

## From the Editor's Desk

The fall issue was followed by three weeks of telephone calls, some constructive, others not, but all the basis of this editorial.

A call came from a 21 year old man, who had written, over the past few months, 400 lines of poetry in English and Persian. His friends admired his work and wanted him to be published. He also wanted to know if I knew of any Persians who would support and aid him in the publication of his poetry.

I received calls from two of my classmates after they received past issues of Persian Heritage. I had not seen them in many years and recently have seen them only briefly. They were amazed at the number of advertisers in the magazine and were certain that I would become very wealthy from Persian Heritage (TRUE IF WEALTH IS MEASURED IN EMOTIONAL REWARDS ONLY) ... then I received their points of criticism; I need to change the quality of the paper, too many typographical errors and on and on. I might add that these individuals had not become subscribers, all the issues they received were without cost to them.

In the middle of all of this another friend called. He wanted my advice on a situation that occurred with his daughter. He and his wife emigrated to the US in the seventies. His daughter is American born. At that time there were few Persians in his community and no trace of Persian

community centers. The parents felt that it was in the best interest of their daughter for her to assimilate into American society. English, not Persian became her primary language. Persian was spoken and taught at home but not with the same vigor as English.

Now twenty five and married, she lives in an area where there is a large population of Persians in her age group. These individuals had spent the first half of their life in Iran and are fluent in Persian and English. Recently his daughter went to one of their gatherings. She was anxious to practice her Persian. Their reaction surprised her. Instead of correcting her accent or grammar, they ruthlessly criticized her and told her she should be ashamed that she was not fluent in Persian. She called her father for advice. He advised her "walk away, you do not need these kinds of friends." Her response was "DADDY, I cannot do that. I need to improve my Persian and they need to accept me for whom and for what I am. Running away from them does not solve the problem. I am American first and am proud of that. It is this country that provided me with my education and my life. But like my non Persian friends I am proud of my heritage. I want to learn more about its traditions to pass on to my children. I enjoy being with them and would like to introduce my non-Persian friends to them. Until I am sure that they will

not accept me, I will continue my relationship with them. I need to be stronger in my language and they need to understand what it is to be American of Persian heritage or a Persian immigrant."

The father was proud of her response but was feeling guilty for not encouraging her to speak Persian at an earlier age. When he finished I told him that his daughter was not in need of any advice. She was moving in the right direction. Her experience, however, sparked in me a memory of a young classmate afraid to speak in front of the class. We mocked him to the point that this fear created a mental and physical disability. Not only could he not speak to the class but he could not communicate with his classmates. That was fifty years ago and I still do not have the guts to ask anyone what became of him. I was ashamed of my actions and vowed that I would never let that happen again and to never allow myself to use ones weakness to cause their discomfort. I would try to encourage them to find the strength to overcome the disability.

Within our own community, we all have our individual handicaps. We as a group must unite in an effort to overcome our handicaps and not let them become a reason for our separation. This must be our goal. We cannot allow strangers from within or outside our community to come in and try to separate us over such trite matters **PH**

# An Act of Diplomacy

**Farhad Sepahbody**  
*Former Ambassador of Iran*

## Of Cats and Dogs and other beasties in Persian Diplomacy



My sister Parvine and I in our chemiran house with our pet goat "Bozzy" in 1937.

During the summer of 1948, on August 1, to be precise, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran visited Paris. He was young, popular, quite handsome and single. He had just divorced the beautiful Princess Fawzia, the sister of King Farouk of Egypt who had failed to bear him an heir. Anyway, that was the official reason given for the separation. I was then a student at Janson de Saille, a very harsh and stern Lycee of Paris. My father had been Ambassador to France since its liberation from the Germans, but had been recalled home. One of the reasons advanced for his premature departure was that he had welcomed exiled Ghavam-Saltaneh, a former Prime Minister in whose cabinet he had been the Foreign Minister. The latter had

become a bit too popular and nursed the notion that a king should reign rather than rule.

It is interesting to note that during the Summer of 1945, the Americans who were still occupying part of Iran, wanted to sell for tens of millions of dollars their military surplus; tents, military wears, canned food as well as an array of totally needless junk. A "garage sale" as they say in America. The cabinet was almost entirely opposed to this forced purchase including my father Anoshiravan Khan Sepahbody. One of the members of the cabinet informed the American Embassy. It was on a Friday, the Persian weekly holiday. The US ambassador demanded to see my father immediately. My father was in

Shemiran at the German Embassy summer resort which had been taken over by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since this was not an urgent problem and that in addition the US ambassador had been arrogant, my father told him to come the next day, a Saturday, to the Ministry. This matter of fact reply made the Shah. The Ghavam cabinet fell and a new one was formed with a different Minister of Foreign Affairs. The military surplus was finally bought by the army but the American ambassador was recalled home for lack of tact. Tit for tat.

With the Russians refusing to leave Iran, and with the Azerbaijan affair in full crisis, master statesman Ghavam Saltaneh was asked once again to become Prime Minister and

form a new government. Ghavam wanted my father as Minister of Foreign Affairs, but the King and others suggested that because of the Americans it would be better to nominate someone else to this position. Thus, my father became Minister of Justice. While in this position, he refused to sign the death sentence of an individual. My father was against the death penalty and resigned from his position rather than sign. He was lauded by many in Iran for this action. He became a Minister without portfolio and in August 1946, was nominated Head of the Iranian Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. While there, he became Ambassador of Iran to France, a position which he had once held before the World War II. I was left alone in Paris and now it was Soheily, and ex-Prime Minister who had become the new Ambassador.

At that time, the chief of protocol at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a good friend of my father. They had known each other prior to World War II when my father was the Persian envoy to Paris. Probably as a gesture of esprit de corps or may be diplomatic camaraderie, the head of protocol had asked me to go to *Le Bourget* airport in a French official car provided for the occasion. You must see the Shah, he had urged. Neither Orly airport nor Charles de Gaulle existed at the time. Le Bourget was the very same airfield where famed Charles Lindberg landed the "Spirit of St. Louis" on the first trans-Atlantic flight. It was then a rather simple airport where cows grazed in the distance. France was then in the midst of a vicious crisis and few high officials were available. Fortunately, the Shah's visit to France was of rather private nature. Present at the airport were, of course, Ambassador Soheily and a few members of our embassy which, I must confess, were very small at the time. Among them was Amini, our military attache. He was a brother of Ali Amini who later

on became Prime Minister of Iran and introduced a measure of economic and social reforms to our country. Amazingly enough, I still have the 8 mm black and white movie I took of the event. Most of the gentlemen seen in that film have now departed for the great beyond, a reality which augurs rather miserably for the very few remaining from that period and who are still kicking around.

Years passed by, and in 1970 I was nominated economic counsellor to the Iranian Embassy in Paris, replacing Ardeshir Lotfalian, a writer and poet at heart whose mission had ended. For me, Paris had always been a love story and up to that time such a seductive position had always escaped me. While I was there, the Shah together with Empress Farah came on a state visit. It was a glorious and resplendent affair. On this memorable occasion, a sumptuous gala in honor of the sovereign was given by French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing at the legendary Versailles Palace. During the lavish dinner, I was sitting next to a ranking member of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he recalled that first visit of the Shah back in 1948.

"Yes indeed, remarked the French diplomat, we had a nasty crisis in 1948. It was a period of ordious social and economic turmoil for France. I was quite young then and partly in charge of the Shah's stay. Our beleaguered Minister of Foreign Affairs had to pay attention to more pressing chores. Together with the Asian Department, the French Protocol attempted the best it could to organize the sojourn of the Sovereign, trying to bear in mind his wishes. His 1948 trip to France was nothing to compare with the munificence of the welcome given to your Sovereign by Charles de Gaulle and now by Giscard d'Estaing! But it was nevertheless *tres sympathique*." The French official went on and said: "Chavonin, our military attache in

Teheran, helped us a lot. First of all, we added rice to each menu and made the Shah and his entourage happy! Then we sent him off to the Military Academy of Saumur to enjoy our riders of the Cadres Noirs. He also played tennis quite well with our national champion!

His arrival was followed by a simple luncheon given at the Hotel Matignon, the residence of the French Prime Minister. Unfortunately our interest at the time was not in your young sovereign, but in French politics and the darn communists meddling in everything and trying to topple the government. I must confess, the Shah at least outwardly, had the high civility not to notice this lack of attention, although, I presume that he was rather surprised by our shortcomings. Perhaps our illustrious host failed to carry with him the usual unforgettable memories of his stay, as we say in the diplomatic language. Anyway if negligence there was in 1948, we have done much better since. Look at the reception tonight, never anything so exalted, so majestic occurred in this chateau since Louise XVI and Marie Antoinette occupied it.

"I thought to myself," I hope the Shah will manage much better. Sadly, by the end 1978 - he didn't ... and took with him a multitude of Iranians down the drain and into the dark abysses. Today, and because of that majestic failure, I live in distant Arizona, but Iran has remained my cherished spiritual home, I deeply aspire that it will become my practical one again.

"By the way" continued the French diplomat "in October 1948 your Ambassador Soheily came to see me at the Asia Department to complain and to remind me of the distressing fact that there were no ministers, not even a deputy Foreign Minister at the Iranian Embassy's reception in honor of the birthday of the Sovereign. He also said that we did not provide him a fitting seat at



My father at left and Gholam Mossadegh the son of Dr. Mossadegh. Photo taken by Farhad Sepahbody at our Paris residence, 1946.

the annual gala of the Paris Opera. But look now, our Prime Minister, our top ministers and industrialists rush and fly to salute and present their respects to His Majesty, whether in St. Moritz or Teheran!"

A diplomat has to be invariably prudent, but the sarcasm I had discerned in the adding rice to the menu bit did not agree with me. At times, and specially with the French, one has to reciprocate; they will appreciate you all the more. "Are you sure that it is only for our long-standing mutual affinities and not for the sweet perfume of oil and new large contracts that these gentlemen rush to see the Shah? I retorted. Aware that oil and morality do not mix, the Frenchman had a faint smile.

It was an endless feast in the spacious "Salle des Miroirs", and we conversed some more on the time-honored and exquisite relationship between France and Iran. Louis the XIV, le Roi Soleil as they called him, had received in 1715 and in unparalleled splendor the eccentric Persian Ambassador Mohammad Reza Beg sent by our Safavid monarch. He had become the hit of Paris, in different times, but at the same regal site. But then, there had

been some clouds in our relations too. Like when Napoleon failed to honor the Finkenstein Treaty to assist Iran against the Russians during the era of Fath-Ali-Shah Qajar. Who can disregard that? It crushed an ancestor, Prince Abbas Mirza Qajar who was on an exhausting campaign against the Russians in Georgia.

To make a long story short, the French diplomat recollected the year when Iran broke relations with France over a CAT. Alas, that incident broke out when my father, Anoshirvan Sepahbody, was Ambassador to France in 1938. A similar rupture of diplomatic ties had also occurred with the United States at more or less the same epoch, this time over a DOG! According to diplomatic immunity law books and other annals, it seems that the chauffeur of the Iranian envoy in Washington, had somehow exceeded the legal speed limit. The car was stopped by cops on Harleys. Obviously they did not realize what the word diplomatic immunity meant or maybe could not care less. When the luckless Ambassador accompanied by his wife lowered the car's window to protest, his German hound snapped the cop's extended hand. Their excellencies were taken

manu militari into custody and a diplomatic row ensued. Ambiguous excuses from the U.S. State Department did not help the situation, they were not considered appropriate. Relations with the US were severed, ah, we irritable Persians!

Both these incidents took place during the stern reign of Reza Shah, a reformist and modernist sovereign indeed, but also much feared for his somber moods and lack of humor. Both these events were of course not comparable to the major split with the U.S. following the 1980 hostage crisis. "In diplomacy," said the French Official, "it is fundamental to take protests with utter tact and try to appease things by displaying extreme comprehension and understanding. In fact, when your dear father were for the first time envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary to France, there was a distressing event which is still present in the memory of all those working in our political department. I was then a junior assistant at the ministry. Rather foolishly, a prewar French satirical journal, L'Os a Moelle, had published a caricature based on the word "Shah." I still recollect the cartoon; It was an illustration of a royal visit to Paris Longchamp race-track. In the official carriage pulled by several horses, quite visibly was crowned CAT, relaxing in full majesty. Under the vexing cartoon was the caption: "Nous attendons la visite du Chat de Perse" in other words: "We are awaiting the visit of the Shah of Persia."

"Chat" means cat in French. It is pronounced the same way as Shah. "The father of your August Sovereign," the French diplomat continued, "obviously had a subscription to 'L'Argus de la Presse', a major press clipping service, and this unfortunate drawing did not escape him." A highly outraged Reza Shah, believing that he been slighted, demanded immediate excuses from a country

## Cat and Dogs

whose press is totally free. Clearly, the French government could not acquiesce and unfortunately vague excuses from the Quai d'Osayl were not acceptable to the proud and emotional Persian.

"Well" I said, "our relations were indeed broken for a few months. But probably what you may not know, is that the day we departed Paris for Iran, your distressed Minister of Foreign Affairs came in person to the railway station. He offered my mother a large bouquet of red roses and my father a rather small package with the express instruction not to open it before crossing the French border."

What was in it, a bomb? pressed on the inquisitive French diplomat.

"You will never guess it, *vous donnez votre langue au chat?*" I asked. A French expression relating to curiosity which translates in English as *do you give your tongue to the cat?*

"Yes indeed," he urged

"It was" said I, "a white marble statuette of a gorgeous sleeping cat and underneath it the following words were engraved *"Le Fautif,"* meaning *"The culprit"* in French. Undeniably discreet but witty French humour relating to an irksome situation. For many long years this prized cat statuette adorned the mantle of my father's dining room fireplace." The story did have a happy ending though and following a stay of several months in Teheran we returned to Paris. Alas, when the Germans invaded France, we had to flee Paris for Vichy, a tranquil spa town, which had become the provisional capital of France. In 1941, my father got a new assignment as Ambassador to Turkey. Upon embarking on this new assignment, he went to take leave of Marechal Petain, the new leader of France who had just met Hitler in Germany. Here is what Petain told my father: "Mr. Sepahbody, you are the fortunate envoy of the land of



At left my father Anoushirvan Sepahbody, minister of foreign affairs leaves a cabinet meeting on day of crisis. At his immediate right is Ghavam Saltaneh "The Prime Minister".

roses and nightingales and I wish you and your beautiful country and people much happiness. I wish you always roses without thorns, but be careful for you have troublesome neighbors. Look at our poor France, he said. "I saw Hitler yesterday! For an old French soldier like me, I would have preferred to die rather than to stand in front of this mountain of pride..." Then, all of a sudden and to the deep emotion of my father, the great marshall of France, the triumphant victor of the Verdun battle during World War I, began to cry as a child.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, I did not report to the French official what Reza Shah had spilled to my father about the French. But since many decades have passed and I am no longer a diplomat, I feel safe to reveal perhaps this small slice of our turbulent but at times also quite amusing history. Upon our return to Teheran, Reza Shah was still fuming over the cat affair and my father was more or less in disgrace. Nobody came to visit us,

people were fearful to talk to someone who had precipitated the ire of Reza Shah. But somehow, this outstanding king appreciated my father and highly valued the fact that my dad had personally planned and conceived the acquisition of our newborn Persian Gulf Navy. Reza Shah remained grateful for this feat. Anyway, one fine Teheran morning the telephone rang following six months of forlorn existence, the crossing of the desert as say the French, My father had been summoned at once to the royal palace.

It is with much apprehension and with many prayers that he went on to see Reza Shah. Here is what my father told me about the encounter:

"I saw Reza Shah, tall, towering and wearing his usual simple military uniform. For what seemed to be an eternity, he paced the floor of his office, utterly ignoring my presence. We were alone, not a fly buzzing around, and except for his heavy stomping there was absolute silence.

## Cat and Dogs

I was ashen and wondered what dreadful fate would be awaiting me. Suddenly the Shah stopped pacing and turned towards me, his piercing eyes glaring, he thundered: "Hey, Sepahbody, raised at the cursed Qajar court, you have served this country aptly and many times, I recognize it and decided to send you back to Paris. You must leave at once and tell the leader of that country of Ladies of the Night, (expletive deleted) that if they repeat something like this again, I'll invite their lousy navy to the Persian Gulf for a challenge with our fleet - let's see who will win." Go now and pack up.

"Yes Sire," my father quickly replied with understandable relief. But as he was taking leave, the Shah dashed to the door and clutched him by the neck, sending renewed shivers down his spine. "I have changed my mind," he said, "don't say anything to that blockhead French president!" "Certainly Your Majesty," replied my father. Reza Shah knew that his strict orders were observed to the letter and thought perhaps that my father could well convey the challenge. It is the destiny of those who fail to ponder over or grasp the lessons of history. But what happened to our shiny new Persian Gulf Navy, the pride of Reza Shah and the nation?

Attacked without provocation by the British and the Russians on August 25, 1941, neutral Iran suffered her own "Pearl Harbor" three months before the United States' more celebrated Day of Infamy. When the onslaught ended, most of our little fleet had been sunk, Iran's army was crushed, and Reza Shah overthrown. As wrote an American military expert<sup>3</sup>, "few incidents of World War II relate more directly to the current quandary in the Persian Gulf than the above one, for the 1941 Anglo-Soviet invasion drew America ever deeper and inextricably into the affairs of Iran and the Persian Gulf." PH

1 Name given to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2 From the book *Pétain et la France, La Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, by French historian Raymond Tournoux - Published by les Editions PLON, Paris. Conversations of the author with Anoshiravan Sepahbody, page 180-181.

3 "See "Sunrise at Abadan, the British and Soviet Invasion of Iran, 1941," by Richard A. Stewart. Praeger, New York 1988.

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# THE FEATURE...



## An Interview with Dr. Camran Nezhat The Edison of Medicine

By S. Ahkami

*Best known for his groundbreaking innovations in laparoscopy, Dr. Camran Nezhat has made significant contributions to the field of minimally invasive surgery. The benefits of the introduction and adoption of the new techniques he created are seen world-wide by thousands of patients who are able to enjoy fast recovery time and improved outcomes as a result of these new procedures.*

*Dr. Nezhat is currently the Director of the Stanford Endoscopy Center for Training and Technology and clinical professor surgery and clinical professor of OB/GYN at Stanford University, Stanford, CA. A man of great character and intellect, Dr. Nezhat readily granted Persian Heritage the opportunity to interview him.*

**Q:** Dr. Nezhat, it is an honor and a pleasure to meet you and I thank you for granting this interview. Could you kindly introduce yourself to our readers?

**A:** I would like to start by saying that it is I who am honored to be interviewed by Persian Heritage. This is a wonderful magazine. I trust that it will continue to have a positive effect on the American community of

Persian heritage and help those outside our community to better understand our culture.

**Q:** Thank you for your kind words of support, but it is you whom the readers would like to learn more about. Where were you born, educated and where did you start your career?

**A:** I was born and raised in Shahreza, Iran, a small town near Isfahan. I attended medical school in Tehran and served two years in the Royal Navy. At the time, military service was mandatory before one was allowed to leave the country. After my military obligation, I came to the United States to finish my internship and residency at the State University of New York at Buffalo and completed a fellowship at the Medical College of Georgia.

I completed the fellowship in June 1980 during the Revolution. Anti-Iranian sentiment in the United States was prevalent during that period. This had a negative impact

on my job opportunities in academic medicine and research, which have always been very important to me. Therefore, I went into private practice. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to work with four remarkable physicians in Georgia whom I continue to respect and admire and was able to continue my research.

**Q:** How did you break from private practice and enter research?

**A:** Although private practice was and continues to be a positive experience, clinical research has always been of significant interest to me. Even while in private practice, I continued my investigations that I started earlier in my training. Our interest in research, led my brothers Farhad, Ceana and I to experiment with the laparoscope and eventually develop the technique known today as video laparoscopy and video laserectomy.

**Q:** Could you explain the

**concept of laparoscopy?**

A: The laparoscope is a thin telescope that enables visualization of the abdomen and other areas of the body without the need for a large incision.

**Q: Your technique, video laparoscopy, changed the direction of surgery. Kindly explain its influence and how it evolved.**

A: Prior to the advent of video laparoscopy, surgery was a one-man show. The surgeon viewed the surgical site directly through the eyepiece of a telescope. I believed that we could apply the technique of video laparoscopy to allow an entire surgical team to view the image on a monitor. This technique enabled surgeons to take surgery into a whole new era.

I started by experimenting with large cameras. In the beginning, image and light quality were poor. Believe me, there were times when I felt like the laughing stock of the operating room, trying to work with prototype systems that provided dark, blurry images. Eventually, camera manufacturers became interested in the concept and worked to develop better light sources, cameras and lenses. This led to the development of the video laparoscope.

Along the way we were met with much doubt and resistance to this new concept. Thus, we proceeded very slowly and with caution. We knew that if there was any mistake, the opposition would instantly kill the program. Most of my colleagues thought I was advocating a dangerous technique that could harm patients. I could not get any of my research material published. In spite of constant rejection, I continued to try to find a way to succeed. In the end, my determination was rewarded. The technique was eventually accepted by my colleagues all over the world.

**Q: Did you find physicians eagerly accepting the procedure once it was shown to be beneficial?**

A: No, not really. I believe

most of them were forced to adapt and learn the procedure. Patients became educated on the benefits of the procedure and wanted minimal access surgery in place of traditional surgery. There is a caveat to this equation, however; minimal access techniques require a high level of skill and experience on the part of the surgeon.

**Q: Could you give us a brief explanation of why the results are better?**

A: First, with the development of video laparoscope, the surgical area is projected on a large video screen and magnified. Exposure is significantly better. The surgeon is able to do a better and more precise job. The results are better and complications are less, of course, in the hands of experienced surgeons. The whole operating team can participate and assist in the surgery. Secondly, by eliminating the large open wound, minimal access surgical techniques can often dramatically reduce trauma, pain, scarring, hospital stay and recuperative time.

**Q: You are multi-talented; a surgeon, teacher and inventor just to name a few. To the best of my knowledge, you were the first Iranian, excluding clerical or political personalities, to be featured in Newsweek and Time Magazine. As an Iranian and a physician, I am very proud. Do you remember the moment?**

A: Yes. I felt that the articles acknowledged that I had contributed something to the world that would make it a better place. Our sacrifices were being rewarded. Success, however, makes you a target of criticism. I knew the positive attention would be followed by some negative press. It is the nature of the beast. Unlike you, there are many people in journalism that seek out the negative rather than the positive.

**Q: Your operating room is constantly filled with physicians from all over the world seeking to learn your techniques. How many**

**years have you been teaching physicians?**

A: I have been sharing our techniques with other physicians since September 1982.

Approximately 6,000-7,000 physicians have been in our seminars, lectures or workshops. One of the pleasures of my life is the ability to help develop the minds of young physicians! The people that visit my operating room are there not as a requirement, but because they want to learn.

Some professors use very rigid teaching methods and leave no room for other opinions. My brothers and I, on the other hand, try to impart to our students that our way is not the only way. Modification of existing techniques is necessary if we are going to take medicine into the next century. We try to show them how to avoid costly mistakes and expose them to both the triumphs and pitfalls of existing techniques. Progress cannot be made without knowing both sides.

There is a saying that I hold close to my heart. I share it with my students and try to practice it every day.

"The man who saves one life saves the world." If my students walk away from here with this thought, to bring the knowledge back to their community and help just one person, I have accomplished my goal.

**Q: That is a wonderful message and should be practiced by everyone. Often individuals who have reached your level forget those who have contributed to their lives and success. You, on the other hand, are very appreciative of their efforts and have gathered your family together to work as a team.**

A: You are very kind. I am very appreciative of my friends, family and students because I feel they have contributed much more to my life than I have given to them. Without them, my work and life would be meaningless. My students continue to stimulate me. I truly love them and



enjoy their enthusiasm. As to my success, I feel that I have been a very lucky man, one who was in the right place at the right time, surrounded by devotion and love.

**Q:** We have covered only a few of your talents as a skilled surgeon, mentor, philosopher, and educator. In addition, I know that you are very well versed in world history. You are proud of your Iranian heritage and never hesitate to admit your background. Are heritage and tradition important to you?

**A:** Without question. I am proud of my Iranian heritage and am equally proud of my American heritage. My parents taught me to be proud of who I am. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to fill my life with culture from two societies. For the earlier portion of my life I inherited Persian life from a heritage thousands of years old and rich in the arts and sciences. Now, I have lived in the United States for more than 23 years. America is a melting pot of many diverse cultures where we are able to experience many cultures, and that is beautiful! In fact, I learned a lot about Persian history after moving here!

**Q:** Tell me about your move to Stanford University.

**A:** While in Georgia, we received offers from several institutions for academic positions. As operative and video laparoscopy became known more universities wanted us to teach the technique. We felt we had a duty to share the knowledge.

Several institutions made offers and we decided to come to Stanford. The experience has been wonderful.

**Q:** Your CV is an encyclopedia of your accomplishments and publications. How many books have you written?

**A:** My brother and I have co-authored two books. As for the number of chapters and publications we have contributed, there are several

but I do not know how many.

**Q:** You are a professor of OB/GYN and surgery. What are the most significant procedures you have performed using your technique?

**A:** I am not sure I can answer that question easily. It is like asking a parent which one of your children you love more! I can say that it has been a wonderful journey. I have enjoyed my collaborations with our colleagues for developing procedures for different organs like the heart, brain, bowel, bladder, ureter, uterus, etc.

**Q:** Can you give us your opinion as to why research for new techniques takes so long to be put into practice in the United States?

**A:** The United States is very conservative in terms of what is placed into practice. Because of the litigiousness of this society, researchers and physicians are slower to carry out new techniques, and at times, patients suffer from this. In the rest of the world, there are fewer obstacles and less litigation. Whether the effects are positive or negative is subject to one's own opinion.

**Q:** How difficult was it for you to get this procedure recognized?

**A:** My interest in this procedure hit me like a passion. I could not understand why there was so much opposition to a procedure that gave such obvious positive results, and significantly reduced surgical risks. I must admit, on several occasions the opposition weakened my conviction. I thought the individuals opposing me might be right. In reality, I would see how well patients did with my technique compared with the old technique. My brothers were my sounding board. They, along with our critical friends, strongly approved of what we were doing. They thought we definitely have a story to tell and we should continue our work in the best interest of our patients. You have to realize my brothers are the

strongest critics that I have! Voltaire once stated. "When something is new, everyone says it is not true. Later, when it is proven to be true, they say it is not important. Times goes by and it is proven to be important. Then people say it is not new! Because it takes so much time to prove something is important, by the time it is proven it is no longer new." Video laparoscopy fits Voltaire's quotation well.

**Q:** Are you working on any new inventions?

**A:** We are continuously working on and evaluating new inventions. I believe surgery is going to become less and less invasive. Incisions will become smaller and instrumentation will become more sophisticated. In the future, there may be no incisions at all!

**Q:** You will be considered the Edison of medicine. Along the way you received a lot of support and some opposition. Can you expound on this?

**A:** I received a lot of backing but also met with some opposition. We spend a great deal of time and money defending our position. It was one thing to defend ourselves to true scientific criticism; that was easy to defend and educate the critics. But all too often we were and still are defending our work to people who are jealous. They wanted to persecute us simply because we had a good idea and they did not. It was very exhausting and demoralizing. I guess that is the price you pay to move forward. We chose to ignore their opinions and this allowed us to move forward with success. We knew the truth would prevail.

**Q:** Your acceptance as a leader in the medical field is obvious. At the different meetings where we met, you were constantly surrounded by people. You must have had a great deal of support to combat the opposition.

**A:** I am privileged to say that I have significantly more friends than



From left to right:  
Dr. Sina Nezhat, Dr. Camran Nezhat, and  
Dr. Farhad Nezhat

adversaries. Friends take care of the opposition!

**Q:** Is there a message that you would like to give to our readers, both young and old?

**A:** I like to quote Omar Khayam, "Forget about yesterday as it is passed, you cannot change it. Forget about tomorrow, as it is not here. Enjoy the moment because that is all you have for sure." I try to do the best I can for the day. Perhaps, those of you who have been kind to me and think my message is worth listening to, can do the same.

**Q:** It is obvious that you are a team player and one of the most successful teams you have played on is the team with your brothers.

**A:** Not only has it been successful but it is most precious to me. I have been very fortunate to have a loving family to surround me. To me, the core of one's life must be found at home. We must have a place to return for stability. My family has always been that stability for me. If you are happy in your personal life, all other obstacles are easier to overcome and today, no one's life is without difficulties. Remember, at times you argue with your family but you love them no matter what.

Our father died when we were young, so my mother had to act as both mother and father. We love and respect her for all that she has done. I have been surrounded by my brothers. I continue to work with my brothers Farhad and Ceana. I also have a brother who is an industrial engineer and another who is a retired educator. They are my family and more importantly, my best friends. Of course, our love for each other is unconditional!

\* Hakeem, A learned man.

\* Nimrod, described in genesis X.9 "as a mighty hunter before the Lord."

## YET ANOTHER STEP

This past August Dr. Nezhat and his Stanford University surgical team used the laparoscopy to perform a rare urological procedure. A 35 year old female patient suffered from an obstruction, by scar tissue, of one of her ureters. The condition threatened her kidney. Dr. Nezhat consulted with Dr. Faud Freiha, professor and vice chair of urology and decided to try and avoid the traditional surgical procedure, psos hitch with a ureteral implantation, and use the laparoscope to remove the obstruction. The end results were successful and the patient left the hospital two days post surgery.

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