



# SHERIAR FOUNDATION

R E P O R T / SUMMER 1995

## Gathering Research: Meeting with the Experts

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, it has become increasingly clear that preserving the vast collection of papers, photos, video and audio tapes, and personal items that offer posterity an abundant and irreplaceable first hand record of Meher Baba's advent is going to be an enormous challenge. And increasingly, Sheriar

Congress, the Smithsonian Museum Support Center, and the Holocaust Museum.

Research was focused on gathering information pertaining to the care of original artifacts and materials (such as film and video, photographs and documents).

Issues of collection management such as how to organize, index, inventory, monitor conditions and keep records were all discussed. The implications and responsibilities of developing and maintaining an archive were explored as well as the importance of following archival standards and guidelines. Although the volume and holdings of these institutions are vast, many of the issues are equally relevant for smaller collections. It was extraordinary how generous many of these highly accomplished experts were with their time and

knowledge. Behind-the-scenes tours of museum and archive facilities, as well as in-depth exchanges of ideas with top individuals in their fields went on for an entire week.

One of the more interesting underlying themes that came up was the importance and the challenge of recognizing that the real heart and meaning of preserving the record of Baba's advent cannot be separated from honoring and somehow retaining the feelings connected to what is being preserved. This subtlety and nuance assumes greater and greater importance as time passes and the

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**"It is no small thing, but finally sublime, to outwit time and make a moment that can last forever.**

**And it is no small thing to cherish those glimpses of our wholeness, and preserve those moments in a place which is made to care for them."**

*A. Bartlett Giametti, 1982, speaking at the 150th anniversary of the Yale University Art Gallery*

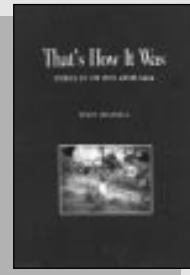
Foundation has committed itself to becoming more knowledgeable and more proactive in this realm of Baba work.

Given the age and perishable qualities of much of what has been accumulated by His lovers over the past 60 years or so, the necessity of dealing with how to protect and preserve these precious materials has gained a greater urgency. In the context of this concern, Sheriar Foundation sponsored a research trip to major institutions in Washington D. C. this past April. On the itinerary were informational meetings at, and tours of, the National Archives, The Library of

### FOUNDATION PUBLICATIONS:

## *That's How It Was*

ERUCH JESSAWALA'S STORIES about Meher Baba have enthralled listeners in Mandali Hall for more than 25 years and this fall 406 pages of those stories will be available in *That's How It Was*, to be published by Sheriar Foundation.



Besides a treasure of brand new stories, the book will include all the stories from two earlier books, *Is That So?* and *Determined To Be His*, which are no longer available as single books.

Eruch was a young man when he and his family went to live with Meher Baba. In the ensuing years, Eruch served his Master in many ways, talking to people, answering letters and serving as translator of Meher Baba's gestures. From those years of intimacy now flows a seemingly endless supply of stories – some humorous, some serious, some with pointed messages – and this new book gathers the best of them into a printed version of an afternoon at Meherazad.

*That's How It Was*, priced at \$15.00, will be available in October at Sheriar Press.

SHERIAR FOUNDATION has issued two publications since our last newsletter: reprints of the hardcover and softcover editions of *Discourses* and a paperback edition of *The Everything and The Nothing*, two of Meher Baba's most popular books.

Distributed by Sheriar Press, the paperback *Discourses* is \$15.00 and the hardcover edition is \$25.00. *The Everything and The Nothing* is \$7.95.

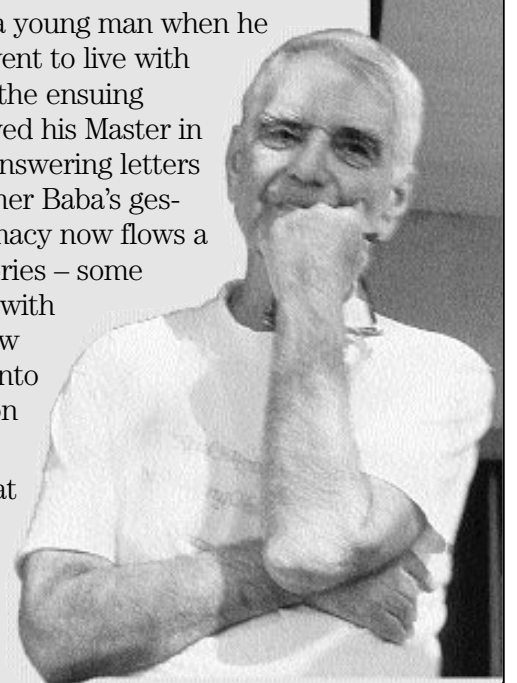
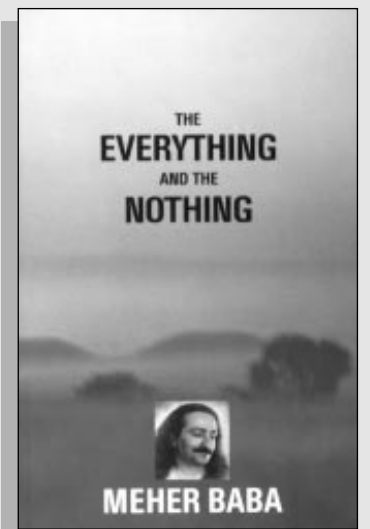
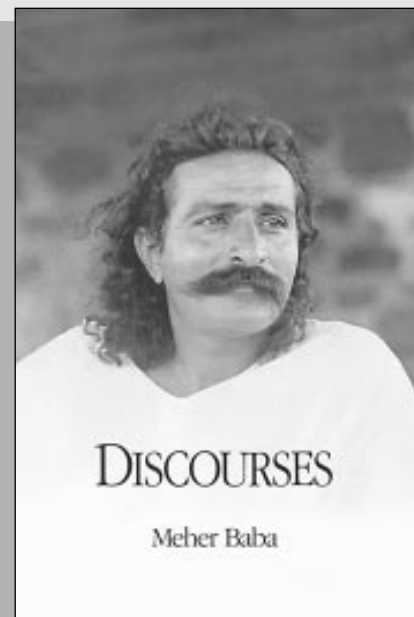


PHOTO BY ALAN LEVINSON



# Preserving and Archiving a New Collection



PHOTOGRAPH ON LEFT: Meher Baba greeting Fred Winterfeldt at the Meher Spiritual Center in the 1950s, when Baba made three visits to the Center. Fred, with his wife Ella, led the New York Baba Group for many years until they retired to Myrtle Beach in 1971.

SHERIAR FOUNDATION has recently begun the archival preservation of the collected personal letters, photographs, books, audiotapes and films of Fred Winterfeldt.

Fred and Ella led the New York Baba Group with John Bass for many years, from the early 1950s until 1971; at which time Fred retired and “Fredella”, as Baba called them, relocated to Myrtle Beach by Baba’s order. From then until his death in 1977, Fred staffed the Gateway, providing the warm greetings and great “bear hugs” still fondly remembered by many Center visitors; and Ella was both a mainstay at Saroja Library, and Fred’s right arm at the Gateway. Fred was also a member of the Center’s Board of Directors for many years.

Fred and Ella first met Meher Baba in New York in 1952; they saw Him again in 1956 and 1958 in this country, and at the “East West Gathering” in India in 1962. Fred also attended the “Three Incredible Weeks” darshan program for men in India in 1954. The Winterfeldt home in New York was a frequent site for Baba meetings and for informal gatherings where Fredella provided tea, sympathy, and Baba information to many newcomers.

To give you some appreciation of what is involved in properly preserving and archiving a new collection, it is interesting to review the initial steps that should be followed. In the process of caring for the Winterfeldt’s unique collection, Sheriar Foundation will begin with a meticulous evaluation of all of the materials that it contains. This provides the detail necessary to determine what kinds of conservation supplies are needed

to preserve the collection and protect it from damage and deterioration. Once each item has been identified and the preservation supplies are on hand, everything will be cataloged, labeled, and put into safe storage. To minimize the risks of future handling, a record of information for each item will be compiled including an inventory number, description, history, significance,

condition, and so on. The Foundation has designed a computer database which will be used to organize, save, and keep track of this information.

With proper care and organization, one day the Winterfeldt Collection is sure to contribute one more first hand testimony to His most extraordinary Advent.

## Meeting with the Experts

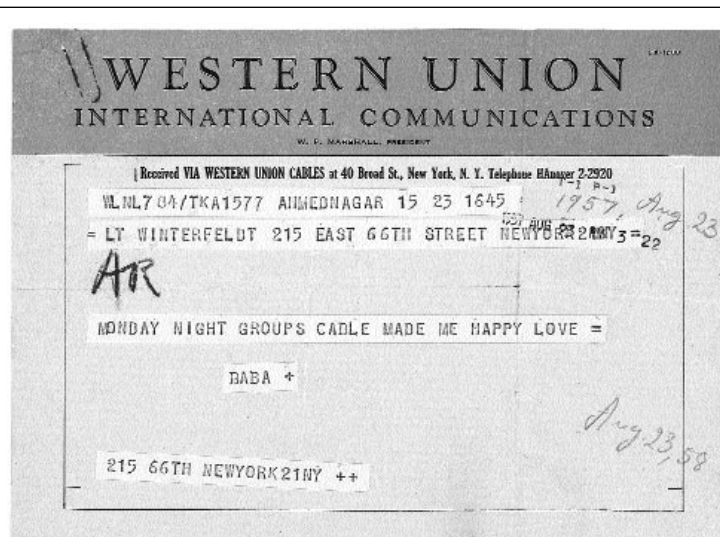
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atmosphere of His time among us loses some of the immediacy that it has today. The Facility Manager of the Smithsonian Museum Support Center, in particular, placed a special emphasis on the significance of preserving the individual culture of any given collection.

Also of underlying interest are the difficulties inherent in this area of balancing the desire to provide access to what is being preserved and recognizing the risks involved with increased handling. In many respects the possibilities that have begun to open up for electronically preserving materials holds out the potential for providing access without putting valuable originals at risk.

Some of the trip’s highlights included touring the photo stacks at the National Archives where millions of photographs are stored in state of the art shelving, and observing “hands-on” treatment in the conservation lab of old and damaged photos. Paper conservators at the Library of Congress demonstrated with great clarity some of the materials and procedures used in the preservation and storage of a variety of paper-based artifacts. Of particular interest was the unique database developed by a team of photo researchers and archivists which facilitates access to the massive photographic collection at the Holocaust Museum. On a more personal level, archivists at the Holocaust Museum reviewed and discussed a diagram of the current state of Sheriar Foundation’s database as part of the process of fine-tuning our efforts in this area.

It is remarkable to realize that the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of this entire archive and preservation field must now somehow be applied to the Baba treasures that have been collected by so many for so long. It is a work that must begin now and move forward as we gather the resources to preserve and share the story of His advent with generations to come.



The above cable received by Fred and Ella August 23, 1957, is Baba’s response to the following message sent to Him by the Monday Night Group: “Beloved Baba, the message through Mehera inviting our help in alleviating your pain has touched our hearts and made us want to love you more and more. We are deeply willing. Dearest love from all the Monday Night Group.”

# 1932 Films, Photos and Videos Come to Life



It's always nice when something we're excited about turns out to be exciting for others as well. A case in point is the Foundation's two video versions of recently discovered newsreel footage of Meher Baba's 1932 visit to America: the seven-minute *Meher Baba's*

*1932 Message To America* and the eight-minute *Meher Baba At Harmon-on-Hudson 1932*.

By the end of May, the Foundation's distributor, Sheriar Press, reports sales of 470 copies of the *Message* video and 211 copies of the *Harmon* video. Both videos are still available from Sheriar Press at \$15.00 each. In addition, 8 x 10 photographic prints from the *Harmon* video are offered by Sheriar Press at \$12.00 each or \$80 for the whole set of 8.



## *Dramatic Results from a Damaged Negative*

*The above photograph of Meher Baba is reproduced from a restored negative which appeared to be unsalvagable. Negatives over thirty years old sometimes separate from their plastic base and seem to be hopelessly damaged. In this case, the emulsion was peeled from the plastic carrier and placed on to a new stable base by a photo conservator who specializes in this work. A new duplicate negative and print was then made.*

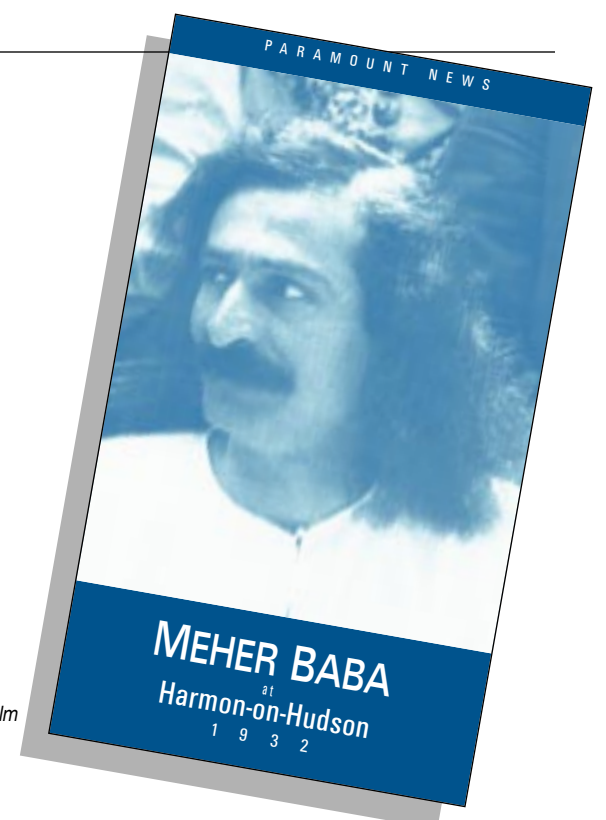


*Photograph of Meher Baba with disciples at Harmon-on-Hudson from the 1932 Paramount newsreel. One of the eight prints available.*

***"As Baba has remarked many a time, even His most casual gesture had universal significance, and every simple personal action generated a universal reaction. . .***

***"We can't help watching it (the 1932 film) over and over again, and every time we find a deeper meaning emerging from each little act and movement of His, as clear and sparkling as the water we see Him drink."***

- Excerpt from comments by Mani about the 1932 Paramount film



## FUNDING UPDATE:

# A Note about the Finances

Sheriar Foundation is committed to keeping you informed as to what we are working on. This includes reviewing with you work that has been completed since our last communication as well as sharing work that is currently in motion or being contemplated for the future. Besides our desire to increase awareness of the focus, scope and direction of the Foundation's efforts, we also have in mind the practical realities of needing your financial support to be able to sustain our work. We are asking again for that support.

We want to thank all of you who have given Sheriar Foundation financial and emotional support. It is important to us to know that the work we are doing matters to you as well as to us.

Many of you have given generously to Sheriar Foundation already. Through July 15, 1995 we have received more than \$161,000 from over 328 donations. It is the nature of the work that we are

doing that there will be an ongoing need for financial support to properly fund projects that are already identified as well as projects that will

come up in the future. We would be most appreciative if you would consider including Sheriar Foundation as a part of whatever annual charitable donations you are able to give.

As we have shared in the past, some people are most comfortable providing funding for specific purposes or projects. We welcome contributions of every kind: large or small; for our General Fund or for the Endowment Fund; for specific projects or for whatever we deem to have the greatest immediacy.

As a practical reminder, all donations to Sheriar Foundation are tax-deductible.

### Donations to the General Fund will help support the following projects:

#### **PUBLISHING:**

*That's How It Was*  
*Love Alone Prevails*  
Future Publications

#### **ARCHIVING:**

**CURRENT COLLECTIONS:**  
Brustman Video Collection  
Fred Winterfeldt Collection

#### **UPCOMING COLLECTIONS:**

*MARGARET CRASKE*, one of the earliest western disciples, who met Baba in London in 1931.  
Although little of Margaret's records

survived World War II, she has left a wonderful record of life with Baba following her return to the West after the war. This collection contains correspondence from the late 40s until her death in February 1990, as well as her personal collection of photographs and books.

*HARRY KENMORE*, a close disciple of Baba's from New York, who met with Baba on several occasions. This collection includes audio recordings and films of Baba and the Mandali.

#### **ONGOING INDIA PROJECTS:**

Video and audio recording

## The Making of a Database

AS DESCRIBED IN OUR FALL REPORT, Sheriar Foundation has completed the transfer to preservation master copies of more than 187 hours of video of the mandali and Meherazad, Meherabad and Poona recorded by Wendell Brustman and a team of professionals in 1986.

During the past two years of working on this project, the tapes were rewound; careful records were kept of their physical condition; and they were numbered and shelved in an inventory system. As the first phase of this preservation work was coming to an end, it became clear that a reliable system to keep track of all of these tapes was very much needed.

In response to this need, working in close collaboration with a long-time follower of Baba, Bob Hartzell, who has extensive background in database development, a relational database has been designed. Its primary purpose is to hold a structured record of the Brustman Collection, including its history, condition, dates of recording, viewing and rewinding. It will also keep track of hundreds of numbered originals, viewing copies and preservation copies. Additional descriptive fields are being developed to help identify and log the content of each tape.

Although the immediate application of this database is to the video material in the Brustman Collection, its basic design can be adapted to encompass record keeping and retrieval searches for additional kinds of collections such as film, audio tape, photographs, transparencies, negatives, and documents as well. As a part of this work, a system is being designed that will describe the content of small segments of footage by keywords for subject, name, place, shot description, and time-code.

On the immediate horizon, the Foundation will be continuing its focus on the Brustman Collection by concentrating on entering existing information into the database, as well as compiling new records of its content. As a critical preliminary step in the building of an archive, the care and attention given to this effort at this time will greatly affect the authenticity and ease of access of searches made in the future.

**SHERIAR FOUNDATION** was formed in 1989 as an independent, non profit, tax-exempt corporation.

The purpose of the Foundation is to broaden awareness and deepen the appreciation of the spiritual values exemplified in the life and writings of Meher Baba.

Sheriar Foundation has an interest in all forms of communication media through which the love and truth of Meher Baba's ideas and ideals may be expressed.

It is dedicated to exploring more dynamic ways of using these communication channels to bring the restorative power of divine love into people's lives.

Modify/View Video Original

Collection: Brustman Video ID: 2-VO-29

Prior Name: Mehera #29 Length (hh:mm:ss:fr): 00:21:38:00

Description: On porch

Camera Crew: Bill Haviland, Wendell Brustman

Date of Recording: 10/07/86 Date Viewed: 01/10/94 Format: 3/4

Time Code: Yes Color Bar: Unconventional

History of Video:

Unique Restrictions:

Condition of Video: Color bar does not appear until 4+ minutes, at which point the shot-date changes to 10/07/86. Flashing at top of image until +/- 13 minutes and then again from +/- 15 minutes onward. (Original date was 9/30/86)

Special Instructions:

Revised 07/20/95

OK Cancel

The database screen above shows a numbered record of a tape of Mehera, taken on the porch at Meherazad on October 7, 1986. This original tape, about 22 minutes long, was reviewed on January 10, 1994. Technical information is noted about the format, time-code, color bar and the physical condition of the tape.