

canoe.ca

DIRECT BUY FROM
DirectBuy
The Home Improvement & Hardware Club

LEARN HOW

Click Here to learn how to
attend a FREE Open House at a
DirectBuy Club near you.

kingstonlife

MICHAEL FLATLEY'S
LORD OF THE DANCE K-Rock
Centre

Home [Subscribe](#) [About Us](#) [Contact Us](#) [Sign-In](#)

In This Issue

[Home > Feature 2 >](#)

From the Editor

Wine

Business Directory

Community Spirit

What's Happening

Kingston Relocation Guide

Media Kit

Quick Search:

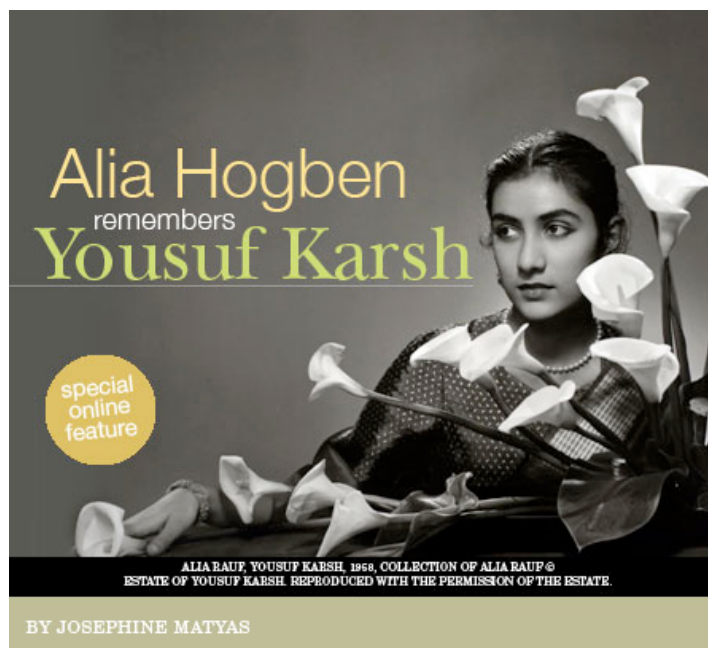
Search

[Advanced Search](#)



FEATURE 2

THE KARSH TRAIL



BY JOSEPHINE MATYAS

When the phone call came, it brought a flood of pleasant memories for Kingston-area resident Alia Hogben. The voice on the other end of the line was an archivist hunting down the lucky few who had shared a personal connection with great portrait photographer Yousuf Karsh.

"It was very exciting," says Hogben, who posed for Karsh when she was a teenage girl almost four decades ago. "I really don't know how they found me."

The elaborate sleuthing was all part of an exhibition that celebrates the 100th anniversary of Karsh's birth. The city of Ottawa is now awash with exhibits at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, Library and Archives Canada, and the Fairmont Château Laurier — all part of The Karsh Trail, a journey through the master's life and work. Hogben's portraits (under the name Alia Rauf, her family name) and the story of her sitting with the celebrated photographer are part of the *Karsh: Image Maker* exhibition at the Canada Science and Technology Museum.

An Armenian immigrant, Karsh believed that to be a good photographer you must first train in art, music, poetry, literature and self-discipline. It was these tastes that prepared the eye to look for and appreciate "the beauties of nature."

Visit these highlights on The Karsh Trail in Ottawa:

Sound and Vision: Portraits of Musicians and Composers (until Jan. 10, 2010)

Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St.,

www.collectionscanada.gc.ca

Intimate photographic portraits of musical greats including Dizzy Gillespie, Glenn Gould, Dave Brubeck and Joan Baez.

Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., www.fairmont.com/laurier

The grand hotel was home, studio and exhibition gallery to Karsh for almost two decades (1973-1992). Stay in room 658 or 660 and you'll feel the kismet of the many luminaries he photographed in that very spot — once his studio space, now renovated into guest rooms. For the ultimate Karsh experience, book the third-floor Karsh Suite, where he lived from 1980 to 1998. If you're only visiting for the day, stop by the hotel's Reading Lounge, where six original Karsh photographs grace the walls — Albert Einstein, Stephen Leacock and Winston Churchill among them. These were Karsh's gift to the hotel.

Karsh: Image Maker (until Sept. 13, 2009, then travelling throughout Canada)

Canada Science and Technology Museum, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd.

www.festivalkarsh.ca

An extensive exhibition of original prints and artifacts, including darkroom equipment and Karsh's large-format cameras, letters and video clips. The gallery walls are covered with portraits of those who have been "Karshed," including Grey Owl, Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King Jr., Helen Keller, Jacques Cousteau and Andy Warhol. The collection includes three photographs of Kingston's Alia Hogben. The exhibition and Festival Karsh are a collaboration between the Canada Science and Technology Museum and the Portrait Gallery of Canada, a program of Library and Archives Canada.

Inarguably considered the greatest portrait photographer of all time (over a six-decade career having photographed thousands of dignitaries from Princess Elizabeth to Fidel Castro), Karsh was a master of light and a storyteller who produced iconic images by carefully constructing each portrait through a series of artistic and technical decisions.

And that is exactly the way Hogben remembers her time in the studio with him.

"My family came to Canada when I was 16 or 17. My father was the Indian High Commissioner. Mr. Karsh must have seen me at a party and he contacted my father's office to ask if he could photograph me. My father refused; he did not know who Karsh was and he was a protective Indian father." The portrait sitting was eventually arranged after Karsh pursued diplomatic channels.

"He was very particular," Hogben recalls. "He posed you. He took a lot of photographs.

"I wore very fancy saris and good jewelry. In one of the pictures, he used the sari as a background. I remember him hanging it up behind me. He used me as his study, and took a lot of photographs of me and used them for a CBC documentary, but I don't know what became of it."

In fact, Hogben's brush with fame stretched much further than the studio sittings, as the photographer welcomed her to his home. "Karsh and his wife were extremely kind. They were wonderful to me. They would call and invite me and I would have tea and spend the afternoon at their house in Ottawa. It was called Little Wings, and I remember huge windows overlooking a park area.

"They were so incredibly kind . . . it was very moving for me. The contact was very personal; they talked to me about themselves. Mr. Karsh was the first person who ever gave me roses. And his wife gave me the most exquisite handmade Italian sandals. I kept them for years."

When she finally got a look at the finished photographs, Hogben's reaction was typical for a teenage girl. "I don't think I photograph well. I was more awed by his name than by the pictures."

Still, what he did for her was "remarkable." Hogben was unaware that Karsh had submitted the photos to *Maclean's* magazine as part of a feature story on beautiful women in Canada.

"He said very flattering things about me," Hogben says. "I was so thrilled. My friends at university showed me the magazine. Everyone was so impressed."

Now, four decades later, she does harbour one regret.

"I felt guilty because I did not keep in touch with him. One day he was in the elevator of the Château Laurier with a friend of mine. She recognized him, picked up her courage and told him that she knew me and that he had photographed me. He immediately said that he would love to hear from me, but I did not follow up on that. I don't know why. I guess that life just got in the way."

Years later, it took just one phone call from an archivist to quickly reconnect Hogben with her memories of the man. "These days it is very thrilling, and very nostalgic to have the photos as part of the current exhibit."

[Sign-In to Discuss](#)
Be the first to post a comment!

Osprey Media

[Disclaimer](#) | [Privacy](#) | © 2009



Newspapers:

Select a Publication:

[wHaggle](#)
[Careers](#)

[Blogs](#)
[Wheels](#)

[Obituaries](#)
[Classifieds](#)