

Herman Alvarado's Story, Part 1

In 1956, Herman Alvarado and his wife Helen had the good fortune to meet Meher Baba in San Francisco. The Alvarados were longtime Bay Area residents, friends to many local Baba lovers. Helen passed away on March 23, 2003. Herman has asked us to print this story in loving remembrance of her.

I will start when I first met my wife Helen on the Key System Train in Oakland. I was on a train packed with standing people when my eyes fell upon a beautiful girl and her older female companion holding onto straps overhead. I was entranced. For less than a second, as I gave her my seat, hundreds of pictures went through my mind, like in a dream or extra-sensory perception, indicating to me that she ought to be my wife. "Thank you," she said, and her older companion, who happened to be her auntie, told me, "Young man, thank you. I see we still have some gentlemen in this world."

Giving her my seat gave me the opportunity to talk to then, and somehow, I extracted a telephone number from them. To make matters short, within a year we got married and settled in San Francisco, where our two daughters were born.

Now I was a family man with a wife and two children to support. But jobs were very scarce and hard to find. Because I was a veteran, the employment office sent me to the Maritime Academy in Alameda to train as a marine engineer. There I met an acquaintance very much interested in mysticism. He invited me to attend a meeting of the Theosophical Society of Oakland. The subject of the



Baba gives His prasad to Helen Alvarado in San Francisco, 1956.

talk was a book on reincarnation by Madam Blavatsky. It was very intriguing for me, also very challenging, due to my traditional and devoted Catholic background. Their chants and meditations didn't satisfy me. Neither did the Rosicrucians' occult and white magic, nor the mantras of Vedanta. However, each one brought me closer to the ultimate goal of my life: meeting a perfect master. In my last visit to the Vedanta Society, the swami, speaking about the mysticism of Persia, lifted his hand and recited a poem by a great Sufi poet. Those words so enchanted me that I asked my friend what they meant. He didn't know, but he told me of a place on Sutter Street where Sufi meetings were held. "Let's go there," I said, and I insisted on paying for the taxi. It was a Sunday morning, and when we got there, the place was closed. On the door was a notice of the next meeting on Wednesday. I so was disappointed! My

thirsty and eager soul had to wait until then. On Wednesday, I rode the trolley car back again. Something was already pre-ordained when I entered the Sufi meeting hall. I saw a beautiful picture of Baba at about the same age as Jesus. Gazing at it, a vivid recollection of a fallen meteor came from deep within my mind. "No," I thought, "this can't be!"

Back in my teenage years, as a good Catholic, I attended the Rosary prayer one evening. It was a starry night, and I was on my way home. I asked Jesus why I could not have lived during His lifetime on earth. "Please, Jesus, give me a sign that I will see you someday, perhaps in heaven." Just at that moment I saw a falling star leaving a streak of light

N E W S L E T T E R

behind it. Could it have been just a coincidence, that falling star, which is a meteor entering our atmosphere? Or was it linked to my searching state of mind of the moment? When I saw Baba's picture, all my doubts disappeared and I knew that He was Jesus. With calm acceptance, I knew I had come home, my spiritual home.

Years later, Baba visited our meeting hall for the first time. Sitting in a chair in front of us, He told us that He was the same Christ we worshipped. For that reason, Murshida Duce put a ribbon across the chair, so no one else would ever sit on it.

During the next few years, my wife and I saw many more pictures of Baba, read His discourses and books and attended meetings in San Francisco, coming a long way from Antioch. Our group was small: my family, the Freys, the Dimpfls, the Smiths, the McDonalds, the Meads, Helen Webb, Don Stevens, Joseph and Kari Harb. We were the first group of Baba lovers in San Francisco.

Then came the great news that Baba was coming to San Francisco in 1956, and with great anticipation, we awaited His arrival. In those days, we were living in a humble apartment on Fulton Street, with a little garden in the back where my wife had planted some roses. One hot day she was sprinkling them with a watering can. One rose was looking down and, when she held it in her hands, she saw the beautiful face of Baba smiling at her. What an endearing compliment, I may say — even before Baba's arrival He visited Helen in the rose! A few days later, according to her recollections, He visited her in our apartment. "But how can that be?" you may ask. Well, let me explain. She wanted to ask Baba to be our guest at our small, plain apartment, but the place was not suitable for His comfort. He deserved and got much better accommodations somewhere else. In the meantime, His arrival was getting very close. To reconcile her feelings, Helen got some balloons and put them around a picture of Baba that my brother had painted for me. She wanted to use the picture and perform His arti, beginning about ten days prior to His arrival.

On the sixth day, her wishes were fulfilled when a Greyhound bus stopped in front of our apartment. The driver opened the door and two gentlemen stepped down. One opened a black umbrella to shade Baba when He stepped down. This was around nine in the morning, when the children were at school and Helen was alone. She looked through the window and saw Baba stride rapidly to the

stairs and, without opening the door, walk inside the corridor. He looked at the rooms and, with His hand, made the okay sign of approval. When He got to the kitchen, He also approved the lunch she was making for the children, cheese enchiladas. With His finger, He pointed at the hot chili peppers and gestured that He liked them. Then He turned around, waved goodbye and walked out. When Helen looked back at the window there wasn't anybody there and there wasn't a Greyhound bus. I cannot explain this.

Then came the day when we went to the airport to meet Baba in person. It was a frantic trip at great speed, because the people who were accompanying me were late in getting ready. One lady, the daughter of Murshida Martin, was crying, fearing a crash. I trusted Baba and did my best driving. We got to the airport just in time for us to park and meet Baba at the ramp, as the plane was landing. Baba was accompanied by Eruch, Meherjee, Don Stevens, Dr. Nilu and Joseph Harb. I gave my camera to somebody and went to embrace Baba. Joseph Harb introduced me to Him and He told Joseph, gesturing, that He had known me a

long time. Later, Don Stevens told me I almost broke Baba's ribs when I embraced Him, and from then on I was more gentle. Baba also embraced my wife and touched my daughters' heads.

We had a wonderful week in Baba's presence. Every day we went to the Holiday Inn on Van Ness Avenue to see Him or to go on various outings around the city. We saw the Golden Gate Bridge, Coit Tower and the redwood trees in Marin. We also had ten-minute interviews with Him. When our time came, He asked us where we lived, what kind of work I did, how long we had been married, etc. And then He asked me if I had any questions. I looked at Helen and, by her facial expression, I instantly knew what to ask. "Baba," I said, "I want to be married by you." He smiled and put His hands on top of each of our heads at the same time and we heard Eruch say, "Now you are married by God." We folded the palms of our hands together, looked into his "namas" (the master's glance) and walked away. That moment has remained in the back of my mind forever.

Another time, when our group went to Muir Woods in Marin County, we saw a trail with a creek leading to the inside of the park where a ranger was demonstrating the age of a Sequoia tree by the rings of a cut tree trunk. The center of the circle, like a bull's eye target, represented the time when the seed started germinating, around 1,000 years ago, at the time of the first Crusade. The second



Herman, Bhau Kalchuri and Helen hold the picture of Baba that was lovingly painted by Herman's brother, Crox Alvarado, in Mexico.

C A L E N D A R

Meetings are held Saturday nights at 7:30, doors open at 7 PM. Directions to the new center: From Hwy 80 in El Cerrito, take the Central exit east, toward the hills, cross San Pablo, go under the BART tracks to Richmond Ave. turn left, go a few blocks to Stockton (the first stop light), turn right at Stockton, go a couple of blocks, park on the street. The center is on the left side of the street, 6923 Stockton Ave. El Cerrito, CA.
Message Phone: (510) 525-4779

Dec. 4 - 5, Urban Sahavas with Dr. Digambar Gadekar

With great joy, we announce Dr. Digambar Gadekar's visit to the Bay Area from December 1 to December 10. Digambar's father was an early mandali member, traveling with Meher Baba when He was still speaking. Baba, along with His mandali, attended the wedding of Digambar's parents and, as a child, Digambar played on Baba's lap. He has attended Baba's darshan and Sahavas programs since 1943 and he sang bhajans before Baba as a member of the Poona Bhajan Mandali group.

Digambar attended the University of California in 1959 and 1960 and, while there, was befriended by Lud Dimpfl's family, often staying at their home in Kensington. He later became a professor at Baroda University for 29 years.

He has wonderful stories to tell, both of his father's life with Baba and of his own contact with the Ancient One.

Saturday, Dec. 4, we will meet at the El Cerrito Center from 11 AM - 9 PM, with lunch and dinner breaks. Sunday, we will meet at the Talbot's, 721 Crossbrook Drive, Moraga, from 11 - 5 PM. Bring potluck lunch.

Suggested donation: Full weekend (Sat and Sun), \$25 for adults, \$10 for ages 18 to 29. \$40 Maximum per family. Single day (Saturday or Sunday), \$15 for adults \$5 for ages 18 to 29. \$25 Maximum per family.

On **Dec. 8**, Digambar will speak in Petaluma at Hermann and Jeanette Loew's home. Call (707) 778-1195 for information. On **Dec. 10**, he will speak at Brian and Karen Drygas' home in San Jose. Call (408) 927-6500.

Dec. 11 - No meeting

Dec. 19, Sunday, 2-5:30 PM - A Holiday Social

A festive holiday social to celebrate the season's magic. The bookstore will be open. Please bring treats to share.

Jan. 8, 7:30 PM - How I Came to Baba

A sharing of the myriad ways Baba draws us Home.

Jan. 16, Sunday, 3-6 PM - Secrets of Sleep & Dreaming

A cozy afternoon get-together reading Baba's words about sleep and dreaming. Come and share your Baba dreams.

Jan 22, 7:30 PM - "A Singing To Meher Baba The Eternal Beloved" by Francis Brabazon - CD release party

This superb song cycle by Francis Brabazon was written by Francis for Beloved Baba's 74th Birthday, Feb 25th 1968 and presented to Him. Come and be a "Love Street Singer" before His door. Tonight we will sing and celebrate the release of this CD by by Rainy Day Archives.

Jan. 30, Sunday, - Observing Amartithi, 8:30 PM

On Amartithi we remember Meher Baba's 1969 departure from His physical body. We will have readings and a viewing of the interment film, followed by a silence from 10:30 to 10:45, to coordinate with Baba's lovers observing silence on Meherabad Hill in India.

Feb. 5 - 6, Urban Sahavas with Adele Wolkin

Adele Wolkin first heard of Meher Baba in the 1940s. She and her good friend Filis Frederick, both still in college, were invited to hear Baba's discourses via Princess Norina Matchabelli's "thought transmission" sessions in New York. They later were invited to live in New York with Baba's western women mandali.

Adele and Filis first met Meher Baba in Myrtle Beach in 1952. Baba called them "Filadele," indicating a lifelong friendship and partnership in spreading Baba's message. Adele had the privilege of caring for a few of His dear ones in their later years: first, Countess Nadine Tolstoy and, later, Norina Matchabelli.

Come and hear Adele's first-hand stories of her life with Meher Baba. We'll meet at our center on Saturday, Feb. 5 from 11 AM - 9 PM, then, on Sunday Feb. 6 at the Talbots' home from 11 AM - 4 PM. Potluck lunch Sunday. See the Dec. 4-5 Sahavas info. for suggested donation.

Feb. 12, 2-5 PM - Create Valentines For Baba

Make valentines and other art projects in an atmosphere of Baba's love. Materials are provided, but you're welcome to bring your favorite Baba image or art materials.

Feb. 20, Sunday, 12-5 PM - Baba's Birthday Party

We'll meet at the Masonic Lodge across the street from our center for lunch, entertainment, children's activities, bookstore, music and more. To volunteer to help with this event, call Kristi Marshall, (925) 352-5156.

Feb. 25, Friday - Happy 111th Birthday, Baba

The El Cerrito Center will be open from 6-9 PM for a potluck dinner and birthday celebration for our Beloved.

Feb. 27, Sunday - Women's Tea 2-5 PM

Come and enjoy tea with your sisters in Baba.

Meher Baba Center of Northern California, Inc.

President, Brian Drygas, *Vice President*, Laurie Brook, *Secretary*, Fred White, *Treasurer*, Cheryl La Rosa Longo

Board of Directors: Brian Drygas, Laurie Brook, Dawn Dolan, Ron Greenstein, Kristi Marshall, Pam Johnson, Katie Mink, Fred White, Janet White

Communications: Laurie Brook • *Newsletter*: Alexandra Cons, editor; Betty Lowman • *Website*: Priscilla Hazlewood, Christine Ozuna

Fundraising/Finance: Dawn Dolan • *Program/Meetings*: Kristi Marshall • *Program Planning*: Alisa Dreyfus • *Center Maintenance*: Fred White

Office Manager: Pam Johnson • *Bookstore*: Katie Mink • *Trustwalla*: Jack Mormon (P.O. Box 2288, Richmond, CA 94802-1288)

concentric ring represented about 100 years later, and so on, through many historical events: Columbus' voyage to America, the Declaration of Independence, the French Revolution, etc., until our present time. The ranger was trying to impress the audience with the age of the tree. When someone asked Baba what He thought of it, He raised his hand in the air, indicating He was much, much older than that. Later, Baba stopped and sat under a very large redwood tree, and we all gathered around Him.

Years later, when Aloba visited the Bay Area, he insisted that I take him to see the redwood trees in Muir Woods. By this time, I was not so sure which tree of the whole bunch along the trail was the special one Baba had sat under. I felt kind of embarrassed, with our group of twenty people waiting for my answer. I said to myself, "Please, Baba, let me know which tree it is." The asphalt walkway had a low picket fence to prevent visitors from trespassing into the forest. I got a sudden urge to jump the fence and, with my right arm over my head, touching a tree, I said to them, "This, I believe, is the tree." At that very moment, a branch broke off, falling by my side. Somebody said, "that must be the tree!" Of course, I was shaken a little when I jumped back into the walkway, and laughing I said to Baba in my mind, "Why don't you holler "Timber!" before you scare the dickens out of me?"

Part 2 of Herman's story will appear in our next newsletter.

NEW MEETING: BABA IN THE ARTS

All are invited to a once-a-month evening of conversation, stories, songs, dance, role-plays, improvisations and other sharing in Baba's presence. The El Cerrito Meher Baba Center is the location, but dates and times will change. Call Ben Leet at (510) 351-8259 for information.

FOR ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBER CHANGES:

e-mail amba42@yahoo.com or write or call:

Paul Christy 28 Domingo Ave. Apt.A,
Berkeley, CA 94705 (510) 525-4779



© AMBPPPCT

LOCAL MEETINGS

Lafayette - Sunday Afternoons

Monthly meeting at the home of Kirk and Marlene Allen. Please call to confirm. (925)-284-4066.

Los Gatos - Saturday Evenings - 8:00 PM

Arti, singing and readings at the home of Clint and Sharon Snyder. Call them at (408) 395-6865, or Betty Lowman at (650) 323-1900.

Petaluma - Sunday Mornings - 11:00 AM

Arti, readings and fellowship. Contact Hermann or Jeanette Loew at (707) 778-1195. Please call ahead.

Sacramento - Several Gatherings Each Month

Times and locations vary. Contact Mike and Jean Ross, (916) 359-2954 or Cheryl Johnson (559) 312-3751 for information. We have two websites: Monthly Study Group: www.premsay.com/MeherBaba
General Info: www.garlic.com/~cdjohnso/SacMeherBaba/

Check out our Web Site:

www.MeherBabaMeherBaba.org

See program information and much more.

THE TRUST

All who wish to share in the commitment laid down by Meher Baba through the Trust should contact Jack Mormon, P.O. Box 70383, Richmond, CA 94807-0383.

To receive e-mail updates from the Center, send an e-mail to Fred White: faledw@aol.com

MEHER BABA INFORMATION

For introductory information about Avatar Meher Baba, e-mail MeherBabal@aol.com, or write to P.O. Box 1101, Berkeley, CA 94701. See our online catalog of books and other materials at www.MeherBabalInformation.org.

MEHER BABA CENTER

of Northern California, Inc.
6923 Stockton Avenue
El Cerrito, California 94530

Address Correction Requested

Non-Profit U.S.
Postage Paid
El Cerrito, CA
Permit No.186