

This letter of Gayle Woolson dated October 16, 1998 addressed to the Bahá'í Regional Council For The Central States, is included for the "Time Capsule" because it describes the instantaneous receptivity of Mrs. Marie Beals and her immediate acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith, thus becoming the historic first Bahá'í of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in November of 1938.

715 Mulford St., #3
Evanston, Illinois 60202
October 16, 1998

Bahá'í Regional Council For The Central States
Mrs. Lynn Wieties, Secretary
11100 Timberline Drive
Rolla, Missouri 65401

Beloved Bahá'í Friends,

With deepest heartfelt gratitude I express my most loving appreciation for your very gracious kindness in sending me a beautiful bouquet of flowers on the occasion of my recent visit to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the introduction of the Faith in that city in 1938. My heart was deeply touched by such a holy and inspirational expression of your good wishes and love. My spirit soared with joyful excitement and awe at the beauty and spirituality of such a meaningful gesture and reflection of the unique bond that Bahá'u'lláh has created among the believers and the Institutions of the Faith.

The events of the commemoration were wonderfully planned and it was a very happy and enthusiastic occasion, from my arrival on October 9th until my departure on the 12th -- almost four full days of activities. I felt like I was among a community of angels basking in all their love, kindness and hospitality. You will receive a detailed report from them.

It was very gratifying to me that the program of events included a visit to the grave site of the first believer of Cedar Rapids, Mrs. Marie Beals. The memory of the rapidity and eagerness of her acceptance of the Faith will always be astonishing to me. Briefly, the story is this. The National Teaching Committee asked me to go to Cedar Rapids where no teaching work had yet been done. The Guardian had told the North American believers -- among his wise counsels for our teaching activities -- to associate with organizations where there would be a possibility of finding seekers. One of my first actions after arriving in November of 1938 was to attend a lecture at the Unity conference center. After the lecture, as I was walking out with the rest of the audience, there was a lady walking next to me. In an effort to start a conversation with her, I mentioned that I had come to Cedar Rapids to convey the Message of a new Messenger of God. She immediately caught on fire and asked me eagerly: "Where is He?" She expressed this with such enthusiasm that it seemed she was ready to take the first plane to wherever He was. This opened the door for explanations and she accepted immediately. Those memorable words: "Where is He?" will always be associated with her. She attended the forthcoming National Convention at the House of Worship in 1939. She had a beautiful soprano voice. Of her own initiative, she contacted the proper person to offer to present a song. She performed at the opening of one of the Convention sessions in Foundation Hall. The upstairs auditorium had not yet been completed. The sweetness and beauty of her voice thrilled the audience.

Bruce Koerber, a member of the Spiritual Assembly of Cedar Rapids, represented the Assembly in making arrangements for my visit. The efficiency of his work is greatly appreciated. He accompanied me in all of the activities. His assistance was invaluable. In addition to being a member of the Assembly, he is an Assistant to the Auxiliary Board.

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for the Central States

The activities extended to another town -- Cedar Falls -- about a one-hour drive from Cedar Rapids. That is where a demonstration was held to show how to help children memorize Bahá'í speeches. The project will continue on a joint basis starting with their seven children.

Again, my sincerest thanks for the flowers and your prayers. They brought your exalted spirit near to us, conveying joy and a sense of fortification to our efforts.

With warmest loving greetings,

Gayle Woolson
Gayle Woolson

cc: National Spiritual Assembly of the
Bahá'ís of the United States

Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Evanston, Illinois
Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Cedar Rapids, Iowa