

## My Memories of Stanwood Cobb

Wm Keith Bookwalter

August 19, 2024

It must have been sometime around the fall quarter of 1973 when Stanwood Cobb visited Ohio State University while on a lecture tour. He was 92 years old at that time. It could have been via the LSA of Columbus, Ohio and the OSU Bahá'í Club that arrangements for the lecture hall were made on or near the OSU campus. The room was filled with students. I sat along the wall on Dr. Cobb's left. I don't recall the title or content of his lecture.<sup>1</sup> I only remember what he said towards the end of his presentation about the last time that he met with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His final words of advice. As Dr. Cobb recounted this event he became very enthusiastic, grabbed the sides of the top of the lectern, and declared with great energy and volume something along the lines of: "And then 'Abdu'l-Bahá exclaimed to me three times, 'Be on fire with the love of God! Be on fire with the love of God! Be on fire with the love of God.' The entire hall "shook" with Dr. Cobb's transformed voice and spirit. He himself was on fire with his love for God! I felt as though the Master Himself was present amongst us. As my life has unfolded over the years, whenever I feel that I need to increase my spiritual energy, I recall that scene and my spirit is buoyed up!

Later that evening, a group of Bahá'í youth met with Dr. Cobb at the home of John and Ethel Gloeckner where he was staying. He sat on a chair in the living room and we sat on the floor around him. He mentioned that he was a palmist and had read the palm of the Master. I asked him if he would read mine. He agreed. First, he touched my hair. He told me that I was a very sensitive person (which is very true). He then read my palm and said, "Your life is like a sailboat with a good wind. Whichever direction you point it, you will be taken there." (This, too, has been very much the story of my life.) Dr. Cobb then excused himself saying that he would like to continue but that he needed to rest.

While Dr. Cobb was holding my hand, I was fully conscious that my hand was being held by the hand that held the hand of the Master. Down through the years, whenever I have needed to feel closer to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, I recall that moment.

For some years afterwards, we corresponded a few times.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Cobb's words of advice I always appreciated and took to heart.

---

<sup>1</sup> Possibly, the title was "The Joy of Existence," the name of the pamphlet included in the attached file of his works. This may have been handed out to the participants.

<sup>2</sup> See the attached folder of correspondence.

I have not read Dr. Cobb's many articles and editorials. Regarding his books, I have read several of them but not all of them. The ones I have read, have helped me greatly, especially as a fledgling Bahá'í<sup>3</sup> and young college student. Many youth during those years were enthralled with the revival and republishing of the book of Khalil Gibran. I, too, read a few. But as a Bahá'í youth, I was more attracted to those of Dr. Cobb. He was my "Khalil Gibrán" to whom I turned for inspiration! The book that I felt to be the most "orienting" at that time of my life was *Radiant Living*. The book that I found to be the most inspiring and which I read over and over was *Wings of the Spirit*. It is a collection of brief prose and poetry from Dr. Cobb and others. I recall him saying that his wife Nayan would take over the duties of running their private school during the afternoons in order for him to write. From time to time, he would jot down ideas that would come to him or passages from other works that he was reading. He would place these in a small box (I imagine a shoe box.) Later, he would go through these and select the best ones for publication. My impression is that it was this approach that produced *Wings of the Spirit*.

At OSU, as I gravitated from sociology to psychology to the Bahá'í Faith and education, I searched for Bahá'í educators who had broad enough shoulders to stand on. I found those of Stanwood Cobb and Daniel C. Jordan. I don't know if they ever met. If they did, it would have been an interesting conversation to record. (Dr. Cobb did quote Dr. Jordan in his last book.) In my opinion, their ideas were very much in harmony.

The influence of the work of Dr. Cobb on my professional endeavors and my personal life have been profound. I hope that future generations will continue to find in them abundant ideas that are worth exploring, insights that are enlightening, and inspiration that is highly motivating!

---

<sup>3</sup> I had become a Bahá'í on July 8, 1971 between my sophomore and junior years of college.