

Catherine's Early and Formative Years: England and Toronto (1932-1950)

Her British-Canadian Ancestry and Privileged Family Background⁴

Before narrating Catherine Heward Huxtable's life with Cliff, I shall set out her family background. This information is worthy of mention for two reasons: first, it will be of historical interest to some readers. This material provides a larger picture that situates Catherine's life within a social context; second, the fact that a woman in a wheelchair willingly abandoned the protected and affluent lifestyle that she knew in Toronto, with its conveniently located medical services, for the formidable challenges of the pioneering field, is evidence, not only of her strong spirit of courage and independence, but also of complete dedication to her chosen Faith.

Although it was Catherine Huxtable's fate to have been diagnosed in childhood with a type of muscular dystrophy that was expected to limit her lifespan to about twenty years, she was fortunate to have been born into affluence. Catherine's care was uppermost in her parents' mind. Their upper-class status allowed the Hewards to provide her with the best care and medical attention that was available at the time. Her Canadian father, Lieutenant-Colonel Stephen A. Heward, and Mrs. Helen Bury Heward, her English mother, were able to afford the services of a Scottish cook, long retained by the Hewards, who also looked after Catherine's care requirements. When Catherine was a child and young teenager, this task was also shouldered by her elder sister, Julia Wynne. When Julia married the Orillia radiologist, Dr. James Norman Harvie (1920–1979), whose father had been the town doctor, the care she had provided was supplied in turn by a Norwegian lady of reputable character.

Catherine's father, Stephen Augustus Heward (1868–1958), was educated in Switzerland, England and Toronto. His first profession was that of architect, but in 1897, after opening an office in Toronto, he abandoned this occupation sometime after 1900. He chose instead a military career.⁵ The Hewards were once prominent in Orillia, a town eighty-three miles (133 km.) north of Toronto,

where they owned Heward's Point, on the southwest shore of Lake Couchiching. It was there that they enjoyed their summer home, "Edinswold," where they were neighbors of the famous Canadian humorist, writer and political scientist, Stephen Leacock, to whom the Hewards had sold an adjacent piece of land on the eastern side of their property. Sometime in the pre-1840 history of Upper Canada, today's Province of Ontario, the Hewards owned a huge tract of land, including what is now part of western Toronto. It extended ninety miles (145 km.) north to Lake Couchiching.

Colonel Heward's ancestors had been members of the influential and wealthy Family Compact, a group of male elites of British descent who, despite the name, were unrelated. They formed an oligarchy, a Tory clique that controlled the political, religious, judicial and economic life of Upper Canada from circa 1810–1840. Their power dissolved after the rebellions of 1837 in Upper and Lower Canada (Ontario and Quebec). A prosperous Loyalist family from New England, the Hewards had fled the rebellious American colonies and moved to Toronto and Montreal, taking their family fortune with them. Catherine's mother Helen was reported to have descended from a de Rudyerd, a prominent knight who fought at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The Burys acquired their wealth through land holdings. Their assets were maintained in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through banking in northern England and real estate development around Branksome near Bournemouth, the resort town on the southwest coast of England.

Birth in Charlwood, Surrey, Childhood and Youth in Toronto (1932–1949)⁶

Catherine Heward was born on January 6, 1932, at Charlwood House, a Tudor style home in the small village of Charlwood, Surrey, one of the greenest and most affluent home counties in England. Located on the southwest border of greater London, even today Surrey still ranks high for its choice quality of English life. After serving as an artillery captain in World War I, Captain Heward returned to Canada and was appointed commander and Lieutenant-Colonel of the Halifax artillery. Circa 1930, Colonel Heward retired to the gentleman's life

in Charlwood where Catherine was born in 1932, when he was sixty-four years old. Anticipating World War II in Europe, and with estates to settle in Canada, the Colonel and Helen Heward returned to Toronto in 1939, when Catherine was seven years old.

It would have helped to complete this narrative to have known something of Catherine's personality in childhood, but no one from her original family is still living. Only one story has survived; it was transmitted to me by Cliff Huxtable: "She told me she had been very willful as a baby. One day in England, the family had left her in the pram while they walked off a little way. She was mad as hops, screamed and cried and shook the very substantial pram until she had knocked it over and fell out. I am very pleased she had later developed spiritually. Catherine could be very determined in the nicest way."⁷

Catherine received her primary education at Havergal College (Anglican), a private school for girls and young women located in the Lawrence Park area of midtown Toronto. Havergal College, despite the name for a post-secondary institution, accepted junior students. Catherine entered Havergal at the age of seven, and followed through until her graduation from the eighth grade in 1945. Secondary education followed at Bishop Strachan School for girls (Anglican), one of Canada's top private schools, in what was then still known as Toronto's Forest Hill Village. The curriculum at both schools included not only the usual tuition in academics, but also a program in music and amateur dramatics. Her love of the arts was to remain strong throughout her life. While she could walk, Catherine had a normal social life, but faced with steadily worsening health, she was forced to abandon formal schooling during her teenaged years.

Her Rejection of Class Distinction and Other Forms of Prejudice

Although Catherine Heward accepted her privileged family background, she rejected any notion of class distinction that blighted the attitude of some of her parents' generation. In her eyes, her socio-economic background was of little consequence to her personal identity and character formation. Because she was an egalitarian in her view of social class, and unlike her class-conscious parents,

she rejected any barrier that stood in the way of anyone who sought her company. In today's parlance, Catherine was fully a "people person." Indeed, she made no secret of the fact that she loved people. Her open view of society was to facilitate later her acceptance of the Bahá'í teachings, with their progressive stance on social and gender equality, and the condemnation of any form of racial, religious or class prejudice. But it was especially the answers she found to life's great questions, both the imponderables and the known, that attracted her to the Bahá'í teachings.

Diagnosis of Muscular Dystrophy: The Heward Family Home, 7 Clarendon Crescent, Toronto

Catherine Heward grew up in a large, three-story house at 7 Clarendon Crescent, a short secluded street on the escarpment just south of Forest Hill Village, overlooking the Nordheimer Ravine and lower Toronto. For easy access, Catherine's room was located immediately to the left on the main floor when one entered the house. A beautiful magnolia tree once stood in the back yard, but the Heward property has since gone the way of "progress," replaced today by an apartment block. In 1941, when she was nine years old, Catherine almost succumbed to a near fatal attack of scarlet fever.⁸ After recovering from the serious illness, the young girl was observed to be falling frequently. She tired easily, had a poor sense of balance, and unlike other children, she was unable to run. Consultations with doctors followed. When she was ten years old, during a visit to their summer home in Orillia, the doctors diagnosed a type of muscular dystrophy that usually strikes male children. Mrs. Heward hid her grief following the medical consultation that day; she did not attempt to explain anything to her child about her illness in the months that followed. Only later did Catherine learn the name of the disease that was slowly claiming her body. Between the ages of ten and fifteen, her back, arm and leg muscles gradually weakened, a degenerative condition that continued for the rest of her natural life. As her disease progressed, her social world necessarily became more restricted. She became dependent upon her parents, sister and friends for outings and receptions, and they did their best to keep Catherine connected to the outside world.

Her Childhood Friend Madeleine Ashlin Davis, Beloved “Stouge”

During her childhood years, and throughout the rest of her life, Catherine maintained the closest sisterly friendship with a beloved classmate who also went to Havergal, Madeleine Ashlin, later Davis. The schoolgirls met when Catherine was eight years old: they became the greatest of friends and confidants. Like Catherine, Madeleine came from a privileged background. She was the granddaughter of Chief Justice Francis Alexander Anglin, the first Chief Justice appointed after Canadian confederation in 1867.⁹ Catherine and Madeleine's playful sense of humor was evident early on in their friendship. The two girls jokingly called one another “stouge.” (Madeleine's spelling). Between them, Mrs. Heward became “Mrs. Stouge” and Colonel Heward was “Colonel Stouge.” The nickname for Catherine's parents was probably her way of finding some relief from the strict protocols and formalities that regulated the British–Canadian household in which she grew up. Madeleine's father sported a monocle, which contributed to his air of pomposity, but despite his consciously cultivated British–Canadian identity, he was approachable and friendly.¹⁰

Her Battle with the Wheelchair, Withdrawal from School, Madeleine Ashlin's Departure for Brazil

By age fifteen Catherine was forced into a wheelchair, and although she fought back for two more years to avoid its regular use, it was a losing battle. She was horrified at the prospect of such a restricted life: “At first I used a wheelchair only when I was alone. Then I conquered my horror of being a cripple,” she recounted in a magazine interview when she was twenty-one years old. (The word “cripple,” pejorative today, was in common usage in the 1950s.) Catherine had not only horror to overcome, but feelings of self-pity. In the same interview, she declared: “I don't feel sorry for myself now. All people have their problems.”¹¹ Until the end of her life, although she was weak in her upper body, Catherine was able to feed herself, but she needed both hands to drink a cup of tea. She was right-handed, and when she wanted to shake hands, she used the left hand to support the right arm.¹² The gradual invasion of muscular dystrophy, although it is generally not painful, and does not affect the mind, leaves the patient

progressively debilitated; everyday living becomes a struggle.

Catherine's forced withdrawal from Bishop Strachan School at age seventeen (1949), and Madeleine Ashlin's move to Brazil (1950) after she graduated from Havergal College, where Madeleine had been boarding, had a temporary depressing effect on Catherine. Years before Madeleine's father had secured a position with the Brazilian Traction Light and Power Company in Rio de Janeiro and later São Paulo. It was time for Madeleine to join her father.¹³ Catherine's withdrawal from school did not, however, signal an abrupt end to social intercourse. When her health permitted, through the care of Mrs. Heward and her older sister Julia, and with a small circle of close friends, Catherine's cultural and artistic interests were nourished. She enjoyed occasional lectures, the art gallery, the theatre, concerts, movies, and ballets. She lived not far from the Royal Ontario Museum, to which the Hewards were generous patrons. It was there that George Spendlove, one of the outstanding Bahá'í teachers of his generation, served as curator. As associate professor, he also taught archaeology at the University of Toronto. (More will be written in chapter 3 of George Spendlove's key contribution to Catherine Heward's and Cliff Huxtable's spiritual awakening and his outstanding contribution to the Toronto Bahá'í community of his generation.)

Epiphany in England: The Awakening to Life, the Arts, and the Beauty of Trees (1949)

After withdrawing from school, Catherine made a consolation sea-voyage to England with her mother and sister Julia. She was seventeen years old, an age when an adolescent's self-identity is still in the process of flux and formation. It turned out to be a trip that was to have a significant impact on Catherine's developing self-esteem and personal identity formation. The trip to England gave fresh wings to her sagging spirits. Catherine's outlook on life was invigorated and strengthened during the trip to her mother's native land, where she met her English relatives and visited London.

In England, Catherine came to realize that her life was far from over. Just as significantly, she was able to perceive that the people who passed through her life did not look down on her as being a pitiable "cripple". Instead, with a growing

sense of self-confidence, she observed that people were actually attracted to her—and with good reason. One of her close friends commented on her beautiful, luminous face, sparkling brown eyes, “gorgeous” auburn hair, and the radiant smile that would fill a room.¹⁴ (References to her radiant smile were frequent among interviewees.) This realization was significant because she used to feel that being confined to a wheelchair constituted a barrier to making new acquaintances. It was a false perception that she gradually dispelled over the ensuing years. After her marriage to Clifford Huxtable in 1955, and by the time that they had pioneered to the Gulf Islands, British Columbia, in October, 1959, she came to realize that being in a wheelchair actually predisposed strangers to be drawn to her.¹⁵

Catherine greatly loved both classical and popular music, but being the artist and craftsperson that she was, she was naturally strongly visual. During the 1949 trip to England, her sense of perception grew suddenly sharper. This phenomenon was probably due to the relief that her new outlook on life afforded, with its enhanced sense of self-esteem. More significantly, we can also view this development as a reflection of an expanding spiritual consciousness that manifested itself in a more acute awareness of the ambient world. In this case, Catherine became suddenly more conscious of one of the most ubiquitous objects in nature—trees. Nor was it her visual sense alone that sharpened. Her appreciation of Beethoven's music and Brahms's First Symphony began at this same time, although she also enjoyed popular music and jazz. She liked Benny Goodman, “the King of Swing,” and his sextet. The 1948 Capitol Records catchy tune, “He's got a fine brown frame,” sung and played by jazz pianist and songstress, Nellie Lutcher, was one of her favorites.

In one of her letters to Cliff's close friend and fellow-student Michael Rochester, letters that will be explored more fully in chapter 4, Catherine explained the phenomenon of increased awareness that she suddenly experienced in England. On September 8, 1952, she wrote:

It was about three years ago, at about this time of year, that my eyes were first opened to the astonishing beauty of trees. Before that, although I had always been a great nature lover,

trees in general were something I could never appreciate. Then I went to England for a trip, and I began to live. At the same time, while there, Beethoven really began to mean something to me, and I suddenly found myself looking at the English trees—and almost gasping at their variety and shape and colour, etc. etc. And, wonder of wonders, when I returned across the ocean, I discovered that Canadian trees were beautiful too!! But each year when autumn rolls around again, I ache to see once more the New Forest and London's Hyde Park, in yellow-leafed misty splendour. [underlining in original]

Catherine Heward's Friendship With Ann Kerr Linden

Included in the circle of Catherine's teenaged friends was Ann Kerr Linden, née Cartwright.¹⁶ Like the other testimonials presented in this book, Ann bore witness to Catherine's authentic, admirable spirituality. Now well into her senior years, Ann is at this writing (2015) still working as a psychiatric social worker in Toronto. Her recollections are particularly pertinent because, like Pamela Ball Webster, who met Catherine in late 1949 when Catherine was seventeen years old, Ann is one of the few friends still living who knew Catherine the year before she met Cliff Huxtable in the fall of 1950. (We will return to Catherine's friendship with Pamela in chapter 3.)

Prompted by a kindness to widen Catherine's circle of friends, Pamela introduced Ann to Catherine. Catherine and Ann began to correspond. The two young women met at the Heward's large three-story home under the watchful eye of Mrs. Heward. Ann felt that Mrs. Heward did not entirely approve of her friendship with Catherine, an impression that Catherine later confirmed, but no attempt was made by the Hewards to interfere. Cliff Huxtable later recalled that the Hewards "had the good qualities of their class, but Catherine was free of its limitations."¹⁷

As their friendship developed, Catherine and Ann grew close enough that they spoke intimately on life-issues. Ann recalled that Catherine impressed her as a "very sensitive, introverted young woman, and you felt the presence of a strong

interior life.” Despite the restrictions on her mobility that curtailed to some extent her social life, Ann confirmed that Catherine was far from being a recluse. The young Miss Heward, despite her contemplative nature, was vitally interested in people. Ann remarked on Catherine's strong interest in the arts, including film and music. Catherine's cousin, the actor Wey Robinson, and film-maker Don Owen, who later produced the National Film Board of Canada's first successful full-length feature, *Nobody Waved Goodbye* (1964), figured among her friends and acquaintances. Don Owen was a member of the youth group at First Unitarian Toronto that Catherine later joined through Pamela Webster.

Ann felt sufficiently at ease during one conversation to ask Catherine how she was able to cope with the severe limitations imposed by muscular dystrophy. Catherine responded that listening to a Beethoven string quartet, and watching Hollywood musicals at the cinema, gave her an exhilarating feeling of liberation, and allowed her to participate vicariously in the activities of the able-bodied. What Catherine most wanted to do was to dance, a desire that was realized during a singular, extraordinary visitation with Cliff on the third evening following her death on St. Helena Island. (See chapter 10). Like most other women of her generation, Ann reported that Catherine was interested in future prospects: “She was very beautiful and men found her attractive. She dated occasionally, but this was not unusual. Most of us dated in those days because we were naturally interested in marriage.”

Her Artistic Petit Point

Catherine had hoped to earn her livelihood through her artistic ability. Weston Huxtable, Catherine's brother-in-law, wrote that after leaving school, Catherine “enrolled in a commercial art course but wasn't able to finish it because her arms were too weak to draw anywhere but at a desk, depriving her of the freedom of movement she felt essential for an artist.”¹⁸ Although the Hewards were sufficiently wealthy to have relieved Catherine of the need to earn a living, she insisted on being financially independent. Not long after she was forced to abandon her commercial art course, Catherine found employment through one of the handicrafts: petit point or needlework. As the first of their “physically

handicapped” employees, she was able to earn a limited income by working for Marina Creations, “specialists in exquisite luxuries such as hand-made jeweled gloves, scarves and petit point.” Catherine also produced finely delicate pictures, evening bags and earrings in the miniature craft.¹⁹ Pamela Webster once observed Catherine painting in miniature. She was astonished by her ability to paint using only one eyelash that was affixed to a small implement!²⁰ Despite muscular dystrophy, her fine motor skills were highly developed. With the money she earned and saved, Catherine was eventually able to purchase a Ford Prefect car, imported from the United Kingdom.²¹

The Testimony of Ann Kerr Linden: “Her Faith was Palpable.”

About a decade after their meeting, when Ann and her Danish husband Sven Kerr had settled in West Vancouver, the Huxtables motored west from Regina to stay with the Kerrs during the Huxtables’ summer vacation in 1958. When they were on their way to settle in the Gulf Islands the following year, the Huxtables were received again by the Kerrs. Ann was finely attuned to the quality of Catherine’s faith. In a telephone interview on April 8, 2014, she gave the author a succinct appreciation of what she felt in Catherine’s presence: “Her faith was palpable. She didn’t have to say anything, but you felt it, although people who were meeting her for the first time may not have been initially aware of what it was they were feeling. The quality and strength of her faith increased as time went on. It was real. There was a radiance. Her faith developed through her deep suffering and her reliance on prayer. You could feel that she was a person who had suffered intensely. She was at times in despair about what she was facing, and she experienced fear, frustration and worry, but she was not sunk by it. She was connected to God.”

“My Calamity is My Providence”: Catherine’s and Cliff’s Respective Searches for Meaning

“O SON OF MAN! My calamity is My providence,
outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and

mercy. Hasten thereunto that thou mayest become an eternal light and an immortal spirit. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it." Bahá'u'lláh

The Diagnosis of Muscular Dystrophy

Both Catherine and Cliff had been visited by traumatic life events that would eventually lead them to the Bahá'í Faith, and to unite them in marriage. Their common spiritual search was driven by a "desperate need to find reality."²² Catherine's traumatic life event was, of course, the diagnosis of muscular dystrophy. As we have seen above, Catherine initially found it unbearable to realize that her physical disability would shorten her life drastically.²³ She eventually learned that the doctors had estimated her lifespan at twenty years, a prognosis that turned out to be fifteen years short of the mark. Being a sensitive soul who was inclined to a strong interior life, Catherine began to seek spiritual comfort, courage and empowerment to help her face disability and premature death. That search included especially finding some deeper significance to her life-situation. I emphasize the truth-and-empowerment motivation of Catherine's search. If it were comfort alone that she were seeking, she could have found it in any number of religions. Catherine found the Bahá'í spiritual philosophy on facing tests and difficulties, life's challenges and learning experiences, to be particularly helpful to someone in her situation.²⁴

Although she became a Unitarian in 1950, when she was eighteen years old, within the next two years Catherine became dissatisfied with the lack of spiritual substance that she found in the teachings of the Unitarian Church, despite its progressive belief in social justice. In a church that admits in the same congregation, agnostics, atheists and theists, she found the teachings of the church too intellectually dry for her personal brand of spirituality. Not all Unitarians believed in the soul or the afterlife, whereas Miss Heward was a strong theist who believed in an immortal human essence. Her life situation impelled her to find answers to such profound questions as the purpose of life, the existence of the soul and the afterlife, and the meaning of suffering. Despite its promotion of the independent search for truth, a belief that is shared with Bahá'ís, she was not able to find in

Universalist Unitarianism any personally significant spiritual philosophy for one who was facing early death. One Unitarian even suggested to her that death had the practical effect of “making room for others.” Although this remark was not intended to be malicious, it discouraged Catherine’s sensitive spirit.²⁵

Cliff and the Near-Fatal Accident in East Toronto

While Catherine was coming to grips with the challenging circumstances confronting her, Cliff was dealing with the aftermath of a weighty test of his own—a serious accident that he had unintentionally caused. On August 17, 1949, when Cliff was sixteen years old, he found summer employment in a small crew of Ontario Hydro workers whose job it was to maintain the base of cedar poles that carried the main power lines. One summer afternoon, the crew’s work schedule had taken them to east Toronto, to the north side of the main highway that ran eastward to Oshawa and Kingston. They came upon a highway bridge spanning a wide, deep ravine with a narrow stream running through it. The power line left the highway, ran down into the ravine and up again to join the road. Cliff and his co-worker Russ followed the line down into the ravine. After completing their task, they climbed back up the steep slope to continue their maintenance-work along the highway. Since the two young men were working well ahead of their follow-up crew, they stopped to enjoy the view. They were about one hundred feet directly above the stream.

In a relaxed moment, Cliff picked up a smooth, round rock and said to Russ: “I bet I can get this rock into that stream.” Before throwing the rock, Cliff looked carefully along and down the slope. He had a clear view to the edge of the stream; it was mostly bare ground, covered with some scattered, stunted shrubs. Satisfied that no one was below, he stepped back, then moved forward to launch the rock and followed through to watch it land. The rock fell short of the stream. Cliff could not have known that, invisible from above, an eight-year-old boy had been hiding near the edge of the stream as he played “cowboys and Indians.” As seemingly impossible as were the chances, the stone struck the boy on the back of the head. As the boy’s hysterical mother and others rushed to the scene, Cliff

plunged down the bank feet first. Cliff took the wheel of the mother's 1936 Plymouth and sped up the dirt road leading to the top of the steep slope. Reaching the highway, he drove as fast as he could to a nearby doctor's office. The doctor followed Cliff back to the ravine in his own car, where the grim-faced physician bandaged the boy's head. They sped away to the Emergency department at the Toronto East General Hospital, where the doctors performed emergency surgery. Fortunately, the lad survived the operation, but several other operations became necessary to restore his health. Much later the doctors decided to insert a metal plate to fortify the skull.

On that terrible evening, Cliff desperately wanted to speak to only one person: Hiles Carter, his "spiritually aware" high school science teacher. It looked at first as if fate had conspired against their meeting that night. Cliff had recently received a postcard from Hiles, who was on holiday in the Canadian Maritimes. He seemed to be inaccessible. Unbeknownst to Cliff, his teacher had just returned to Toronto, when he heard of the accident on the radio as he was unpacking the family car. Hiles phoned immediately to offer his help. That night Cliff and his science teacher walked the streets of Toronto, far into the night. During some long, anxious hours, Hiles patiently listened while the young man talked himself out. During that conversation, Hiles helped Cliff to better understand his unarticulated aspiration to pray. Cliff takes up the narrative in his own words:

I wanted to pray but really did not know how. He asked what I wished for deep in my heart as an outcome of this tragedy, then said, 'That is your prayer.' He suggested there were no accidents, that God was real, and that if we sought it there was good in everything. He further suggested that if I earnestly sought the good, I would one day look back on this dreadful event with deep gratitude to God. This was the effective beginning of my spiritual education.²⁶

Cliff and his family paid a heavy price for the accident. Following an investigation, the police determined that criminal negligence was not a factor,

but because the medical expenses could not be covered by his financially limited parents, the boy's family initiated a civil suit. This legal action consumed an insurance policy held by Cliff's father, as well as his life savings to that point. Emotional recovery for Cliff was slow. His social life remained a blank for the next two years. Cliff tended to be a loner. He reflected some twenty-nine years later, however, that the accident turned out to be a minor "miracle,"²⁷ because it eventually caused a profound change in his life. The Huxtables' friend, my aunt Edna Halsted Nablo, was convinced that the accident was the proverbial blessing-in-disguise. She believed that the Huxtables' marriage was one of the compensations of Providence for the tragic accident that had taken place in Cliff's youth.²⁸ Edna's conviction was not without foundation. The accident later helped to forge a compassionate bond between Catherine and Cliff, no less than Catherine's paralysis, a bond that, coupled with the Bahá'í Faith and their mutual love, brought them together in marriage. As for Cliff, the series of events that eventually brought him together with Catherine began in that unhappy moment of his life.

The Role of Cliff's Brother Weston Huxtable (1931–2001)

Although the conversation with Hiles Carter was a significant turning-point in Cliff's life, a moment that first made him conscious of the reality of prayer, he continued to grapple with the after-effects of the accident. His older brother, Wes, who first introduced him to the Bahá'í Faith, was helpful during this distressful period by encouraging him to examine the Bahá'í teachings, and to find the remedy to his psychological distress, rather than to remain fixated on the past. To help Cliff move forward, after Wes had listened to his younger brother pour out his troubles one more time into the early hours of the morning, he attempted to make a break-through by asking pointedly: "Cliff, are you in love with your troubles or do you want to solve them?" Wes's question "hit home." It became another turning-point conversation.

Wes had graduated from Forest Hill Collegiate (Toronto), where he became a committed Bahá'í through his classmate Gerald Robarts, one of the three sons of the future Hand of the Cause of God John Robarts and his wife Audrey FitzGerald Robarts.²⁹ After he had enrolled at the University of Toronto,

when faced with criticism from the rest of the Huxtable family because of his recent conversion, Wes switched universities and enrolled at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. At Queen's he joined a small group of new Bahá'ís and Bahá'ís in-the-making. Despite the family's initial rejection of Wes's newfound Faith, Cliff began to examine surreptitiously the Bahá'í books his brother had brought home from university. When the therapeutic conversation mentioned above with his brother took place, Cliff had been attending firesides occasionally for some two years. By the time he was eighteen years old, Cliff was determined that he would make it his purpose in life to help others, although it was not clear to him precisely how his humanitarian motive could be accomplished. Cliff's conversations with his high school mentor, Hiles Carter, and his brother Wes were to have unsuspected, far-reaching consequences for Cliff and Catherine's acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith, their conjugal life, their spiritual development, and for the many other lives that in turn would eventually be touched by them.