

# A Light in All Our Lives

*The Life and Times of  
Lucille Sanche Maloney*



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Cover art by Esther Maloney

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*... love is light no matter in what abode it dwelleth ...*

— 'Abdu'l-Bahá<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

With the encouragement of members of my family and several friends, I have written this biography of my mother, Lucille Sanche Maloney.

I write about Lucille principally as her daughter, knowing aspects of her life of which few others are aware. Lucille became a member of the Bahá'í Faith in the region of Montreal at a time when there were very few Bahá'ís of French-Canadian origin. Her life may be of interest to future generations since, like many early believers, she chose to be part of a world-embracing and universal Faith in the second century of its existence.

As Lucille's only daughter and the eldest of her three children, I have access to the few documents she left in my care. I also write because as a woman, like my mother and largely thanks to her, I have had opportunities that many of my own generation may not have had. I realize that there are innumerable women who have lived important and valuable lives throughout diverse cultures and societies, over centuries and even millennia who have remained unknown, invisible simply because no one wrote about them.

Lucille admired Gilles Vigneault, the great *raconteur* (storyteller) and *chansonnier* (singer) who came from a tiny village on the upper north shore of the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence, that mighty river that crosses the entire province of Québec. Vigneault, like the Saint-Lawrence is an integral part of the spirit that is Québec. Now, this wonderful artist is in his 90s. In the 1970s Lucille described him as coming from very poor and humble beginnings, becoming a veritable folk hero for several generations of Quebecers.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/abdul-baha/selections-writings-abdul-baha/3#159531595>. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the eldest Son and appointed Successor of Bahá'u'lláh.

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Reading Vigneault's recent description of what inspired him to write his soul-stirring songs, I thought of Lucille as he recounted that, *"It was in the cemetery of my native village of Natashquan that my first songs were born. I saw the tombstones of people I did not know, and it bothered me. I wanted to speak about their courage, their resolve and their hopes; to celebrate them, rather than those of mythical heroes."*<sup>2</sup>

Vigneault's short description suggested an excerpt from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet and founder of the Bahá'í Faith, about the nature and purpose of the soul. Particularly since Lucille once recounted how she found this concept central to her own aspirations:

*Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world. ... The light which these souls radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples. They are like unto leaven which leaveneth the world of being, and constitute the animating force through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Through them the clouds rain their bounty upon men, and the earth bringeth forth its fruits. All things must needs have a cause, a motive power, an animating principle. These souls and symbols of detachment have provided, and will continue to provide, the supreme moving impulse in the world of being.*<sup>3</sup>

I am also grateful to those who have already led the way, having written biographies of remarkable individuals, particularly those who wrote about women, and from whom I derive inspiration.

From my own earliest years as a Bahá'í youth until now, in my late 60s, I have cherished books and stories lovingly researched and

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<sup>2</sup> Free translation of Gilles Vigneault during a performance, source: La Presse newspaper, 6 October 2019. « C'est au cimetière de Natashquan que sont nées mes premières chansons. Je voyais les pierres tombales de gens que je ne connaissais pas et ça me dérangeait. J'ai voulu raconter leur vaillance, leur endurance, leurs espérances et, plutôt que célébrer des héros mythiques, les célébrer, eux. » — Gilles Vigneault, lors de son spectacle, La Presse, 6 octobre 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Chapter LXXXI.

written about individuals whose lives have enriched humankind, whatever their circumstances. Their stories have sometimes been my companions in the worst and in the best of times; reminding me that countless others have lived through great joys and many difficulties. Some are biographies and narratives of people I have known, and others about those I truly wish I had.

I chose to write Lucille's biography in English since, although I am fluently bilingual, I am a better English than French writer. I also hope that having this biography available in English will make it more accessible to more readers who may be interested in the lives of early members of the Bahá'í Community in the Region of Montreal.

Montreal has great significance for the Bahá'í Community since it is the only city in Canada where 'Abdu'l-Bahá stayed for several days during his travels across North America in 1912. While in Montreal, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke eloquently in churches, and in meeting and union halls on many diverse and pressing issues<sup>4</sup>.

It was well over half a century later, in 1967, that Lucille discovered the Bahá'í Faith. She often told me that, throughout her life, she longed to understand the "big questions" such as that vast and ever-present question which most of us ask ourselves in some way or other: What is the purpose of life?

Later, what concerned Lucille even more was how and what to teach her children about life, and values that are sound, which would serve them and would have them strive to make a positive contribution to the betterment of the world throughout their own lives. Gaining a deeper understanding of these questions through the spiritual and social teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and wishing to share this joyous discovery became the motivating force that guided and sustained her in the last quarter century of her life. The all-encompassing, coherent, and universal nature of these teachings does not pit one people, race, religion, or nationality against another. It was this world-embracing vision that attracted Lucille to this new Faith.

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<sup>4</sup> For further details about Abdu'l-Bahá's nine-day visit to Montreal see: [https://bahai-library.com/mclean\\_centenary\\_abdul-baha\\_montreal](https://bahai-library.com/mclean_centenary_abdul-baha_montreal) and on the Bahá'í Faith see: [www.bahai.org](http://www.bahai.org).

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Lucille received a fine and rather exceptional education for a woman living at that period in Quebec; and she was intelligent, independently minded, and resourceful. She made important and sometimes unconventional choices that left their mark and influenced the lives of many people in positive ways. As a determined and radiant spirit, she did not care for any undue attention, remained true to herself and loving to all who knew her. She passed away almost 30 years ago and yet when a treasured friend, Raymond Flournoy, passed away more recently, my husband and I received a note from an old friend stating that “*... As I write to you, Suzanne, I think of your dear mother and what a wonderful gift to the world was her being.*”<sup>5</sup>

My daughter Esther, Lucille’s first grandchild, recently wrote about her grandmother, and as I read her words, I hear my mother’s voice also assuring me that:

*... in the end, of course, we don’t really make anything ourselves. We only allow what is already there to emerge. And when it does, it is unspeakably glorious and far greater than anything we might have imagined ourselves.*<sup>6</sup>

Now Esther is a mother herself, living in Toronto with her husband and young son, Liam. Wanting to introduce French into Liam’s life, the language she associates with her beloved “Grandmaman Lulu”, she recounted this story where Lucille appeared to be ever present in her life:

*... Today, after a stressful drive out to this little store in the east end of Toronto, where I was almost in tears myself because Liam was crying so much, he finally settled in the wrap, we walked a bit and I walked into a used bookstore. There was a pile of baby books on the floor, and I sifted through and then asked the sales lady if she happened to have anything in French for babies. She said "Yes! There was one book! Really cute!" Then tried to find it and struggled for a bit. She picked up a lovely book with a rabbit on it. The title was "Le rêve de Lulu" (Lulu's Dream) ... Of course, I teared*

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<sup>5</sup> M.R., email 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Esther, June 2015

*up immediately and said, "that looks good, I'll take it." ;) it felt confirming, like she's nudging me along! And like this French thing is a good idea.<sup>7</sup>*

And her father, my beloved husband of almost 50 years responded:

*I do believe she is much closer to us than we realize.*

*Dad (who is known as Jaja to his grandchildren Clara, Liam and Na'im)*

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<sup>7</sup> Esther, September 2016

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## Lucille's Ancestry and Origins

Lucille's mother was named Maria Brassard (1893 -1986), though her baptismal name was Marie-Thérèse and yet, in Church records<sup>8</sup>, she is Marie Rose de Lima Brassard. The marriage registry of 1919 records *Marie Louise alias Maria Brassard*. Since Lucille was born in 1924, her mother was 31 when Lucille was born.

The Brassard side of the family is not very well known since Maria became an orphan at a young age and was adopted by an aunt. However, in 1991, Lucille wrote, "Roch Brassard married Delvina Dupuis at Saint-Isidore de Laprairie (a town on the south shore near the island and port city of Montreal, on the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence in southwestern Québec) on 15 February 1881..." Maria and her twin brother were the youngest, but he died in infancy.

During the 1880s and 90s rural people in Quebec, particularly farmers, left their land to work in the factories of the United States where it was easier to find factory work and higher wages. Most of this work required few skills or formal education and often employed women and children. This was especially true in the huge textile mills of New England where several members of a family could find work. According to Lucille:

*Roch and Delvina moved to the U.S. to find employment and returned home around 1895 when my mother, a twin, was born (the boy died at birth). Delvina was very sick and unable to care for herself or her family. ... She died at 41... Beatrice, the oldest, took over the care of the family but my mother was later adopted by her childless aunt, Annie Dupuis, and uncle Venant Leduc. They lived on Bourbonnière Street in Hochelaga (now an eastern district of Montreal).*

When Lucille was in her 60s, I remember her recounting that her mother may have had an Abenaki<sup>9</sup> parent or ancestor, although the family has no record to that effect. More recently, after having had a

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<sup>8</sup> Thanks to Heather Harvey Desson's research, through Ancestry.com

<sup>9</sup> Abenaki means "the people of the rising sun," or "People of the east Wabum-light A'ki-land." <http://www.angelfire.com/mi4/polcrt/Abenaki.html>

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genetic analysis of my origins, there is no indication of First Nations' origins. Nevertheless, like most French-Canadian families, it was unlikely, given the little concern for or knowledge of First Nations' peoples at that time, that members of Lucille's family would have even acknowledged any familial lineage with First Nations. Children, generation after generation in Catholic schools, were taught of "first contact" (Jacques Cartier, French explorer, lands in Gaspé, Québec in 1534) with First Nations' people when European settlers first arrived and little else.

Lucille's father was Hector Sanche (1893-1967) (Figure 1). Hector was from a farm family near Casselman, Ontario. As a small child Hector broke his arm and it had been badly set so he could never use it fully. As a result of this accident, he was deemed unfit to be a farmer. Instead, a local priest decided that Hector should be sent to college or more specifically to a seminary in Montreal. That seminary has since become a private French high school in downtown Montreal.<sup>10</sup>

Boys who attended such schools were destined to become priests, doctors, lawyers, or notaries. Hector became a doctor and specialized in obstetrics. In doing so, his own family became part of Montreal's French-speaking professional class.

Lucille wrote:

*My father Hector Sanche was born in a poor Catholic, French, farming family in Casselman, Ontario. Public schools there were only for English Protestants. For the few lucky French kids, the parish priest established private catholic elementary schools. From 9 years old, my father was handicapped, a broken right elbow had been badly set and he couldn't fold his arm completely. Therefore... no good for the farm... he was sent to college in Montreal (expenses paid by the Church because there were nuns and priests in the family), and he seldom went home again. He must have been a very lonely young boy in the stern discipline of those days.*

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<sup>10</sup> [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collège\\_de\\_Montréal](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collège_de_Montréal).



*Figure 1: Hector Sanche circa 1911*

On the Sanche side of the family there is little information about ancestry; nevertheless, Lucille's brother, Paul, who lived from the 1950s onward in Guatemala and later in Mexico City, looked into the origins of the name and ancestry in the late 1970s or early 1980s. Lucille recounted that her brother was directed to the Jewish ghetto of Mexico City where an elderly gentleman, who knew much about Sephardic ancestry, told him that the name Sanche had likely never been Sanchez, as we had mistakenly thought, but indicates that these ancestors were most likely Sephardic Jews.<sup>11</sup>

We were also told that this couple then left Mexico for New Orleans, most probably because of the Inquisition in Mexico, which was at least

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<sup>11</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi\\_Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi_Jews).

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as devastating as in Spain<sup>12</sup>. New Orleans was nearby, had a large Hispanic community, and no Inquisition occurring there; all likely reasons why they moved. They then travelled north, which meant up the Mississippi River, and eventually they settled on the Ontario/Quebec border region just south of Ottawa, in or near Casselman, Ontario. Somehow in this process the couple or their progeny became French-Canadian Catholics. According to the historian and philosopher John Ralston-Saul<sup>13</sup>, it was illegal at the time to be of any other faith than Christian in Canada so, like many Jews who came to the New World, they were compelled to convert, or they simply left the other inhabitants to assume that they were Christian.

However, as mentioned earlier, according to my own genetic analysis there is no evidence of Spanish or Jewish origins. A more likely explanation for the settlement of the Sanche family in Casselman is that they moved to that region from the Lower-Laurentian region just north of Montreal because the land in that region of Ontario was less expensive.<sup>14</sup>

We have no knowledge of how Maria (Figure 4) and Hector met, except that they both lived in Montreal and married in 1919 (Figure 2). As in many French-Canadian families, children were born in rapid succession. By 1928, Maria and Hector had four children (Figure 3) including Lucille, and five more were to follow.

As a small child, in the late 1950s, I have wonderful memories of my grandparents' summer cottage near the Laurentian village of Nominingué, where I met most of my aunts, uncles, and many cousins who were about a year or so younger than me. I also met some of them later, when we moved to the suburbs of Montreal in the early 1960s. We usually saw one another at the annual Réveillon on New Year's Day when we would all converge at my grandparents' home in Town

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<sup>12</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican\\_Inquisition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Inquisition)

<sup>13</sup> Ralston Saul, J., *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada* (2008)

<sup>14</sup> This explanation came from a distant cousin who had also had this same genetic analysis.

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of Mount-Royal, now a borough of the City of Montreal, to enjoy a meal together and catch up on one another's lives (Figure 43).



*Figure 2: Dr. Hector and Maria Sanche, August 6, 1919*

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*Figure 3: Hector Sanche with Claire, Paul, Pierre, and Lucille in the summer of 1928*



*Figure 4: Maria Brassard Sanche in 1930*

## **Montréal (1924-1950)**

### **Lucille's Childhood**

Lucille, born in Montreal into a French-Canadian Catholic family, was sent to the “convent” from the age of five until she was 18. Convents were private Catholic boarding schools founded, administered, and operated by nuns. Holidays and summer months were spent with her family in the country, usually with the help of a maid.

A few years after Lucille’s parents married, the family moved from a modest working-class neighborhood below Sherbrooke Street near Sanguinet and Amherst, to a more middle-class neighborhood on Saint-Hubert Street above Sherbrooke Street (in a trendy neighborhood now referred to as the Plateau). Lucille’s parents bought a three-story grey-stone row house like the one pictured below (Figure 5). Hector established his medical practice at street level, while the family lived on the upper floors.

In Lucille’s own words she describes her father and her family as she saw them at that time:

*He became famous as an obstetrician in French Montreal. He was Director of Hôpital de la Miséricorde, professor and dean of the Faculty of Obstetrics at the Université de Montréal, chief director of nursing studies in Montreal, and advisor to the archbishop, etc. Many people worshipped him and called him “Papa Sanche”. His office was on the ground floor of our home at 3709 Saint-Hubert Street in Montreal.*

*Maman had two maids and a maintenance man to care for this big house. Most of us children went to boarding schools. We were very proud of our father. Yet, to me, he was a shy uncommunicative man; whatever question I ever asked him, he left unanswered or ridiculed it! He was overburdened with responsibility, and he had to deal constantly with women (as an obstetrician) ... and to note that in those days, men were like kings and women were treated as illogical bundles of emotions whose rights were denied, naturally!*

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*Figure 5: A residence on Saint-Hubert Street, similar to Lucille's childhood home.*

*As I grew up, I reacted to my father's attitude. My mother, sisters and brothers were so captivated by papa's fame that they misunderstood my point of view. To me he was undoubtedly a good man; he worked very hard and made us proud of him.*

## Lucille and Her Grandchildren (1982-1991)

*I wish I had been better able to communicate with him and my mother, sisters, and brothers. They were more like strangers to me, maybe because I was the only one to be placed in boarding school from the age of five.*

Being the fourth of what was to become a family of nine children may have been why Lucille was the first child in the family to be placed in a boarding school at such a young age. Since the family lived in the center of Montreal in a row house with her father's medical practice on the ground floor, it was probably too cramped for this growing family to all be living there all the time.

Lucille's parents may have thought it essential to have the children placed in boarding schools if her father was to continue with his large practice and his many other hospital, ecclesiastical and community-based obligations in the heart of the city. Although they lived near a beautiful park (Parc Lafontaine), there was no yard for children to play outside the home since the back stairs lead to storage, parking garages, and narrow alleys. These alleys were used for pick-up and delivery including coal for heating. Many of these alleys were later converted into streets (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Alley behind 3709 St. Hubert in 2020

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Five more children were born. Lucille's youngest sister, Yolande, suffered from a heart condition and was mostly homeschooled. The youngest, Bernard, died in infancy. The girls attended the same schools as Lucille and the boys were placed in the Collège Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur (Sacred-Heart College) facing the landmark Saint-Joseph's Oratory on the northern slope of Mount-Royal.

It is likely that as early as the late 1930s, Maria and children spent their summers at their large and welcoming summer cottage (Figure 7 and Figure 8) on the shores of Grand Lac Nominingue. Getting to their cottage meant either taking the train, known as *le p'tit train du nord* (the little train of the North) (Figure 9), or driving several hours due north from Montreal through the magnificent Laurentian Mountains.



Figure 7: Camp Sanche in 1937, on Lac Nominingue

Lucille and Her Grandchildren (1982-1991)



Figure 8: Lucille (left) at Nominingue in August 1940



Figure 9: Lucille boarding Nominingue train,  
September 1943

## Education

Lucille was a boarder in a primary school on Côte-des-Neiges Road, (Figure 10) from 1929 to 1936. During that same period the Jewish community of Montreal was growing and rallied to build a hospital nearby, to the consternation of other institutions in that same neighborhood. One friend recounted several decades later how Lucille described to him and others, who were visiting her, how she had learned about Jewish people as a child. He recounts that, "... Lucille shared, with everyone, stories of the racism and anti-Semitism of the nuns who taught her. She spoke of the nuns' attitudes as they watched the nearby building of the Jewish General Hospital. As far as the nuns were concerned it was the work of the devil."<sup>15</sup> I too remember Lucille telling me how the nuns had told all the students that they should pray that this hospital would not be built. The land for the hospital was purchased in February 1930 and broke ground in 1934.<sup>16</sup>

Fortunately for our own family, the Jewish General Hospital was built. In the 1980s, fifty years later, two of Lucille's grandchildren, were born in this outstanding institution that has served people of all origins since the day it opened its doors.

Later, Lucille attended high school at Collège Basile-Moreau (Figure 11 and Figure 12). Lucille graduated in the middle of World War II, in 1942 (Figure 13). In school she learned writing, reading and arithmetic, as well as music, sewing, crochet, theatre, Latin, and catechism.<sup>17</sup>

The influence of the Church in Quebec society was considerable, and later Lucille witnessed the gradual secularization of public education

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<sup>15</sup> B.D., email April 7, 2020

<sup>16</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.jgh.ca/about-us/history/1930/>

<sup>17</sup> Decades later, in the early 1970s, as secularization became ever more pervasive in Quebec, this same Collège for young women became CÉGEP Vanier, an English post-secondary college, and has remained connected in various ways to our family over several decades. First, I graduated from this CÉGEP in 1972 and in the 1990s my husband became a professor in the department of computer science at this same institution. For a history of the nuns who began this boarding school see Giroux, Alice (1980). *Histoire du Pensionnat Notre-Dame-des-Anges, Saint-Laurent, 1847-1967, Montréal, Sœurs de Sainte-Croix.*

## Lucille and Her Grandchildren (1982-1991)



Figure 10: Lucille's primary school: *Notre-Dame-des-Neiges*.

in Quebec. This process, which continues still today, began in the latter half of the 19th century, when the Catholic Church:

*... gained many privileges in Quebec: full guarantees were extended to confessional schools; indeed, the only schools permitted in Quebec were confessional schools; all civil registries were kept by the Church; the only form of marriage acceptable was a religious marriage and divorces could only be achieved through an act of the Federal Parliament; Church corporations were not taxed, and the tithe was legally sanctioned. In general, the Church of Quebec controlled education, health services and charitable institutions. If we consider that the role of a state is to regulate society and provide to it social services, then in Quebec in the late 19th century the Church had become, in practice, the State.<sup>18</sup>*

This process of secularization in education and health services occurred in Quebec through the late 40s, 50s and 60s. In the 60s and 70s there also emerged the further development of an ever-present Quebec nationalism in parallel with secularization. The Church lost much influence while the provincial government established

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<sup>18</sup> Bélanger, Claude, Department of History, Marianopolis College, retrieved from <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/readings/church.htm>

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ministries of education, and of health and social services; services that had, until then, been mostly under the direction of the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations. In some instances, in the larger cities these services were also organized and offered by Jewish benevolent organizations. For many leaders of thought this process of secularization was regarded as a means of creating a modern, progressive, and inclusive society where everyone would have access to essential health care and a basic education.



Figure 11: Collège Basile-Moreau in 1940; now Vanier CEGEP

Lucille occasionally expressed deep feelings of being deprived of family life; having been sent so young to boarding schools. Although she had an excellent classical education, she felt that there were whole parts of childhood and adolescence she did not experience since she did not live with her family. She had a religious education within a strictly Catholic context that restricted exposure to ideas and lifestyles other than those approved by the Church and society. Only one example of this sectarianism is the Catholic Index<sup>19</sup> or list of forbidden books (including unauthorized translations of the Bible). Thus, most of the people of Quebec were prohibited from reading some of the

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<sup>19</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index\\_Librorum\\_Prohibitorum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index_Librorum_Prohibitorum)

## Lucille and Her Grandchildren (1982-1991)



*Figure 12: Lucille (age 15) and one of her teachers  
in 1939*

finest writers, philosophers, and scientists whose works were banned by the Church.

Lucille also recounted how knowing anything about her own body and sexuality was taboo. For example, having to cover oneself with a sheet while taking a bath, and another in that young adolescent girls were not told about having their periods or menstruating until it occurred, and only in the most rudimentary of terms. Lucille thought she was deathly ill until a nun explained it to her with little care or understanding, as if it were a mere nuisance which she would simply have to accept.

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Figure 13: Lucille is in the top row second from the left.<sup>20</sup>

For Lucille's mother (see Figure 4), who had been orphaned and adopted by her aunt who lived in one of the poorer working-class districts of eastern Montreal, to have married a doctor assured her a life of greater security, comfort, and prestige. However, like so many Catholic women of her generation, she bore many children (nine in her case) and lost one in infancy. Contraception of any kind was and is still prohibited by the Church. Although she was literate and capable, having a large family, as was the norm at that time in Quebec, as well as managing her household, and the demands of being a doctor's wife was a heavy burden given her own limited education and resources.

I remember my grandmother as the matron of her home, sometimes a bit breathless simply trying to organize the next meal and coping with her active grandchildren. She had little time for much personal interactions. The authoritarian and paternalistic culture in which she was reared came through as she coped with her large family, so Lucille may have interpreted all this as simply being unable to understand her mother. This was likely why Lucille had sometimes expressed a sense of aloneness that haunted her throughout much of her life; a feeling

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<sup>20</sup> [Vaniercollege.qc.ca/about/history/faces-old.html](http://Vaniercollege.qc.ca/about/history/faces-old.html)

## Lucille and Her Grandchildren (1982-1991)

that she did not have the kind of childhood that others enjoyed. Having lacked a childhood in a family and a home life, she was all the more aware of her own role when she became a mother. As young children, my brothers and I enjoyed a close and loving relationship with her although she sometimes found motherhood quite overwhelming given the birth of three active, healthy children between 1953 and 1956.

Still, despite these feelings of deprivation, learning to live in a boarding school year after year, Lucille never feared having a different opinion on any given subject or issue, despite family and friends regarding this attitude as quite unacceptable in a young woman. Lucille tried to act on principle rather than the pressure or influence of society or of her peers. There were many conventions at the time that were quite oppressive for women of the upper classes who were expected to wear hats and gloves when going out, not to smoke (which became all the rage in the 40s into the 60s) or paint their faces or their nails, which were regarded as signs of a streetwalker.

On a few occasions Lucille wanted to learn more about the world. She recounted how, as a young woman in her parents' home she had wanted to learn how to cook and instead of being encouraged to learn this skill, she was promptly reprimanded and forbidden to enter the family kitchen since it was the domain of the help and not that of a child in a family of the professional class. Incidents such as these deepened her feelings of alienation from her own family.

Ironically, not learning to cook would later be the cause of some irritation when, as a new bride living on her husband's family farm in a far off rural and coastal region of Quebec, it was assumed that she had naturally acquired all the essential skills involved in cooking, baking, pickling, and preserving whatever foods were available or in season.

## Coming of Age for Lucille and of Québec (1942-1948)

After graduating from high school in 1942 (Figure 13), Lucille enrolled at the *École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal* (Montreal's French school of fine arts) and also worked for her father as his medical secretary.

## A Light in All Our Lives

As her father's secretary, Lucille saw him through the eyes of his patients, who were entirely dependent on his medical expertise. She also saw his involvement in the care of young pregnant women who sought whatever health and welfare assistance they could get from benevolent religious institutions. This usually involved giving up their babies for adoption and never seeing them again. She witnessed the differences of class and position as it existed in the urban setting in French Québec of the 1940s. She described situations such as her father being categorical and dictatorial with his patients, telling them that smoking was not permitted while pregnant. Although the advice was sound, it was the way such admonitions were conveyed which she found particularly difficult to accept.

Over 80 years after this period, while meeting a notary for some estate business, the notary and I discovered to our surprise that our grandfathers were both obstetricians during this same period, and had each been the attending physicians for the birth of one another's children! Montreal, particularly among the professional class, was a much smaller world at that time.

## **École des Beaux-Arts and l'Affaire Maillard**

It was a small, closely knit world full of conventions and expectations which did not sit at all well with many young people of Lucille's generation.

During this period from 1942 to 1947, (Figure 14) when Lucille studied at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, tensions were developing between the established authorities such as with the school's director Charles Maillard and an anti-establishment movement called Les Automatistes. This movement of young adults was first begun by several younger artist-teachers who were later recognized among Quebec's most notable artists and intellectuals.

In Quebec it was a time when many French-Canadian Catholics left the Church, particularly those who migrated to the larger cities to find work and sought a more prosperous life. Mass media became ever more present, first through radio and later through television, influencing trends, fashion and values that were adopted and appreciated by the masses of North America. While the materialism

## Lucille and Her Grandchildren (1982-1991)

and commercialism that often involved abandoning traditional values and which nevertheless encouraged a greater openness toward the larger world, little in this consumer-driven culture guided their choices except toward the world we have inherited; a world in which the masses face crushing debt, serious social and environmental challenges, and pandemics and crises on a global scale.



Figure 14: Lucille in New York City in December 1946

In Lucille's graduation year, a document that would later be regarded by historians as a turning point in Quebec society was being circulated amongst many of the students and teachers at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. That document titled *Le Refus global* (Total Refusal), is well-known and regarded as a milestone among French Quebec artists, intellectuals, and historians. The authors sought to divest themselves of the shackles of religious orthodoxy and the authoritarian attitudes entrenched in the political agencies and institutions of Quebec.

## A Light in All Our Lives

*Le Refus global, or Total Refusal, was an anti-establishment and anti-religious manifesto released on August 9, 1948, in Montreal by a group of sixteen young Québécois artists and intellectuals. Le Refus Global is widely seen to have been one of the fundamental causes of the Quiet Revolution.*<sup>21</sup>

Lucille's father and his family were regarded as part of the "establishment" and associated with the very institutions that directed the social, political, religious, and cultural life of Montreal. These institutions were composed of the Catholic Church, and the hospitals, schools, colleges, and universities of Québec. For Lucille to see that 16 of her peers, many of whom were students or teachers at the École des Beaux-Arts, were signatories of the *Refus Global* was very exciting. Its publication heralded a great period of social, religious, and political ferment that is now referred to and characterized as *La Révolution tranquille* (the Quiet Revolution) which occurred during the 1950s and 60s.

This made for both exciting and hopeful times for many young people of Lucille's generation who longed to be freed from the autocratic and traditional establishment, particularly the systemic and pervasive influence of the Church. Nevertheless, the establishment that was specifically criticized and described as moribund suppressed this document and took some harsh measures to control its influence including threatening the livelihood of many of its signatories; many of whom later became important cultural figures in Quebec. Paul-Émile Borduas, the author of this pivotal document knew the establishment very well since he had worked for the Church and Catholic schools. Eventually, he also joined a newly formed school called *L'École du meuble*; established in the late 1930s, to answer a need for employment during the Great Depression and to revive the trades and applied arts.<sup>22</sup>

In hindsight, we can now see that such forward thinkers could not fully anticipate that secularization would later involve a whole range of

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<sup>21</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refus\\_Global](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refus_Global) and for an English translation of the original text see: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/refus-global-manifesto>

<sup>22</sup> [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89cole\\_du\\_meuble\\_de\\_Montr%C3%A9al](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89cole_du_meuble_de_Montr%C3%A9al)

## Lucille and Her Grandchildren (1982-1991)

models and possibilities depending upon diverse social, cultural, religious, and economic contexts and circumstances of individuals and communities within society. Nor were they able to anticipate or determine the impact of ever-increasing numbers of diverse immigrant populations settling in Quebec; diverse peoples who brought with them their own values, hopes and visions for the future.

Lucille recounted that just as she completed her studies at the *École-des-Beaux-Arts* the traditionalist director, Charles Maillard<sup>23</sup>, had been confronted by several of these young students about his approach to art and to teaching.

At the time, Mr. Maillard was known to the Sanche family. In 1947 Lucille's father, Dr. Hector Sanche, delivered Mr. Maillard's daughter, who later married Dr. Paul David, a prominent cardiologist. Following this birth, Charles Maillard gave Lucille's father one of his paintings (Figure 15)<sup>24</sup>. Lucille left a note on the back of the painting describing how she was invited to choose this painting, as a gift of thanks for her father from Mr. Maillard. She also describes Mr. Maillard as a "beautiful man whom I respected". I remember Lucille speaking about his kindness toward a janitor at the *École des Beaux Arts*, who could not afford to be a student, but who later became recognized as one of Quebec's finest painters of his generation.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Mr. Maillard (1887-1973) was a French national born in Algeria, who studied art in French art schools and later joined the French Foreign Legion. During his tour of duty in 1916 in Montreal he decided to remain in Montréal. He first taught drawing and painting, later becoming Director of the *École des Beaux Arts*.

<sup>24</sup> This painting may well have been based upon a photogravure (see Figure 15 and Figure 16), almost identical in composition, by German photographers Rudolf Lehnert or Ernst Landrock (Lehnert & Landrock), who produced many such works in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The subject is a mosque in the city of Algiers first built in 1471, which bears the name of a devout and erudite Muslim named Sidi Abderrahman. The foreground is a cemetery where he and many illustrious religious leaders and rulers were also interred over subsequent centuries.

<https://www.periodpaper.com/products/1924-sidi-abderrahman-mosque-tombs-algiers-photogravure-original-photogravure-015092-nafl-061>

<sup>25</sup> In 1938, Léo Ayotte (1909-1976) moved to Montreal and worked as a model at the *École des beaux-arts de Montréal* and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

## A Light in All Our Lives

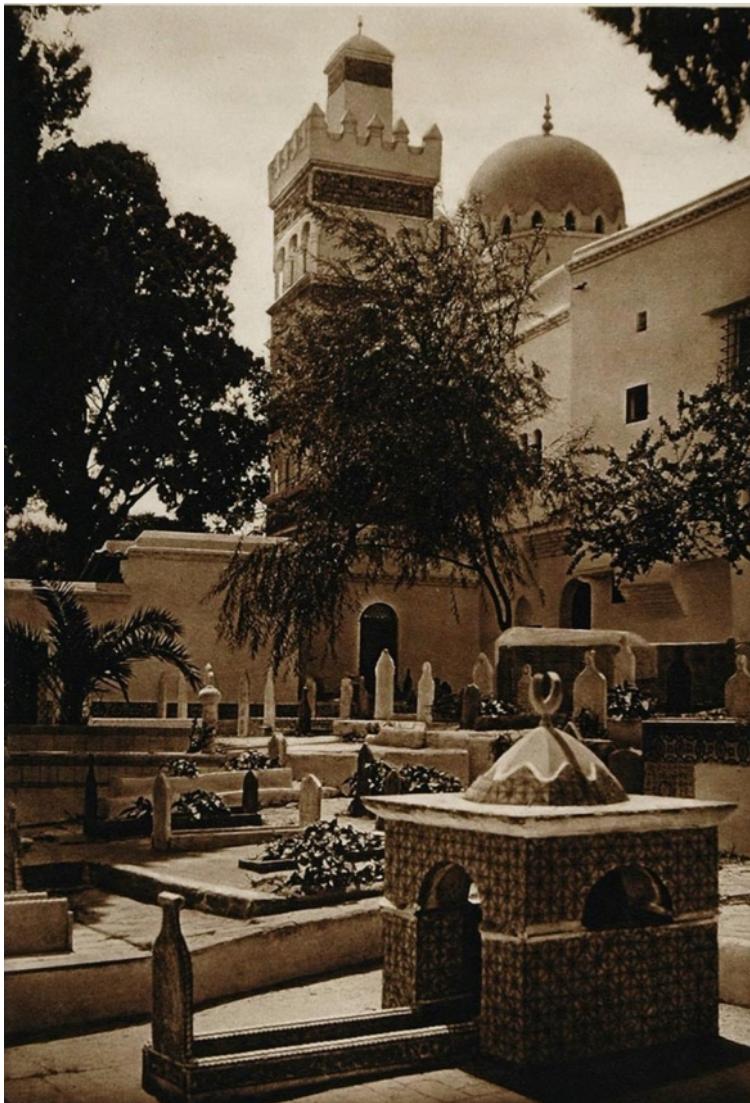


Figure 15: Charles Maillard, *Sidi Abder Rahman Mosque, Algiers*

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Not being registered, Ayotte could not follow the lessons, but his work there as a model and as a janitor allowed him to listen in on classes. Without money, he also picked up the half-empty tubes left by careless students and used them to paint. The director Maillard told him later after he saw one of his paintings: "You are my best student." ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo\\_Ayotte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Ayotte))

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*Figure 16: Lehnert & Landrock, Photogravure of Sidi Abder Rahman Mosque, Algiers*

Since Mr. Maillard was a friend of Lucille's father, the family was dismayed to see the situation deteriorate to such an extent that Mr. Maillard eventually resigned.

## A Light in All Our Lives

Although Lucille was unable to continue her painting after graduating, we have a few of her early works (Figure 17, Figure 18, Figure 19, and Figure 20). She only signed these as “Lucille S” since they were student works. Over two decades after her passing, I wondered where these small works had gone as we were going through our father’s effects. Fortunately, we did find them stored in a dark closet in cardboard boxes. We were delighted to see that he had kept these few paintings.

Lucille and Her Grandchildren (1982-1991)



Figure 17: A still life by 18-year-old Lucille



Figure 18: Lucille's painting

## A Light in All Our Lives



Figure 19: Lucille Sanche, *Roses*



Figure 20: Lucille Sanche, *By the Pond*

## **World War II, Europe and New Horizons**

Having completed her studies at the École des Beaux Arts, Lucille and some of her friends travelled to Europe in 1947. Lucille once recounted that unlike her siblings, she had saved the entire amount of her small allowance while she was in school and since she had never found anything to spend it on while in school, she had the means to travel.

When my brothers and I were little, Lucille expressed her admiration for the beauty of Loire River and its castles. In later years, when we were grown up, she spoke of how she witnessed the devastation of World War II on that continent. She was saddened to see how much people had suffered and described how inspiring the song *La Marseillaise* (French national anthem banned during the German Nazi occupation) was for many survivors, who were struggling to reconstruct their lives.

Seeing the devastation in post-war France and Italy may well have been why Lucille chose a career in nursing. Other members of her family were shocked since, as the daughter of a medical doctor, she was expected to marry someone who was a member of the professional class. Instead, Lucille wanted to pursue a career, be independent, and searched for a meaningful way to make a positive contribution. She was the only one of the girls in the family to pursue university studies and graduated in nursing from the *Université de Montréal* in 1951 (Figure 21). Decades later her oldest sister, Claire, trained in nursing as well.

Lucille then applied to the Red Cross to work in an outpost in one of the far-off regions of Quebec where medical services were sparse. That was another surprise for her family; she was going to the backwoods instead of staying in Montreal.

## A Light in All Our Lives



*Figure 21: Lucille in her nursing uniform.*

## The Fishing Village of Barachois (1952-1955)

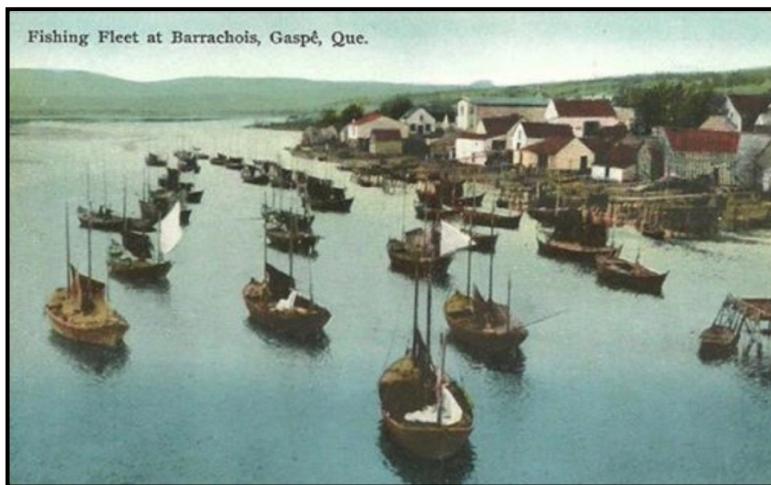


Figure 22: Barachois, circa 1920

### New Surroundings

In 1952, Lucille was offered a post either at a Red Cross station on the Magdalen Islands (Iles-de-la-Madeleine) or another that was at the very tip of the *Gaspésie* (Gaspé Peninsula) in a small fishing village named Barachois<sup>26</sup> (Figure 22). This village is nestled between the town of Gaspé (where the first French explorer, Jacques Cartier, met the Mi'kmaq people) and the popular tourist destination of Percé, where the distinctive Percé Rock stands at the end of this long peninsula that juts into the North Atlantic (Figure 23). In Barachois (Figure 24 and Figure 26) the inhabitants subsisted on seasonal work composed of fishing, farming and lumber production.

In addition to the Red-Cross station (Figure 25, Figure 27 and Figure 28) composed of two nurses and a doctor (who was often gone fishing), the village had two churches (one Catholic and one Protestant) composed of English-speaking residents mostly of Irish origin, and some French-speaking people of French origins.

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<sup>26</sup> Barachois is an archaic French word meaning sandbar.

## A Light in All Our Lives



Figure 23: Towns and Villages of the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula<sup>27</sup>



Figure 24: Barachois, circa 1950

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<sup>27</sup> Retrieved from [https://www.geostrategis.com/c\\_cli-gaspe.htm](https://www.geostrategis.com/c_cli-gaspe.htm)

## The Fishing Village of Barachois (1952-1955)



Figure 25: The Red Cross station at Barachois, circa 1950



Figure 26: Percé Rock from Malbaie near Barachois.

## A Light in All Our Lives



*Figure 27: Lucille stands outside the Barachois Red Cross Station, 1952. Percé Rock and Bonaventure Island are on the horizon.*



*Figure 28: Lucille in the Red Cross car, Barachois, 1952*

There were also several families from the Guernsey or the Channel Islands, an English protectorate near the coast of France in the English Channel. Many of the owners of the general stores in small villages scattered around the Gaspé Coast were originally from the Guernsey or Channel Islands. In Barachois the general store included the bank and the post-office. On the Gaspé, one of these businesses was known as *Robin, Jones & Whitman* and:

*A typical Robin establishment ... consisted of a general store, a house where the manager lived, a warehouse for dry fish, and a stage (or landing platform) where the fish were brought ashore. There would also have been a large area on or near the beach where flakes for drying the fish had been erected. These were waist-high frames on which the split cod would be spread out to dry.<sup>28</sup> (Figure 29)*

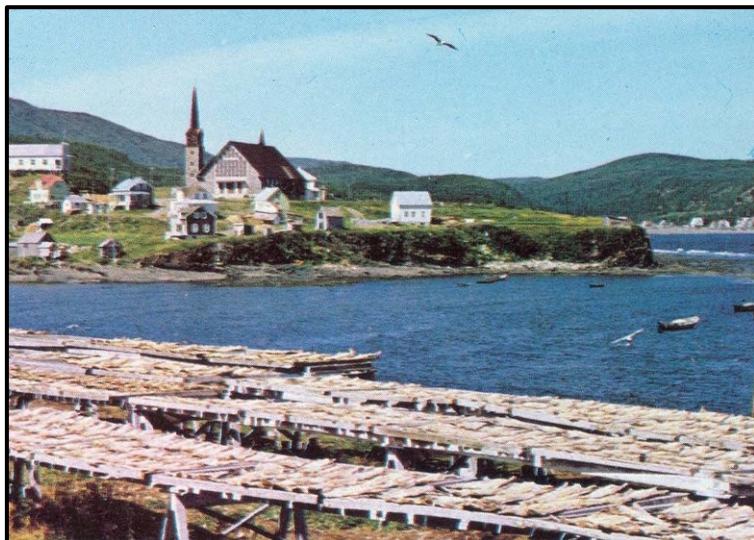


Figure 29: Flat of cod drying by the beach, circa 1960 in Cloridorme.

In addition to the churches, these general stores were the centers of the village. The general store was the go-to place where everyone met

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<sup>28</sup> <http://gaspesie.quebecheritageweb.com/article/jersey-gaspe-charles-robin-1743-1824-forgotten-father-canada-part-2>

## A Light in All Our Lives

and interacted for business, the bank, the post-office, and community news.

Barachois even had a train station at that time; whereas today Barachois is hardly noticeable along the coastal road since the train station is gone. When I visited Barachois in the 1990s, the only memorable feature was the motel restaurant where they served “Barachois burgers”. I found an elderly relative by the name of Kennedy who was from my paternal grandmother’s side of the family, originally from another nearby village named Douglastown, who still lived in a big old house just off the long winding coastal road.

When Lucille arrived at her nursing post, the young man who managed the general store was Alban William Maloney. Although Lucille hardly spoke a word of English and Alban spoke French fluently with a strong English accent, they were smitten with each other and decided to marry in Montreal surrounded by Lucille’s family in January 1953.

### **Alban William Maloney (1919 – 2011)**

In some respects, it was very much the story of the country mouse and the city mouse. Alban grew up in the small village of Barachois in a farmhouse looking out to sea from a quiet bay where they owned some coastal land by a salmon river, a few head of cattle, a few horses, and a wood lot. He learned how to care for the animals, how to hunt, to build, and to repair whatever was needed. According to Alban, if there was something they needed, they learned to make it themselves.

Alban was born on the 21 March 1919 in a period during the Spanish flu, a pandemic that killed over 50 million people worldwide from 1918 until 1920. His mother contracted it at the very time she was giving birth to Alban. She had to be nursed back to health to care for her other young children, so Alban was left mostly to himself at the end of a hallway in the farmhouse. The family thought he would not survive and yet he did. The family then concluded that his short stature might have been due to having the flu at birth. Nevertheless, Alban outlived all his siblings.

For Lucille, Alban was a wonderful man who knew how to do most anything and was always very pleasant and helpful. In some respects,

she found someone who was not like her father. Hector Sanche was rarely present and did very little about the house. I remember my grandfather, who was retired by then, would sit in his big leather chair by a corner window of the dining room with his card table and pipe stand, where he would play solitaire for hours. Whereas Alban always had projects and “jobs” to do, everything from building a house to showing his “boys” (and that for him, usually also included me, his only daughter and my two brothers) how to use various tools.

For Alban, having to go to school and attend church were obligatory, whereas cars, motors, and tools were what he truly enjoyed. Since the family expected he would continue his father’s work as the manager of the general store, Alban was sent to business school in Bathurst, New Brunswick. However, when Canada became involved in the Second World War (1939-1945), he joined the army. Unlike most young men at that time, for some unknown reason Alban had taught himself Morse Code, and quickly became a communications officer and instructor for commandos training in Western Canada. He travelled to, and lived in, Victoria and enjoyed his army service. Given his father’s failing health and the need to maintain the family farm and business, he was discharged from army service in 1944. Alban’s father, Valentine, passed away in 1951.

Alban’s mother, Hildred McCauley, was a schoolteacher who came from the nearby village of Doulastown. She was a devout Catholic who, in my father’s estimation, was quite a disciplinarian. Of course, with a brood of adventurous children and little help except for the occasional housemaid or the help of a spinster aunt, her discipline may have well been necessary. Alban had two sisters, Lucy and Lydia, and three brothers: Emmet, a lawyer who after having just married, was killed with his new bride in a plane crash in Gaspé in July 1948; John, a doctor who after graduating from McGill University in Montreal settled in Prince Edward Island where he also served as provincial minister of health and welfare in the 1960s and early 70s; and Teddy, who left for California after the war and lost touch with the family.

## Finding a Treasure

In the Maloney family of Barachois there is a story about a treasure<sup>29</sup>; a story which has yet to be authenticated and probably never will be, since there are few records or history available. Nevertheless, Alban recounted this story several times to his children and considered it to be true. The story goes that Thomas Maloney, Alban's grandfather, also worked for Guernsey businessmen on the Gaspé Coast managing their store in Barachois. One day, Thomas was digging around outside the store to repair the foundation or some such, when his shovel hit something that made a metallic sound, clunk!

Thomas unearthed a small metal box in which he found coins which he called "gold Napoleons"<sup>30</sup>. Since Thomas could not do anything with this little treasure by himself, he put it back. Leaving it hidden, he negotiated an agreement between himself and the owner of the store who had contacts in Guernsey. In the Channel Islands (of which Guernsey is one), the value of the coins could be assessed, liquidated, and then split between Thomas and the storeowner. They both stayed true to their agreement, and each got a tidy sum. Although the amount is not known, the story goes that Thomas had enough from this treasure to afford his sons a better education, which meant business school.

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<sup>29</sup> As for stories of treasures, there are lots around the Gaspé including this one, from a book written the same year Alban was born, in 1919: "Gaspé and the Baie des Chaleurs country are rich in legendary lore; tales of pirates and buried treasure abound, and efforts have been made to discover and dislodge this hidden wealth. These traditions have their origin in history, and beside many a hearth-fire the old folks have told tales, to which eager children listened open-eyed and credulous, of the early days and the treasures buried by the fugitives, as they fled before the British foe. ... Each locality had its spot to which legend pointed as the place where money lay, awaiting the person lucky enough to succeed in dislodging it from the dead sentinel often left on guard. These interesting places are various, extending from Matapedia to Gaspé — fully two hundred miles of country — and in northern New Brunswick." MacWhirter, Margaret Grant, *Treasure Seeking in Gaspé*, [www.archive.org/stream/treasuretroveing00macwrich/treasuretroveing00macwrich\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/treasuretroveing00macwrich/treasuretroveing00macwrich_djvu.txt)

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Napoléon, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Napol%C3%A9on\\_\(coin\)&oldid=908739423](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Napol%C3%A9on_(coin)&oldid=908739423)

One of Thomas's sons was Valentine, Alban's father, who went to business school and was known as a prolific reader. Although my brothers and I never knew our paternal grandfather, we do remember seeing on Alban's bookshelves row upon row of leather-bound onionskin books of all the Irish and Scottish poets that ever existed. These were Valentine's books that eventually all disappeared almost unopened after about 50 years and several moves from one house to another between Barachois and suburban Montreal. In 1993, Eric, son of Alban's brother Dr. John Maloney of Prince Edward Island, told me that his father said that our grandfather, Valentine had had in his possession the only copy of the *Holy Qur'an* on the Gaspé Coast.

In addition to these fine books, Alban also kept the original wall safe from the family's general store until his passing in 2011. It was very heavy and of little use, but Alban dragged it about from home to home until we, the children, were finally able to offer it to a charitable organization willing to have it carried and brought to their offices. They needed it in their offices to secure their funds before depositing them safely in the bank. That little safe was so heavy, I feared that the old basement stairs of Alban's house would collapse as they hauled it up and out to their pick-up truck.

### **The City Mouse Marries the Country Mouse**

Lucille and Alban met in Barachois in 1952. They married in Saint-Kevin's Catholic church on Côte-des-Neiges Road, Montreal, in January 1953 (Figure 30).

Returning to Barachois after their honeymoon in Florida, Lucille was faced with many challenges. She was now the wife of the manager of the general store and concentrated her efforts on raising a family. One challenge that came back to haunt her was cooking and hearing of how delicious Aunt Maggie's cooking had been for Alban and his siblings.

## A Light in All Our Lives



*Figure 30: Lucille and Alban at their wedding, January 30, 1953*

Aunt Maggie or Margaret Maloney never married and spent much of her adult life cooking and cleaning for Alban's family. The family was composed of Alban's parents, Hildred and Valentine, with their four sons and two daughters. I recall Alban speaking of Aunt Maggie's fabulous cooking. Only later, did I understand how irritating it was for Lucille to hear her praises as she tried to manage with very limited resources to cook for her own growing family.

In addition to having to put up with the remarkable tales of the legendary Aunt Maggie, Lucille recounted how, while pregnant with me, her first child, she craved fresh fruit. Alban, as the manager of the village's general store, had especially ordered a crate of fresh peaches for her. At that time, everything came in by train from Montreal. He brought the crate to the family home and left it on the kitchen counter. And, before Lucille could sink her teeth into a single fresh peach, to her utter dismay, Alban's mother had already made a whole batch of peach preserves. Preserves were the order of the day, to be stored for the winter months to enjoy on Aunt Maggie's delicious hot-cross buns!

## The Fishing Village of Barachois (1952-1955)



*Figure 31: Alban and Lucille (on the porch) and their home in Barachois, April 1954.*

Alban and Lucille realized that there was little future for them or their children in the tiny village of Barachois (Figure 31). Like most villages on the coast dependent on fishing, the industry gradually disappeared and younger generations migrated to larger centers.

I, Suzanne, was born in 1953. Lucille's second child was my brother Paul born on 1 June 1955 and one year and a day later, our little brother Shawn arrived on 2 June 1956. We moved to Murdochville, a newly opened mining town, when I was hardly more than three and we only returned to Barachois to visit a few cousins in the late 1950s.

I only remember a horse and a dog from my brief life in Barachois, although they may simply be memories from a few old photographs now in my possession (Figure 32). I remember wearing a scratchy woolen hat and scarves that may have been knitted by my grandmother, who was an excellent knitter. However, they felt like they had been worn for years before Lucille used them to keep me

## A Light in All Our Lives

warm as I ventured out after a snowstorm to build my snow bear (Figure 33). Sometimes my brother Paul and I also played in the farmhouse basement with old wooden blocks and toys although Paul delighted more in climbing up the narrow old wooden stairs, much to my chagrin (Figure 34).



*Figure 32: Lucille and Suzanne, visiting Nominingue in 1955.*

The Fishing Village of Barachois (1952-1955)



*Figure 33: Suzanne builds a snow bear in Barachois, January 1956*



*Figure 34: Paul and Suzanne, basement of Barachois farmhouse, January 1956*

## A Light in All Our Lives

I remember exploring the beach with my mother, playing by the shore and jumping into the waves. I will never forget the feeling of helplessness when I suddenly found myself caught in the undertow of a large wave. It seems that the dog and I were fine friends since Lucille later told me I spent so much time playing with him that I caught his fleas.

## **Murdochville (1956-1962)**

Alban heard of new prospects in the mining town of Murdochville in a densely wooded area in the centre of the Gaspé Peninsula. It had recently been opened and exploited by Gaspé Copper Mines, an affiliate of Noranda Mines, both large businesses that no longer exist.

Alban and Lucille moved to Murdochville, while Alban's mother, widowed in 1951, moved from the family home in Barachois to Ottawa. There she joined her daughter Lydia who had married Gérald Morrissette, a lawyer who later became a federal deputy minister. Aunt Lydia was a charming lady who was a great antique hunter and could always tell interesting tales, much like Uncle John, Alban's brother who had settled in Prince Edward Island.

Alban and his cousins, Kevin and Sinclair (sons of Alexander Maloney, Alban's uncle) opened a garage and a hotel in Murdochville. The hotel hardly prospered though it served as the only establishment where businessmen could stay and where the basement tavern was always busy after work. Alban sold his interests in the garage and his share of the hotel to his cousins shortly after they arrived. He became the administrative assistant to the mine's manager, William Brissenden (Figure 35).

When Alban and Lucille decided to live in Murdochville, Lucille designed our house (Figure 36). It was different from the company houses that were built in twos, or semi-detached, sharing a common wall; probably built this way as a cost savings for the company. I loved our turquoise cedar-shingled house, especially since I had my own room. Lucille designed it so that we had the living areas and the bedrooms all on one floor, unlike the tall clapboard, two-storied semi-detached, company houses; our house was more akin to her own parents' new home in Town of Mount-Royal, which was a suburb of Montreal. When I saw our Murdochville house over 40 years later, it looked ever so much smaller than I remembered and clearly, no longer turquoise.

Lucille took care of us, the children, and sometimes worked as a nurse at the hospital. However, when she did, she found it difficult to find people to help at home. I remember a woman called Noëlla, who was particularly rough and intimidating. I remember her forcing us to eat

## A Light in All Our Lives

canned stewed tomatoes and trying to convince us it was soup. Shawn ate it and she liked him, but Paul and I found her and the tomatoes particularly unacceptable (Figure 37).



*Figure 35: Alban, right, on a mountain overlooking Murdochville, 1959.*



*Figure 36: Lucille and Alban's first house, designed in 1956 by Lucille<sup>31</sup>*

Murdochville had a large community center with a swimming pool, a curling club, and a skating rink, as well as a fun ski hill with a

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<sup>31</sup> Street view on Google Maps, 2020

rudimentary rope lift. Despite these amenities, Murdochville was a small, isolated one-company town. Although Murdochville was better for our family than Barachois, it still seemed impossible for Lucille to see any reason to remain as she saw her children growing up and knowing Montreal offered more opportunities and resources.

When it was time for me to learn how to skate, there were only boys' skates available, so I learned to skate like the boys and was among the fastest, at least for a while. When I needed a school bag, Alban had one made by the shoemaker in the town. However, he made it so solidly, of such dark thick brown leather and rivets that, to my dismay, it lasted for decades.



Figure 37: Murdochville, Summer 1958. Suzanne, Shawn, and Paul.

In 1957 there were dramatic events that were to become of great historic importance, when the miners went on strike in an attempt to

## A Light in All Our Lives

unionize.<sup>32</sup> It was a Quebec first. Despite years of struggle beginning with a strike involving riots, overturned cars, destruction of property, and even the death of one man, followed by years of court battles, the miners only managed to unionize in 1967, several years after our family had moved away.<sup>33</sup>

Alban was a member of management as the assistant to the mine's manager. Although I was very young, there had been some violent incidents and I remember feeling the tension and seeing my father taking out his small revolver to go to work. There were curfews with a siren going off at 7:00 every evening to ensure everyone went home, no loitering in the streets. This period of many months was very oppressive and stressful for both Alban and Lucille. For Lucille, even more so, knowing that there were alternatives to living under such brutal conditions.

Lucille truly worried about her children's future. For years, she encouraged Alban to find a way of moving the family to a larger centre; ideally for her it would be Montreal. Having worked as a Red Cross nurse on the coast, she was poignantly aware that isolated regions like these suffer from neglect, and that one-company, one-resource towns like Murdochville simply disappear when the resources are no longer there to exploit, or the markets change. Murdochville is only one such example among dozens of such towns across Canada that can be described in these terms:

*Characteristically, the resource town is connected to an industry or business and lacks control over its own economic development. ... Resource towns are also characterized by the simplified occupational structure inherent in them. The middle class is relatively weak and usually includes only a small group of managers, merchants and professionals who*

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<sup>32</sup> Among the journalists covering this strike was a young reporter by the name of René Lévesque, who later became premier of Quebec from November 25, 1976 until October 3, 1985. And there was a lawyer, Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, who reported on and supported the strikers although he was not there to represent them. He later became prime minister of Canada from April 20, 1968 until June 4, 1979, and again from March 3, 1980 until June 30, 1984.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/murdochville-strike/>

*are oriented, as far as careers are concerned, to organizations outside the town. ... Several factors discourage the development of a diversified economy that would generate a more heterogeneous work force. ... One basic distinction involves the origins of the population. ... "New towns" created in largely uninhabited areas have no physical or cultural rural connections. ...*

*Many have a limited lifetime, and prospects for activity and growth beyond the initial function seldom materialize. ... Hundreds of Canadian communities have disappeared in this way. ... the future remains uncertain and fluctuations between boom-and-bust plague attempts for orderly, long-term development.<sup>34</sup>*

Murdochville was a nowhere land for Lucille, who felt like an outsider since neither the wives of the miners nor the people in management had much in common with her. She was not of English Canadian origin like most of the wives of the other management people, nor was she a French-Canadian woman with little formal education, like most of the wives of the miners, who almost all came for work and better salaries than in their traditional fishing villages around the Coast.

Lucille helped Alban finish some rooms in the basement of our house. Very young, I remember how she struggled to make it attractive yet functional despite what few resources we had. When my father built our playroom and an office in the basement, I remember marveling at the beautiful paintings Lucille created on the cupboard doors in their office behind our playroom. Until then, I had never imagined that my mother was such an accomplished artist. And in our playroom every door was a different colour and the linoleum floor composed of bright yellow and black tiles. Naturally, Alban also had a workshop where he enjoyed building toys and repairing whatever needed attention.

Despite the isolation, Lucille made the best of it. On weekends in summer, we would sometimes go camping along the coast either in a campground or in a farmer's field (Figure 40, 41). One particularly beautiful and dramatic place along the Coast is Cap Bon Ami, now

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/resource-towns>

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part of Forillon National Park (Figure 38) at the very tip of the Gaspé Peninsula, near the village of Cap des Rosiers (map, Figure 23). The cliffs and the beauty of this site attracts many visitors; however, when Lucille and Alban brought us, it was very rustic and wild. At the top of the cliff there was only one small old log cabin. Whereas now, on that same site, there are showers and bathrooms for campers.

Lucille and Alban loved to visit Cap Bon Ami (Figure 39) with us, but Lucille used to be terrified we would be swept over the edge of the cliff since there were no protective barriers near the cliff's edge at that time. I remember her holding us so tightly as we would venture near the edge to see the gulls flying below us and plunging into the rough seas for their dinner.

Both Lucille and Alban told us a story about the old, abandoned cabin on Cap Bon Ami, the place where “the spy” lived “during the War”. We loved to listen to these stories of the Gaspé. This one was about a man that lived in this little cabin for a time and would sometimes drop into a little store in a neighboring village to pick up a few supplies and then quietly return to his cabin. One day this man simply disappeared without a trace. Later the local people heard he had been a “spy”, a German communications officer who was transmitting information for the German submarines (U-boats) circulating in and around the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence. These U-boats sunk several supply and warships leaving from Montreal on their way to Europe. Fishermen sometimes even witnessed ships suddenly attacked and sunk by these U-boats. This part of the Second World War is called the Battle of the St. Lawrence, and sometimes referred to as *Canada's Forgotten War*.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_the\\_St.\\_Lawrence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_St._Lawrence)



Figure 38: Magnificent cliffs of Forillon at the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula.

Stories like these and others Lucille later shared with Esther, her first grandchild, and continue to be shared as part of our family's oral history.

In Murdochville we also learned about hunting; when Alban hunted partridge, we all went with him. Of course, I cried to see those lifeless little birds that Lucille would call *les petites perdrix des bois* (the little partridges of the woods). Lucille carried on; she learned how to pluck, prepare, and bake these little wild fowl.

One year, Alban also went moose hunting with some fellow hunters. He returned with a moose. However, the meat was so tough that we thought it must have been the oldest living creature on the whole of the Peninsula. We would sometimes remind him that just when he

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thought he had felled that big moose, as a last act of defiance, that mighty beast had caught him by the seat of his pants and threw him up in the air before finally expiring. His fellow hunters loved telling that story on their return. Nevertheless, Alban was proud of his prize, mounted the horns and kept them all his life.



*Figure 39: Forillon, looking northwest*

At Christmas, we would go out into the bush to find a tree. I remember the lovely smell of a freshly cut spruce. There was one tree so big that, once decorated, I could hide under its bows and marvel at all the lights and tinsel.

Trying to create meaningful friendships, Lucille and Alban learned how to curl: a team sport that involves throwing a large flat and rounded stone down a long expanse of ice to reach a goal at the other end of the rink with the help of team players who use brooms to guide the stone to its goal – difficult to understand from this description, yet easily understood once one can see it being played.



*Figure 40: Lucille, Paul, and Shawn*

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*Figure 41: Lucille, Paul, Shawn, and Suzanne camping on the Gaspé coast in 1960*

Lucille taught herself how to cook and bake and run a household, and always did it to the best of her ability. Despite that, there were limits such as what one does when the birthday cake falls just before the party begins. Lucille's creativity knew no bounds (even when there should have been some!). Suffice to say that I dislike marshmallows with a passion even without going into the gory or gooey details as to what lengths Lucille went to, to "save" that fallen birthday cake.

In Murdochville, the French school was Catholic, and the English school was Protestant. It was how most schools were organized in Quebec at that time. Only where there were large enough populations of Irish Catholics, such as in major urban centres like Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec City, were English Catholic schools established. I never knew why, but my parents chose to send my brothers to the English Protestant elementary school, and I went to the French Catholic. Consequently, I received more religious instruction since the nuns taught catechism assiduously, which included all the fine details about the Church's rituals, the priests' vestments for mass, special holydays and traditions. Furthermore, the principal of my elementary

school, dear Sister Saint-Gertrude, was my father's first cousin. Both she and her younger sister were among the nuns who administered and taught at the school with others who were laity.

The church was near the elementary school and at some point, the priest spoke to us, the children, about the customary sectarian ideas about the superiority of Catholicism perpetrated at least since the Protestant Reformation. I distinctly remember being deeply troubled with the counsels of the priest to me and my classmates that Protestants were "not quite as good" as Catholics; that we could be nice to them but that they were not our real friends. This religious leader, a person in authority, told us that our friends and in my case, even my brothers (since they were in the Protestant school too), were suspect. When Lucille heard my tearful concerns, she reassured me and made it clear that we were not to accept such values and ideas. It was my first memory of her teaching me to use my own reasoning whenever someone in authority makes any irrational statement or acts in any way that appears inconsistent with the very ideals they profess. I also understood around that time that Lucille had disassociated herself from Catholicism, despite recognizing the excellent education and services the nuns offered her and so many others, over several generations in Quebec and abroad.

Lucille realized that she believed in, and valued much of, basic Judeo-Christian values such as the Ten Commandments and wished to transmit them to her children. However, she could not accept the authority of institutions that dominated people through ignorant, incompetent, and corrupt leadership. One day while dusting some old books, Lucille told me about *Les insolences du Frère Untel* as she took it off the shelf. She recounted how she found this former priest and author, Jean-Paul Desbiens, particularly insightful and frank. She kept this book all her life and later gave it to me. It was a remarkable bestseller for her generation and later translated as *The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous*. It was:

*...first published in Montreal in 1960. In a very short time, it sold more than 100,000 copies, in a society where a book with a 10,000-copy print run was considered a best-seller. The anonymous author was Jean-Paul Desbiens, a Marist*

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*Brother, who attacked the church-controlled education system in Quebec.*

*The book had an important impact on the Quiet Revolution in Quebec and on the educational reforms that eventually shaped the present Quebec education system.*

*Desbiens was scathing in his attack of the existing system of classical colleges, where Latin reigned supreme. He also criticized the poor quality of the French language in Quebec, which he called *joual*. He called for massive reforms in all aspects of the system. Later, he was also very critical of the way the reforms were carried out.<sup>36</sup>*

At that time, church leaders perpetrated multiple and unspeakable abuses, which were either accepted or ignored by the authorities. Although historians, victims, activists, and the judiciary continue to document, expose, and combat these abuses, many of which persist to this day, much has yet to be resolved.

Suffice to say that Lucille was all too aware of the possible damage of such abuse and remained ever ready to defend herself and her children from any such machinations. She was sometimes ostracized by her family because she did not remain silent or indifferent.

As children we had a lot of freedom to play outside with Lucille usually watching us from the kitchen window. I also remember being able to step out behind my home playing in and around a tiny creek with neighbourhood friends or walking along an old forest road to an abandoned lumberjack cabin, or up a nearby mountain full of craggy rocks and trees up to the edge of the forest; so full of undergrowth that I could go no further.

Toys were rare but wildflowers and bees, mud, sticks, and stones were abundant. We collected insects in jars, observed and played with them. Until television came to Murdochville, we did not know much more. We never felt deprived or in need of things, but we never saw a playground or park in Murdochville; simply a creek, open fields, and forest around the edge of town.

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<sup>36</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les\\_insolences\\_du\\_Fr%C3%A8re\\_Untel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_insolences_du_Fr%C3%A8re_Untel)  
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Thanks to Lucille's love of nature, her imagination and inventiveness, I hold dear many memories of visits around the Gaspé Coast; magnificent cliffs and cataracts, and lovely beaches where we would collect shells, dried starfish, whale bones and teeth, stones, and agates. We would sometimes stop by the roadside and take in the wonderful aroma of homemade bread made in large roadside ovens. If we could purchase some freshly caught lobster, we would bring them to the beach and cook them ourselves. At that time, we could also get dried strips of salt cod or smelt, real treats that were among the many special features of that utterly beautiful coastline.

Yet, there were times when Lucille could hardly bear living in these rustic and isolated conditions. In the Fall of 1962, she chose to join her parents in Miami. Like many other well-to-do Quebecers at that time and even more of them today, her parents would spend a few of the coldest winter months in Florida. More recently there are so many Quebecers migrating south for much of the winter in Florida that they are referred to as snowbirds.

Lucille joined her parents at a time when the United States was involved in one of the most important international security crises occurring just near that same Florida coastline. Historians now refer to this event as the *Cuban Missile Crisis*, succinctly described as:

*... a 13-day (October 16-28, 1962) confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union over Soviet ballistic missiles deployed in Cuba. It played out on television worldwide and was the closest the Cold-War came to escalating into a full-scale nuclear war.<sup>37</sup>*

Lucille suddenly found herself unable to return to Canada. Although Alban tried not to alarm us, as the eldest at nine-years-old and a little more aware than my brothers, I was stunned to hear flights had been cancelled and those out of Florida were grounded indefinitely. For the first time I realized that such a sudden turn of events could happen. I realized I could lose my mother or never see her again. Fortunately, her absence was not for long and life did return to normal.

<sup>37</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban\\_Missile\\_Crisis#International\\_response](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Missile_Crisis#International_response)

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This incident, however, may have been instrumental in finally changing my father's mind about leaving the Gaspé Coast. Lucille often told me she thought that Alban would never have even left his native village, had it not been for her insistence. And although Lucille's persistence and resourcefulness may have helped, in hindsight, I do wonder if the *Cuban Missile Crisis* and that brief but shocking moment may have been a decisive event for our own family's future.

It was soon after this that Alban chose to leave the land he loved so deeply. Lucille had seen the writing on the wall years earlier, but it may have taken this incident for Alban to finally decide to move; very soon afterwards he asked for a transfer to the Noranda Mining Company's new metallurgical research center being built in suburban Montreal.

Just as Lucille had anticipated years earlier, after decades of fluctuating markets and uncertainty, the mine did close for the last time in 1999. Despite several attempts or schemes, there is little to attract any viable or sustainable economic development in that region. Fortunately, Lucille and Alban saw this as an opportunity to move on. Alban got his transfer in the winter of 1962-63.

## **Pointe-Claire (The Early Years: 1963-1967)**

It was a stark arrival to Montreal<sup>38</sup>, but Alban quickly found himself at his new post: organizing and managing the purchasing department for the new Noranda Research Centre in Pointe-Claire.

Our family moved to Pointe-Claire the winter of January 1963. Lucille and Alban bought a house described as semi-detached, meaning a house attached to another house that is the mirror image of the other side. Just the term *semi-detached* made me feel that the house was incomplete, although I got used to it. The housing development was so stark and plain that it was difficult to tell one house or even one street from another, with hardly a tree or a bush, and surrounded by large, flat, vacant fields and a few old apple orchards. A stark contrast to the diverse settings and houses on the Gaspé. Everything seemed so identical that on one evening, I returned home in the dark after skating in the nearby park and, to my great embarrassment, I miscounted the streets and I found myself walking right into another family's home thinking it was my own!

Sometimes our new neighbours would talk about “the mountain” although there was not a one to be seen, anywhere. I eventually understood they were referring to the mountain called Mount Royal, in the middle of the City of Montreal about 30 kilometers away. Pointe-Claire and the whole of the West-Island of Montreal had mostly been farmland, except for some country cottages and a few yachting or sailing clubs along the waterfront that wealthier Montrealers built since the 1800s. After World War II, with the return of young men from their army service, suburban living became the dream of most young North American families. Urban and suburban sprawl was at its height in the 1950s and well into this new millennium. Pointe-Claire became a typical example of middle-class suburbia. One historian who grew up in the West Island describes this portion of the Island of Montreal as follows:

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<sup>38</sup> The Island of Montréal is composed of several independent cities, of which the largest is the City of Montréal. Pointe-Claire is an independent city in the western part of the island in the region often called, the West Island.

## A Light in All Our Lives

*From the 1950s onwards, many country estates were sold off and subdivided, although the original houses often remained intact on greatly reduced grounds. During the 1960s a wide ribbon of the rural West Island was sacrificed to make way for Highway 40 and the industrial parks which sprang up on its flanks. Rampant suburbanization followed soon afterwards, as farmers began selling large tracts of land to developers, and city-dwellers like my parents began flocking to the area.*

*There are some people who would characterize the transformation of the West Island from rural backwater to modern suburbia as progress. Some would back up this viewpoint by saying that the lives of the people who toiled on the seigneurial farms that once carpeted the area were anything but idyllic. ...But at the same time, it cannot be denied that the wanton destruction of the rural West Island between 1950 and the present day represents an irreversible environmental upheaval of massive proportions. For those interested in the history of their surroundings, it is equivalent to the unceremonious sweeping away of three centuries of Montreal history.<sup>39</sup>*

When we settled into our new neighbourhood in 1963 there were still vast empty fields in which to play and pick misshapen apples, some we even ate until they gave us stomach-aches. The fields were more interesting than the few swings in the park at the end of the block. They contained several shallow ponds full of frogs and pollywogs in summer, and in winter we sometimes could skip along and skate from one pond to another. To Lucille's and several of our neighbour's consternation, my brothers and a few friends built field bikes using old lawnmower motors to race through the fields making an awful clamor.

We also lived directly under one of the busy flight paths serving the Montreal International Airport (now called the Pierre-Elliott Trudeau

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<sup>39</sup> Vassiadis, George. The rural West Island: Montreal's lost patrimony, June 25, 2010, <https://montrealserai.com/article/the-rural-west-island-montreals-lost-patrimony/>.

Airport) about five kilometers away. The screaming engines of the jets both landing and taking off interrupted any and all conversation. We would have to tell people on the other end of any telephone conversation to please wait for the jet to pass since we could not hear a word they were saying. Still today residents in the area complain about the noise levels.

While my brothers were placed in a nearby English Catholic elementary school, for the last portion of grade four I was sent to a French Catholic school. It was quite a bit further away and in a 19<sup>th</sup> century dark brick Victorian-looking schoolhouse that has since been torn down. Teachers were composed of a mixture of lay instructors and nuns.

My English schooling began in 1963 when I entered fifth grade. It was a particularly memorable year since it was the year that American President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, in November 1963. It was such a shocking world event that the school brought televisions into our classrooms for the first time, so we could witness the Kennedy funeral *live*, as it was occurring. It is the year I understood that there was a big country to the south of Canada where a lot of important things happened.

Being closer to Montreal, Lucille was happy to see her parents and her siblings again. We had some opportunities to meet and visit our aunts and an uncle who remained in the Greater Montreal area and cousins (too many to mention and most of whom Lucille had not yet met). One brother, Jeannot (Jean-Jacques) moved to Oregon in the mid 1960s. Paul, another brother, moved to Guatemala in the 50s followed later by her sister, Denyse. Both Denyse and Paul remained in Guatemala for decades, both married and raised their children there through the 1960s and 70s.

For a few summers we also vacationed with my grandparents and some of my aunts, uncles and cousins in the family's lovely cottage on a large lake named Nominingué (Figure 7), several hours' drive north of Montreal. It was a large cottage with an open mezzanine. Upstairs there was a row of several beds and dressers lined up for all the cousins to sleep. Grandparents and adults had the bedrooms below on the main floor. We, the grandchildren particularly enjoyed the clear sandy beach, the nearby marshy portion of the lake full of lily pads

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and frogs, lots of chipmunks darting about, wild blueberries growing round the lovely gazebo on a little point, as well as use of a big old rowboat. On Saturday evenings we could walk by the *patates frites* (French fries) stand on the edge of the village (Figure 42), pick up an order of fries in a small cardboard box and saunter over to the dance hall behind the general store. It was huge hall with a big juke box where we would dance and try to look grown up. Some evenings we played games and cards at the cottage with our parents or sat on the porch for a while, and on cooler nights we would sometimes have a fire going in the big stone fireplace. Every time I hear a screen door swing shut, I am transported back to summers in Nomininguie.



Figure 42: "*Patates frites*" stand near Nomininguie

In suburbia families lived in either very simple apartments or in newly built, single-family houses with a yard and a driveway. Public transportation was non-existent and there were no bicycle paths and few sidewalks. There were few shopping areas, no public markets, no hospitals, and for over a decade as school-age children, there were few sports or cultural activities nearby. A few years later, a library and sports center were built. Then rickety buses began to circulate but only offered a few routes either to or from the newly opened glitzy Fairview shopping mall, several miles away across the huge six lane highway (the Trans-Canada Highway 40) built in 1965.

Although we now lived closer to Montreal, suburban living was neither interesting nor practical for Lucille, who had grown up in an urban setting where she could hop onto a tram near her home to get to shops, schools, hospitals, or museums. Given the distances to get to work, school and any regular activities, our family needed a second car.

I remember my parents were very obliging to our neighbours. Alban was often the handyman for our neighbours and Lucille the nurse.<sup>40</sup> Alban could help install or repair washing machines, clothes dryers, and such, although Lucille wished he would stop repairing her old washer and dreamt of being able to afford a new one.

As the neighbourhood nurse, Lucille was asked about minor health questions or in one instance, called upon to pierce the ears of our Italian neighbours' daughter. As the young woman saw my mother sterilizing the sewing needle, she panicked fearing the pain. Lucille then decided I could be the demonstrator model to reassure her. Yes, Lucille pierced my ears although I had never even considered having them done.

It was the 60s and suburban youth were bored and sometimes found their parents' liquor cabinets a source of distraction while other illegal drugs came into many of their lives. On one occasion I remember Lucille having to literally sober up a young neighbour, an older sister of one of my school friends. I had never seen someone drunk before. It seemed she had gotten drunk after breaking up with a boyfriend. Lucille managed to get her showered, sobered up and in bed before her parents would have otherwise found her unconscious on their living-room floor.

Lucille also saved and nursed one of our cats back to health after he had been badly hurt by the fan under the hood of a neighbour's car. Lucille truly knew how to care for the sick and I can attest to the fact that it was particularly difficult to fake illness, when trying to take a day off school.

Although a few years after our arrival there was one local private bus but not necessarily going where and when it was needed, without local

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<sup>40</sup> Note that Quebec did not have socialized medicine or Medicare until 1970.

## A Light in All Our Lives

bus services, children usually had to be driven to and from most after-school activities that were often several kilometers away. For youth especially, suburbs such as these were not interesting places to live since they had neither the space nor the natural beauty of the country, nor were there the activities, attractions and cultural institutions found in large cities. Developers counted on this to build shopping centres that eventually became huge, enclosed shopping malls which, during cold weather, encouraged people to pass the time wandering about in a more sheltered and comfortable environment. Yet, these shopping malls had very few attractions and became places where youth could simply loiter and meet each other.

These shopping malls were also where some local drug dealers became part of the landscape. Drugs became a major part of the lives of anyone over the age of 12. Studies of this vast North American phenomena is well documented in the *Le Dain Commission Inquiry on the Non-Medical Use of Drugs* from 1968 to 1972, and countless studies of the various urban settings across Canada<sup>41</sup>. Fortunately, my brothers and I were expected to do our homework and help at home with meals and clean up, so we had little occasion to hang out in the malls. Alban built a playroom in the basement, organized his workshop and the laundry room in the first year or so.

Lucille returned to work as a nurse in a nearby industrial park on the night shift at a plant owned by Rolls-Royce of Canada about 1964 or 65. In addition to being mostly known for its luxurious Rolls-Royce cars produced in Britain, the company also manufactured and maintained airplane engines for Air Canada, an airline based at the nearby airport.

As a nurse, Lucille attended to any minor accidents that staff experienced while working on these engines. To make her return to work possible, all three of us children were given our respective lists of chores we were expected to carry out regularly. Our lists were posted on a wall going down our basement stairs, where we could all check when we had to do what. It was then, at about 12 years old, I

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<sup>41</sup> Marquis, Greg. *Urban History Review Volume 42*, Issue 1, Fall 2013, p. 27–40.

Retrieved from <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/uhr/2013-v42-n1-uhr01125/1022057ar/>

learned to cook, bake, organize a meal for five and clean just about anything.

Lucille had our home well organized and believed in cleanliness and hygiene. Dust bunnies or stinky bathrooms were not part of our vocabulary. As an adolescent she explained to me how worried she was that we could contract polio as young children<sup>42</sup>. I was stunned to see a classmate during that same period who had to wear heavy leg braces and use awkward looking crutches because of this devastating disease. It was only later that I realized that the polio vaccine had only been developed in the mid-1950s.

Lucille did not define herself or limit herself to her career as a nurse and as the demands of working night shifts as a nurse for Rolls Royce took their toll, she moved on to a nursing position in another institution caring for people with disabilities. Shortly after starting this work, she found the institution was poorly administered and lacked proper resources to care for the population it was supposed to serve. Finally, she decided to leave nursing all together. Later, she became a real-estate agent.

During Alban's vacations that were usually all of two weeks per year, we would travel. Lucille would plan our trips meticulously. We would scout out a few places in the early spring and sometimes rent a small cabin. One year we spent a few weeks in the little town of Alburg, Vermont, in a cabin on Lake Champlain. Lucille and Alban were simply happy to get out of the city for a while. One year we went camping in Maine on the lovely Sebago Lake. Lucille did not have much time to relax, but it was good to get away from the 'burbs for a while. She loved beachcombing and exploring wherever we went, while Alban was usually repairing something with my brothers, helping Lucille make a meal or reading the newspaper.

From the year we arrived in Pointe-Claire in the winter of 1962-63, until 1968, the year Lucille's father passed away, most of her sisters, their husbands and her brothers with their wives and their children who lived in the Montreal region would gather for the *Réveillon du*

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<sup>42</sup> See, for example, <https://www.cpha.ca/story-polio>

## A Light in All Our Lives

*Nouvel An* (New Year's Day meal) at Lucille's parents' home in Town of Mount Royal (see Figure 43).



Figure 43: Réveillon du Nouvel An (New Year's Day) 1966. Photo taken in basement playroom, Alban is 3<sup>rd</sup> from the right back row, Lucille is 4<sup>th</sup> from right back row, Suzanne is on the right wearing a pendant, Shawn at front right with bowtie, Paul front second from the left.

Lucille became a real-estate agent in 1966. Since she was bilingual, liked meeting people, and had a good understanding of design and construction, she enjoyed many aspects of the business. However, some of the more cutthroat and competitive aspects she found difficult to accept. Lucille did not appreciate the aggressive behaviour of some of her colleagues, although she did quite well as an agent. She also managed the family budget and invested what savings she could. One year, she and Alban bought the house next door and rented it for several years.

Lucille spent many days nursing my grandfather in 1968, while he was quite ill and bedridden at his home in the last months of his life. Both she and my uncle Pierre (Figure 44), who was a doctor, helped my

### Pointe-Claire (The Early Years: 1963-1967)

grandmother during this period. Sometimes I would help and only then, did I realize how difficult it could be to properly care for someone who is no longer in their right mind. Lucille showed me how as adults or responsible individuals we may at times have to make decisions in the best interest of someone else, while being compassionate and forbearing.



*Figure 44: The Sanche family in 1967: Back row, left, Denyse, Lucille, Yolande, Marthe, and Claire. Seated left, Pierre, Maria, Hector, Jean-Jacques (Jeannot), and Paul*

When it was time to settle my grandfather's estate Lucille appeared to be the only one of her siblings who realized that the trust company was dragging its feet since it was in their own interest not to liquidate and distribute what they themselves were administering for a hefty annual fee. Like many doctors at that time, my grandfather had a few apartment buildings that the trust company would have been happy to manage indefinitely for the family. To the surprise and seeming embarrassment of some of her siblings Lucille claimed her inheritance and had the estate settled and closed with dispatch.

## The 1967 Montreal International World's Fair: Expo '67

The year 1967 was a turning point for many people living in Montreal when the city opened its doors to the world and developed an appreciation for all its peoples and cultures. A spirit of openness the like of which had never been witnessed in Montreal became the norm for many of its inhabitants. Visitors and immigrants had flowed into Montreal in great numbers before Expo; and the flow increased and accelerated even more.

Lucille was delighted with Montreal hosting this World's Fair because it presented all the diverse cultures and nationalities in a positive and culturally interesting light. Until then, Montrealers usually lived in either an all French-speaking neighbourhood or an all English-speaking one. The French and English were truly *two solitudes*, to borrow the phrase from the title of a book (1945) on this very subject by Montreal English writer and professor of literature at McGill University, Hugh MacLennan. Although there were many European, African, Haitian, Jewish, Caribbean, and East Indian immigrants, they usually lived in their own neighbourhoods as they arrived in the city. Later, they moved and seemed to blend into the English or French populations or sometimes, create their own micro-communities or neighbourhoods. Most First Nations people in the region lived off-island on a reservation now called *Kahnawake*, a Mohawk reserve southwest of Montreal.

Lucille bought each of us season passports to *Expo '67*, so we were free to access the *Expo* site to visit all the national and other pavilions, including parks and fair grounds. *Expo* was set on a series of islands in the Saint-Lawrence River near the Port of Montreal and the pavilions were all unique and interesting constructions of fanciful and sometimes very avant-garde styles although most of them had only been built to last the season. Years later I discovered that my father-in-law, Fred Lebensold, designed the *Expo* site's three theme pavilions. Some of the pavilions, including Buckminster Fuller's enormous sphere, are still standing. All of them were linked by a monorail leading into the site where there were innumerable pathways

lined with kiosks offering fast food, film, and souvenirs<sup>43</sup>. The site was also accessible through a newly built *Métro* or subway system with a station situated between the amusement park and the exhibition area on the island of Sainte-Hélène. It was a magical summer for many Montrealers.

For a few weeks that summer of 1967, I lived with my grandparents in their home in Town of Mount-Royal so I could easily access a city bus and subway that led directly into *Expo '67*. I was 13 and often told that I “was mature for my age” and I had no fear of going most anywhere on my own, so I enjoyed going alone to *Expo* to see the different pavilions that most of my friends were not particularly interested in visiting. At other times, I would meet up with friends or we would get a lift from one of our parents, to go to the amusement park portion called *La Ronde*, where we could meet boys and take in some of the free live rock bands.

Soon after this interesting summer, Montrealers became ever more aware of international issues. Some of these issues became part of our own lives when more and more young American men settled in Montreal to avoid being drafted into the U.S. Army to serve in Vietnam, a far-off country that I, like most Montrealers, had never heard of until then.

## Vietnam, Racism, and the Civil Rights Movement

The United States’ involvement in Vietnam<sup>44</sup> in the 1960s resulted in the draft of young men into the American army and tens of thousands of these young American men migrated to Canada to avoid military service. They were called “draft dodgers”, “conscientious objectors” or “deserters” depending on how and when they left the United States. They were an unexpected boon for Montreal, bringing with them issues and resources about which most Montrealers were quite unaware. The issue of conscription, obligatory military service, was one that resonated in French Canada since many French Canadians

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<sup>43</sup> Decades later, my husband told me that he worked at his first summer job in a camera store at *Expo*.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War).

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tried to avoid it a few decades earlier during both the First and Second World Wars.

Other issues, however, such as racism and civil rights were quite new for most of the 1960s and 70s youth of Montreal. The young draft dodgers and deserters were far more aware of these hot issues in the United States. Although they were English speaking, unlike much of the local English population, they appreciated French culture and language, as well as the attractive young French-speaking women who were their contemporaries. In fact, it was quite remarkable how quickly they were able to learn French and integrate into their new surroundings. This may have been because they were unaware of the complexities of age-old conflicts between the English and French settler populations. This migration brought several thousand young people to Montreal, who made it their home. I was fortunate to have a few that were among my best college teachers.<sup>45</sup>

During this same period there were, as there are still, many different personalities, gurus and charismatic individuals who claimed some kind of special knowledge or powers that circulated in the media, wrote sensational books and became very well known. Some were westerners who associated themselves with eastern mystics and spiritual teachers and became part of their entourage. Like so many at that time who were curious and intrigued by this phenomenon, Lucille investigated several<sup>46</sup> of these new age movements she had heard of through friends, acquaintances, and the media. Like her contemporaries, she was curious about them, but none held her interest for long.

### **First Encounters with the Bahá'í Faith (1967)**

Lucille first heard of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet and founder of the Bahá'í Faith, through an article in a popular American

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<sup>45</sup> Several of these young men were members of the Montreal Bahá'í Community.

Their issues and the dilemmas they faced coming to Canada as refugees from the United States sensitized and influenced their contemporaries here in Montreal.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Edgar Cayce, Lobsang Rampa, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

magazine around 1966 or 1967. Impressed with the teachings of this relatively new faith, she wanted to know more. Two of the principal teachings that attracted her were that of the need of the harmony of science and religion, and the fact that there is no clergy in the organization of the Bahá'í Community.

Lucille's curiosity was piqued, and she began to search for more information. She started by looking in the City of Montreal's printed telephone directory, which was the usual way before the existence of home-computers and the Internet, and found one telephone listing for the Bahá'í Shrine located on Pine Avenue West in Montreal; situated below the old Montreal General Hospital on the slopes of Mount Royal.

This site, now called the Canadian Bahá'í Shrine, was the home of William Sutherland Maxwell and his wife, May Bolles Maxwell, and their infant daughter Mary. Mr. Maxwell was a distinguished architect, who designed and built their home in the 1910s. He and his older brother Edward designed many major institutions and hotels across Canada. William and May Maxwell were among the first Bahá'ís in Montreal<sup>47</sup>.

In August 1912, they had the honour of receiving 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son and appointed successor of Bahá'u'lláh, as a guest in their home. This home became a place of great significance and designated a Bahá'í Shrine in the 1950s by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's grandson and Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, this illustrious and inspiring personage, arrived in New York City on the *Cedric* on April 11, 1912, as part of a series of trips from the Middle East through Europe and North America from 1910 to 1913. His safe arrival is also of note since he had originally been scheduled to sail on the *Titanic*. Since this famous luxury liner had been publicized as unsinkable, the world was shocked to hear that on her maiden voyage the *Titanic* hit an iceberg and sank into the icy waters of the North Atlantic on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

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<sup>47</sup> *The Maxwells of Montreal*, Vols. I & II, by Violette Nakhjavani, with the assistance of Bahíyyih Nakhjavani. Vol. I: George Ronald, Oxford, 2011, xx + 422 pp. Vol. II: George Ronald, Oxford, 2012, 442 pp.

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‘Abdu’l-Bahá travelled to major cities and towns in the North America from sea to sea. He spoke in churches, synagogues, universities and union halls, meeting people of all walks of life. Montreal was the only Canadian city he visited and did so, despite being advised not to. He later explained this in a Tablet addressed to the Bahá’ís of North America:

*Before My departure, many souls warned Me not to travel to Montreal, saying, the majority of the inhabitants are Catholics, and are in the utmost fanaticism, that they are submerged in the sea of imitations, ...*

*But these stories did not have any effect on the resolution of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He, trusting in God, turned his face toward Montreal. When he entered that city, he observed all the doors open, he found the hearts in the utmost receptivity and the ideal power of the Kingdom of God removing every obstacle and obstruction.<sup>48</sup>*

Over a half century later, with her own heart in the utmost receptivity, Lucille called the number listed for the Bahá’í Shrine in the telephone directory and spoke to one of the custodians<sup>49</sup>. They had little to offer except a small pamphlet which they sent her by regular mail. It contained no more information than the magazine article she had first read.

During these months while she was searching for further information about the Bahá’í Faith, Lucille did not even realize that there was a Bahá’í community in Montreal. Then one day in 1967 she quite unexpectedly met Bahá’ís for the first time. Lucille, having then become a real-estate agent working for a firm in Montreal’s West-Island district, met a Dutch couple from Toronto. Jan and Lonnie Van der Vliet entered her office and promptly asked her to be their agent to help find them a house. Delighted to have them as clients, Lucille asked them what they were looking for. One of her standard questions to new clients who had children was: Did they wish to be near schools

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<sup>48</sup> Tablet to the Bahá’ís of Canada and Greenland, [www.bahai.org/library](http://www.bahai.org/library)

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.bahai.ca/bahai-shrine-in-montreal/>

that were French or English, and whether they wished to be near a Catholic or a Protestant school.

Jan and Lonnie promptly replied that they wished their children to attend English schools, however, since they were Bahá'ís, they did not care if it was Protestant or Catholic. Lucille, who was driving them to visit a few houses at the time, was astonished to hear that they were Bahá'ís. She promptly pulled her car over to the side of the highway to explain that she had wanted to know about the Bahá'í Faith for quite some time. Surprised, they responded asking her to find them a house and that they would then be delighted to invite her and answer all her questions about the Bahá'í Faith. Within a few weeks the Van der Vliets had bought their house and invited Lucille over.

Lucille was invited to a meeting that is referred to as a fireside, to learn more about the Bahá'í Faith. She was warmly welcomed, pleased with the answers to her questions, and even more impressed when she was encouraged to continue to study the Bahá'í teachings. She noted that there is no priesthood in the Bahá'í Faith and that Bahá'u'lláh spoke of the unity of humankind, the oneness of God and that Revelation is a progressive process through which humankind has been guided through successive messengers or divine teachers. These teachers are called Manifestations of God and include many we no longer know, and several with whom we may be more familiar such as: Abraham, Buddha, Jesus, Krishna, Mohammed, Moses, and Zoroaster.

She was also particularly attracted to the concept of the oneness of humankind since she always found people who were not from her culture or origins to be interesting, rather than to be avoided or feared. She longed to discover and understand diverse peoples and cultures. As she studied the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, she wholeheartedly accepted the following, as later articulated by the Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith:

*... the principle that is to infuse all facets of organized life on the planet is the oneness of humankind, the hallmark of the age of maturity.*

*... the principle of the oneness of humankind, as proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, asks not merely for cooperation among*

## A Light in All Our Lives

*people and nations. It calls for a complete reconceptualization of the relationships that sustain society.*

*... The principle of the oneness of humankind implies, then, an organic change in the very structure of society.<sup>50</sup>*

Educated in private Catholic residential schools (known as convent schools) by nuns from her elementary through high school, Lucille particularly appreciated that Bahá'u'lláh taught that reason and faith, or science and religion, are essential and complementary functions and characteristics of human existence rather than opposing approaches in the investigation of reality. Asking both religious and scientific questions is not to choose one over the other but to regard both as essential elements in the investigation of truth and in the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. Lucille found this whole approach to religious study and practice quite revolutionary, as explained in this talk by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

*Furthermore, religion must conform to reason and be in accord with the conclusions of science. For religion, reason and science are realities; therefore, these three, being realities, must conform and be reconciled. A question or principle which is religious in its nature must be sanctioned by science. Science must declare it to be valid, and reason must confirm it in order that it may inspire confidence. If religious teaching, however, be at variance with science and reason, it is unquestionably superstition. The Lord of mankind has bestowed upon us the faculty of reason whereby we may discern the realities of things. How then can man rightfully accept any proposition which is not in conformity with the processes of reason and the principles of science? Assuredly such a course cannot inspire man with confidence and real belief.<sup>51</sup>*

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<sup>50</sup> The Universal House of Justice, from a message dated 2 March 2013 to the Bahá’ís of Iran.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace. (Wilmette: US Baháí Publishing Trust, 1982 second edition) P. 394. Available from [www.bahai.org/r/797148697](http://www.bahai.org/r/797148697), Talk given 6 November 1912 at Universalist Church, Washington, DC.

## New Friends

A few other Bahá'í families in nearby communities also invited Lucille into their homes so that she could learn more about these teachings. One such family were the Hashemis, who lived in the nearby suburb of Saint-Laurent. Rashid and Pari Hashemi and their daughters Greta and Otessa were from Iran, the birthplace of the Bahá'í Faith. Like many other Bahá'ís in Iran, they had experienced persecutions because of their beliefs and wished to practice and teach their faith freely. Meeting the Hashemis and other Persian families at that time, Lucille also learned more about Persian culture and was impressed with their gracious hospitality.

The Homayouns were another such family, who were originally from Hamadan, Iran. They lived in the suburb of Dollard-des-Ormeaux where their home became a meeting place for several youth who attended informal study classes their two sons, Feridoun and Sepehr, held quite regularly in the late 60s. They had attended Bahá'í classes in Iran and were taught by very well-informed teachers, such as 'Ali-Akbar Furútan<sup>52</sup>. They presented subjects in a logical way; much the way they had been taught. I was among these youth who found it refreshing to learn about a religion in a way totally different from my experience with Catholic education<sup>53</sup>.

Feridoun and Sepehr's parents would greet us and offer tea and refreshments while we would meet in their basement family-room; we were all curious about the Bahá'í teachings and attracted by the hospitality of our hosts. Lucille was delighted that I was among them. I was interested in learning from Persian Bahá'ís, to better understand the Prophet or Manifestation's cultural origins. However, as I

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<sup>52</sup> 'Ali-Akbar Furútan (1905–2003) was a prominent Iranian Bahá'í educator and author ... In 1926, nine years after the Russian Revolution, 21-year-old Furútan won a scholarship to the University of Moscow, where he studied education and child psychology. ... Throughout his life, 'Ali-Akbar Furútan taught Bahá'í classes for children and youth, and he published many works in child spiritual and material education. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E2%80%99Ali%C3%A2%C3%A9-Akbar\\_Fur%C3%BCtan\\_%23cite\\_note-academy-1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E2%80%99Ali%C3%A2%C3%A9-Akbar_Fur%C3%BCtan_%23cite_note-academy-1)

<sup>53</sup>[https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/ccc\\_toc.htm](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/ccc_toc.htm)

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continued to study it became quite clear that His message is for all peoples of all origins and cultures.

Lucille had the opportunity to meet many other Bahá'ís from diverse backgrounds such as Rosemary and Emeric Sala, memorialized by their niece, Ilona Sala Weinstein in her book, *Tending the Garden*<sup>54</sup>. They were among the first Bahá'í youth in the Montreal community<sup>55</sup>, contemporaries of Mary Maxwell, daughter of May and William Sutherland Maxwell. The Maxwell family are remembered in an excellent two-volume publication titled *The Maxwells of Montreal*<sup>56</sup> by Violet Nakhjavani. These are but a few of the people Lucille met through her discovery of the Bahá'í Faith. Others who welcomed and extended friendship to Lucille were Georgie Skeaff, 'Abdu'l-Rahim Yazdi, Eric Frost, Dr. Shapoor and Mahin Javanmardi and so many more<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> Tending the Garden: A Biography of Emeric and Rosemary Sala, by Ilona Weinstein. One Voice Press, 2016,

<sup>55</sup> *The Maxwells of Montreal*, Vol. II, by Violette Nakhjavani, with the assistance of Bahíyyih Nakhjavani. George Ronald, Oxford, 2012, 442 pp.

<sup>56</sup> *The Maxwells of Montreal*, Vols. I & II, by Violette Nakhjavani, with the assistance of Bahíyyih Nakhjavani. Vol. I: George Ronald, Oxford, 2011, xx + 422 pp. Vol. II: George Ronald, Oxford, 2012, 442 pp.

<sup>57</sup> *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1898-1948*, by Will C. van den Hoonaard, WLU Press, 1996.

## **Family and Community Life (1968-1990)**

### **Beaulac Bahá'í School (1968-1971)**

In 1947 some Bahá'ís in Quebec offered a country property to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada for the purposes of having seasonal study groups and retreats in a quiet and natural setting. The property included a large farmhouse and a converted barn where courses were held in summer. There were also a few outlying cottages on several acres of rolling land, partially wooded and with a few open areas where some participants could pitch their tents. Individuals with expertise or knowledge on aspects of the Bahá'í Faith and related topics such as Biblical prophecies, and historical and social issues, were invited to this seasonal school, Beaulac Bahá'í School, to teach over a weekend or a week. As active participants in community life, Bahá'ís need such opportunities to deepen in their understanding about the many aspects of their Faith since:

*It is not enough to bring people into the Faith, one must educate them and deepen their love for it and their knowledge of its teachings, after they declare themselves. ... In this respect, the summer schools can be of the greatest help to the friends, new and old Bahá'ís alike, for in them they can study, and enjoy the feeling of Bahá'í companionship ...<sup>58</sup>*

Lucille attended Beaulac's winter session in early 1968 and shortly afterwards, she formally became a Bahá'í. She also wanted to teach her children about her new-found Faith and decided that one of the most effective ways to do so would be to rent a summer cottage near the Beaulac Bahá'í School for a few weeks in the summer of 1968. This way her children were able to meet other Bahá'ís closer to their own age as well as come to the realization that this seemingly obscure, yet world-embracing Faith was not a passing trend that would go the way of innumerable other movements. It was a fateful summer for me since I also became a Bahá'í, but that's another story.

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<sup>58</sup> From a letter dated 18 July 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada.

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Beaulac Bahá'í school was just an hour's drive north-east of Montreal. Over several years, 1968 to 1971, Lucille and I had the pleasure of studying with some fine Bahá'í teachers at Beaulac: Ali-Akbar Furutan and John Robarts, who both had a unique role to play in the unfoldment and development of the Bahá'í Community, having been appointed as "Hands of the Cause"<sup>59</sup> by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith; Javidukht Khadem, a scholar of the writings of Shoghi Effendi; Stanwood Cobb, who actually met 'Abdu'l-Bahá<sup>60</sup>; and Alan Raynor and Nancy Campbell, both of whom served as members of the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada. Decades later, in 2000, Lucille's own granddaughter, Esther, graduated from a school that bears Nancy Campbell's name.

Beaulac would never have been possible without the devoted services of Bill and Priscilla Waugh, who were both the caretakers and cooks. They were ever so patient with the youth, even several overly enthusiastic ones (who shall remain nameless) who sometimes transformed dishwashing duty into hilarious water fights.<sup>61</sup>

After about 20 years, Beaulac Bahá'í School was no more when the property was expropriated by the provincial government to widen the highway. Beaulac disappeared although many memories of the wonderful atmosphere, of inspiring speakers and deep friendships remain for those who were able to be in that place at that time, truly an incalculably precious gift.

In these last years, the Robarts family also became an essential part of this legacy when John Robarts and his wife Audrey retired and settled in the nearby town of Rawdon, having just returned from living as Bahá'í pioneers in South Africa for almost two decades. They were

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<sup>59</sup> The Hands of the Cause of God, Hands of the Cause, or sometimes informally referred to as Hands were a select group of Bahá'ís, appointed for life, whose main function was to propagate and to protect the Bahá'í Faith. (Wikipedia)

<sup>60</sup> For an account of both this and subsequent meetings see *Memories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* by Stanwood Cobb, retrieved from [https://bahai-library.com/pdf/c/cobb\\_memories\\_abdul-baha.pdf](https://bahai-library.com/pdf/c/cobb_memories_abdul-baha.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> Today, I actually have a memento from Beaulac, which I use almost every day: A wooden vegetable brush Mrs. Priscilla Waugh had used as the cook for many years.

also joined by their daughter Nina, her husband Ken Tinnion and their two young daughters.

### **Buying an Old Farmhouse (1968)**

In 1968 Lucille and Alban were looking for a country place and decided they liked the area near the Bahá'í School, not far from the town of Rawdon. After looking all around the region, on the very last day of their vacation they found an old farmhouse for sale. Alban thought that it was just what he wanted, while Lucille was appalled by its poor state. Nevertheless, it was a beautiful property, partially wooded with private frontage on a clean and magnificent river. They made an offer which was quickly accepted and then spent countless weekends over many years repairing and cleaning. Many friends came by to visit, picnic and swim in the river.

In the winters the family snowshoed, skated over icy expanses of the wide and shallow areas on the river and even enjoyed racing several snowmobiles that Alban and my brothers spent time maintaining. Lucille always had a big pot of soup, usually composed of beef bones, onions, and lots of root vegetables, simmering on the old wood stove in the middle of the kitchen. Alban had a tiny root cellar under the old farmhouse to store the harvest of the previous summer's crop from their vegetable garden.

Lucille would attend some of the sessions at Beaulac School since it was just a five-minute drive up the road. Although almost 90, Stanwood Cobb would still enjoy a brisk swim in the river.

Unfortunately, on one very hot summer day at Beaulac, when one of the sessions went on too long, a large salad with a mayonnaise dressing poisoned most, if not all, of the attendees. Lucille nursed them all over several days. She was one of only a few who had not eaten the salad, since she usually returned to the farmhouse to join Alban for lunch. I was away at that time, Lucille described how awful it was to nurse a houseful of sick people over several days. Thankfully everyone did recover.

We had the pleasure of having many friends visit from Montreal at various times; they would usually spend a day and go for a swim in the river. Lucille's two teenage sons, Paul and Shawn spent many

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summers there and even became beekeepers for a few years. I on the other hand spent less time at the farmhouse having started my college studies in Montreal. I also left Montreal for Zaïre (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo or DRC) when I married Julian Lebensold in December 1972.

Meanwhile Paul and Shawn were quite involved in projects, helping Alban rebuild and repair the farm as well as building their own motorbikes. They then used them to travel across Canada, living in British Columbia for a while and eventually motorbiked to South America. Later Shawn returned “out West” for several years. The longing to travel across Canada was a kind of leaving home and coming-of-age activity for many Canadian teens in the 60s and 70s.

### **The Bahá’í Community in Montreal and Surroundings (1968 to 1975)**

In the summer of 1968, soon after Lucille and the family returned from that little rented cottage near the Beaulac Bahá’í School, several young musicians from Saskatoon settled in Pointe-Claire, near our home. They were members of a rock-n-roll band called the *Mozarts*, who had rented a house. Among the six to eight of them there were several who were Bahá’ís. They attracted many young people who were interested in meeting these musicians in what was a veritable cultural wasteland of suburban living.

The *Mozarts* often played in a basement coffee house in the local YMCA when they did not have a gig in a club in Montreal. Their old van would sometimes have to be pushed down the street before the engine would finally turn over to get them and their equipment downtown.

Among the teenagers and young adults who hung out with the *Mozarts*, there were several who became Bahá’ís. Leslie Kerr was about 16 at the time and lived near Lucille’s home. Leslie and I became good friends as we studied the Bahá’í Writings together and then studied in the same college. Despite having lived, travelled, married, and had our children in different regions of the country, we have remained in touch over this half century. Like me, Leslie is now

a grandmother who lives in the Yukon, near her daughters and grandchildren.

When I mentioned that I was writing about Lucille, a few weeks later Leslie sent me this poignant note describing how she and Lucille continued to visit and see each other while I had married and left home:

*When she (Lucille) smiled the room lit up and filled with joy.  
When you (Suzanne) were in Africa (1972-73) we would read  
your letters together and feel better while missing you. She  
always welcomed me into your home so graciously and  
warmly not just in Pointe-Claire but also at Beaulac. She was  
so brave even when people made her feel like she was from  
Mars, being French Canadienne.<sup>62</sup>*

As one of only a handful of French-Canadian Bahá'ís at that time, Lucille encouraged further efforts to teach the French speaking population of Quebec as had been encouraged by Abdu'l-Bahá himself.

During this period, Lucille also joined some benevolent community organizations such as the *Carrefour des religions*, a Montreal inter-faith group facilitating talks about various faiths, encouraging discourse with people of diverse origins. She also worked with another Bahá'í who originally came from Russia, Valentina Tremblay, visiting prisoners. Lucille even invited one of them to spend a little time with our family when he was first released.

Around 1970 there were as many as nine adults who were Bahá'ís living in Pointe-Claire, most of whom were between the ages of 21 and 25. Nine adults were enough to form a Bahá'í local spiritual assembly, an administrative and consultative body elected annually, to guide community development and hold regular meetings. Several local teens and young adults from Pointe-Claire became Bahá'ís. Some of them, much like the members of the *Mozart* band who'd arrived earlier from Saskatoon, decided to rent an old house with other high-school friends who all wanted to move out of their parents' homes. Sharing a house seemed economical enough to make it

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<sup>62</sup> L.K., email 30 Sept. 2019

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possible, and the idea of living in a communal lifestyle was becoming more and more popular among youth in their teens and twenties throughout the 50s, 60s and 70s.

For several years Lucille served as a member of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Pointe-Claire along with several of these young people. She was also elected as either the secretary or the treasurer from year to year.

Lucille was deeply empathic in times of crisis and became a very dear helper in times of grief. One friend describes how, following the tragic death of her young son, Eric, in a bicycle accident in 1981, describes how she turned to Lucille for solace:

*... I called her (Lucille) one day in acute desperation and asked if I could come over to say prayers with her. 'Yes, of course! COME!'*

*We sat together, and, holding my hand, she recited the Long Healing Prayer.<sup>63</sup> <sup>64</sup> The peace that pervaded my soul was palpable, ... Your mother had healing in her hands. ... Her compassion enveloped me. Her blue eyes twinkled, she had a ready smile, ... I remember looking forward to all that would transpire because of the spirit of love that we all felt, and your mother was largely responsible – great energy, mature insight, no patience with nonsense! ...*

*Then, when her time with us was drawing to an end, I visited her in the hospital. She glowed with spirit, she was completely at peace, she reassured ME, and, smiling, said she would be seeing Eric!*

*My beloved Tante (aunt) Lucille.<sup>65</sup>*

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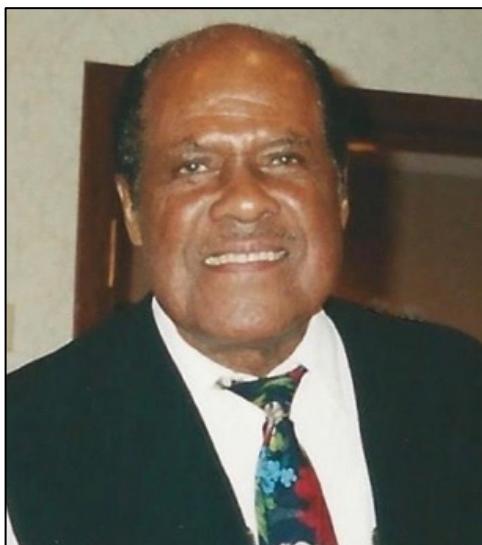
<sup>63</sup> [https://bahai.wikipedia.org/Long\\_Healing\\_Prayer](https://bahai.wikipedia.org/Long_Healing_Prayer)

<sup>64</sup> *The Long Healing Prayer* is a prayer written in Arabic by Bahá'u'lláh,  
<http://www.bahai-prayers.org/healing6.htm>

<sup>65</sup> H.N., email July 12, 2020

## Expanding Community of Friends

Another Bahá'í and dear friend was Raymond Flournoy (**Error! Reference source not found.**), a wonderful musician and composer. Raymond hosted firesides with a speaker every Friday evening, for almost 40 years. It was a welcoming place where people could find out about the Bahá'í Faith and meet people from diverse backgrounds. It was at Raymond's fireside that I first met my husband a half-century ago. Many friends, both young and old, spent Friday evenings in Raymond's living room listening to speakers and discussing relevant and usually interesting topics, rather than spending all our time in bars and clubs. Unbeknownst to our parents, we did occasionally visit them to hear some of the great jazz and rock musicians of that period.



*Figure 45: Raymond Flournoy, July 2002*

When Raymond passed away in 2015, he left among his papers a song that he and Lucille co-wrote<sup>66</sup>. Although it was probably never put to music, it is an expression of the deep friendships and creative projects which Lucille enjoyed through her involvement in Bahá'í community

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<sup>66</sup> This was provided to me by Ilona Sala Weinstein, found among Raymond's papers after his passing.

## A Light in All Our Lives

life. It represents the coming together of an Afro-American Canadian and a French-Canadian who both found hope and joy as members of this world-embracing community. The original (**Error! Reference source not found.**) is so faded that it is also transcribed below.

### PRAISE THE GLORY OF GOD (IT DOESN'T MATTER)

By. Lucille Maloney &  
Raymond Flournoy

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU LIVE OR DIE,  
IF YOU TRAVEL ON LAND OR THRU THE SKY,  
AS LONG AS YOU PRAISE THE GLORY OF GOD.  
IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU WIN OR LOSE,  
OR IF YOU'RE SAD AND HAVE THE BLUES,  
AS LONG AS YOU PRAISE THE GLORY OF GOD.

CHORUS  
THE GLORY, THE GLORY, THE GLORY, THE GLORY,  
PRAISE THE GLORY OF GOD.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOUR COLOR MAY BE,  
THE SOUL OF MAN IS ALWAYS FREE  
AS LONG AS YOU PRAISE THE GLORY OF GOD.  
IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE GREAT OR SMALL,  
YOU REACH THE TOP AND SUDDENLY FALL,  
AS LONG AS YOU PRAISE THE GLORY OF GOD.

(CHORUS)

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE RICH OR POOR,  
YOU CAN ENTER THRU THAT ETERNAL DOOR,  
AS LONG AS YOU PRAISE THE GLORY OF GOD.  
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHEN YOUR JOURNEY END,  
THE WORLDS OF GOD WILL JUST BEGIN,  
AS LONG AS YOU PRAISE THE GLORY OF GOD.

(CHORUS)

Alternate ending

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN,  
The CHILDREN OF GOD WILL WEAR A CROWN,  
AS LONG AS YOU PRAISE THE GLORY OF GOD.

Figure 46: Song by Lucille Maloney and Raymond Flournoy

**Praise the Glory of God**  
**(It Doesn't Matter)**  
*Lucille Maloney and Raymond Flournoy*

It doesn't matter if you live or die,  
If you travel on land or thru the sky,  
As long as you praise the Glory of God.  
It doesn't matter if you win or lose,  
Or if you're sad or have the blues,  
As long as you praise the Glory of God.

Chorus: The Glory, the Glory, the Glory, the Glory,  
Praise the Glory of God.

It doesn't matter what your color may be,  
The soul of man is always free,  
As long as you praise the Glory of God.  
It doesn't matter if you're great or small,  
You reach the top and suddenly fall,  
As long as you praise the Glory of God.

Chorus: The Glory, the Glory, the Glory, the Glory,  
Praise the Glory of God.

It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor,  
You can enter thru that eternal door,  
As long as you praise the Glory of God.  
It doesn't matter when your journey ends  
The worlds of God will just begin,  
As long as you praise the Glory of God.

Chorus  
The Glory, the Glory, the Glory, the Glory,  
Praise the Glory of God.

(alternate ending)  
It doesn't matter when the sun goes down, –  
The children of God will wear a crown,  
As long as you praise the Glory of God.

## A Light in All Our Lives

Lucille discovered that the administration of the Bahá'í community encourages and involves the participation of all its members for worship, for consultation, and for community service and development. Since the Bahá'í Faith has no clergy and no electioneering, its institutions are elected in a prayerful atmosphere at the local, national and international levels. Lucille soon found herself serving on several different administrative bodies, and later, as a delegate to the annual convention to consult and elect the members of the national governing body of the Bahá'ís of Canada (**Error! Reference source not found.**).



*Figure 47: Québec delegates and participants attending the 1974 Bahá'í National Convention: Standing, rear, left, Abdu'l-Rahim Yazdi, Hugh Adamson, Patrick Lapierre, Jean-Paul Léonard. Middle row, left, Molly Oliver, Lucille Maloney, Audrey Robarts, Hand of the Cause John Robarts, Dr. Abdu'l-Missagh Ghadirian, Aquateh Akako Vidah. Front row, Dr. Shapoor Javanmardi, Margot Léonard and Férial Ayyad.*

The Bahá'í Community grew throughout Quebec during the late 60s and into the next several decades, in urban and rural areas, through

new immigrants and new adherents from diverse backgrounds. As it did, so did its institutions and the activities of friends and families. For Lucille, this involved her serving on regional committees, although her involvement had to be balanced with her family's needs and that of her husband. Alban, like so many of his generation, had little interest in religion of any kind. For Alban, Catholicism was something he was born into and as such, it was the faith to which he had to adhere. Eventually Alban became more familiar with the social and spiritual teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and there grew a mutual respect between Lucille and Alban as to their individual choices of faith and practice.

There were several Bahá'í families from Iran who settled in the surrounding suburbs of Montreal such as: the Akhavan family in Beaconsfield; and the Homayoun family mentioned earlier. Over the 1970s and 80s many Bahá'í families of Canadian, American, European, Egyptian, and Persian backgrounds also settled in Pointe-Claire and the surrounding region: the Javanmardis, the Monajems, the Stees, the Skeaffs, and the Niderosts.

## **Lucille and Her Children**

Lucille had a meeting in Quebec City in November 1969 and brought me with her to experience my first flight in an airplane as a birthday gift. Several families moved to the region in the early 1970s: There were the Hatchers from the United States; the Finleys settled in nearby Cap Rouge and later moved to Pointe-Claire; also, the Zrudlo and Bos families. These newcomers attracted many new French-Canadians to investigate, study the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and many became Bahá'ís. Within a few years many French Canadians embraced and contributed greatly to this burgeoning community with more Quebec family names like Audet, Beaulieu, Belliveau, Bergeron, Breton, Cormier, Gagnon, Garçin, Lachance, Laliberté, Langlais, Larin, Léonard, Racine, Renaud, Robert, Saint-Amant, Saint-Onge, Sauvé, Tourigny, Tremblay, Turbide, Vigneault, Wright and so many more. There are now second and third generations of Bahá'ís in these families. Many have also married newly arrived immigrants from diverse backgrounds from as far off as Africa, India, Iran, China, and Mauritius.

## A Light in All Our Lives

Lucille was very encouraging and supportive of my own involvement in Bahá'í activities. At 16, I had the opportunity to be part of the first travel-teaching trip around a few regions of Quebec in the company of several other youth and three couples (the Garçin, Hatcher and Zrudlo families) with their young children who accompanied us over several weeks. Later we, the youth, continued to travel along the north shore of the St. Lawrence to Bay Comeau and then further north to Saguenay.

Lucille rarely wrote to me (except in the form of lists of chores I had to get done) but she did write to me before I set off for my first trip on my own with a core group of five other youth:

*Rawdon, June 28, 1970*

*So very dear Suzanne,*

*Heard from Linda [Tourigny], Anne-Diane [Belliveau], etc.  
that you were in Tracy. Hope you had a fine weekend and that  
you are all ready for your GREATEST TRIP yet!*

*Please call Mama.<sup>67</sup> I am so sorry I didn't call her before  
leaving.<sup>68</sup>*

*Write me here, my mail will be delivered at my door. Address:  
442 Grégoire. Take some 6-cent stamps with you.*

*As you are in the hands of God and under Bahá'u'lláh's  
shadow, I can't be worried about you. Whatever happens is  
God's will which is always the best in the end, for all who trust  
Him and obey His laws.*

*My inner being will accompany you and may talk to you  
sometimes, at least will try!*

*Oh! What a great privilege you have while only 16 and  
serving such a great Cause and at such a feverish time! May*

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<sup>67</sup> Lucille's mother who was living in an apartment on the corner of Cherrier and Parc-Lafontaine Avenue, which had also been her neighbourhood as a young woman.

<sup>68</sup> Lucille and Alban did not have a phone in their old farmhouse.

*you be patient if you see not the taking of the seeds you will spread; many might one day become giant trees!*

*Oh! Suzanne, witness how God's mercies and graces are pouring on us. How grateful we must be!*

*So much is going through my mind these days! You finishing [high]school and now going for the Cause, so few mothers know such peace and joy at this moment. Ya'Bahá'ul'Abha!*

*And here I am for 2 months in such a blessed spot of our own, next to the Bahá'í school! Ya'Bahá'ul'Abha! May I too in my limited way teach the Cause the whole summer and be a better wife and mother!*

*Suzanne, for 40 years I travelled from hell to paradise many times and hell was more often in sight, but these last 5 years I learned that hell has no bottom and paradise, no ceiling.*

*From now on Suzanne, you will be more and more flying on your own, may you reach higher realms and soar to where you belong. ...*

*God bless you all on this great proclamation venture. I will pray for you all daily!*

*Ya'Bahá'ul'Abha!*

*Fondly, Mother*

Lucille helped me, Suzanne, to get back to my schooling as I returned from this full summer of travels. Having just finished high school, Lucille drove me to enroll in a CÉGEP<sup>69</sup> in an ugly inner-city campus in a far-off and difficult to access old industrial building in Montreal. We were both repulsed by the campus and Lucille brought me to another CÉGEP, Vanier College, in a more semi-rural, suburban area and nearer to our home.

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<sup>69</sup> A CÉGEP is a publicly funded post-secondary and pre-university college, providing technical, academic, vocational or a mix of programs exclusive to the province of Quebec's education system.

## A Light in All Our Lives

Lucille was astonished to find that Vanier College was the very same grey-stone building that had been her own boarding and high-school convent (see photos Figure 11, Figure 12 and Figure 13). On that day, as we walked the halls, Lucille exclaimed how the Church had lost its influence while showing me the old religious frescos at the back of the stage in the concert hall. Before the semester ended the frescos had disappeared and the entire area renovated; the church became a library; none of the religious artifacts were kept except the cross on the church steeple, perhaps left there for reasons of cultural heritage and the prohibitive costs of such modifications.

At Vanier College I had an opportunity to study so much that had been banned in Catholic schools and was introduced to both ancient and modern thinkers, writers and philosophers who further enriched my life and world view. I finished my (pre-university) CÉGEP studies in the spring of 1972 and participated in summer activities with other young Bahá'ís in various regions of Québec. One of the other young people who was among these youth was my future husband, Julian Lebensold. He had decided to pioneer and move to Zaïre (now DRC). Before leaving he proposed, and we married in December 1972. We then left Montreal to begin our life together quite literally in the heart of Africa.

During this period the farmhouse near Beaulac became the weekend and summer cottage for the family. Lucille and Alban received many friends over the years. Their sons, Paul and Shawn, helped Alban repair and renovate various parts of the house, the sheds, and the barn.

Paul and Shawn became beekeepers and Paul went on to study entomology at McGill University. Before his studies he also became a helicopter pilot, working in the bush in northern Quebec on large hydro-electric projects. One day, the whole family was quite taken aback when Paul landed a helicopter in the driveway in front of the old farmhouse to drop in for lunch!

## Story of the Bear

One late summer in the mid-1970s, Paul and Shawn were having problems with the regular visits of a bear that was destroying their beehives. This is one story better told by Lucille's youngest son,

Shawn, the bear hunter, as he recounted it to his children, Sara and Matthew:

*When Paul and I were in beekeeping and producing honey to sell to the stores in Montreal and other little towns, we had many honeybee apiaries (beehives) up and around Rawdon. ... we would go and work the hives and check on them and as we were driving up to this one specific location, we came upon a young bear who took down several of our beehives. He was sitting pretty, just chewing away at all the honeycomb in the frames and it was quite interesting to watch him.*

*Paul and I decided that I would come back alone as Paul had some errands to do at home, so I went back to the farmhouse and got Grandpa Alban's rifle and went back to see if the bear would still be there. Sure enough, there he was, sitting pretty, still eating all the honeycomb he could ... and the bees were just swarming all around his face.*

*The bees did not seem to bother him one bit, as I am sure he was in heaven ... eating so much good honey. I knew that I had to get rid of the bear because he will come back and destroy more of the hives. So, I lined up my sights with Grandpa Alban's rifle and shot once.*

*Bang!!! Down went the bear, rolling several times down the embankment towards me. Then, he saw me standing beside all the other hives where I was getting stung many times, but mostly around my ankles and starting to feel very sore.*

*The bear got back up and ran after me really fast, as I am sure he didn't like my face or me being around. I had the rifle in my arms, and I wasn't sure if I should stay there and shoot him again since he was on the attack. So, I decided not to and turned around and ran for my car! I had to jump over a barbed wire and electrified fence. The electric fence meant to keep the cows inside the pasture.*

*The bear looked at me running to my car as I needed protection, since he was on the attack. Boy! Oh boy! Could he run fast! But Shawn was able to run pretty darn fast too LOL.*

## A Light in All Our Lives

*I don't think I ever ran so fast, especially with a rifle in my hands and jumping over barbed wire fences.*

*I lined my sights again on the bear and I would see a tree, and then the bear, and then the tree, and then the bear as he walked and then, I saw the bear and Bang!!! One more time, as he continued walking toward me. So, I wasn't sure if I had hit the tree so I kept lining up, waiting till I would see the bear between the trees.*

*It took four shots to get him down to protect us from the danger and protect the honeybees and their hives. By this time, I was very sore with all the bee stings round my ankles and could feel the swelling starting up. I walked up to the bear but, not too close because I thought maybe he would get up and get me.*

*He was just lying on the ground, and I could see he wasn't breathing, so I thought he was dead. I threw a stick at him to see if he would move but there was no movement.*

*All of a sudden, I could hear a quad motorcycle coming up in the pasture and the farmer who owns the property and when he reached where I was. He laughed and he said, "I've never seen anyone run so fast with a bear on their tail."*

*We had a good laugh together as I told him that I've never been so scared. Scared because when you have a bear chasing you, you almost think it's the end of your life! ...*

*...I went to the farmer's house ... phoned Paul and our father, Alban. They came back to see the bear and we got a nice picture with all of us (Paul, Esther, Shawn, Laurel, and Alban) with the bear. Then the farmer asked me what I planned to do with the bear. I asked him if he could bury the bear for me. He asked if he could keep the bear since his son wanted to skin it and make a bear skin rug ... I would imagine the farmer kept the meat and made some really good stews and steaks with it.*

*I had to sleep for many hours for about two days because the bee stings really knocked me out. Lucille took good care of me all this time!!!*

*Just toooooo much bee juice, LOL!*

*This is my story of the bear.*

*Thank you,*

*Shawn*

Shawn loved all things mechanical and motorized. Later, he became a machinist and after moving with his family to Calgary, he also became a very popular magician with the help of his two fine assistants, his children: Sara and Matthew.

### **Lucille's Travels (1975-1990)**

In March 1976 Lucille went on a pilgrimage, visiting Bahá'í Holy Places in the cities of Haifa and Akka (an ancient Roman and later a Crusader stronghold) over a period of nine days, in northern Israel.

At the time of the imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh in Akka (1868-1892), the entire region from Turkey to Egypt was under Ottoman rule. A number of these Bahá'í Holy Places are sites of Bahá'u'lláh's successive banishments and imprisonments. First, He was exiled from Persia to Bagdad (1852-1863); then to Constantinople (now named Istanbul), capital of the Ottoman Empire; then on to Adrianople (now named Erdine, 1864-1868); then to the ancient prison of Akka; and later, still under house arrest, in various houses in and around this prison-city until His Ascension (passing) in 1892.

Just across the Bay, on the slopes of Mount Carmel in the city of Haifa, Bahá'u'lláh and His son 'Abdu'l-Bahá, ensured the entombment of the sacred remains of the Bab<sup>70</sup>. Later the grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi was appointed the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. Shoghi Effendi continued, over several decades, to design and develop magnificent terraces and gardens surrounding this sacred mausoleum, the Shrine of the Báb, upon which an elegant marble superstructure designed by distinguished Montreal architect, William Sutherland Maxwell (Figure 48), and completed in 1953. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008 (Figure 49).

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<sup>70</sup> The Báb was the forerunner who prepared the way for Bahá'u'lláh. Furthermore, the Báb is regarded as an independent Manifestation of God.

## A Light in All Our Lives



Figure 48: William Maxwell's design for the Shrine of the Bab<sup>71</sup>

It is wondrous that over half a century after the visit of Abdu'l-Bahá to Montreal in 1912, his visit was a key to Lucille's discovery of the Bahá'í Faith in Montreal in 1967. A decade later, Lucille had the blessing and opportunity of visiting the Bahá'í holy places in Haifa and Akka.

Fortunately, Lucille left a small travel diary of her pilgrimage containing detailed descriptions, thoughts, and impressions of her experience. She also mentions how grateful she was that her son, Paul loaned her the money for her pilgrimage. She describes how she prayed for him and other members of the family and friends when she first entered the Shrine of the Bab on the slopes of the Mount Carmel in 1976.

The utter beauty and simplicity of the holy Bahá'í places were in sharp contrast to her subsequent visit to the somber and ancient holy sites in Jerusalem; where, like so many visitors and pilgrims, she had to negotiate aggressive attempts by street vendors selling all and sundry of religious paraphernalia. Upon her return, Lucille mentioned that she would have preferred to have visited these ancient places before the Bahá'í holy places rather than afterwards.

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<sup>71</sup> <https://brilliantstarmagazine.org/articles/william-sutherland-maxwell-1874-1952>



*Figure 49: The Shrine of the Báb<sup>72</sup>*

Lucille's travel diary ends with a note about an intriguing and unexpected narrative:

*I had promised [the wife of a friend], to bring back an orange from the Bahá'í holy gardens, because she was told that in the past a woman who, like herself, wanted to have a child was told by Abdu'l-Bahá to eat such an orange and she had a child.*

*So, at the last moment, the only oranges I had left with me from Bahji<sup>73</sup> were two small bitter ones. I brought them anyway.*

*On the plane, I had to fill up a declaration paper attesting I wasn't bringing back any seeds, vegetables, fruits, etc....*

*As I dared not lie, I declared my two oranges. Arriving in New-York, I was the first at the customs in line.*

*The officer said, "Where are the two oranges? You can't take them with you!"*

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<sup>72</sup> <https://media.bahai.org/detail/2237675/>

<sup>73</sup> Bahji is a mansion surrounded by gardens near the City of Akka where Bahá'u'lláh spent the last years of His life and where He is interred.

## A Light in All Our Lives

*I said, “These are very special, it is a promise I must fulfill because they are blessed, they are from the Holy Land.*

*He grinned and opened my suitcase and looked all over with me to find my oranges. We couldn’t find them!*

*He surely thought I was crazy, so did I! He let me go!*

*Arriving home, I found my oranges right on top in a plastic bag in which he had looked! I couldn’t believe it!*

*So, I gave one [to her]. Although it was bitter, she and [he] ate it!*

*They moved away to the U.S. but came back after a few months.*

*Here she was pregnant!*

*They had a daughter, born in 1977. She also had two sons. They lived in Pointe-Claire and later moved to Kirkland.*

The following year, in February 1977 Lucille attended an International Bahá’í Teaching Conference in Mexico, and in 1978 she and Alban visited Ireland, land of his ancestors. In 1979, Lucille visited Martinique, travelling and teaching with a handful of Bahá’ís on that island (Figure 50, Figure 51, Figure 52).

Family and Community Life (1968-1990)



*Figure 50: Lucille in Martinique, 1979*

## A Light in All Our Lives



*Figure 51: Lucille in Martinique, 1979*



*Figure 52: Lucille with friends in Martinique*

## **Lucille and Her Grandchildren (1983-1991)**

Following this period of travel, Alban and Lucille built a round cordwood house (Figure 53, Figure 54) next to their old farmhouse. Lucille designed this unusual round house, which Alban built himself when he retired from his work in 1985 at age 66. To ensure that her plans were sound she also consulted my husband's father, Fred Lebensold, an excellent architect of many major public buildings and private residences in Canada and abroad. He looked over her plans and explained how the concept of a central skylight was a very good idea.

Often Lucille and Alban would take our daughter Esther (b. 1983), their first grandchild, for several days where she reveled in their attention and the country atmosphere. Soon, there were five more grandchildren: I, Suzanne, had another child, Jonathan (b. 1986). My brother Paul and his wife Carmela Esguerra had Laurel and then Timothy. Later, our little brother, Shawn came back from Edmonton where he lived for almost a decade and married Frances Matichak in 1990. They lived in Montreal until 1997 and moved to Calgary with their first child, Sara. Later, in 1999, their son Matthew was born. So, each of Lucille's children had a daughter and a son. When Alban and Lucille saw each of us and each with two children, Lucille suggested that having six grandchildren was quite enough for them to be truly attentive grandparents.

Despite some health issues and living in Florida during the coldest Canadian winter months, Lucille and Alban spent what time they could caring for and loving their delightful grandchildren (Figure 55). Lucille and Alban sold their home in Pointe-Claire in 1986 and settled in what we all dubbed their "round house".

Lucille's influence on her grandchildren are so lovingly expressed in this brief introduction Esther, her eldest grandchild, made as an introduction to a film that she and Jordan Bighorn co-produced for the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada that was presented to the Canadian *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in June 2015<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> The film is called *The Path Home*, <https://vimeo.com/131765992>

## A Light in All Our Lives



Figure 53: Esther, almost 3, playing on the foundation of the round house, 1985.



*Figure 54: Installing the roof on the cordwood house, September 1985*

Esther recounts that:

*In the film we're about to see, many friends describe the role that their elders have had in the shaping of their character. When I was little, my grandmother, Lucille Sanche Maloney, would take me for long walks in the forest behind her home in Quebec. There was a clearing in the woods there, where she would stop and together, we would say prayers and share spiritual ideas. I learned from her that this connection to our Creator is at the core of who I am.*

*One summer, Grandmaman Lulu created signs for each path in the forest, each named for one of the grandchildren. Since I was the eldest, the main path, which connected the other paths, was named Chemin Esther (Esther's path). All my life, when I've drawn or painted, there is a path in there somehow. Growing up, it's been easy at times to believe that this path is about achievements and material possessions, and that it can be controlled. Creating this film, it was easy to think that a good film is created with the right lens or software, that we had to chase down that perfect shot.*

## A Light in All Our Lives

*The first day we arrived on Morley Reserve, outside of Calgary, I was so eager to film the mountains, to capture the way the wind moved the tall winter grass. ... By the end of that first trip to Morley, I realized there were worlds of spirit and insight that I had unintentionally left behind in that forest of my childhood.*

*What I'm learning is that in the end of course, we don't really make anything ourselves. We only allow what is already there to emerge. And when it does, it is unspeakably glorious and far greater than anything we might have imagined ourselves.*

*This film has been a fire for these notions I had of my own place in both a creative process and an awakening to my own place in the universe. In those moments, I've been led back to that forest. My grandmother's voice has been with me throughout this project. Tonight, I honour and thank each of you for welcoming me, just as I am, and I honour my grandmother as well.*

*Thank you for assisting me in finding my own path home.<sup>75</sup>*



Figure 55: Esther and Jonathan with Lucille, March 1987.

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<sup>75</sup> Presentation of the film *The Path Home: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation* commissioned by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, June 2015, Ottawa.

Lucille and Her Grandchildren (1983-1991)



*Figure 56: Lucille and Alban, circa 1988.*

A Light in All Our Lives



*Figure 57: Lucille Sanche Maloney August 1st, 1990.*

## Saying Goodbye (1991-1993)

Around 1991 Lucille calmly informed the members of her family she had breast cancer. We were devastated and did whatever we could to assist Lucille and Alban (Figure 56). Alban had had serious health issues a few years earlier, and it seemed that his treatments had at least kept its ravages at bay. Although they loved to live in the country, Lucille realized, that once again, it was time to make a change. At Lucille's request, we found suitable accommodation that would not be too far from the Lakeshore General Hospital in Pointe-Claire, a better choice than the hospital in the country which would have been an hour's drive from their home. Lucille and Alban moved into a seniors' residence in Pointe-Claire, a few blocks from the hospital.

Soon after arriving Lucille had to be hospitalized and despite efforts of family members and doctors to convince her to accept radiation therapy, she refused and clearly expressed her wishes to all and sundry. One day, Lucille explained to me that she had had a good life and she was so grateful to have had three healthy children and to have known her grandchildren. She did not see the need to try to extend her life while also living in pain and discomfort, especially since she had a deep faith and understanding of the assuring teachings of Bahá'u'lláh concerning the progress of the soul in the afterlife.

She felt assured and prepared for the next leg of her journey so those of us who could be with her during those last months tried to make her comfortable and happy. Lucille wanted to be at home, as we all do, but the family was unable to provide the level of care she needed at home and no palliative-care centres existed in the area at that time. During those several months in hospital Lucille received the visits of many dear friends and family who simply came to say goodbye. Her attitude is reflected in this passage from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

*The world is but a show, vain and empty, a mere nothing, bearing the semblance of reality. Set not your affections upon it. Break not the bond that uniteth you with your Creator... the world is like the vapor in a desert, which the thirsty dreameth to be water and striveth after it with all his might, until when he cometh unto it, he findeth it to be mere illusion. ...*

## A Light in All Our Lives

*O My servants! Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. You are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain.<sup>76</sup>*

There were many poignant moments for us all as we saw Lucille going through this devastating disease until she finally drew her last breath on October 13, 1993. Lucille often told me she never liked the month of November so it somehow seemed quite fitting that she left this world before she would have to face another.

Although a person of capacity and intelligence, Lucille was not interested in the limelight; she simply longed to be of service. She spent many days and evenings doing community work particularly in the translation of many texts from English into French. As in the case of so many others who have made, and continue to make, valuable contributions for the wellbeing of humankind, few knew how Lucille served her newly found Faith, her family, and her community. It was only after her passing that some members of her family realized how conscientious and discreet she was about her work. Decades after she passed, love and appreciation for Lucille are still expressed by family, friends, and colleagues. Even in the last weeks of her life she taught me, from her hospital bed, how to help my father settle her affairs.

Lucille always tried to make life easier for others. She directed me to ensure that her last wishes would be fulfilled, and basically planned and organized her own funeral. Only two members of her immediate family attended, while several were away or had predeceased her. These were her youngest sister Yolande, and her husband Alfonso Moneti, a former Roman Catholic priest, who expressed surprise that Lucille had so many friends. Unbeknownst to her own family, Lucille was deeply loved in the Bahá'í Community and over 100 friends

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<sup>76</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, CLIII. US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990 pocket-size edition.

attended her funeral. Over the last quarter century of her earthly life, she touched many lives with her loving-kindness.

Heather Niderost, author of *The Light World*, a lovely and inspiring book that came out of the tragic loss of her young son, spoke of Lucille as a source of comfort and compassion during those painful days of mourning. Heather later recounted how when they prayed together that Lucille “was a light in my life”.

Lucille’s family received many condolences such as this one from Will and Debbie van den Hoonard of New Brunswick stating:

*Our hearts go out to you when we learned of the death of Suzanne’s mother. She was indeed one of the earliest of the new generation of French Canadian Bahá’ís in the 1960s, and had a great influence on many Bahá’ís like myself, by opening up our eyes to that wonderful spirit of dedication and gentleness of character that she brought into the Faith. Many, many thanks in keeping us informed, with warmest love to you both, Will and Debbie. (Email, 29 Oct 93)*

Another friend, who Lucille loved and admired, was Violet States, an African-Canadian musician and teacher, who wrote to Lucille shortly before her passing:

*... I was so sorry to learn from Suzanne that you (Lucille) have been hospitalized. All who were present ... were equally saddened to hear of your confinement. Prayers were said and chanted for you and you can be assured that will be a daily commitment from all who know you. Keep a positive attitude and “hang in” there with God’s richest blessings to assist you! Love, Violet (no date)*

Another friend, Louise Mould, who was serving as librarian at the Bahá’í World Centre in Haifa, Israel when Lucille passed away, wrote:

*Dear Julian, thank you for letting me know. Please give my love and sympathy to Suzanne and tell her I will pray for the progress of her dear mother’s soul when I am next at Bahji [the final resting place of Bahá’u’lláh]. Lucille was such a*

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*warm and delightful person to be around. She will be missed  
in the community! Love, Louise (email dated 19 Oct 93)*

To this day, friends remind Julian and I of the affection they had for Lucille and cherish having known this lovely soul. We too often think of her, particularly now as we grow older and are deeply thankful to have known her and the community that surrounded her. And most of all, we are thankful that Lucille was a positive force especially in our children's lives, a light in all our lives.

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There are many dear friends, some of whom are authors and writers, who have encouraged me to refine and make this work more meaningful. Among them there are some who kindly shared their own memories and love for Lucille, which I've included in this book. One is Leslie Kerr, who quite unexpectedly offered a lovely narrative that told me that, in addition to being my neighbour and close friend, she and Lucille were quite close even after I left home. Heather Niderost, whose touching description of her own period of great sadness, reminded me of Lucille's compassion and care for her friends and neighbours. Bill Duquet, a dear old high-school friend, shared his memory of meeting Lucille when she recounted some of her own childhood experiences. My brother Shawn delighted in offering his "story of the bear" that occurred during his bee-keeping days at our parents' country home. Ilona Sala Weinstein encouraged me to persevere, as she herself has done in writing *Tending the Garden* about her uncle Emeric Sala and his wife, Rosemary. Emeric and Rosemary were cherished friends that Lucille loved and admired. As youth in Montreal in the 1920s and 30s, and later in various countries and continents, they encouraged the growth and development of Bahá'í communities.

Will van den Hoonaard, professor emeritus of sociology and author of several books including the most comprehensive history of the early Bahá'í Community of Canada, has been an inspiration ever since the day we met in the late 1960s. His beloved wife, Deborah Kestin van den Hoonaard, herself an author and sociologist, encouraged me as a young artist when she chose one of my works as a book cover for one of her first books. Heather Harvey Desson, who is currently writing about her remarkable aunt Winifred Harvey, offered some fine suggestions that made this memoir all the richer. There are others, who may not know it, but they too were an inspiration through their writing and their friendship.

I am thankful for the uplifting and creative environment of the diverse, fascinating and ever-growing Bahá'í Community which, despite the great trials of these very challenging times, is a source of great joy, hope and inspiration.

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This memoir could never have been completed without the unwavering support of Julian Levensold, my beloved husband, who has encouraged me and offered his technical assistance, as well as his astute analysis in editing, not to mention his fine skills as a graphic designer, who is the love of my life since our first meeting over 50 years ago.

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