

# A 100-year-old Lebanese poet still makes waves with words

*Daughter honors Jawdat Haidar, social activist*

*Poet, writer and social activist Jawdat Haidar – renowned for his participation in the Great Arab Revolution of 1958 – hails from Baalbek. Below, his daughter, Khatoun Haidar, pays tribute to his work – which is still going strong despite his age – as she finds refuge in his poetry.*

Violence and death in Iraq and Palestine, Guantanamo Bay where detainees lost the right for self defense, racial and religious profiling in the land of the free, and the fait accompli of clerics of all faiths preaching intolerance.

Faced by a turbulent and noisy world, I took refuge in a virtual oasis of sanity created by the poetry of Jawdat Haidar published in his books "Voices," "Echoes," and "Shadows."

Disheartened by a year that

ended with a natural catastrophe, I visited Jawdat Haidar seeking his philosophical quietude. Do not misinterpret my words, this 100-year-old poet is no escapist, he is committed and concerned.

He is not a hermit, he lived an intense life full to the brim, yet he was not merely content to experience, suffer, and enjoy. He sought to understand, analyze, and find solutions. He could be characterized as a civic poet who sought to express contemporary political and social ideas in poetry. I prefer to characterize him as a poet and philosopher. Didn't Samuel Taylor Coleridge say "No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher?"

I found him in good health, working on his new collection of poetry. We discussed various subjects and I was amazed at his interest in the Internet and its pos-

sibilities. For somebody who was born before there were transistor radios or planes, he showed an incredible understanding of the possible applications of this new technology. He even explored with me the possibilities of setting up his own Web site.

Touching on the subject of the latest developments in our region, he presented me with some poems. They provide some clear answers to our predicament. "Women" explores the very current subject of development and the issue of the role of women in

## Women

*Though we've had a rarity in the past  
Of those great women who left a big name  
Since that time most of them have braved at last  
The highest range of knowledge and became*

*Well ed'cated and more cultured indeed  
To help carry well the burden of life  
Being the muscle of the heart we need  
The exponent on the tracks of our strife*

*Now friends we and them hand in hand a team  
Work for the welfare of our land to be  
The land of the democracy we dream  
The peaceful land of love and liberty*

*A team who can save the world from the smell  
Poll'tion and the ugly journey to Hell.*

*Jawdat Haidar  
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development. This poem is very poignant given that Jawdat grew up in a world where women were still struggling for the right to vote.

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