

Part 3
Life in USA

United States of America:

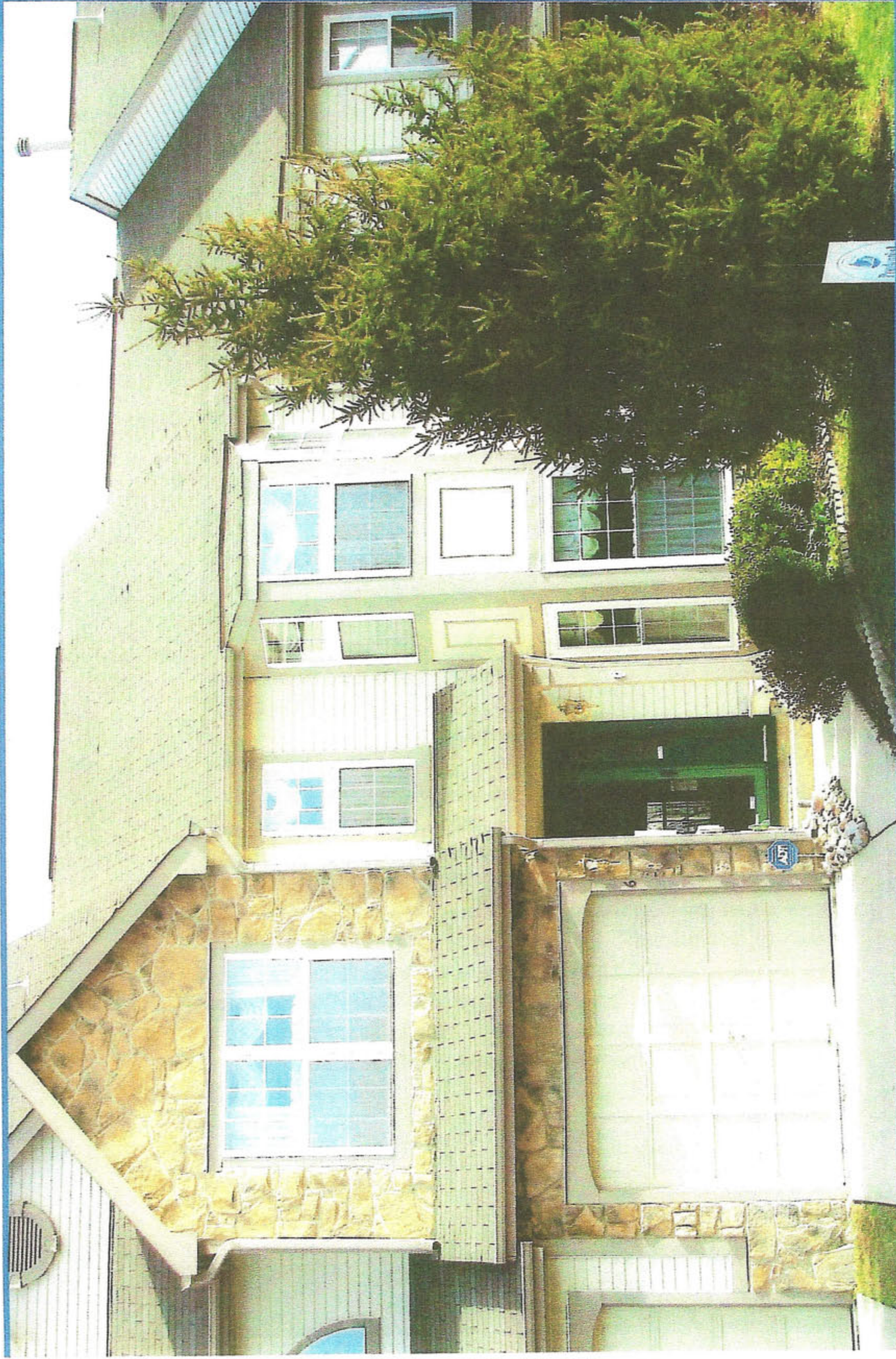
When Soheli picked us up from New Jersey he took us to his apartment in north Jersey. I had all my belongings in storage in NJ. I stayed with Salima and Amir for a while. Then I stayed with Hyder Arastu, my nephew for a week. While I was at Hyder Arastu's house I thought I will call up a realtor and ask him to show me houses. Looked at many, but did not like anything. Then I showed him the photographs of my house in Markham, Canada.

He at once brought me to show the town houses in Mount Laurel, NJ. I loved these townhouses, but thought it would be far away from everyone. These were model homes and were not yet to be sold anyway. So I stopped thinking about them.

I went away to visit Sajida Apa in LA, California. I kept thinking of the Mt. Laurel town houses. I returned to NY and I looked at houses in NY. I could not find anything I liked. I kept thinking of the Mt. Laurel town-houses.

Children, I said, said let's see if those town-houses are still available. I called up the realtor to check. He said one of the models was still available. We drove down to NJ to see the only model town house left and the children said Mom, that's you. We can see you living there. This also looks like the house you left behind." I put some money down and put an offer. It was accepted and the house was mine. This was the first time I bought my house all by myself. Sharaf was always there and we did every thing together. It was scary at first but I came out OK. So I moved to my new house in March of 1993. My new address:
6 Sandhurst Dr.,
Mt. Laurel NJ 08054

This was my house:



6 Sandhurst Drive Mt.Laurel
Courts at Laurel Creek



Prudential

Fox & Roach,
REALTORS[®]





Immaculate Former Model Home!

This immaculate Dorchester model is situated on a prime lot in the prestigious "Courts at Laurel Creek" of Mount Laurel. Pride of ownership is evident in this large executive townhouse. Large spacious rooms provide ample space for entertaining as well as gracious family living. The spacious gourmet kitchen features plenty of upgraded cabinets, a center island, custom back-splash, and a sun dappled breakfast room that boasts twin skylights and access to the rear garden. The adjacent Family room boasts ceramic flooring, custom built-ins, & a stone fireplace. The rear yard has been prof. landscaped w/a two tier E.P. Henry paver patio, arbor, and an abundance of flowering shrubs and perennials. Upstairs find three large bedrooms including a stunning master. the master suite features a seperate sitting room, custom moldings, recessed lighting, and a sumptuous bath w/soaking tub and separate shower. The two additional bedrooms are spacious and offer ceilings fans, recessed lighting, and plenty of closet space. This well maintained home is ready for a quick occupancy. Don't miss out on your chance to live in Laure Creek at a great price!



6 Sandhurst Drive Mt.Laurel Courts at Laurel Creek



Living Room	16 x 16	Fence	Privacy Fence
Dining Room	12 x 10	Heat	Gas Forced Air
Kitchen	9 x 9	Air	Central
Breakfast Room	11 x 8	Fireplace	Wood Burning
Family Room	16 x 13	Utility	Public
Master Suite	16 x 14	Association Fee	\$220/Yearly
Master Sitting Room	10 x 9	City	Mount Laurel
Bedroom 2	13 x 12	County	Burlington
Bedroom 3	12 x 10	Zip Code	08054
Floors	Wall to Wall, Ceramic	Schools	Mount Laurel Township
Exterior	Aluminum & Stone	Taxes	\$4819/ 2005
Garage	1 Car w/opener	Age	15
Patio	Two Tier Paver	Levels	2

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The front of my house in Mt. laurel



The backyard was designed by me. I drew everything by scale, called around for estimates, and then gave the work to the contractor who was the most reasonable.
Photos of my backyard attached.

My backyard is being made according to my design.



Some photos of my backyard.



Some more photos of my backyard



Amir, my son-in-law, helped me a lot in buying the furniture for my new house. I did not know where to go. I did not have a car yet. He drove me around in his car to all the furniture places.

I thought I didn't know anybody in this completely new environment here. Very soon Naveed and Kazim told me that Hashim, (Kazim's brother) and Fizza (Bilgrami) live not very far from me. Hashim is Kazim's brother and Fizza Bilgrami's whole family went to Grammar school where I went. So I knew all of them. Fizza called me when Naveed gave her my telephone number and we talked for a couple of hours. Hashim and Fizza invited me to their house for dinner, we talked till 2:00 AM and then they dropped me home.

Fizza was very kind to me and used to take me for groceries and milk till I bought myself a car. Since both of us were not working at the time we spent a lot of time together. Even after I bought my car they used to pick me up to go to parties where ever we both were invited. They did this till I left NJ in February, 2006! Thanks, Fizza and Hashim.

Through them I met all the Hyderabadies who lived in the area. Baitul Qayum, our religious center was ten minutes from my house. This was great. Now I had friends. I thought I did not know anybody! As years went by, more and more friends came to live in the area. Thank God.

Suhaila and I lived here and started getting ready for Suhaila's wedding. The wedding date was fixed for 5th September, 1993. We had lots to do so we got busy right away. I bought new furniture, decorated the house and started wedding preparations.

Now I had a place of my own. I had a little majlis, then a wedding shower for Suhaila, which was very nice. The Mehendi ceremony was at Hyder Arastu's house. The food was prepared by Naveed Reza. All deserts were also made by Naveed Reza. Naveed had made all the deserts for Salima's

wedding too. I believe Naveed had told me that she will make all the desserts for my children's weddings. I did not remember that at all. She kept her promise.

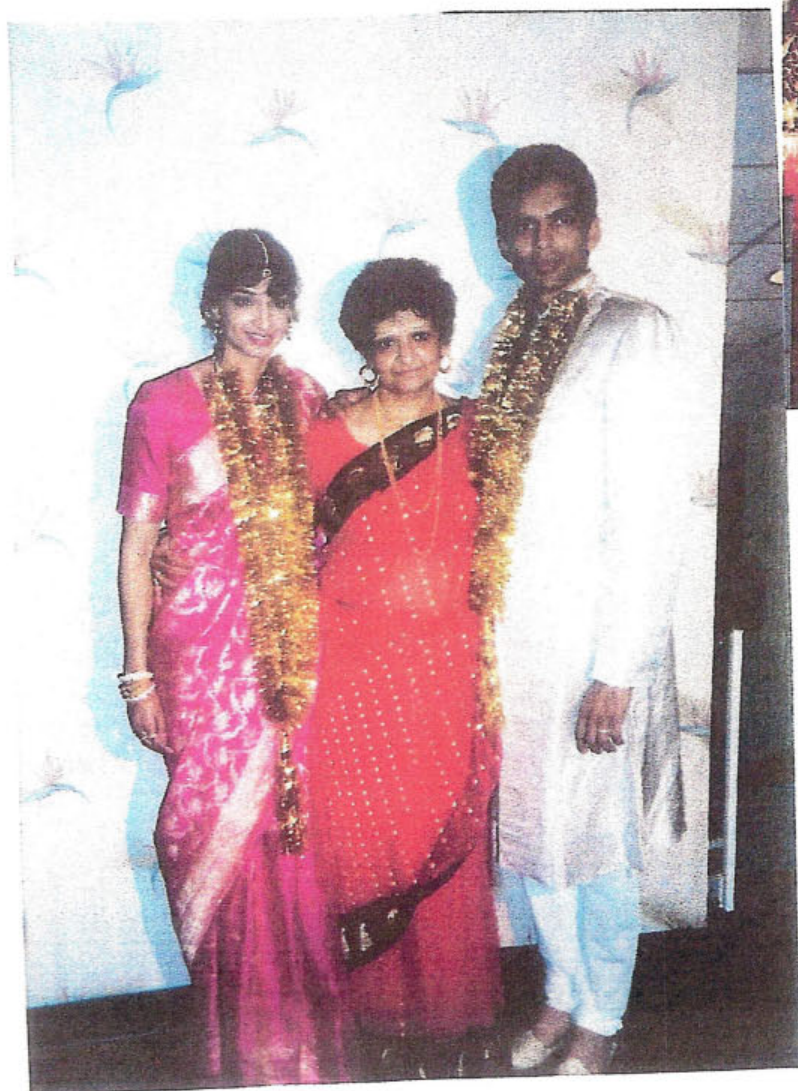
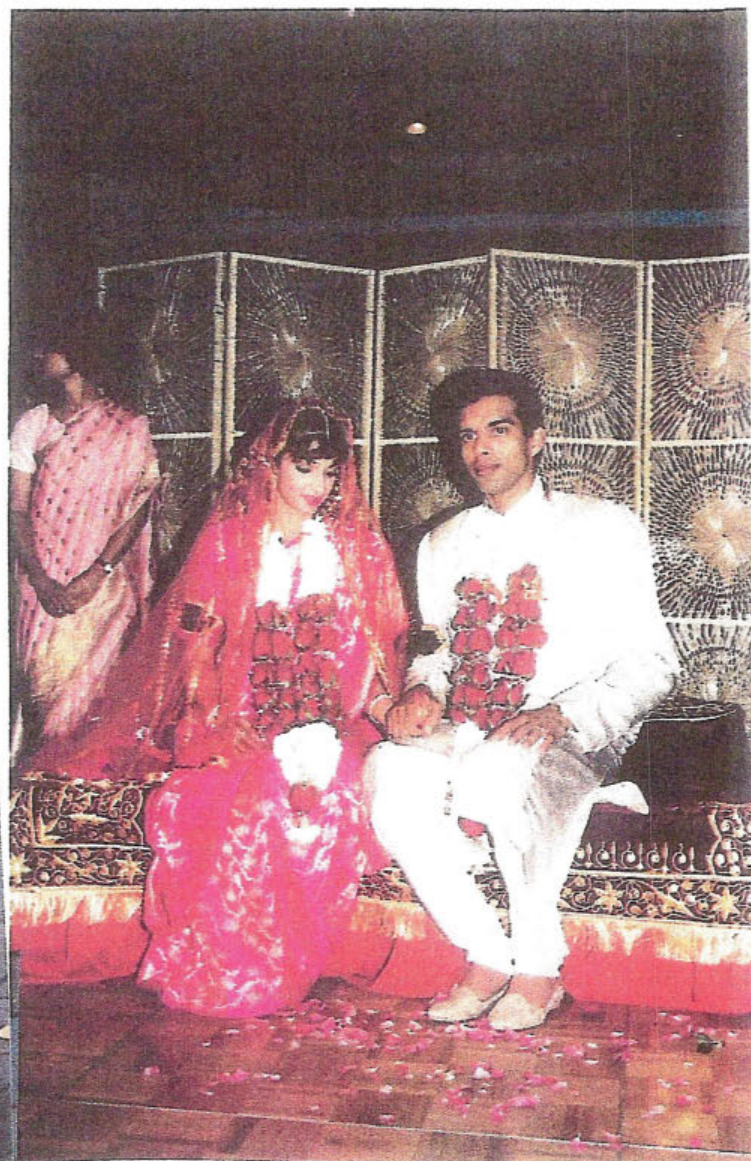
In March 1993 I went to LA. Since all my brothers and sisters were present at one place we took some photographs. Here is a nice photograph of all of us except Masoom Bhai. Masoom Bhai was in India. There is also a nice photo of my two sisters and me.

Photos of my brothers and sisters



In September, 1993 Suhaila and Sohel's wedding reception was at a country club in Philadelphia. The food was catered by Palace of Asia. They made Hyderabadi food. It was a decent affair. Palace of Asia made special vegetarian food for Suhaila without me telling them to do so, which was very much appreciated. Suhaila had turned vegetarian after Sharaf's death. Suhaila and Sohel's wedding photos attached.

Suhaila's wedding photos





With the wedding behind me now I started looking for a job and got one as a shop-at-home sales person for Strawbridge and Clothier. I worked there a few years, and then I switched to furniture sales.

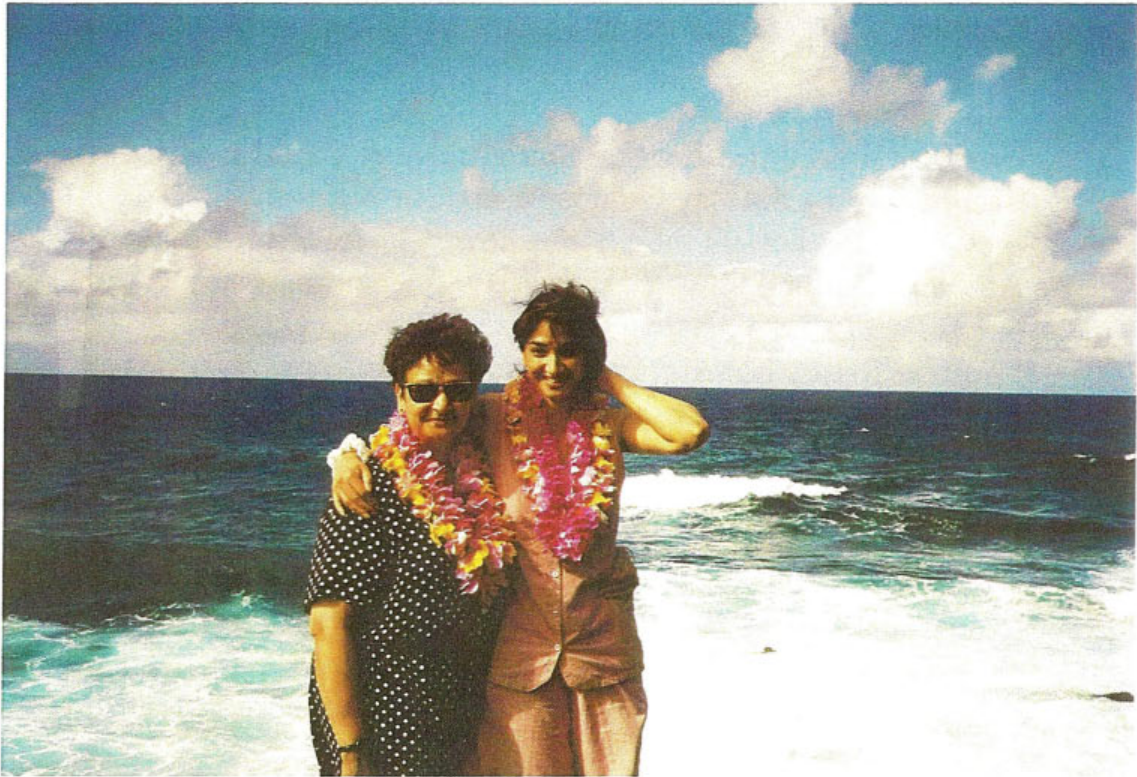
In a very short time after that Strawbridge & Clothier was bought over by the Bay Company, another big company; the new company bought their name, "Strawbridges" too. Now I was working for Strawbridges. When the company changed hands they had a big sale throughout the store. I could buy furniture for my house at much discounted prices. As a furniture sale person I benefited extra discounts. This way my house was fully furnished.

On the 3rd of February, 1995 Masoom Bhai, my brother passed away. It was unbelievable, he was gone within a month or so from cancer. That was very sad. He was healthy and not old and all of a sudden he was gone. I have many very good memories of him.

On 2nd May 1995, Mukarum died in a car accident. He was my brother, Arif Bhai's, son-in-law. He died an untimely death at a very young age. It was very sad.

In June 1995 Suhaila and I went to Hawaii and visited Chris Purton's family who had built a house there. We rented a car and drove to the west side of the big island. It was fun. We went diving and snorkeling together in the warm waters.
(Photo attached)

Suhaila and I in Hawaii



In May 1996 I visited Sheilah Alleyne in Barbados for a week. This reminded me of India. The flora and fauna was just like India. It was great to be there. (Photo attached)

Barbedos : Sheilah and I



On October 16th, 1996, my eldest brother, Riazath Bhai, passed away early morning. He was not sick or anything, but he was heart broken because his eldest son, Showketh was very sick with cancer and was in the hospital. Bhaijan, I used to call him this, went and sat with Showketh for a long time the night before he died. It was shocking for everyone.

My last photo with Razia Apa. This was taken 7th of October, 1996 when I visited California. Six months later, on the 24th of April, 1997 my eldest sister, Razia Apa passed away in California. She was in her eighties.

My last photo with Razia Apa. Nice photograph of all sisters.



Nasir's daughter, Zarine was getting married so I had a wedding shower for her at my house.

Suhailaa was expecting. By this time they had moved and were living minutes away from my house, in Mount Laurel, NJ. I was near by to take care of Suhaila in her difficult times.

It was right after a Thanksgiving dinner at Suhaila's house when she started going into labor. There was excitement and nervousness all together. I did not know what I was feeling. It was a very strange feeling. I just prayed that everything should be all right.

Sarah Aliya was born without any problem. Thank God for that. It was 27th of November 1999 at 12:55pm. It was the happiest day in my life- I was now a grandmother. I was a grandmother for the first time in life and was very happy. I had a big shower for Suhaila before the delivery and had made a bassinet full of all kinds of things with knitting, sewing, and crochet for the first ever baby grandchild of my own. I decorated the bassinet with lace and presented it to Suhaila. You have no idea of the excitement of becoming a grandparent for the first time. When you become a grandmother or grandfather you will remember this and say, "Nani was right." Baby photographs attached)

Aliya's baby photos



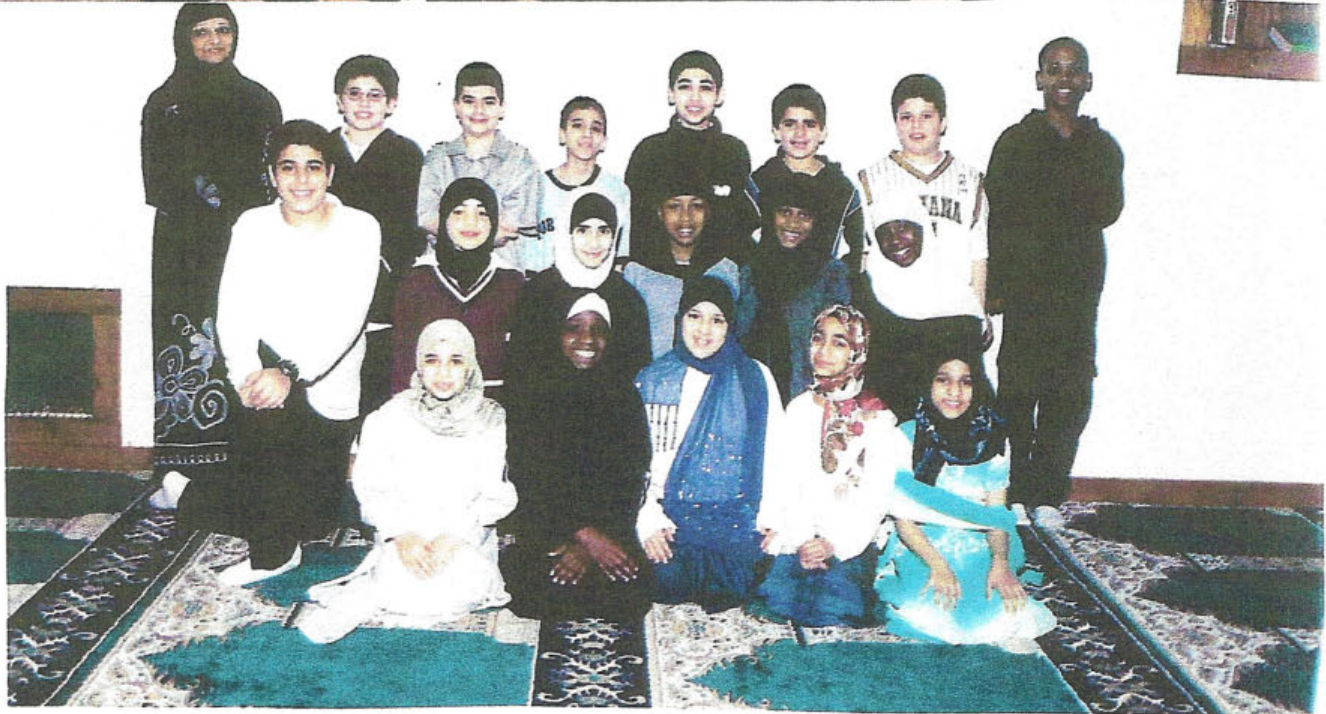
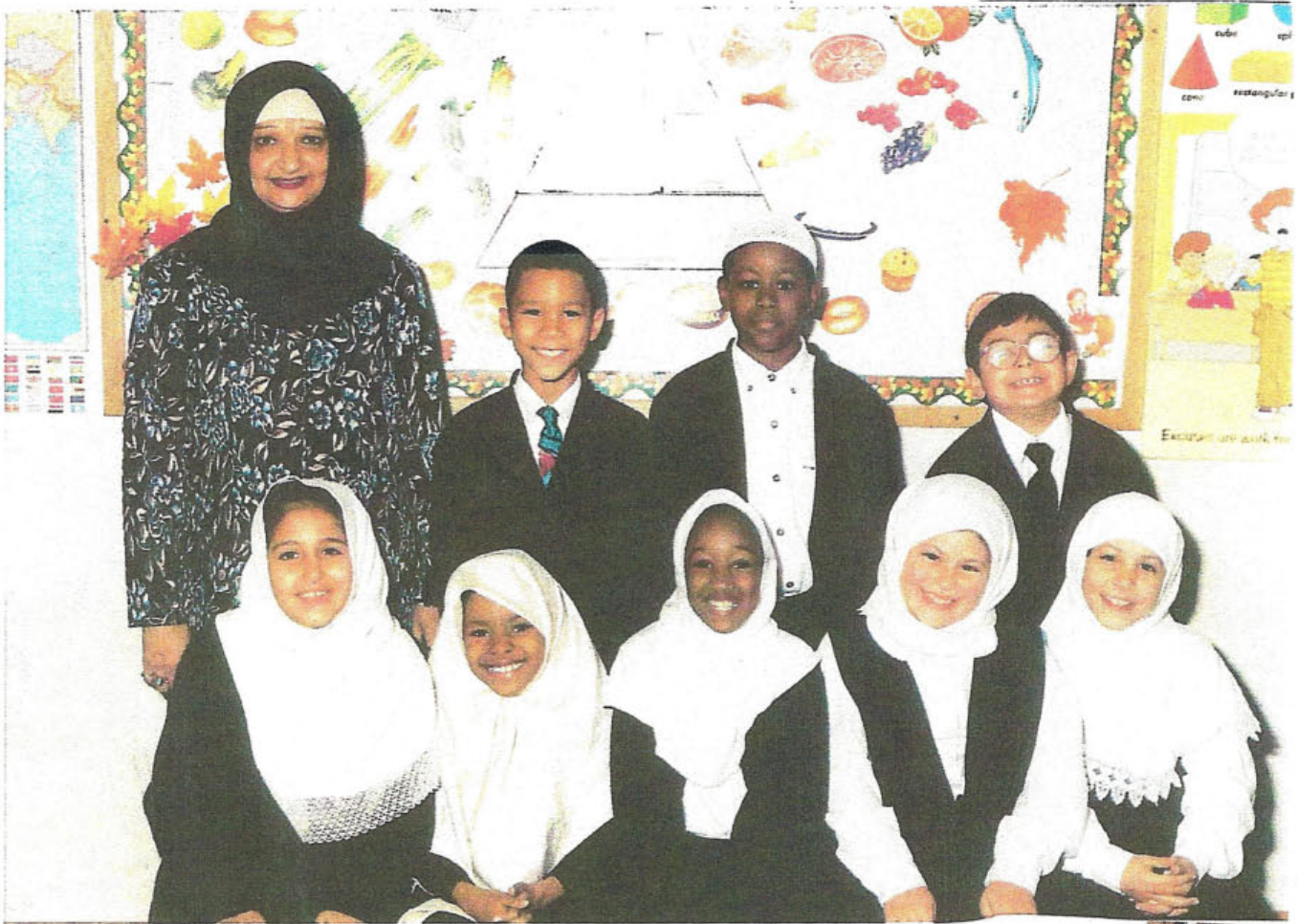
I left Strawbridges, since I had enough of sales. I was looking for a job when I saw this advertisement for a teacher in an Islamic school in Philadelphia. I called them and faxed my resume. I got a call for an interview. This school was situated in a very bad area of Philadelphia. I went for an interview anyway in spite of people warning me. I just wanted to look at the school.

The principal was a very modern young man and asked me to do all the necessary paperwork, which I did half-heartedly, because at the back of my mind I thought that this was a very bad area to work in. I had to fill all the sheets anyway. He also told me if I want to work there I will have to wear a "hijab," which is a scarf. He said I have to wear this only at the school. He didn't care if I didn't wear it all the time. Then I left.

A week later I still didn't have a job, so when this school called to say I got the job, I accepted it. I was going to teach grade 3. I was willing to wear the "hijab" and work in the bad area. The parking lot was all fenced in. I felt safe.

It turned out I enjoyed teaching. I had 10 eight year olds in my class. They were very good kids. (Photo attached on the next page) The principal was very good and kept everything in order. I worked there as a 3rd grade teacher for three years. The Name of this school was Al- Aqsa Academy.

My first 3rd grade students



In February, of 2000 I went for Rabia's daughter, Farha's wedding to Siam. It was great fun. Photo attached.



In early summer of 2000, Brenda visited me and we both drove to Canada in my car. It was a fun trip. We stayed with Minnie Chesson, a common friend of ours. Every lunch and dinner we were invited by our Canadian friends. One day, all the Canadian friends got together and invited us out for dinner at a restaurant. It was great to see everyone there. Minnie had a party for us at her house so we could meet all her family. Photos attached.

Party at Minnie's house

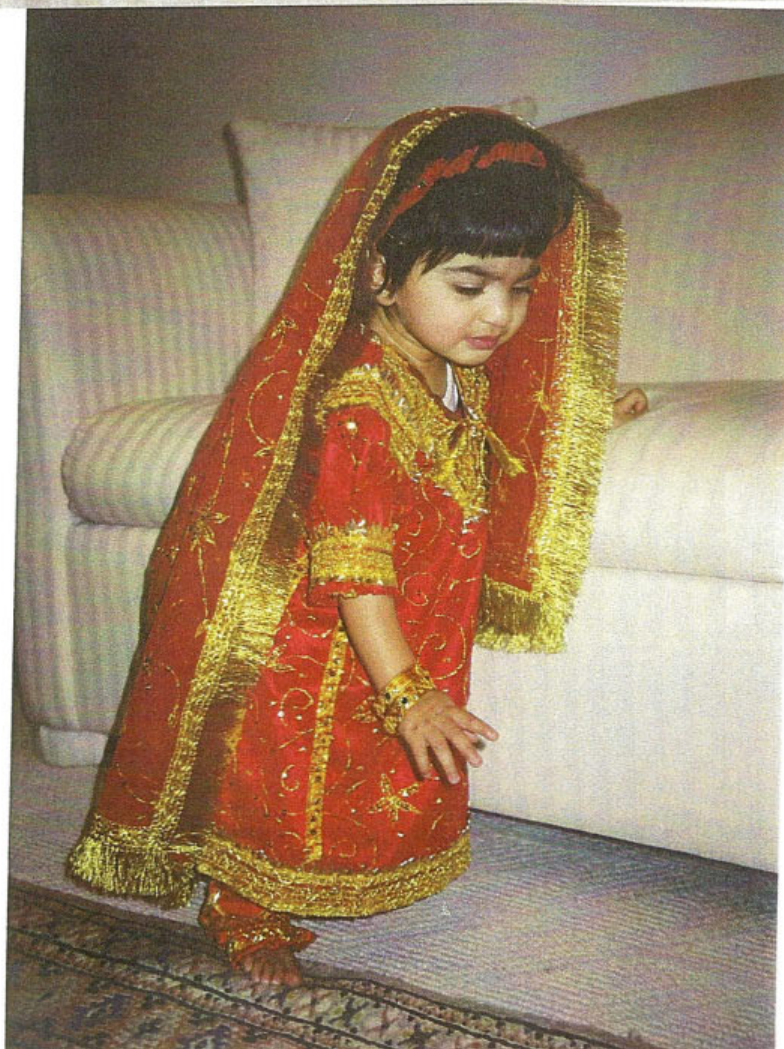
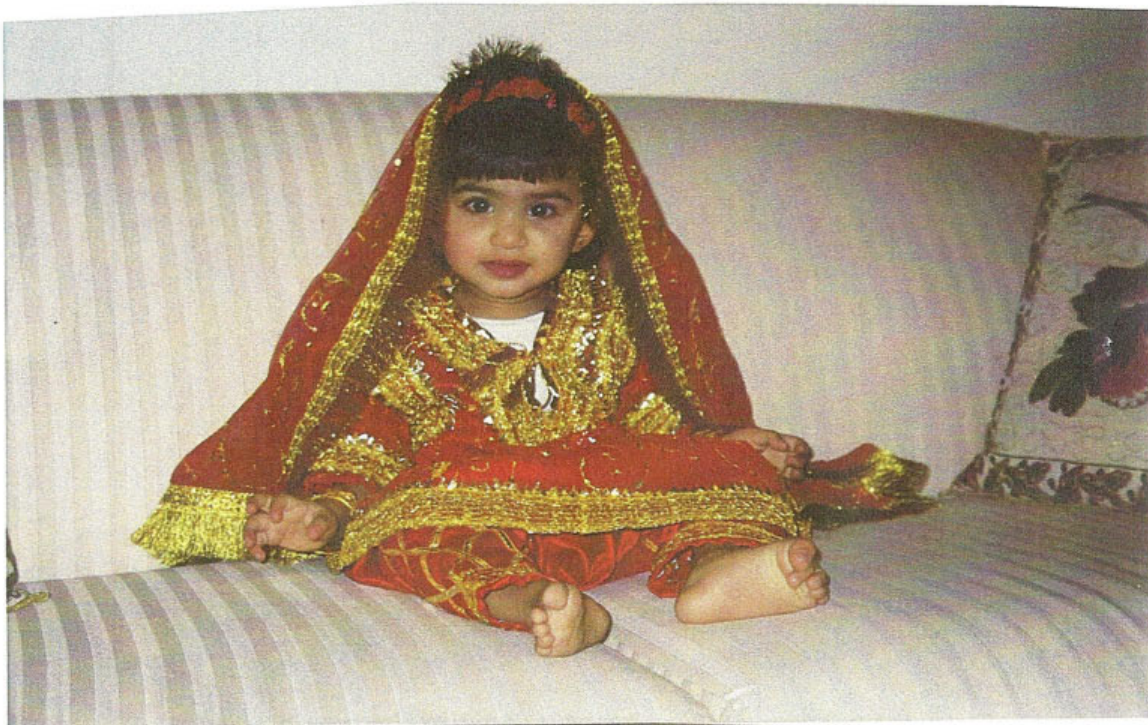


Party for us by the Toronto friends

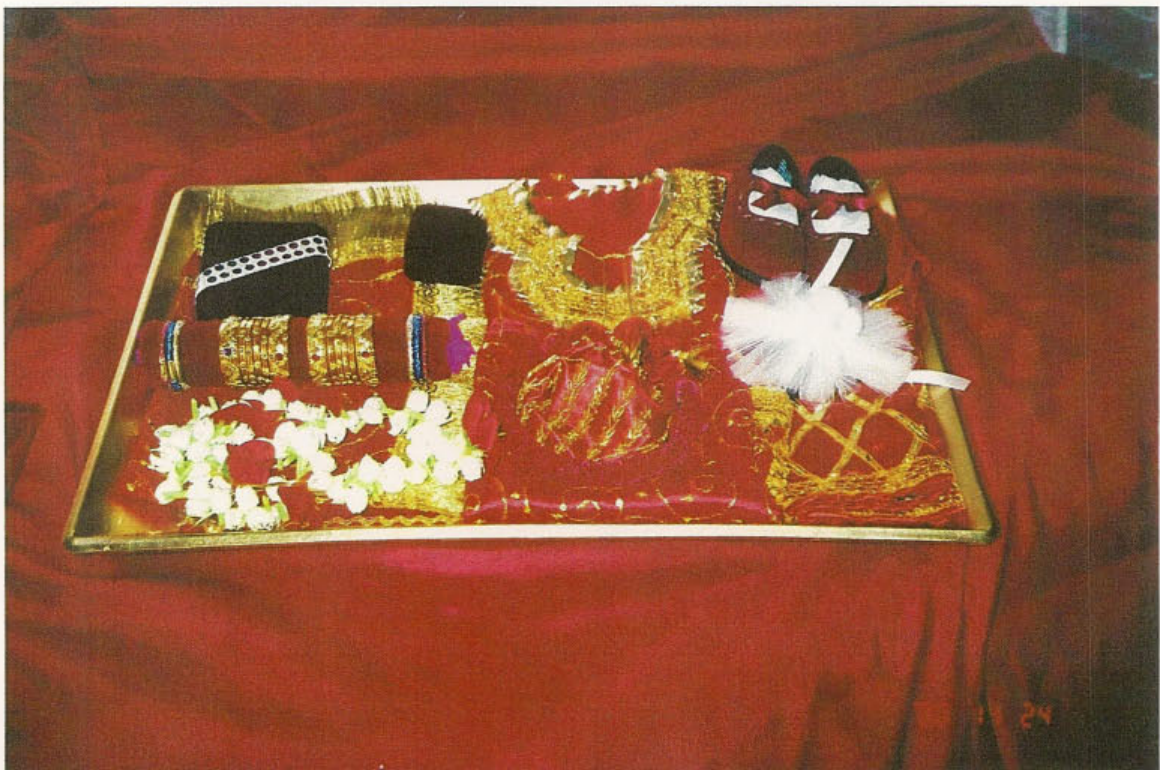


In Nov., 2000 it was Aliya's first birthday. She wore "khara duputta" which was sent away from Hyderabad. She looked very cute. Some photos attached on the next few pages. I had arranged all the clothes I was giving in a tray just like they do in Hyderabad. I presented these trays just like they do in Hyderabad. It was covered in red cloth and the cover was red and silver, which I had made. Sameena and Irfan Sabir with Adil carried these to Suhaila's and Sohel's house. Photos attached:

Aliya sitting in khara duputta
Aliya standing in khara duputta



Aliya's birthday clothes in a tray



Aliya's birthday tray cover I had made



Our Family Group Photo at Aliya's 1st Birthday



The principal of Al-Aqsa was replaced. The teachers changed and the school was getting bigger and things started falling apart. I was asked to teach grade 5, which I did for two more years.

In June, 2001 I was diagnosed for Hodgkin's Lymphoma (big celled); this spreads fast. I was referred to Dr. Jeffery Khon by Hyder Arastu. Dr. Khon was Hyder Arastu's friend and co-worker. Dr. Khon started me with chemotherapy right away because I was in third degree stage. By the grace of God, my many supporters, Hyder Arastu and Munsoor Husain's constant guidance and help I am here to write this book.

I was so worried, who would look after me when I won't be able to take care of me. I was there for Sharaf when he needed looking after, now he was gone and here I was all alone. However, God Must have heard this and so many people looked after me during my sickness, other than my own children some of whom I must mention here, Sarfraz Bhai, Sajida Apa , Bader Bhai,, Arif Bhai, Rasheeda Bhabi, Zainab, and Munsoor's family, Brenda Kite and her sister, Pat Brown. Some of these people actually came and stayed with me.

I had lost my hair completely, head, eyebrows, eye lashes everywhere. I had no taste left. Everything I ate was like leather - tasteless. I pray no one should go through this ever.

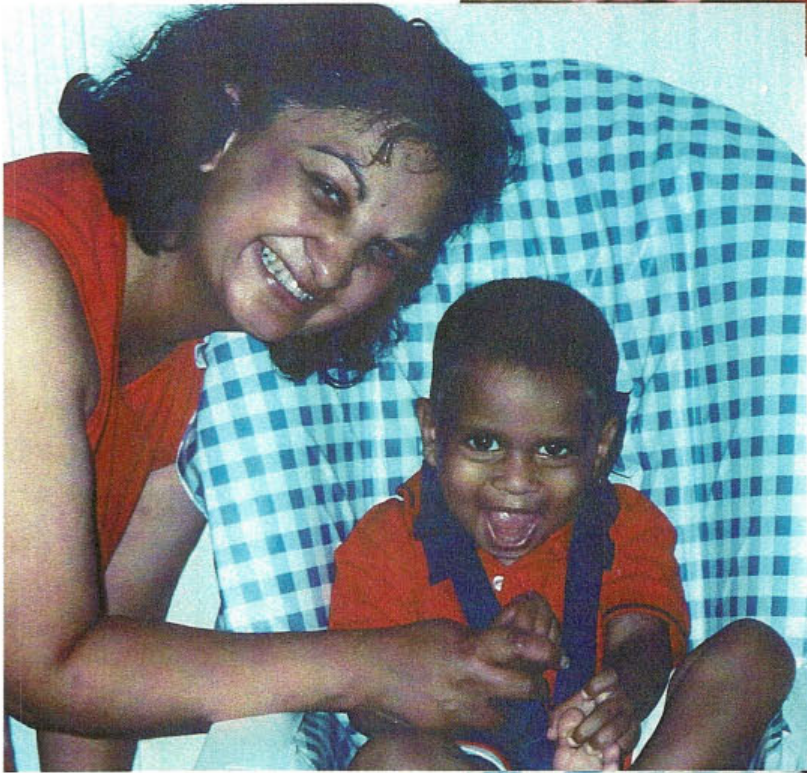
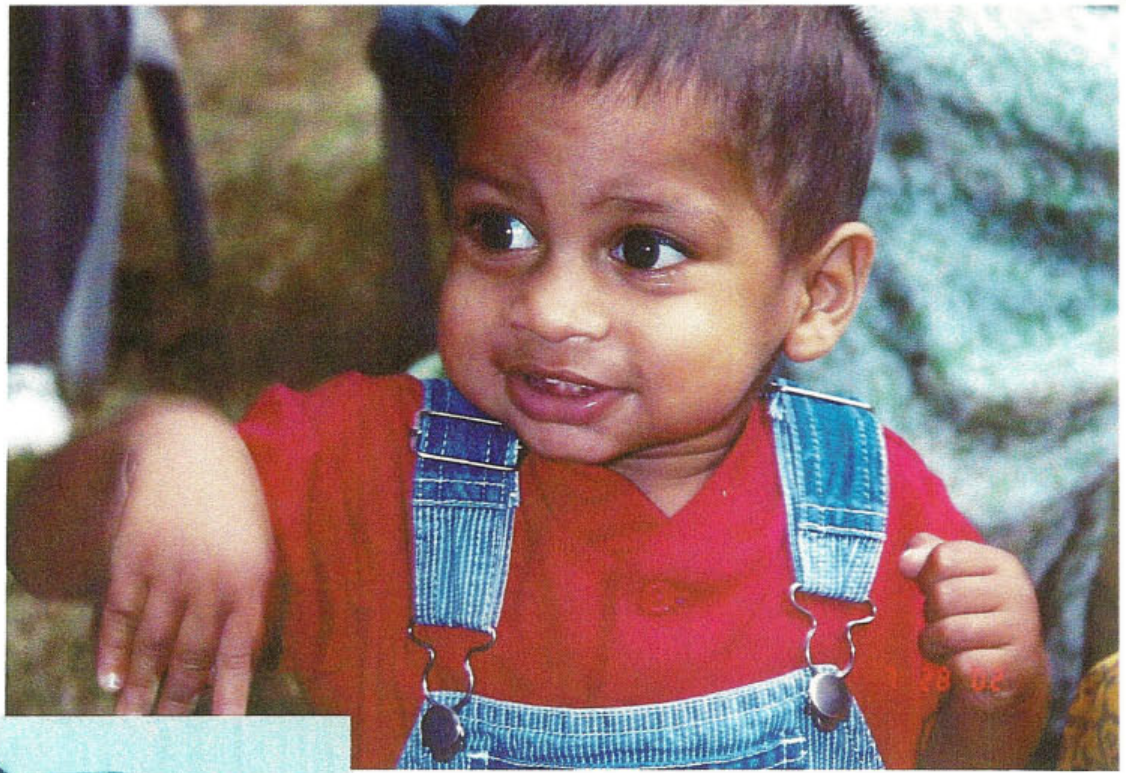
My very special thanks go out to Dr.Hyder Arastu and Dr. Munsoor Husain who never left me alone throughout my treatment. Thank You.

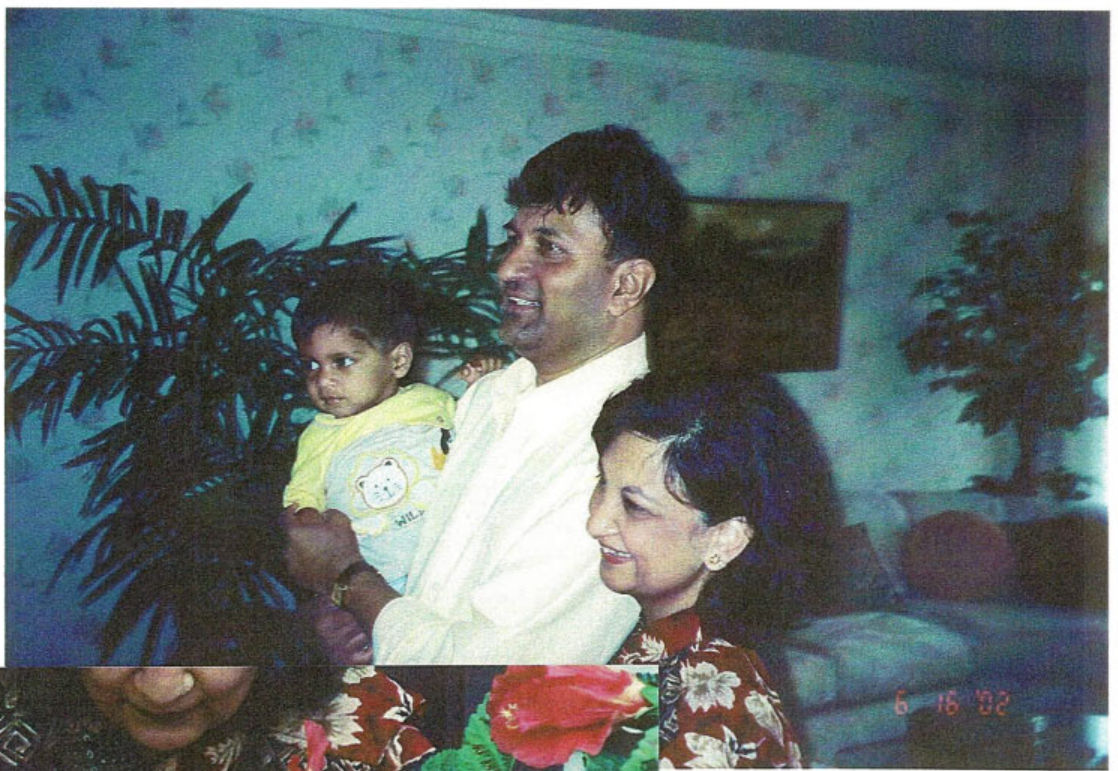
Children's prayers were heard, adults who prayed for my recovery must have prayed hard enough-- now I am here.

When my chemo was over Salima and Amir asked me to accompany them to India. We were to go and bring back Adam with us. This was such a pleasure to have an extra member added to our family. Adam was 14 months old. He is a very special little boy. When we were leaving to get him a limo came to take us to the airport. When we landed at Delhi airport we were given the presidential suite at the Taj Hotel. This was all arranged by Amir's friend, Sanjay. The next day his visa was given within a few minutes.
(Adam's photo attached)

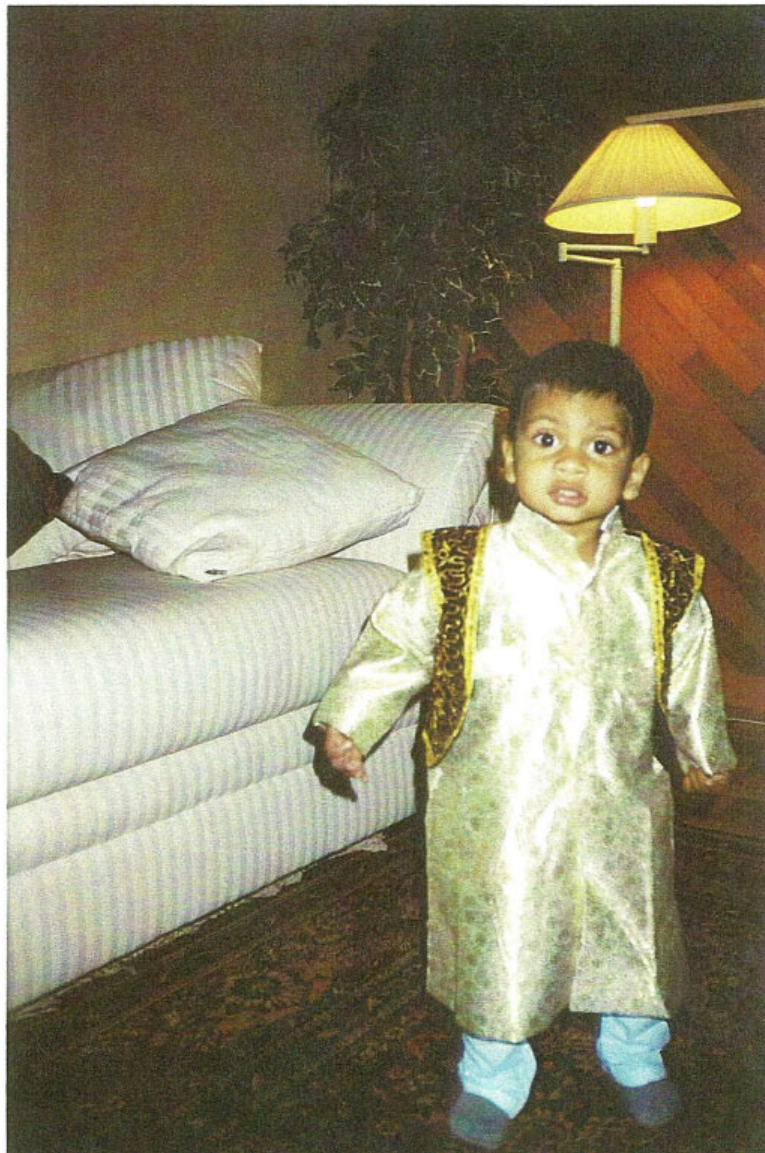
Adam joins our family







Adam's second Birthday photograph



I went to India after fifteen years and saw many changes. From Delhi I went to Bhopal to see Rafia. I stayed with her for a week then left for Bombay. We got Adam and Salima, and Amir left for USA. I left for Hyderabad. I stayed in India for a month.

After coming back from India when I felt a little better I took a course in substitute teaching. I started working as a substitute teacher for the rest of the school year. I joined Source for Teachers, to do some substitute teaching in Mt. Laurel Schools. I did not like going to new schools each day. I like to see the gradual change in students; I want to see the progress in students, which you can only see if you stay in a particular place all the time. So substitute teaching was not for me. When the school year was over I went back to the old school and taught grade 5.

The school was getting bigger still. I had some of the worst experiences at this school this time. There were so many changes, the school was bigger but the quality of education was absent. I felt sorry for the parents who were working 2-3 jobs to send their children to this school. I am ashamed to say that this being an Islamic school had so many basic problems. I wrote a poem, which is attached here. The poem will give you some idea what was going on other than the bad schooling.

I Wonder...

**Will only the scarf do the trick?
Could decent attire just be enough?
Will fasting alone take me there?
Or feeding the hungry will help?
Prayers all day- is that His direct contact?
Humanitarian behavior will appeal Him more?
Rolling rosary beads will wash my sins away?
Or, honesty is the best policy anyway?
Charity alone will do wonders for me?
Can caring, kindness, not hurting people,
Give me a better place there?
Can I be mean, lie, steal, and backbite?
I plan to do Haj alright.**

I was teaching grade 5 in this school when I met a very good lady, Cathy Cohen, who came to teach the kids poetry. (Cathy's photo attached) She had a unique way of teaching poetry and the kids loved her. She got me interested in writing poetry again. Cathy has been a good friend ever since. This was the year Cathy Cohen was being honored for the work she was doing to get different religions together through poetry. She invited me to attend the award function in Philadelphia. I wrote a poem for her about her as a gift from me. I have attached it here.

Cathy at our school. Cathy got this award in California later.



Cathy and me



Cathy Cohen

You are poetry and poetry is you
We now love poetry because of you
You have given special meaning to
poetry

Which, we bet, You even didn't know
You kindled the fire longing to light
By bringing us poetry, what a delight
When you said poetry doesn't really
have to rhyme

Oh, what a burden you took off our
minds

We now see poetry in numbers, symbols,
alphabets and all

In pictures, in animals and things big
and small

I thank you from my heart

And the children too, its true

For listen to their cries

And what they have to say about you

We love you Ms Cathy, we really do

For you are the best, we know that too

You brought light in our lives

By bringing poetry in our school

You are plain and simple, smart, kind
and "cool"

With all the treasures and more that
you hold

You bring us books and pictures too

You bring little nick knacks to write
about too
You never make us sad or mad, you know
You are always there to share you know
Your knowledge, ideas, and experiences
Are interesting, amazing, fun and
unique

You always love our poems no matter
what we write
Although we know, they are not that
bright
You spend your precious time, money
without a regret
You combine our poems and make one that
is great
You are friendly, kind, gentle and fun
You never miss a class, not even once!
You are always on time never late
You are always happy and that is great
We love and enjoy the things you do
We don't really care, who you are
We see poetry in person, place, or
thing
And when we see poetry, we see you
Our school year will ultimately end

But what you taught us will always
remain
We know you will shine wherever you go
We will only be lucky to have you once
more
For you are poetry and poetry is you
We now love poetry because of you

By

Saleha Lakdawala

5th Grade

Al- Aqsa Islamic School

(presented to Mrs. Cathy Cohen)

May 6th 2003

January, 21st, 2003 I visited Brenda and Jack. On this trip I visited Zafar and Shameem, Saleem Rangoonwala, Pat Brown, Brenda's sister, Jai Kumari and her Husband, Anis Athar now Khambathia, Ateka Apa and her daughter Umbarina's family, and Beryl and Alex, Farha and Saim. Also met Sayeeda Rangoonwala, Sakina Apa, Zahida and her husband Chris, Salma and Hassan, and Nilofer and her family .

Beryl, Brenda and I went inside the Buckingham Palace; this was a golden opportunity because Queen Elizabeth was on a holiday somewhere.

Brenda and I took the Nile Cruise from Luxor. It was a two week trip and was a lot of fun. This was my first cruise ever and it was the most memorable time of my life. I have described the experience in poetry form so I will just let you read that. Our tour photos attached.

Nile, oh Nile, oh River Nile
I have been thinking of you for a while,
It was years ago, when I visited Ireland,
I had seen a map of River Nile, hanging
At a friend's house,
When I asked why it was there
He said, It was there to remind us of the trip
We had taken, my wife and I
It was the most wonderful trip we took
We have never forgotten that trip, to this day

I made up my mind right then, I did
To take this trip and so I did
With my dearest friend for 40 years
She actually made my dream come true
She kept saying lets go, lets go, lets go
To Nile, to Luxor, and to Cairo
From London to Luxor we flew
To board Lady Sophia, the queen of the Nile
Oh what a boat it was, you know
With luxurious rooms, bathrooms and all
With beautiful shops, and health clubs and all
With restaurants who served most delicious food

The scenery from the ship is yet unique
Very different from anything you have seen
Date trees lined all along the shore
With dates hanging in colorful bunches
Some still green, some yellow, and some ready to go
You see obelisks, and Timeless monuments from desert sands
Huge Sphinxes and old Egyptian temples galore
With their gods and goddesses staring at you.
Those amazing figures carved in stone
Still standing there for thousands of years
Cruising ships are a common sight
Here they come and there they go.
They cruise up and down the River Nile
Egypt, of course is the gift of the Nile
When stationed, these ships are parked in rows
In rows of threes and fours
If you have to go on shore
You will then have to cross all rows of fours

When you visit Valley of Kings and Queens
You will surely be impressed by Tutenkomen's tomb
For that's the only one that was found intact
With his furniture, carriages and 2000 artifacts of gold
Which the boy-king would need in his after world

Then you see, some hills and plains
Where Egyptians trying to build a house or two
Its fun to see canoes with vendors selling
Hurling their goods to top of the boat
No fear of falling or losing their goods
They throw their goods you throw your pounds
It's a fair deal on both grounds
When the ship stops at famous sights
An Egyptologist comes with you as a guide
Who knows more than what you want to know
Who can read the figures and make some sense
Of the hieroglyphics and their symbols
What they mean and why they were there
How did they carve these is what I want to know
Without any tools or machines

They made the pyramids of stones and grains
A stairway to heaven they thought
These man-made mountains, called pyramids
Are 3000 years old, with stones weighing 50 tons
Cleverly aligned with certain stars you see
Knowledge built these pyramids, I think
Where engineering, math, and geometry
Played a part with Astronomy
The door to these pyramids you would think
Lies at the very base I bet
You will be surprised to find where it is
And I think I'll let you find it yourself
Pyramids standing there so high
Yet in a perfect straight line
Facing the cardinal directions exactly
How did 20,000 slave at this task
Of building 100, out of which 80 survived
The others the deserts reclaimed
How did they carve in stone so high?
What kind of color still survives?
All puzzles, but not for long
I hope?

When it was time to build The Aswan Dam
Huge mountain-carved temple had to be moved
Recreating it at Abu-Simble, where
Modern men have cut, numbered, and moved
The temple piece-by-piece, and rebuilt
Just like it was built before
Keeping all the details intact
The mountain, the four gods sitting right inside
The summer and winter solstices are kept in mind
Where the sun shines, only twice a year
On the three gods and not the fourth!
Because he is the god of darkness of course!
Amon, The Pharaoh of the Light, they say
Makes Ptah the god of darkness remain in dark

The people of Egypt are another delight
So simple, so humble and so polite
Very happy with their lives
Not really knowing what is outside
Oh Nile, oh Nile oh River Nile
You give Egypt its bread and wine
Without Nile there is no life
There is no cruise, no trade, nor sights
There are no tours, or tourists, nor camel rides
You draw people from across the globe
Who love, and cherish your every sight
Cameras flicking everywhere, at every sight
Movies cameras rolling away all the time
People trying to take a bit of Egypt home
To remember, to show to families and friends
Who can in turn get tempted to cruise
The Nile, the longest River Nile.

By,
Saleha Lakdawala
After a trip to The Nile in August, 2003
Poem written and completed, October 1st, 2003

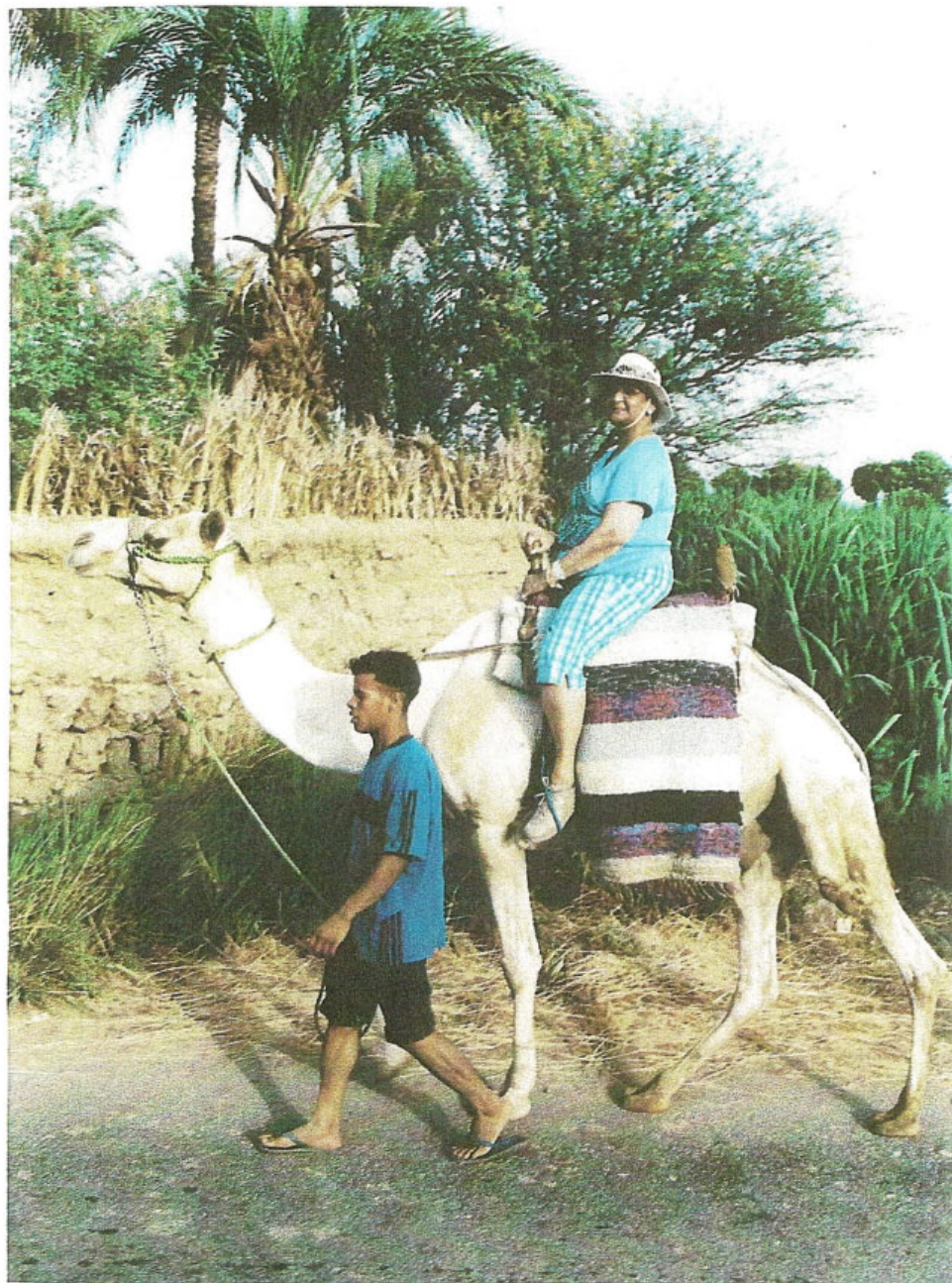
The whole gang at Egyptian Night on the boat



Egyptian



Camel ride



Cathy Cohen was getting another award for her good work and dedication. She invited me to go to LA, California with her for her award ceremony. I did go with her and after the ceremony went to Sajida Apa's house. Sajida Apa was suffering from kidney cancer. She was very sick from chemo and was getting weaker day by day. Finally she passed away. In May of 2004, my sister, Sajida Apa passed away, leaving a big hole in my life. This was a nightmare. She was so close to me, I could talk to her about anything and she would understand. I felt very lonely. I am glad I was with her and helped her in tough times. I still miss her very much. I will always miss her. Attached here is a poem I wrote about her.

Dead Silence

House is full of people, who care and love
Yet there is silence
She lies inside in vain, in pain
Trying to win a losing battle to cancer
Yet there is silence
People come and go
They feel, they cry, know what lies ahead
Yet there is silence
No treatment, no medicine will work, we are told
But there is hope, a miracle or so
Yet there is silence
She slips away helpless, in despair with a tear
Like ocean sand through fingers tight
Yet there is silence
Loneliness, mixed with sadness, anger, and all
Oh God, Why her? Why her? Why her?
Yet there is silence
Feelings concealed waiting to burst like
Calm before storm, volcano waiting to erupt
Yet there is silence, dead silence, just aah....

Saleha Lakdawala

My last photo with my dearest Sajida Apa attached.

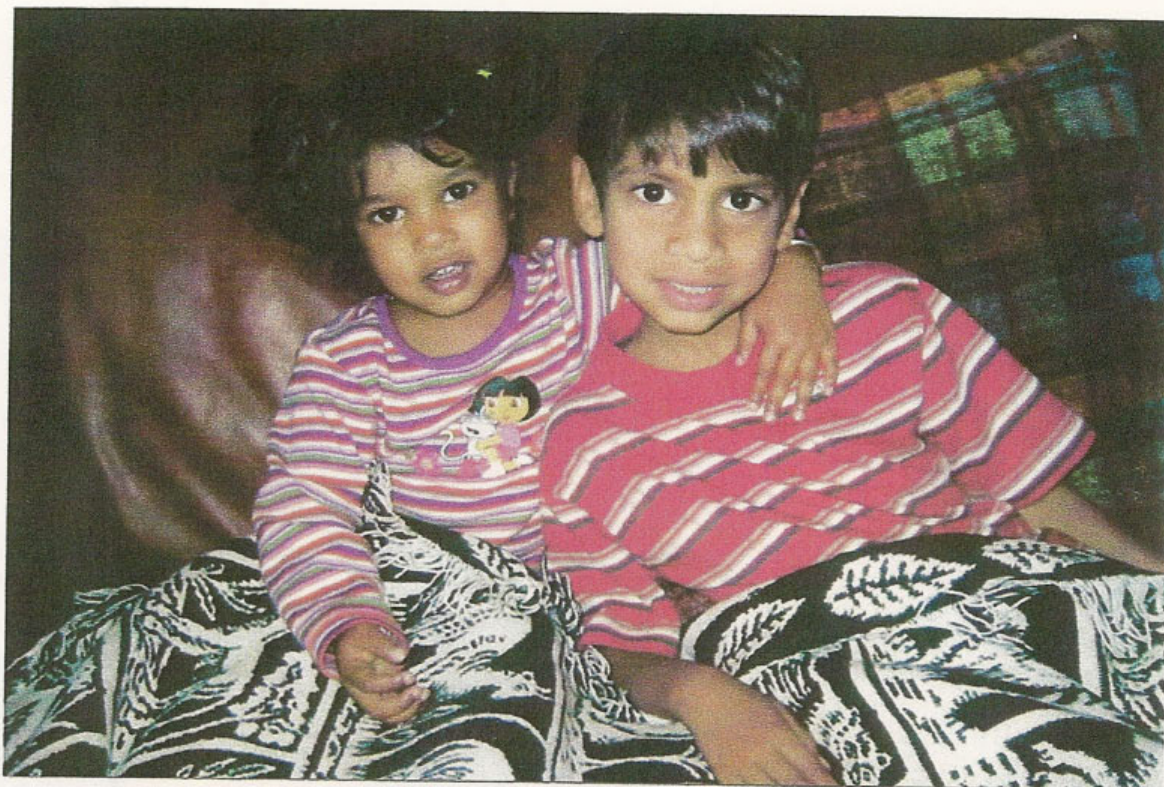


September, 2004 I joined Mt. Laurel Middle School as an aide. I worked with grade 5 & 6 special education students. It was an enjoyable year. I did the same job for 2005 as well.

On March 17th, 2005 Salima and Amir went to India to adopt Alisha Samira Abdabhai. Now we have another addition to our



Alisha joins our family

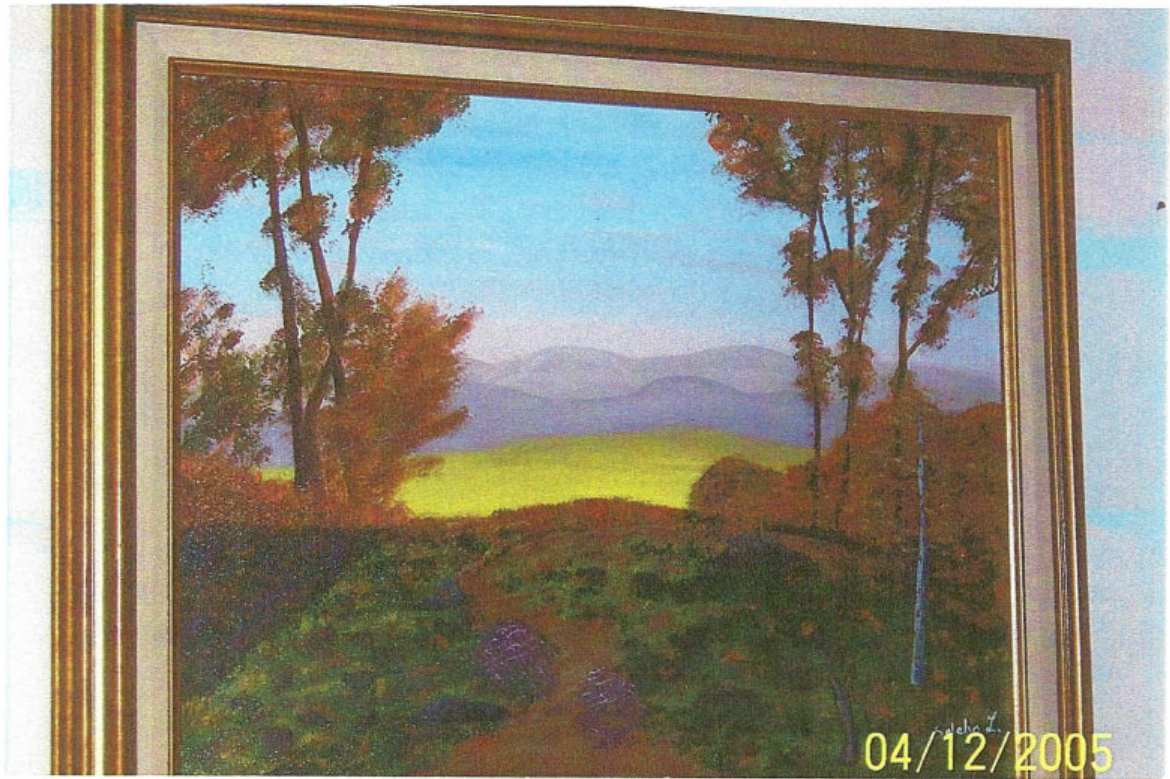


It was my childhood desire to paint. I joined the painting class at A C Moore, which was held once a month. Here is my first painting and the second one attached on the next page. I left NJ and the painting class behind after that.

My very 1st painting



My 2nd painting

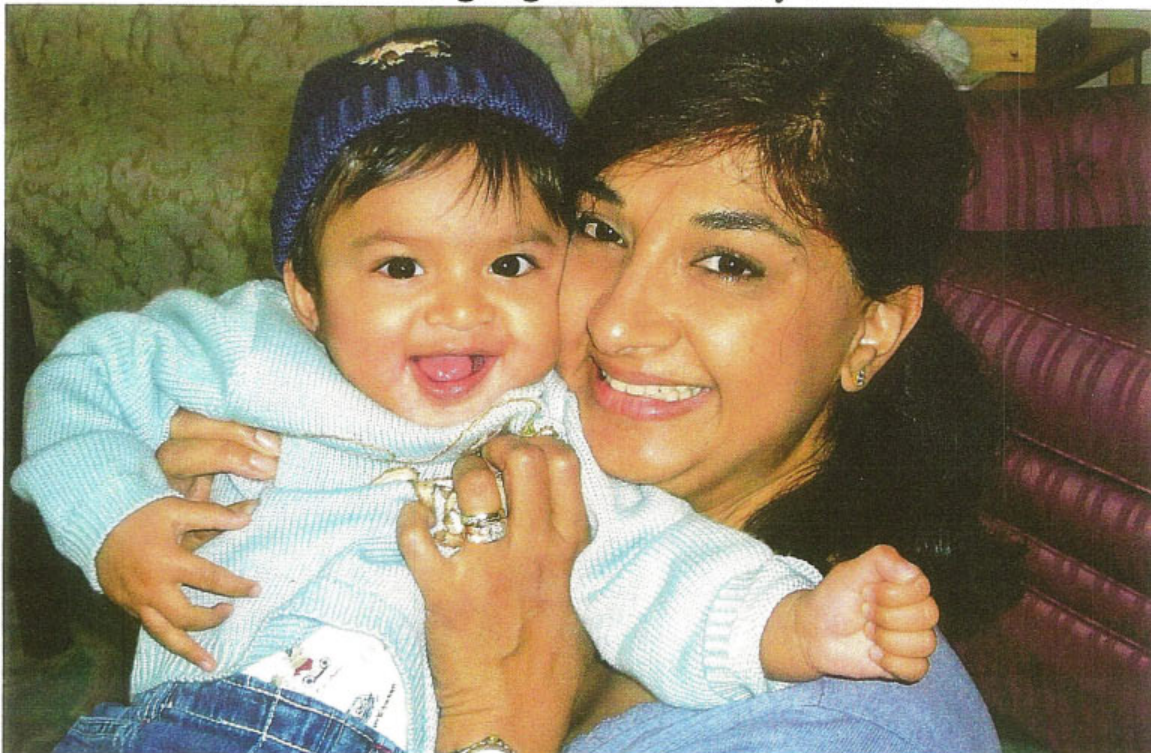


I was now 65 years old and I could go and live anywhere I liked. I do not have to worry about my medical insurance, (Medicare kicks in when one is 65 years old). It was also getting harder for me to shovel snow in winters. My whole family lives in California anyway. So I decided to move to California. My first very wrong decision made as I found out later. I got movers to take all my belongings to LA. Most of my belongings I gave away to people.

I thought finally I will be able to live near my family after all these years. It was not meant to be. However, in February of 2006 I left for California. I thought I will live in LA or San Francisco. After staying a week in LA, I rushed to San Francisco for Suhaila's delivery. We had her shower and "Mithi Shitabi" and then we waited patiently for Zayn's arrival in this world.

On the 12th of April, 2006, at 6:05 PM, Zayn was born. It was an easy delivery and he is a very cute baby. I was there to help Suhaila. Photos Attached:

Soon after Zayn's birth, Soheli and Aliya left for Africa for a wedding. I stayed with Suhaila. Then I found out that I had a broken tendon in my right shoulder, and had to be operated on. Suhaila was now looking after me. I couldn't use my right hand at all. I broke my tendon in NJ while packing and moving all the boxes to the garage to make it easy to move from there.





I could look after myself now but had to do physiotherapy for a long time. I went and lived with Asif Arastu and Raees for a while. I had a lot of fun with them. I met many new friends, and enjoyed their company. Thanks, Asif and Raees.

However, things did not work for me in California on the whole, so I decided I will not live there. I still didn't know where I could live. The houses were very expensive. That meant I would have to rent a cubby hole in a bad neighborhood, where my stuff would have never fit. I was very unhappy for all the time in CA. I felt homeless and very lonely and was wishing I could just vanish in thin air forever. However, I kept praying to God to do what is right for me. I tried to travel so I was not in any one place too long and giving trouble to anyone.

I had another chance to getaway. I went back to attend Nasir's daughter, Nazi's reception in NJ, although I was not invited for the main wedding. I stayed with Zainab. After the reception, Afsar came from Chicago, Rafia and Ruby came from Nasir's house and we all drove to Zulaikha's house. Durreshwar and Nasima joined us there. Eight of my childhood friends met there. We had a lot of fun. We had a sleep-over and next day we all went over to Zainab's house for another stay over. It was fun to be with old friends after such a long time.

Every two years all the St. Georgians get together in Chicago. I have been going from last two times. This year 2006 I went to Chicago. Chicago is a very special place for me because the person I admire the most lives there. You must have guessed who that is. That is Oprah Winfrey. I make sure I watch her shows because there is a lot to learn there. I always wish I might meet her. Maybe, a day will come.

There were 400 St. Georgians at the reunion this year. It was great to see all of them. This went on for three days. The first day was registration with snacks. Then there was a fashion parade, dinner and music party. Then on the third day a brunch before everyone parted. Some photos attached.

St. Georges Reunion



Luckily, my niece, Rafia was visiting Dallas so I thought I will get away again with an excuse to go meet her. I came to Dallas, visited Tahira Malik, a friend of Mouzam and Rizwana's, in Austin. I found out houses here were much cheaper. I thought if I looked for a place in Dallas it would be better. Austin did not have an international airport so the search for town houses in Dallas began.

Maryam Arastu, Mouzam's daughter, did some research and found a list of affordable townhouses. I had made up my mind this was the best thing for me to do. In one day I bought a townhouse north-west of Dallas in a place called Frisco. I was getting an excellent deal for this so I did not waste any time. Everybody who heard this was shocked. I couldn't believe this myself. However, this was God's will. I have been praying to Him to show me the way and He did. I am so happy now. I have the desire to live again. God has given me everything I ever wanted and more in this house. I could not thank Him enough. It is so true, "When one door closes God opens another door."

My address:

5441 Crimson Oaks Drive.
Frisco, TX 75035
USA

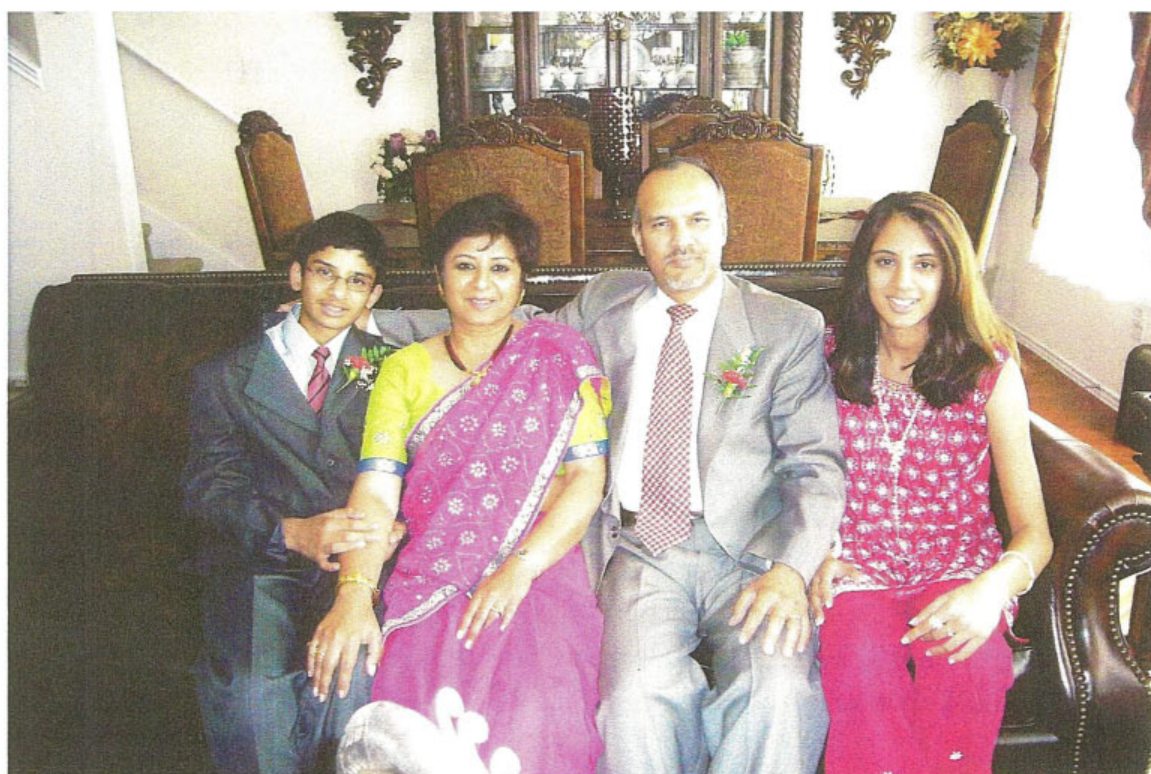
Moazzam came with me for the walk-through and for the closing as well. Surfraz Bhai was with us all the time that day even if he was not here physically. He kept calling us all at the right moments. Finally when we got the possession of the house we called Surfraz Bhai to pray "Innah-Fatahna" on the speaker system. That was very nice to have that read by the eldest member of my family.

Moazzam's family joined us later with cooked food and we had an initiation celebration of my new house. It was nice to have family here.

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My niece, Rizwana and my nephew, Moazzam and their children, Maryam and Muneer have helped me so much in moving that I don't know how I can ever repay them. In fact, in all my life I have never been helped so much as this time. It was good because I couldn't really use my shoulder. God had made all these arrangements for me. Rafia and I moved here to my new house together, which was another blessing.

They have accepted me here with open arms. I thank you guys. Having Moazzam and Rizwana, was like having my own son and daughter. Their never tiring help and support had often had me in tears. They are constantly in my prayers. May God bless them and may all their wishes come true. Although they are 45 minutes away, they are always there when I need them. They have accepted me as a mother figure, and treat me as such. Moazzam's family photograph attached here.



Mine is a whole new development in Frisco. It is so new that it's not on the map! First when Rafia and I moved here, we went out to eat and couldn't find our way back, so I put the address in my navigation system. It couldn't find it. Finally we found the Walgreens drug store near my house and then I could come home. Walgreens address was used whenever I wanted to come home till I upgraded my navigation system.

After my house was completely decorated I had a majlis in my house and had about 30 people. (Who said I don't know anybody here!)

One of the ladies who had come to my house introduced me to another lady, Raqshi, and her husband Ali Immam Jafri, who live in walking distance from my house. This turned out to be an old friend of Sajida Apa's. They were so pleased, to know this, and so was I. We are good friends now.

Moazzam's family and I drove to Florida for a week or so. We were in Orlando, Tampa, and all over. It was great. We visited Farzana Tapia. I met her after 46 years! Amazing...

We visited The Parrot Jungle. Attached is an interesting photograph in The Parrot Jungle with parrots sitting on us. It was a memorable trip which lasted 10 days.



Salima and the kids came here in April and we celebrated Salima's birthday at my new house. Photos attached.



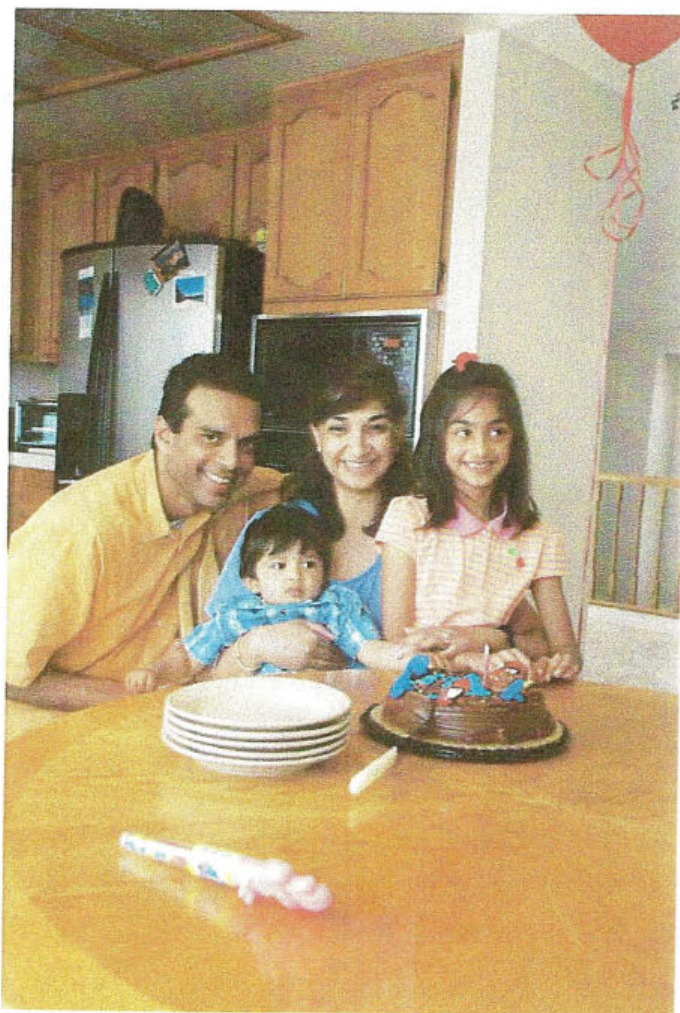
In NJ I had this pet cat for a while. I called it "Snowflake". Photo attached:



My scuba diving buddy, Susan Prokopenko visited me here with her husband Geoff Hunter. They were here for a dog show. They brought four dogs for the show. They have Irish Wolf Hounds. It was nice to see them after so many years. Photos attached.



Zayn's first birthday was in Shahida and Sarwar's house. Suhaila and family were returning from their spring-break holiday. Proper birthday will be celebrated later in June. Photo attached



I am in Frisco as I write this book. My house is completely furnished and decorated. I have completed my backyard as well as my garage.

I pray to God Almighty to keep me healthy and safe here. I hope I do not ever have to depend on any body for anything. If I get old I hope I can still be able to look after myself till I die. Amen.

I have been meeting so many old friends from St. Georges Grammar School here. Everywhere I go I meet someone who knows our Arastu family. My social life has become good. I am enjoying my life here tremendously.

A bunch of ladies meet every Friday at 11:00-11:30am for a couple of hours and do "Dua-e-nudba" and discuss whatever. We have a bite after that and leave. So far it is very rewarding and I am meeting more nice new people. Photos of women in Dua group attached. These were taken at my house when we gathered for dua at my house one Friday.







I had an interview at a Montessori school and got a job at the school. It is only seven minutes from my house. I am looking forward to join this school in August 2007.

My good friend Nafis Khan, came from Canada for a short visit on the 19th of May, 2007. We really had a good time together. I am really happy because through her I met more new people.

My brother Arif bhai and Rashida bhabi came on the 29th of May. It was so nice to have my brother and Bhabi here. It was too short a visit but a pleasant one.

Now I am waiting for Suhaila and family to come for the month of July. I am anxiously waiting for their arrival.

Then Brenda and Jack have already booked their flights to spend the Christmas holidays with me here. That will be a lot of fun.

I love having guests. My dad used to say, "Angels come to your house when you have house guests".

Lastly I cannot end this book without thanking my very close and dear old friends, "my treasured friends" who stood by me through thick and thin over all those years. Without their support it would have been tough living. Thank you. Here are their photos:

Photos of my treasured friends



Some other friends and USA



Here are the cars I drove in USA





Here are some of my visiting cards:



SALLY LAKDAWALA
Design/Sales Consultant

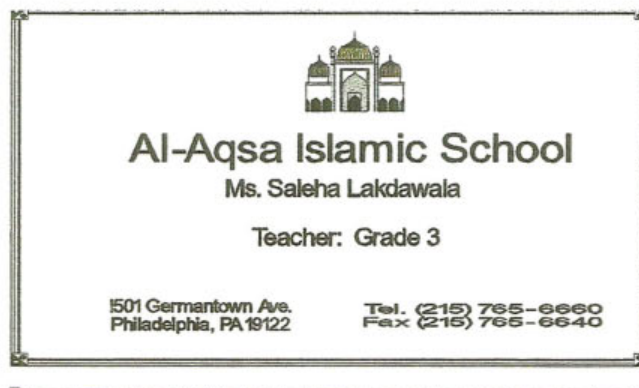
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If I am still alive after writing this book I will thank God for giving me more years to enjoy my children and grand children. If not, enjoy reading my life history.

Always remember I love you all dearly.

Nani,

Saleha Lakdawala

The end

Acknowledgments

This autobiography is the result of constant pressure from my two daughters, Salima Abdabhai and Suhaila Sachak. When my sister Sajida Husain and Arif Arastu came out with their Autobiographies I was further motivated to write mine. It took months to put everything together. I had to remember many years of past before I could put anything in black and white.

I am lucky to have my older brothers Surfraz Arastu and Arif Arastu for giving me the facts about the time when I was little. I am also grateful to my friend Cathy Cohen, Arif Arastu and Salima Abdabhai for taking time to edit my book.

Saleha Lakdawala

My baby photo is one of the children's photographs. Can you find me on the outer cover of the book?

Saleha

