

It was in February 1983 that my late father and I received an invitation from Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah , ex Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iran and then subsequently appointed Minister of Information of Kuwait , for the opening of the Museum of Islamic Art in Kuwait , the first institution of its kind in the Gulf Region where the “ Al-Sabah Collection “ would be showcased.

The world of Art and Culture had gathered to celebrate this event with the greatest scholars and legendary personalities of the Islamic Art World all in attendance . The collection was dazzling, beautifully displayed and it was during the reception that we were introduced to Sheikh Nasser Sabah and in that same moment a guest approached and addressed him as “ Your Royal Highness “ and with his wonderful smile he replied “please don’t call me Your Royal Highness “ . This was my first impression of a man of such noble simplicity, yet at the same time opening to the world one of the greatest treasure chests of priceless Islamic Antiquities as a preserve for all to enjoy.

As I got to know Sheikh Nasser better with time , his larger than life personality surpassed and towered over the importance of Al-Sabah collection. His warmth, humility, generosity, loyalty, patriotism and childlike enthusiasm of sharing his treasures was truly unique.

Over time , his collection through his ambassadorship represented more than just art but rather became a symbol of the plight of the Kuwaiti people during the dark days of the Iraqi invasion in 1990, giving this tragic episode a face of reality and hope.

At the same time as meeting Sheikh Nasser , I came to know his beloved wife Sheikha Hussah , who with Sheikh Nasser was instrumental in creating the Al-Sabah Collection. I forged a great friendship and she took me under her wing in those early dark years of post 1979 Iranian revolution and showed me affection and protection that only a sister could have done. When the news of Sheikh Nasser’s passing was announced, the mourning for him extended well beyond his family and Kuwait but across the globe to all mutual friends and acquaintances he touched with his heart.

The world has lost a great man who enriched the world of Art with his great vision and his legacy will survive him , as his greatest treasure, Sheikha Hussah, who has painstakingly taken the task of offering it to the international public during these past 35 years and she will continue to do so well into the future.

As Saadi the Persian poet said :

“The purpose is leaving an impression to survive as I cannot see our existence as eternal “

His impression will survive he will be remembered as the “irreplaceable Sheikh Nasser “ may his soul rests in peace.

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