

KhabarNameh

خبرنامه

Newsletter of the Peace Corps Iran Association
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FROM THE EDITOR

Joan Gaughan (Rasht/Lahijan, 1964-66)

“**This conference has soul.**” (A PC volunteer to Kerry Segel.)



There was laughter. There were tears and lots of hugs and vows to stay in touch and exchanges of email addresses, and snatches of Farsi that hung in the air and poetry. There was a somber remembrance of friends who have gone before us. And then it was over. Or was it? On the first evening, **Joseph Kennedy III** set the tone of the conference by echoing the challenge of his great uncle, JFK, to continue asking what we can do for our country. Put bluntly, he made it clear that while the PCIA will soon close its doors, closing our minds and our hearts to its mission is not a

high-quality option. Over half of this issue dwells on the conference. Then **Dave Devine** reviews the book that will be the last discussion for the Dooreh-ye Ketaab and then also highlights honors recently won by Iranian artists. **Jackie Spurlock** lists the books for the last three Doorehs and “**Rom Rom**” and **Chef Babri** usher in Yalda...with *anar*; of course.

And so gentle reader, befarma'id.

IN THIS ISSUE

From the President	2	Reunions	12
Film, <i>When We Grew Together.</i>	3	It is Finished	14
Diplomacy Now or Later	4	Where Do We Go From Here?	15
Nomads in Iran	5	Books, Books	16
Personal Reflection	7	The Prizes	17
Film. <i>A Move</i>	9	Dooreh-ye Ketaab	18
Film. <i>The Dawn is Too Far</i>	10	Aya Midanastid?	18
Shaehr “Witness”	11	Chef Babri	19
		In Memoriam	20

FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Chuck Kaminski (Kermanshah, 1969-71)



Salaam,

It has now been two months since our final PCIA conference and reunion this past October in Washington, DC. We continue to hear from attendees and presenters how they enjoyed the presentations and the sense of community among those in attendance. One presenter remarked that they are typically never in the presence of so many Americans who lived and worked in Iran and who have an appreciation of its people and culture.

The Friday evening reception opened with remarks from former Massachusetts congressperson and RPCV, (Dominican Republic, 2004-06) Joseph P. Kennedy III, who was introduced by former HHS Secretary and Iran Group 1 volunteer Donna Shalala. The six plenary sessions and six breakout sessions over the next two days were filled with discussions about hijab, poets and poetry, diplomacy, the Iranian diaspora, changes in the Farsi language, nomads, and the obvious question...where do we go from here? The Sunday closing Persian banquet concluded with PCIA member Carolyn Yale reading her own moving poetry, PCIA member Genna Stead Wangsness offered words of memory for Iran RPCVs who have passed, and then remarks by former PC Director Jody Olsen closed the conference. Heartfelt thanks to the planning committee who delivered a memorable reunion and conference: Skip Auld and Brad Hanson, co-chairs, and members Bill Brandon, Barbara Deekle, Peter Deekle, Jeanette Gottlieb, Megan Lessert, Andy Mott, Kerry Segel, Doug Schermer (and yours truly).



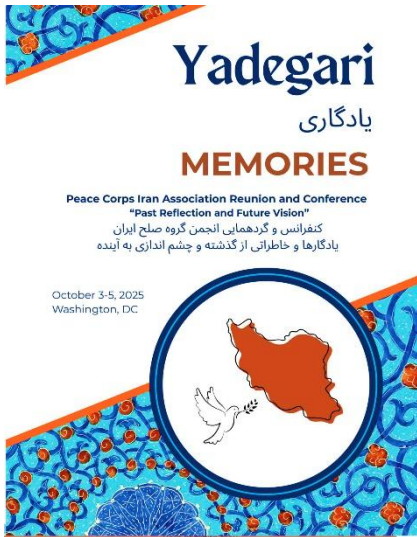
Joseph Kennedy

What is coming up next? The Board is taking a break this December and we will reconvene in January and focus on the closing of our organization by June 30, 2026. The closure committee beside myself includes Jackie Spurlock Vice President, Ed Seiders Treasurer, Marie Mitchell Secretary and Board members John Salamack and Doug Schermer. We will keep you informed as decisions are made about ending dates for our various programs and social media presence.

A way to continue to be in touch about Iran and connect with your fellow Iran volunteers is to sign up at Peace Corps Connect+, <https://community.peacecorpsconnect.org/signup> . It is a virtual and free on-line community by the [National Peace Corps Association \(NPCA\)](#), On Connect+ you will be able to find and connect with other members, share stories and more. BUT you must sign up. The more Iran RPCVs sign up the better to connect after PCIA fades away.

Finally, have a safe and joyful holiday season. Cherish those around you, family and friends. Be kind. And hope for peace during these challenging times. December 21 is Yalda, the Persian celebration of the winter solstice when family and friends gather, share foods and read poetry. Sounds like what is needed. As Persians say... **Shab-e Yalda Mobarak** -- شب یلدا مبارک

Yadegari:



There are still a few copies left of the 32-page bilingual, multi-color *Yadegari* booklet that was distributed free to all paid conference registrants and conference speakers. The *Yadegari* production group intended this booklet, as the title suggests, not only as a reminder of our Peace Corps days in Iran, but also as a brief chronicle of PCIA as an organization. It also provides resource lists, such as favorite Iranian films, cookbooks, books about Iran authored by RPCVs, and Dooreh-ye Ketaab books discussed for those still interested in widening their knowledge of Iranian culture. If you are interested in getting a copy of *Yadegari*, please use this link

<https://peacecorpsiran.org/yadegari-booklet/> A donation of \$10 to PCIA is requested for each copy to cover its production cost and mailing expense.

Editor's note: Unless otherwise labelled, the graphics in this issue are from the Yadegari.

A TIME OF INNOCENCE; A TIME OF HOPE

By Bill Brandon, (Shiraz, 1964-66)

When We Grew Together



Abbas Motlagh

On Saturday afternoon, conference participants attending the third plenary panel session enjoyed watching the world premier of the feature-length documentary *When We Grew Together*. Through interviews with volunteers who had served there, the film explored the Peace Corps presence in Iran. Following the screening, filmmakers Hossein Mahallati (producer) and Abbas Motlagh (director) discussed the film with the audience and moderator Bill Brandon.

This film was made without any PCIA editorial control or its financial support, but the Board did facilitate communication between the filmmakers and PCIA members and appointed an Iran RPCV as liaison to the filmmakers. *When We Grew Together*

received a standing ovation, the only standing ovation during the three days that this *KhabarNameh* correspondent witnessed.

As a follow-up to the conference, Mr. Mahallati is donating a physical copy of the film poster to the Museum of the Peace Corps Experience. Museum Director Dr. Zack Klim explained that an acquisitions committee will decide whether to accept the gift. Because the Museum apparently insists on a story related to submitted artifacts, Bill Brandon sent him a short essay, “A Divine Gift,” published by *KhabarNameh* (February 2021, pp. 12-14) that, while focused on other topics, does explain why the producer found the subject of the Peace Corps in Iran so compelling.



Hossein Mahallati

DIPLOMACY NOW OR LATER

By Paul Barker (Bidokht, Shiraz, Tehran, Bahrain, 1973-76)

The plenary session on “Finding a Way Forward for Diplomacy with Iran” featured a panel with four noted scholars/journalists/diplomats with extensive experience in Iran-American relations



over the decades: Trita Parsi, Barbara Slavin, John Limbert and Sina Toossi. While the volatile international atmosphere surrounding American-Iranian politics evolved greatly over the two years when our conference was being planned, the relevance of the aspiration to find a peaceful, diplomatic path to negotiate our long-entrenched hostilities only grew stronger. Our panelists shared wisdom garnered through their extensive experience with the bedeviling dynamics of US-Iran politics. As the ever-wise John Limbert observed, there are always two answers to these questions: 1) “I don’t know” and 2)

“It’s complicated.”

Trita Parsi, who has authored three books on the promise and pitfalls of Iran-Israel-US relations opened the discussion with the provocative suggestion that due to the unhelpfully entrenched positions of the current regimes in both Washington and Tehran, this is not a good time for a strong push for new diplomacy. Despite earlier signaled flexibility, the Trump team now has laid down unacceptable terms for a new deal, terms which would amount to Iranian capitulation to US demands. Iran predictably finds these more than unacceptable. Were the US to now press these terms and Iran resist them, Netanyahu’s Israel might seize the moment as an opportunity for militarily “mowing the grass” in Iran. When the current regimes in the US and Iran age out, new openings for diplomacy will hopefully arise.

Barbara Slavin reported on her recent talks with President Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. She found him to be more seasoned and confident in his role than had been the case a year earlier. His government has been burned badly by Trump’s policies and actions, most recently joining Israel’s bombing campaign against Iranian nuclear assets and

pushing of unrealistic diplomatic positions. The alternative Iranian path has been to nurture trade, diplomatic and security relations with China, Russia and Iran's immediate neighbors. Hopefully, Trump's desire to bring peace somewhere will bear fruit, or at least constrain the most dangerous options; and, again hopefully, Netanyahu's problematic attacks on targets in Qatar and elsewhere will hold back his country's appetite for new attacks on Iran; and, still hopefully, Tehran's leaders will want to focus on dire domestic, economic and environmental problems.

John Limbert quoted the wisdom of Samuel Becket and Moulavi Rumi to call for patience and persistence in the face of inevitable setbacks. We need clear and realistic goals, and we need to recognize that foreigners have a terrible track record when it comes to sorting out Iran's very real problems. Our Iranian friends, and we, deserve better leaders than we have.

Sina Toossi noted that there did appear to be an opening for successful diplomacy early in this year when Steve Witkoff showed a willingness to accept limited uranium enrichment and even as late as June when the US was engaged fairly directly with Iran in five rounds of negotiations. These opportunities were blown up by the 12-day June war. The prospects for diplomacy in the near term are not good.

The video of the panel can be found at: https://youtu.be/ltN14kk3_5s

NOMADS IN IRAN: PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE

By Brad Hanson. (Khaf, Shiraz Tribal School, 1973-76)

Ashkbous Talabi, himself Qashqa'i, born somewhere while his family was migrating between their winter and summer pastures, engaged his audience with a fascinating presentation at a breakout session on Saturday afternoon on the origins of the Qashqa'i Confederation, its checkered history with central Iranian governing authorities, and the necessary adaptations of Qashqa'i and other tribesmen's traditional lifestyles in the face of changing governments, land



L to T: Paul Barker, Ashkbous Talabi and Brad Hanson, all wearing Qashqa'i tribal hats.

reform, road construction, and other socio-economic factors. He gave special attention to the role of the Office of Tribal Education and its farsighted founder, Mohammad Bahmanbegui, in preparing the younger generation for life in an evolving Iran. Imprisoned by both the Shah's and Islamic Republic regimes, Talabi's personal story of survival and prospering reflected that of so many of his fellow tribes people. In response

to an audience question, Talabi, a born educator, demonstrated the versatility and different meanings of how to wear the distinctive felt wool, two-flap, tan Qashqa'i hat. Unfortunately, AV difficulties prevented showing the several short, historic clips intended to complement his presentation showing a migration and traditional tribal dancing (*chub bazi*). However, all were shown at the beginning of the succeeding conference plenary session and so all conference attendees got to see them. Hopefully, PCIA will be able to post this session and the short clips on the PCIA website.

From the *Yadegari*

ما به یاد داریم We Remember

- The ubiquity of pictures of the shah.
- The stars at night, especially in southeastern Iran, are closer to the earth than anywhere in the United States. And there are more of them.
- Being awakened by the call of the muezzin to prayer.
- Camels really smell bad.
- Iranians often do not spoon sugar into their tea. They will drink the tea with a piece of *gand* held between their teeth.
- Each regional ethnic group has its own unique cuisine, textile and carpet styles.
- Farsi has many dialects.
- An American dollar was worth about seven tomans.
- *Tadiq*, saffron and *fesanjan*.
- Celebrating the winter solstice, *Yalda*, on a cold winter night with a bubbling samovar on the table and your feet tucked under a warm *korsi* munching on *peshte*, *anar* and *shirini*.



ما یاد گرفتیم We Learned

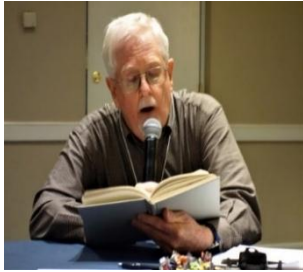
Shanbeh Yekshanbeh Dohshanbeh Sehshanbeh Charshanbeh Panjshanbeh Jomeh

The week started on Saturday, and if you knew how to count in Farsi, the names of the days were easy to remember.

The calendar was a bit more difficult since the Iranian months started in the middle of our Gregorian months.

WHY STOP NOW? PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AT THE PCIA CONFERENCE

By Kerry Segel (Khonsar, 1969-71)



It was 1969. The assistant manager of the Khonsar Inn rushed up to me in the middle of Khonsar's main street and handed me a small book. "This book is for you. The poet's name is Forugh."

"Why is he giving me this book? Why does this poet have only a single name?", I wondered.

This incident marked the beginning of my fascination with the life and works of this twentieth century Iranian woman, the poet Forugh Farrokhzad, who has become an iconic figure of the twenty-first. Although her most highly praised work coincided with the first five years of Peace Corps in Iran (she died in 1967), the lack of English translations at the time meant that the substance of her works was not available to those without an advanced reading knowledge of Persian.

That situation has now changed. With numerous translations available, it seemed fitting that this final literature plenary highlighted her life, works, and legacy. In the conference Saturday afternoon, we were able to include an audio of her reading her own poems, as well as presenting a trailer of the one documentary she produced and directed, *The House is Black*. Multimedia artist Shirin Neshat contributed images of Farrokhzad's poetry woven into the photographs of human figures, while Farzaneh Milani discussed letters of Farrokhzad to which only she had been given access.



Forugh Farrokhzad

The other conference "venue" that has a personal resonance for me is the *Yadegari (Memories)* booklet. Three entries stood out.

On page 11 is a recent photo of my dear friend and Peace Corps mentor M.H. Tasbihi with his wife, Agdas. On page 26 "The Timeline of the Peace Corps Iran Association," the year 2020 is listed as the year I began writing about Tasbihi. Finally, on page 18 there is the beginning of Forugh Farrokhzad's poem "It is only Sound that Remains," the opening line of which speaks about the need to go on. "Why should I stop? Why?"

Indeed, why should I stop writing about Tasbihi, even if there is only one issue remaining of *KhabarNameh*? So I will continue to write *about* Tasbihi's travels, beginning with the book *Az Khonsar ta Khorasan*, a recounting of his trip to Mashad to attend a seminar for English teachers.

A final note: Just the other day, thanks to WhatsApp, I was able to speak to the Tasbihi family, who live in Tehran. Although Dr. Tasbihi's infirmities precluded his speaking with me (after all, he is 95), Agdas, who is 90, and I had the most delightful conversation. She reminded me how

when she visited Khonsar on her honeymoon, I had provided the equipment for the Tasbihis to view a movie. We discussed their sojourn in Pakistan, where Tasbihi did most of his research. I learned that Dr. Tasbihi's final manuscript, which took over twenty years for him to write the more than 2000 pages, was now being brought out in book form. Volume One of perhaps five volumes was on the verge of being printed. As our conversation wound down, she made one request: Could I obtain a copy of the *Yadegari*?

Forugh Farrokhzad and Mohammad Hossein Tasbihi—two very different personalities, brought together in our PCIA DC conference with one message for me: don't stop.



Mohammad and Agdas
Tasbihi

It's Only Sound That Remains

Why should I stop, why?
The birds have gone in search
of the blue direction.
The horizon is vertical, vertical,
and movement fountain-like
and at the limits of vision
shining planets spin.

چرا توقف کنم، چرا؟
پرنده ها به جستجوی جانب آبی رفته اند
افق عمودی است
افق عمودی است و حرکت: فواره وار
و در حدود بینش
سیاره های نورانی می چرخند

Translated by Michael Hillman, *A Lonely Woman: Fourough Farrokhzad and Her Poetry*.
Washington, DC. Three Continents Press and Mage Publishers, 1987, p. 160.



NEMA-ye NAZDIK AT THE CONFERENCE

Reviewed by Bill Brandon

A Move

Leading off the Sunday conference program was the plenary panel “Women, Life, Protest in Contemporary Iran.” The overture—a music video mashup of three versions of the anthem “Baraye,” the hit Iranian “Zan, Zandegi, va Azadi” protest song—played while the audience found seats in the large, steeply-banked auditorium. After Narimon Safavi’s brief introduction, PCIA’s audio-visual vendors screened the short film *A Move*, a quiet family drama about how a family in Mashhad adjusts to a daughter who refuses hijab. Produced by the award-winning director, Elahi Esmail, the daughter’s decision is intertwined with everyday conversations where the choice about the hijab is set against the larger dilemma of choosing between respect for one’s family and adhering to one’s principles.

Following the showing, Mr. Safavi moderated a discussion by Washington Post Iran reporter Yeganeh Torbati and sociologist Dr. Elham Gheytnchi about protest in Iran. The audience engaged in an energetic and insightful discussion of protests in Iran both during that Q and A and after the panel ended.



THE DAWN IS TOO FAR

By Carolyn Yale (Shiraz, 1974-76)



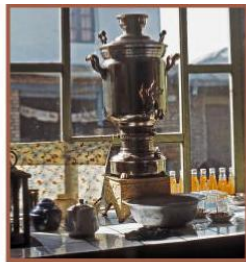
As Director of the Center for Iranian Diaspora Studies at San Francisco State University, Persis Karim has worked to shine a light on the generations of people with Iranian heritage who have made their home outside of Iran. Persis' major accomplishment before retiring this year (2025) has been completion of the film *The Dawn is Too Far*; which was featured at the conference on Sunday. Focusing on individuals' experiences leaving Iran (e.g., during the Revolution) and making a life in the US might sound like an invitation to air the difficulties of "Iranian" identity here. Yet the film, which features interviews with Iranian Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area, is upbeat. It demonstrates that émigré "adaptation" can be a creative blending of cultures. As Persis explains it, "*The Dawn is Too Far* undermines the tired and overplayed news headlines that were dominated by narratives of enmity and mistrust between the governments of Iran and the US, and offers a more humane understanding of how people's lives and the sacrifices they make are part of the larger story of immigration." The discussion at the end of the 55-minute film showed real appreciation for the it.

To view *The Dawn is Too Far*

<https://veterandocumentarycorps.vhx.tv/products/dawn-is-too-far-stories-of-iranian-american-life>

For subscribers to the Vimeo OTT

channel: <https://veterandocumentarycorps.vhx.tv/videos/film-the-dawn-is-too-far-stories-of-iranian-american-life-karim-behrens-2024>



SHAER AT THE CONFERENCE



WITNESS
By Carolyn Yale

Memory is a lonely witness.
I have seen a land in full eclipse of sun,
watched winter rest on the Alborz,
walked in gardens veiled with summer shadows.
Splendid roses grew behind high walls.

I hear voices through remembered time:
prayers floating in the dust,
conversations among friends I've lost,
rooms closed to strangers,
secrets kept and shared.

Who are these memories?
Where are the feasts today?
Are the windows locked and blind?
I learned another's words
for face and touch.
It mattered once.

What matters now
when hope is martyred on Tehran's broad streets?
I recall when hope was green.
Through years of struggle for a different life
change cuts a narrowing passage
with many seasons to explain.

Carolyn Yale served in Shiraz, Iran as a Peace Corps volunteer (1974-1976). Since 2012, she has been an active member of the Peace Corps Iran Association leadership, a nationwide non-profit dedicated to promoting understanding and peaceful relations with Iran.

خاطره شاهی تنهاست.
سرزمینی را دیده‌ام در خورشید گرفتگی کامل،
زمستان را دیده‌ام که بر البرز آرمیده،
در باغ‌هایی قدم زده‌ام در پرده‌ای از سایه‌های تابستان.
گل‌های سرخ شکوهمند پشت دیوارهای بلند می‌شکفتند.

صداهایی را در گذر زمان به یاد می‌آورم:
نمازهایی که در غبار شناور بودند،
گفت‌وگوهای دوستانی که دیگر نیستند،
اتاق‌هایی بسته به روی غریبه‌ها،
رازهایی نگامداشته و رازهایی در میان نهاده.

این خاطره‌ها کیستند؟
جشن‌ها امروز کجایند؟
آیا پنجره‌ها قفل و کورند؟
واژه‌های دیگری آموختم
برای «چهره» و «لمس».
روزی مهم بود.

اکنون چه مهم است
وقتی امید بر خیابان‌های پهن تهران به شهادت می‌رسد؟
به یاد دارم روزی که امید سبز بود.
در سال‌های پر کشمکش برای زندگی‌ای دیگر،
تغییر گذرگاهی باریک می‌برد
با فصل‌های بسیار برای توضیح.

PAST CONFERENCE REUNIONS

Group 18 (1967-69) Comes Together

By Ed Seiders (Noshahr, Chaloos, 1967-69)



Iran Group 18 trained in 1967 at a Job Corps Center in Clearfield, Utah. Of the original sixty-three trainees, fifty-one went to Iran at the end of training. Eight of the group are currently known to be deceased. We were architects, teachers, engineers and secretaries assigned to the Tehran office and various cities and towns throughout Iran. Although since returning we have become spread out, we've managed to stay in touch throughout the years. The Washington Conference was kind of a reunion for our group, with nineteen of us, plus spouses and friends attending the conference. In addition to being able to catch up at free times in the hotel lobby and at meals throughout the three days, thanks to Neil Hart, we also had a great group dinner on Saturday evening at the Sichuan Pavilion, Chinese restaurant on K Street. Kendall Dudley has volunteered to set up a Group 18 on NPCA Connect+, so we can continue to stay in touch after PCIA officially closes up, and there are no more Iran RPCV conferences. In addition, we have begun to gather updated bios and pictures of the group which hopefully will eventually be available some place online.



At the D.C. conference and reunion, Group 18 gathers around a table with a white tablecloth.



Group 1 (1962-64) Reunited at the Chicago 2023 conference

PAST PCIA REUNIONS AND CONFERENCES

“Peace Corps Reunion,” Portland, OR, August 5-7, 2011. Chairs: Doug Schermer, Jackie Spurlock, and Genna Wangsness.

Reunion at the National Peace Corps Association gathering in **Boston, MA, June 28-29, 2013,** including the opening session, **“Evoking the Complex, Vivid Life of Today’s Iran.”** Chairs: Doug Schermer and Jackie Spurlock.

“Iran Today: Quest for New Narratives,” University of Texas, **Austin, TX, May 28-30, 2015.** Chairs: Doug Schermer, Jackie Spurlock, and Carolyn Yale.

“Preserving the Legacy and Advocating the Future,” Annapolis, **MD, October 29 - November 1, 2017.** Chairs: Skip Auld, Jeanette Gottlieb, and Doug Schermer.

“A Modern Mosaic: Iran, America, and Peace Corps Interconnections,” San Diego, **CA, October 4– 6, 2019.** Chairs: Jeanette Gottlieb and Doug Schermer.

“Looking Back to a Path Forward,” Virtual Conference, October 2, 2021. Chairs: Jeanette Gottlieb and Doug Schermer.

“Understanding Iran Today: Fulfilling Our Mission, Ensuring Our Legacy,” University of Chicago, **Chicago, IL, May 25-27, 2023.** Chairs: Jeanette Gottlieb and Doug Schermer

“Peace Corps Iran Association Reunion and Conference: Past Reflection and Future Vision.” Washington, **DC, October 3-5, 2025.** Chairs: Skip Auld and Brad Hanson

IT IS FINISHED

تمام شده است



Readers may remember that in early 2021, in view of our aging membership, the PCIA Board began working with the Telesto Consulting Firm to determine the Association's future. By the 2023 PCIA conference in Chicago, the Board had narrowed the choice to: (1) expanding to include younger members, (2) merging with another organization that coincided with our mission and legacy, or (3) fold. The latter choice was taken. Thus, the breakout session to discuss our future might have been one of the more pivotal sessions at the Conference.

The following summary is from notes of the discussion taken by Richard Eaton (Tabriz, 1962-64)

The PCIA president, Chuck Kaminski emphasized that, as of June 2026, PCIA will cease to exist. The name "PCIA" can no longer be used nor can any other such group use the PCIA mailing list. After the cost of the conference has been covered, the remaining money in the Association's account will go to another like-minded non-profit organization which will be determined at a later date.

The two online publications, the *KhabarNameh* and Paul Barker's *Advocacy Bulletin*, as well as the Dooreh-ye Ketaab, and the Facebook group which numbers about 500 will all disappear entirely along with the monthly Board newsletter, *From the Field*. As former PCIA president, Jeanette Gottlieb pointed out, without a Board there would be no reason for it. Jackie Spurlock added that, at the beginning of 2026, Dooreh-ye Ketaab will choose three books for discussion every other month until closure in June and then it too, will cease to exist. [These are listed on page 18] That said, if anybody would like to continue the Dooreh, that could happen, but it could not be called part of the PCIA.

So what, if anything, can replace those five entities? In a word, nothing. However, if someone wants to continue any one of the publications, they would be free to do so but there could be no PCIA connection nor would there be any web access for distribution. Peace Corps Connect+ enables us to access information about the PCIA but transferring information into it would take time. Someone also mentioned that we can keep the PCIA's more general mission of informing the wider public about Iran by speaking at groups such as senior centers or church groups.

Our documents are archived at American University which can take our contact list, but it must be locked. All issues of the *KhabarNameh* which are now on our website will obviously be gone when the website itself is shut down, but they will be available through the American University.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

By Skip Auld (Mahallat, 1973-74)



We wrapped up our final conference with Carolyn Yale's reading "A Last Pass at the Wine." We gathered, we learned, we broke bread, we celebrated, we smiled, we cried; in a word, we embodied the name of our reunion and conference: *Past Reflection and Future Vision*. The following three opportunities allow you to remain connected:

1. **Contact Mehrnoosh Pourziaiee**, BBC Persian TV Correspondent. She is keenly interested in proposing a documentary to her producers at BBC Persian TV. She has some ideas but wants to hear your thoughts and talk with you about Iran, your Peace Corps years, Iranian-American relations, and more. Production of this documentary will require many more resources than this 5-minute report which she filed from our conference: [BBC NEWS فارسی on X:](#)



Mehrnosh Pourziaiee
interviews Brad Hanson in D.C.

[گردهمایی آمریکایی‌های عاشق ایران مردان و زنانی که در دهه‌های ۱۳۴۰ و ۱۳۵۰ خورشیدی غریبه وارد ایران شدند و مهمان‌نوازی مردم شهرها و روستاهای ایران، برای همیشه آنها را دگرگون کرد. آنها سال‌هاست که از ایران می‌گویند و در <https://t.co/CcYE8JBXJM> / X حسرت بازگشت به ایران بغض می‌کنند مهرنوش پورضیایی گزارش می‌دهد](#) If you're willing to talk with her, please reach out by email, text, or phone. Here's her contact information: Mehrnosh.Pourziaiee@bbc.co.uk / (240) 688-8575.

2. **Contact Cyndi Capurso**, Program Coordinator with the National Peace Corps Association. She would like to connect with all of us to keep us engaged through Peace Corps Connect+ and other ways. Her contact information is: ccapurso@peacecorpsconnect.org / (202) 293-7728.

3. **Reach out to former PCIA President Carolyn Yale** to request a copy of her poetry chapbook from which she read two poems to end our conference, "The Reach of Earth's Shadow," and "A Last Pass At the Wine", which begins "We move slowly these days . . ." She will mail the book to you and asks only that you consider a donation to PCIA. Carolyn's contact information is: yalebush@gmail.com / (510) 325-5005.

OUR VISION:

To achieve and maintain cultural understanding and peaceful relations between the US and Iran.



ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

By Joan Gaughan (*KhabarNameh* Editor)

In his keynote address, Joseph Kennedy emphasized that our work is not done. The challenge remains. We can—and are— not only building bridges between Americans and Iranians but many of are also working in various ways to bring the Kennedy idealism of our youth to our own communities. So, send us the projects you are invested in and would like help with or simply want to talk about by next March 15 so that we can share them in the next, and last *KhabarNameh*. The address is allgaughan@yahoo.com.

BOOKS, BOOKS



Iran's Grand Strategy, by Vali Nasr, Princeton University Press, 2025, 388 pages. Reviewed by David Devine (Zahedan, 1971-73).

Can a book written about a nation's security philosophy be out-of-date on the day it's published? That's a question to consider for this book since the fall of Assad in Syria, the Israeli demolition of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the American and Israeli attacks on Iran itself all occurred after it went to press. However, the book's basic premise—the Iran-led Axis of Resistance seeking to expel both the US and Israel from the Middle East—still has validity with Iran joining China and Russia in an anti-American alliance, and Hamas avoiding complete defeat in Gaza.

Written in a dry, straightforward fashion, *Iran's Grand Strategy* doesn't offer much new to the subject of the regime's world outlook. It does, though, clearly spell out the two basic tenets of that philosophy—sacred defense at home and forward defense in the region. The former relies on protecting the ruling class by emphasizing the numerous actual threats to the country, beginning with the 1980 Iraqi invasion. The latter looks to ensure Iran's sovereignty by having allied surrogates fight battles in their own homelands.

The recent obvious failure of this second strategy may have resulted from Iran's relatively meager military spending. According to Nasr, while Saudi Arabia spends \$75 billion annually and Israel \$23 billion, Iran invests less than \$7 billion.

The ongoing internal conflict between hardliners pushing the need to defend the Revolution by assertive military action and those who support moderating Iran's posture vis-a-vis its neighbors and the US are emphasized throughout the book. But the recent revelation that Iran's military is simply a paper tiger leads to an unavoidable question: Is the development of a nuclear arsenal the only way the regime can protect itself while insuring the sovereignty of Iran?

The Prizes

By David Devine (Zahedan, 1971-73).



Iranians, both in country and the diaspora, have been awarded numerous awards for their 2025 artistic achievements. London resident Mimi Khalvati received the Jhalak Poetry Prize for her book of collected poems, with one reviewer writing: “Mimi Khalvati is a poet of light, love, absence, and the many facets of self.”

Drawing inspiration from the *Kotál*, an embroidered processional flag, Minnesota-based Ziba Rajabi won the DAG Prize for her fabric-based artwork. “This project,” Rajabi observed, “is part of ongoing research about grieving and mourning rituals in the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamia throughout history.”

Ten photos by Iranians—two first place, six second place, and two third place—won 2025 International Photography Awards. Among the second-place winners was the photo above by Ehsan Moradi taken in Sistan and Baluchistan Province entitled: “Water is not the source of life.” Not only is the water polluted with soil, but it also contains eight heavy elements.

The Asia Society honored New York City artist Shirin Neshat with its 2025 Asia Arts Game Changer award. *Land of Dreams*, a recent film by Neshat, prompted one reviewer to write: “In order to control the people, the government decides to record their dreams. But a worker in the census bureau secretly impersonates the dreams she records in Farsi and puts them out on social media.”

Finally, Paris-based artist Pooya Abbasian won the Art & Environment Prize in Europe, while at Stanford University, the Bitá Prize for Persian Arts was awarded to architect Hossein Amanai.



DOOREH-ye KETAAB 2006 Plan

Jackie Spurlock (Abadeh, Riz/Zarrinshah, 1974-1976)

Below is the list of three books chosen by members of the Dooreh-ye Ketab to be read in 2026. Each of the three 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.

May 13 will be the last Dooreh. Members who wish to continue gathering must begin organizing by June 30, as no member information, publicity assistance, zoom, etc. will be available after that.

January 14. *The Evin Prison Bakers' Club: Surviving Iran's Most Notorious Prisons in 16 Recipes*, by Sepideh Gholian. 2025. **NOTE UNUSUAL TIME: 8am Pacific Standard Time** We will be joined by Maziar Bahari who is in London because the author is in prison in Tehran.

March 11. *King of Kings: The Unmaking of the Modern Middle East*, by Scott Anderson. 2025. Scott Anderson will join us.

May 13. *Iran's Grand Strategy: A Political History*, by [Vali Nasr](#). 2025. Vali Nasr will join us. See David Devine's review, page 16.

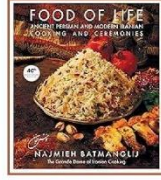
AYA MIDANASTID?

By "Rom Rom"

Yalda Night and the Radiance of the Pomegranate



Did you know that **Yalda Night**, the longest and most luminous night of the Persian calendar, has been celebrated for centuries as a quiet victory of light over darkness? Families gather around glowing tables filled with ruby-toned fruits, reciting poetry and sharing stories that stretch back through generations. At the heart of it all sits the pomegranate (*anar*) a fruit so symbolic that its glistening seeds are said to resemble scattered embers of the sun. On Yalda, eating *anar* is more than tradition; it's a poetic wish for warmth, renewal, and brighter days ahead, carried in every burst of its sweet-tart jewels.



Chef Babri Dal Adas, the Golden Comfort of Abadan



In the warm southern city of Abadan, where the air hums with Gulf breezes and the kitchen is the heart of every home, Dal Adas has long been a beloved companion to daily life. Humble yet full of character, this dish shows how a few simple ingredients can create something deeply satisfying. *Fun fact:* In many Abadani households, Dal Adas is one of the first dishes children learn to cook—because it’s quick, comforting, and nearly impossible to get wrong.

Ingredients:

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1 cup red lentils (adas-e ghermez), rinsed | ¼ tsp. black pepper |
| 1 small onion, thinly sliced | Salt to taste |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | 2+ T. olive oil |
| 1 T. tomato paste | ½ tsp turmeric |



Serve with fresh lime and a pinch of cumin or chili flakes

Simmer the red lentils with turmeric, garlic, and salt until they soften into a golden, velvety base. In a separate pan, fry the sliced onions in oil until they turn a deep, caramel color, then stir in the tomato paste and black pepper to awaken their aroma. Combine the onion mixture with the lentils and let everything bubble gently until thick and fragrant. Finish with a squeeze of lime and serve with warm bread or over rice. Simple, sunny, and unmistakably southern Dal Adas carries the warmth of Abadan in every spoonful.

Nooshe jaan!

IN MEMORIAM

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



ADSIT, Paula Scharf, 82, died on October 18, 2025, in Ohio. With a BA and MA in Education, she joined TEFL 13 and served in Bojnourd from 1966-1968. After Peace Corps, she moved to San Francisco where she lived for more than fifty years. With a PhD in speech pathology, she devoted her life to the field, retiring after 30+ years. Passionate about helping students overcome learning disabilities, she was a vocal advocate for human rights and equality for all people. Paula is survived by her brother, Lawrence Scharf, and her nephew, Sean Aplin and his family.



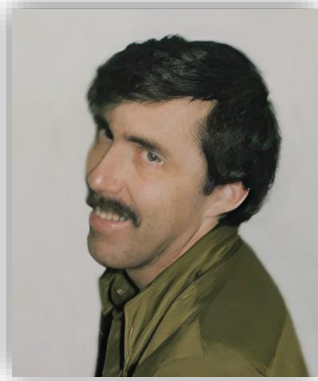
BRADLEY, Duncan Lee, 86, died on Sunday, October 5, 2025, in Peoria, Illinois. With a BA and MA in Philosophy, he served in Mamazan from 1966-1968 with TEFL 12. After working as a detective in a Colorado sheriff's department, he worked for over thirty years as a criminal trial attorney and public defender both in Colorado and New Mexico, and as a philosophy professor. He was a long-standing member of the Masonic Lodge, attaining the level of 32nd degree Mason. He was an accomplished and published author. Survivors are his spouse, Renne Colette Angel, son, Parker (Joanna), daughter, Commander Esther

(Patrick) Rist, a grandson, Merrick Bradley, and a sister and brother.



FEICHT, Michael J., 79, died on October 25, 2025. He earned a BA from Fordham University and then served with TEFL 20 from 1968-1970 in Baft and Tehran. After receiving a Master of Divinity and PhD from Andover Newton Theological School, he began pastoral ministry in Massachusetts and New Jersey. He held adjunct teaching appoints at Andover Newton, Eastern University, and Camden Country College. He organized and led mission trips to Puerto Rico, Belarus, Egypt, Rwanda, and India, and volunteered at Urban Promise, Camden Cathedral Kitchen, and Habitat for Humanity. He enjoyed music, art, walks with his wife, reading to his grandchildren, birdwatching, golf, and painting.

He is survived by spouse Elizabeth March, children Sarah, E. Emily Flasiniski (Brian), and M. Peter (Laura).



FOX, James F. Jr., a longtime Bellingham, Washington resident, died on July 9, 2025, aged 83, after living with muscular dystrophy and dementia. Born in Washington, DC, Jim received a civil engineering degree from the University of Maryland, then joined the Peace Corps, working first in East Pakistan (Bangladesh), before an evacuation to Iran in 1965, where he fell in love with the people and culture, working as a volunteer and a staff member. After Peace Corps, Jim drove across the Middle East and Europe in his Land Rover, ending up in Seattle, where he attended graduate school and became active in the anti-war movement. A search for a summer job took him to Bellingham, where he joined a start-up, Anvil Corp,

staying thirty-two years. Jim married twice, acquiring an extended family, Gail Chamblin, stepsons Anson and David, and Rosetta Sanz and her daughters, Schehara and Crickette. His celebration of life was held at Diamond Jim's, the breakfast spot he frequented for decades. Friends and loved ones will always cherish memories of his wit, smile, kindness, and that special spark of life that he carried, always.



GUILLAUME, Jonathan Flierl, 84, died on September 29, 2025. A loving and adventurous husband to Margaret, Jonathan mostly stayed close to his birthplace in Williamsville, New York, near Buffalo. He was an unconventional teacher for over thirty years in the Sweet Home school district. A dependable friend to all, he will be missed not only by his large, extended, and blended family but by the folks at Buffalo's Habitat for Humanity where he helped renovate houses for underserved communities for over fifteen years. He took great pride in helping with the recreation of the historic Erie Canal boat, the Seneca Chief. An

AFS high school representative to France in 1958, he joined Iran 5 in 1964 and was stationed in Lashtenishah for two years, an experience that impacted the rest of his life. In Jonathan's memory family suggests donating your time or money to Habitat for Humanity.



KEADY, Michael F., 82, of Milford, New Jersey, died on July 4, 2025, in Easton, Pennsylvania. A 1964 graduate of Boston College, he received his MA in Communications, but decided to enter the Peace Corps, serving for two years with TEFL 19 from 1968-1970. Michael spent 30+ years in a career with AT&T, holding roles in public relations, speech writing for executives, and making in-house films. He served on many boards, including as chair of the Green Team under the Sustainable Jersey program. A wine collector, he enjoyed sharing meals with friends and family, enjoying good food and fine wine. His beloved spouse, Bella R. (Abdallah) Keady predeceased him in 2008.



RENO, Tom, born in 1940, passed away peacefully surrounded by his family at home. A 1962 Arizona State University graduate, Tom served with the first Peace Corps Iran program, teaching English from 1962 to 1964, an experience that broadened his worldview and fostered cultural understanding and compassion. In 1966, he worked on the Navajo reservation helping facilitate the transition of school leadership from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Rough Rock Demonstration School run by the Navajo tribe. With a Ph.D. from Michigan State, he spent a 58-year career dedicated to improving teaching and learning, working as a superintendent in Apache Junction and Yuma. He and his wife Vickie had three children, Lucy, Fran, and Matt. Following a divorce, he married Jackie, whose son Michael joined Tom in Tempe. Tom and Jackie celebrated 50 years of marriage. An avid hiker, Tom was a fan of ASU football. A spiritual person, he attended Mass throughout his life. In addition to Jackie, his four children and six grandchildren survive him. In his memory, participate in the Walk to End Alzheimer's or donate to the Peace Corps.



SUNDERLAND, Robert, died on September 16, 2025, after a year-long battle with pancreatic cancer. Born in 1945, in Plattsburgh, New York, he was the 12th born child, growing up on the family farm near the Canadian border. Following graduation from Brigham Young University in 1963, he joined Peace Corps, serving for one year with Iran 9, from 1966 to 1967 in Shahabad. He and Emma Schaffer of TEFL 13 had a 40-year marriage. Post Peace Corps Robert served in the Army in Germany as a photo interpreter for aerial reconnaissance. He taught French and German in secondary schools in New York and Utah. A talented builder, he built apartments and remodeled homes with his sons. A member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, he taught math at LDS Business College for twenty-one years. In 2010, he married Margaret Norton, gaining two stepchildren and eight grandchildren. Margaret loved his sense of adventure, humor, creativity, good character, and ability to fix most things around the house. Survivors are Margaret, ex-wife Emma, his five children and spouses, twelve grandchildren, and one brother and sister.



Weiler, Charles Joseph passed away peacefully on October 25, 2025, at the age of 84. Charles attended Notre Dame which led to a career in architecture. He took great pride in his many projects, and his work is being donated to the Camden County Historical Society. From 1966 to 1968, Charles volunteered with the Peace Corps in Iran, serving with Iran 14 in Hamadan. Around this time, he met his first wife, Clare Osman, and went on to have three children, Rachel Fricke (Bryan Fricke), Chuck Weiler (Kara Weiler), and Rebecca Tasso (Tim Tasso) and seven grandchildren. Later in life, he married Marilyn Stein. They traveled frequently to Lexington, Kentucky to visit his stepdaughter, Melissa Schroder-Stein (Kelly Schroeder-Stein) and two grandchildren. They also enjoyed traveling to Florida, going out to restaurants, listening to music, and organizing family gatherings. To his children, he will be remembered fondly as a sheepskin-vest and clog wearing architect who spoke fluent Farsi from his Peace Corps days, played the dulcimer and filled his house with Persian rugs, taught his grandchildren to eat dessert before dinner, a grand storyteller, and a kind man.



Happy Yalda

یلدایتان مبارک