



## ***Hamida Mohammed bin Amer***

Tibra Spotlight, June 2002\*  
by Hana Naas

### **A Pioneer for Libyan Women**

Hamida bin Amer is the first female Libyan radio announcer. In 1954, when the idea of establishing a radio station surfaced, there was a search for a Libyan woman to present a program called "Women's Corner." Hamida al-Anaizi, a pioneer woman activist, suggested the position to Ms. bin Amer, who was married at the time. After some hesitation, special arrangements were made to have the program recorded at home, then broadcast from the radio station. Her work pioneered the way for the Libyan women's radio icon Khadija al-Jahmi. Until the early 1960s, Hamida bin Amer confidently spoke to the housewife, the daughter, the student, and was widely admired. Her work in educational radio is only one of the many examples of the leading contributions that she and her contemporaries have made to Libyan society in general and Libyan women in particular.



Hamida bin Amer (right) with her friend the late Khadija al-Jahmi (left.) The picture was taken in Tripoli in August 1996, few days before al-Jahmi passed away.

Hamida was fortunate to grow up in a household that valued religious education as well as education in other disciplines. Her grandfather, Shiekh Mohammed bin Amer, was the Mufti and chief judge of Benghazi during the Ottoman era. Her father, Sheikh Mohammed M. bin Amer served for a long time as an attorney in religious law (Islamic Shari'a), and wrote a book entitled, "Mulakhas al-Ahkam al-Shar'ia ala al-Mu'tamad min

Madh-hab al-Malikiya," which translates to "Summary of Legal Statutes based Upon Endorsed Principles of the Maliki School of Jurisprudence."

With her father's encouragement, she learned the Italian language through middle school and attained an elementary education diploma in the Arabic school. She attended the first Arabic school for girls in Benghazi, which was established in 1930 by Hamida al-Anaizi and Badia Flaifel. In addition to formal schooling, she benefited from her father's diverse library. Along with the formal curriculum in Arabic and Italian, she also learned the crafts of needlework, embroidery and sewing. In 1940, she married Mr. Husien Salem bin Amer, and they raised four sons and six daughters. Despite their simple means, they passed the value of education to their children who achieved high degrees of education and distinction.

### Hamida Mohammed bin Amer

Born in Benghazi, Libya, 13 December 1925

**1940:** Married Husien bin Amer. They raised ten children.

**1945- 1970's:** Founding member of the first women's association

**1954:** First Libyan female radio announcer

**1962-1985:** Teacher

Lives in Benghazi, Libya

She was one of the founding members of the first women's association after independence. From 1954 till the end of the 1970s, she was an enthusiastic, leading contributor to society. Fellow members in the association included Hamida al-Anaizi, Khairya Mizkhan, Salma Younis al-Jouhary, Hayat al-Jarrah, Zakia al-Mangoush and Wedad Ashraf. The women's association was funded by donations, and its activities included helping needy girls in schools, visiting families and encouraging them to send daughters to school, helping orphans, and visiting patients in hospitals.

Appointed as a teacher in 1962, she worked in the education sector until she retired in 1985, but never completely left social and charitable activities.

Ms. bin Amer has been written up and interviewed in the Libyan media at various times where she conveys a clear picture of yesterday's society and its differences from today's.

*An interview with Ms. bin Amer from "Al-Bayt" magazine. (date unknown) Visit <http://tibra.org>*

Hamida bin Amer has been an important influence in making a positive difference, a role model for many younger women, always stressing the importance of social values and driven by her dedication to women's causes. She has lived a very productive life, taking the opportunities to enrich the lives of many others. She is an optimistic person, and her motto is "Wish for others what you love for yourself."

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*\*Reference material was provided by Hamida's daughter, Ibtissam bin Amer.*

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