

KhabarNameh

خبرنامه



انجمن گروه صلح ایران

Newsletter of the Peace Corps Iran Association
Volume 9 – Number 2 – February 2021
Copyright © 2016 by Peace Corps Iran Association

FROM THE EDITOR

Joan Gaughan (Rasht/Lahijan, 1964-66)



And now comes spring – Nowruz—and new things, including the outline and status of a **Strategic Plan** for the PCIA unveiled here by Board member **John Holehan**. For the hard work and realistic vision of the PCIA Board, we can all be grateful. John supplements that work with a review of **John Limbert's** new book while **Jim Grant's** article on an Iranian family's business mirrors Persis Karim's work on the Iranian diaspora. A new column, **Letter from Tehran**, debuts and “Rom Rom” noticed something interesting about the Statue of Liberty in the **Aya Midanastid? Nema-ye Nazdik** carries a review of a most intriguing film and **Bill Brandon** evokes a “divine gift” similar to what some of us might also have experienced. Be sure to take note of the link to an article in the *Tehran Times* on **Bill Beeman's** interview regarding Iran's conventional weapons and don't miss the **Announcements**.

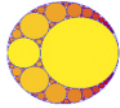
So gentle reader, befarma'id.

IN THIS ISSUE

Strategic Plan	2	Aya Midanastid?	10
Iranian Immigrant	5	Nema-ye Nazdik	11
Books, Books	7	Trivia Corner	11
Letter from Tehran	8	A Divine Gift	12
Dooreh-ye Ketab	9	Announcements	14
Beeman Interview	9	In Memoriam	16

PCIA Strategic Plan

Update provided by Board member John Holehan (Mashhad, 1967-71)



Phase I

In October 2020, the Board began working on long-term strategic planning with Telesto Strategy, our consulting firm. Telesto has delineated four phases for the development of the PCIA Strategic Plan:

Internal Discovery & Maturity Evaluation

Overview

Conduct interviews with PCIA board members for baseline understanding and assess PCIA's overall maturity

Outcome

PCIA & Telesto will have a common understanding of research priorities & of PCIA's current maturity

1. Internal Discovery & Maturity Evaluation
2. Landscape Assessment & Member Survey
3. SWOT Analysis & Evaluation
4. Transition Strategic Plan

Each of the phases is highlighted in accompanying text boxes which provide a brief overview and expected outcomes. Phase 1 has been completed and consisted of detailed interviews with all Board members and other members involved in direct work for PCIA in promoting the organization's legacy and advocacy goals outlined in its mission statement. Telesto compiled and analyzed the interview comments into a Phase 1 report. Among the highlights and accomplishments reported in Phase 1 were the following:

- The Board updated its mission statement to better reflect its goals with respect to legacy and advocacy;
- The majority of PCIA leadership expressed that a succession plan should involve a regional alliance (rating of 8.5) to promote advocacy and continue the mission as related to Iran;
- The majority of the leadership - with second choice (7.6 rating) suggested that a successor group should be considered for the succession plan in order to diversify membership and recruit new leaders; and
- Telesto provided an assessment of PCIA current maturity based on leadership, value chain, communities & government. Overall maturity rated as Introspective – organization sees the need for a new approach given lack of long term and succession plan. These elements will be addressed in later phases.



Phase II

Landscape Assessment & Member Survey

Overview

Develop and conduct an online survey with PCIA members and complete a landscape analysis of analog organizations

Outcome

Phase II of the strategic planning process was initiated after holidays and is currently in progress. This phase encompasses a landscape assessment of analog organizations and a comprehensive online PCIA member survey.

Through preliminary research to date, Telesto has identified four organizations aligned with PCIA based on mission, measured impact and diverse programming initiatives. These organizations are: The Friends Committee on National Legislation; The National Iranian American Council (NIAC); The Public Affairs Alliance of

Iranian Americans; and The Peace Alliance. Telesto will continue to identify potential successor groups and the online survey invites members for names of organizations that they would like to see evaluated.

The online survey was launched on January 27, 2021. It was designed by Telesto in consultation with the PCIA Board. In order to protect the privacy of PCIA members, the survey was distributed directly by PCIA using its current membership list. The completed surveys were to be returned directly to Telesto for compilation and analysis by February 5, 2021. Telesto has provided the following preliminary results from the survey:

- A total of 191 surveys were received which represents approximately one third of the membership surveyed. Target quota was 75. The survey was in the field for 13 days. Average time to complete the survey – 10 minutes and 11 seconds.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed (47%) or strongly agreed (21%) that **PCIA has made a positive impact in political advocacy, advancing the mission for peace through education, outreach and cultural diplomacy.**
- An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed (58%) or strongly agreed (26%) that **PCIA has made a positive impact through legacy efforts and collection of documents, stories, and publications.**
- In ranking PCIA activities for the **potential of having the greatest impact**, the respondents ranked **preservation of historic legacy** and **political advocacy** each first with a weighted score of 3.1.
- On a scale of 1-10, where 10 is most successful and 1 is least successful, the membership was asked **how successful is PCIA at advancing its mission** to date? The resultant score was a positive **7.1**.
- Another question asked “If you had to choose, what is the **one thing** that you would like PCIA to **actively pursue**?” The highest response rate (34%) went to **Advocate for peaceful relations between U.S. and Iran**. A close second at 31%, respondents identified **Preserve the legacy of RPCVs who served in Iran**.

PCIA Vision

Achieve and maintain peaceful relations between the US and Iran.

Mission Statement

Building on the legacy of the Peace Corps in Iran, Peace Corps Iran Association advances peace and understanding between Americans and Iranians through education, outreach, and advocacy.

Phase III is scheduled to launch in mid-February and will build on the foundation of research data and analysis gathered from the first two phases of the planning process. Telesto will utilize this data to inform a traditional SWOT analysis which will examine the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to PCIA and its mission. Alongside the SWOT, Telesto recommended a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) analysis, a process they developed over the years to incorporate additional leading principles from non-profit management and leverage components of the SOAR analysis model. SOAR incorporates other considerations important to the long-term strategy of a non-profit and is a very inclusive process and more action-oriented. Telesto will work collaboratively with the Board on the best concept to leverage for PCIA activities.



Phase III



Phase IV

SWOT Analysis & Evaluation	Transition Strategic Plan
<p>Overview</p> <p>Synthesize data to inform SWOT and recommend SOAR analysis</p>	<p>Overview</p> <p>Refine strategic plan with insights and actionable recommendations</p>
<p>Outcome</p> <p>PCIA will know the opportunities and parameters surrounding organizational direction</p>	<p>Outcome</p> <p>IA will have strategic plan that addresses succession planning and next steps</p>

Phase IV will conclude with development of a Transition Strategic Plan with insights and actionable recommendations. The plan will address succession planning and next steps. The overall study is expected to be completed by May 1, 2021.

Periodic updates of the Strategic Plan will be posted on the PCIA website and publications. Any questions regarding the Strategic Plan can be directed to Board President Jeannette Gottlieb (jeannettegny@peacecorpsiran.org) or Board member John Holehan (johnh@peacecorpsiran.org).

HOW AN IRANIAN IMMIGRANT EXPANED AN AMERICAN DRUG STORE SERVICE

By Jim Grant (Lahijan/Karaj, 1964-66)



Jim Grant

The Discount Drug Mart (DDM) headquartered in Medina, Ohio, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2019. Ranked in the top ten of U.S. drug store companies, it was founded in 1969 by an Iranian immigrant, Parviz Boodjeh.



Discount Drug Mart store No. 73 located in North Canton, OH. ca: 2019

Parviz was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1927. He grew up with four sisters and a brother. During his first twenty-one years, the Iranian people experienced difficult

living conditions exacerbated by a serious famine. These conditions were aggravated by foreign intervention for Iran's oil. During World War II, the Allies commandeered Iran's manpower and equipment to operate the Trans-Iranian railroad as well as its cross-country road system in order to supply the Soviet Union with military equipment and supplies. In order to make money for the family, Parviz sold home-made pastries on Tehran street corners but he was determined to become a medical doctor. To achieve that, he wanted to attend medical school in America.



Parviz Boodjeh, age 17 in Tehran, IRAN. ca: 1944

In 1947, with his own savings and his family's help, he was able to purchase the airfare to make the trip to California. The limited exchange rate of the Iranian rial to the U.S. dollar at that time was .0462. So Parviz arrived in California with \$90.

He attended Santa Rosa Junior College, majoring in pre-med while paying for his education with odd jobs and living in a rooming house near the college. Near the completion of his second year, the college dean advised him to switch his major to pharmacy and directed him to the University of Toledo, Ohio, which had an accredited pharmacy curriculum. So, he followed that advice.

In 1952, he met his wife, Mildred L. (Dietrich), at an evening dance in a church near the college campus. That year they were married and started a family. Parviz graduated in 1954, and became a certified licensed pharmacist.

For fifteen years, he worked for two drug store companies in the Cleveland area. As general manager at one of these, Jay Drug Stores, he broadened the merchandise and increased the business, but Jay Drugs was sold in 1969 and Parviz lost his job. So Parviz and Mildred gathered their children, David, Debbie, Don, Diana, and Doug and told them that their father would start his own drug store.



Mildred and Parviz enjoying a trip to Florida away from the cold winter weather in northeastern Ohio, ca: 2008

Parviz wanted to serve his customers with more merchandise than a “drug store.” He envisioned a store size that would range up to 30,000 square feet and stock 40,000 items. This enlarged drug store would offer its customers a full line of health and beauty items, groceries, hardware items, house paints and tools, automotive maintenance parts, beer and wine, casual clothing for adults and youngsters, toys and books, school and office supplies, as well as durable medical supplies.



A Boodjeh family photograph at the University of Toledo with Mildred, devoted mother and grandmother, all proud of Parviz being awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science by the College of Pharmacy. ca: 2008

The first store was in Elyria, Ohio. In the next eight years, seven more stores were built throughout northeast Ohio. With three of his children involved in the operation and growth of the business, the Discount Drug Mart has grown to seventy-six stores throughout twenty counties in Ohio together with a 580,000 square feet warehouse and its own fleet of trucks.

Parviz Boodjeh’s company provides delivery and service of durable health care equipment as well as necessary drug store services and everyday household

merchandise. It also has its own pharmacy supply center and prescription service. For its 4,490 employees, the company provides qualifying employees with an employee stock ownership program.

Before his death in 2015, Parviz and his company had received numerous awards for their commercial and civic services. His proudest award came in the spring of 2008 when the University of Toledo awarded him an Honorary Doctorate of Science. Two years later, he contributed over one million dollars to the construction of the university's College of Pharmacy's new building. With the loving support of Mildred and their five children, Parviz has accomplished his early desire to serve others with medical service.

The full life of Parviz Boodjeh and the 50 years growth of Discount Drug Mart can be viewed at <https://discount-drugmart.com/our-store/about-us/>

NOTE: All photographs displayed are courtesy of the Parviz Boodjeh family.

BOOKS, BOOKS

Edited by John Holehan (Mashhad, 1967-71)

Believers: Love and Death in Iran. By Marc Grossman and John Limbert. Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2020. 355 pages. Reviewed by John Holehan.

While the authors go out of their way to claim their story is purely fictional, this book reads more like historical fiction. The story unfolds with all the intrigue, excitement and plot twists of a classic spy novel. The characters grab you at the outset and the story pushes you dizzily towards a surprising conclusion. Ambassadors John Limbert and Marc Grossman weave a story embedded deep in the reality of Iran and the dangerous art of spying in a hostile land.

Retired Foreign Service Officer Nilufar Hartman, arrives in 1979 Tehran as Muslim students storm the US embassy and take Americans hostage. As the title suggests, Nilufar's story is about believers, love and death, and Tehran. Her story is suspenseful, romantic, timely and vitally relevant to our times. Nilufar is recruited by her former boss, Undersecretary Alan Porter, and sent to Tehran undercover for the purpose of gathering intelligence on the hostage situation at the embassy. Nilufar's uncle Arash, Iranian Ambassador to the US and Porter's friend and colleague, provides Nilufar's undercover character, the pious "Massoumeh", with references that gain her jobs with Islamic leaders Beheshti and Rafsanjani and thus access to the inner workings and policies of the Revolution.

Nazanin is an enlightened Iranian woman who befriends Nilufar. While she suspects Nilufar is not who she pretends to be, Nazanin unquestionably supports her friend through several harrowing clashes with authorities and ultimately assists Nilufar in escaping Tehran. And what good spy venture would be complete without a competent antagonist so the authors give us Sarhaddi, the villainous character who thwarts Nilufar's efforts at several turns and comes treacherously close to uncovering her. This provides the palpable tension to the book. Can Nilufar's information to Porter keep the hostages alive long enough to negotiate a release? If Nilufar is exposed her life would be in danger. As events and Sarhaddi close in on the deception, Porter is forced to provide her protection and make plans for her escape.

Iranian American Ruzbeh Parvizi, a young CIA officer, is recruited by Porter and sent to Tehran to protect and ultimately extract Nilufar from Iran to safety. Posing as a journalist,

Ruzbeh covers the Revolution and the Embassy situation and gains access to Nilufar. Through the stress of protecting their undercover personas and dodging the Islamic authorities that are rapidly closing in on them, Nilufar and Ruzbeh eventually fall in love and make plans for their escape and life thereafter.

The second part of the saga occurs thirty years later when Alan Porter again recruits Nilufar for another dangerous mission to Iran. Extremists in America and Iran are intent on provoking war between the two countries. Porter needs Nilufar in Tehran to engage the Islamic leadership in combatting the extremists and avoiding war. This crisis also rings true. The Trump administration's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action increased tensions between the two countries, and before the 2020 elections, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was making provocative statements regarding potential confrontation with Iran.

Nazanin turns up heroically in Part Two as well. Nilufar remained in contact with her friend since leaving Iran in 1989. Now thirty years later Nazanin has a prestigious academic position with the University and, more importantly, a family connection with the current Iranian President Rafsanjani. This connection helps Nilufar pass information to the Islamic leadership and mount a coordinated attack against the extremist groups and dissolve the threat of war.

In their first foray into the world of fiction, Grossman and Limbert provide their readers extraordinary insight into the politics and culture of Iran while evoking a bygone era. PCIA members should have particular interest in an historic reading of the Embassy hostage situation and the birth of the Islamic Republic. Nilufar's Iranian family adds cultural realism to the story and will remind us of our own relationships with the Iranian workers, neighbors, and friends that we met as Peace Corps volunteers.

The other PCIA connection is our friend and colleague John Limbert. As a RPCV from Iran (Sanandaj, 1964-66) and former hostage, Limbert is uniquely respected for his wisdom, expertise, and familiarity with the ancient, complex and culturally rich country of Iran and its political machinations. *Believers* is a fast-paced, realistic, high stakes story that keeps the reader on edge. This is a must-read historical novel filled with rich characters, history and twists that take readers right up to the dangers of an open conflict today. If you are a spy thriller aficionado, it's also great fun.

LETTER FROM TEHRAN

By Homa

Haji Firooz

In ancient Persian culture, Haji Firooz was the one who guarded the fire in the Zoroastrian fire temple and did not allow it to be extinguished.

He was pictured with a black face due to the smoke from the fire, and from nothing else. His clothes were red, also from the fire which, in the culture of Mithraism, is sacred. At Nowruz, he came to the streets early before anyone else, singing and dancing and playing a tambourine. He did not come to beg but people happily gave him gifts because he brought the gift of the good news that Spring would soon come.

Many elements of Christianity, especially associated with Christmas, are derived from Mithraism.

DOOREH-YE KETAB

By Jim Goode (Tuysarkan, 1968-71) and Jackie Spurlock (Abadeh, Riz/ZarrinShahr, 1974-76)

Here are the books and authors selected by members of the Dooreh-ye Ketab for the remainder of 2021:

- March 10 – Kevan Harris, *A Social Revolution: Politics and the Welfare State in Iran*, 2017.
- May 12 – Neda Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race*, 2017.
- July 14 – Dennis Briskin, 1967-69), *The Face of Iran Before...* , 2020.
AND Alice Preston Phinney, (Kerman, 1965-67), *Yekke Bud, Yekke Na Bud*, 1975.

PLEASE NOTE: The two works on July 14 will be read together for a single discussion session.

- September 8 – Tara Bahrapour, *To See and See Again*, 1999.
- November 10 –Shokoofeh Azar, *The Enlightenment of the Greengage Tree*, (2020).

All dates are Wednesdays; time is 5:00 p.m. (Pacific Time). We meet on Zoom. All living authors have agreed to join us for the discussion of their books.

Last year we had some great discussions and we're excited about the titles we have coming up this year. If you have not yet attended a Dooreh and wish to be included on the invite list, email us. If you have participated in previous Dooreh meetings, we have you already on the list. You're good!! Please let one of us know if you have any questions.

Jim@peacecorpsiran.org

Jackie@peacecorpsiran.org

William Beeman's Interview with the *Tehran Times*

By Joan Gaughan

The January 29 issue of the *Tehran Times* carries a lively interview with William Beeman. He argues that, in the discussions about Iran's nuclear program, there has been a "bit of a charade" since Iran has been prohibited from developing nuclear weapons since it became a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1970. It was false claims that Iran was violating the NPT that led to sanctions being imposed on Iran which then led to the need for the JCPOA. Iran's conventional weapons, Beeman argues, are completely legal. The objection to them is the "fantasy" that conventional weapons could be used to deliver a nuclear warhead to Israel, an argument that has been made since 1990—thirty years ago!



Dr. Beeman's interview can be accessed at <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/457474/Iran-s-conventional-arms-are-completely-legal-American-scholar>.

AYA MIDANASTID?

By "Rom Rom"

Mithras and the Statue of Liberty

Have you ever wondered where Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi got the idea for his design of the Statue of Liberty? A while ago, I came across a picture of Mithras, the Zoroastrian demi-god, and I was struck by the similarity between that image and the Statue of Liberty, especially in the crown. Maybe the similarity is coincidental. Or maybe it isn't.



The seven spikes in the Statue of Liberty's crown represent the seven continents or the seven seas. In the ancient world, the number seven, had mystical significance. In all three of the later monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. There were seven planets. In pre-Islamic Persia, there are seven stages of love, and in the *Shahnameh*, Rostam is required to undertake seven labors accompanied only by his horse, Raksh. As we know, the "haft



sin" of Zoroastrianism's Nowruz represent the good things of creation. One of the most important is light; hence, fire is holy. It drives out darkness, provides warmth, it cleanses and one cooks with it. In a Zoroastrian shrine, it is never extinguished.

Mithras was associated with light, the sun, all-seeing, and thus, associated with Truth. He is often portrayed with a torch in one hand and, in the other, a knife. The Statue of Liberty also raises a torch but the knife is replaced with the tablet on which is inscribed "July IV MDCCLXXVI" --- July 4, 1776.

So what, if anything, would Mithras have to do with Bartholdi? Several millennia after the beginnings of Zoroastrianism, there was a lot of contact between Persia, Greece and later, Rome. They were all familiar with one another's deities. One was the Roman god, Libertas, who was closely associated with Helios, the Greek god of the Sun for whom the Colossus of Rhodes had been constructed, and, as the name indicates, with the light of Liberty and Truth. Libertas/Mithras was also associated with Rome's Sol Invictus (Invincible Sun). Eventually, it was also easy to mesh Sol Invictus with the Invincible Son of God and thus provide a path to conversion to Bartholdi's Christianity.

Whether Bartholdi was aware of the connection between Sol Invictus, Libertas, and Helios and those connections with Mithraism or not we cannot know. But it's fun to think that our beloved statue may have a connection, even if remote, to Iran.

NEMA-YE NAZDIK

By Joan Gaughan

Thursday Appointment

In the temporary absence of Cameron Cross, I am again offering one of my own recent favorites. Subscribers to the PCIA Facebook page have already been introduced to this film.

It takes about a minute or two for a traffic light to change from red to green. For most of us, not much happens while we wait. But in *Thursday Appointment*, directed by Sayed Mohammad Reza Kheradmandan, very much happens. Two cars are stopped at the red light. In one, an elderly man and his wife exchange loving couplets from Hafez in a pattern called *mo-sha-e-reh*. In the other, a younger man and a woman are in a passionate argument while a little girl, presumably their daughter, sits in the back seat, hugging a stuffed animal. Their argument abruptly ends when a boy, summoned by the elderly couple, presents them with the bouquet of roses that had lain on the car seat between them. The film ends with a shot of rose petals falling upon a bowl of dates in the place where the elderly woman had been sitting.

Thursdays are days when many Iranians visit the graves of their loved ones, often leaving behind dates and roses. The love of the elderly couple had transcended her death.

The film won an award at the Luxor (Egypt) Film Festival and can be accessed on YouTube.

TRIVIA CORNER

Edited by “Rom Rom”

The elderly couple in the film *Thursday Appointment* are reciting the poetry of Hafez in a pattern called *mo-sha-e-reh*. The last letter or sound of the line of poetry spoken by the first person becomes the first letter or sound of the second person’s line. Obviously, it demands a deep knowledge of Hafez or any other poet. Can you imagine trying this with “Mary Had a Little Lamb”? “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”?

Islamic Coins Donated to the Smithsonian by Joel Hettger (Tehran, 1970-72)



A DIVINE GIFT

William P. Brandon (Shiraz, 1964-66)



Bill Brandon (left) with his student Cicily Hampton after her "hooding ceremony" for new Ph.D.s at the University of North Carolina, May 2014.

Photo by Lynn Roberson

At the beginning of May 2020, I received an extraordinary communication that broke the monotony of hiding-at-home from Covid-19. Happily, this gratifying email correspondence continues to blossom.

An email and suggestion for a Zoom meeting came to me from two brothers, one the holder of an endowed chair in the religion department at Oberlin College, Mohammad Jafar Mahallati (who goes by Amir), and the other, Mohammad Hossein Mahallati, a businessman and philanthropist in New York. Amir explained that he and his brother had spent years wanting to make contact with me without knowing how. Why? Because, by their account, my name was commonly heard in their household when they were children in the Shiraz home of a very prominent family of Shia clergy that go back to the early nineteenth century. “[Y]our name,” Amir wrote, “triggers lots of memories when my father, Ayatollah Mahallati of Shiraz, mentioned your name many times with admiration and deep sense of friendship.”

Indeed, as a very callow—and beardless!—youth in 1965 and 1966 I did meet at least weekly with their father, then a young Shia clergyman, to discuss Islamic and Western Philosophy at a time when contact with the religious side of Iranian culture was discouraged both by Western governments and that of the Shah. The man with whom I met always had a twinkle in his eye and a chuckle in his voice to accompany his wise and tolerant words. I was told that he taught Arabic and Islamic philosophy at the local seminary (Khan Madrassah); I never learned that his father was a Grand Ayatollah. Those discussions and the character of my interlocutor, Majdeddin Mahallati, who later was recognized as an Ayatollah, have always been a high point of my two year’s residence in Shiraz. But I never imagined that our meetings had any lasting effect on a busy and successful young cleric from a very long line of distinguished religious leaders. (Ayatolla Mahallati’s picture appears in Fen Montaigne, “Iran: Testing the Waters of Reform,” *National Geographic* 196 (1 July 1999): pp. 32-33).

Amir and Hossein have told me that they believed I was the first American anyone in their family had ever known and that Ayatollah Mahallati’s opposition to family members studying abroad was changed by our contact. In a later email, Hossein remarked “[T]he reappearance of your name in my mind during the blessed month of piety, is a divine gift, an answer to a fifty-year search for the person who had such a wonderful impression on my late father that somehow paved the way of my destiny.” Despite the family’s long and illustrious history as leaders in opposing Western colonial attempts to dominate Iran, their father became the first high-ranking Shia cleric to visit the West. He developed a fascination with American culture; all of his four children were educated in the U.S. and are successful professionals here.

Amir, the professor at Oberlin, inherited his father's clerical responsibilities (especially for carrying on the many charities his father started); he went back to Iran as a *hojatoleslam* (a respected clerical rank below Ayatollah) after his father's passing. In a previous career, Amir was also Iran's Ambassador to the UN towards the end of the Iran-Iraq war and helped end it. At Oberlin, he has established the Friendship Festivals that promote peace and understanding. His brother Hossein, who learned about the Peace Corps in our Zoom calls, became fascinated by the Peace Corps presence in Iran. This interest led him to team up with Abbas A. Motlagh, award-winning film director, to make a documentary about the Peace Corps in Iran with input and help from PCIA members.

These revelations may seem too much like the denouement of a Dickens novel to be true, but they are real, even allowing for the generous expressiveness of Iranians (*ta'arof*), the sweetness of their language, and especially the warmth of natives of Shiraz (city of both Hafez and Saadi). They have caused me to re-evaluate the way I see my Peace Corps service. While I never felt at all guilty, I have always been convinced that I gained much more than I gave as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Mine was the classic personal volunteer story. My two years in Shiraz were transformational: They made me the person I am today. However, I was convinced that I had failed to accomplish anything of lasting significance in terms of what successful, "real" volunteers did—build mosques, bridges and schools in villages or mobilize impoverished local craftspeople to develop profitable international markets. The epitome of the successful



Amir Mahallati

volunteer is the late storied Barkley Moore, who spent more than six years (three tours) in his small town of Gonbad-i-Qavus and surrounding villages in northeastern Iran where he founded a great many local social service and educational institutions and was beloved by the community.¹ Yes, I had many good Iranian friends, but again they all made *my* life richer and enabled *me* to learn Persian.

My evening classes at the local youth club may have helped a few lower middle-class kids compete with students whose families could pay for English lessons at the American and British cultural agencies designed to influence Westernizing elites and the rising secular middle class. I also enjoyed teaching a handful of students in an introduction to Western philosophy at the local university and may have had marginal impact on a few of them, especially the Kurd who ultimately earned a Ph.D. in psychology from Temple University. But how does another very smart expat Iranian academic with an American Ph.D. compare with bridge-building and mobilizing communities for change within Iran? To be perfectly truthful, as I gradually gained greater understanding of Iran, its rich culture and comfortable adaptations to its extraordinary environment, I began to believe that Iranians, at least those living in cities like Shiraz, had the capacity to achieve any needed change on their own—aside from political change which PCVs were not supposed to think about.

Thus, my epiphany over this last month has involved becoming conscious of the existence of unimagined streams of value flowing from my quotidian actions over half a century ago. Despite

¹

remaining far outside my ken until now, those commonplace activities of daily living apparently possessed much greater consequence than I could have imagined. I shall forever be grateful to Amir and Hossein for jolting me into this reality.

Rumi, however, said it more elegantly:

But don't be satisfied with stories,
how things have gone with others. Unfold
your own myth, without complicated explanation,
so everyone will understand the passage,
We have opened you.

Start walking toward Shams. Your legs will get heavy
and tired. Then comes a moment
of feeling the wings you've grown,
lifting.

¹ **Glen Barkley Moore (1941-1994), who trained in Iran IV Group in Logan, Utah, in Community Development with me, served three Peace Corps tours (1964-1970) and returned to the U.S. to work at his alma mater, Oneida Baptist Institute. In 1972 he became the ninth president of OBI, which had been founded in 1899 to educate poor children in Kentucky. His presidency was cut short by his untimely death.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements related to Peace Corps Iran projects or the National Peace Corps Association are welcome here as well as notices of cultural events in your area. Please contact me at joan@peacecorpsiran.org, if you have something you think we should all know about.

Celebrate Nowruz...Virtually

There will be a virtual celebration of the Persian New Year on Saturday, March, 20 10:00 AM Pacific (1:00 PM Eastern). Bring your stories of celebrating Nowruz in Iran and at home while chewing on pistachios, gorging on fesenjan, and massaging the bruises you got on *Charshambe suri*. Contact jeanette@peacecorpsiran.org for more information. Go to the home page at www.peacecorpsiran.org to be directed to information on the program and registration procedures.

PCIA Conferences

There will be a virtual PCIA conference on October 2, 2021. Stay tuned for more news. Contact Jeanette Gottlieb to help with this event.

An in-person conference is planned-for Chicago in 2022. Send ideas for either or both conferences to Jeanette Gottlieb at jeanette@peacecorpsiran.org.

Open Board Position

If you were up to the challenge of serving in Iran in your twenties, you might enjoy the challenge of serving on the PCIA Board in your sixties/seventies. If so, please contact Jeanette Gottlieb at jeanette@peacecorpsiran.org.

The Peripatetic Medical Kit



Jim Whitaker's (Fuman/Sari, 1964-66) medical kit was with him on village visits to treat what ailments and injuries he could and he retained it (against Peace Corps policy) when he left Iran. (See *KhabarNameh*, June 2020.) Despite multiple upheavals and travels, the kit has found its final resting place...maybe... in the Museum of the Peace Corps Experience at the American University Museum. Learn more by clicking [HERE](#).

Requiescat in pace.

CORRECTIONS

The address to order Dennis Briskin's book, *Faces of Iran* was incorrectly given: The P.O. Box should be 1195, Palo Alto, CA 94302.

The obituary for Tom Dawson should have read:



Thomas R. Dawson, of Stevensville, Maryland, died on 6 September 2020 following a stroke. Assigned to Ahar with TEFL10, four months after his arrival, on a stop in Astara on the Caspian Sea, he was captured by Soviet guards. Released three weeks later, he transferred to Micronesia to complete his tour. Tom became a lawyer, fine art dealer, and host of a local TV program. His wife Pam and other family members survive him.

Ayd-e Shoma Mobarak o Sal-e Now Khosh Bash



By Genna Stead Wangsness (Shiraz, Tehran 1965-1971)



Dr. Mary Catherine Bateson died on January 2, 2021, at the age of 81. The daughter of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, Dr. Bateson was an author, linguist, and cultural anthropologist. She and her husband, J. Barkev Kassarian, moved to Iran in 1972 when he began working at the Iran Center for Management Studies in Tehran. In Iran until early 1979, she learned Persian, taught anthropology at Damavand College, and became involved in higher education planning for the Ministry of Education. In May of 2015, Dr. Bateson participated in PCIA's conference in Austin, Texas, presenting "Quest for New Narratives," encouraging volunteers to tell their stories.



Joseph H. Blatchford, born in Milwaukee in 1934, died October 7, 2020, at the age of 86. Following Sargent Shriver (1961-66) and Jack Vaughn (1966-69), Blatchford was the third Peace Corps director, appointed by Richard Nixon in 1969 and serving until 1971. A full obituary written by his three children appeared in the *Washington Post*, November 20-22, 2020.



Peter L. Bower, age 79, died on October 1, 2020, at home in Phoenix, Arizona, after two extended illnesses. Peter served with Iran 5 from 1964-67 in Nowshahr and Barmasar, supervising and digging water wells. Twenty-four years old when he joined Peace Corps, he had been a forest fighter in Yellowstone with the US Forest Service. Post Peace Corps, he taught school in Phoenix and became an enthusiastic long-distance bicycle rider, one year riding coast to coast, and a marathon runner before neuropathy handicapped his legs, energy, and competitive edge in 1990. He continued his interest in riding, writing articles for *Adventure Cycling* and other publications. Peter's wife of thirty-seven years, Jennifer, survives him, as well as his son, Joseph, and other relatives.



Bryan Brost died on December 14, 2020, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, after a four-week battle with COVID-19. His wife contracted the coronavirus at the same time but recovered. After working on a farm and as a ranch laborer, Bryan joined Peace Corps in 1964 and after training at Utah State with Iran 5 served in Shahi and Babol for two years. A Nebraska native, Bryan received a BS in Education following Peace Corps. He married Kate in Custer, South Dakota, in July 1972 and moved to Alliance, Nebraska, where he and Kate raised wheat and cattle, along with seven children. Eventually selling the Nebraska ranch, Bryan, Kate, and their youngest daughter moved to a family ranch in Wyoming. In addition to ranching, Bryan taught middle school math and science in Nebraska, and served as a substitute teacher in Wyoming until 2010. In 2009, he was appointed to the Wyoming Board of Agriculture. Bryan's children and Kate were with him when he died.

Lynne L. Culbertson of Greenfield, Massachusetts, died on May 15, 2020, after a courageous battle with ovarian cancer. Following her graduation from UMass in Amherst with a B.S., in November of 1973 she left for Iran with her husband Michael Leach for training with Iran 48, serving until 1976 in Rezaiyeh, where she performed dairy herd management and record keeping on an experimental farm associated with the agriculture college. She taught English to a co-worker who went on to graduate school in England. Obtaining her R.N. post Peace Corps, Lynne worked in Greenfield until her retirement in 2016. Two daughters, two granddaughters, and other relatives survive her.



Lawrence J. Franke, age 77, died in Indianapolis on Tuesday, December 29, 2020, after a lengthy illness. Larry joined Peace Corps in 1964 as a high school graduate, where he was president of the Future Farmers of America, president of 4-H Club, and VP of student councils of the State of Indiana. He served with Iran 5 for two years in Mahmoodabad in the field of agriculture. Following PC, he served with the Air Force and worked in the field of commercial real estate.



J. Dean Heltz died at the age of 85 in Athens, Tennessee, on July 22, 2020. Born in 1934 in Reserve, Louisiana, he served as a US Navy Petty Officer on the USS Segundo Submarine from 1953-57, and continued Naval Reserve service until 1961 while attending the University of Mississippi, having been a manager for the Ole Miss football team. Receiving a B.A. in Classics with an emphasis on Greek and Latin languages and Anthropology, Dean taught Latin, History, English, and Math. He then joined Peace Corps, serving from 1965-69 with TEFL 6 in Torbat Hedarieh. After receiving an M.A. in Education, he taught elementary and high school Latin until his retirement in 1992. Dean is survived by his wife, Billie Bea, and numerous family members.



Ronald E. Hofsess died on December 3, 2020, at the age of 78 from COVID-19 complications in Edmonds, Washington. Ron joined Peace Corps in 1965, training with Iran 6 in Utah and serving in Tehran. Ron worked at New York's Corning Community College as a counselor for almost thirty years and taught graduate courses in trust communities at Elmira College. He developed "Lives of Older Women" support groups. He co-authored a book with his daughter Christy, *Emerging from the Shadows: The Needs of Older Women and the Benefits of Supporting Them*. Ron had a passion for human rights and a love of sports. He commissioned an art piece on the Negro League to highlight the contributions of African-Americans in baseball, a convergence of his hobby and beliefs in racial equity and justice. He is survived by his daughter Christy, son Jason, and two granddaughters.

Lawrence "Larry" P. McCormick, of Ankeny, Iowa, died on December 14, 2020, from a heart attack. Born on August 21, 1952, Larry joined a TEFL group training in Borujerd in 1974, serving for two years as an English teacher in Iranshahr and Khash in southeast Iran. Along with his friend Ken Pransky, he remained in Iran following Peace Corps, working for Bell Helicopter in Isfahan until the Iranian Revolution. In 1980, he began working for Bridgestone/Firestone in Akron, Ohio, his hometown, rising to Controller BAAG, Bridgestone Americas Tire Operations-Bridgestone Mining in Des Moines, from which he retired to enjoy golf and his family, wife Fay, and sons Craig and Collin. Well loved by his business colleagues, Larry was known for his quick wit, hard work, and love of family. His friendship with Ken was life-long. "He was a good guy."



John J. Murphy, MD, 74, passed away surrounded by family in his Lunenburg, Massachusetts, home on December 28, 2020. From 1974-76, Dr. Murphy, a young doctor in his 20s, was assigned to Armish MAAG in Tehran, where he described his primary job as taking care of "stiff-necked" state department types and aircraft techs. He was also hired as a consultant to provide medical care for Peace Corps volunteers. After earning his M.D. from State University of New York Downstate, Dr. Murphy served in the Walter Reed Army Hospital in Bethesda, MD and at the US Army Hospital in Tehran, earning the

rank of Major. Upon Honorable Discharge from the Army, he opened his own medical practice in Leominster, Massachusetts. His wife, Elaine (Donovan) Murphy, and two children survive him.



Pamela Dean Spencer, 76, of Brownwood, Texas, died on December 3, 2019. Graduating from the University of Texas in 1965 with a B.A. in geography and history, she trained at the university that summer as a member of TEFL 6. Pam taught English for a year in Abadan and worked in occupational therapy at a Mashhad mental hospital during her second year. Back home, she continued to teach at levels from middle school to college. With a passion for the arts, she loved theater, performing for her students and at local theaters, winning awards for her paintings, drawings, and as a thespian. Her two children, daughter Roxanne Hobbs and son Ben Hobbs and his wife Vanessa, survive her, along with four grandchildren, Jordan, Tara, Cheyenne, and Megan, many other relatives, and beloved dogs Bonky and Goliath.



Joseph F. Teller died of COVID-19 on Saturday, January 2, 2021, in Massachusetts. From Pennsylvania, Joe studied horticulture at Delaware Valley College and at Syracuse University, joined Peace Corps and served with Iran 1 in Kermanshah.



Mary Wertz Fiscus died on February 10, 2021, at the age of 76 from Alzheimer's disease and cancer. She was in a facility at the last and her family was not able to say goodbye. Mary arrived in Iran as a volunteer secretary in 1967 after training with Iran 16, serving in that position for two years in the Tehran office. She attended the 50 years reunion of Iran 16 in Vermont organized by Marilyn Erickson, a highlight of her later years. Mary's greatest joy in life was spending time with her family and friends. She is survived by her husband of fifty years, Donald G. Fiscus, four children, Jodi, Peter, Eric, and Michael, along with eleven grandchildren and other family.

In addition to reporting on recent deaths, PCIA maintains a memorial book of the deceased. If you know of anyone who has died, have memories of anyone who served in Iran or further information that you would like to share, contact Genna Stead Wangsness at genna@peacecorpsiran.org. We welcome comments for publication.

PCIA'S NEW WEBSITE FEATURES NEWSLETTERS AND DISCUSSION GROUPS

By Douglas Schermer (Semnan, Shahrud, 1966-67)

Our new website at www.peacecorpsiran.org has been completely rebuilt from the ground up using SilkStart's web design platform. This is the platform developed for the National Peace Corps Association specifically for affiliate RPCV groups.

One blessing of the Covid lockdown was the time it gave me to learn how to use SilkStart and receive training from Ella Dowell, NPCA's guru for affiliates. It took six months before we went live and three more to work out additional details. It remains a work in progress.

The new website permits you to control subscriptions to various email messages. To do so, you must log-in using your email as your password. On your first visit, you will need to create a password to access all the features of the website. Your profile permits you to check boxes to indicate which emails you wish us to send.

In the meantime, you can subscribe to various emails by sending a message to contactus@peacecorpsiran.org as described below.

Another change involves using Google Suites for nonprofits to archive past publications, pictures and documents of the Peace Corps Iran Legacy. Links to those documents are embedded in the website or documents such as this issue of the KhabarNameh.

From the Field, edited by Jackie Spurlock, is the PCIA Board's monthly e-newsletter for sharing information and organizational updates. You can subscribe by sending an email to contactus@peacecorpsiran.org. Please include "From the Field" in the subject line.

Advocacy Bulletin, edited by Paul Barker, is a monthly update on advocacy issues of interest to PCIA members. To subscribe send an email to contactus@peacecorpsiran.org. Please include "Advocacy Bulletin" in the subject line,

Action Alerts is focused on late-breaking issues in need of immediate response. If you would like to be on the PCIA Action Alerts email distribution list, please send an email to contactus@peacecorpsiran.org. Please include "Action Alerts" in the subject line.

The **Iran Issues Discussion Group** is a new free-flowing conversation about matters related to Iran, hosted by John Salamack. We meet by Zoom the fourth Monday of every month at 5:00 p.m. PDT. Contact John for further information at johns@peacecorpsiran.org. To join the discussion, send an email to contactus@peacecorpsiran.org. Please include "Issues Discussion" in the subject line.

DOOREH BOOK CLUB, led by Jim Goode, meets the second Wednesday on alternate months. For more information, contact jim@peacecorpsiran.org. To receive email announcements about this group, send an email to contactus@peacecorpsiran.org. Please include "Dooreh in the subject line."