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Letters to the Editor

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Dear Pat,

TRANQUILLITY ZONE

As a member of the “Past Editors of the Bahá'í Journal UK Club”, could I enter a small contribution to the historical accuracy regarding the origins of Tranquillity Zones?

The Tranquillity Zone concept has become such a popular feature that the National Spiritual Assembly has trademarked the term. The Swindon friends have done a great deal to systematise the Tranquillity Zone so that a decent standard of preparation, execution and follow-up is assured. Yet I fear that we could lose sight of the Tranquillity Zone's origins.

Those friends fortunate enough to have attended the Sidcot Summer School in August 1997 had the opportunity to visit the old oak-panelled library at the School, which was transformed by use of drapes, candles, flowers and photographs of significant figures in the Faith. This “Journey to the Heart” as it was called was the inspired work of the Dacey family, who wove music (some taped and some sung live by Conrad Lambert) and readings from the Bahá'í writings into a highly profound experience. The simple invitation to each session, which included a special one for the youth, asked attendees to prepare as if they were about to meet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

So inspired were the friends from the Wirral who took part that they decided to hold a similar event at a fair organised by Wirral Grammar School for Girls in Bebington on September 27, 1997. Staging the event for a non-Bahá'í audience, they needed a more inclusive title. The name “tranquillity zone” was the suggestion of David Netherwood, who was then eight years old. Friends wanting to read more can look up their copy of the November/ December 1997 Bahá'í Journal, page 20.

The first “TZ” was the most popular part of the fair and the organisers predicted in the Journal: “This idea will be a complete success and winner of hearts wherever it is repeated.”

Kindest regards, Stephen Maund

Dear Sir

A SMALL HISTORIC “FIRST”

Aberfeldy has for some time had one resident Bahá’í – Hilarie Hounam, whom some may remember by her previous name of Burnett. At the end of November 2001, the Bahá’í population doubled when I came to live at Weem, just across the Tay. With the recent arrival of Hilarie’s son Iain and his friend Amica, hot-foot from serving at the World Centre, it doubled again, albeit their addition is only to be temporary.

On the evening of Friday, January 18, eight people gathered in the Hounam house to celebrate the Feast of Sovereignty. This was an historic moment for the Faith in the area, because it was the first Feast to be held by the resident community. Several guests had been invited and the four who were able to come were: Parvin Morrissey, Angie Baines and Kathleen and Scott Murray.

The evening began with a truly magnificent feast, provided by Hilarie, assisted by Amica. An uplifting Devotional of prayers and readings followed. There being no Local Assembly, there was no official business but consideration of how the Faith might be propagated locally prompted some lively discussion. There was time for talk too and it was late enough before the guests were decanted into the cold night air, to their cars and road home.

It was not an earth-shattering event, just another small step towards the day when the New World Order of the Bahá’í Faith is brought about...

With loving Bahá’í greetings, David Grant

Dear Editor,

NATIONAL FUND

At a recent Bahá’í gathering, an NSA member informed me that, based on previous donations to the Arc Fund, the UK Bahá’í community is capable of donating £2,000,000 (\$3,000,000) a year, which is nearly half the amount required for the Endowment Fund. As one of the richest Bahá’í communities in the world, taking into account prosperity and number of believers, it is this level of contribution that is expected of us.

The Councils have divided the UK into 100 areas (78 areas in England), this means on average each area has to raise £20,000. Obviously, in areas of high unemployment and where there are few Bahá'ís, this figure is too high. Hence, for the more prosperous regions the figure needs to be higher (nearer £40,000).

Now that we will soon be having our area meetings, why not each area pledge to raise thousands of pounds each year for the Endowment and International Funds. Raising one thousand pounds a year, means setting aside £20 each week for the fund. The tax rebate from this level of donation will also provide the National Fund with a large proportion of its requirements. We really have to think in terms of such figures if we want to fulfil what is expected of us in the UK and take one of the burdens off our beloved Universal House of Justice. We have done it before and we can do it every year.

In these days of economic uncertainties, is there a better place to deposit our money than in the shrines of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb!

Warmest love, Igan Hayati

Dear Sir

HELP FOR THE HARD OF HEARING

As one who is partially deaf, I suspect I am not alone in my desperate struggle at times to hear what is being said in the restrained and refined atmosphere of meetings in people's homes. Resulting from my struggles down the years to cope with hearing-loss, tinnitus, and hyperacusis, I have devised various strategies and technical tricks to help overcome the problems of being unable to hear, and thus participate, in Bahá'í discussions. I have even borrowed a neighbour's hearing dog, but its accent is so strong I can't understand what it is saying.

Seriously though, one in seven of the UK population has hearing difficulties, which suggests a figure in excess of 600 among the Bahá'ís. Anyone feeling despondent, discouraged, isolated and excluded by the curse of deafness is welcome to contact me for help, by email at: Arthur48@btinternet.com

Best wishes, Uncle Arthur (Kendall).

Dear Editor,

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

I enjoyed reading the account of "A Change of Time" in the January Bahá'í Journal. The conference was indeed inspiring and uplifting. However, if we are trying to offer an example of a new pattern of life we are often our own worst enemies. While I hesitate to sound a negative note, I do feel that the following issue needs bringing to the attention of the wider Bahá'í community. I stayed with a friend at a very pleasant hotel, a short distance from the conference centre. When we arrived, early Friday evening, the owners asked us what "Bahá'í" was. We explained briefly. This was the first year they had been open at the time of the conference and had not heard of the Faith before. We asked if they had any one else booked in for the conference. They said they had two more parties booked for Friday night.

The following morning, when we appeared to be the only guests at breakfast, we asked about the others. One party had phoned, Friday evening, and cancelled, the others had just not turned up. Saturday evening the landlord asked me if anything had been announced at the conference as they had been expecting more guests to arrive. He thought something must have prevented them coming, perhaps something had been cancelled.

Next morning we were still the only guests. Three more parties had been expected and none had arrived, or even rung and cancelled. Out of six bookings, four had just not turned up without even contacting the hotel, one had cancelled and we were the only ones who had stayed there. This certainly did not give a good impression of the Faith to our landlord.

We did mention the situation to one of the conference organisers and he told us that this was a recurring problem. Such behaviour really does not reflect well on the Faith, a Faith that has trustworthiness as one of its central concepts. Surely, we should do better than this. I would like to end with a quote, also in the January Journal,

“One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.”

(Shoghi Effendi: Bahá'í Administration, p. 66)

Louis Doughty,
Conwy

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