

KhabarNameh

خبرنامه

Newsletter of the Peace Corps Iran Association

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FROM THE EDITOR

Joan Gaughan (Rasht/Lahijan, 1964-66)



Much of this issue is about journeys. **Chuck Kaminski** introduces an exhibit in San Diego that highlights the journey of a Baha'i family who fled Iran before the Revolution. He also gives us more information on the trip that many of us, hopefully, will make to Washington, D.C. next October. That is followed by **Mike Metrisko's** tale of the journey of an Afghan student and his family to Pennsylvania, hopefully to make America "a better place," while **Kerry Segel's** friend, Mr. Tasbihi begins a *safarnameh* about his journey within his own homeland. When **Bill Brandon** was asked "*koja mirid?*" he was on a journey, not of miles, but of his own heart. In a different vein, in the **Nema-ye Nazdik**, **Carolyn Yale** tells of a film about a special school with which some of us had direct contact. The three responses to *Land Between Two Waters* in the **Books, Books** column suggest that the author herself might not have anticipated the impact her book would have on its readers. In **Aya Midanastid?**, "Rom Rom" asks if you knew that the coming of spring in Kashan, the city of roses, ushers in a festival aptly named *Golab giri*. And just in time for barbecue season, **Chef "Babri"** offers a *jujeh* marinade. Finally, please don't forget to check out the list of donors whose generosity helps control our costs, including those of next year's conference.

So gentle reader, befarma'id.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Chuck Kaminski (Kermanshah, 1969-71)



Persians and others recently celebrated *Charharshanbe suri* with fire jumping, then on to Nowruz on March 19, the spring or vernal equinox! I remember the first time I celebrated Nowruz in Iran. The table was set with *haft seen* and I learned a new custom, and a celebration of the rebirth of the earth. Thirteen days later, we picnicked in a grove in Kermanshah alongside a stream of water to celebrate *Sizdah Bedar*, which this year is April 1.

These customs and traditions still resonate with me, and “*Eyd-e Shoma Mobarak*” is sent to all of you.

Today I visited the Mingei International Museum in my home of San Diego to see an exhibit, “Threaded Journeys,” by second generation Iranian refugee artist, Shirin Towfiq. Along with the artist, Ms. Towfiq’s family was present. They are Baha’i who left Iran before the revolution. Both Shirin’s mother and grandmother are artists. Her grandmother designed jewelry for the Shah. In the exhibit Shirin tells the story of how the grandmother fled Tehran. Ms. Towfiq’s folk art weavings uses Sadaf tea bags and gold threads. Pictures are posted on PCIA’s Facebook page.

The Washington, D.C. October 3-5, 2025, conference program committee headed by Brad Hanson, and the event venue committee headed by Skip Auld meets regularly along with Bill Brandon, Allen Cutter, Barbara and Peter Deekle, Jeanette Gottlieb, Andy Mott, Doug Schermer and Kerry Segel to strategize and consider possible conference events. This 2025 conference/reunion will be the last that PCIA will hold so I hope and encourage you to mark your calendars for this final in-person event. Volunteers are encouraged and welcomed to help plan the events. Reach out to Brad at brad@peacecorpsiran.org, Skip at skipauld@gmail.com, or myself charles@peacecorpsiran.org.

As part of the planning for the conference, the Board has been discussing with John Krauskopf a second volume of *Memories and Insights: Iran through the Eyes of Peace Corps Volunteers* for its reveal in 2025. To make this happen, John needs your stories and memories. Contact John at johnk@peacecorpsiran.org.

From our year-end appeal we have received letters returned undeliverable. An updated list of those former PCIA volunteers who still need to be found is on page 21. Please let us know if you have a current address for any of these people. Send that information to doug@peacecorpsiran.org.

Finally, I would like to thank all who responded to our year-end appeal. Your generosity is very much appreciated by the entire Board and me. As PCIA does not have membership dues, these contributions and donations will help support the 2025 conference and enable us to keep the registration fees as affordable as possible. In the months ahead, think about joining our Dooreh Book Club and Iran Discussion Group, both on Zoom, as a way to engage with our members and others, and increase our knowledge of the Iranian experience and events unfolding in the world.

“They Will Make This Country a Better Place”

By Mike Metrisko (Songhor, Mamazan, 1970-73, Tabriz, Tehran, 1977- 81)



Editor’s note: Following graduation from the Foreign Service School at Georgetown in 1968, Mike joined the Peace Corps as a teacher first in Turkey for two years, then in Iran from 1970 to 1973. In 1974, he joined the Department of State and was sent back to Turkey for two more years, then to Damascus for a 6-month TDY (temporary duty), and then back to Iran in 1977, first to the Embassy’s Consular Section, then to the Consulate in Tabriz until 1979, and then back to Tehran from 1979 to 1981 There he got caught up in the Hostage Crisis. Following his release in 1981, he served in a number of other diplomatic posts and retired from State in 1996 but returned in 2001 for a TDY to Yemen.

The 9/11 attacks brought him back into service again, but this time to Afghanistan. He arrived in January 2002 when there was only a skeleton staff at the newly re-opened Embassy, with an assignment to head the Political Affairs unit. It was a long way from his first visit in 1971, when he had been serving as Peace Corps Volunteer in Iran and had crossed the border to spend a Nowruz vacation getting high in Herat.

Shortly after his arrival, he met an Afghan educator who had established a school called Marefat for Hazara Shi’ite refugees, an oppressed minority, the poorest of Afghanistan’s poor. Marefat then had about three dozen students who were squeezed into two rented rooms in an impoverished area west of Kabul so desolate that it was called the Desert.

That meeting set the stage for Mike’s efforts twenty years later to bring two Marefat students, and ultimately their family, to the United States. He takes up that story below.

The educator invited me to visit the school. I started going, and continued off and on for the whole time I was in Afghanistan. I started to help the school through personal donations while I was there. Then when I got back to the States, I started a personal scholarship program. The school staff selected the recipients, but I had two conditions: First, the number of male and female recipients had to always be the same. No gender imbalance. (Yes, the school was totally co-educational, which is one reason I liked it so much). Second, each student was required to send me at least one email a year, telling me something about themselves and their goals.

One of the boys who had been receiving my scholarship for several years was especially good at his emails, and our correspondence grew. In 2020, he had questions about the scholarship he was being offered by an American college and when I looked at the terms, I realized he would never be able to raise the rest of the necessary money to go there. I talked to his high school administrator (my old friend from 2002) and told the boy to apply at the university just fourteen miles from my home here in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. I talked to that school here, and I decided to pay all of his expenses.

That began a saga that continued almost a year, with incredible bureaucracy in Kabul and Dubai, incredible stupidity, incompetence, and coldness at our Embassy in Kabul and the Consulate in Dubai (and in Washington at the State Department). But there was also incredible kindness and understanding from a long and complicated set of old friends (both Afghans and

Americans), as well as from many other people—especially at the university here. And there were uncountable phone calls and emails trying to get the boy a visa (unsuccessfully).

And then the Taliban arrived on the scene! That meant my student’s sister, who was also one of my scholarship recipients, was thrown out of school in Kabul. So, after about one minute of thinking about it, I told him to include her in all of our planning. The story goes on from the government collapse in August 2021, the students being turned aside at the airport, hiding out in Kabul, and finally, with help from many people stretching from Washington to Qatar to Kabul, getting on a plane from Afghanistan to the U.S. refugee camp in Qatar, then to another refugee camp in New Jersey. Finally, in January 2022, they reached my home.

The day after they arrived at my home, the boy was registered for classes at the university here (the staff had been cheering him on at a great distance for months!), beginning with a single class. Since he had no familiarity at all with the American educational system, the class was American Government. He got an A. At the end of his first year, he was selected as the “Outstanding Freshman Student of the Year.” For the past two years he has been a straight A student, is now in the Honors College, and since his first semester has been elected to the Student Government.



Students vote for Student Council at Marefat High School in 2021
(Courtesy of Marefat High School)

His sister is now a senior at our local rural high school, an honor student, and was selected to represent the student body to the School Board Directors. She has been offered a very good scholarship to her first choice of colleges. And best of all, after being separated from their parents and younger brother in the autumn of 2021, the rest of the family arrived at my house in Carlisle in April of 2023, and now live in a small house in the city. The youngest boy, who is already totally fluent in English, goes to their local middle school, and the two older kids migrate back and forth between their parents’ place and mine.

Support from many of my friends has been outstanding. Over the years I had previously hosted Turks, Arab-Israelis, Iranians, and another Afghan student. Whenever my former students asked how they could repay me, I told them that I was helping them because I had been helped by others when I was a student. I said (and I believe) that helping people to continue their studies is an integral part of what we call “civilization,” and that the best way to repay me was to help

others in turn. The two of my ex-foreign student/housemates who are in the States, and my American student housemate, who has just finished his own studies, have helped tremendously. They have given the Afghan students substantial gifts of money, have toured them all around Washington, etc. The same is true of some of my friends who have provided invitations, material support, and generous amounts of advice and time to them.

The question of how my female student and her mother are reacting to “freedom” is more difficult to answer. In general, they immediately started to dress in a very western style, stopped wearing head scarves immediately, and quickly adjusted to doing normal things (for American women) going to classes, shopping, eating in restaurants, taking part in conversations, making their own decisions, etc. Afghan women are very strong, and have witnessed more doom, death, and destruction in their lives over the past fifty years than any American woman could possibly imagine. But there is an underlying sadness in adjusting to America as well. Most of them have lost their connection to the extended family circles they had in Afghanistan, and they have lost their sense of security as well. They might be able to acquire more material possessions here, but it comes with a heavy price in the disappearance of their traditional support system, and in knowing that their families and friends are now scattered over several different countries and living in dangerous and difficult conditions.

My two students are more mature and have seen far more of the harshness of life than most Americans can ever comprehend. They were born after the United States invaded Afghanistan, and they spent their whole lives there living under the American military occupation of their country. There was some good in what we did there, but there was also a huge amount of hubris, stupidity, corruption, and cruelty. I hope this Afghan family will stay here in America, because they will make this country a better place.

There is a very good book about the Marefat School for Hazara refugees called The Last Thousand: One School’s Promise in a Nation at War by Jeffrey Stern. Chapter 8 is titled “The American.” It’s about Mike. Look for Dave Devine’s review of the book in the July issue of the KhabarNameh.

Piano Irani

The piano is not an instrument we normally associate with Persian music, but Ehsan Mirbaha has mastered the keyboard, and plays both Iranian and Western music with equal finesse. For his story, you can check him out at <https://youtube.com/@EhsanMirbaha>.



Koja Mirid? Learning the Arts of Conversation and Intercultural Understanding

By Bill Brandon (Shiraz, 1964-66)



[The memories below were triggered by a suggestion at the January 2024 PCIA Board meeting that the 2025 PCIA conference include a panel on how the Peace Corps experience in Iran transformed its members.]

The continuing journey that has seen my cultural expectations and habits periodically turned upside down began some years before my immersion in Iran. But it was an experience at the beginning of Peace Corps training in Utah that caused me to become aware of the successive transformations that this provincial small-town White southern boy has experienced over a lifetime and has learned to welcome. Let me explain.

I bumbled my way into Johns Hopkins in Baltimore in Fall, 1959, my first time venturing into “the North.” Baltimore, when I arrived, was as segregated as any southern city; indeed, it considered itself to be part of the South. Sadly, the selective university I had chosen had fewer Blacks enrolled than Chapel Hill. Despite a last-ditch effort by the UNC-CH Admissions Director who tried to persuade me to choose Chapel Hill with the threat that “up there” I would be in school with Blacks. By the time I left Baltimore degree-in-hand, Chapel Hill had integrated, and significant numbers of Blacks were graduating.

Fortunately, some of the diversity I sought was present in the student body at my university. On meeting someone new from “up North” in the era before the Civil Rights Act of 1965 and escalation in Vietnam, a heavily accented White southerner had about thirty seconds to make clear that he was on the right side of the race issue. The effort to signal where one stood quickly turned into a useful conversational gambit that eased communication between young Americans from different regions. Often the conversation was as simple as responding, “Yes, and thank God the South lost the Civil War” when a Yankee commented on my accent. Back in those days there was still a speakers’ corner in Boston Commons. The stereotypes were so common that once when a White Massachusetts friend and I argued with a Black nationalist there, White passersby at first assumed we were the racists instead of proponents of the mild-mannered integrationist Kum-Ba-Yah views that I held.

By 1964, I had dropped out of grad school and accepted an invitation to become a Peace Corps Volunteer in Iran. My group trained for three months in Logan, Utah. What a stroke of luck, I thought, to have a chance to see the other side of the Mississippi. I had only once crossed the Appalachian Mountains and that was for the typically southern purpose of attending a church youth conference in Tennessee when I was in high school. One of the first people I met in our Peace Corps training group of seventy-six guys was Timothy Thomas, a tall Californian and Berkely grad who had grown up in Sebastopol, CA. My familiar habits kicked in and...NO RESPONSE. What? West of the Mississippi did they not appreciate the era-defining significance of the Civil War? Maybe Faulkner’s claim that “the past is never dead—it’s not even past” is not true in the West. Or perhaps out there the experienced past starts with the frontier, its values, and

Peace Corps Iran Association stands in support for Iranians as they raise their voices for “Woman, Life, Freedom.”

its purported disappearance? A useful gambit was dead and new conversational habits were required. But anyway, soon the issues dividing the U.S. began changing, as the Vietnam War upended ideologies, split generations, eroded historic regional differences, and introduced new rhetorical conventions.

Within a few months, I was in Shiraz as a new PCV. In those days Shiraz families commonly promenaded in the evenings to enjoy the cooler air and indulge their native sociability.¹ Seeing and being seen was an important objective of this *gardesh*, especially for young people. During these walks I commonly encountered acquaintances and friends. “*Salaam, Agha-ye-Beel! Chetoree? Haleh-tun khobeh?*” etc. After such customary exchanges of greetings, often the next question for me was “*Koja mirid?*” (“Where are you going?”) Having nothing to hide, at first I reacted to what seemed like a nosey question with as much detail as my nascent Farsi permitted. But then I remembered the Civil War gambit and began to think that “*Koja mirid?*” probably functioned like “What’s up?”— at least in Shiraz! Or maybe that polite inquiry was reserved for me because, unlike everyone else, I seemed to have no parents, wife, children, aunts, uncles, or cousins in Iran to ask after, and my presence in Shiraz undoubtedly was mysterious. In any case, the last thing my Iranian friends and acquaintances wanted was a detailed itinerary of my ramble.

Some uncertainty probably envelopes any conversation between persons grounded in different cultures. But nowadays our greater discernment requires dismissing the muscular binary orientalism of “East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet, Till . . . two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth.”²

Rumi’s vision, however, is far superior:

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I’ll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about.

Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*
doesn’t make any sense.³

¹ Is this healthy communal family experience ancient history now that homes are air conditioned, and probably Iranians, like the rest of the world, live in private worlds curated by their individual social media?

² “The Ballad of East and West”, *A Choice of Kipling’s Verse made by T.S. Eliot, with an essay on Rudyard Kipling* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963) p. 117. Said, chronicler and debunker of “orientalism”, said of Kipling: “few more imperialist and reactionary than he.” Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1994), p. xxi.

³ “Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing” in *The Essential Rumi*, translated by Coleman Barks and John Moyne (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), p. 36. The Peace Corps Iran Association’s monthly newsletter, *From the Field*, pays homage to this poem in its name.

Aya Midanastid?

By “Rom Rom”

Golab-giri



The Mohammedi Rose

You may know that the rose is probably the national flower of Iran. Beloved of mystics and poets, the rose often symbolizes beauty, love, even the Divine, and the rose motif appears in a wide variety of arts, including ceramics, on carpets, manuscripts, tiles, textiles, and in popular and traditional songs.

But did you know that, while roses can be found all over Iran, Kashan along with the surrounding cities of Qamsar and Niasar is the rose center of Iran. Surrounded by desert, the climate nonetheless allows for the cultivation of a particular variety, the Mohammedi (also called the Damascus or Damask) rose which has a distinctive delicate pink blossom. And it is in the district of Kashan that roses not cultivated for personal use are turned into rose water, the golab, which has a variety of uses in medicine, cooking, cosmetics, and perfumes.



The copper vats

From mid-May to mid-June, during a festival known as the *golab-giri*, families walk to the fields dressed in colorful clothes and singing. The roses are harvested before sunrise because, according to popular belief, it is then that the roses have their richest, strongest odor.

About 30-40 kilos of the fresh petals are then thrown into huge copper pots, with about four liters of water. The pot is then placed over a fire. As the petals are boiled, the steam flows through aluminum pipes to larger copper pots from which the condensed liquid is then poured into containers for shipment throughout Iran and then to many places throughout the world.

The process takes about four hours, and the yield is about four liters of rose water for about 30 kg of rose petals.

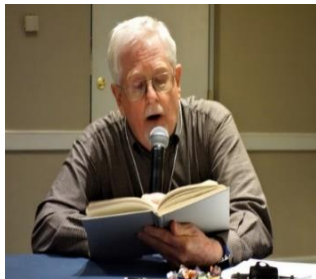
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We believe emails sent from our PCIA account may appear to come from our webmaster, doug@peacecorpsiran.org. Some may be disappearing in various junk and spam folders. Please check yours regularly. Also, add us to your “do not block” or “white list.” Thank you.

Khonsar

By Kerry Segel (Khonsar, 1969-71)

The Literary Mission, or from Khonsar to Shiraz by Mohammad Hossein Tasbihi

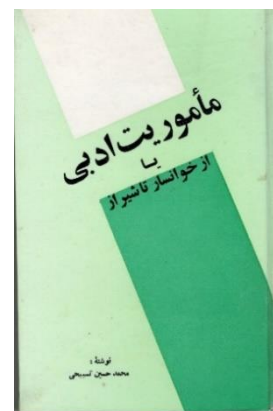


[This essay is dedicated to the late Barney Freiberg-Dale, PCV, Khonsar 1971-73. Our paths never crossed, but the two years we each spent in Khonsar were clearly life-changing crossroads for both of us.]

In the last issue of *KhabarNameh*, I wrote that I would be shifting my focus from the adventures that I shared with Mr. Tasbihi to his own travels within Iran. Two of his essay collections, about conferences to Shiraz and to Mashad, were published in book form. I briefly introduced the earlier of his travelogs, *Mamuriyyat-adabiyat ya az Khonsar ta Shiraz* [*The Literary Mission or from Khonsar to Shiraz*], which details his account of the literary “mission” assigned to him by the local office of education. This mission was to attend a week-long conference for high school Persian language and literature teachers in Shiraz. In this and the subsequent essay, I’ll introduce episodes from the first part of his travelog, or in Persian, *safarnameh*.

First though, a brief background on the Persian writing genre known as the *safarnameh*. The *safarnameh* appears in a variety of forms, styles, and emphases. It can be factual, fictional, or a combination of the two. It can emphasize description or interpretation. The *safarnameh* might be embedded within another form such as the short story or memoir.

The Persian-language *safarnameh* has a distinguished history. Naser Khosrow (1003-1077) detailed his seven-year journey to Mecca in the 11th century A.D. The *safarnameh* was especially popular during the Qajar Period, primarily as a means of recording images of the West experienced by Persian visitors.⁴ Less frequent were *safarnamehs* written by Persians traveling within Persia. By the middle of the 20th century, the improvement of transportation and mass communication within Iran, and the rise in popularity of the short story led to the decline in popularity of the Iran-focused *safarnameh*.⁵



⁴ See Ghanoonparvar, M.R. *In a Persian Mirror: Images of the West and Westerners in Iranian Fiction*. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1993, for a highly readable and informative discussion of the West through the eyes of Iranian writers.

⁵ In the introduction to *The Literary Mission*, the historiographer M. Javad Mashkooor describes Tasbihi’s work as a renewal of the tradition of describing cities [of Iran] and the villages between them. However, there are other examples of the *safarnameh* genre after World War II. [M.R. Ghanoonparvar, personal communication]. Also see Ghanoonparvar, M.R. *Iranian Cities in Persian Fiction*. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2022.

The *safarnameh* of Mr. Tasbihi is highly descriptive and factual. Tasbihi replicates a significant amount of speech in quotes. He shares his feelings and reactions as well as providing a highly detailed narrative of places and events. *The Literary Mission* took place in the summer of 1968, and was originally published as a series of essays over a year’s time in the *Ruznameh-ye-Farda*. In one sense, Tasbihi’s *safarnameh* seems like the detailed diary of a Westerner experiencing a new culture and country, or an Iranian revisiting Iran after many years abroad. Yet, up to the time of the publication of the book, Tasbihi had not traveled outside Iran. He had previously experienced village, small town, and city life, including a visit to Shiraz decades before the “literary mission” trip. To me, his background, combined with his highly detailed recording of what he experienced and reflected upon, make *The Literary Mission* a valuable historical document of this time in Iran. In this and upcoming essays, my aim is to provide an accurate reflection of Tasbihi’s experiences while providing insights into the man himself.

VARZESH



Here you go, sports fans: top, left to right, Terry Fitzgerald, Rick Koenig, Pat Hickey, Lee Koehler, Jim Endicott. Bottom left to right, Paul Barker, Dave Shawver, Randy Szyba, Steve Manis. We also had Malcolm Travelsted, one of our trainers and a former offensive tackle for Duke University, on our team. But it did not help. The Iran 31 Hamadan Hotshots (our team) went down in defeat.

Peace Corps Iran Association stands in support for Iranians as they raise their voices for “Woman, Life, Freedom.”

NEMA-ye NAZDIK

By Carolyn Yale (Shiraz, 1974-76)

Alborz: We Climb Mountains. A film by Maryam Sepehri



In 1873, the American Presbyterian ministry began an education project in Tehran: Initially a grade school, the school later became a junior college, and by 1928 the “Alborz” school was an accredited arts college. The name Alborz aptly reflected the impressive mountain range towering north of Tehran, as well as the school’s aspiration to offer a quality education that would prepare its students for success in the modern world.

We are fortunate today that Maryam Sepehri, an award-winning Iranian American documentary filmmaker, has created a film that brings the story of Alborz College to a broader public. Its title is, *Alborz: We Climb Mountains*. Since I have not had the opportunity to view the entire film, I rely on a detailed letter by Hamid Naficy⁶ recommending the film, and what can be gleaned online. To quote Professor Naficy, Maryam Sepehri “uses rare historical and documentary film footage and photographs of Alborz students engaged in play, in lab work, and in classes.” There are interviews with former students, many of whom had distinguished careers. Alborz College offered a highly regarded “Western” education. But the story is more than the College. By including what might seem trivial (lists of expenses, attendance records, housing...) the film is a fascinating record of “the way things were” and the changes occurring in Iranian society.

In 1940, the Iranian government took over all foreign schools, forcing out the College president, an American. Alborz College was closed and later reopened as a high school that still operates today. This comment on the documentary is striking: “It exemplifies what has been lost in the years since the 1979 Revolution and why today so many among the bright and promising young Iranians sound critical of current policies and administrative mishandling of one of their country’s once top educational institutions.” [Vimeo] For an interesting take on the role of Alborz College as a “westernizing—proselytizing influence,” I recommend the entry in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. See: <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/alborz-college>.



Maryam Sepehri

To date the film, which came out in 2023, has had special screenings at sponsoring universities and other organizations across the country. We at PCIA received an inquiry from Persis Karim (San Francisco State University) regarding PCIA support for a showing. A trailer is online: at <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/alborzweclimbmountains> and Vimeo also offers rental and sale of the film.



⁶ Hamid Naficy is Emeritus Professor of Radio-Television-Film at Northwestern University.

DOOREH-ye KETAB

Jackie Spurlock (Abadeh, Riz/Zarrinshah, 1974-1976) and Jim Goode (Tuysarkan, 1968-1971)
Co-coordinators

Below is the list of six books chosen by members of the Dooreh-ye Ketab to be read in 2024. Each of the five authors has agreed to participate in the discussion of his/her book. The Dooreh takes place on the second Wednesday of every other month, beginning in January, and is open to anyone who is interested. We meet at 5 pm PST/8 pm EST. No additional obligations implied. Please join us on Zoom whenever your schedule allows. To receive the Zoom link, contact doug@peacecorpsiran.org.

This is the schedule for the five remaining Doorehs.

May 8



Arvin, Amir, *The Mirror Years* (2022) In this diary/novel, forty-year-old Pedram, an Iranian immigrant living in Sweden, suffers a mid-life crisis following his birthday. He is troubled by the loss of his best friend, but he cannot remember how he lost him. He decides to review his diaries from post-revolutionary Iran and takes us on a personal, revelatory, psychological journey through his family, school years, university, political and philosophical discussions with a cast of fascinating characters that provide a backdrop to growing up at the time in Iran.

July 10



Frame, Margaret A., *Passage to Persia – Writings of an American Doctor During Her Life in Iran, 1929-1957* (2014). In 1929, Adelaide Kibbe was a 27-year-old missionary physician who set out from New York, headed for Iran. It would be 28 years before she returned home, and during the ensuing decades she would see huge changes in her adopted country. Through her letters to family, diaries, and mission reports we have an insight into a country which has undergone tremendous cultural, social, and political change. Adelaide's personal observations open a window to a bygone era brought to life through her engaging and timeless writings.

September 11



Goode, James F. (Tuysarkan, 1968-71), *Negotiating for the Past: Archaeology, Nationalism, and Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1919-1941* (2007) A transitional period in Middle Eastern archaeology, as nationalists asserted their claims to antiquities discovered within their borders. Motivated by politics as much as by scholarship, nationalists sought to unite

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citizens through pride in their ancient past as they challenged Western powers. In Iran they were able to hold onto discoveries at legendary sites such as Persepolis. Retaining artifacts allowed them to build museums and control cultural heritage. Western archaeologists became identified (in the eyes of many) as agents of imperialism, thus making their work more difficult, and often necessitating diplomatic intervention.

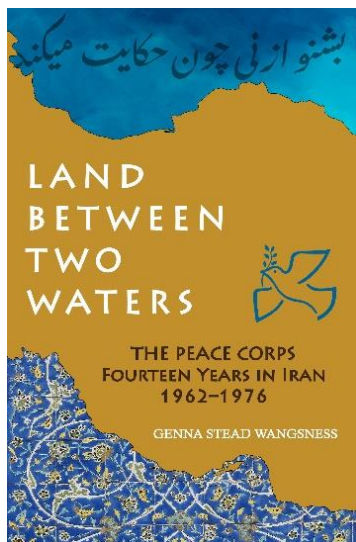
November 13

Wangsness, Genna Stead (Peace Corps Iran Volunteer), *Land Between Two Waters: The Peace Corps Fourteen Years in Iran 1962-1976* (2023).



This is a chronological history of the fifty groups that trained for and served in Iran during the reign of the last shah. Through hundreds of stories drawn from their rich and varied experiences, we learn how those volunteers adjusted to a way of life so different from their own. Later, when the country became rich from oil and expats with little knowledge of the country's language or culture arrived, working at jobs paying extravagant wages, the Peace Corps made the decision to withdraw. The interaction of Americans and Iranians sharing their lives at a personal level came to an end. This volume records for posterity memories of those who lived through those historic and life-changing times.

BOOKS, BOOKS



Editor's Note: *As an historical chronicle of Americans' service in Iran in the mid-twentieth century, the value of Land Between Two Waters certainly is obvious. But what the author may not have been able to foresee was she was revealing the panorama that very few of us experienced when we were there...a panorama we could not have seen without this book. Nor did we have the kind of tool this book provides to show our grandkids that, indeed, it all really happened."*

From Dick "Mac" McIntyre (Mashhad, 1971-73)

Thank you once again for writing such a meaningful and resourceful book. My time in the PC was perhaps among the most rewarding times in my life. Life in the PC allowed a kid from New Jersey to see and experience life and times in parts of the world that few are privileged to witness.

My kids, now in their late 30s, remember such Farsi phrases & words like *barf* (which it's doing at the moment), *harf-na-zan*, *ob-jo*, *yodam raft*. The friends, the bus rides, the field trips, vacation in India, Kabul, Herat, and so many more. I can show my kids that it all really happened.

From Deb Boettcher (Bandar Pahlavi/Tehran, 1971-73)

Thank you, Genna, for taking on the monumental job of writing such a comprehensive book about PC Iran. Fascinating reading. I learned more about what Pete, Ray, Ken, and Sarah were doing from the book than I did when in Iran. I appreciate very much that you have documented our time there.

From Ken and Sarah Kimball (Bandar Pahlavi, 1972-74)

Though Sarah and I were not able to attend the Iran PC event in Chicago this past spring, we did want to extend our sincere appreciation for the excellent, well-written book you authored—*Land Between Two Waters: The Peace Corps Fourteen Years in Iran* that we both just finished reading. Not only did it allow us to have a better perspective of the other volunteers in our overlapping cohorts, but the whole Iran PC tenure from beginning to end and its evolution during that time frame. Our service time (1972-1974) occurred during the rapid transition time (during and post 1970s oil embargo) when Iran underwent dramatic social and economic changes. Your book gave us a much more comprehensive understanding of the changes that evolved in the PC (and Iran), prior to our arrival in Iran, and after we departed. And it gave us an opportunity to remember our memories and friends during our time in Iran, many who we still keep in touch with. Many thanks for your dedicated effort to write this book.

Statue of Cyrus the Great Unveiled in Atlanta



Last October 2023, on what is commemorated as Cyrus the Great Day, a huge statue of the founder of the Achaemenid Empire was unveiled at the Millenium Gate in Atlanta, GA. The statue was dedicated to liberty, justice, and peace and stands in Nimruz Park. The name Nimruz, of course, refers to mid-day and thus, light with its corollary of justice. Nimruz also refers to the place in Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*, where the champions of Iran gathered to protect the realm.

The Great King’s decrees, inscribed in the Cyrus Cylinder, are the oldest known declaration of human rights. And Atlanta, home to Martin Luther King, John Lewis, and several other Civil Rights leaders, is a fitting home for such a monument.

Further information on the unveiling can be accessed at <https://fezana.org/a-statue-of-Cyrus-the-Great-unveiled-in-Atlanta>.

FROM THE ASHPAZ-KHANAE

By Chef “Babri”

How to Marinate Jujeh Kebab



For the marinade, mix together:

Crushed red pepper	The juice of 2 limes
5 T. olive oil	Tumeric
1 tsp. salt	Saffron

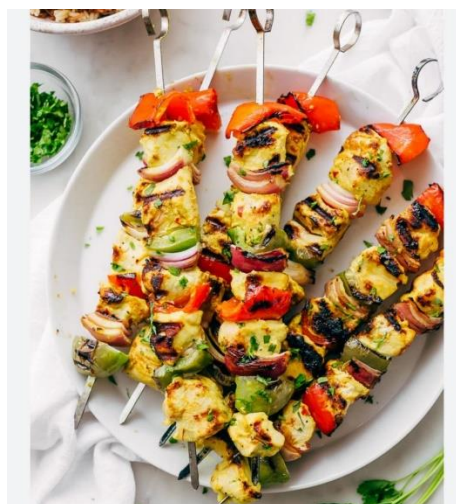
Cut 2 lbs. boneless chicken thighs into chunks and marinate for at least 8 hours. About two hours before cooking, add the lime juice.

Then put them on skewers interspersed with slices of red onion and tomatoes. Grill, preferably over a wood charcoal fire.

Serve with saffron rice.

For saffron:

1 tsp ground saffron if it's Persian saffron; 2 tsp if it is not Persian. To crush the saffron, use a wooden mallet. Put this in a glass with 2 or 3 cubes of ice and let it melt so that all the pure color can come out



IRAN PRIMER

Iran Primer provides news about Iran and Iranian-US relations via a website and timely newsletters. Affiliated with the United States Institute for Peace, it boasts a full panel of experts who provide commentary. It is a valuable source of information about events in Iran.

In 2010, USIP and the Woodrow Wilson Center launched “[The Iran Primer](#)”—an original book and regularly updated website—to provide resources and education about Iran, which has been one of the thorniest foreign policy issues for the United States since 1979. Author [Robin Wright](#) is one of the founders.

You can sign up for the Iran Primer newsletter [here](#).

In Memoriam

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



Gary Baltzer died at home in California on November 14, 2023. Born on December 25, 1945, in Ventura, he joined the Peace Corps in 1966, serving with Iran 9. Gary's love of farming and travel developed in his teens, working on a ranch in Somis. After finishing his BS degree in CalPoly Pomona, he worked in Porterville, California. In 1983, Gary's company sent him to Yemen to manage a farming contract with World Bank, where he met his wife Anne, who had moved there from Ireland. They returned to the US in 1993 after living in Yemen, Spain, and Turkey. As a consultant for World Bank, he worked on projects in Jordan, Africa, the Balkans, South and Central America, and

Afghanistan. His love of farming never waned. A gentle man with a gentle soul, his last day was spent on a hillside at Rancho Filoso where he worked for the last seventeen years. Anne and his beloved dog Winnie survive him as well as countless relatives, including his Irish family.



Leland J. Blair died in his sleep from cancer on April 10, 2024 in Virginia. Born on October 12, 1939, in Iowa, he received his B.S in History and Political Science from State College of Iowa. Lee first served as an airman first class in the Air Force in Izmir, Turkey. At the age of 26, he applied to the Peace Corps and due to his positive Middle East experience, he requested Iran. Assigned to Turkish-speaking West Azerbaijan, he served from 1966-68 in agriculture with Iran 9 in Miandoab. Receiving a law degree from Georgetown University, he had a distinguished career as an attorney with the Federal Communications Commission. Lee is survived by his wife, sister, brother, and brother-in-law.

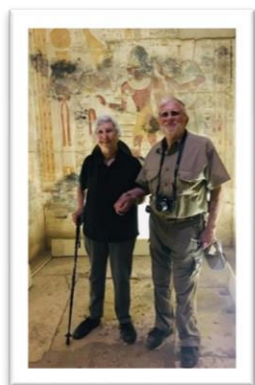


Mildred M. Carroll was born on November 25, 1920 and died on February 7, 2022 at the age of 101. She was born in Indiana and died there. Prior to joining Peace Corps with Iran 4 in 1964, Millie taught English in Indiana schools. In Tehran, she taught at Tehran University and lived with three other female volunteers. Following Peace Corps she taught on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota. A member of Central United Methodist Church in Richmond, Indiana, Millie leaves nieces, great nieces, great nephews, great-great nieces and nephews, and great-great-great nieces and nephews.



Alan James Christopherson, born on October 31, 1941, in Fingal, North Dakota, passed away peacefully in Hudson, Wisconsin on April 5, 2024. After attending Hudson Bay High School in Vancouver, Washington, he attended Portland State and continued his education at Western Washington State College, graduating with a BA in Education in 1964. He joined the Peace Corps that year, teaching English in Shiraz with TEFL Iran 4 until 1966. In 1969, Alan married Mary White, and in 1975, they welcomed son John Andrew Christopherson. Alan taught in Glenwood, Wisconsin, until his retirement in 2001, remaining as a substitute teacher for over ten years. Alan was a wonderful teacher, father, and friend. He loved books and always had something to learn.

He liked mysteries, including John Grisham and Tess Gerritson. Preceded in death by his parents and a brother, Alan is survived by son John, wife Mary, and sister Sharon.



Dolores E. Fairbanks, a librarian and expert on Islamic art, died at the age of 86 on March 30, 2024, in Virginia after a prolonged battle with sepsis. In 1966, she met Stephen C. Fairbanks at the University of Michigan who had returned from serving with TEFL Iran 4 from 1964-1966. In 1968, Dolores and Stephen, along with their months-old daughter, Jennifer, left for Iran, both teaching for four years at Iranzamin, Dolores teaching German, her first language. In 1977, they returned to Iran, with Jennifer and a second daughter, Stephanie. Dolores worked as librarian at the Tehran Center of the American Institute of Iranian Studies where Stephen was the director. When the revolution shortened their stay, Dolores' work continued, with positions for the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University, Library of Congress, Textile Museum, and until her retirement

in 2011, twenty years cataloging books at the US Department of State in the languages she knew: German, French, Russian, Dutch, Arabic, and Persian. Beautiful, elegant, highly cultured, Dolores was a woman of impeccable artistic taste, an avid gardener, horseback rider, and ballroom dancer. Stephen, Jennifer, Stephanie, and three granddaughters survive her.



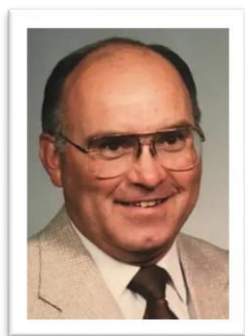
Tahmineh Mary Klein was born in Iran on December 13, 1937, and died in Durham, North Carolina, on November 23, 2023, at the age of 84. In 1962, while attending Namazi Nursing School in Shiraz, she met John Klein, a member of Iran 1. They married in the US on October 31, 1964. In 1968, they returned to Iran to work, departing due to the revolution of 1979, and moving to Stuart, Florida. In 2018 at the age of 80 she traveled alone to Iran to visit relatives. One of eight children, six of her siblings remained in Iran. Tahmineh had a life-long nursing career. She is survived by her two sons, Kombiz Klein, DO, in Durham, and Aryon Klein in Miami, Florida, her sister Nahvash who married an American friend of John Klein, and her cousins, Shahla and Vida Bourbour. John Klein predeceased her in 2019.



Frank L. Kratky died on April 12, 2022, at the age of 80 at his home under the care of his loving wife Patricia and Hospice of the Red River Valley. Born in Chicago, Frank graduated from the University of Michigan with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1964, beginning his career with Perkins & Will in Chicago. The next year he joined the Peace Corps and served in Shiraz with Iran 6 Utah where he met and married PCV Patricia Roach who had relocated from Pakistan. Following graduate school at the University of Minnesota School of Architecture, Frank enjoyed a long career in architecture. He enjoyed wood carving, control line model airplane building and flying, landscaping, gardening, and singing solos in church choirs. He was an elder at First Presbyterian Church in Moorhead, MN. Patricia survives him, along with a sister and cousin.



Daniel P. Rusthoi, born on June 5, 1942, passed away in December of 2023. After receiving an engineering degree from Los Angeles City College in 1963 and a degree in physics from the University of California Berkeley in 1966, Dan joined the Peace Corps, serving with TEFL Iran 10 in Rezaiyah from 1966-1967 with his former wife Barbara. Dan had a long career at the Los Alamos National Laboratory from 1978 until his retirement in 2008. He was a contributor to Santa Fe Pro Musica, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and the Sangre de Cristo Chorale, and volunteered at the Pajarito Environmental Education Center. Following retirement, he was active with Habitat for Humanity, a chef at St. Elizabeth Men's Shelter in Santa Fe, and played piano at his church and other events. Dan's three daughters, Christina, Keri, and Rachel, and their children survive him.



Earl M. Seeley died on April 6, 2024 in Urbandale, Iowa. Raised in New Jersey, he earned a degree in economics from Rider College, playing baseball at Rider with scouts eyeing him for professional ball, but the draft was approaching, so he joined the Peace Corps and taught English with Iran 14 in Rezaiyeh. Drafted after into the Army, he worked with Intelligence with early computers, toured with top flag football and softball teams and as a member of the soldier show, lifting spirits of service members all over the South. He was an amazing singer, with a beautiful natural instrument. Moving to Colorado, he married Debra Chandler and had one son Neil and stepson Ryan Baldi. After a career in banking, he took a job as a delivery driver until his retirement in 2013. Following their divorce, Debra and Earl raised Neil together, before Debra remarried and moved to Memphis and Neil stayed with Earl in Colorado. He embraced his role as a single dad, his true calling was as a father. He followed Neil to Minneapolis when he married, then to Des Moines, again becoming a devoted grandfather. Neil (Erica) and grandchildren Norah, Kieran, Ethan, and Graham survive him. His parents preceded him in death, as well as good friend Rush Limbaugh.



Michael W. Spurlock died of natural causes on Sunday, March 3, 2024, at the age of 78. He died in Portland, Oregon, the city where he was raised. Mike earned a B.S. in Geography from Portland State University, taking time off twice to hitchhike across Europe. He met Jackie Joyer while in graduate school, and in 1972 they married in the State of Durango, Mexico. In 1974, they joined the Peace Corps, working with Iran 47 as teachers in Abadeh and Riz. They remained in Iran following their two-year service, Mike working with Fluor-Thyssen Joint Venture helping build an oil refinery near Isfahan. Their son Bill was born there in 1977, and upon returning to Portland, they welcomed Robbie in 1981. Mike worked for the City of Portland Water and Maintenance Bureaus until his retirement in 2011. A man of curiosity and eclectic interests, he collected Oriental rugs, binoculars, hi-fi equipment, vinyl records, and small trinkets and doodads from around the world. He loved good food, good puns, and world music. He found great joy in the company of his grandchildren, Natalie, Ava, Malcolm. He died before seeing his new-born grandson, Cyrus.



Donald Scott Whitcomb passed away peacefully on February 8, 2024 in Chicago at the age of 79. Don graduated from Emory University with a BA in Art History in 1966. Joining the Peace Corps, he taught English in Bushire with TEFL Iran 13 from 1966-1969, serving for two years before extending a third year to work at the Asia Institute in Shiraz. He earned an MA from the University of Georgia in Anthropology in 1971 and a Ph.D. in Islamic Archaeology from the Department of Anthropology of the University of Chicago in 1979. With the Oriental Institute and the Middle East Center from 1981 to 2024, he also served as a Fellow at the American Center for Oriental Research in Amman, Jordan, American Research Center in Egypt in Cairo, the Smithsonian Institution, Field Museum of National History, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, carrying out field research, teaching, and curating museum exhibits throughout the Near and Middle East. A pioneer in the field of Islamic Archaeology, he directed excavations in Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Syria, and Iran, received support from National Geographic Society and American Numismatic Society, published eight books, and numerous articles. He loved the outdoors, spending time with family, enjoying barbeques at his family farm in Indiana, reading, and sitting in the garden with a good book. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Janet, two children, John and Felicia, and a brother David.



Peace Corps Iran Association stands in support for Iranians as they raise their voices for “Woman, Life, Freedom.”

HOW TO DONATE ARTIFACTS FROM YOUR PEACE CORPS IRAN EXPERIENCE

There are two organizations currently accepting donations of artifacts and documents from our Peace Corps Iran experience.

MUSEUM OF THE PEACE CORPS EXPERIENCE

The [Museum of the Peace Corps Experience](#) collects and preserves stories and objects of material culture donated by volunteers who serve in communities around the globe. It fosters cultural understanding through education and promotes research on the impact of Peace Corps, encouraging visitors to serve—wherever they live, however they can.

How to Donate Objects to the Museum

Go to Museum's website <https://museumofthepeacecorpsexperience.org/contribute-to-the-collection>

- 1- Click on the “Objects” tab. Go to bottom of the page and click on “Gift an Object.”
- 2- That will take you to the Donor Request form, which should be completed and submitted. Photographs (required) of the object(s) should be attached to that form.
- 3- The form goes to the Collections Team Leader who then puts it on the agenda for the next Collections Team meeting (they meet once a month). The Leader contacts the donor.
- 4- The Collections Team considers the object(s) for the Museum's collection. There is a complete policy on what the Team considers for a donation. (A summary of this policy is on the website under “Objects.”)
- 5- The Collections Team Leader emails the donor with the decision of the Team.
- 6- If the object is accepted, then the Team Leader emails a “Deed of Gift” form to be completed and the address of where to send the object(s). Correspondence at any phase is encouraged (debbiemanager@yahoo.com).

THE PEACE CORPS COMMUNITY ARCHIVE

The [Peace Corps Community Archive](#), curated by the American University Library, collects, preserves, and makes available materials that were created and acquired by Peace Corps Volunteers. The archive is used to support student and scholarly research, create exhibits, and provide educational and public programs that document the experiences and impact of individuals who served in the Peace Corps.

Materials created and/or acquired by volunteers during their service can be donated, such as: correspondence, diaries, film, photographs, reports, lesson plans, scrapbooks, and sound recordings.

If you are interested in making a donation, please contact the archive at <mailto:archives@american.edu> or by telephone at +1 (202) 885-3256. The archivists will be happy to answer your questions and guide you through the process of making a donation.

PLEASE HELP US CONTACT THESE MEMBERS

In December 2023, the PCIA board mailed letters to over 900 members with two purposes: (1) to update our records and (2) to solicit donations to support the 2025 conference. They were mailed first class to guarantee a “return to sender.” Over 100 letters were returned, and we have updated our member roster by email and help from people who know them. However, there are 43 members for whom we do not have a valid mailing address or email.

If you know the address of any of these people, please contact doug@peacecorpiran.org so we can complete the task as soon as possible. Thank you.

Anderson	James	Eugene	OR
Anderson	Patricia	Eugene	OR
Appleton	Marvin	West Hills	CA
Arnold (see Johnson)	Jane	Franklin	TN
Barrot	Gail (Lydia)	Sonoma	CA
Breslin	Carole	Philadelphia	PA
Calegari	Daniel (Dan)	Manchester	NH
Campbell	Emily	Olean	NY
Carter	William (Bill)	Eau Claire	WI
Christian	Keith	Seattle	WA
Dilendick	Stephen	Stoneham	MA
Erdt	F. Terrence	South Hadley	MA
Fitzpatrick	Eileen	Summit	NJ
Ford (see Landis)	Denise	Rio Verde	AZ
Froehlich	David	Doylestown	PA
Grove	Adele Sue	Matawan	NJ
Hannibal	Nancy		
Herman	Thomas	Tucson	AZ
Hill	Steven	Yakima	WA
Hunter	Christopher	Helena	MT
Imhoff	Alfred	Saint Paul	MN
Jakubielski	Lorraine	Plymouth	MI
Kratky	Patricia	Moorhead	MN
Lindquist	Jack	Arma	KS
Louden	Mary Ann	Branson	CO
Lynch	John	New York	NY
Madson	Jack	Issaquah	WA
Male	Stephen	Harrisburg	PA
Malvaux	Kenneth	Knoxville	TN

Marrero	Auro	New York	NY
McNulty	Michael	New York	NY
Olitt	Raymond	Edmonds	WA
Pagel	Doug	Gonzales	TX
Petri	Albert	Napa	CA
Phay	Andrew	Nashville	TN
Puro	Chris	Decatur	MI
RaLonde	Raymond	Eagle River	AK
Schill	Peggy	Ellicottville	NY
Seigle	Daniel		
Strong	Paul	APO	AP
Torma	Gerard (Jerry)	Lorain	OH
Turoff	Carey	Monroe	NY
Wong	Mary	West Chester	PA

PEACE CORPS IRAN ON THE WEB??

By Douglas Schermer, PCIA Webmaster

Our website, www.peacecorpsiran.org, is set for major changes. Thanks to the National Peace Corps Association, we have made use of the SilkStart platform for our website and for sending emails to members. NPCA has made the decision to move to a different platform, WordPress, and supplement it with a database and messaging system called Raiser’s Edge. Those changes were expected by January. When that transition begins to impact us, I anticipate a steep learning curve and more than a few bumps along the way. As things progress, please be patient.

FROM FALLING WATER TO TALIESIN WEST



When Iran 14 trained at Blue Knob Ski Resort in Pennsylvania in the summer of 1966, Jim Chappell suggested a field trip to visit nearby Falling Water which was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. It was Doug Schermer’s introduction to the world of architecture.



Recently Chappel came to Scottsdale to visit relatives where Taliesin West, Wright’s winter studio and architecture school, is located. Schermer, who lives nearby

and is a member of Taliesin West, helped facilitate a tour for Jim. That was followed by lunch at a nearby Persian restaurant and reminiscences over dessert.

PCIA Donors, November 2023 - February 2024

PCIA conducted a fund-raising drive between November 2023 and February 2024. Below is a list of those who donated during this time. We are thankful for their support for PCIA.

Adkins, Kirsti	Frye, Eden	Murphey, Sara
Bea, Debora	Gianfortoni, Emily	Nelson, Barbara
Beaufait, Neil	Gillio, Geraldine	Nelson, Griff
Beauvais, Susan	Goode, Howard and Reka	Nix, Roger
Bently, Ernie	Gottlieb, Jeanette	Norland, Diane
Bettencourt, Emily	Green, Janet	Osterberg, David
Bevans, John and Judith	Grummon, Stephen and	Overby, Kent
Blumhorst, Glenn	Corrie	Paine, Charles
Bourbour, Vida	Hanson, Brad	Prichard, Vince
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Casper, Carl	Kugelman, Larry	Schneider, Herbert
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Clarke, Bonnie	Mayer, John	Smith, Homa
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Dereskewicz, Michael	Metzler, Robert	Starkis, Andrej
Easterly, EM	Mihm, Madelyn	Stealy, June
Eaton, Richard	Milks, Bill	Tipple, Ronald
Endicott, James	Miller, Thomas	Werhner, Mathew
Erickson, Marilyn	Mitchell, Marie	Westheimer, Tom
Eskandari, Nick	Montalto, Nicholas and	Wynkoop, Kitty
Ferguson, David	Gloria	Zachow, Rosalind
Frieden, Nancy	Mott, Andrew	Zerbonia, Robert
Fry, Edward	Moulton, Laurence	