US\$20. Please let me know if I am up to date with my contribution.

Please accept my sincere regards.

**George Stephan**

**6.14.05. Ealing, U.K.**

Dear Sirs: Hope all goes well with you and the family.

Thanks again for sending me the HUSCA 7th issue which I read with interest.

I enclose \$25 to cover my membership subscription.

Well done for all the good work you are doing.

I shall do my best to keep in touch. Best wishes.

**Shmouel L. Issa**

**6.24.05. Middlesborough, UK.**

Dear Sirs, In the last issue of HUSCA, I read between the lines hints of "fading enthusiasm" in editing and publishing the magazine. While I agree that this is a tremendous effort that you both have undertaken, but the service that you are providing to HUSCA readers is monumental. Although my wife Janet and I were children when our families left Habbaniya, we both enjoy reading every page of the magazine. The correspondence from the readers that is published in every issue is a testimony that there are many others who enjoy HUSCA.

I realize that there is limited material on how much can be written about the life in Habbaniya. There will come a time that the material suitable for publishing will dwindle. Therefore, I am suggesting to assign the following sections for the readers' participation:

1. The readers to share their memories after leaving Habbaniya (e.g. their whereabouts, work, family, children, grandchildren, etc) accompanied with family photographs.

2. Pros and Cons on controversial topics such as:

(a) Was replacing the Union School with the Iraqi Government Public School good or bad and Why?

(b) What if the Assyrians had served the Iraqi Government instead of serving the British? Would we today be better off, worse, or the same and why?

I am confident that there are many readers who would come up with other suggestions to ensure the HUSCA continuity.

Regards.

**Nathan Michael**

**6.27.05. Glenview, Illinois.**

>>> *Thank you very much for your kind and encouraging words. Nathan, it is not so much about lack of*

*subjects or ideas on Habbaniya to write about as it is the deficiency of enthusiasm and energy at this stage of our life to research, develop and write about them. But you have made an excellent suggestion and hope that some of our younger and more energetic readers will respond to it. And thanks for your generous donation of \$140.00 to HUSCA. We very much appreciate your and Janet's continued support—Ed.*

Dear Sirs: Thank you for the reminder. Yes, I would like to renew my subscription for the HUSCA magazine. Enclosed is a check for \$40. I will be sending you some photos in the future and I hope you will accept them for inclusion in the magazine. For now, I am enclosing one of the pictures. It is dated 1947. The three ladies standing from right to left, is myself, Nageeba Baba, Lujia and Christina. I cannot remember their last names, nor can I remember the two ladies that are seated. Perhaps one of the readers will know who they are.

**Nageeba Baba-Yonan.**

**6.30.05. Turlock, California.**

Dears Sirs: Enclosed you will find a check covering my subs to HUSCA.

Thank you again for all the great efforts you are putting into such a unique work which brings former Habbaniyans together.

With best regards,

**Zia [Moshi Youkhanna]**

**7.1.05. St. Augustin, Germany**

Dear Sirs: Thank you so much for your reminder. Also thank you so much for the great job that you are doing in publishing this interesting HUSCA Magazine. I enjoy reading it very much.

Although we never lived in Habbaniya, we used to visit our relatives over there a lot. Therefore, we met a lot of wonderful people there and felt like we really lived in Habbaniya.

Enclosed is my check for \$20 to cover my subscription and the rest for S & H expenses.

**Jane G. Phelps**

**7/7/05. Fairfax, Virginia.**

Dear Sirs: I thank you for reminding me of my belated subscription payment towards HUSCA Magazine. In fact, I love to continue my membership indefinitely and, enclosed, you will find my check for \$30 to cover the outstanding subscription.

With regard to Sixth Reunion of HUSCA activities to be held, I am sorry I will not be able to attend as my health condition does not allow me to travel.

I respect work that you are displaying and, in fact, I do enjoy reading your HUSCA Magazine.

With best personal regards and best wishes for your good health and happiness, I am

**Benyamin Menashi**

**7.28.05. Phoenix, Arizona.**

Dear Sirs: Many thanks for the latest HUSCA Magazine. As usual, it is flowing with very interesting articles, and these, of course, are achieved through endeavors by you and others who help.

Keep up the good work, and God bless you all.

I am enclosing herewith the \$12.00, being my subscription.

Thanks and best regards.

**Ben Ishmaiel Yalda.**

**8.6.05. West Ealing, UK.**

Dear Sir:

It is 10 am in Sydney and I am on my fourth cup of coffee. I am an early riser 6 am every day (or as they say an early bird catches the worm). I start the day watching the news especially of what is happening at our place of our birth. Not so good. Then I start surfing the web. There are so many Assyrian sites. I noticed you mentioned Zinda. I believe Wilfred's website is excellent and very informative. You mentioned he might create a website for HUSCA magazine. You also mentioned he is a real *umtanaya* and not like others who use free labor and fleece our people in the name of Ator. I believe I know who you are talking about.

However it is my belief that all Assyrian Organizations, political parties, etc. should work for the benefit of our Assyrian people. Each and every one of them has good points. (The Assyrian TV broadcasting from your home town is available in Australia also all over the world. It is good for our older generation who do not surf the web but can watch programs in their own language. I believe that we as a Habbaniya Union School Community Association should not side with or against any Assyrian organizations. The Australian branch of HUSCA have discussed this point and will bring it before the meeting held in Chicago (which I and Dinkha Warda will also attend).

Regarding my letter on British taking care of us at Baquba and your comments. I totally agree with you on so many points that you so clearly show the British have always been for British. They did not build their empire thinking about other nations or even people like us who served them very faithfully. My comments were and I still believe to be true. We were left in an untenable position surrounded by Turks, Persians and Kurds. The Russians left us and went to fight the Communists. The Assyrian people fled for their lives unorganized losing half of our people on their way to Iraq. I still believe had the Brits not been there to protect us from marauding Arab tribes it

would have been the end of Assyrians in Iraq.

What can I say? Each and every one of us has a different view about Habbaniya. I agree with what you have pointed out in your answer to my letter. Habbaniya was not wine or roses but a place we grew to manhood.

I noted that you intend to weed out all letters to editor that have no substance. As editor it is your responsibility to find the best way to serve us. However I believe that these letters have some use. People like to see their names in print and therefore will continue to support the Magazine. (it would be quite useful if the writers of the letters leave their e-mail addresses).

The latest issue of HUSCA is excellent. I really appreciate the hard work and time it takes you to publish it. Please keep up the excellent job you are doing.

Sad news: Shawil Gewargis—Zaia's father died. Shawil was 100 years plus. Not many of that generation left. I will talk to Zaia and Philip Darmo to write an article about his life.

**Yul [Bahram Marbo]**

**8.23.05. Sydney, Australia.**

*>>> Thank you for your comments and observations, which are always welcome.*

*We have decided for the present, as you have suggested, to keep on publishing even the short letters that have nothing of substance to offer except payment, if only to please the writers.*

*Sorry, but up to now (third week of November) we have not had feedback for a bio-obit on Zaia Shawel's late father.—Ed.*

Dear Sirs: Please accept our family's condolences on the death of Ben Yalda's mother. I learnt too late from HUSCA.

Grief is a powerful universal feeling, but it is survivable. Grief always brings a gift. It is the gift of greater sensitivity and compassion for others. We learn to rise above our own grief by reaching out and lessening the grief of others. Nothing can ever take away a mother's love from the heart that holds it dear.

Those that live in our hearts never die.

Enclosed please find my subscription to our beloved magazine, HUSCA. You all are doing a great job and sacrificing a lot of your precious time just to keep us informed about what is going around. Keep on the good work and God Almighty bless you.

**Sargon Levi Gabriel**

**8.24.05. Canada.**

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for the magazine. I need to ask you for a big favor. You have any photos of my father Polus Rasho, or if you can find any, can you please let me know or send me the copy of the print? We do

not have any photos left of him they were all left behind in Iraq. I would appreciate it so much.

Also I would like to thank you for the story on my mom it was very nice. There was one tiny misprint. I was born in 1949 and married in 1969. My daughters and I appreciate the story and thank you again. [\$10 enclosed for new membership.]

**Eileen George**

**6.14.05. Modesto, California.**

>>> Eileen, *The date of your birth is not mentioned in your mother's bio-obituary, and the date of your marriage was supplied to the Editor, with other missing information, by your sister Avigil over the phone. However, the error is regretted, whether ours or your sister's.*

*You will find your father's picture included in the lead group picture illustrating the tennis article in issue #7.—Ed.*

---

Dear Sirs: I enclose obituary Questionnaire in respect of my wife Lampedas Sarkis who passed away on August 1, 2005, at 11:15 hrs.

I have done my best to give all the information that I was able to find and hope it will serve the purpose. I enclose two photographs of Lampedas, that was all she had. I was not able to find any recent pictures of her.

I am very grateful for your condolences and to all members of Founding Committee of our Habbaniya Union School Community Association for being so nice to me in trying to ease my worry.

Finally I enclose a check in the amount of 75 dollars as a donation to our wonderful Magazine which keeps us close to each other.

Thank you very much again.

**Leon Sarkis**

**8.15.05. Arlington Heights, Illinois.**

>>> *Once again we offer our sympathy to you and pray that your beloved wife may rest in peace in Heaven. And we appreciate your monetary gift to HUSCA.—Ed.*

---

Dear Sirs: According to the invitation that you are telling me about it, unfortunately I have not received, but anyway I appreciate your big thought about me. I am sorry to tell you that I am unable to attend that wonderful event (Habbaniya Reunion). God bless you and all the Committee members that are working with you for creating such beautiful events.

Here is \$20.00, \$10.00 is for my subscription and the rest is my donation for your HUSCA. My sincere regards to all HUSCA staff.

Thank you again and may God bless you all.

**Eva DeKelaita.**

**(Undated) Morton Grove, Illinois.**

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Dear Sir: Thank you again for your wonderful e-mail. I always look forward to your response. This check

should be. As for the Chicago trip I was very sad that I could not make it. I was looking forward to seeing you. But hope and pray to see you and all the wonderful people that lived in Habbaniya.

My regards to you.

**Flora [Flowrence Eshoo]**

**Northridge, California.**

**9.22.05.**

>>> *The Editor is grateful to you for the \$20 personal gift you sent against the couple of dollars you owed for the postage on my complimentary book "An Assyrian's Youth Journal." Your thoughtful gesture is sincerely appreciated. I have endorsed your check to HUSCA and hope you will not consider such action as ingratitude. I have never used my writing talent and time to earn money for myself but have offered it as a voluntary service to my people during all the long years I have been writing—Ed.*

---

Dear Sirs: Greetings. I enclose check for \$15 for renewal of my annual subscription. Thank you for sending the Spring-Summer issue to my daughter Anita in lieu of the one that had gone astray in the mail. Your prompt response is appreciated.

With warm regards and best wishes for a Merry Christmas. HUSCA is doing a terrific job!

**Aprim K. Abraham**

**Los Angeles, Calif.**

**8.14.05.**

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Dear Sirs: Enclosed is a money order \$50 to cover my subscription fees for HUSCA Magazine. And balance is donation towards magazine.

I once again congratulate you all for the excellent work done.

Thank you all God bless.

**Joe Aslan**

**Mississauga, Canada**

**9.7.05.**

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Dear Sir, Thank you so much for your heart warming message. It truly made my day. I will always remember the few hours we had at Victor's home. [in Schaumburg, IL] Hopefully in the near future Matt, Nicole and Jonathan will have the opportunity to meet you.

Thanks again for taking the time to write to me. I will save and treasure all your messages.

Sending you and all the family my love and the best of wishes.

**Rosa (Shmaiel) Dillabough**

**Des Plaines, Illinois.**

>>> *I too thank you for the lovely flowers, the delicious cake and gaimar. And we all enjoyed the time and the chat we had with you.*

*Thanks also for your \$20 donation for my book. I have already contributed this amount to HUSCA toward a two-year subscription for you—Ed.*

Dear Sir: Many thanks for the copy of song book you sent me, Ben, and I congratulate you all for its presentation. It obviously meant many hours of hard work of which you should all be proud. I regret not being able to attend the [Reunion] function, but my doctor remains in control of my activities.

I have enclosed the twelve dollars which I believe is outstanding, together with some photographs taken in 1942 of a few of the Scouts and Guides. I enjoyed every moment that I spent at that time working both with the Scouts and Guides.

As you are aware I was fortunate to meet up with Khawa again after a period of 60 years, and she keeps me up to date with any news. My very best wishes to you and your family, and to all my friends of all those years ago who receive copies of your publications.

**Aggie [Jim Haggata]**

**10.1.05. Bexhil on Sea, East Sussex, Eng.**

>>> Thank you for the payment, photos and the compliments as well as your assistance in selecting a few of the songs in the "Sing Along" Book. Although not sharp enough, two photos have been included in this issue—Ed.

Dear Sirs: Sargon and I want to congratulate and thank you, Ben, and the Founding Committee for the successful and oh! so-rewarding 6th reunion which you hosted in Chicago. You can't imagine the joy and fun we had those three days. Friday night was a marvelous idea. The sing along book, the musical talents and the joyful singing made us look like a big extended family who had come together sharing love and memories. It was obvious how happy all the participants were. Thanks also go to all the students, their families and friends who have supported you. But special thanks to you Ben as you carried most of the load.

At one moment I caught a glimpse of you looking stern and firm as one in-charge. You reminded me of my late father Raabi Yacoub. I can picture him as having been like a concerned and caring farmer who had planted good seeds. The harvest has resulted into the best quality crop. You wonderful people have proven over and over your unshakable commitment and dedication to Habbaniya Union School.

Beside the Founding Committee we do not wish to overlook the tremendous load that HUSCA Editor is carrying in willingly keeping the Habbaniya residents in touch through his skillful writings and good memory. He is another example of the good quality crop. We wish him good health.

Through your activities we were pleased to notice the involvement of your second generation! We hope and pray that the torch you are carrying will keep on burning as you pass it on year after year.

Our best wishes are extended to your wonderful wife Leena and lovely family. God bless you all. Love.

**Samira and Sargon Hermes**

**10.31.05. Daly City, California.**

>>> Thank you Samira and Sargon for the compliments and the beautiful expression of your sentiments about



Capt. Ben Yalda with Samira and her husband Sargon Hermes at the Museum during Saturday Chicago City Tour.

*the Reunion. Samira, you have a special way of expressing your feelings that are your own.*

*Your likening your late father to a farmer who had planted good seeds is apt indeed! But unlike your father, Ben Yalda has to be likened to the captain of a ship who is the master of it all. You can see it just by looking at him—his attire, his stance, his expression, his speech, his actions, all spell captain with a capital C—the man most visible at the helm of his ship! —Ed.*

Dear Sir: I hope you are doing well and keeping your chin up and making the best of everything. Life is too precious to be wasted otherwise.

Thank you so much for being so prompt and considerate of others. We really enjoy hearing from you and hope someday soon you will come back to Chicago and spend some more time with us. The photos you sent me were just beautiful.

Enclosed please find the photos I took with my camera.. I hope you like them. Oshana Youram has not developed and printed his film yet. He and Seranosh asked me to thank you for the photos you sent them. They also asked me to convey to you their regards and best wishes. You will be hearing from them very soon.

Take care and say hi to your family.

Love, Joe

**[Pius Zussimas Joseph]**

**11.9.05.**

**Roselle, Illinois.**

>>> Thank you very much for your sentiments, love and regards as well as for the dozen photos you sent. But most of all, I thank you and your very gracious wife Nina for your whole-hearted hospitality and friendship.

*I may sound like a crowing rooster, but I think the two pictures you took of me sitting on your sofa are the best product. Don't I look like a washed-out ambassador from a Third World country?*

*Joe, I'm really trying to keep my chin up. Actually, I'm meek like a mule, but when wronged I can also be stubborn and kick and be cruel. If someone shows respect and consideration for you they have to prove it in deeds and not in flattering words that don't match. "Actions speak much louder than words," don't they?—Ed.*



# Just chit-chatting...about the Chicago trip

## By The Editor

Now that the three-day 6th Habbaniya Reunion in Chicago is but a memory everyone of the 350 participants from Chicago and various corners of the world are by now (early October) back in their old grooves, getting on with their lives as best as they can. Most of them, including me, have a tale to tell, whether glowing or harrowing. My own tale is a pleasant one, but it is not about the ceremonial Reunion, about the pomp and glory of it. It is a personal one about my Chicago trip and visit and it is mostly about friends. And this is basically what I went for, to meet and greet dear friends and former Habbaniya comrades, to dine and drink, chat and sing and even get drunk in the euphoric joy of the magic of the moment, and generally enjoy the company and the social interaction in general. Normally, I don't splash my picture around and brag like some do, but now I have an urge to splurge with the pictures taken on my camera.

Except for half a rainy day, we had a very beautiful weather during my six-day stay in Chicago. It was always cool and sparkling sunny. But the Joe (my son) I met at Sacramento Airport on my return home was a cloudy and stormy guy who had just weathered a very wet and stormy 80-minute drive. He said the thunder and lightning was so scary that it was like driving through exploding bombs, a thing he had never experienced before! In fact, the rain and lightening kept bombarding us all the way to Modesto.

I was glad my health held out pretty well in Chicago and, despite one or two incidents that really ruffled my feathers I thoroughly enjoyed my stay and some of the three-day Habbaniya events. I met friends and acquaintances galore, and that is in fact what we all were there for. The first evening (the Friday Get-together) was a mass of humanity, 250 strong, milling around in the tight hall, meeting and greeting, hugging and kissing, chatting and laughing, with some guzzling and gobbling—whenever



9.17.05. With Pius Joseph aka Joe Pius (right), my host and companion at the three-day Habbaniya Reunion, posing inside Chicago's Oriental Institute Museum. (Photo Oshana.Y. Michael)

it could be sandwiched in between the social obligations. There was a rainbow of emotions, actions and reactions: piercing puzzled stares, surprises and smiles of recognition, back-slapping, exclamations of joy as well as subdued moments of empathy and sadness, while at one corner a happy, hilarious group sang old Hab favorite songs on top of their lungs, let by—who else but Ben Yalda himself, with Andrious Mama Joty, MBE, as his side-kick.

Can you believe it that the first person I met after greeting Ben Yalda and his family at the entrance was Andrious Mama? He was taken aback and shrunk back as I rushed at him and hugged him. I tried to kiss him, but he drew back his head as if I was a cobra!

He seemed a little bit under the weather and had a worried expression on his face. But I'd heard his long face, too, had suffered an attack of shingles this summer (ouch!). I also knew his wife Victoria has a rather serious heart problem. Or were these the real reasons for his unfriendly mood?

I spent most of my time that evening roaming about and finding old friends and acquaintances. Some of those I found I couldn't recognize right away—or vice versa. I guess the physical "geographies" of all of us have drastically changed during the years. I sometimes even greeted "strangers," men and women, and asked them who they were. Most of the time, it ended in an embrace and a short chat. A few old friends even sought me out to greet me.

After Andrious Mama, I met Parmany (Nadirsha) Landi and we both recognized each other immediately. And some of you know how outgoing Parmany is. She was really into the spirit of the moment, enjoying herself. I later met her older sister Marganita Gergo. A nice lady too.

I saw Dr. Khoshaba Aboona (whom I had already



9.17.05. Some of the "Reunionists" on our bus during Saturday's Chicago Tour. Back: Joe Pius; couples: Yul "Millionaire" Marbo and wife Norma (right) and Ammo Warda and wife Nestornia (left). Half face is of Raabi Albert Babilla. And guy "shooting" me is Oshana Y. Michael.

met recently at his sister Julie's home here in Modesto). He was with Yosip and Benyamin Gewargis Shabo, all Brother Wiska's cronies. I'd never met the Shabo Brothers, but I knew them right away. But d'you know something? I was under the embarrassingly mistaken impression that the white-haired guy was Ben—who turned out to be Joe! Ben is married to Juliet, my best friend Eshay Baba's sister-in-law.

Another Wiska's friends I met was Sargon, son of the late Levi Gabriel the chief clerk of the "Cash Section" of our AHQ Air Ministry Audit Office. He introduced to me his wife and told me about his children. I spotted him again at the Banquet. I brought him to our table and got him reacquainted with my guests, his father's *qarevta* Maria Lazar (who had not seen him for ages) and her son Victor.

Sargon is a school admirer of Julia Aboona and Wiska and alleges that in Ramadi High School Julia obtained the highest final exam average in the whole Dulaim state followed by Wiska. Actually, according to Wiska, Julia was first in Dulaim in her class for girls and he was second to an Arab in their class for boys. Boys and girls had separate schools.

The Shabos' sister, Regina (Gewargis) Jones of Toronto and I have been in correspondence with each other since 1992, but we haven't met since Hab school days of the early 1940s. We were looking forward to finally meeting at the Reunion. Unfortunately, due to her sister Madeleine's sudden illness, they had to cancel their trip. However, I wish both Madeleine and Regina good health and happiness. Perhaps there will be a second chance!

One of the old friends I hadn't see in person longest (perhaps more than 55 years), was Mishael Lazar Solomon, Dan's eldest brother. I knew him right away and shouted "Mishael Lazar Sulaiman!" But much as he scrutinized my face, he could not place me until I told him. Then he gave me a real bear hug, followed by kisses. His late younger brother, Nichola (Niko), was my Maratha Lines friend in Hinaidi and Mishael's wife Axo was my teen-aged neighbor in Habbaniya's C2 in pre-1942 years. Unfortunately, Axo wasn't with him due to her very poor health.

Someone turned me around, smiling into my face, and asked if I could recognize him. I gave up. It turned



9.15.05. With my first host Victor Hawil Lazar (right) by the live-flower-bedecked Saint Mary's statue installed in front of his home in Schaumburg.

out to be our engineer in London, Youel Shawel Tammo. He was one of brother Wiska's friends. His arm around her shoulders, he introduced his smiling wife, Margaret. I greeted her in English and to my surprise she responded in Assyrian! Then I remembered she was the Assyrian-speaking Irish wife who lived in the Assyrian township of Dora for several years. A lovely lady!

I asked Youel about his brother Shmouel (Shuwa) from Boston. He pointed him out to me, but Shuwa couldn't recognize me until I said my name.

One of Wiska's best friends I met was Dr. Shumon Raabi Ammanuel Shumon. I saw him standing outside the Banquet hall with Dr. Khoshaba Aboona and the Shabo Brothers on Sunday evening. He still looked good. I gave him a very hearty embrace. I wanted to take his picture for Wiska, but my camera was on our party table inside. Actually, I had decided to take the picture of every old friend I met, but in the excitement I forgot all about the picture-taking most of the time.

Boy, at times how I wished you were there with us Wiska, among all the friends. Some of the Ramadi group members were really looking forward to seeing you again, among them Warda Goriel; friends, notwithstanding their "lost youth: the gray hairs, wider waistlines, wrinkled faces, receding hairlines, thick glasses, perhaps less physical endurance, and God knows what else," as you wrote. Yes, these are all the ravages of decades, merciless years that are still cherished and celebrated, despite today's creaking bones and moans and groans!

A couple of weeks before the Reunion our community in California put to rest Shlimoon "Chimoo" Youav Malik. He wasn't the first and won't be the last of us to go. There were many comrades I saw in 1992 Reunion who weren't with us this time around. A few that come to mind: The late George Kelaita, Fraidon "Goalchie" Orahim, Nimrod "Kookoosh" Lazar, Menashi Shindo, Polous Nimord Benjamin, Yosip Eramia Benjamin, and his handsome brother Babajan "Baajo," Raabi Dinkha Zaia Gewargis, Awigil (Shmouel) Zia, John Baijo Rehana, Raabi Khamis de Baz, William (Raabi Yacoub) Jacob, Julius Nweia Shabbas (the editor who gave Habbaniya so much coverage in Nineveh Magazine for 11 years) and my own wife Blandina (Ewan) Pius. And we must not forget the late great entertainer William



9.18.05. At Joe Pius's home in Roselle on Sunday looking like a washed-out ambassador of a Third World country.

David Shino and his equally well-known older sister, “the terrible teacher” Raabi Jane (David) Rizk, not to mention some others who could not make the trip due to age-related problems; friends like Benyamin Menashi, John Roovil Michael and his sister Alice with husband Youel Baba, Mary and John Isaac, Eshaya Hormis Isaac, and a few others.

And it wasn't only Shlimon who was once young, strong and vibrant, as *Khaalu* Yooshia Kakko Poloss thinks. I guess we all were, to one degree or the other, weren't we? But time is minutely but surely tearing down our temples and pretty soon there will be nothing left of us but our memories, whether pleasant or unpleasant. But that's how the world goes: You're young today, old tomorrow, and gone the day after. But are we all making the most of our todays without worrying about our tomorrows?

I know most of us oldsters are still living in the past, still looking back over our shoulders and worrying about our future, while a few are still planning and working to conquer the world. Our memories are certainly precious and we should hang on to them as long as we can, for our memories are, in a way, our mental memoirs, our histories. But we should never lose sight of what we have today. Live today to the full and let tomorrow take care of itself, because who knows if there will be a tomorrow!

Our friend *Raabi* Philimon Darmo of Australia sent me a poem his wife has pasted near his computer. It reads:

“Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is mystery. Today is a gift.  
That is why it is called. The present.”

How very true!

Anyway, let us quit philosophizing and get back on down-to-earth track: So, after wandering around and asking, I was overjoyed to finally locate my dear friend Eshay Orahim Baba, with his wife Sandra and her youngest brother Sargon Isaac. Eshay and I were classmates and were virtually inseparable friends for more than 25 years in Habbaniya and Baghdad.

We sat together for a while and chatted over a drink. Sandra looked good, but Eshay—whom my late brother-in-law Avia Ewan used to call “Brown Bomber”—is a shadow of his former self. He has lost a lot of weight and, like most of us, is bedeviled by his own age-related problems.

But it's funny in what light each one of us sees others!



9.16.05. At the get-together with Dr. Khoshaba (Rab-Tremma Yacoub) Abbona (right) and (left) Joseph and Ben (Rab-Tremma Gewargis) Shabo.

I believe—and I felt—that I was blooming with good cheer and well-being in Chicago. But after I got back home, Eshay told me on the phone that he was worried about me at his home (when I visited with them) because I looked “bloated and shiny!”

Couldn't it have been because of my euphoric joy?

I met another friend I had last seen about 38 years ago. I will not mention his name to avoid embarrassing him. In Habbaniya he had an athletic built and was several years younger than me. But like me, he lost his wife several years ago and these last few years apparently haven't been very kind to him. What little hair he has left now is snow-white, his dark cheeks are sunken and he's slightly stooped. I honestly believe that if we stand together anyone would estimate him to be several years my senior. But he looked into my face closely and said: “Minashi, you know, you have changed so very, very much!” I smiled and said: “Yes...we all have changed.”

I guess, like beauty, age and looks are in the eyes of the beholder!

I visited Eshay and Sandra and family in Skokie on Monday evening and enjoyed dinner and four happy hours with them. I'm quite familiar with the whole family. All the members were there: Both of their daughters, Svetlana and Suzy, with Suzie's youngest kid; both of their sons Bob and Ashur, with their wives Nahrain and Khairiya, and a few kids; two of Sandra's sisters, Fahima and Violet (with a couple of big-guy sons). We did a lot of reminiscing, chatting and laughing and had a great time together.

Just before visiting Eshay and family, I dropped in on Avigil and Eshaya Hormis Isaac and family, who live a few blocks away. Victor and his younger brother William Hawil Lazar were with me. We spent an hour with the family. I had briefly met Avigil and her three children with her younger sister Margaret at the Friday get-together and promised to visit Eshaya at home. (Due to my commitment to these two families I had to apologize to Nathan Michael that I couldn't accept his and his wife Janet's kind dinner invitation for that night.)

I was glad to note that Eshaya, who was paralyzed on one side, has fairly recovered after an extensive course of physical therapy. Although he walks with a cane, his



9.17.05. With *Bne-Maata* Patros Khammo Oshana (right) and his wife Shamiran at the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago.

speech, though somewhat slow, is quite coherent. Eshaya and I have known each other since boyhood and have worked together at Audit Office at AHQ for seven years in the forties and fifties. My late wife Blandina and I also visited Eshay's and Eshaya's families during the First Reunion in 1992. Avigil had then lost her youngest sister, Anna.

Victor and Willy and Lazar Oshana took care of my transportation to Skokie to visit my friends on Monday as well as to the airport for my return home on Tuesday afternoon.

At the get-together I also ran into my old friend Yul "Millionaire" Bahram Marbo with his wife, Norma. Both of us were truly happy to see each other again and we embraced warmly. We chatted a little bit, but the hum-drum of the occasion put a quick end to it. We bumped into each other again on the tour bus and at Chicago's Oriental Institute Museum of Chicago on Saturday and at the Sunday Banquet.

Yul, Habbaniya's long-distance swimming champ, is still big and strong and gregarious as before. He told me he's retired and that he and his wife do a lot of traveling. Good for them! We recalled, with laughter, the public-speaking class we, along with several other "dumb" guys, had at the Employees' Club in late 1940s.

One of the persons I was really looking forward to meeting was Khouna "Gloola" Youkhanna, whom I hadn't seen for many, many years. I met him at the Saturday get-together with his wife Nina Baba Mirza (whose family lived in our C2 "block" pre-1942), when Khouna used to visit her family regularly. I also met the couple at the Sunday Banquet. Khouna looked well. He is still chubby and I took advantage of his rosy kissable cheeks as I stood at his table and chatted. Khouna was the entertaining life of our class. You should hear him tell of the time the late *Raabi* Aprim Baz (may he rest in peace) pulled me by the arms in anger for a mischief, thus tipping our school desk over upon his own leg and foot. "The next day," Khouna would say, "*Raabi* Aprim limped into the classroom to teach us Bible in Assyrian. He had a log under his arm for support and a quilt wrapped around his injured leg!"

I met for the first time Sargon Malik as well as Ashur Dick Sargon, with their wives. Actually, I had a message for Ashur Sargon about an article on his father. So I went



9.19.05. At my friend Eshay Baba's home in Skokie. From left, Suzie and daughter, Sandra, Eshay, me, Bob, Svetlana (front), Khairiya (Bob's wife) and Fahima (Sandra's older sister). Eshay's younger son Ashur & wife Nahrain & children (not in pic.) were also with us.

and had a brief exchange with him at his table. But Sargon Malik introduced himself at the Friday get-together. Unfortunately I didn't have a chance to hold a chat with him to know him better.

To be truthful, I couldn't quite place Sargon because I'm not sure if I had seen him before in person, but he seemed to know me, perhaps from our Coronet Bookstore days in Baghdad. I had a feeling he was son of either the late Shmouel Malik or of his younger brother, Babajan Malik. Ben Yalda couldn't confirm this later, but had a few good words to tell me about Sargon and his American wife. I later learned that he was Babajan's son. Sargon, I'll take a rain check, man. With the hope that you will not hold it against me, God willing, perhaps we'll have another chance to know each other better.

Shlimoon Youkhanna is another person I hadn't seen for a long, long time. We had recently exchanged a series of emails and he looked forward to meeting me at the Reunion. Unfortunately, his former mother-in-law Lapia, an educated woman of the older generation, passed away just before the Reunion. Out of respect for her memory, Shlimoon forewent the Reunion festivities. But he came and stood by the hotel entrance on the Banquet night until I arrived so that he could just meet and greet me—and leave. It was a very thoughtful gesture, which I truly appreciate.

I also ran into a couple of *Bne-Maati*, Patros "Petta" Khammo Oshana and Awisha David Younan, at the Friday get-together. Patros found me, but I found Awisha. I sat and chatted with Awisha for a while, asking him about his family and his two sisters, Maria and Victoria. I even asked him about the whereabouts of his sisters' close companion in Habbaniya, Margaret Awisha (whose beauty had mesmerized a few of us), but he drew a blank. In Habbaniya Margaret was deep into the social life, but she seems to have completely withdrawn now.

I ran into "Petta" and his wife again on Saturday at the museum and at the Sunday Banquet he introduced me to his two daughters who have apparently come up in the world and of whom he was evidently very proud. In fact, I managed several minutes of dancing *khigga* between him and one of his daughters, before I ran out of gas, left the line—and fished out my tiny nitro bottle!



9.15.05. My hosts (from right) Julia and Victor; next Victor's mother Maria (late Hawil "Jinja's" widow); *khname* Birishwa Oshana; and her son Lazar, who also whizzed me around town.

At the Banquet I went around meeting and sitting briefly with a few other people, among them my host's sister, Margaret Joseph, sitting with two of her girl friends next to our table. I hadn't seen her since I left Baghdad in October, 1981. I met her brother Toma with his wife *Raabi* Joan the first night, but I was disappointed that their brother Francis never showed up at the events.

I met *Raabi* Albert Babilla and my friend Hubert Babilla the first night and on the bus. But I went to their table and greeted their sister Jany and their younger brother Youel with his wife Adaina (my classmate at Baghdad's German Language Institute in early 1960s). Travel Agent and my late brother "Appy's" good friend "*Khaalul*" Shlimon Khammo was another friend I met the first night. He, with his wife Mariam, was our table partner on Sunday and he treated me to a "shot." Other table partners were my hosts Pius Joseph (aka my son's namesake Joe Pius) and wife Nina and Nina's cousin Oshana Youram and wife Seranoush, and my guests Victor and his mother Maria Lazar.

Naturally, I met many other friends and acquaintances, among them the Warda siblings—Enwia, Odisho, Julia, Sisliya (pitty husband Yarro was not there!) and Dinkha—John Aghajan and wife Lowas and John's saxophonist brother Johnson with whom I had a brief chat at the coffee urn. I also met many others whom I had seen not very long ago.

Before I forget, I want to mention that one of my most enjoyable occasions was our few hours visit to Juliana's Restaurant for lunch immediately following our Chicago Bus Tour. The 200 Reunion guests were served with trayfuls of rice and lula kebabs, with pickles, that tasted like the real thing, and coffee flowed for the thirsty. In addition to the delicious meal, Albert Oscar, the owner, entertained us for more than two hours with his beautiful Assyrian dance and Habbaniya sentimental songs, accompanied by his own band and the music of John and Johnson Aghajan and Wania Benyamin. Some of the guests went to the *khigga* line and really shook a leg and whirled around a waltz. We had a very exciting time!

In Chicago, I bunked with relatives. I had made arrangements to stay with Victor and his family when my dear long-time friend Joe Pius (and son of my life-long



9.17.05. Posing with me is Parmany (Nadirsha) Landi (a former school mate) by Assyrian Winged Bull at the Oriental Institute Museum of Chicago.

friend the late Zussimas Joseph) had left me a message on my machine. I called him the next day and he kept insisting on picking me up at the airport and taking me to his home to stay. But after some "debate" we agreed to decide this after my settling in at Victor's first.

At Victor's home the first two days I was quite comfortable and enjoyed his and his family's company. Both Victor and his wife Julie (daughter of late Mishael "Tubby" of Habbaniya's Employees' Club canteen) are very hospitable people and Blandina and I also stayed with them on our Reunion visit in 1992 and they did everything to make us feel at home. Their two beautiful children are now fully grown-up. Amy, their eldest, a very intelligent college girl, is a very sweet and kind person, with a constant smile on her face, and Paul is a nice and gentle guy—but handsome enough to be easily mistake for a Hollywood movie star! Victor and Julie should be very proud of them. And I believe they are.

Shortly after Maria and I arrived at Victor's home, we were visited by *Khnam* Lazar Oshana and his visiting mother and on our first morning Blandina's cousin Rosa (Lazar) Dillabough, one of Shmaiel & Margy's daughters, dropped in with a nice bunch of fresh flowers, a delicious cake and some home-made *gaimar*. We all ploughed in and had a hearty breakfast together.

In her mid- or late-fifties, I assume, Rosa is tall for her sisters and still pretty. She has a keen sense of relationship and is bubbling up with interest to listen and talk about the good ol' days. She asked about almost the whole range of our relatives. And Brother Wiska and family, with Brother Koiya in the forefront, were the topic of much of our conversation, and the funny stories I told about the two never failed to generate bursts of laughter.

Rosa also indicated that she's a keen reader. I gave her a complimentary copy of my last book, *An Assyrian's Youth Journal* (of which I also gave a dozen copies to Ben Yalda to hand out) and promised to send Rosa a number of Wiska's stories. She gave me a \$20 donation for my book, but I said I'd use the money for her HUSCA subscription. True to my word, I mailed her photocopies of several of Wiska's home-produced stories together with my last spare copies of the last two issue of HUSCA and emailed her a few pictures as well.

Anyway after bunking two days at Victor's home,



9.17.05. Posing with me (capped) at Chicago's Oriental Institute Museum, are (from right) Dinkha Warda, Joe Pius, and Odisho Warda.

Joe Pius drove over on Friday and, after a short courtesy chat, took me, along with my “pots and pans,” and installed me in one of their several rooms, complete with private bath.

Joe and Nina have a very beautiful two-storey house made entirely of burned brick, with several well-furnished and decorated rooms and four private bathrooms, in the quiet, high-class suburb of Roselle. It has rich expansive lawns, with colorful flowerbeds, and immediately behind their unfenced backyard lawn is a natural forest reserve, in which, Nina told me, sometimes “deer and antelopes roam,” popping up to “inspect” their lawn in winter.

Nina is the youngest daughter of Habbaniya’s *Raabi* Sheem Mikhael and the sister of Michael and Archdeacon



9.16.05. My hosts, Pius Joseph (left), aka Joe Pius, and wife Nina (second from right), with the Reunion Chairman, Mr. Ben Yalda, his wife Leena and daughter Dorothy. On right is Seranoush, wife of Nina’s cousin Oshana Youram Michael.

ta Rica! He is an intelligent and resourceful person and a very successful businessman engineer. And this is not just me saying this out of gratitude or to soft-soap the good guy. Ask any Chicago guy or gal who knows the couple and they will attest to this.

Like Roselle, most of the Chicago suburbs are clean and attractive, with generous green lawns. I took a long walk one morning from Victor’s home in Schaumburg on their tidy sidewalks, 20 feet off the main street. The weather was invigoratingly cool and crispy sunny and my pleasure was enhanced by an abundance of squirrels skittering about on the grass and up and down the street trees, nibbling, and perking and cheering me up.

Well, I guess I’ve just about emptied my bagful. This is just my personal story of the six-day Chicago trip. The “official” HUSCA report on the events at the three-day Reunion will follow. I’m just waiting for a big collection of pictures from the Windy City. Keep your fingers crossed and hope you’ve been “shot”—even if only from behind the front-liners.

My Christmas and New Year Greetings and very best wishes to everyone...and hope I didn’t put you to sleep! —**Mikhael K. Pius**



9.17.05. At Dr. Soukha’s Assyrian Museum in Chicago, with *Raabi* Albert A. Babilla (left) and Joe Pius.



9.17.05. With Oshana Youram Michael (left), one of my companions at the three-day Reunion events, posing at the Oriental Institute Museum of Chicago. (Photo courtesy Oshana Y. Michael)

Ninus S. Michael of California. She is a very clean and tidy housewife and gentle, caring and hospitable person. Joe is also a very nice guy. Both of them are friendly and sociable and have very generous hearts. Nina is a member of the Assyrian Church of the East and Joe is a staunch Catholic. But they both compromise in church attendance and they take pleasure in house guests and entertaining friends, including H.H. Mar Dinkha, the Patriarch. They virtually embarrassed me with their hospitality and were my companions throughout the three-day Reunion, along with Nina’s cousin Oshana Youram and his wife Seranoush, another nice couple. Joe himself has done so much to help both family members and friends as well as strangers in Baghdad and—of all places—in Cos-

## Bombing damage to Mar Gewargis Church of Habbaniya in last summer



Pictures courtesy of Dr. Sami Sharlman of Syria and Sh. Elisha Simon of Sacramento, California

# 6th Habbaniya Reunion Ceremonies

By Mikhael K. Pius



9.17.05. Mr. Chairman Benyamin Yalda, head and chest above all, making announcements to the Reunion crowd at Chicago's Assyrian Museum during the Saturday's Chicago City Bus Tour, while the cameras roll.

For the 6th time (seventh if we are to count the special party given to surviving former Habbaniya teachers in October, 1994), the Habbaniya Reunion activities were held by the Chairman, Mr. Benyamin Yalda, with co-operation from his co-founders, Sargon Aboona, Zacharia Odisho Zacharia and Odisho Warda and with some assistance from family members and friends. (Zacharia invested a lot of time and work, but was unable to attend due to health reasons.) The Reunion lasted three days, September 16 through 18, 2005, and consisted of a number of events.

The first event was on Friday, September 16. It was held in a Holiday Inn hall in Skokie. It was a get-together when some 250 people were packed together in the hall to meet, get acquainted, and exchange conversation and memories over snacks and refreshments. Mr. Chairman gave a speech to inform the assembly of certain things about the Reunion.

During the few-hour get-together, some people went about meeting people they knew and making new acquaintances; others sought out old friends, though sometimes it was not easy recognizing each other because of the physical changes the past decades had wrought upon each of them; some concentrated on enjoying the food and drinks; while some others preferred the euphoria of singing

favorite Habbaniya songs on top of their lungs from the sing along book under the direction of Mr. Chairman to the accompaniment of accordion, saxophone and piano music by John and Johnson Aghajan and Sargon Yalda, with "conduction" from Charles Ganja and Andrious Mama.

The second day, Saturday, a Chicago City round bus tour was arranged to commence from Holiday Inn, the base of the Reunion in Skokie. Some 200 people piled into two buses that drove them 80 minutes down to Chicago's Oriental Institute Museum, where a small collection of Assyrian artifacts were displayed. After a short visit to the museum, the buses returned their passengers to the Assyrian Museum (owned by an Assyrian named Dr. Solkha) in Skokie for another brief visit. The museum had copies of some Assyrian artifacts and pictures and Dr. Solkha was at hand to explain to the crowd about his museum and some of the things in it. As far as this writer and some other people he talked to were concerned, the best part of this trip was the return drive along Chicago's famous Lake Shore Drive and the sight of the Chicago skyscrapers.

Following the visits, the visitors were transported to Juliana Restaurant around three o'clock for lunch. The lunch was arranged with the restaurant owner, Mr. Albert Oskar, who is also the lead singer for his band at the restaurant.



Being of Habbaniya origin, Albert had agreed to provide the meal for the tour participants at the reduced price of \$12.00. And it was a delicious lunch of trays full of colored rice and lula kebabs, along with pickles, all with a distinct Baghdad-like flavor, plus urns of coffee for the pouring.

Albert is a noted singer among most of the Assyrian communities in the States and is well known among some other Assyrian communities elsewhere and his cabaret restaurant seemed to be a favorite with the Chicago Assyrians and other Middle Easterners. For almost two hours Albert Oskar, accompanied by his band and supplemented by the saxophone and accordion music of the Aghajan brothers and Wania Benyamin, entertained the enthusiastic crowd in his beautiful voice, with dance songs—and a few sentimental Habbaniya songs—and jokes, while some of the more energetic and enthusiastic ladies and gentlemen had a whale of a time dancing and prancing in Assyrian khigga and western steps. It was really a very pleasant three hours and in my mind the highlight of the three-day Reunion because it was a care-free affair with hardly any ceremonial formalities when the participants really let their hair down and enjoyed the food, the music and songs, the jokes, the laughter, and the dancing and prancing.

After the hall door was opened and the dammed guests flowed in and found their seats, the formal Sunday evening banquet was launched by a short announcement by MC Atorina Zoumaya, a vibrant, attractive non-ex-Habbaniyan. After this came the recorded American and Assyrian national anthems, a one-minute silence to the dearly departed former Habbaniyan friends, followed by the ceremonial flag parade.

As usual, Leena Yalda carried the American flag and Louas Aghajan the Canadian. Sarah Kathryn Bowie, Raabi Albert Babilla's young, handsome granddaughter, bore the British, Jenny Mirza the Australian, Shoni Zaia the Assyrian and the late Raabi Yacoub's daughter Samira Sargon the Union School flag. The parade was followed by a round of applause. (Wives of three Reunion co-founders were not in the parade this time; Almas Aboona and Ampolia Warda did not take part and Helen Zacharia was absent due to health reasons.)

The MC called on Raabi Albert Babilla, one of the only two surviving teachers of Union School, to say a blessing before the meal. This done, the dinner got underway while the MC announced and described the raffle prizes. The main dish, which was stuffed chicken, with barely cooked vegetables, was terrible!

Dinner was followed by Mr. Chairman's speech: Mr. Benyamin Yalda stepped to the podium and gave his keynote address as his two co-founders, Sargon Aboona and Odisho Warda, stood on each side of him, hands clasped behind their backs. (Davis David was substituted for California's absent Zacharia O. Zacharia.)

Ben Yalda gave a brief history of the Reunion since its inception in 1992 (including a special dinner party given in 1989 in memory of the late Raabi Yacoub) and explained how this 6th Reunion had been arranged and managed, basically by himself with some assistance from Sargon Aboona (who along with his wife had experienced health

problems) and with help from family members and others, because co-founders Odisho Warda and wife lived far away and Zacharia O. Zacharia and his wife had health problems. He also pointed out that the number of 350 guests was over the hall capacity, but that was not his fault because many of the guest did not respond to his registration deadline in time to enable him to rent a bigger place.

Then Mr. Chairman went on to thank and express his appreciation to a list of people, among them Assyrian Museum owner Dr. Soukha, AUA guests of honor John Nimrod and Homer Ashurian, singer Albert Oskar, MC Atorina Zoumaya, his own founding members and regional organizing members, with their family members, the hotel management, etc. etc...Next Odisho Warda, on cue, eased his way into reading a list of Andrious Mama Jotyar's talents and qualifications and announced that he had been awarded an MBE by Queen Elizabeth (which news was four years old!) for "improving relations among the Assyrian communities." This over, he then turned to a commendation about his own brother Dinkha, listing his achievements and his influential relations with top government officials in Australia.

After that Mr. Chairman presented special awards to the last two surviving Union School teachers, Raabi Albert Babilla himself, and to Ashur Sargon on behalf of his sick mother Raabi Vergin (Patros) Sargon. Each recipient delivered a speech: Raabi Albert expressed his gratitude and appreciation with a catch in his throat. Ashur thanked and praised Ben Yalda and the Reunion for honoring his mother and recalled how she once gave him a memorable advice about Habbaniya and its people. He then in return presented Mr. Chairman with a personal gift along with \$1000 donation "for Habbaniya."

After a round of khigga, as usual Mr. Chairman then presented award gifts to his co-founders Sargon Aboona and Odisho Warda (and later to Adeleine Audisho on behalf of her father Zacharia O. Zacharia), as well as to some regional organizers such as John Aghajan, Dinkha Warda, Andrious Mama, and Yul Marbo. The presentations were punctuated with handshakes and cheek kisses, while some of the recipients in turn awarded Mr. Chairman reciprocal gifts, followed by handshakes and kisses, all photographed and video taped.

Mr. Chairman then announced and thanked Mr. "Manashi" Pius for donating some copies of his book "An Assyrian's Youth Journal" to those who wanted it, and later apologized to Manashi Pius in person for having forgotten his repeated request to announce him to read out a little story on behalf of his brother Basil (Wiska) Pius of Montana.

Then raffle tickets were drawn and prizes awarded and long lines of khigga dancers went round and round to various tunes of music and song, punctuated by some western dances, for the next few hours before the Banquet evening came to a close. To wind up the evening, a group picture was taken of the one-third of the crowd that had stayed behind. Of the 80 people portrayed, less than half of them were former students of Habbaniya and some of the others were not even former Habbaniyanas.

In all the speech-making Mr. Chairman did during the three days, not a single word was spoken about HUSCA, the magazine that has made so much impact on its hundreds of members in its short life span of about four years! ♦

# Reunion Pictures: MISCELLANEOUS SCENES



1  
Portrait taken after Sunday Banquet of one-third of the 350 participants. Of the 80 people shown less than half were ex-Union School students.



2  
A scene from the Friday night's get-together at Holiday Inn when some 250 people attended to get acquainted with each other.



3  
Albert Oskar. With his band, singing some favorite Habbaniya songs, at his Juliana Restaurant during dinner, accompanied also by John Aghajan (left) Wania Benyamin and Johnson Aghajan.



4  
Wania Benyamin (center) and the Aghajan Brothers, John (left) and Johnson who provided music, along with D.J. Zohrab Band, at the Banquet night.



5  
Pianist Sargon Yalda and accordionist John Aghajan playing music in accompaniment to some popular Habbaniya songs sang at the Reunion at the get-together meeting.



6  
Led by Chairman Ben Yalda, some of the 250 participants at Friday get-together singing favorite Habbaniya songs to Sargon Yalda's piano accompaniment.

# THE HONORABLE AND THE HONORED



Mr. Chairman, Ben Yalda, flanked by his Reunion retinue, the Founding & Organizing Committee members and Banquet MC.



The flag bearers: R-L Leena Yalda, Louas Aghajan, Jenny Mirza, Sarah Bowie, Shouni Zaia and Samira (Bet-Yacoub) Sargon.



Mr. Chairman delivering his keynote address at the Banquet flanked by his Founding Members.



Mr. Chairman presenting award to *Raabi* Albert Babilla, one of the 2 surviving teachers



Ashur Sargon receiving from Mr. Chairman award on behalf of his mother Raabi Verjin.



Adeleine Audisho, posing with Mr. Chairman Ben Yalda and Founding member Odisho Warda, with the award for her absent father, Zacharia O. Zacharia who could not attend.



Mr. Chairman's guests of honor. From right: Mr. Homer Ashurian and former state senator John Nimrod with friends.

# DANCING COUPLES



Adeline & Yakou Audisho of Chicago.



Liza & Davis E. David of Modesto.



Louas & Ninos Patros Isho of Modesto.



Guy & Linda Zaia of San Jose



Sunny Ibrahim and ? Chicago



Dr.Rovil & Welhemina, Chicago



Doris & Charles Ganja, Canada



Romina & Ashur Sargon, Chicago.



Agnes & David Shaul Benjamin, Turlock.



John Yalda of Las Vegas with Verjin Marcus

# DANCING COUPLES



Victoria & Johnson Aghajan, Canada.



Almas & Sargon Abbona, Skokie.



Leena & Ninos Younan, Chicago.



Rita Yousif & Michael Aghajan



N/K Couple.



Alice and Leonard Andy



Flora & Kirk Kiryakos



Fiona Odisho & brother Bob Yonan



Atourina & (farther?) Lajin Zoumaya



Yoel Babilla & Helen ?

# THE KHIGGA DANCERS



R-L: Wania Benyamin, Johnson Aghajan, Dr. Khoshaba Aboona, and Sisliya Kaanon. At table Shlimon Khammo.



R-L: Jackie & Tony Khoury, Avia & Shammiran Khamo, and Benjamin G. Shabo.



R-L: N/K, Benyamin & Shamiram Zachaira, Jane Zacharia, N/K, Asmar Zacharia, Bernadette Zomaya and Hilda Abraham



R-L: Dolphine Abraham, N/K, Marina Odisho, Bernadette Zomaya, Basso Badal, Atorina Zomaya, Shoni Zaia.



R-L: Gitton Goriel (?), Alice & Leonard Andy, and face of Shlimon Khammo.



R-L: Gina Zia, Flora Kiryakos, Angel & Abe Yousif, Hubert & Blandina Adam.

# THE KHIGGA DANCERS



R-L: Parmany Landi, Jenny Shindo, Rose Audiso, Leena Yonan, N/K, N/K.



R-L: Benyamin Zacharia, Sargon Aboona, Baitoo Kanoon, Shouni Zaia.



R-L: N/K, Alice Andy, Flora Kiryakos, Shouni Zaia, Dorothy Yalda, John Yalda, Verjin Marcus and Nahrain Youkhanna,.



R-L: Fabronia Youmaran, N/K, Marina Odisho, N/K, Shoni Zaia, N/K, Dorothy Yalda, Flora Kiryakos, and Fiona Odisho.



Five N/K Khigga dancers; Mikhael (Minashi) Pius, Editor & compiler of HUSCA Magazine, and Victor Lazar in the fore-



R-L: Michael Aghajan, N/K, Wania Benyamin, Louas Aghajan and daughter Rita Yousif.

# THE SOCIAL SCENES



MC Atorina Zomaya (forefront) and Chicago Tour participants who were assigned camera and video photographer. Known ones right: Nahrain, Michael & Malko; Left Parmany, Marganita, David.



Some of the riders on the other bus. Joe Pius (back), Yul Marbo and wife Norma, Oshana Youram and (left) Emanuel Warda; Front: Raabi Albert Babilla and brother Hubert. (Photo MKP)



Back: Bob Yonan & sister Fiona Odisho; Front: Emmanuel Malik (right) and Apnuel & Gladis Barkhou.



Mikhael Pius (Editor, HUSCA Magazine) flanked by former best friend Eshay Baba and wife Sandra and Sargon Isaac. (Photo MKP)



Warda Siblings: Julia (scarf), Odisho (center), Sisliya (grey blouse) and Dinkha, with friends from Australia. On left: Artoush Sulaiman



Ben Youkhanna Khoshaba (left) with his friends Adeleine & Yakou Audisho (next to him) and other friends.



Mary & Avisha David Younan, Canada.



Mary and Dan Lazar Solomon of Modesto.



Diana & Sargon Babajan Malik, Chicago.



# THE SOCIAL SCENES



The other side of our party's Banquet night table. From right, Oshana and Seranosh Michael, Mariam receiving wine into her glass from hubby Shlimon Khammo and in middle Nina and Joe Pius. ( Photo MKP)



At Juliana's Restaurant for the very delicious lunch with inspiring old songs and humor by owner Albert Oskar. R-L: Oshana & Seranosh Y. Michael, Joe & Nina Pius, Nano & Lilly Yousif. (Photo MKP)



Musicians John Aghajan (bow tie), & Saxophonists Johnson Aghajan and Wania Benyamin and their friends.



In center, former student Matti Sogul Kanon, with wife Maryam and her younger sister Dr. Baroni; Patros Oshana on left.



Pius (Peyour) Haddad (right), Ninos Yonan & Edmond Baba



L-R: Samira (Bet-Yacoub) Sargon & her former pupil Louas Aghajan, with Marina Odisho (?).



Regina Harutunian (right) and Friend, Dr. Baroni.



Assyrian Docu. film producer Nina Yacobova from Armenia



Michael Solomon & cousins Nahrain Youkhanna & Youlia Falconer.



Ousta Moushi's son Aram Khoshaba with sister-in-law.

## Native Habbaniyan is named “Father of the Year 2005”

Story by Mikhael K. Pius

On Mother’s Day and on Father’s Day each year American-Assyrian Civic Club of Turlock honors two of its active parents. This year’s Father of the Year honor went to a native Habbaniyan, Albert Eramia Benjamin, a deacon of *Mar Toma Assyrian-Chaldean Catholic Church* in Turlock.

*Shamasha* Albert, though semi-disabled by a back problem for many years, has been an active member in both the social and religious life of the community of the Turlock-Modesto area for more than three decades. He has served in various responsible positions for the welfare of his club and church, among them: member of Assyrian Welfare Committee to encourage group education and foster support to new Assyrian émigré families; Civic Club’s member of Executive Committee in 1975, Club’s TV Chairman for 1975-76 and 2002-03, Assyrian Secretary for 1982-83, and Club President for two terms (1978-79 and 1980-81); and, finally, Chairman of St. Thomas Church thrice (1979-80, 1991-93, and currently since 2003).

A rather handsome man with grey green eyes, he is mild-mannered, pleasant and intelligent, with a special gift as a speaker. He is the person who is most called upon to narrate bi- obituaries and to eulogize at community funerals and to act as MC at special social functions and he is quite adept at it. He has a strong sense of right and wrong. A dyed in the wool Catholic who stands firm in his belief he peppers his talks with bible quotations.

Albert studied briefly in a Catholic seminary and was consecrated a deacon for the Church in 1977. Judging from his actions in the past, I believe to him his faith comes first. Currently, he is the right-hand man of St. Thomas pastor, Fr. Kamal Bidawid, a man who is generally loved by his congregation and who has also a strong belief in his faith and in his Church, but is in a constant struggle, walking a tightrope to keep a balance between his (90%) Assyrian congregation’s nationalistic feelings and the competing political stand of his Chaldean Church’s hierarchy.

The fourth of five children, Albert was born to Eramia Shimoun Benyamin and Maria “Baaji” Gewargis Shallou on December 5, 1939 in Habbaniya, where his father worked as canteen manager for Navy, Army, & Air Force Institutes (NAAFI) and where Albert graduated from Habbaniya Elementary School. His older siblings were the late Shimon well-known as “Baajo,” and Yosip and sisters Cardelia known as “Cardo,” with a younger sister, Aglantina.



A blown-up picture of Albert as an impish 15-year old boy in Habbaniya.

Cardo was married to the late Polous Nimrod Benjamin of Canada and Aglantina to her mother’s first cousin, the well-known Habbaniya footballer, William Shallou of Modesto. Albert has always maintained strong ties with his maternal uncles’ big family, the Shallous.

In 1956 his family moved to Baghdad and five years later Albert graduated from *Thanawiya* (High School) Al-Ja’fariya. Having been born and raised a devoted Catholic he joined the Legion of Mary organization for which he served as president for two terms, or six years. While he worked at the Central Bank of Iraq Albert also attended Baghdad University’s Institute of Accountancy and Business Administration, from which he graduated in 1963 with an academic degree in the subject. He served his two-year Iraqi Army conscription (1964-65) as reserve officer in Mosul. In June 1968 he was married to Gladis, daughter of Oshalim Sarkis of Baghdad. The couple was blessed with two children Ramina (born in 1969) and Raman (in 1971).

In 1973 Albert, with his family and parents, left Iraq. He came to America seeking, as most immigrants, a better life for himself and his family. Albert first rejoined older brother Yosip in Bay Area. But soon after he settled in Modesto close to Turlock where his church (St. Thomas) and the Assyrian club (Civic Club) were situated and in both of which he became an active member in order to serve his community. He obtained a job at Gallo Glass and worked as selector from 1977 to 1989. to support his family and afford his children proper Catholic education. He has now a financial interest in a liquor & mini-mart business owned by his brother-in-law William Shallou.

After twelve years of marriage to George Silva, daughter Ramina gladdened her parents’ hearts by presenting them in January 2004 with their first grandchild, Mary Elizabeth. Wife Gladis, a former seamstress, has also been very active in St. Thomas, serving twice as head of Women’s Auxiliary and raising money for the church. And with her help, Albert boarded his parents in his home and took care of them devotedly until their last final days, his mother dying in 1989 and father in 1995, the latter well into his nineties.

Shamasha Albert and family lived in the eastern section of Modesto for many years. His children pressured him to relocate to Turlock, closer to church and club. But wife Gladis was adamant and so they finally moved several years ago into a new home in north-west part of Modesto. **[Reprinted from Zinda eMagazine, with some minor changes]** ♦



Albert (third from left) with his mother (2nd in 2nd row from left ) and some of his maternal uncles' clan members, the Shallous, in Baghdad.



Albert Benjamin (in suit), TV Chairman, with Civic Club's Youth Group in 1975.



Albert (1st, right) enjoying a khigga dance in Baghdad as Sargis Shallou leads the line and Albert's late uncle Kaaku Shallou prompts him on.



1965: Albert Benjamin is seen above (second from right) as a reserve officer in the Iraqi Army in Mosul, following his graduation as Accountant & Business Administrator.



Early 1960s. Albert, as 23-year-old student president, giving a talk at the Legion of St. Mary's Center in Baghdad.



2004. *Shamasha* Albert Benjamin with family: Standing (left) George Silva (son-in-law), Raman (son); Sitting, daughter Ramina, wife Gladis with grandkid Mary in the Benjamins' home in Modesto.

# SNAPSHOTS Contributed by Readers



1942-43 Winners (of Scouting competition?) with Jim Agatta, posing in the Union School courtyard. Winner on right is Wilson Khoshaba Isaac, but the winner on left is not known. Photo. Aggie.



1942: A group of Habbaniya Girl Guides posing in the school yard. From left: Regina Gewargis, N/K, Roza Aziz, N/K, Arpen Onick Sanasarian, and Khawa Yacoub Aboona. Photo "Aggie"



Jan. 12, 1947: The famous Levy marching band leading a Habbaniya Boy Scout & Girl Guide Christmas parade through the scenic streets of RAF Station part of Habbaniya. Photo Shlimoon Youkhanna.



1947: From left: Lilly Shlimoon, Christina Khammo Pius, Lujjiya Kakko Poloss, Najeeba Zaako [Yonan], and Almas Iskhaq, posing in a scenic spot in RAF Station part of Habbaniya. Photo Courtesy Najeeba Yonan.



1951: Unity Chapel Group of CC Habbaniya. Last row L-R: Youel Babilla, Qasha Youav, Yosip Yousepous, N/K, Gladys Yousepous; 2nd row, L-R: N/K, Andrious Mama, Yousepous Shmouel, Louise Yousepous, Jane Babilla, Ludia Elia, Angel Youash, Almas Simon, Raabi Albert Babilla; Front, L-R: Boy (N/K), Shoura Youav, Rhoda Youav, Leeda Yousepous, Rhoda Yousepous, Looba Yousepous, Boy (N/K). Courtesy Raabi Albert Babilla.



1947: Assyrian boys of first three grades at Habbaniya Elementary School (former Union School), with two Arab teachers, on third year following the government takeover. Among them are: Ben (Rab-T) Gewargis Shabo, Andrious and Nathan (R-T) Odisho, Nimrod (Rab-Khaila) Zaia Gewargis, and Fouad Youav. (For an e-mail copy of the picture, contact Ben Shabo (bgsdude@aol.com) and to report identity of unknown pupils, please contact The Editor (mkpius@comcast.net)

# SNAPSHOTS Contributed by Readers



10.19.03: Pius Haddad (right) and Mikhael Pius with *khizmita* Banana Sabri Ezaria, visiting from Australia, at Raley's coffee shop in Turlock during a chance meeting. Photo courtesy Pius Haddad.



Easter 1956. L-R Chado ?, Youkhana Lazar (USA), late Valodia Yosip, Youil Darro (USA), and late Awner Ousta Moshi. In left background is the well-known Yosip's Chaikhana in C.C. Photo courtesy Zia Yousif.



6/1971: Zia Yousif (standing, front) with son Sargon (back) and two friends by a tunnel at the Nineveh rampart. Front, left: Late Awner Ousta Moushi (left), and Aprim Yosip. Courtesy Zia K. Yousif.



1965 ? Hot *Khigga* at Tel Mohammed, Baghdad. Known persons, from right: late George Esha Owdisho, Wilson "Raani" Havil Lazar, and (fourth) his older brother Victor H. Lazar. Courtesy Wilson Lazar.



1945: AMWD Basketball team, cup winners: Back, from left: late Yonan Baba, Newton El-isha, Sadouq Daniel (coach), Ali (Arab); Front: late Youav Baijo Rehana, Mohd Ali, and Azzo Yonan. Photo courtesy Sadouq Daniel.



1952: Zia K. Yousif, former employee of Air Ministry Audit Office in AHQ standing by Levy Swim. pool. His good swimmer Levy father was the pool lifeguard. (See2 other pictures contributed by Zia)



1951/52? *Raabi* Albert Babilla (center), winner of 18-mile,20-racers, Ramadi-Habbaniya cycling race (55 minutes) flanked by 2nd place Albert Aviqaam (right) and 3rd place Andrious Mama, after trophy presentation by sponsor, Officer-in-charge CC, Sqd. Leader Harris. Courtesy Albert Aviqaam (Samuel).

Our sportsman of this issue**Kaako Gewargis Shallou: The Nippy and Tricky Scorer**

By Mikhael K. Pius

A sturdy and dependable forward-line player, Kaako Gewargis Shallou was fast and resourceful on the field. He delivered nippy (and sometimes tricky!) accurate shots with either foot that usually took the goalkeeper by surprise. Although only five-foot-four, he was a good header, often stealing the ball from taller opponents' heads. A soft-spoken and friendly person, with a jolly sense of humor, Kaako was well liked by his team-mates and got along well with other people.

Kaako played in several international games, creating or scoring some of the goals. Among these, in Baghdad, he played for Iraq's Muslaha (Bus Transport) team against Anal Bakar team of Turkey in 1956 and for Assyrian Sports Club against Racing Club of Lebanon in 1957. In the former he netted one of the goals against Turkey and in the latter a "hat trick" of the 5-0 winning score against Lebanon. He was also a reserve player on the Assyrian National team that beat Taj Club of Teheran 5-4 in Baghdad in May 1956.

Kaako was among the group of former "All-Star Athletes" honored at the United Organizations of California's First Assyrian Olympics held in Turlock in 1992, and at the Second and the Third held in San Jose in July of 1994 and 1995, and, posthumously, by the Ex-Habbaniya Community Group of Turlock-Modesto in August 1996, only weeks after his death.

In Habbaniya, Kaako played soccer for the Flying Squadron civilians, Civil Cantonment Select, and RAF Employees' (Assyrian) Club teams during 1945-52, and was a field hockey goalkeeper, too, during his last few years in Habbaniya. In 1952-54, he played for Iraq Petroleum Company of K3 and during 1955-58 for Muslaha (Baghdad Passenger Transport) and the Assyrian Sports Club teams of Baghdad.

He worked as a clerk, for RAF in Habbaniya for eight years, for Iraq Petroleum Company in K3 and its Baghdad office, and for a German firm for a total of about 35 years in Baghdad.

Kaako was born in April 1926 in Kota Camp, Hinaidi, Iraq, into a soccer-playing family, namely his late older brother Baba and three first cousins. His late parents were Gewargis and Naano Shallou of village of Dizzataka in Urmia. He lived his childhood and early boyhood years in Hinaidi, but he went to school, grew up, worked, developed into a top soccer player and (in June 1952) got married in Habbaniya.

After leaving Habbaniya and working, and living with his family, in Baghdad for more than 30 years, he and his wife Agnes immigrated to California in December 1992 to rejoin two of their six children and



The late Kaako Gewargis Shallou, aged 69, at his home in Modesto during a humorous chat.

various cousins. Unfortunately, he did not live long enough to enjoy his old-age years in this country!

Former Habbaniya Assyrian sportsmen and fans, as well as older Assyrian soccer fans in general, lost yet another former Habbaniya top soccer player when Kaako Gewargis Shallou passed away of cancer in Modesto, California, July 16, 1996, aged 70, and was interred at Turlock Memorial Park in Turlock. Among the mourners were seven of his teammates and three of his soccer contemporaries. He will be remembered and missed by his family members, friends and admirers for many years to come.

He was eulogized by his maternal nephew, *Shamasha* Albert Eramia Benjamin, who said that his uncle was very Christian, with a strong faith in God, and that he was optimistic, kind, humble, and helpful, with a big heart.

Kaakou is survived by his wife Agnes (Shmouel) Shallou of Modesto; six children: Edmond and Gilbert Shallou, in San Jose, California, and Evelyn Abraham in Washington D.C., and Edward and George Shallou and Irene Sarmast in Baghdad, Iraq; and by seven grandchildren. Surviving him are also his former soccer-playing cousins, the trio, Ben, William and, the better-known, Sargis Shimshon Shallou, Ben lives with his second wife in Bay Area and William and Sargis and families in Modesto. ♦

## Dick Sargon: Habbaniya Footballer and Top Tennis Player

By Mikhael K. Pius

The most popular sports games in Habbaniya were soccer, field hockey and tennis. Soccer drew the largest crowds, followed by hockey and then tennis, if we are to discount track and field athletics.

Athletic meets attracted many more spectators than did both hockey and tennis, but athletics were usually held only once a year. Habbaniya had many good athletes, but it really produced only one track champion of Iraqi national standing, namely Shmouel Skopila Jibrail, who excelled in both 400 and 600 meter races.

Habbaniya Assyrian soccer players, on the other hand, were the cream of the Iraqi national teams for more than a decade and produced many star players for the nation.

Although hockey attracted more spectators than tennis, it hardly extended beyond the Habbaniya perimeter fence. But tennis was next to soccer in spotlighting Habbaniya as a center of sports in Iraq and it produced several high-grade players, a few even winning Iraqi national championships.

Among the top tennis players was the late Malko Sargon, popularly known as "Dick" Sargon, who started playing tennis in Habbaniya but really came into his own after he left for Baghdad after the mid-1940s. He participated in friendly and local competition matches held between players from Alwiyah, Ameer, Mansour, YMCA, British Institute and a few other Baghdad clubs, where tennis is played. In a few years he had polished his tennis skill well enough to enable him to stand up to the very top younger players.

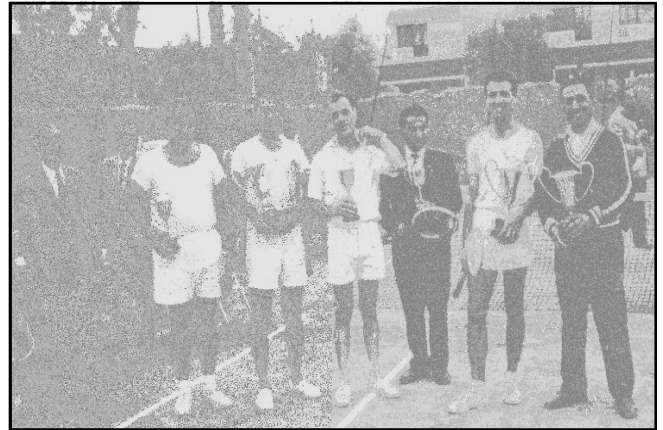
I don't know what championships the late Dick Sargon won, if any, but he did compete in important matches fought in early fifties between Baghdad top players such as Eramia Youshia, Nasir Al-Mudarris, Abbas Abid, Abbas Ali, Ismaiel Qaiyarah, Hussain Kadhim, among others; and William Daniel, Andy Simon, Italian "John" Shawel, Youkhanna Odisho, Hassan Jumaa, Jamiel Jowhar and Ahmed Mahmoud, of Habbaniya.

Dick Sargon was also one of the top soccer players in the early days of Habbaniya (1937-41) when the CC soccer fields were ruled by the Assyrian team of "Arsenals" Sports Club and Tigers team and the Kurdish-Arab "Blackpool" team, which teams dissolved and gradually emerged within a decade through younger players as per the noted CC Select, Employees' Club, Levy C, and Oriental Club teams, among other lesser known teams.

The couple of cup finals fought out between Employees' Club and Levy C teams at the turn of 1940s were reminiscent of the exciting and fierce championship matches played between Arsenals and Tigers a decade earlier.

Dick Sargon was on the Tigers team. But in 1941 he and a few of the good players joined Arsenals, and Tigers team was dissolved; similarly, just as a few top Levy C players joined the Employees team exactly a decade later, and Levy C team was consequently disbanded.

**Note:** Because Ashur Sargon (evidently a very busy man), failed to provide the writer with the information requested about his father for a brief life sketch to support the illustrated pictures, this article is based solely on the writer's own personal knowledge and his own documented sources. ♦



"Dick" Sargon with some of Iraq tennis champions of 1950s  
From left, Eramia Youshia, Dick, Nasir Al-Mudarris, Youkhanna Odisho, William Daniel and Andrews Simon, with their trophies.



Dick Sargon serving a highball... ... and smashing a high ball.



"Arsenal" Sports Club, Habbaniya, Iraq, winners 1941-42 CC (Civil Cantonment) Cup, following merger with Tigers.

Standing from left: Nimroud "Nimmo" Khouda Mansour, Shmouel "Tittuna" Eshaya, Yacoub "Khouna" Avraham, Dick Sargon, Fraidon Orahim, Baba Gewargis Shallou, Yacoub Patros, Benyamin Warda, W/O E.D.Cook (Ref), Sitting from left: Havil "Jinja" Lazar, Haido Patros, John Isaac, Jerair Chachanian, and Daryawosh Aghajan. (Courtesy MKPius)

## Ceremonies of Disbandment of Assyrian Levies

By Solomon (Sawa) Solomon

This year marks the golden anniversary of the disbandment of the Assyrian Levies and in their honor I am writing this article.

It was on the 6th April, 1955, that an agreement between Iraq and Britain was signed calling for the closing of British air bases in Iraq and the disbandment of the Levies. The date for the handover was set for the 2nd May, 1955. The following is a brief description of that event.

It was decided to have two parades for the Levies. The first one included both Iraq troops and the Levies, during which the base would be officially handed over to the Iraqis. The second parade would be a private affair when the British Ambassador would bid the Levies farewell.

The Iraqi contingent for the parade came from an infantry battalion that came to Habbaniya to form the nucleus of the motorized infantry brigade still in the process of being formed to protect the Habbaniya air base. The Levy troops for the parade, 370 strong, were formed into four squadrons.

The main parade in Habbaniya was attended by King Faisal II, Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id, British Ambassador Sir Michael Wright, and the Air Officer Commanding Air Vice Marshall H.H. Brooks. The parade was also witnessed by other Iraqi officials and by representatives from Arab countries.

The Levies paraded under the command of Group Captain A.B. Riall, the last Levy Force Commander. The Iraqi troops marched under the command of Colonel Shukri Kadhim, the new commander of the still-being formed new Habbaniya Brigade. Afterwards speeches were made by both the British and the Iraqi officials, then the Union Jack was lowered for the last time and the Iraqi flag was hoisted. At this time, the parade was dismissed.

Here the Levies returned to their own parade ground and formed a hollow square. British Ambassador Wright arrived and gave a speech. Then he went down and personally bade farewell to each Levy officer. Then the entire formation gave three cheers to the Queen and marched past the Ambassador, returning to their own lines. The parade was then dismissed.

In the afternoon Col. Shukri agreed to have the Levies' post guard at the Levy area during the night. Also joint Iraqi and Levy patrols toured Habbaniya till eight o'clock in the morning when the Levy quarter guards were received by the Iraqi Army and the Levies ceased to exist as a force. It was the end of an era that lasted four decades. ♦

## School Gymnastics Champ: Jennifer Yalda's Own Story



My name is Jennifer Mary Yalda. I was born on December 13, 1990 in Chicago, IL. I have the best and most supportive parents, Nadia and John, an older brother who is sixteen named Joseph and a twin brother named Jonathan. I was born and raised in Chicago and at the age of ten I moved to Las Vegas, NV. Las Vegas is an awesome place to live. The weather is beautiful. I love it.

Now I am fourteen years old and going into my first year of high school. I get good grades and I have all honors classes. I am currently a level six competitive gymnast. I started gymnastics when I was about five or six in Chicago. After a few months of that, I quit and started ice-skating. I ice-skated for about four years. But when I moved here to Vegas, I did not like ice-skating anymore. About a year after we moved here, I decided to give gymnastics a chance, again. I started taking classes and they quickly moved me up to pre-team. Not too long after that, they moved me up to level four team.

I competed level four one season and I received gold on bars in many of my competitions and state champion on vault. I was ready for level five. But instead of going to five, they moved me up to six, skipping five. I was shocked. Just before my level six season started, I injured my back and had to sit out my first couple of competitions. But that did not stop me. My first competition was fall state and I was Nevada state beam champion with a 9.45 score. The rest of the season was just as awesome. I was always beam champion in just about every competition.

On April 3, we flew out to Reno, NV for spring state competition. And again I was Nevada state beam champion with a high nine.

I have four coaches, one for each event: vault, bars, beam and floor. My coaches are very supportive and awesome. If it was not for them, I do not think I would be here right now.

During the summer, my coaches will be testing me to see if I will be able to move up to level seven. If you have any questions or comments email me at true\_story19@yahoo.com. Thank you and God bless.

>> *Jennifer, an off-spring of former Habbaniyans and apparently an achiever, is Ben Yalda's granddaughter.—Ed.♦*



## Between Montana and California

By Basil K. Pius



**5.29.04. Myself, Koiya and Babs following a farewell dinner party to two doctor friends and their families of Miles City, Dr. Roshan from Iran and Dr. Nass Syria. Present were also a bunch of my senior tennis playing friends, among them the two doctors who admired Babs for her kind and loving caring of Koiya.**

Unofficially speaking, I am the only Assyrian in the state of Montana since 1966. I have lived in Miles City with 10 thousand other people, including my family. If you check it on the US map you will see that Montana is a very large state, and Miles City is in southeastern part of it. We are 1250 miles from Modesto, California.

Periodically we visit California, not because of its golden sunshine attraction, abundant fresh fruits and vegetables, its ever sprawling housing projects, new buzzing crowded freeways, and busy daily life of its masses. Our journey to California is more of a personal pilgrimage to recharge ourselves as we share with our Assyrian relatives and a few of our former Habbaniya friends.

Brother Mikhael and sisters Melina and Nina have always been our strong wellsprings of connections to the larger Assyrian community of California. Actually brother Mike is my faithful anchor man who enjoys filling me in on Assyrian social matters as well as sharing personal and literary projects of mutual interest. From the time he discovered the magic of his computer many years ago he has become a tireless "news hound," not only for me but also for hundreds of appreciative readers.

Needless to say that Modesto and Turlock have thousands of immigrant Assyrian families from the old

country. So every time we are there it is very likely that we may run into familiar faces of the past, whether at homes or at our picnic in the park. That indeed adds more spark to our presence.

Last July we had the opportunity to spend an enjoyable afternoon with Julia, her husband Rowil Aboona and our good friend Skharia (Zacharia Odisho Zacharia). Julia *Rab Tremma* Yacob Aboona and I were at one time part of the first Habbaniya group of students attending Ramadi High School during the late 1940s. Scholastically, she was the top student. Her two younger brothers, Khoshaba and Youkhana, attended Ramadi school and did quite well too.

It's amazing how much we tend to appreciate old friendships as we get more seasoned with age. The fellowship we all shared around the meal table that afternoon with Julie's family was one of the high points of our summer trip to California. And judging by the variety and quality of the food Julie had prepared for us that day, I would say she is just as clever and impressive. It was a day to remember, and good memories keep us high spirited.

On a personal note, I have learned that when I am under the roof of my Assyrian hosts, I make sure

that I have an empty stomach and no strict diet limitations. Admittedly, it is not always easy to escape the temptation to overstuff the stomach.

The Amtrak train trip from Modesto to L.A. with brothers Mike and Kooya turned out to be very enjoyable. We visited our maternal uncle Youshiya and aunt "Doovy" (the 1950s "Coronet" recorded singer Wardiya Kakko Poloss) and their families for two days which turned out to be emotionally therapeutic and refreshing for all of us. Brother Kooya's childlike bursts of laughter and excitement every time he glanced at his uncle or aunt kept us all laughing silly too.

Kooya is our 66-year old disabled brother who is mentally and physically handicapped since his infancy days in Habbaniya, Iraq. It was heartwarming to see him connecting so well with his uncle and aunt after 30 years when they last saw each other in Daura.

Today Kooya is enjoying the people of Miles City, Montana. He attends a school for disabled and he is one of the most likable fellows among his trainers, especially women. They call him Koooyya.

Neighbors and friends are very kind and encouraging of him. My gracious wife Babs and I have been taking care of Kooya in Miles City since 1998 when our sister Christina became too worn out to handle him. She had been his dedicated care taker in Iraq and Jordan for many years.

The fact that Kooya requires constant care, just like a two-year old child, seems to fit into my days of retirement very well. When Babs is at work I may take Kooya out for a short walk, or for an automobile ride to visit friends, or I try to find a home-creative project such as writing, drawing and cooking to make my day more self-fulfilling while keeping an eye on my brother.

By the way, I have learned to prepare a good variety of our traditional Assyrian meals like *dulma*, *hareesa*, *kubba* (*seeniya and hamidh*), *riza w'sherwa* in its many varieties, *mazgoof* fish, etc. Nobody seems to complain even if the food lacks the real Assyrian zing. As for Babs, she enjoys baking cakes and cookies, including *kelaichy*.

From another positive vantage, Kooya's presence actually fills in some of the fun-missing links to my Assyrian culture. For example, we play Assyrian video tapes and music more often than before, we speak more Assyrian language, including Babs (born in Oregon), who enjoys the challenge of learning to communicate with Kooya in Assyrian. Sometimes Babs is brave enough to join in with Kooya and me in a round of *khigga* to the happy tunes of Juliana Jindu, Julie Yousif, and even Kadhim al-Sahir's soul-lifting verses. As we dance around, Babs will unexpectedly improvise the all common Middle Eastern yodeling sound of Lu...Lu...Lu.. Lu... to the delightful cheers of Kooya.

For those who may be wondering why I have stayed in Montana for so long, here it is: In Miles City I consider myself the Assyrian Ambassador for Peace. Over the past four decades I have made many friends in this community where our five children were raised.



**7/2005: Dinner for former classmate at Aboona's.**

At desert, following dinner: From left: Rouel (Abu Basil), Kooiya, myself, Julia, and Zacharia O. Zacharia, at Rouel and Julia Aboona's home in Modesto.—Brother Mike snapped the picture.



**7/2005: Visit at Khaalu Yooshia K. Poloss' home in Hollywood.**

Back, from left: Brother Mike, Khaalu's friend Steven O raha, a young Assyrian docu.film producer in Hollywood, Khaalu and grandson Nicholas; Front: Anjel Poloss, Gina (Poloss) Chattsworth, Kooya, Wiska, and Bakh-Khaalu Haiko Poloss. Photo by John Chattsworth.



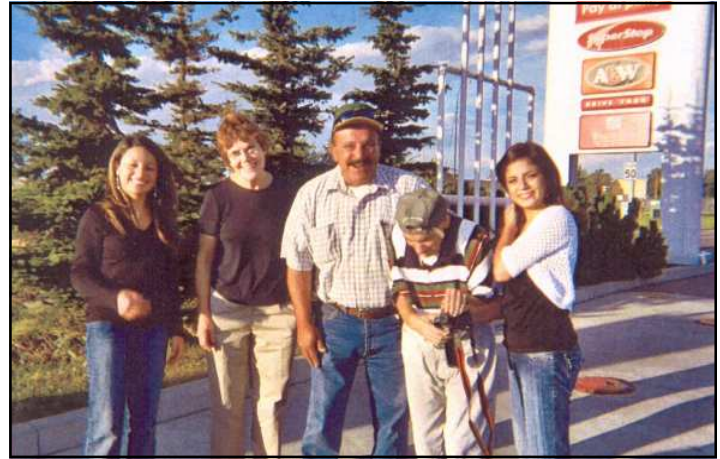
**7/2005: At Khaltu Wardiya porch sitting room in Palmdale, CA.**

From left: Wardiya, her niece Angel Poloss, and her nephews Koiya, Wiska, and Mike. Wardiya and Shumon Ezaria Davoodzadeh have 5 children: George, Joseph, Muna, Hanaa, & Tony. Photo by Hanaa.



**9/2005: Visit to Khaltu Lujiya & Cousin Berno in Calgary.**

From left: Babs Pius with “son” Kooiya; myself and Khaltu Lujiya. Standing: Bernadette Is’hak, who has been taking care of her sick mother Lujiya, wife of late Fraidon Orahim Iskhaq. Berno’s Younger siblings are Sargon in Brampton, Zaia and Francis in Calgary, with families



**9/2005: Visit with Khwarza Ashur George and Family.**

Our sister Christina’s and the late “Paddy’s” eldest son Ashur George of Calgary cavorting with his maternal uncle Kooiya while daughters Bunni (left) and Sandi, with Babs, smile and enjoy the antics. Ashur and his wife Amira have a younger son, Zaia. Photo by Wiska.

in this community where our five children were raised. The current sheriff, police chief, postmaster, mayor, a number of nurses, teachers, bankers, doctors, business-people, newspaper publishers, etc. were at one time either my college students or young soccer trainees. I have periodically lectured about the Assyrian culture to school children, service clubs, and church groups. Many people here have certainly touched my life; I hope in a small measure I have touched theirs too

In Miles City the pace of our daily life is slow for sure. There is a feeling of security among these country-type type of supportive neighbors who we know by names. Most of the major common facilities are in close proximity: market place, church, post office, downtown area, city hall, courthouse, and friends’ homes. So I do plenty of walking under Montana’s blue “Big Sky.” And when I play tennis during our three fair Montana sea-

sons, I usually take brother Kooya as a good cheerleader. Believe it or not, at one time during the mid 1970s my late brother Aprim and his young family lived two years here in Miles City, before moving on to Turlock, CA. One day he called me and said, “I miss those good people of Montana. They are genuinely friendly and trustworthy....Don’t you ever leave Montana.” I am sure brother Aprim would have been delighted to know today that we are still here and brother Kooya is with us too.

Just in case, the curious adventure-spirited friends who may find their way to miles City one day to visit us, God willing, could also see the world famous Yellowstone National Park that extends itself into Montana, Wyoming and Idaho--one of the wonders of the world.

(Persons interested to visit us may call 406-232-0366 or email us at: basilp@midrivers.com Thanks.)



**8/2005: My picnic at Grace High School park in Modesto.**

Front: Late Appaiel’s eldest daughter Dayi Morassa Hildebrand and two of her children, Erin (left) and Catlin; 2nd row: Lilly (Pius) Thomas, Nina (Pius) Lazar, Kooiya & Wiska; back row: Sargis Oshana, Elishwa Paulus, Mark Lazar, Patros Paulus, Wilson Lazar, Mike, Muriel Pios (Appaiel’s widow) and grandchildren and Dayi’s other two children, Breanna and Kyle. Photo by Dina (Pios) Wilkinson.



**9/2005: Get-together for niece Mariam (Lulu) of Holland.**

Posing after dinner at home of Uncle “Meekho” (Mike) in Modesto, from front (left): Sargis Oshana, Mark Lazar and Yosip Pius; 2nd row: Wilson Lazar, Oshana K.Oshana, Melina Oshana, Nina Lazar, Raman Lazar, Uncle “Meekho” and daughter Lilly Thomas and 2-of-4 children Peter and Emile. Back: Guest of honor Sister Christina’s daughter, Lulu (George) Tammo, visiting her recuperating aunt Melina.

## Eshaya Hormis Isaac's School Reminiscences

I was very pleased to read Raabi Albert's letter, in Husca 7<sup>th</sup> issue. It was of much interest to me and I read it several times.

I have known Raabi Albert since I was a kid in Hinaidi. He was a smart fellow, energetic and physically strong. His parents were very decent and had faith in moral and religious values.

He was my mentor and a few years older than me. I was a bit behind in the school, because I didn't go to school while we were living in a village in Iran. I studied very hard and he helped me in my studies. Whenever I had new books when school commenced, I proudly showed them to him and he would congratulate me on the progress I had made.

In 1936-37, when one of his relatives was getting married—I think it was the late Yonathan Mirza—Albert asked me to deliver some of the invitations. I did so with pleasure, although it was a difficult task. Kota Camp houses were not numbered and the streets were crooked.

On another occasion in Hinaidi some British service men were practicing football at a single goal. One of the players threw a coin outside the field for us. The first one to grab it was Albert. We were no match for this strong boy, who penetrated like a bolt out of the blue.

Albert mentioned in his letter about Youkhana Petros. Youkhanna was my friend. We worked in the same office for many years.

I think Youkhanna's vision of Habbaniya was wrong. Habbaniya was the safest place to live in: it was well organized with clean water, good sanitation and free from Malaria and other diseases. We worked with the most civilized people on this planet. They even helped us to emigrate and obtain their nationality.

Security was tight and perfect: you were free to wander in the cantonment without any fear of being molested by any person. Habbaniya was circled by barbed wire for protection from intruders, especially from Dulaimi Arabs [who jumped over the main fence to club late-night cyclists and steal their bikes or to break into houses to burglarize—Ed.].

In 1941 our family lived in Gahwat Shukir—a dangerous place to reside—in Baghdad. One day I was going home from school (American School for Boys) when a *Jundi* [soldier] followed me and hit me on the back of my head. A lady saw this from the balcony of her house. She cried out and cursed the *Jundi*. My books fell and were covered with dirty mud. The matter was reported to Dr. Staudt, my school principal, but no action was taken for lack of evidence. Later I understood that one of our neighbors, a young Arab, whom I hated, told the soldier to beat me up.

We left Hinaidi in 1938, and came to Habbaniya. I continued studying in the Union School until I graduated with honor in 1940. During the school commencement exercises, a party was held and students



1992: Eshaya Hormis Isaac at the First Habbaniya Reunion.

recited poems, orations and there were songs in English, Assyrian, Armenian, and Arabic.

An accident happened in the morning, which was same day of party, we were supposed to throw putting the shot to a distance. This was under the supervision of Albert. When my turn came to throw, my arm-twisted to the right side, and the shot landed on the head of bystander Minashi. He was my friend and a relative of the late Awiya Evan, my classmate.

After the commencement ceremony began my turn came to deliver my English oration. I did well because the headmaster Raabi Yacoub and Mr. Jack Ingram, the principal, were very happy and the audience cheered. But I was not, because my mind was troubled by the tragic accident that had happened that morning.

After the graduation I requested Raabi Albert to help me in two subjects, Geometry and Physics. He gladly did so during summer months. In 1940 he was in 5<sup>th</sup> High and I was accepted in Third High of American School for Boys and as a result of Raabi Albert's assistance I had no problems in class.

Raabi Albert graduated in 1941. Although I was promoted to 4<sup>th</sup> High, I did not graduate from the school due to the hostilities created by the Prime Minister of Iraq Rashid Ali Al-Gailani against the British.

I wanted to help my father to support our family. So I quit school and worked for the Air Ministry Audit Office until the handing over of the base to the Iraqi Government in May 1955. The Air Ministry offered me and others jobs in Cyprus or Eden. I refused the offer.

In January 1956 I obtained a job at the American Embassy in Baghdad, but resigned in March 1957, due to the risk of being considered an American spy by the Iraqi Government. At that time Suez Canal was nationalized and Gamal Abdul Nasir, with his fiery speeches, turned all the Arab world against the West, especially against Americans and the British.

Thereafter I found a job as an audit clerk with a British firm of chartered accountants and stayed with them for 20 years.

In 1974-75 my children were studying in England. My wife Avigil and I decided to join them. In June 1976 we left Iraq. In London I continued to work for the same firm I worked in Iraq till we immigrated to America in May 1978. In Chicago I worked as a credit correspondent and accountant for a number of years until I retired during the Gulf War of 1991.

In February 2001 I developed diabetes. Soon after I had a stroke on my left side. But with the help of physical therapy, thank God I have now improved.

While in the hospital, I was visited by my friends Sargon Aboona and Ben Yalda to whom I am very grateful. Other friends also visited me. An Assyrian nurse named Argentina Antar would come and visit me daily after her shift ended. I am especially grateful to my family, particularly my wife who takes good care of me.

I enclose a check for \$100 as a donation to HUSCA. May God bless you all and this great nation of USA. ♦

**Eshaya Hormis Isaac**  
Skokie, Illinois.

7/15/05

>>> *Thank you very much for the generous donation. Incidentally, Eshay was the Habbaniya Union School Boy Scout Secretary for 1939-40, graduated from Secondary C Form (2nd High) at the top of his class, and was the valedictorian at the graduation exercises in 1940.—Ed.*

## Super Issue

This issue, as you can see, is superior to previous issues, not only in its contents but also in the total number (56) of its pages, i.e. 16 pages more than previous issue. Naturally, the bigger the issue the more expensive both printing and postage charges, not to mention the voluntary work involved. Just postage on this issue is going up 46c per copy for domestic and around \$2 for abroad. (To Australia postage alone will cost \$5.30 a copy.) The subscription rates will therefore go up and will be:

**\$12 for US; \$15 for all other countries.**

## AN AMAZING STORY

By Basil K. Pius

*Because Brother Basil (Wiska) could not attend the 6th Reunion in Chicago, he asked me to read out the following story on his behalf at the Banquet night. Ben Yalda promised to give me a few minutes to read it out, but he was so busy that he forgot to announce me. Because I still believe it is an amazing story, I'm reproducing it here for HUSCA readers—Ed*



Peter and Stephanie Pius of Turlock were happily married in 1997. Their busy life and family planning efforts did not produce any new members to their family for six years. So they decided to adopt one or two children.

One day in 2003 the judge summoned them. He informed them of three healthy black children from one family who were up for adoption. It was a challenging decision for the couple but they signed the contract any way and took home three energetic children: Anno, Serenity and Clayton.

As time went by, the same judge summoned Peter and Stephanie again. He told them that the same mother had given birth to two more babies to be united with their three siblings. Once again the bewildered but happy Peter and Stephanie accepted the responsibility to expand their fast growing family; this time they added Jeremiah and Isaiah. As one may expect, the Pius household became a busy, buzzing, and sprightly family.

This fairy tale soon took a more thrilling turn early this year when Stephanie's doctor informed her that she was pregnant—with TWINS! Naturally, the emotions were high. The flashing news immediately spread around and people were in awe. But the jubilant couple praised the Lord.

Today, August 27, 2005, Peter's exhilarated eldest Assyrian uncle in Modesto, Mikhael, informed our family in Montana that Peter and Stephanie have indeed become the happy biological parents, a month in advance, of TWO healthy babies...ADAM and BENJAMIN. Peter's humble words over the phone: "The Good Lord will take care of us." Amen.

CONGRATULATIONS, Peter & Stephanie! With LOVE for a brave and fertile couple of this 21st Century! ♦

[Incidentally, Peter is the youngest child of Marlene and the late Aprim "Appy" Pius of Turlock, the founder of the famous Coronet Bookstore of Baghdad during the 1950s and 1960s. ADAM was Peter's eldest brother who died at the age of 40 in Turlock in January 2001. BENJAMIN was Peter's first cousin, Basil's eldest son, who died in July 1998 aged 33, only ten months following his marriage.]—Ed.

## 50 Years Ago...from our archives

Reprinted from *Assyrian Star* Magazine issues dated December, 1955 and November, 1955.

### Forgotten Assyrians in Greece

By M. K. Piyous

The October 22 issue of *Everybody*, an English weekly, contains a vivid report by Lord Kinross, its special correspondent, on 15,000 political and war refugees in Greece—Rumanian and Yugoslavian Greeks, Tsarist Russians, Turkish Armenians, and ASSYRIANS. The article is illustrated with three pictures; a half a page close-up showing a young Assyrian mother holding in her arms her little son, and two smaller pictures, one of an aged Assyrian couple bashfully holding hands and the other of a white Russian woman reading a Russian newspaper printed in America.

The refugees live in communities in camps in the suburbs of Salonika and Athens. They are poor but a clean and tidy lot, says Mr. Kinross, eking out a living as draughtsman, clerks, mechanics, drivers, cobblers, carpenters, blacksmiths, bootblacks, sweepers, watchmen and unskilled laborers. Some of them are self-supporting while others are provided with supplementary food and clothing by the United Nations High Commission.

The following is an extract regarding the Assyrian community:

"Less fortunate is a community of Assyrians, refugees twice over since they were driven by the Turks into Russia in the First World War and out of Russian by the Bolsheviks after it. A Christian people intensely proud of their race, religion and culture, with a lively dignity of their own, they are a closely-knit community rising above poverty in a settlement of tumbledown shacks near Athens.

"They still learn the Assyrian language in schools of their own and practice rites of the Assyrian Church. Sometimes a priest comes from Lebanon to perform baptisms and marriages. But they lack the resources to support him permanently. They rely on the services of an aged deacon, bearded like a patriarch and proud of his rags.

"For the most part, they scrape a living as shoeblacks and sweepers in the streets of Athens, as casual laborers or watchmen in factories. Their 'matriarch' is an old lady, a hundred years old, whose son is a shoeblack, aged seventy. Waving a stump of a hand, whose fingers, she declares, were bitten off by a goat as she lay in her cradle, she denounces the youngsters now playing with the idea of emigrating individually to America.

"I would cut my throat,' she cries with a ghoulis gesture, 'rather than go there, rather than separate my people.'

These are the people whom the world has forgotten. They survive largely thanks to the charity of the United Nations, to the labors of a handful of its devoted servants, men and women who do not forget. ♦

>>> *Today we still have new groups of Assyrian refugees in Greece—this time product of the brutality of Saddam Hussein's regime—who are now living under exceptionally difficult conditions as "undocumented illegal aliens"—Ed*

### Assyrian Boxer Wins Two Iraqi Titles

By M. K. Piyous

The Best Boxer cup, donated by Al-Akhbar newspaper, was awarded to Shimon Yosip [Mirza], an Assyrian of *Shabab* [Youth] Club of Baghdad, at the 1955 Iraqi Amateur Boxing Championships tournament—which consisted of bouts for 10 titles—held at King Faisal Hall on Thursday night September 15. Shimon won the honor along with the featherweight title against Abdul Mughni al-Samarrai of Huwat [Amateur] Club in a scheduled three 3-minute-round bout.

The 1955 Iraqi featherweight champion is 19 years old. He is the youngest son of Maral (nee Lazar) of Sataloowy and the late Yosip Mirza of Katoona.

Shimon has been boxing since 1951. During this time he has won 26 of his 28 official fights, among them six school and national championships. ♦

>>> *Shimon Y. Mirza now 70 lives in Turlock and is a well-known political leader in the Assyrian community. He still has the gumption to challenge his rivals to a "match!"—Ed*

### Assyrian "Samson" Has First Haircut

By M. K. Piyous

A seven-year-old Assyrian "Samson" had his long hair cut and the locks kept by his parents as a memento amid sacrifice offering, feasting and dancing to the booming music of "zoorna woo'dawoola" at the Civil Cantonment of Habbaniya on September 26. The celebrated was Odisho, son of Mr. and Mrs. Yosip Jitto of Shamisdin.

Before Odisho's birth his parents had two children who died soon after birth. The deprived parents then beseeched *Mar* Odisho for a surviving son of whom they promised to make a "dervish" for seven years and at the end of which they would offer flesh of sheep as sacrifice. Their prayers were answered and they named the child after the patron saint. The couple has now two younger sons and a daughter.

Odisho's grandfather Jitto is a 65-year-old former Assyrian Levy soldier whose expert hands have cured countless fractured and broken bones, sprained muscles and dislocated joints—and all "for the charity of God." (Based on information received from Mr. Youkhanna Patros Youkhanna) ♦

>>> *"Dervish" Odisho, son of the late Yosip Jitto, is now two years older than his renown grandfather Jitto Somo was at the time of his hair-cutting. He is married, has three children and lives with his family in London.—Ed.*

## Rab-Khamshi Sarmo Shabo of RAF (Iraq) Levies

The following pictures of Sarmo Shabo were submitted by his grandson, Frankie Sarmo of Australia. Sarmo Shabo served in the RAF (Iraq) Levies for a period of 21 years, from October 31, 1924 through January 18, 1946. He was stationed mainly in Hinaidi and Habbaniya, as well as other places where Levies were posted to serve. According to his discharge certificate, his conduct and character were exemplary. He was awarded five service medals, namely General Service, Iraq Active Service, Long Service, Good Conduct, and War medal. He enlisted as a private and left the service having been risen through the ranks to *Rab-Khamshi*. (2nd Lieutenant). Following his discharge, due to his military record and experience he was accepted in the Iraqi Army and promoted to a 2nd Lieutenant after a short course of training. He served for about four years, from 1946 through 1949.

Sarmo Shabo was born in 1901 in Sararo, Shamisdin (Turkey) and died in 1994 in Dora, Baghdad (Iraq), leaving seven children, among them his eldest Youkania Sarmo (Frankie's father) who was well-known in Habbaniya. Youkania worked as a civilian clerk for the Levies and was a Senior Scout in the 1st Habbaniya (Iraq) Boy Scout Group.—MKP ♦



Sarmo Shabo as 2nd Lieutenant

Lance Corporal Sarmo Shabo (second from right) with a group of his company being instructed in the skill of machine-gun firing. [Can any reader identify any one of the other soldiers, or the missing Boy Scout names in the other picture?]



May, 1949: Sarmo Shabo's son Youkania (in civil clothes) with a group of his Sr. Scouts at a Habbaniya RAF horse race meeting, where the Boy Scouts were required to lend a helping hand. From left, Asst. Petrol Leader Yerjanik Babayan, Petrol Leader Haroon L\_\_\_\_, Troop Leader Youkania Sarmo, and Sr. Scouts Eshu H\_\_\_\_, Daniel N\_\_\_\_, Pnowil Neesan, Wilson David, George B\_\_\_\_, and Oraham Shoshou.



Sarmo Shabo's Levy service medals.

## Shmouel Issa remembers Habbaniya and his Ramadi school days

Thank you for 7th issue of *HUSCA*, and reminder to renew my membership. I am sending the renewal fee by post.

I will always remember reading one of the earliest issues, and poring over the first plan view of [a part of] Habbaniya produced by Minashi. I thought the plan was very good and Minashi must be congratulated for it. That plan triggered a flood of memories, mostly happy ones. I traced the route I used to cycle, the field where we played and practiced football, the spot where my dog Jimmy, after falling really ill, was put down by an SIB [RAF's Special Investigation Bureau] with a pistol, the football field where we, the HBB [Habbaniya Bus Brothers], won the final. (see picture and story in *HUSCA* # 6). Also I watched Aram Karam taking a free kick against an Iraqi national team, from the center of the pitch and scoring a goal. I have yet to see another footballer matching Aram's powerful and accurate kick.

I remember the corner at the cinema where we



Dec.1959: Four of the former Habbaniya Bus Brothers (from left) Youkhana Yacoub [Aboona], Shmouel Lazar [Issa] (third), Shmouel Youkhanna, and William Khoshaba, students at Manchester University, receive former comrade Wiska Khammo [Pius] (white overcoat) during his stop-over in England on his way for higher education at Portland University in Portland, Oregon. Courtesy Shmouel L. Issa.

hung around with a Pepsi and *zillabia*; the spot where we would catch the bus every morning for the long journey to the school at Ramadi. I even remember *Musardy*, when every Assyrian was free to pour water over any other Assyrian. I retrieved every thing from my memory to find out why we did it, and failed to find out.

Also the church spot reminded me of a wedding



1954: Some members of the Habbaniya Bus Brothers Group at Ramadi Secondary School. From left: Shmouel Lazar [Issa], Oushana Mikhail, Robin Philip [Rasho], Benyamin Khoshaba, Atniel David, Wiska Khammo [Pius], and Francis Murad. Photo courtesy

custom: Out of church [from up on a rooftop—Ed] the bridegroom threw an apple into the crowd. It was rumored that the Kurdish community started acquiring our custom in that Hama Pichka the footballer threw a... pomegranate... into the crowd when he got married. Thank God it was not a water melon!

The canal reminded me of our swimming facility besides the Levy swimming pool where I used to practice diving into the heavily chlorinated water.

The Assyrian cemetery reminded me of the hymn sung at funerals on the way to the cemetery, *Push bit shlama umra id zawna*. The priest and the *shamash* produced a powerful sad sound.

The market place reminded me of a sweets shop run by an Assyrian where a friend and I put our pocket money together to buy one Mars Bar, and carefully cut it into two equal pieces. And there was the occasional border dispute!

The other thing that I remember about those days is our attitude and perseverance under restricted environment and circumstances: For instance, we played football with a worn-out tennis ball; we made our 40-mile school round trip to Ramadi in a bus with a home-made body and with hard wooden seats, over very rough roads, some very dusty. We created our own entertainment; we used Lake Habbaniya and the Relief Canal to go for swim and picnics. We read and studied hard with a minimum of access to reading material—from the civic reading room, Appy's book shop, and second hand books bought at Shorja in Baghdad. I also went to the tip where each year the British burned surplus books, to pick up some before they burned them. I picked a book and taught myself Calculus. In the coming years the Habbaniya Bus Brothers (actually "siblings" because





1952: Five of the HBB members at a cycling dayout at Lake Habbaniya. From right, Wiska Khammo [Pius], Shummon Ammanuel, Raphael Khammo [Pius], a Summon's relative (?), and Shmouel Lazar [Issa]. Photo courtesy Shmouel L. Issa.



1954: Another day at Lake Habbaniya. HBB members, from left, Shmouel Lazar [Issa], Ben Yalda Benyamin, and Sabah Naomi. Photo Courtesy Shmouel L. Issa.

there were a few girls too) became teachers, doctors, engineers, etc. Albert Tatar who died in Australia, became a professor in the Sydney university. They were happy days indeed!

Best wishes.

**Sam (Shmouel) Lazar L. Issa**  
**England**

6.14.05.

>>> *We thank you and appreciate your beautiful contribution of nostalgic memories and pictures.*

*In regard to Nusardil, or Nusardy or Musardy, as it was popularly called, water was sprinkled on anyone, whether Assyrian or not. I wrote a personal true story, with Nusardy as its theme and background, which was published in Nineveh Magazine, 1st-2nd Quarter, 1992 issue. The story was illustrated by some relevant cartoons by Richard Ewan, the youngest son of the late Avia Ewan. The story was later translated into Assyrian by Mr. Bailis Yamlikha Shimon and published in Journal of Assyrian Academic Society of Chicago, Spring 1992 issue. I wrote also an essay on Nusardy, which was also published in Nineveh, 1st Quarter, 2002. And I recently had a revised version of the essay in Zinda eMagazine, dated 6/29/05.*

*As to the custom of apple throwing at Assyrian weddings, I had a long article published in 1st-2nd Quarter, 1996, issue of Nineveh on Assyrian weddings at Habbaniya,*

*including a picture of an apple-throwing bridegroom. Actually, the bridegroom, flanked by his best man and best friend, had three apples to throw. But the first one was always snatched from his raised hand by his best friend.*

*The writer of this letter, Mr. Shmouel Issa, is the youngest brother of the late well-known Assyrian dramatist and novelist, Mr. Mishael Lazar Essa.—Ed.*



1952: At Hilla, from left (back): Sargon\_\_\_?, Atniel David, Shmouel Lazar [Issa]; Front, Wilson Polus {Rasho} and Wiska Khammo [Pius]; Background: Shmouel Kambar. Courtesy



1951: At Levies football field. HBB's Wiska Khammo [Pius] and Shmouel Lazar [Issa]. In background: Shmouel Kambar (left) and Wilson Warda (right). Courtesy Shmouel L. Issa.

## Winner of “The Crimson Field” International Book Cover Competition

By Rosie Malek-Yonan, Author of “The Crimson Field”

It is my pleasure to announce that The Crimson Field International Book Cover Competition has a winner!

Selecting a cover for my historical novel, *The Crimson Field* [about which most of HUSCA readers have already heard and read—Ed] was an important undertaking. I knew exactly what I wanted and I knew that any hired artist could interpret my vision. But just any artist wouldn't do. It was important for me to select an Assyrian artist. The idea of an International Book Cover Competition seemed to be the perfect vehicle to reach Assyrian artists worldwide. So with the help and the support of the Assyrian community, Assyrian websites worldwide and word of mouth, the news quickly spread.

The deadline was soon approaching when I began receiving frantic email messages from a young Assyrian artist from Canada. One message read, “I'm sorry I keep inconveniencing you with these emails, however I am determined to please you ... I feel that you will find it worth waiting for, if you could so kindly wait.”

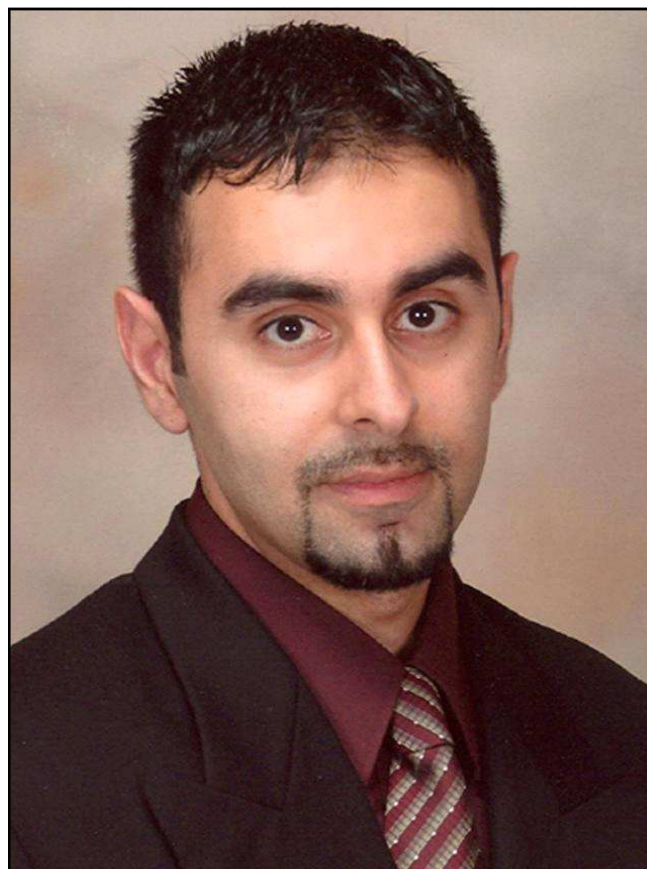
On the final day of the competition I received an unassuming package wrapped in brown paper. It was postmarked from Canada. I tore open the crude paper and inside I discovered a most striking interpretation of *The Crimson Field*. At once I could see that a lot of care and thought had gone into it. This was obviously the work of a very sensitive artist.

I immediately dialed the phone number taped on the back of the painting. A few rings later a young male voice answered. “I'd like to speak to David,” I said. “That's me,” he replied. I introduced myself and there was a moment of silence followed by a small eruption, “Oh, my God, did I win?” he asked, his voice trembling. “Yes, David, you won.” I'm fairly certain he didn't hear much of anything else after that.

And so it is my great honor and privilege to introduce the very talented **Mr. David Daryawish** as the winner of The Crimson Field International Book Cover Competition.

David Daryawish is a twenty-six-year-old Assyrian born and raised in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. His father, Avia, was born and raised in Baghdad, Iraq, and his mother, Gracy, was born and raised in Abadan, Iran. David's grandparents on both sides were from Mawana. David has an older sister, Kathyanne.

The only artist in the family, David majored in 3D computer animation in college and since has been



working as a freelance artist. He has a steady clientele for portraits, general designs, tattoos (really, tattoos!), t-shirt designs, novel illustrations, business ads, business cards and greeting card designs.

David's interest in art began on his first day of school. “My stick figures were better than everyone else's!” claims David. He still has a drawing of the Flintstones that was a very good likeness from when he was around five years of age. Always proud of their son, David's parents have kept everything he has drawn from his early years. He remembers always drawing, but didn't realize that he was an artist until he was in his teens. By his early twenties, David took serious interest in art.

A self-taught artist, David's preferred medium is air-drying clay, pastels, oils, tattoo, digital, graphite pencil, colored pencil and acrylic. He enjoys his freelance career, however, he is pursuing a career in animation. The style that best describes his work is realism, cartoon, fantasy and action. David has been involved in a sculpture project for the past four years and has currently completed twelve pieces. He is inspired by movies, his own imagination, science fiction and fantasy.

Art is a jealous mistress. I am driven to make art

because I can and if I don't, my conscience will harass me," admits David. His advice for other young Assyrians who want to get into art is, "Above all, stay in school. Make goals, be persistent and believe. Practice, practice, practice. Challenge yourself. Mingle within the art community. Go to a special art school. Stay on course." Great advice from a hard-working young artist.

Most of all, David is a proud young Assyrian. He wanted to enter the Book Cover Competition because he believed that he could win. He also felt that an important novel needed a good cover. "Our Assyrian story deserves it," says David. He was a little nervous about entering the competition but not because his work would be judged. More so about making the deadline! It took him a total of fifteen hours divided into three sessions to complete his entry.

In order to interpret *The Crimson Field* into a cover, David studied my requirements and admits that the description at first felt dark and gloomy to him, but he knew that the message was about hope. He describes the overall painting as, "The sky couldn't be blue. It would be too cheerful as would a brilliant sunset be the same. I couldn't use pinks, otherwise the overall piece would look too red, because the field is also red. So I picked a stormy looking purple that would give a sense of gloom, merging at the horizon with a light yellow to add a feeling of beauty or hope. I could not interpret the meaning of the well, so I just left it alone. The angel had to be 'protecting' the young girl somehow, so I gave her an expression as though she were looking at the girl's foot, to see where it would land. The blood on the angel's wings could not be too gory, but it still had to be stained. The young girl needed innocence so her posture took away from the fact that she was walking in blood." I can assure the readers that David accomplished his vision beautifully, but unfortunately, the cover will remain a secret until the unveiling in September at which time the book will be released.

It was important for David to have his work selected because he wanted to give back to the community. David admits that winning this competition means the world to him. "It is possibly the greatest achievement in my life so far."

He also hopes to attain future cover projects as a result of his win. When I reminded him that thousands of people across the world would be able to see his work on the cover of *The Crimson Field*, David replied, "I am humbled. Everyone I know is as happy for me as can be. It's an amazingly overwhelming feeling."

David claims that he was fairly confident that he would be the winner. But mostly he felt that just by entering, he had accomplished a great deal. Even

though he was a bit nervous waiting for the results of the competition he never lost his confidence. I asked David to describe his feelings when I called him with the news. He admitted, "I was so happy that I was shaking. I couldn't sit down for the longest time. I felt a lot of adrenaline and my face hurt after a while from smiling so much."

When I asked David what he would work on next, he laughed and replied, "A complimentary portrait of Rosie Malek-Yonan in oils as a thank you gift." Well, David, it is I, who must thank you for a job well done.

Thanks to all the Assyrian individuals, organizations, television programs and websites worldwide that carried the message of the competition and contributed to its success.

I would also especially like to thank Assyrian artists, Claude Isaac Younan of Chicago and Aram Odisho of Sweden for their participation.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to Zinda Magazine and particularly to Wilfred Bet-Alkhas for being such a huge supporter of the Book Cover Competition and *The Crimson Field*. Thank you for the continual recognition you give to Assyrian artists. I am forever grateful. ♦

**[Reprinted, with appreciation, from Zinda eMagazine, issue dated July 23, 2005.]**

**Editor's Note:** *David's father, Awia "Avoo" Daryawish was actually born in Hinaidi and his family relocated (when he was a young boy) to Habbaniya when Hinaidi RAF air base was vacated in 1936-37. The family lived in Habbaniya for a few years before they moved to Baghdad. Awia has six sisters and a younger brother. His mother's name was Anna (Nee Ezaria) and his father was Daryawish David, both of Mawana origin as stated in the article. Awia's father, Daryawish, was a technician at the RAF powerhouse in Hinaidi for several years as well as in Habbaniya during late 1930s and early 1940s.—Ed.*

### **With our Appreciation**

**We offer our thanks to our readers Shamasha Elisha Simon of Sacramento, California, and Mr. Zia K. Yousif, B.Sc., M.A., of Frankfurt/Main, Germany, who, between them, have supplied us with the names of three unidentified persons in our picture of Senior Boy Scouts gracing the back cover of our issue #7. The missing names are as follows:**

- 1. Front row, #5: David Awraham**
- 2. Back row, # 5: Yonathan Patros Esho**
- 3. Back row, # 6: Khoshaba Bahram**

**We urge our readers to always furnish us with missing names, or point out anything they find amiss in our magazine.—Ed.**

## Wishing you well! Wishing you well!



Mr. & Mrs. Zacharia O. Zacharia by their home looking like two young handsome lovers, enjoying life and a blooming health. Of course that was a few years ago...but they're still doing well.

Our dear friend Zacharia ("Zac the Sax"), popularly known as Skharia Odisho, and his wife Helen, as many of their friends know went through a difficult time for the last two years. At first Helen had to undergo a very serious operation in the summer of 2003, followed by aggressive therapy. While Zac was devotedly taking care of his wife as she underwent treatment, he himself had to have a major operation. So the couple had to struggle for two years through the medical facilities available to get well as well as to take care of each other. They were fortunate, however, to have the love and support of their four children, Edmund, Adeline and Linda in Chicago and Fabian in Modesto. Every now and then one of them, mostly Adeline, would come down from Chicago to visit them and take care of them for a short while.

As most of you know, Zac is one of the four Founding Members of Habbaniya Reunion committee as well as the Reunion's representative in California. In addition he is one of the three members of the Board of Directors of HUSCA Magazine. But neither Zac nor his wife were at the recent Reunion in Chicago, the reason being that Helen was not quite done with her course of treatment. Because he and his saxophone had been a constant Reunion fixture, especially at the Banquet evening, Zac's absence was visibly noticeable.

But thank God, Zac is now in fairly good health. And a happier news was that in October Helen was pronounced completely free from her disease. So to celebrate their good fortune, they took off at the end of November for a two-month vacation with their three children and other family members in Chicago. And we certainly wish them a good time and continued good health.

We are wishing good health and happiness to a few other friends and relatives too who have health problems, but without mentioning names in case they are sensitive to such personal information being made public.—MKP.



Raabi Albert blessing the dinner at the Banquet night of the Habbaniya Reunion at Holiday Inn in Skokie, IL. He was awarded a trophy for his former teaching services at Union School, Habbaniya.

Another dear friend and former teacher, Raabi Albert A. Babilla, is also now recovering from a very serious illness in England. He had a massive heart attack October 25, just over four weeks after returning from the Habbaniya Reunion in Chicago. Thank God he was saved after his daughter Julia Kemp called emergency. He was transferred to a hospital, where he was operated on and tubes were inserted into his blocked arteries. And he is now recovering at Julia's home and is expected to be well enough to move back into his own flat by mid-December, or just before Christmas.

There is a very funny and embarrassing story behind Raabi Albert's critical incident: On October 26 a very reliable source called me up and stunned me by telling me that Raabi Albert had just had a massive heart attack in England and had died. The person asked me to arrange to write his bio-obituary in HUSCA. I promised to do so, and even to submit the story to Zinda and Nineveh.

I then decided to reserve two pages for his bio-obituary and in fact changed the picture already set on the magazine back cover to that of a group close-up of Raabi Albert with Raabi Youkhanna Shimshon and Raabi Emmanuel Jacob, in their memory.

Two days later, I emailed Julia and expressed my shock and offered my deep sympathy to her and family. I also attached an obituary questionnaire and asked her to fill it out and mailed it back to me along with a few pictures of her father in different aspects of his life.

Was my face red the next day? Beetroot red! But I was also overjoyed to read the following reply from Julia:

"Papa is still very much alive, but he has had a massive heart attack...the Lord has chosen to heal him." ...and she went on to describe the circumstances of his trauma and his survival.—MKP

## 7th Issue of HUSCA is exemplary work!

*Writes Shlimoon Youkhanna from Chicago.*



**Jan. 8, 1948: Christmas party by Rover Crew of 1st Habbaniya (Iraq) Boy Scout Group at RAF Assyrian Employees Club hall, with music provided by accordionist Shlimoon Youkhanna.** Front row, L-R: 1. "Baby Boy" Apostoloff, 2. Unknown, 3. Baba Yosip, 4. Youel Yonadam, 5. Sargon David, 6. William David, 7. U/K, 8. Jebrial Kelaitha; 2nd row, L-R: 1. Alice Rouel Mikhail(?), 2. Munny Murad, 3. U/K 4. Khanna Ammanuel, 5. John David, 6. Battu Neesan (?), 7. Ammanuel Shnmouel, 8. Youlia Faron, 9. U/K, 10. U/K; Third row, L-R: 1. Aprim Benyamin, 2. Awia Karam, 3. U/K, 4. U/K, 5. U/K, 6. Anna Youkhanna or Panna Shawel, 7. U/K, 8. Daizy Shallou, 9. Sargis Shallou, 10. U/K, 11. Youkanya Sarmo(?) 12. U/K (Englishman?), 11. Not recognizable, 12. Mansor Benyamin Zodo, 13. U/K (Englishman?), 14. U/K, 15. Mirza Shmouel, 16. U/K; Last row, L-R: 1. Shlimoon Youkhanna, 2. Wilson David, 3. Camillia Katto, 4. U/K, 5. U/K, 6. Zaia Esho Yalda, 7. attention-attracting-thumbs-up Ben EshoYalda, 8. U/K, 9. U/K.

Yesterday, Tuesday, June 7, 2005, I received my copy of the 7<sup>th</sup> issue of HUSCA magazine. My, oh, my, what an excellent and well prepared publication! I raise my hat for the exemplary work! I read it all, word for word, page by page, and yea, with tears of joy.

Where shall I begin... I am lost! First and foremost, my very sincere condolences to Gladys, wife of a dear friend, Anwar Yalda David, who passed away last November, and to her son and daughters and grandchildren.

Anwar's father, *Mama* (Uncle) Yalda – an extraordinary gentle and kind person – and his wife Armounta were the official registered *Qareevah* who stood at my late Father's and Mother's wedding in 1923 or 1924 in Baquba (I presume). I remember uncle Yalda vividly and he always treated me like his own son.

My sincere condolences also to the survivors and families of all those mentioned in your 7<sup>th</sup> issue magazine. May God bless the souls of all the deceased and give them a place in His Kingdom.

*Raabi* Albert Babilla's beautiful article [in HUSCA #7] reminded me of the glorious days of our youth we spent together in good old Hab. To mind comes an event that Albert will, I am sure, remember very well (don't laugh, Albert!) But before revealing this event, let me first go back one step....

Way back in around 1942/43, after some months of membership in the *Khaet Khaet Allap* [*Khoubba Khouyada Atouraya*] organization, under the tutorship of *Mama* Shaul Suleiman, *Mama* Rovil Mikhael, *Mama* Ewan Warda and *Raabi* Aprim Benyamin, it was proposed that I should try by any means possible to

embark upon a "Mission Impossible" to proceed to the island of Cyprus with some secret messages to our late Patriarch, His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun who was then residing there in exile.

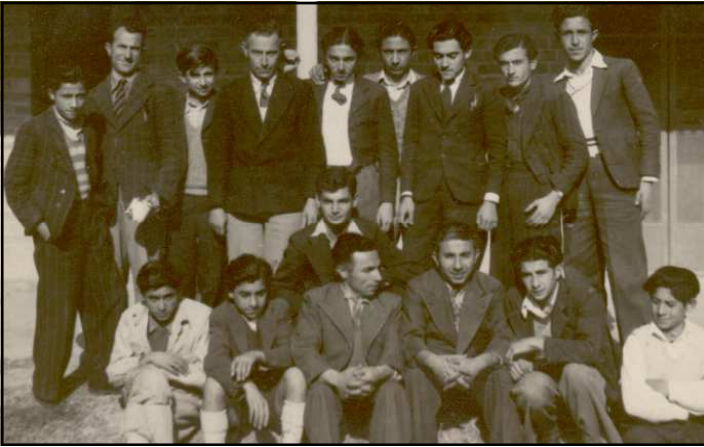
After a few weeks of deliberations and debating within myself, I decided to concoct a plan. I went to the physician of our Civil Cantonment Hospital, Dr Gulak Pasha, and told him that I would soon be having TB if I didn't get out of Habbaniya soon due to its bad environment and air pollution. After Dr. GP examined and x-rayed me he told me: "*Brooni*, there's nothing wrong with you. You're as fit and healthy as a young gazelle." But I kept insisting and he gave in and asked me what he could do for me. I said "give me a letter saying that due to health reasons I need a healthier climate to work in."

At the time, I was working for 115 Maintenance Unit personnel department as a clerk. The next day, I took the Doctor's letter to *Raabi* Ammanuel Shimun (God bless his soul) at the RAF Levies Employment Office. I knew *Raabi* Ammanuel well through his brother-in-law, Mishael Tooma, who was our Chief Clerk at 115 MU.

*Raabi* Ammanuel asked me what he could do for me. I told him I wanted to go to Cyprus and the only way I could do this was to be hired as a clerk with the RAF Levies companies that were being posted to Palestine and Cyprus. I also told *Raabi* Ammanuel in confidence that I had a mission to accomplish, to see the Patriarch. And he understood very well what I meant.

A few days later *Raabi* Ammanuel introduced me to Capt. Eric Day who was in-charge of [Levy] Record Office. Eventually I was hired as a clerk and was assigned to the 6th Levy Battalion.

When we arrived in Haifa, Palestine, we were told to wait for a few days in the transit camp for the next boat to Cyprus.



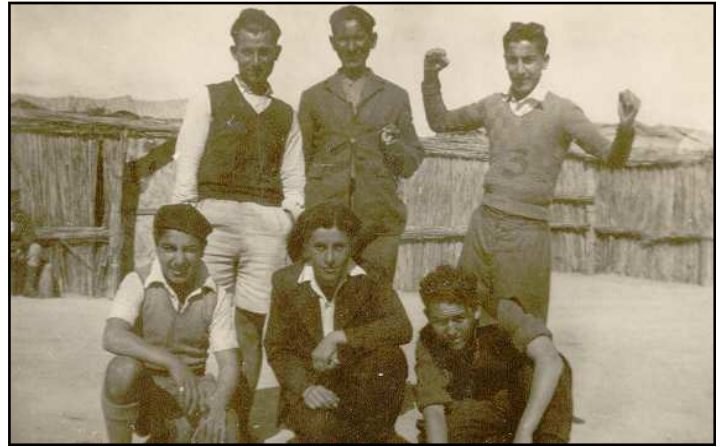
Mar.1946: Assyrian clerical staff of Aircraft Depot 115 Maintenance Unit Records Office. Standing (back) L-R: Mishael Yosip, N/K, Yooshia Kakko Poloss, N/K, Hawil Warda (?), Andrew Simon, Shlimoon Youkhana, John David, Aviqam Yonan; Sitting (L-R): Koryakos "Kirk" Esho Koryakos, Daniel Lazar Sulaiman, Avshalim Gewargis, Esha Owdisho, Ewan Warda, Israel Karam, and Yacoub Kambar. Photo Courtesy Shlimoon Youkhana.

(Haifa port on the Mediterranean Sea was the main artery transit camp for British and allied troops to pass through to connect or interchange to other locations.)

As misfortune would have it, on my third day at the Haifa transit camp, *Rab Tremma* Aprim (Bnai Marbisho) came along visiting the Levy troops and spotted me. He asked what was my job and where I was heading. I said I was a Battalion clerk and heading to Cyprus. He took a liking to me as we conversed on several subjects. He then said: "You are staying with us in Haifa and not going to Cyprus, because we have a very inefficient clerk and want to send him back to Habbaniya and you will take his place. And that is an order from me! Needless to say, it was futile to argue with him and thus he ruined all my plans.

In the year and half I was with him, we never established a good rapport, and finally I got myself transferred to another Battalion in Ramleh (near Jerusalem).

On May 8, 1945, while on a week's vacation joining British troops also vacationing in Jerusalem, I met three British soldiers at the YMCA Jerusalem Recreation Hall. While playing



Feb.1943: A few of the many young Assyrian civilian clerks who endured the cold and wet winter and the heat, dust and flies (not to mention snakes and scorpions) of the desert summer in makeshift hovels working for meager salaries helping the British war effort during 1942-43. Standing L-R Charles Babilla, Ahmed the camp sentry, Andrious Mama the "Brag-ging Tarzan" who claimed that he killed two snakes and seven scorpions that day. Squatting L-R: Davis Eshay David, N/K, and Khammo Enwiya, posing in foreground of their *sarifa* huts built of reed-and-palm-tree-leaf mats and crude posts and planks.

a game of billiards together, suddenly the music (radio) stopped and a special announcement came from the British Forces command that Germany had surrendered! Hell broke loose! We were up all night long in the city, dancing, drinking, "mishmushing" with beautiful girls till sunrise. I'll never forget that day, especially the three British soldiers, with two of whom I maintained contact for nearly 35 years and visited them in England several times up until the mid-1980's.

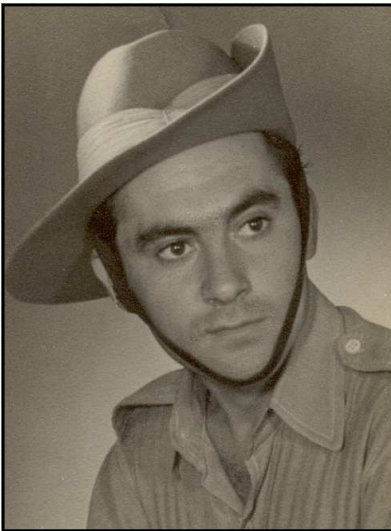
In June-July, 1945, we returned to Habbaniya but just before that I had purchased a small size accordion in Tel Aviv and had brought it back with me to Habbaniya. A few months later, the VERY FIRST Assyrian music dance band was formed through my efforts and the cooperation of a few acquaintances whom I knew had music instruments. We named our band *The Winged Disc Band* and guess what our insignia/emblem was? The very same one now used by the Assyrian Democratic Movement (*Zowaa*). What a sweet coincidence—



A few of the Civilian clerk distributors of food rations to the local residents during the May 1941 siege of RAF Station of Habbaniya. From left are: Mr. Edwards (Indian), William Shmouel, Shlimoon Youkhana and Nikhama David; kneeling: Nichola (Niko) Lazar Solomon, who died a few years later while still in his teens.



May 1941: A group of CC residents assembled to receive free rations during the Iraqi Army siege of Habbaniya when RAF flew in supplies from Basra and Jordan to supplement the scanty supplies available locally. Shlimoon Youkhana, the contributor of this picture, was assigned to distribute rations to 159 families in C1 and C2 quarters.



**Feb. 1944: Shlimoon Youkhana, now 81, shown as a young civilian clerk, in Levy uniform, attached to an RAF (Iraq) Levies battalion in Haifa, Palestine, during WW2.**

compose and write the lyrics that he sang so well.)

Our dear Raabi Albert Babilla joined in, on and off....what did you play, Albert?

I believe Andrious Mama Jotyar (today's MBE & Editor of *The Assyrian Observer* magazine In U.K.), also pitched in from time to time.

Please excuse my "dementia".....I am talking from 60 plus years memory, so don't blame this old soul for any omissions.

To go back now to the event connected with Albert Babilla mentioned earlier: Albert arranged, through his connections at the RAF Officers' Club, for our Winged Disc Band to play music for a surprise birthday party the Club had planned for one of its members. (Bear in mind that at that time our band



April 1943: Shlimoon at the *Sarifa* Camp in Shaibah as a "critical radical and self-imposed protester against RAF for the despicable living conditions of local clerks. I did not shave for months against the wishes of our British Sergeant Chief Clerk who threatened to fire me if I didn't, but finally gave up because he knew he couldn't replace me as an efficient clerk."

40 + years later!

Let no one boast and claim that they were THE FIRST Assyrian dance band in Habbaniya (as some have claimed previously). "Winged Disc" WAS the very FIRST in Habbaniya. Period.

Our Band Members were: Violin, the late and my very dear friend Khnania "Nanno" Bakus; banjo, Danno Polos (Bnai Ardeshai), decorator by profession, deceased; mandolin, Shaul Baba Avraham (now living in Chicago); drummer, the late William David Sheeno, may God bless his soul; accordion and mandolin, yours truly; and finally our beloved singer "Frank Sinatra" of the day, William David Sheeno. (I used to

compose and write the lyrics that he sang so well.)

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was so efficient, popular and well liked, that practically no wedding, engagement or special event party took place without the Winged Disc Band playing for it.—and this is no exaggeration, trust me! We used to charge anywhere from Iraqi Dinars 3 to 5, or even more, depending on the specific event and or the affordability of the sponsors. We even played at the drama of the Assyrian Group that came from Baghdad and performed in the old Cinema House.

Now back to Albert's adventure...Our band went to the Officers Club punctually, and as pre-arranged, the five of us scattered and hit behind the tall bushes, each with his own instrument in hand. As soon as the group of officers escorted the "birthday boy" onto the beautifully manicured lawn, a signal was given to us to "pop-up" and play the Happy

Birthday song, which we splendidly accomplished to the great surprise of all the officers. If I recall well, we played for several hours all kinds of dance music. Albert, if I haven't said this before, now I say sincere congratulations for a job well done, qualifying you for a meritorious award!

Here's an interesting point to conclude this article with. After things settled down, the officers repeatedly asked for dance music to be played. We began our playing session as usual with our theme song, namely the Assyrian nationalistic *Roosh Jwanqa*, which we always played at the beginning and end of each event. So when we started playing

*Roosh Jwanqa* (rather than dance music) the officers had no idea what was going on until one of us explained to them that it was our "trademark" song. Thanks Albert for the memories, and warmest regards and affectionate love to all ex-Habbaniyans and readers of the glorious HUSCA magazine.

**Editor's Note:** *Your parents couldn't have been married in Baquba in 1923 or 1924, because Baquba refugee camps were closed down at the end of 1920. They were probably married in Gailani or Kota Camps, both established in early 1920s.*

*As you know, Khaet Khaet Allap (Assyrian Love Unity) movement was established by the late Ousta Moushi Khoshaba (of Souldos) in 1942 in Shaibah when a sizable group of RAF employees were transferred from Habbaniya to a desert area near Shaibah to work on transshipment of Allied supplies and war equipment aid to Russia through Iran. The secret Assyrian Movement was brought back to Habbaniya in 1943 and it spread to other Assyrian communities in Iraq and in Syria and Iran. But a few years later it was betrayed to the RAF, as usual by some of our own Judas, and a sympathetic British Officer "advised" its leaders to dissolve it before it was reported to the Iraqi Government. An article on the history of the Movement I wrote was published in the 3rd Quarter 1999 issue of *Nineveh Magazine*.—The Editor ♦*



May 2, 1947. Rover Shlimoon Youkhana (left) with the late Khoshaba Kambur during an Ambar province (Ramadi, Habbaniya, Falluja, Tikrit, Haditha, Rutba) Scouting jamboree in celebration of King Faisal's birthday.



Shlimoon Youkhana, 81, 57 years later. This picture was taken on a Caribbean Cruise ship, with the two medals hanging on his chest won in a men's competition for the "most athletic body and sexiest legs on the ship, judged by a 5-women panel — and no kidding!"

## Zia Moshi Youkhana on Habbaniya Bus Brothers

The following is a brief story of a unique group of boys and girls that was formed after Habbaniya Union School was nationalized and run by Iraq's Ministry of Education as an elementary school.

After graduating from the elementary school a number of pupils whose parents were financially capable continued their higher education in other Iraqi cities especially Baghdad. But many graduates were recruited as apprentices to fill diverse clerical positions with British Authorities on the base.

Back in 1945-46 a few devoted parents approached the RAF Authorities to arrange some kind of transportation to drive their children between Habbaniya and Ramadi, the capital of Liwa Aldilaim, 30 kilometers west of Habbaniya so that the pupils could continue their education of intermediate and secondary level. For this purpose a military truck was provided by the authorities. I witnessed this process at the time personally. But after a few weeks, this privilege was for whatever reason cancelled. The parents were left with only one choice, namely to arrange transportation with local bus owners from nearby cities such as Falluja.

At the beginning transportation costs ran at ID2/250 per month. A year later the fare was negotiated down to ID1/500 due to competition among bus owners.



1954: The group of Habbaniya Bus Brothers and the bus—with "home-made body and hard wooden seats"—that took us back and forth to school in Ramadi. Photo Courtesy Shmouel Lazar Issa.

The bus was given permission to pick up the students from the main Civil Cantonment market area within the barbed wire fence that surrounded Habbaniya, which was installed for certain control and security reasons. The pupils had to walk only a short distance to catch the bus. After a short period, however, the bus was denied entrance into the air base. So the pupils were forced to walk in all kind of weather from home to the main gate, about half a mile. Still, the pupils through encouragement of their parents were adamant in accepting the hardships only to pursue their education.

Our group of 1949-1950 comprised of some 22-24 pupils, split evenly between boys and girls. The secondary school level in Ramadi separated the genders. The girls attended their school and the boys a different one. Both schools were located on two adjacent streets in center of Ramadi.

Despite all obstacles generated through transportation and hardships caused by inadequate living conditions in most of the family quarters, like lack of electricity, running water and hygienic facilities, this group endured all difficulties and carried on their education.

The majority of boys and girls excelled in all subjects taught, so that many teachers were proud and fascinated by their performance. Many were exempted from end of year exams, due to the higher marks acquired during the school year. Some of these pupils were extraordinarily intelligent. After finishing the secondary level with very high marks,



1952: Three of the HBB team members seen with the Hilla school headmaster during their visit to play soccer against a local school team. From left, Khoshaba Yacoub [Aboona], Shmouel Lazar [Issa] and Wiska Khammo [Pius]. Courtesy Shmouel L. Issa.



they were granted scholarships for higher education in Great Britain. Others continued their studies through their parents financial support in U.S.A.

After graduating as civil and mechanical engineers or architects, they returned home to serve their military service. Doing this, they were appointed to different responsible positions. Others graduated from Ramadi secondary school, who were less fortunate to receive a scholarship, were matriculated in several colleges of Baghdad University. A few graduated as medical doctors, geologists, civil engineers or secondary school teachers.

The boys within our group were named Habbaniya Bus Brothers. How and when the name HBB was born?

A football [soccer] team was formed mostly from Habbaniya's Ramadi students and a few friends of the group. On Thursdays, when the classes ended at noon time as usual, we waited for Abbas our bus driver. He was often late and we decided to walk back home. Strolling towards home, the pupils started a heated discussion on what name our football team should be given. The loudest of all was Hormis Hassamo, who was very articulate in English beside Assyrian and Arabic languages. Several names were suggested and written by chalk on asphalt road. Eventually, Habbaniya Bus Brother's name won the vote. Thus the name HBB was born.

As usual, yearly football tournaments were held during the playing season. For the first time a tournament for juniors was enacted in 1950-1951. HBB team took part in it. With hard work and training they reached the finals. The other finalist was the Habbaniya Elementary School select team. The game was played in an exciting and tense atmosphere. Spectators and supporters of both teams were cheering their team in a jovial and friendly spirit. As in competitions and tournaments,



1954: A day at Lake Habbaniya. From left, Zia Moshi [Youkhanna], Shmouel Lazar [Issa], Wiska Khammo [Pius], Shummon Ammanuel, Atniel David. Courtesy Shmouel Issa

it is the result that counts. H.B.B. won the game with a score of 2:1. Yoash (Yaya) G.Tamras proofed to be an excellent trainer, while Fraidon Orahim Iskhaq was the coach. The Civil Cantonment Commander presented the trophy to the team captain Basil (Wiska) Pius. Wiska was the best dribbler and fast ball passer on the field.

Our pride and joy for this great achievement was demonstrated by walking around and discussing the triumph with friends and schoolmates.

This is a prelude, which I read on a postcard on my last visit to Krasnadar/Russia. Because, it fits the above biography, I believe it would express some personal feeling if I quote it.

"Our good friends stay within our thoughts in such a special way—no matter how much time goes by. They are part of everyday, and of good times shared and planned, of each feeling and experience we know they would understand. They will be missed for all the pleasure, that just being with them brought. But good friends will stay forever close in mind and dear in thought". ♦



1953: Four HBB's Ramadi school students at Kut for a football match against a local school. From left, Zia Moshi [Youkhana], Ammo Baba, Wiska Khammo [Pius] and Shmouel Lazar [Issa]. Photo courtesy Shmouel L. Issa.

### Hurrah, Mr. Ben Yalda has personal postage stamp!

Mr. Benyamin Yalda, Chairman of the Habbaniya Reunion Founding Committee, has now his own personal 37c postage stamp, with his and his wife Leena's picture on it. I'm sure some of you must have already received his envelopes in the mail with the cancelled stamp on it. Others will soon receive it when Ben usually sends each HUSCA subscriber a reminder in regard to payment.

To order your own personal stamp just google <http://photo.stamps.com> ...and then do the rest! —Ed.



# In Remembrance of...

...Joseph Gewargis Joseph, 79, a former resident of Habbaniya, passed away of natural causes in Hanwell, England, on April 27, 2005. He was laid to rest two days later following funeral services celebrated by retired Archdeacon Younan Youel at *Mart Mariam Church of the East* in Hanwell, W.7, and was eulogized by his son Yacoub Joseph at a luncheon offered in his memory to the eighty people who attended the funeral.



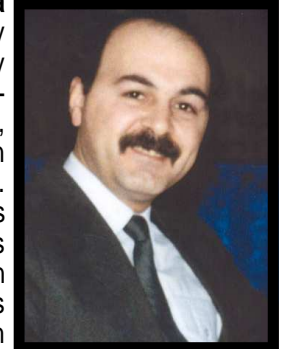
Third of five children, Joseph, also known as Yosip, was born in Hinaidi, Iraq, July 1, 1926. His mother was Oussanna and his father, who worked for the R.A.F's Air Ministry Works Directorate as an electrician/supervisor, was Gewargis Yosip. He received his elementary schooling at *Raabi Espania's School* in Maratha Lines adjoining the Royal Air Force Station of Hinaidi, five miles east of Baghdad. He also studied at *Raabi Yacoub's Union School* after his family moved in 1938 to Habbaniya when the RAF relocated to a new site 55 miles west of the Capital. Joseph worked for the RAF for 15 years in Habbaniya mostly as accountant but beginning as a junior clerk at the age of 16. There he also married Lilly Enviya on October 18, 1947, following their elopement.

In 1958 Joseph with family relocated to Baghdad. There he was employed as a general clerk by Iraqi import agents until 1972, when he immigrated with his family to England. He settled in Hanwell, and obtained employment with M.G Imports, working till his retirement in 2000.

Joseph is survived by his wife Lilly Joseph in Hanwell; six children: Anita, wife of Zaia Poulos, in London, Yacoub Joseph in Sydney, Australia, Teodora wife of Robert Allawerdi, Carmen Joseph, Diana Joseph, and Avraham Joseph, all in London; brother Benjamin G. Joseph in Sydney; sisters Margaret wife of William Gewargis in Fairfield, Australia, Gladys wife of Elisha Bakus in Modesto, California, Agnis wife of Ammanuel Youkhanna, and Bulbul wife of Francis Yousip both in Fairfield; and by three grandsons and three granddaughters.

May he rest in peace in His Kingdom.—MKP

...Fredrick Bajjoo Rehana, 55, a native of Habbaniya, passed away after a long illness in Chicago on May 14, 2005. His funeral services, attended by more than 400 mourners, were celebrated by Archdeacon Aprim DeBaz, assisted by Rev. Shlemon Heseqial, at *Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East*. He was laid to rest at Montrose Cemetery in Chicago. A memorial lunch was served to the mourners at the church hall, during which he was eulogized by Dr. Mark Bernstein and Mr. Ashur Dick Sargon.



The late Fredrick, popularly known as "Freddy," was son of the late John Bajjou Rehana. He was born on August 13, 1950, in Habbaniya, Iraq. After completing his elementary and high school education in Baghdad, he graduated from Baghdad's Mustansariya University. He applied to join the Iraqi Republican Air Force to train to become a pilot, but was turned down.

While in Iraq he lived with his family in Daura township near Baghdad. In 1970 he left for England and eleven years later came to this country to rejoin his family that had preceded him and had settled in Chicago. He worked for Hilton Hotel as Director of Food & Catering for three years. In 1984 he moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, doing the same job for Hilton.

In 1990 he met and married a woman named Annette. After living together for a year, they were divorced.

Freddy is survived by his mother Berimjin Rehana; two brothers, Francis and family in Chicago and George in Australia; two sisters, Susan Sankey and Joann Patros and their families in London, England; two uncles Rehana B. Rehana and family in Chicago and Robin B. Rehana in England; three paternal aunts, Jane and Judith and their families in England and Juliet in Chicago; a maternal aunt, Verjijn and husband Razmik and family in Chicago; also Najat, wife of his late uncle Youab B. Rehana, with her family in Chicago; and many other relatives.

Freddy was a very polite person and respectful to everyone. He was a great sports fan and especially enjoyed watching football, basketball and soccer. He suffered from a paralytic and respiratory disease for several years to which he finally succumbed.

May the Lord reward him in His Kingdom.

—Benyamin E. Yalda.

## Reunion Photos for Sale

Anyone who wants to buy prints of some of the pictures taken at the last Reunion held in Chicago in September, should contact Mr. Chairman, Benyamin Yalda (see P.2 for his phone and address). To order prints of those published in this issue, please first refer to magazine page number and then pin-point the pictures required on that page by numbering the pictures of each row, starting from the top left corner and going right for each row: For instance top row: No. 1, 2; 2nd row: 3, 4; 3rd row: 5, 6 etc. If a row is three or four pictures count the third and fourth pictures in each row too. See specimen on P.18. Thanks.

# In Remembrance of...

**Paul Aprim Paul, 77, a former resident of Habbaniya,** passed away on October 9, 2005, of a heart attack suffered at his home in Chicago, Illinois. His funeral services, attended by more than 400 mourners, were held at Mar Sargis Church of the East. Ten priests, namely Corbishop Athanasis Yousif, Archdeacon Aprim De Baz, Rev. Shlemon Hesiqial, Rev. Dr. George Toma, Rev. Charles Klutz, Rev. Kouchaba Bouza, and Rev. Antwan Lachin, along with a number of deacons took part in the services.



Paul was laid to rest on October 11 at Montrose Cemetery in Chicago. A memorial luncheon followed at Mar Sargis hall when he was eulogized by Revs. Athanasis Yousif and Aprim DeBaz. A breakfast was also served in his memory following the third-day church services.

First-born of three brothers and two sister, Paul was born July 1, 1928, in Karkov, Ukraine, to Khatoun Polous and Aprim Paulis. He had his earliest schooling in Iran and later in Habbaniya, Iraq, where he grew up. He started working in Habbaniya at the age of 12 to help take care of the family when his father passed away prematurely.

After leaving Habbaniya he worked and lived in Baghdad for many years where he was married on August 3, 1967, to Nora, daughter of Shawel and Elishwa Yonan. Seven years later, Paul came to America and settled in an apartment flat in Chicago for three years before he could bring his family over to join him. All his life in Chicago he was employed by ITT Bell & Grossett for which he worked until his retirement as machine operator engineer.

Paul is survived by his wife Nora Paul of Chicago; daughter Sweetlana, wife of Emile Aboona; daughter Ash-tar, engaged to be married to Steve Adams; son Tom Paul and family; brothers David Paul and family in Chicago and Arthur Paul and family in San Jose, CA; sister Shamiran Kanno and family in San Jose; and two grandchildren, Danny and Dina Aboona.

As his picture implies, Paul was friendly and cheerful, a gregarious person with a constant big smile to everyone; a loyal husband for 38 years; a hard-working father who supported his children to attain high standards of education; and a loving and loved grandfather and father-in-law.

Paul upheld a family tradition of celebrating the birth of Mar Toma, his eldest son's patron saint, each year on July 3 by a public *shara*, and contributed the donations received from family members and friends to church and charities.

May he be repaid for his goodness in His Kingdom.

—MKP

**...Shlimon Youav Malik, 77, a former Habbaniya sportsman** passed away September 3, 2005, following a long period of ill health. He was laid to rest at Turlock Memorial Park on September 8, following funeral services celebrated at Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East in Ceres, Shlimoon's hometown. The Pastor, Oshana Kanon, read out a sketchy record of Shlimon's life and a memorial luncheon was offered by his family to those who returned (some 100) to the small church hall from the burial.



Shlimoon, who was called "Chimoo" by family members and close friends, was born in Iraq (probably in Levy Lines in Hinaidi) in 1928 and grew up in the RAF Stations of Hinaidi and Habbaniya. He had his elementary education at these two camps and worked for many years as a clerk in RAF Levies in Habbaniya, where he was also married in 1947 to the late Sarra Daryawosh. She was a distant cousin of Umby origin like himself. During his youth years in Habbaniya Shlimoon was a boy scout and also played soccer and field hockey for the Levy Civilian team. He was also on the Employees' Club and the CC Select hockey teams. He was a good hockey player and although a very strong and "tough" defender in soccer, he never played in international matches and was not among the noted top group of Habbaniya footballers.

After he left Habbaniya in the late 1950s he settled in Baghdad and worked for African & Eastern Co. for many years. He then moved with his family to England in the 1970s where he worked and lived for a number of years before he rejoined his eldest son Charles in 1985 in USA. He engaged for several years in Auto spare parts business in Los Angeles before retiring to Turlock-Ceres-Modesto area.

Shlimon is survived by his two sons, Charles in Modesto, and Jameel in London; also by four daughters and a number of grandchildren.

May his soul rest in peace—MKP

**Note:** Because Shlimon's son Charles did not provide the Editor with the information required on his father, despite his promise, this bio-obituary is based on the personal knowledge of the Editor (a friend of Shlimon) as well as on a very sketchy information read out at the funeral church service by Rev. Oshana Kanon. The cropped vintage picture is also from the Editor's personal photo collection—Ed.

# In Remembrance of...

**...Lampeda Sarkis, 76, a housewife,** passed away in Chicago August 1, 2005, and was laid to rest two days later at Montrose Cemetery in Chicago after funeral services by Pastor Shlemon Heseqial at Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East. She was eulogized by her husband Leon at a memorial luncheon offered by her family at the church basement to 150 mourners attending the funeral.

The late Lampeda was born in Kirkuk, Iraq, on July 1, 1929. No information is available about her educational background. She was married to Leon Sarkis in Mosul, Iraq, in 1960 and immigrated with her family to this country in September 1975, settling in Chicago. She was employed from 1976 to 1980 at Marvel Engineering as a factory worker.

She is survived by her husband Leon Sarkis of Arlington Heights, IL; four children, Vivian Hoffelt, and family of Chicago, IL, Michael Sarkis of Arlington Heights, IL, Linda Sarkis and family of South Barrington, IL, and George Sarkis of Phoenix, AZ; a granddaughter; and a sister, Leda Baba, and family of North Hollywood, California.

May her soul rest in pace in Heaven.—MKP.



(and comforter) and he did all this voluntarily as a service to his people.

Skandar once told *Qasha Yako Orahaa*: "I never sang and danced in my own mother's wedding as much as I did in your wedding." Ironically enough, *Qasha Yako Oraha* returned the favor by singing religious dirges at Skandar's funeral and grave.

In Los Angeles he attended mass every Sunday and sang in the choir. He also cooked *addas* (for which he was noted) for church socials and proved his skill in the Assyrian *saipawo-matala* dance in weddings and festivals even during his senior years.

Skandar was born in Amediya in northern Iraq in 1921. His father was *Qasha Ablakhat* son of "Doctor" Iskandar of Lower Teyareh in Hakkari and his mother was Panna Yosip of the village of Mawana in Targewar, Iran. Skandar was six months old when his father, who was in fact a herder, died in Tiyareh. A few years later, his mother took Skandar down to Mosul and she later remarried Haroon Esho of Upper Teyareh in Giyarah, Iraq. Skandar was taken care of well by his stepfather, as promised his mother, and was pampered and left to develop in his own natural way especially during the years his mother bore three other children for her new husband.

Skandar had some elementary schooling while his stepfather served in the Assyrian Levies in northern Iraq and in RAF Station in Hinaidi in central Iraq. When the family moved up to RAF Station of Habbaniya in the late 1930s Skandar started working to help his step-father in taking care of the family. He worked at various kinds of jobs, among them as a "chokidar," (security guard) a NAAFI canteen hand, and finally as an enlisted man in the Iraqi Air Force.

Skandar was married in 1947 in Habbaniya to Virginia "Varjo" Israel of Armujagha, Gavilan, origin. Between 1948 and 1967 the couple produced nine children, four sons and three daughters of whom survived.

In 1970 Skandar was transferred to Baghdad. So his family left Habbaniya and settled in Gailani Camp. There his step-father died soon after. Skandar continued to serve the Iraqi Air Force, where he was loved and pampered by both officers and men, his last rank being a warrant officer. But in 1980 he and his whole family packed up and left Iraq for Greece. They lived there for two years, mostly on aid. His son Sankhero managed to come to LA first and the rest rejoined him shortly after, except for Skandar's mother Panna who died that year back in Kirkuk, Iraq. After living in LA for 22 years Skandar, his wife and daughter Shamiran and family relocated to Turlock. But after a year they "did not like the weather," and they returned to LA, where his eventful life finally came to an end shortly thereafter.

Skandar is survived by four sons and three daughters: David Iskandar Marogi and family in LA; Rosa Behnam and family in Baghdad; Albert Iskandar Marogi and Sh. Sankhero Iskandar Marogi and family in LA, Elishwa Esha and family in Baghdad; Shamiran Davido and family and Ashoor Iskandar Marogi and family in LA; by siblings Gollizar Khoshaba and Yosip Haroon Esho and their families in Baghdad; and by six grandchildren.

May the Lord bless his loving soul in Heaven—MKP



Iskandar as warrant officer in Iraqi Air Force

**....skandar Marogi Iskandar, 84, popularly known as "Skandar Zamara," a former Habbaniya folklore singer, song-and-dirge writer, poet, monologist, comedian, and a legend** died in Los Angeles, on October 29, 2005, after a long debilitating illness caused by aging problems.

He was interred November 1 at Oakwood Memorial Park in Chatworth (LA) after funeral services at *Mar Shalieta* Ancient Church of the East conducted by Pastor Yako Oraha and church deacons in San Fernando (LA). He was eulogized by his son *Shamasha Sankhero* "Sonny" Alexander to only a hundred mourners who partook of the memorial lunch offered at the church hall. Rev. Gewargis Rasha of *Mart Maryam* Assyrian Church of the East in Tarzana (LA) also participated in the funeral services.

Skandar Zamara was probably one of the few Assyrians who could call himself, without doubt, Habbaniyan. He not only lived in Habbaniya for a very long time (30 years) when most resided probably half of this time, but all of his seven surviving children were born and raised in Habbaniya and five had most of their education at Habbaniya and the nearby towns. Skandar was also probably the most well-known resident among the 10 to 12 thousand Habbaniya local inhabitants. I doubt if there were many among these thousands, including non-Assyrians, who did not know who Skandar Zama-ra was, including children. He was gregarious, friendly and a loving person, to both friends and strangers alike.

Skandar Zamara was a legend of his own. You could see him in almost every event that took place in Habbaniya, be it a sports game, party, wedding, funeral, you name it. And he was in the spotlight all the time. With his amusing folkloric and wedding songs (some intended to tease maidens), he oftentimes led the line of dancers with amusing playful steps and body rock, shake and swing. His funny anecdotes or jokes never failed to gush up laughter and his mournful dirges for the dead (most of which he composed himself) during wakes and funerals always generated wails and flowing tears. He was a great entertainer

# In Remembrance of a Legend...



## Captions for above pictures, starting from the left bottom and going clockwise:

1. A formal Skandar Zamara "doing his thing" on the microphone during his last years; 2. In front of City of LA Independent School in his late 1970s; 3. With his younger step-brother Eshoo Haroon Esho in early old age; and 4 & 5 on his deathbed: with his wife "Verjo," showing their family members' wedding pictures; and with fourth son, Shamasha Sankhero "Sonny" Alexander.

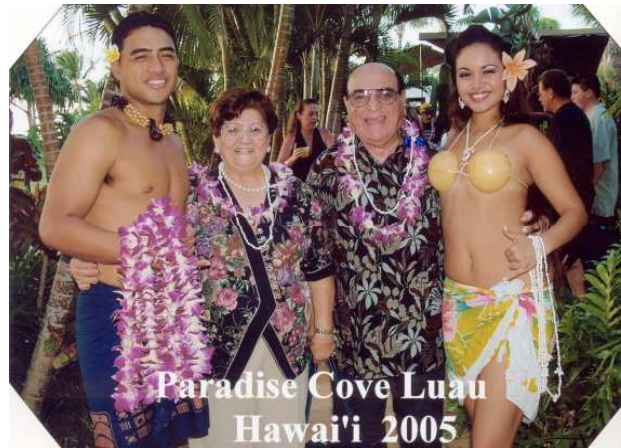
## Habbaniya's Modesto Couple Celebrate In Hawaii 50 Years of Marriage



Liza & Davis at their engagement on 9/15/1955



Liza & Davis on wedding day 10/15/1955



Liza and Davis E. David celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary with a vacation in Honolulu, Hawaii from October 13 to 20, expenses paid, as a shared anniversary gift from their four children.

The couple were betrothed on September 15, 1955 and were married a month later (October 15) by Rev. Squadron Leader Davis at RAF's Saint George's Church in RAF Station of Habbaniya. Their wedding celebration was held at the RAF Assyrian Employees' Club in Civil Cantonment on the same day.

First of seven children, Davis was born in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1926 to Eshay Mirza David Bet-Khan and Judith Aghakhan Neesan. Liza, fourth of nine children of Aziz Shamasha Eshaya and Khanno Khnanisho, was born in Hinaidi, Iraq, in 1935.

Davis grew up in Baghdad and CC of Habbaniya. He graduated from Habbaniya's Union School (Junior High) with honor in 1942 and was the class valedictorian. He was then employed by the RAF as a clerk for several years before he switched to a weather forecaster at Meteorological Office, where he worked for another 10 years.

Liza began her schooling in Habbaniya's Union School and ended graduating from Habbaniya Elementary School.

In Habbaniya Davis was an active member of the community. He was a Boy Scout troop leader and Ro-

ver and acted in several school and community plays. He was the Sports Secretary for Employees' Club for two years.

Before marriage, Liza taught beginners' classes at CC's Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East for five years and was an active Girl Guide for several years.

After leaving Habbaniya, the couple had a home in the Assyrian township of Dora and Davis worked for the Accounts Department of Khanaquin Oil Company for 16 years before the family immigrated to USA in 1973. They settled in Modesto and after working at various jobs for a few years, Davis was employed by Container Department of Tri-Valley Growers where he worked for 21 years before retiring in 1995. Liza also worked for the same company for 20 years.

The couple are now members of the Civic Club of Turlock as well as of Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East in Ceres. Davis was chosen as "Father of the Year" by the Civic Club and Liza was chosen as "Mother of the Year" by the Daughters of Mar Zaia Assyrian Church of the East in 1995.

The couple have a daughter, Patricia Kleis who lives with her husband and two daughters in Hastings, Minnesota; a son, Ronnie, 48, married with two sons and a daughter, and unmarried twin sons, Frankie and Jesse, 36, all living in Modesto.—MKP

## Habbaniya's Anglo-Assyrian Couple Celebrate Golden Wedding Anniversary



Kay (former Khawa Yacoub Aboona), with her bridegroom Flight Lieutenant Arnold Pearce, cutting their wedding cake on August 7, 1955.



Kay (Khawa) and Arnold Pearce cutting their golden wedding anniversary cake on August 5, 2005.

Kay, an Assyrian, and Arnold Pearce, an Englishman, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on the 5th August, 2005, with an informal luncheon party at Upton House, Poole, England, not far from sea-side resort of Bournemouth in Dorset.

Champagne and canapés were served to the music of the 1950s before luncheon on a very fine day and the guests were able to stroll about on to the extensive lawns and gardens.

Kay (Khawa) Yacoub Aboona was married to Flight Lieutenant Arnold Pearce, Engineer Officer to the Royal Air Force Levies (Iraq) on the 5th August, 1955. The initial ceremony was at RAF Habbaniya's St. George's Church, and subsequently on the 7th August at St. George's Church in Baghdad followed by a reception at Kay's family home in the suburb of Alwiyah.

On the wedding day the groom's family and friends in England were unable to make the journey. But the situation was reversed for the recent event; the travel difficulty being with the bride's family. Despite this, the celebrating couple's eldest son Richard flew in from "Silicon Valley," California, whilst a few others from England and Europe also attended, including two of the four bride-maids, Kathy (Aboona) Shlimon and Jane (Baijo) Khanakian. Nostalgia was added to the occasion by the attendance of Pamela, widow of the late Air Commodore Arthur Riall, CBE, last Commander of the Royal Air Force Levies, Iraq, who was a close friend of Kay's father *Rab-Tremma* Yacoub Khoshaba Aboona, OBE.

The eldest of six siblings, Kay is the daughter of the late Rab-Tremma Yacoub Khoshaba Aboona. She received her earliest education at Hinaidi, Iraq, and subsequently in Raabi Yacoub's Union School in Habbaniya. She took part in many activities, including Girl Guides, in which she had a leading role. Her education continued in stages as her three sons grew up. She obtained a B.Sc. in Knitwear Technology at Leicester's de Montford University, receiving her award just when her son Richard Sargon achieved his Ph.D. in Electronics and Computer Net-

working. Her other two sons also obtained degrees, Martyn Ashur M.Sc. in Bio-Chemistry and Ren Younis M.A. in Fashion. All three are now well known internationally in their chosen fields, and Ren travels widely as part of his fashion business, which is centered in London.

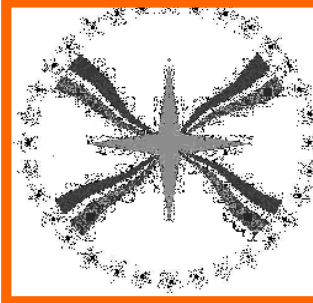
Following her qualification Kay was designer for many well known labels such as Marks & Spencer.

Arnold received his qualifications in aeronautical engineering in Leicester, having been trained at the National Gas Turbine Establishment. Following his RAF service he was employed for the next thirty years in the design and construction of nuclear power stations and ended his career as a consultant to Jaguar Cars Ltd. at nearby Coventry.

Kay and Arnold have five grandchildren. Three of them Marcus, Emily and Oliver, whom they regularly visit, live with their parents Richard and Angelina Pearce in Saratoga, California. The other two, Nadia and Lily, live with their parents Martyn and Sarah Pearce near Farnham in Surrey, England, which is fairly close to their grandparents' home. ♦



# مجله دانش‌آموزان دبیرستان سیدالهدی



Compiled in Modesto, California, and distributed from Des Plaines, Illinois.

## CLASS OF 1945 & 46



**The last 1945 and 1946 combined classes of graduating students of Raabi Yacoub's Union School, following takeover of the school by the Iraqi Government in 1944.**

**Due to its takeover and its conversion to an elementary school and change of curriculum to Arabic, Union School's 1945 and 1946 classes could not graduate until 1946, after it was arranged for the students to carry on in Raabi Yacoub's English curriculum in the evening in the school building under the tutorship of Raabi Youkhanna Shimshon and a RAF officer and an Airman from the RAF Education Unit, with supervision from the then government school principal, Mr. Antwan Qaseer.**

Front row, L-R: Avigil Polus Jado, Sarro Benyamin, Avigil David, Rapqa Jibrael, Wardiya Youna, LAC Ward (teacher), Mr. Antwan Qaseer (Principal), Raabi Youkhanna Shimshon (teacher), Violet Youav Jacob, Julia Yacoub Aboona, Elizabeth Odisho, Awigil Shmnouel, Anno Skharia; 2nd row, L-R: Baba Francis, John Fraidon, N/K, Leena Yonathan, Minania Ewan, Shammiran William Shabbas, Odette Youav Jacob, Nina Alec, Youaw Giliana Tamras, Benyamin Youkhanna Khoshaba, Hubert Aghassi Babilla, Aprim Yosip; 3rd row, L-R: George Youkhanna Yonan, Hawil Yosip, N/K, Pola Skharia, Emmanuel Yosip, Albert Avişam, N//K, Yosip Kaaku, William Skharia, Istapanus\_\_\_\_, Moushi Shindu, Aprim Haroun; Back row, L-R: N/K, Yerjanik Babayan, Wilson David, Warastad Markarian, N/K, Avia Nimrod Khamo, Kapriel's son, Wilson\_\_\_\_, Francis Shawel, Rehana Baiju, Yosip Gewargis Shabo. **Photo & names courtesy Abigail (Polus Jado) Isaac.**