

Texas dawnbreakers in the summer of 1969



We heard often from Lupita Ahangarzadeh, especially in 2005, when she was serving as an Auxiliary Board member, that she is a Bahá'í because of the efforts of the dawnbreaker Eugene Dornbrook in the summer of 1969 in Texas. She is presently serving on the Southern Regional Council. **Here is the rest of the story.**



In the summer of 1969, some youth in Texas arose to take the Message of Baha'u'llah from city to city. Touched by the spirit of love and sacrifice of their spiritual forefathers in Iran, they followed their example of detachment and went teaching.



Varqá, son and father
in chains



Badi in chain



King of Martyrs (left), and Beloved
of Martyrs (right). Two brothers

The Texan youth were reading how twelve-year old Rouhullah Varqá and his father gave their lives, Badi sacrificed himself for the Beloved, or the brothers known as the King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs, were martyred. The older brother was Mírzá Muhammad-Husayn, given the title Mahbúbu'sh-Shuhadá' (Beloved of Martyrs). His brother was Mírzá Muhammad-Hasan, given the title Sultánu'sh-Shuhada' (King of Martyrs). The latter was identified as one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh.

The two brothers were both natives of Isfahan, and were both rich and highly endowed with trading acumen. They were beheaded in the city of Isfahan in 1879 as a result of three persons: Mir Muhammad-Husayn, the Imám-Jum'ih of Isfahan; Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, another influential Muslim cleric of Isfahan; and Sultan-Mas'ud Mírzá, the son of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, who governed Isfahan during the time.

All these examples moved the Texan youth to form the dawnbreakers team, especially when they realized that they were the spiritual descendents of the dawnbreakers. They said they are going to claim their spiritual heritage. They took up many projects such as pioneering and travel teaching. For the sake of brevity, we will describe one of their efforts, travel-teaching to small unopened cities. They took their sleeping bags and clothes and hit the road.



Gene Dornbrook and Gary Dragna

I remember those days very well, for I was their chauffeur, driving them in my small VW. It was so small that tall Gene had to sit there with a bent head. I told him that was good for him, for it makes him humble. That Friday in July of 1969, we left Dallas at about five P.M., after work. Our team consisted of Gene Dornbrook, Ivan Pruett, Steve King, Gary Dragna, and Joe Burba. Gary just became a Bahá'í.



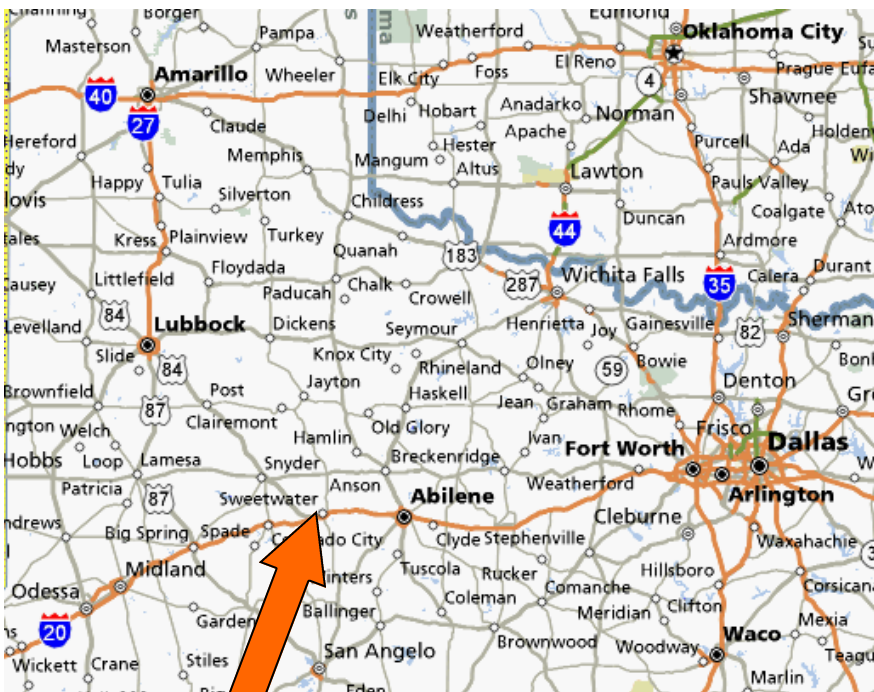
Left to right: Gary, Steve, Gene and Ivan, in Dallas



Left to right: Gary, Joe and Gene, in Abilene, TX



Gene and Vahid in Abilene, TX



Sweetwater, Texas

Steve and Ivan did not go with us that day. We drove to Abilene and dropped the first contingent of our youth at a hotel. The Abilene group were Joe and Gary, and their mission was to pray and look for waiting souls, as the Dawnbreakers in Iran did years before.

Next, Gene was dropped off in a park in Sweetwater with his sleeping bag in hand, not knowing that three waiting souls, by the name of Lupita, Belinda and Odilia, lived there.

Gene slept in the park that night and said 500 Remover of Difficulties and nine Tablets of Ahmad, and the next day walked all over Sweetwater, searching for waiting souls. He could not find any. He went to a barber shop in the hope of being able to talk to someone about the Faith, but all he got was a clean hair cut. I did not recognize him the next day when I was there to pick him up after my trip to Amarillo and Lubbock.



Belinda and son Kevan on the left, Lupita and Shoaleh Hedayati on the right, in the late 1970's.

Years later, Lupita and cousin Belinda went to Arlington from Sweetwater; they met and married two brothers Mansour and Jamal Ahangarzadeh and became Bahá'ís. They taught their friend Odilia Palma from Sweetwater, who became Bahá'í and pioneered to San Angelo.



Gene and Suellen, picture on the right, got married in August 1970 and went pioneering to Argentina. Last we knew, Gene was serving as Auxiliary Board member, (that was years ago). Hopefully they will see this story and contact us to bring things up-to-date. Specially we want to have the pictures of their children and possibly grandchildren.