

## Remembering Sheikh Nasser

I first met Sheikh Nasser in London in 1982, but got to know him when I was invited to help with his collection of manuscripts for which I went to Kuwait regularly for years and saw him there or in the UK when he was here.

Having known him for so many years, I can describe him as a man who embodied gentleness, kindness, generosity, humanity, attentiveness, thoughtfulness, care, joy of life, appreciation of art and whatever one did for him, and he had a great sense of humour. He always made one feel at ease in his company.

In Kuwait, in addition to seeing him in the office to discuss work, I was often invited to join their family lunches or occasionally he would order special meals to be sent to the office and join us.

I also remember my morning conversations with him on various subjects in their inner courtyard during the time I had been honoured to stay at the house in the late 90s.

When we were told the Iranian Foreign Minister was to visit the Collection with the Ambassador and Kuwaiti officials, I asked him how I was to dress. He looked at me and said 'miniskirt' and left. He must have realized that it would be my first encounter with the officials of the Islamic Government and naturally I would be worried about my appearance. Dear Hussa, always caring and attentive, called shortly afterwards to assure me that apart from not shaking hands, I should appear as I always did, for which I was most grateful.

In the UK, I was glad of the many opportunities to see him in the house he stayed in Beaconsfield. He always came to the door welcoming his guests with his smile, first offering us fruit juice, discussing art and asking our opinions on the objects he had been offered. Lunches at the big table usually had a dish cooked by him. On one occasion he took me by the hand, led me to the kitchen and asked me to show his cooks how to make a Persian dish he had liked and had already bought the ingredients for.

The grand-fatherly joy he shared with me at the birth of the child of one of the Filipino members of the household was very moving.

On one of my last visits to him in Beaconsfield, he asked me if I knew what juice I was drinking. When I could not identify it, he told me it was the juice of pomegranates from one of his farms. I told him how much my grandsons loved pomegranates, and when I was leaving, he, as always, accompanied me to the car, where I found a bag of pomegranates. I should have remembered not to say I liked something to either dear Hussa or Sheikh Nasser, as, unfailingly, I would then be yet again a recipient of their kind generosity.

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