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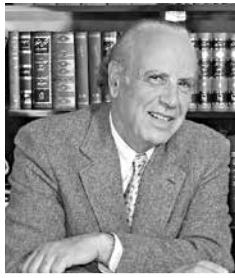
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Persian  Heritage

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

On behalf of me and my colleagues at Persian Heritage we wish all of our dear readers in Iran and the Diaspora HAPPY NOROUZ. This is the time we celebrate the change of season, from winter to spring. As always we continue to hope that the year coming will be less volatile than the last. And, we hope this year will bring peace and be more resourceful for the people in Iran. We look forward to seeing Iran, after thirty-eight years of isolation and turmoil, return to normalcy and find peace with its neighbors and of the world.

Twenty one years have passed since the birth of Persian Heritage magazine. As you know this magazine has faced obstacles that could have resulted in the end of its publication. There were and remain many critics who hoped to see the demise Persian Heritage. Luckily, through our determination and the support of our readers, we have been able to publish this quarterly magazine, since its inception, without any interruption.

Twenty one years have passed during which we have witnessed the hardships endured by Iranians in Iran and the Diaspora. Throughout this time we never stopped understanding their grievances and difficulties, nor have we turned a blind eye to their misfortune.

The days following the 1979 Revolution we and the world witnessed countless executions, murders and the loss of human dignity. Many young and old disappeared. Their families are in limbo not knowing their fate. This is disheartening to me because these lives lost (in so many ways, death, human trafficking across the borders, leaving Iran for political asylum) were Iran's assets, minds that could have been instrumental in bringing Iran into the 21st century. When we see the images of the Syrian refugees living under the same horrible conditions, I am reminded by the horrors suffered by Iranians following the 1979 Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. Our memories should not be short when it comes to these inhumane events. And, we must acknowledge that even today there are Iranians living in refugee camps in Turkey, Australia etc. awaiting asylum, only to be denied because they are Iranians. An example is Germany.

Twenty one years have passed during which Iran's sovereignty has been constantly physically and verbally attacked by many world powers. During the Presidential campaign of George Bush and Jimmy Carter I had attended a fund raising event for Mr. George Bush. One of the guests asked Mr. Bush the following question, "Mr. Bush if you were to become the

president of the United States, how would you handle Iran?" He responded by stating that he would bomb it, make it a parking lot and turn it back a thousand years, into the stone age. Hearing these words by a presidential candidate made me sick. I was overwhelmed with anxiety and fear. How, I thought, can someone in his position be so easily prepared to destroy a nation with such a rich history and peace loving people? The threats made on that day have continued to this day. These threats and words continue to be overwhelming with fear and anxiety for Iran, its people and the world.

Persian Heritage is now twenty-one years old, like wise I to have added twenty one years to my life. The years with Persian Heritage are filled with memories of Iran's turbulent times. One extraordinary moment was the world's viewing of the Green Movement in 2009. Because of the internet and speed of information the world immediately witnessed young, old, men and women taking to the streets of Iran in an effort to fight and restore their freedom of speech, press and life. The world also immediately witnessed how the hopes and dreams of the protesters quickly tarnished by the hands of the hard liners. The dreams of these men and women, walking peacefully side by side in the streets in Iran ended by force and a crackdown. Once again innocent lives were destroyed by death and jail.

Twenty one years have passed during which we witnessed leaders such as Ahmadi Nejad. These leaders failed in all aspects of political life. The eight years of his reign were filled with corruption. His failed policies put Iran in a financial crisis never experienced before by the nation. Oil revenues were mismanaged. His speeches on foreign policy destroyed Iran's remaining dignity. His words started an international public relations campaign to destroy Iran, a policy that remains today. Only by the determination, pride and love of its citizen's has Iran been able to keep the war mongers at bay.

Twenty one years have passed and the negative propaganda remains in an effort to destroy Iran and/or change its geography and history. Arab campaigns are being successful in changing on some maps, the name of the Persian Gulf. The loss of oil revenue and other resources has become the income of some Arab nations and is used "buy off" museums like the Louvre, allowing Persian Art and Persian history to be labeled as Arab or Islamic art and history.

Twenty one years have passed since the inception of Persian Heritage. We continue to hope for a free Iran. An Iran

that is tolerant. An Iran that ends the years of suppression and oppression placed on its people. An Iran with a lifted financial burden. An Iran where hardships are diminished. An Iran that values, cares and understands the needs of its people. An Iran that sees a reverse in drug addiction, prostitution, homelessness and incarcerations. There was hope with the election of President Rouhani that Iranians would see more freedom and fewer executions. Unfortunately, freedoms have lessened and executions are on the rise. Last year 700 executions by hangings were recorded. If this continues at the same rate Iran will lead the world in the number of executions. These numbers are so staggering that even Mr. Mohammad Javad Larijani, who represents the Human Rights Council in the Judiciary system in Iran, admitted that executions of drug traffickers have not resulted in lowering drug crimes in the country. Doesn't this comment, coming from such a high ranking individual in the Islamic Judicial system bring shame? I only hope that before I die, I can say rather than "maybe the day will come when we see a better Iran" to "the day has arrived."

I believe it is important to note that one of the grievances that led to the over throw of the last monarchy in Iran and the revolution was the fact that one thousand families ruled over Iran. Long ago, and I have a vivid memory of this conversation, I returned to Iran after completing my studies in France. My dearest uncle, Ahmad Ghorashi (rest his soul) along with his brother Mahmoud, were the first Ghouchani's who had finished their studies at Tehran University. He held a high ranking position at Saderat Bank. These positions led to the hiring of several of my friends who I introduced to them. Knowing his prestigious position, I was confident that I would have no problem, using his influence to find a position at the health clinic in Saderat Bank. To my astonishment my uncle refrained from hiring me because it went against his principals. He told me that because I was his nephew, the son of his sister, ethically it was not the right thing to do. I questioned him, "but my dearest uncle this country is run only by a one thousand families and....." He stopped me as he placed a cigarette in between in lips, "my dear nephew that is why people are in rage and are not happy with the system. I can never go against my own values. When I am one that complains about the system, how can I do the same thing by hiring my own nephew?" With a broken heart I left the bank. Eventually I found a position at a local hospital (Mehr) that changed the path of my life altogether.

Interestingly enough at that time there were one thousand ruling families. Today not only are there more than one thousand ruling families, they are entangled with one another in a tribal way, through marriage and other forms. They rule over every government agency and important organization from military to banking. They are so powerful that the chain of control over the public thwarts any progress.

Twenty one years have passed yet the threats remain against Iran and against its people. Ongoing propaganda by

the far right, leaves those of us in love with our motherland, at the edge of our seats, wondering about Iran's future and the future of family and friends who remain there..

Twenty one years have passed and we add one more memory, an agreement with Iran and the world super powers on Iran's nuclear issue. It remains to be seen if in fact this agreement is one sided. It remains a question because almost immediately after the signing of the agreement, gains made were diminished by the President Obama's passing of a bill in Congress that discriminated against Iranian-Americans and other hyphenated Iranians having dual citizenship with Iran. This action solidifies the continued control and animosity the West and others have towards Iran and its people. It also clearly shows their desire to continue to suppress Iran and its people, people who simply want peace and unification with the West and the rest of the world.

This day, as I stated above WILL and MUST come. Iranians will see peace between the country of their birth, the countries of their children's birth and the country they now call home. The day WILL and MUST come when freedoms and social equality are once again the virtue of Iran's leaders. Again we wish you a happy and prosperous year.

Shahrokh Ghouchani



TOLERANCE

I have read every article in your wonderful magazine and enjoyed reading and learning about Iran's rich and amazing Persian culture.

If only all the citizens of our world would join hands like the two Arab and Asian children in your editorial, and have respect and be tolerant of each others differences.

If only more young people had the opportunity to read your words of wisdom about tolerance, encouragement, and peace. If only wishing could make it happen.

Thank you,

Sally Helen Atkins

IT IS INFECTIOUS!

Dear Editor:

Thank you for sending me your Magazine. I have read a few of the articles. I found them very interesting and informative. I am and always have been in awe of your

energy and enthusiasm. It is infectious.

With best wishes,
Ibrahim Bahmaie

THE COVER LOOKS LOVELY

Thank you so much!! The cover looks lovely! I'm so excited to share this with everyone.

Anahita Sedaghatfar

THE NEW VISA WAIVER REGULATIONS

Doost va daneshmande gerami,

As usual, I hasten to thank you very warmly for so kindly sending me a copy of the latest issue of your splendid publication, which I shall read with the greatest interest.

Yekta joins me in wishing you and all your family, health and serenity in the New Year. Let us hope it is a less turbulent one than the last for all of us.

The new Visa Waiver regulations so swiftly and eagerly passed by both Houses and signed with such alacrity by the President, have dismayed all Iranians and right-minded Europeans and Americans.

These discriminatory regulations are unworthy of a great country like the United States, and diminish her standing in the world community, without in any way adding to her security. The spur must certainly stem from the most influential lobby in the world, which has no doubt been infuriated by the recent rapprochement between Iran and the 5+1 countries. A shameful capitulation by the US government indeed! With my kindest regards and renewed thanks.

Fereydoun Ala

MY OWN E-MAIL NAME

Ba Dorood va Sepas as Always
I always enjoy reading

your e-mails for sure and it is an honor to contribute to your excellent journal, and as always I love to wait for the hard copy in my mailbox.

As promised I plan to send you several articles a year to contribute our heritage and culture.

I also noticed that you have printed one of my postings on the Iranian railway system on page 16, however the author of that article is cited as "Manuvera" which is actually my own e-mail name.

I will begin to send you my articles from early January and of course in the meantime, have an excellent holiday of Mithras!

Many *Eradat* and *Sepas*,
Kaveh Farrokh

AWESOME

Loved your editorial!!!
Bravo, and proud of what you do!!

Kamshad Raiszadeh

Str8up Kid2Kid Stop, Stretch, Str8up

A campaign by Shirin Raiszadeh
kidbacker.com

WHY DOES YOUR BACK HURT?

Are you leaning over all the time instead of standing up straight? Str8up Kid2Kid is a new non-profit organization whose mission is to dramatically change this. While computers, handhelds and mobile phones are how we connect socially today, there are some unfortunate physical consequences that come along with the use of these devices. We simply do not stand up straight anymore. The result is **BAD POSTURE**. Our spines suffer, are being damaged, and our posture is being compromised. This can be a life long consequence unless we start fixing it now.



And it is not just technology that is ruining our posture and spines, it is also the weight of backpacks. According to a recent article in SPINE magazine, when a backpack is incorrectly placed on our shoulders, the weight causes us to bend over to accommodate it. This makes our spines compress unnaturally. This doesn't mean just PAIN but bad posture.

WHY POSTURE IS CRITICAL TO SUCCESS IN LIFE

Good posture gives us confidence and great health. It is just as important as eating all the right foods, exercising and if you like to play sports, excelling at them. Our parents also want us to get a great night sleep and bad posture prevents this. But beyond just the physical benefits of good posture, there is an even more important one for kids: **SELF-ESTEEM**. Kids with good posture have stronger self-esteem, are more energetic, more social, better prepared to interview for college and other competitive programs, and are ready to make great things happen. This can only result in amazing results in life overall. Body language tells people how confident or not you are about yourself.

OUR GOALS WITH STR8UP KID2KID

Our goal with our new nonprofit is to provide students, schools and parents with the following: Video education about 8 exercises students (and you!) can do to help improve posture; Posters and other materials that teachers can post in the classroom to remind students about how to sit, stand, and use technology; A website that all students, parents and teachers can access to learn about how to improve posture, use of technology as it relates to posture and the correct way to wear backpacks including how heavy they are.

FUNDRAISING USES

We are asking you for your support to help us raise \$38,000 to do the following: Legal fees, Printing and graphic designer, Website and exercise app development, Development of an explainer and promotional video, Classroom outreach.

Our mission and goal is to make our exercises available to all students and schools and to ensure that our generation knows how to use technology and develop best practices about how to build and strengthen their posture so they can be the most successful kids on the block.

ANOTHER PROUD IRANIAN

Dr. Mona Jarrahi, University of Michigan
at Ann Arbor Iranian recipient of Presidential Award



President Obama named 102 researchers as recipients of the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers, the highest honor bestowed by the United States Government on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers. The winners will receive their awards at a Washington, DC, ceremony in the coming year.

"The impressive achievements of these early-stage scientists and engineers are promising indicators of even greater successes ahead," President Obama said. "We are grateful for their commitment to generating the scientific and technical advancements that will ensure America's global leadership for many years to come." The Presidential Early Career Awards embody the high priority the Obama Administration places on producing outstanding scientists and engineers to advance the Nation's goals, tackle grand

challenges, and contribute to the American economy. The recipients are employed or funded by the following departments and agencies: Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of Education, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of the Interior, Department of Veterans Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Science Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Intelligence Community, which join together annually to nominate the most meritorious scientists and engineers whose early accomplishments show the greatest promise for assuring America's preeminence in science and engineering and contributing to the awarding agencies' missions. The awards, established by President Clinton in 1996, are coordinated by the Office of Science and Technology Policy within the Executive Office of the President. Awardees are selected for their pursuit of innovative research at the frontiers of science and technology and their commitment to community service as demonstrated through scientific leadership, public education, or community outreach.

The UN resident coordinator in Iran has said cooperation between Department of Environment and the Conservation of Asiatic Cheetah Project has reversed the extinction trend among Asiatic cheetahs.

Gary Lewis who was addressing the ceremony to celebrate the International Cheetah Day (December 5) on Saturday, told the meeting that the ceremony celebrated 12 years of cooperation with Iran's Department of Environment in protection of Asiatic cheetah; "during the last 12 years, the UN came to help us in installing trap cameras in cheetah habitats; the aid also proved effective in extending the scope of the protection, which drastically reversed the down-hill extinction curve now into a flat," Lewis added.

"We have the opportunity now to save Asiatic cheetahs and their habitat, and the UN will provide Iran's government with any help needed; in the past decade, the UN pumped \$10mn into the project, and has actually on the agenda increasing the aid allocated to the project CACP (the Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project)," Lewis told the meeting, however adding that no precise figures had been announced for new pledges, and that he was doing necessary arrangements for securing a lump sum.

Masoumeh Ebtekar, Head of Department of Environment, also addressed the meeting in a brief speech; "our trap cameras had revealed the rising number of cubs up to 18, which is the outcome of a collective attempt by CACP, Department of Environment, local public, and the UN experts; Pardisan Park of Tehran is now home to a couple; and we now receive expert information from international large cat consultants to bring under control the couple's behavior," she said. "We are very hopeful to see the couple's mating and birth of at least a cub after a miscarriage which squandered the genetically valuable

Asiatic Cheetah Extinction Trend Reversed

Source: Mehr News Agency



cub months ago."

Ebtekar then addressed Lewis in English in reminding a national commitment to save the animal under extinction; "Lewis, when in Yazd, we spoke of cheetah, which is a valuable species under extinction," she said.

Houman Jokar, the Director of CACP told the meeting of an idea which hit the project to bring the male and female cheetahs so that they mate. He calls female cheetah 'Delbar,' and male cheetah 'Koushki.' "Scarcely would cheetahs actually mate in captivity; excellent conditions should be present so that a couple establish psychological connections before physical contact; this is a prerequisite in the wild for a successful mating and birth of new cubs," he commented. As Iman Memarian, wildlife veterinarian and a contributor to CACP says, Delbar had underwent an abortion due to an infectious kidney problem, which fortunately was treated in Tehran; "however, the disease will company Delbar to her death; the kidney problem is endemic to the cat family and could be controlled as well."

Memarian invests much hope in the mating of the two and coming of fresh cubs; "apart from new births in cap-

tivity which actually is good news (and unique experience as well), we have amassed invaluable information as to the species' reproductive behavior; we detected differences in levels of red and white blood cells and other enzymes of Asiatic cheetahs with those of African cats," he detailed.

Houman Jokar said in a hope-inspiring remarks that the habitat of Asiatic cheetah had undergone the least

changes during 14 past years unlike other habitats across the country; "in northern wildlife refuges of Khartouran and Mi-andasht, we observed higher dynamism in the cheetah population, with visitors fortunate enough to catch a rare glimpse of cheetah and her cubs quite infrequently," he added.

"8 years ago, the public awareness was not as high as it today at least among the rural locals; for example, a local shepherd on motorbike would chase a female along her cubs in search of finding a plaything for his child; he succeeds in tiring and trapping Koushki which was lagging behind his mother and sibling; however, the locals find the cub invariably priceless and inform the Department of Environment local officials who come to save the cub," Jokar accounted. "The 4-month-old cub was in no condition to manage itself on the wild and fortunately, a fence in Minadasht accepted it as beloved child of the nature; the second cub with the similar fate four years later met Koushki as father of her cubs for the first time."

Mashhad "Forugh Mohabbat" Charity Center Teaches Street Children Music

A charity center in the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad, which is home to the shrine of Imam Reza, teaches street children music and organizes concerts, during which the children perform. Ghazaleh Lotti and her husband, Ramin Zafari, established the *Forugh Mohabbat Charity Institute* in 2003 to help reduce delinquency in society. "We decided to focus on street children, helping them imagine a better world through music," Lotti told the Persian service of MNA. "We began our job with five children and the education program went so well that the children were then able to perform a concert," she added. "Now, we are happy that the children have progressed to be young musicians, who perform occasional concerts and also hold educational courses for the children supported by the institute," Lotti stated. They also lend a helping hand by introducing new street children to the institute. Lotti commemorated Gholamali Puratai and Haj Qorban Soleimani, two late maestros of Khorasan regional music, who had accompanied the children in some concerts.

Forugh Mohabbat has never received any support from governmental organizations, said Lotti and added, "I only asked cultural officials to lift the obstacles to performing our concerts."

Walls Of Kindness' Encourage Iranians To Give



Golnaz Esfandiari
www.rferl.org

Walls typically create divisions. But not always.

In Iran, activists are using them to bring people together and encourage them to give. They've installed coat hooks and signs in at least three cities asking people to leave unwanted clothing for those in need.

"If you need clothing, take according to your needs, and if you have clothing at home that you don't need, please hang it here," reads one of the signs.

Iranians are calling them "walls of kindness."

The man behind the initiative in Mashhad told the daily Hamshahri recently that he was inspired by similar acts of kindness in Iran and around the world.

"Be good, as God has been good to us," reads the sign on his wall.

The man, who wishes to remain anonymous, set up his charity wall on his own property in October, he told Hamshahri: "I saw a picture from Gilan [Province] where a place was designated for people to leave their extra clothes for whoever needed them. I also heard that in Tehran they've installed a fridge where people leave food [for the needy]."

He added that many people have welcomed the initiative.

"I saw one person hanging two sets of almost new suits [on the wall]; he had brought them from the dry

cleaner," he said.

The Iranian economy has been in recession, or teetering on the brink, for several years. And while official unemployment figures are around 10 percent, the jobless rate among young people is estimated at more than 20 percent.

The Mashhad man said he's asked people on social media to keep giving: "I've told them to bring clothes in small quantities so that those who come here know that clothes are always available."

He hopes the day will come when no one will need to come to his wall for clothes, he added.

Social-networking sites and messaging applications, including the popular Telegram app, have reportedly played a key role in getting the word out about the "walls of kindness."

"A man came to me from a poor neighborhood in Mashhad -- he told me he had found the address on social media," said the Mashhad man.

Similar initiatives have reportedly been set up in other parts of the country, including in the southern city of Sirjan, where, also in October, a group of young people installed coat hooks and signs in two locations, asking people to give to the poor.

There is also a similar wall in Shiraz, according to social-media users who have shared pictures of it recently.

WATERLOO ASTROPHYSICISTS WIN THIRD PLACE

Waterloo's astrophysicist Niayesh Afshordi and Perimeter Institute post-doctoral fellow Elliot Nelson have won third place in the 2015 Buchalter Cosmology Prize competition. The announcement was made today at the winter meeting of the American Astronomical Society. Afshordi is an Associate Professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy and faculty member at Perimeter Institute.

The researchers won the prize for their paper Cosmological Non-Constant Problem: Cosmological bounds on TeV-scale physics and beyond that was published in the Journal of High Energy Physics.

The prestigious judging panel for the prize is comprised of leading theoretical physicists noted for their work in cosmology, including Dr. Sean Carroll of the California Institute of Technology, Dr. Robert Caldwell of Dartmouth College, and Dr. Joao Magueijo of Imperial College London. The judges considered the Waterloo researchers' work "an intriguing proposition that the Planck scale of quantum gravity may soon be accessible by particle accelerators, based on the expected white noise fluctuations in the cosmological constant, which might not be constant at all but vary widely in space."

The Buchalter Cosmology Prize was created by, astrophysicist turned entrepreneur, Dr. Avi Buchalter to encourage and recognize ideas in cosmology that have the potential to fundamentally advance our understanding of physics.

IRANIAN SCIENTIST WINS PRIZE FOR US IMMIGRANTS

Houra Merrikh, originally from Iran, is a winner of the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science. The prize recognizes young immigrant scientists who have shown outstanding achievement early in their careers and includes a \$50,000 cash award. Dr. Merrikh, an assistant professor at the University of Washington School of Medicine, was selected for her research demonstrating how conflicts between life-sustaining cellular machines involved in genome duplication and gene expression can accelerate evolution.

Houra Merrikh's work on the mechanics of DNA replication and gene expression in cells has uncovered hidden conflicts between the cellular machines that use threads of DNA as a template to carry out these life-sustaining functions.

Merrikh has shown that such conflicts can lead to genetic mutations, which can serve as a substrate for evolution. More importantly, such mutations may underlie a raft of clinically relevant phenomena, such as the development of antibiotic resistance in bacteria and the onset of cancer in human cells. By unraveling the mechanism of the conflicts, which appear to be a common feature among genes, Merrikh's work has thrown open a window on the molecular minutiae of gene evolution.

She is now exploring precise ways to predict how such conflicts influence human disease.

Merrikh is an assistant professor at the University of Washington School of Medicine and was born in Tehran, Iran. The prize winners were selected by panels of experts in each field; they will be honored at an awards gala in New York City in April 2016.



Iranian Scientists Win US NSF Award

TEHRAN (ISNA) – Two Iranian Scientists Negar Tavassolian and Babak Heidari won the Stevens Award at US National Science Foundation (NSF).

Babak Heidari, is professor at Systems and Programming Faculty of the University and Negar Tavassolian is teaching at the Faculty of Electronics and Computer Engineering. They both graduated from Iran's Sharif Poly Technique University.

Heydari received an NSF CAREER Award to support development of a new theoretical framework based on game theory and complex network methods to model the impact of architecture of products and systems on technological innovation and market competition.

In addition, as part of his project, Heydari will create educational materials based on complexity sciences for children's science museum programs in New York City.

"We are increasingly relying on complex human-centric, socio-technical systems whose analysis, design and governance need new sets of lenses and perspectives. The traditional dichotomy of soft and hard sciences is disappearing, and we will be dealing with a continuum of methods and perspectives to tackle future problems such as complex systems," he notes.

"Some bridges have already been successfully built between otherwise isolated islands of traditional disciplines, but to go from a handful of bridges to a continuum of tools and methods useful for socio-technical systems requires a concerted effort by the academic community.

I am excited that an organization with the caliber of NSF has endorsed the interdisciplinary approach we are taking, and thankful that Stevens has given me this opportunity to define my research in a quite non-traditional way."

Heydari's other research at Stevens

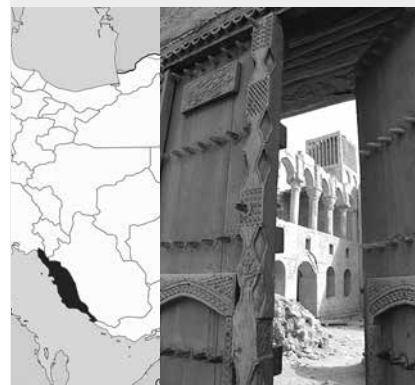
includes investigations in modeling hybrid human-autonomous networks; spatial diffusion of risk; and silicon-based communication circuits and systems.

Tavassolian received her NSF CAREER Award to begin an immediate project that will apply millimeter-wave technology to biomedical imaging applications in an effort to diagnose skin cancer tumors earlier and more effectively than is currently possible. By dividing bandwidths into channels, each equipped with small antenna units, she proposes to create higher-contrast, better-depth imagery; proof-of-concept experiments will be performed at Massachusetts General Hospital. As part of the project, Tavassolian will also create educational programs in partnership with Liberty Science Center in Jersey City and a new Stevens graduate-level course in the biomedical applications of electromagnetics.

"Skin cancer is the most common and fastest-growing of all cancer types, with more than 3.5 million new cases detected and billions of dollars of associated treatment costs in the U.S. last year alone," she notes. "Skin cancer is generally diagnosed through visual inspection by a dermatologist, who orders biopsy in cases where cancer is suspected, but visual inspection is subjective and susceptible to human errors. There is a definite need for the innovative, low-cost and portable imaging technology we are offering in this area."

Tavassolian's other work at Stevens includes research on radio frequency and microwave technologies, bioelectromagnetics and micro-electromechanical systems (MEMS) with additional biomedical applications. She previously performed research at MIT's David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research, investigating a magnetic relaxation-based platform for non-invasive monitoring of patients' hydration states.

SIRAF PORT



Ancient Persia was considered a major trade hub connecting the West and the East through the Silk Road. The Siraf Port in southern Iran is one of the many historical sites that testify to the country's significant role in the ancient trade system. Siraf is located southeast of the Iranian city of Bushehr, roughly halfway along the northern shore of the Persian Gulf. The ancient city boasts a number of key historical sites dating back to the Parthian (248 BC-224 AD), Sassanid (224-651 AD) and Islamic eras.

PROSPEROUS HISTORY

Archeological evidence suggests that the historic port was a main marine trade hub during the pre-Islamic era and the first four centuries following the advent of Islam. Siraf has been compared with some of the most successful ports of the ancient times with a similar amount of wealth and prosperity recorded in Hong Kong, Venice and Boston. Objects found at the site also show that the port was once a large city which went under water after an earthquake. Archeologists have unearthed remains of grand multi-storied houses, as well as large congregational centers, bazaars, and an extensive industrial quarter used for production of pottery, glass, textiles and jewelry.

Iran's Siraf Port has been included in UNESCO's Tentative List, which includes properties considered to be a cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value, and suitable to be registered on the World Heritage List.

The Battle of Spelling NOROUZ

How to Pronounce “Persian New Year” in English

Bahmani

Regardless of anyone’s argument Persian Heritage has accepted NOROUZ as our official spelling

Once again, it begins again

One of the signs that the new-year is upon us, is the continued debate surrounding the Yarshater camp (more on that later) spelling of NOWRUZ. Every year it seems, someone brings me flawed data to support this aberration and attempt to amend common English phonetic rules. Now don’t get me wrong. Here’s my entire point:

– I am in no way suggesting you must spell it my way or that I even have a “way”.

– I say that NOWRUZ isn’t as successful a spelling as is possible.

– I do not think we need to have one correct spelling. Just look at Hannukah.

Now though, we are presented with yet another reason that we must agree to be coerced into using NOWRUZ.

UNITY

It was told to me, that we must all accept NOWRUZ to show we can unify and as a sign of Iranian community solidarity. To be sure you the reader understand this, because I bet some of you will undoubtedly have an opinion, I’ll carefully craft this next sentence. I’ll even space it out so you can fully digest what you may be about to comment for, or against. Ready?

NOWRUZ, according to established, undeniable, un-amendable English phonetic rules that govern the likely pronunciation of words written in English, is pronounced as; (Are you sure you are ready?)

NOW as in: HOW, NOW, BROWN, COW”.

RUZ as in: RUG, BUG, HUG, MUG.

So, our most positive and precious asset in cultural relationship building, if spelled as NOWRUZ would rhyme with COW BUG.

Got it? NOROOZ however, is the most phonetically correct (more on proof later) spelling. But for some reason, choosing the obvious and more importantly, phonetically corrects pelling, is not an option for building UNITY. Apparently.

So yeah, there’s UNITY now.

The Yarshater camp, since their unauthorized, uninvited, and self assigned assignment toget UNESCO to record NR as a unique Persian cultural heritage trait, somehow got onto spelling it as NOWRUZ. Claiming that the top Persian language linguists in the world all agreed on the NOWRUZ spelling as best.

That would seem correct, except for one HUGE Flaw. The flaw, as it appears to me, is that to identify the best English spelling, you would consult with ENGLISH LINGUISTS not PERSIAN LINGUISTS!, then say the word to them as you wish it to be pronounced by English speakers, and ask them to write it in English, so native English speakers could pronounce it correctly themselves, whenever they read it in books and papers, UNAIDED.

What’s the point if you need an Iranian standing next to you every time you try to read Nowruz? Unfortunately, according to this “New and Unimproved English” being pushed by the Yarshater



camp via their coercion in getting numerous publishing and press releases by the White House, Congress, incessant groups like NIAC, and naively supportive foundations like PAAIA and WIKIPEDIA, you’d have to also demand to spell OBAMA (also not a traditional English word) as OWBOMO. OW to get that same desired Yarshater-Persian inflection. And BOMO, to get the rest of it the same way the Yarshater camp wants you to speak.

And of course, all of this is supposed to make total sense. Ask or question it, and you are apparently, quite the popular un-Iranian, as this new unification demand goes.

Even though I knew it, I figured I’d have to test it. You can’t just be right these days. You need a survey to suggest anything in the Iranian universe. So I tested the NOWRUZ spelling, 96% said it WRONG!

I then tested NOROOZ. 98% said it CORRECT! But don’t believe me or my survey. Please, do your own test. It’s super easy. Here’s how: Step 1: Ask 100 Americans if they know the name of the Persian New Year. (If they do, give them some shirini and tea, wish them a happy new year and move on to someone else.)

Step 2: If they do not know the name of the Persian new year, show them the word NOWRUZ and ask them to say it out loud. Do the same with a different group of Americans using NOROOZ and record the results. And this would be the end of this discussion. If we were not Iranian. For as all Iranian disagreements go, the one who is wrong, will never admit it. Especially if they are older generation, like the Yarshater camp, and especially if you suggest they are wrong socially or in public.

Having lost the 1979 revolution, constantly on your conscience, must weigh heavily in your fast fading last gasp attempts at validation. Therefore, if you are younger, and comfortable with your Post-79 Cowardice, you must have stacked the deck, or you must have done this or that, or some other sneaky self-promotional trick to make them look wrong or mistaken. Or foolish. It is never a mistake on their part. Always you are wrong. And shame on you for your disrespect of your elders.

Now, with the attempt to bring UNITY in as the leash to heel everyone who spells it purely phonetically, the NOWRUZ gang has shifted it’s (ironically) dictatorial and oppressive tactics to play, on your new-found sense of community.

When are you ever going to learn to do the right thing? And accept this embarrassing spelling? Huh? When? Can’t you see you are being disloyal? Just because you think our spelling is wrong, it doesn’t give you the right to stop us from using it.

And so goes the argument or non-argument, updated with the cause of UNITY. Always made defiantly. In total denial of any slightest possibility for simple mathematical and procedural error.

The government of Iran has also, by the way, finally weighed in on this recently. And true to Persian form, as if to spite or thank the very diaspora generation that created it, has sanctioned the official Iranian government spelling as; NOROUZ.

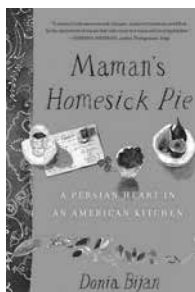
Go figure ...

REVIEWS

MAMAN'S HOMESICK PIE

Donia Bijan

For Donia Bijan's family, food has been the language they use to tell their stories and to communicate their love. In 1978, when the Islamic revolution in Iran threatened their safety, they fled to California's Bay Area, where the familiar flavors of Bijan's mother's cooking formed a bridge to the life they left behind. Now, through the prism of food, award-winning chef Donia Bijan unwinds her own story, finding that at the heart of it all is her mother, whose love and support enabled Bijan to realize her dreams.



From the Persian world of her youth to the American life she embraced as a teenager to her years at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris (studying under the infamous Madame Brassart) to apprenticeships in France's three-star kitchens and finally back to San Francisco, where she opened her own celebrated bistro, Bijan evokes a vibrant kaleidoscope of cultures and cuisines. And she shares thirty inspired recipes from her childhood (Saffron Yogurt Rice with Chicken and Eggplant and Orange Cardamom Cookies), her French training (Ratatouille with Black Olives and Fried Bread and Purple Plum Skillet Tart), and her cooking career (Roast Duck Legs with Dates and Warm Lentil Salad and Rose Petal Ice Cream).

An exhilarating, heartfelt memoir, *Maman's Homesick Pie* is also a reminder of the women who encourage us to shine.

QAZAQLIQ, OR AMBITIOUS BRIGANDAGE, AND THE FORMATION OF THE QAZAQS

Joo-Yup Lee

In *Qazaqliq, or Ambitious Brigandage, and the Formation of the Qazaqs*, Joo-Yup Lee examines the formation of new group identities. It focuses on the Qazaqs, in post-Mongol Central Eurasia within the context of qazaqliq, or the qazaq way of life, a custom of political vagabondage widespread among the Turko-Mongolian peoples of Central Asia and the Qipchaq Steppe during the post-Mongol period.



Utilizing a broad range of original sources, the book suggests that the Qazaqs, as well as the Shibanid Uzbeks and Ukrainian Cossacks, came into existence as a result of the qazaq, or "ambitious brigand," activities of their founders. This provided a new paradigm for understanding state formation and identity in post-Mongol Central Eurasia.

MY LIFE AND THE OVERTHROW OF THE PERSIAN PEACOCK THRONE

Siamak A. Adibi

New Publishing Partners (2016)

By the cover I believed I was about to read another statistical book on the events leading up to the overthrowing of the Peacock Throne. I was pleasantly surprised! This small book was filled with fascinating facts of the author's experience of events. More importantly his discussion of his own life made

the book's facts ones to remember. The book reflects the dilemma in leaving the country of your birth, still hoping the best for its future, and thinking of your return, until you fall in love with your new home.

After reading this I believed that the author found peace with his decisions and a better understanding of just why there is animosity between Iran and the United States. A truly worthwhile read!

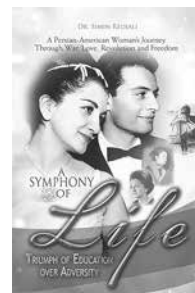


A LIFE IN MANY MOVEMENTS: ONE TRANSCENDENT WOMAN'S "SYMPHONY" OF 20TH CENTURY PERSIAN LIFE

Simin Redjali

The life story of Dr. Simin Redjali (Khadiri) begins in Iran (Persia) during the time of Iran's westernization. Her story follows the social, historical, political turmoil of the past seventy years in Iran, Europe and the United States.

Like a symphony, this book has four movements. The author traces her transition from being part of Iran's elite to her struggles in the US encompassing Iran's recent social historical movement, the women's rights, mental health, and personal issues such as surviving cancer.



The book illustrates the personal approach the author has adopted throughout her life in coping with and overcoming adversities through the power of education. Her journey is a testament to a woman's ability to balance all facets of her life: family, career, emotional turmoil, and quest to help others.

Education has been the cornerstone of Dr. Redjali's life. She received her Ph.D. in Educational and Clinical Psychology from the University of Heidelberg in 1961. After a post-doctoral Fellowship at the University of London she became the first women professor at the National University of Iran, an NSF Fellow and a Fulbright Scholar in the United States in 1966/67.

Dr. Redjali worked tirelessly to promote the social status of women in Iran and as the Secretary General of the Women's Organization of Iran she helped establish more than 150 Family Welfare Centers throughout the country. In 1973 Dr. Redjali established Shemiran College which provided three much needed new areas of study: early childhood education, family counseling, and welfare administration.

After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Dr. Redjali and her family were granted permanent residency and citizenship to the United States because of her education. Then she has devoted her time to advancing services in the fields of mental health and intellectual disabilities in the State of Virginia as Fellow Center Director, Research Director, Clinical Faculty of MCV and Consultant and is the author of several books and articles written in three languages.

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Molla Nasraddin

(magazine)

taken and shortened from Wikipedia

similar processes in other literary traditions, primarily in Iran. Iranian cartoon art emerged as a result of publishing Molla Nasraddin in Tabriz in 1921.

With an acerbic sense of humor and realist illustrations reminiscent of a Caucasian Honoré Daumier or Toulouse-Lautrec, Molla Nasreddin attacked the hypocrisy of the Muslim clergy, the colonial policies of the US and European nations towards the rest of the world, and the venal corruption of the local elite, while arguing repeatedly for social justice, educational reform, and equal rights for women. Publishing such stridently anti-clerical material, in a Muslim country, in the early 20th century, was done at no small risk to the editorial team. Members of MN were often harassed, their offices attacked, and on more than one occasion, Mammadgulizadeh had to escape from protesters incensed by the contents of the magazine.

Success Managing to speak to the intelligentsia as well as the masses, however, the magazine was an instant success and would become the most influential and perhaps first publication of its kind to be read across the Muslim world, from Morocco to India. Roughly half of each eight-page issue featured illustrations, which made the magazine accessible to large portions of the population who were illiterate. And like the best cultural productions, MN was polyphonic, joyfully self-contradictory, and staunchly in favor of the creolization that results from multiple languages (it drew on three alphabets), ideas, and identities (its editorial offices were itinerant between Tbilisi, Baku, and Tabriz). While it helped give rise to a new Azeri intellectual culture, Iran was arguably the country where it had its greatest impact: MN focused relentlessly on the inefficiency and corruption of the Qajar dynasty, and its essays and illustrations acted as a preamble of sorts to the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1910, which resulted in the establishment of the first parliament in all of Asia.

Influence: During Molla Nasreddin's two and a half decade run, the country at the heart of its polemics and caricatures — Azerbaijan — changed hands and names three or four times. Its impact, however, is difficult to over-estimate. Molla Nasreddin offered inspiration to similar pamphleteers from the Balkans to Iran and Serbia. The Azeri newspaper *Irshad* coined the term "Molla Nasreddinism" to describe the ability to tell things as they are.

Structure: The features and columns of Molla Nasreddin were the following: discussions, *facetiae* (short witty pieces of writing, *feuilletons*, humorous poems, humorous telegrams, satirical stories, anecdotes, postbox, humorous advertisements, personal advertisements, cartoons, caricatures, and illustrations.



Molla Nasreddin (Azerbaijani: MollaNəsrəddin) was an eight-page Azerbaijani satirical periodical published in Tiflis (from 1906 to 1917), Tabriz (in 1921) and Baku (from 1922 to 1931) in the Azeri and occasionally Russian languages. The magazine was “read across the Muslim world from Morocco to Iran.” It was edited by the writer Jalil Mammadgulizadeh (1866-1932), and named after Nasreddin, the legendary Sufi wise man-cum-fool of the Middle Ages.

The periodical was founded by Jalil Mammadgulizadeh, a famous Azerbaijani writer, and published by Geyrat Publishing House owned by him. The name “Molla Nasreddin” was inspired by the 13th century Muslim cleric Nasreddin who was remembered for his funny stories and anecdotes. The main purpose of the magazine was to satirically depict various social phenomena, such as inequality, cultural assimilation, and corruption; and to ridicule backward lifestyles and values of the clergy and religious fanatics.

Bold and denunciative articles were the reason for numerous searches performed by the police and frequent bans of Molla Nasreddin (in 1912, 1914 and 1917). After a three-year break, Mammadgulizadeh moved to Tabriz, Iran, where within the next year he published eight more issues of the magazine.

The significance of Molla Nasreddin is in its development of the critical realist genre in Azerbaijani literature. It influenced

AN IRANIAN-AMERICAN WIZKID IS BEHIND THE LATEST POPULAR DIGITAL INNOVATION

By Ardeshir Lotfalian



Periscope, a live streaming video app these days is hot news and the media, including TV late night shows are scrambling to interview Kayvon Baykpour, a 27 year old Iranian- American who is the CEO and co-founder of the company that is behind this latest sensational digital innovation.

Periscope allows you to broadcast live videos from anywhere and at the same time interact with those who are watching your videos.

Kayvon Baykpour was born in 1988 to an immigrant couple from Iran in Mill Valley, a San Francisco suburban town. He grew in the same area and followed his studies there. In 2010 he graduated from Stanford University in computer science. In 2009, even before graduating, he co-founded Terriblyclever Design (developer of apps for universities) which was soon after acquired by Blackboard Inc. an educational technology company with corporate headquarters in Washington D.C. After this acquisition, he became Blackboard's general manager and senior executive. Baykpour says, his entrepreneurial spirit was sparked by his Iranian- born parents.

Periscope that was developed in 2014 by Baykpour and his close friend and partner Joe Bernstein, became an instantaneous success and

quickly got popular. It made headlines when people streamed the Mayweather-Pacquiao boxing match, allowing viewers to bypass the \$100 pay-per-view fee. Periscope was also used during Baltimore unrests last year, enabling viewers to watch what was happening there, directly and unfiltered. This mass consumer appeal was the main reason behind the Twitter 's decision to acquire Periscope for an estimated price of 100 million dollars in 2015, even before it was officially launched.

When in an interview with Creative Conversation website he was asked what inspired him to create the app in the first place, Baykpour said: "I was in Istanbul when the protests in Taksim Square erupted. It was this really dramatic and pivotal moment, and I remember asking myself whether it was safe to go out or not. So the initial seed of Periscope was: "Why is it that I can't see what's happening right now somewhere in the world? That's when [my cofounder] Joe Bernstein and I started thinking about this idea of a teleportation machine."

He added: "Periscope has become a medium that can build truth and empathy. If I can see what's happening in Baltimore right now through someone's eyes in a way that's raw and unfiltered and unfettered, that's truth. You can't deny it."

According to Baykpour, "Journalism through Periscope is so compelling because it's the first time the news is not a passive experience. You are not consuming just what has been packaged for you. You can also contribute. Viewers can ask the broadcaster questions. The other difference is that it has the potential to be more immediate."

In response to another question as to how has the Twitter acquisition affected life at Periscope he said: [Despite] everything that happens in Periscope, we own product development, we own marketing, we own brand. We wanted to run an independent group.

We wanted our own office, our own culture. When you read a tweet from Periscope, that's our tweet. No one's telling us what the words should be. If we want to swear, we can swear. That seems silly, but it matters to us." Baykpour who presently manages his team of 24 in a separate San Francisco office away from Twitter's headquarters, says Periscope's mission hasn't changed since the deal."

With Periscope's ability to broadcast anything from anywhere, a crucial question that is raised about its potential impact has to do with piracy and copyright protection. Baykpour admits that this is a legitimate question to be asked and needs to be thoroughly addressed in a way that copy right works are protected. Also nobody should never be allowed to stream pornography. Periscope is presently working with content providers such as HBO and the National Basketball Association on keeping protected material from being rebroadcast.

The impact of Periscope that is taking people behind the scenes, is already felt in the entertainment industry. Kayvon Baykpour was quoted as saying: "We are thinking: are we building something that 's changing the way the people communicate?"

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One Day Matriarchy in Iran

Jeff (Jafar) Sepehri (Canada)



One day Matriarchy is an old annually custom from ancient Iran and now it is still held in some Iranian mountain villages. One of them that nowadays is more famous than the others is held in April, in a village named "Ask" near "Larijan" in the central Alborz mountain chain, north of Tehran (as shown in the following map). In this special event, all males, should go out of the village and women stay in and hold "One Day Matriarchy" customs.

April is the most beautiful month in the Alborz mountain chain. Everywhere it is green and all covered with flowers; special lovely scarlet copses. Whereas the mountain peaks are covered by white glaciers, with shiny sun light in a blue sky which includes some scattered fractocumulus clouds. They create one of the most fantastic fantasy views that you can imagine. At the same time, friendly birds sing on tree blossoms while noisy lambs scamper in the hayfields. The magic of the nature is completed by the voice of roaring moving water heard everywhere.

In this special event, matriarchy, which normally has a weekend, of all men go out of the village to a grassland far from the area named "Aske-Vash". There is a huge basaltic hole in that area and men should collect snow in this hole. In the hot summer days they use the water of melted snow to water

their thirsty sheep herds. This event is named "Barf-e-Chall" combining the two words, Barf means snow and Chall means hole and place. It means the place or the hole that you gather snow. The males in the village should be prisoned at home and can't go even to windowpane.

On the same day the dene rule and are control by women. On the previous day, they elect the queen in a general referendum between candidates. The candidates should be young, tall, beautiful, strong, brave, mellifluous, sociable, managerial, and have good etiquette. The queen shouldn't have a baby nor be pregnant at that time. She should not be last year's queen, as well. The referees select the best woman and offer her a purple robe and diadem. They call the queen "**Shah_zan**".

First the queen chooses the village guardians. She select about 30 tall, strong, bash less, brave girls among the volunteers. The best of them become their commander. They wear ancient soldiers' uniforms and carry wooden, club weapons. If they see any strange man, they hit and beat him awfully. Even police are not allowed to enter the event that day.

The queen's command is obligatory and if a woman trespasses, guards ride her reverse the without a packsaddle donkey and the other women make fun of her. The minor penalty is cooking cookies for the others.

The queen selects two ministers for that day. One of them sitson her right hand and is called "Sun Donna". The other sits on her left hand and is called "Moon Donna". They wear scarlet dresses but they shouldn't have a diadem.

At sunrise, when all the men go out the village, the women come out with their best colorful dresses and start to sing, play, and dance to the queen's house. They demand her by singing and for herto come with them to her fantasy palace. They repeat their request three times and then the queen comes out and goes with them between her guards in a parade. The place of the palace is based on the weather. On a sunny, breezy day, they choose a high place in the village and put the queen's throne and minster chairs under a canopy which is decorated by colorful cloth. Four guards stand around her. On a rainy day, they design

one of the public houses. Today, they asked the meteorology organization about the fair weather day.

At first, the queen sends guards to hunt any man that may be hiding in the village. If they find any man, they punish him violently. The guard commander delivers her report every half minute. A group of women make a detailed elegant lunch for this festival. The others sing songs, dance, and play music, read poems and lyrics, the act at a theater till lunch. About two in the afternoon, they eat their lunch. After lunch they start to collect and clean everything. They dance and eat nuts and fruit until sunset. They go back to their homes at sunset.

After sunset, the village men are allowed to come back their homes. No one says welcome to them. No dinner is prepared and the men have to go to sleep immediately.

In the present cycle we are dealing primarily with Celtic and Iranian epic literature, which is a quite large topic. At present we will deal with a somewhat shorter topic closely akin to it.

During the middle of the First Millennium BC, Iranians, Celts and Slavs were closely associated for some time. There was later a re-encounter between Iranians and Slavs as a result of the expansion of the Sakas into the Russian and Ukrainian steppes. Iranians, Celts and Slavs all have a reverence for fire, all celebrate the summer solstice, called "St. John's Eve" in western Europe and "Kupalo" in Russia and Ukraine, and all have a certain respect for the rooster, probably because his comb resembles flames.

The names "Croat" and "Serb" are both of Iranian origin. Iranian influence is found in nearly all aspects of Slavic culture; the number of Iranian words in the Slavic languages is quite large; obviously, this is all very complicated.

The first East Slavic state, Kievan Rus' (often called "Kievan Russia", but this is in fact misleading), was in reality a Viking foundation. During the 9th century AD, the Vikings, following a trail blazed by the Goths, reached the Black Sea. The kingdom of Kievan Rus' was founded in 878 by a Viking named Rurik (Old Norse: Hroekkr), progenitor of the dynasty known as "Rurikovichi", the "Sons of Rurik". In the list of the names of princes of Kievan Rus' are found both Viking and Slavic names.

In 990 Prince Vladimir, "the Russian Viking" (Old Norse: Waldemar) converted to Byzantine Christianity. There already Christians in Kievan Rus'; Vladimir's grandmother Olga (Old Norse: Haelga) had become a Christian on a journey to Constantinople. So, largely through the mediation of Bulgaria, Kievan Rus' was converted to Byzantine Christianity.

When Kievan Rus' finally converted to Byzantine Christianity, it did so with great fervor and verve. There is something symbolic about the famous "onion dome". It was soon discovered that the Byzantine hemispherical dome (of Parthian and Sassanian origin) was not practical in Kievan Rus', because in winter the snow accumulated to such a degree as to become dangerous, whereas snow will slide off an onion-shaped dome long before it can accumulate sufficiently to become dangerous.

Russian orthodoxy developed its particular character at an incredible speed; a Russian or Ukrainian could be pardoned for believing it miraculous. An Iranian or any other Shi'a will identify immediately with the story of Sts. Boris and Gleb, the Martyred Princes. It has been justly noted that no other saint has so captured the imagination of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples as have Sts. Boris and Gleb, the martyred princes of Kievan Rus'.

In a personal communication, my friend Seyyed Hossein Masr told me:

"You are completely right in emphasizing the unique rapport between Shi'ism and Sufism on the one hand and certain elements of Spanish Catholicism and Russian orthodoxy on the other."

Though many, especially Protestants, have been taken in by the attempts of the communists to slander and degrade it, Kievan

Rus was in fact a great and fascinating period, one to which Russians and Ukrainians in later centuries would look back upon as a lost golden age.

The language of Kievan Rus' should correctly be called "East Slavic", which only later, well after the Mongol Conquest, split into Russian and Ukrainian.

The Slavic peoples have an epic tradition, which at least among the South Slavs, survives to this day. Certainly Kievan Rus' had an extensive epic tradition. In the only surviving example of this lost tradition, the *Slovo o polku Igoreve* (The Song of the Campaign of Igor [Old Norse: Ingvar]), the unknown author makes repeated references to other epic bards, most notably Boyan, whose name seems to indicate a Bulgarian origin and is known to us from other sources, but of whose works survive only those lines cited in "The Song of Igor's Campaign", which, incidentally, is the source of the great opera Prince Igor by Alexander Borodin.

Much or most of the literature of Kievan Rus' was destroyed during the Mongol invasions. Also, most of the literature of Kievan Rus' was written not in East Slavic, but rather in Church Slavonic, a liturgical language closest to Old Bulgarian. No doubt fragments of the lost Kievan epic tradition survive in other forms.

In the *Song of Igor's Campaign* (henceforth known as the *Slovo*), the Iranian sun god Khors is mentioned repeatedly in the *Slovo*. Also appears the Iranian Div, or Daeva in a rather interesting form. Notes Vladimir Nabokov in this respect:

"The Daeva, or Diva, Div is the demon bird of Oriental myths, a cross between an owl and a peacock. It is here an agent of the Kuman (enemies of the Kievans) and will swoop down from the top of his poplar tree in line 443:

"Already the daeva has swooped down upon the land"

We find in MacPherson:

From the tree at the grave of the dead,
The lonely screech owl groans.

In line 118 we find:
the daeva calls, on the top of a tree,
bids hearken the land unknown.

Here, the Div or Daeva is obviously a sort of demon who takes the form of a bird. Nabokov found many other echoes of the works of the 18th century Highland Scot scholar of Gaelic epic literature James MacPherson in the *Slovo*.

Line 217: darting light from his golden helmet •••

Says Nabokov:

"The effect of this image on the mind is curiously similar to that of "Intermitting darts the light from his shield" in MacPherson's *Temora*, Book V."

Lines 273-275:
tempered arrows fly
sabers resound against helmets, steel lances crack

The Sakas

Part two
Michael McClain



Gold artifacts of the Saka in Bactria, at the site of Tillia tepe.

Notes Nabokov:

“A similar din of arms is heard in MacPherson’s Berrathon:”
Darts his through the air. Spears ring on mail. Swords on broken
bucklers bound.”

Lines 455-457:

“O my junior, Igor (Old Norse: Ingvar) and vsevolod!

Early did you begin

To worry with swords the Kuman land”

MacPherson, Fingal: “Early were your deeds in arms.

Line 583-584:

“No longer does the Sula flow

In silvery streams”

MacPherson, The Poems of Ossian:

“Blood tinged the silvery stream.”

Lines 643-644:

“having enveloped himself

in a blue mist”

Temora Book VI:

“He clothes, on hills, his wild gestures with mist”

& Temora Book VII:

“From the skirts of the evening mist, when it is rolled
aroundme”

Lines 699-708:

“Wind, Great Wind!

Why Lord, blow perversely?

Why carry those Hinish dartlets

on your light winglets

against my husband’s warriors?

Are you not satisfied

to blow on high up to the clouds,

rocking the ships upon the blue sea?

Why, Lord, have you dispersed

my gladness all over the feather grass?”

MacPherson, Darthula, Vol. I

“Where have you been, ye southern winds, when the sons
of my love were deceived? ...

O that you had been rustling in the sails of Nathos [son
pfUsnoth] ... It was then Dar-thula [daughter of Colla] beheld
thee, from the top of her mossy tower.”

And MacPherson, The Song of Selma:

“Cease a little while, o wind!

Stream, be thou silent a while!

Let my voice be heard around.

Let my wanderer hear me!

Salgar! it is Colma who calls.”

Line 778: Not small unto thee the fame

(the glory, the greatness).

MacPherson Fingal Book I:

“But small is the fame of Connal!”

Lines 831-832:

“Said Boyan, song-maker of the times of old

MacPherson, The War of Caros, Volume I:

“Bard of the times of old.”

The Celtic Epic Tradition has two divisions: the Welsh-
Breton, known in the Middle Ages as The Matter of Britain,
which includes the Arthurian Cycle and the Gaelic Epic of Ire-

land and the Scottish Highlands. Besides the language, the two
Celtic epic traditions are distinguished by something else. It is
now universally recognized that the Welsh-Bretonic or The
Matter of Britain bears the deep impress of Sarmatian and Alanic
cavalry station by the Romans in what is today northwestern
England, though at that time there was no place called England,
no people called “English” nor any language called English.
The Gaelic Epic contains no Sarmatian nor Alanic influence,
simply because Ireland and the Scottish Highlands were never
occupied by the Romans, no Sarmatians or Alanic cavalry was
ever stationed there.

Nabokov apparently was only familiar with the works of
James MacPherson, whose works are based only on the Gaelic
Epic Tradition. Anyone more learned in the Gaelic Epic Tradi-
tion than Nabokov could no doubt have found far more Celtic
echoes in the Slovo than did Nabokov, and Nabokov apparently
was unfamiliar with the Welsh-Breton, with its Sarmatian and
Alanic influences. Even so, Nabokov was forced to admit that the
parallels between the Slovo and the works of MacPherson are
far too numerous and close to be coincidence.

Nabokov explained the parallels between the works of
MacPherson and the Slovo as the result of the Viking sagas form-
ing a bridge between Ireland and the Scottish Highlands on the
one hand and Kievan Rus’ on the other. Obviously Nabokov had
not done his homework: there is no resemblance of any kind
between the Celtic epics on the one hand and the Viking sagas on
the other. Nor is this all. Since the protagonist of the Slovo, Prince
Igor (Old Norse: Ingvar) was of the Rurikovich Dynasty, and
therefore of Viking ancestry, it seemed plausible to some people
that there must be Viking influences in the Slovo. However, even
thorough investigations failed to discover any traces of Viking
influences in the Slovo.

The many affinities between Iranians, Celts and Slavs is a
vast topic about which books could be written. At the moment
we are dealing with literature. The resemblances between the
Parthian Vis and Ramin the Welsh-Breton Tristan and I so it
and the Gaelic Deirdre of the Sorrows are far too close to be
coincidence. “Single combat” is found in the Persian epic and
in both branches of the Celtic epic. Previously we have noted
that the resemblance between the story of Sohrab and Rustam of
the Shahnamah on the one hand and the Gothic chanson de geste
Hildebrandis so close that one could say that the two are identi-
cal, only the names being changed. This same motif occurs in the
Gaelic epic; in this case the resemblance is no quite so close, but
still far too close to be a coincidence. These cases there can be no
question of the influence of Sarmatian and Alanic cavalry. The
question of Sarmatian and Alanic influences in the Welsh-Breton
epic is far too large a topic to deal with at this time.

We have noted that in the 1st century BC Iranians, Celts and
Slavs were closely associated. The Slavs had a re-encounter with
the Iranian peoples as a result of the expansion of the Sakas to the
west, as did the Celts. The Slavs were strongly influenced by the
Sarmatians and Alans, as was Celtic Britain. Finally, the Slavs
were in close contact with the Goths, who were much influenced
by both Celts and Sakas.

So, there was no “bridge” between the Gaelic epic and the
Slovo nor was there a need for any such “bridge”: the many par-
allels between the Slovo and the works of James MacPherson
noted by Vladimir Nabokov. Are easily explained by the complex
interrelations between Iranians, Slavs and Celts.

to be continued ...

An Interview with

Touraj Parang

Entrepreneur Innovator



Shahrokh Ahkami

It is a pleasure to meet you after so many years. I have been following your achievements and am now happy we can share them with our readers.

Thank you for your kind words. I am humbled by your introduction.

Let's start with where you were born and how you ended up in the United States.

I was born, over forty years ago, in Tehran, Iran and lived there before and through the revolution. My family and I spent a few years in Tehran and a few in Shiraz. From there, we went to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), living in Sharjah and Dubai.

Why to the Emirates?

My father was starting a business. He was a high ranking military officer in Iran during the Shah's regime. He loved serving his country but once retired there was not much for him to do. After trying his hands at a number of entrepreneurial activities he decided to start an import/export business and so we moved to UAE. We stayed there for about three years until he concluded that things were not going the way he wanted for us.

He received some of his military training in the US and had fallen in love with the country. His dream and mission became moving to the US. This was in the early eighties and getting immigration visas to the US, especially for a family of six, was very difficult. We left UAE for Germany to apply and obtain our visas. What we thought would be a short stay took three years. During those years I went to school and learned German. When we finally received our immigration papers we left for the United States, settling in Los Angeles.

Tell us about your education.

After Germany, at the age of sixteen, I entered US as a freshman in high school. Immediately I realized that the path to success as an immigrant, or otherwise, was to get the best education I could. To do that I would need to speak perfect English so I started my ESL classes. I accelerated my classes and became conversant in English in one month.

Due to my family's financial situation, I also needed to work. My first job was as a bus boy and host at Denny's. I would work there after school. Still needing more financial support on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, I worked at a gas station. This was a good experience because I realized that I was not cut out for being a restaurant host or working at a gas station as a career.

Realizing again that a good education was the key, I spoke to my high school "guidance counselor" about taking advanced classes. She did not encourage me to do so (I later learned why: guidance counselors' performance at our school district then was measured by how the average class performed, leaving them little incentive to worry about individual outliers). Disappointed, I decided to apply to the Magnet School Program, which offered a more advanced curriculum. Luckily I was accepted. So I started at Van Nuys High School Math & Science Magnet Program in 10th grade. This was a fantastic program! I loved it and enjoyed my fellow students since they were similar to me in their mindset and ambition.

I really loved my high school classes and studied very hard. I had a great English teacher who introduced me to philosophy and the great American philosophers. I studied very hard to keep up my grades and get a good SAT score. Wanting a well-rounded education, not just one in science and math, I applied to liberal arts colleges. I asked around about the best institutions and a friend told me about Stanford, so I applied there and a few east

coast Ivy League schools. Much to my surprise, joy and luck I was accepted. In 1992, I came to Northern California to study at Stanford.

While at Stanford it dawned on me that what really distinguished the United States from other places was its legal system, founded on the principles of the Constitution. There is a tangible respect for the rule of law in the United States. I began to think that if I knew “the law”, I would have an easier time, especially as an immigrant, in navigating life in this country. Accordingly and without discussing this with my parents (who probably hoped I would become an engineer or doctor), I applied to law school. Again I researched what the best schools were and Stanford, Harvard, and Yale always came on top of the rankings. As luck would have it I got into Yale Law School and I loved every moment of it.

You keep mentioning the word luck, I think it was not so much luck and more the fact that you deserved it.

Well thank you, but I use the word luck, because there truly was an element luck. There are fewer available seats in these top schools than the number of highly qualified applicants, thus getting in a bit of luck helped. Of course my grades and test scores helped but I also think that my unique background distinguished me from other applicants as the schools probably thought I would add a new point of view to the community.

In 1999, I graduated from Yale. In law school I became enamored with technology and the internet. I wanted to be in the middle of high tech innovation and Silicon Valley was and remains the place for that. Upon graduation, I joined a leading technology law firm in Silicon Valley. Interesting enough my first day of practicing law was also the first time I stepped into a law firm. After a while I realized my vision of legal practice was not the reality of it. Eventually I made the decision to leave the legal profession and join the community of the venture capitalists and entrepreneurs.

I stepped to the other side of the fence, from a service profession, to a profession where I could build and create. It is in this community that I have remained for the past 12 to 13 years. Being an entrepreneur and working with startups and tech companies in various capacities, from founding stages to expansion is truly rewarding and wonderful. I am thrilled that on a daily basis I get to leverage my background, to apply my liberal arts and legal education, my love of philosophy and personal experience to the high tech organizations I work with.

You are currently with GoDaddy?

Yes that is my day job. I am one of the leaders in our Corporate & Business Development team. GoDaddy has over 4,000 employees worldwide and our mission is to radically shift the global economy towards small businesses. On nights and weekends, I am an operating partner of a venture capital firm called Pejman Mar Ventures, founded by a fellow Iranian-American, Pejman Nozad. Pejman is not just a dear friend but is also my mentor. He is inspiring and a genuine role model in our community. The purpose of the venture fund is to help and finance entrepreneurs who aspire to change the world.

And of course, last but not least, I have a third job, on nights, weekends and holidays and that is my family, whom I adore.

Tell us about your love story and family who I must say are amazing!

You are making me blush. Once again I was lucky, this time to meet someone who was wonderful and found me a worthwhile companion in life. She is a proud Iranian Canadian. We met online. Let me explain. At the time, in early 2000's, I was in California and she was in British Columbia. She was writing about her travels to Iran for *iranian.com* and I was fascinated with her articles. One day I finally summoned up the courage to write to her and praise her writing. She was kind enough to write back. We continued an email relationship that developed into texting and then progressed to actual phone conversations. Over a span of time we began to really know each other intellectually. We then decided to meet in person. It was wonderful and we both felt as if we knew each other our entire lives.

Is she a journalist?

No, at the time she was an accountant, known as a Charter Accountant in Canada. She was employed by a large accounting firm as an auditor and worked on mergers and acquisitions on large transactions. Once she moved to the US, for many years she worked at the Canadian Consulate in Silicon Valley as a Trade Commissioner. She is now starting her own venture. But I always do encourage her to keep writing and remain a big fan.

I am very familiar with her writing. She wrote a wonderful article on the dual citizenship visas.

Yes, she is a passionate writer and that is a topic near and dear to her heart.

Do you have any message for our younger generation?

Yes, always remember that education is extremely important and you must remain focused. Saying this to a Persian family is like preaching to the choir since our community really values education. Today, staying focused is more difficult however for the younger generations.

Because of the computer era we, especially the youth, are faced with never-ending distractions. Social media, games, etc. can occupy all our time. I believe while one is young it is the best time to absorb knowledge and expand ones horizons. Expose yourself to the arts, philosophy, chemistry, programming, etc. in an effort to find your true passion. For most, once you are out of college, you will be hitting the ground running trying to make ends meet. Life, at that time no longer affords you much opportunity to broaden your exposure, to learn and discover yourself. So that would be my message. DON'T GET TOO DISTRACTED from the core of your life.

You mentioned your love of philosophy and poetry, do you still read Persian poetry and literature.

Ninety nine percent of my reading is in English. I am therefore a bit embarrassed to say that my Persian has taken a back seat and I am left with reading translations. As you are aware a

translation of a Persian poet and writer such as Rumi and Hafez is not the same as reading it in Persian.

During another conversation we discussed the idea that France is trying to have their own Silicon Valley in Western Europe. You brought an interesting point about American character and the secret to their success. Would you share this with our readers?

Those who live in the US intuitively know about American work ethics, it is the nature of American ethos to work hard and sometimes play hard. This idea is magnified in Silicon Valley and the tech world, where the environment is ultra-competitive, innovative and time critical. Something new and innovative today will not remain so in two weeks. Therefore, people are forced to work hard all the time, to remain competitive and at the forefront. I have a hard time seeing these characteristics and work ethics, drive and ambition in other places where there is a more balanced work-life style. Please note that I am not suggesting that one is better than the other. What I am saying is that if France, Spain, Italy etc. want to replicate Silicon Valley, they would have to replicate many things they presently do not have. It is not sufficient to have a few entrepreneurs who work hard, it has to be the entire community who is supportive of those entrepreneurs, including non-tech service providers such as lawyers, accountants, as well as the government. Silicon Valley is an ecosystem and a network with all the parts of that network having evolved in sync with one another. So, I am skeptical when another geography tries to duplicate "Silicon Valley" because there are so many unique social and cultural aspects about the Bay Area that would be difficult, if not impossible, to replicate.

Americans in general tend to be "work focused", maybe sometimes too much. This can and has caused problems such as substance abuse, failed relationships, rising divorce rates and suicide rates. So yes there are definitely negatives stemming from our focus on work and material success. But then you wouldn't have Google, Apple and Dropbox had it not been for personal sacrifices and insatiable drive and hard work of the individuals involved. As we all know, in life there are many sides to everything, so I guess you just have to strike the balance as it best suits you.

Thank you for this interview, you have left our readers with some very interesting "food for thought."

I thank you and wish you continued success with your magazine.

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Pejman Nozad

TECH'S MOST
UNLIKELY VENTURE
CAPITALIST

In 1992 I was homeless in Silicon Valley. Well, not homeless, exactly. I was working in a yogurt shop and had somehow convinced the owner of the shop to let me sleep, rent-free, in the attic above the store. Once, when I was letting myself in late at night, the police stopped me. They thought I was trying to rob the place.

I couldn't blame them. I probably would have stopped me, too. But I was surviving.

A few months earlier, I had left my native Iran and landed in the United States with \$700. I couldn't speak English and knew handful of people in California. But I knew America stood for opportunity, and I was ready to seize it. I was also in love. In Tehran, I had fallen hard for a girl I grew up with. I spent the little money I had making phone calls halfway around the world. Soon I ran out of money.

In Tehran I had been a well-respected sports journalist—hosting the most popular sports radio show in Iran. But that didn't carry any weight in America. I got a job at a car wash in San Jose and took English classes at a local community college. I went from the car wash to the yogurt shop. Then one day, watching TV in my attic above the shop, I saw an ad for the Medallion Rug Gallery in Palo Alto. They were hiring salespeople.

Immediately, I picked up the phone. "Have you ever sold rugs?" the owner asked. No. "Have you ever sold furniture?" No. "Have you ever sold anything?" No. "Then what are you calling me for?" Before he had a chance to hang up, I pleaded with him to give me a chance. "How can you say no to someone you haven't even met?" I asked. There was a long pause. "Fine, come in," he said. The next day, I went to see him. I got the job. And by the end of the week, I had moved out of the attic. It was the beginning of my new life.

THE RUG SHOP

The first thing I learned as the newest employee at Medallion Rug Gallery was that Persian rugs are really expensive—tens of thousands of dollars apiece. The second thing I learned was that most customers have no way of knowing whether they're being taken advantage of or not. They can't tell how a rug is made, or where it comes from. They have no idea what a fair price is, and they have no way of finding out. That's why selling high-end rugs requires trust. It requires a strong relationship. And over the next few years, that's exactly what I set out to build. I became friends with my customers. I went to their homes. I spent time with their families. I got to know them.

And I closed sales. A lot of sales: \$8 million worth of rugs in my best year.

I was witnessing an amazing community, destined to change the world and I wanted to be part of it. And so, in addition to showing my customers rugs, I started asking questions. Little by little, I learned about the world around me—the companies, the technology, the incredible growth. And then one day, I walked into my boss's office—the owner of the rug store—and told him, "We need to start a tech venture fund."

**THE ADVENTURE
BEGINS**

My boss Amir Amidi was a great man who had built a business empire in Iran, and then started from scratch when he moved to the U.S. after Iran's revolution. He was smart and truly believed in me and the opportunity. So I put everything I had saved into our fund and we began looking for promising young companies. I committed \$200K but did not have the money and was paying my portion from my monthly rug sales commission.

Our first challenge was convincing people we were serious. Most of the founders we met with were coming from appointments with top venture capitalists on Sand Hill Road. They expected the same kind

of polished elegance when they met with us. Instead, we served Persian tea in the back of a rug store. That was our icebreaker!

Then our biggest challenge was how to discover great companies before anyone else did. The term "Angel investing" or "Seed investing" wasn't fashionable. There was no YCombinator and AngelList. So I invited venture capitalists and founders to networking events at the rug gallery. I spent a great deal of time educating myself. I went to every conference, met many investors and founders, and read books. We made some bad investments early on, but then our luck started to change. We funded Andy Rubin in the year 2000, who went on to create Android. Meeting Andy was the turning point for me. I recognized the very rare characters of an entrepreneur in him, and after that, it was all about pattern recognition.

As word got out, more and more people came to the rug store to talk tech. Top-tier venture capitalists began taking my calls seriously. And over time, our investments grew. We became the first investors in Dropbox, Lending Club, SoundHound, Danger, Zoosk and others. Today, the companies I've invested in are worth more than \$20 billion—and many of them started as pitches in the rug gallery.

ON MY OWN

In 2013, I struck out on my own, starting Pejman Mar Ventures, a \$50 million early-stage fund. My partner was Mar Hershenson, an entrepreneur originally from Spain with a .PhD in Electrical Engineering from Stanford. She co-founded three startups in the mobile, e-commerce, enterprise software and semiconductor industries. The idea was to invest in people as much as technology. To find entrepreneurs working to solve problems in big markets and make them part of our family—sticking with them through good times and bad.

Today, PMV has invested in more than 30 startups—including Doordash, Guardant Health, Gusto and Branchmetrics. While every founder is different and there is no magic formula, we've identified a few traits that are common in all the best ones—traits you can spot early on.

1. GREAT ENTREPRENEURS DON'T CHASE BIG IDEAS, THEY SOLVE REAL PROBLEMS

I'm wary of founders who had a list of 20 ideas to pursue and narrowed it down to the one that felt feasible. I like founders who have a history with their idea. The best entrepreneurs aren't just chasing interesting, "next big thing" ideas. They are very close to the problems they are solving and those problems tend to be specific. Like connecting people with cars to people who need rides. Or creating a better way for employees to talk to each other at work. Or storing data remotely. That's how the Ubers and Slacks and Dropboxes of the world are born.

When someone truly understands the problem they are solving with great depth, they are less likely to burn out when the going gets tough, and are more likely to understand the structural issues in the market

that have prevented others from solving the problem. There's nothing wrong with big ideas, but if a company is founded on one, it's more likely to fizzle. The best companies set out to solve a smaller problem the founders have actually experienced and even obsess over. It's that genuine connection to the problem that drives them to solve it, and beat the odds.

2. PERSEVERANCE MATTERS

Since building a successful startup is hard, founders can't be easily rattled. I tried to start my first business in Tehran during the Iran-Iraq War. Every night, Iraqi jets would fly over the city. And because Iranian anti-aircraft weapons kept them from getting low enough to drop their bombs, they settled for breaking the sound barrier at a higher altitude, so windows down below would shatter. This happened almost every night.

So one day before the sun went down, I had the idea to go door-to-door selling tape for shopkeepers to put on their windows to keep them from shattering. Unfortunately, nobody wanted to buy it. And after a few hours of unsuccessful sales pitches, I gave up.

A good founder would never have done that. He would have tried a different sales pitch. A different kind of tape. Even a different idea. Years later, I remember talking to a young, dejected founder trying to get funding who said, "Silicon Valley... it's a war zone out there." Well, no, it's not. I grew up in a war zone. But being successful here does require a healthy dose of tenacity.

3. THEY ARE CAPTAINS OF THEIR SHIP

A good captain knows directionally where the ship is going and will do anything to get it there. A good captain is also incredibly loyal to his

or her shipmates as well as the ultimate mission. A great captain is willing to go down with the ship.

4. THEIR CO-FOUNDERS MATTER TO THEM

One simple red flag for me is when co-founders have had just a short history working together. The founding teams I've seen succeed have experience problem solving together before launching their first startup. They knew each other's strengths and weaknesses, and how to navigate through the inevitable ups and downs of running a company. They gel in some way. Their chemistry is crucial because in the early days of a company you can change your idea. you can raise more money, but it's very hard to change your co-founder.

5. THEY DO IT FOR THE RIGHT REASONS

I look for founders who have a long-term vision instead of just a short-term goal. Are they focused on getting rich quickly? Or are they focused on making users happy, creating jobs, building a long-lasting company and changing an entire industry? Founders shouldn't bite off more than they can chew (see point #1) but they do need to look beyond the next big payday and think about what kind of future they want to build. That's how real

change happens.

6. THEY ARE PARANOID AND KIND

I like founders who are paranoid, but in a good way. I respond to founders who are confident with a clear vision of the future, but who are also careful enough to double and triple check every action and every decision. It's only by thinking through every scenario and possible outcome that founders can know with confidence that they're choosing the right path. Being paranoid does not mean you have to be harsh or unkind. I look for people who put their company and their teams above themselves, and who are kind to others. I like founders with an unusual personal past.

LESSONS FROM THE ATTIC

For me, it all started in that attic above the yogurt shop. I did not have much money then, but I had hope. Hope that if I could survive living there, I could survive anything. Hope that with enough sacrifice and enough hard work, I could make something of myself. Hope that this was just the beginning. And remember the girl? The one I spent all my money calling? We celebrated our 22nd wedding anniversary in June with our two lovely children. Yet another reason why it pays to never, ever give up.

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An Interview with

Dr. Patrick Hunt

**A Renaissance Man
Who Loves Iran**

Brian H. Appleton



I first met Dr. Hunt when he was reading his poem "The Garden of Cyrus" at the opening ceremony of the Stanford Norouz Celebrations about ten years ago and he invited me to be a guest speaker at a Stanford class he was teaching about Reza Abbasi and Persian Miniature paintings. His love of poetry and gardening in themselves are enough to qualify him as an honorary Persian but his love for Iran has far deeper roots than that. Dr. Hunt was kind enough to invite me to his home for this interview and the first thing we did was look at his Persian Carpets including one of pomegranates dyed with real pomegranate dye and one of a Chahar Bagh garden.

Can you tell our readers a little about the origins of your interest in Iran?

Well, I always loved Cyrus the Great, who freed many foreign slaves, probably a first in history. I have been admiring the Cyrus Cylinder at the British Museum since living in London from 1986 onward. If you go to the online archeology magazine *ElectrumMagazine.com* of which I am the Editor in Chief, you can find an article I wrote entitled: *Persian Paradise Gardens: Eden and Beyond* as Chahar Bagh for the Garden Conservancy and their conference *Gifts of Persia* at the Ebell Garden in Los Angeles where I spoke on

this topic. I suspect that Chahar Bagh with the four rivers flowing from it was the original Garden of Eden. But it was while I was working under Dr. David Stronach at UC Berkeley that I developed my love for Persia. I was a stone researcher there and he would show slides of stone works from various archeological sites and ask me to identify them in front of his classes, which was difficult but exciting.

Besides Iran, you have a wide range of interests, you even designed your own house and have made numerous appearances on documentaries for National Geographic, NOVA, PBS and the History Channel!

Yes, my interests include fine art, illustrating Greek mythology, art history, Persian miniature paintings, classical music and composition, writing poetry, archeology, the Middle East, Alpine archeology, the Phoenicians, Hannibal, Greco-Roman history and archaeology, Hebrew, Greek and Latin languages, gardening, the archeology and history of domestic plants, the study and practice of architecture.

You missed your interest in wine. Dr Hunt is also a professional sommelier and oenologist, having lectured for the Napa Valley Vintners Association, the Institute of Masters of Wine and other venues.

If we may can we talk about your childhood for a moment? Where were you born and tell us about your family?

I was born in San Diego and grew up on a small family farm with vines and pomegranate and nut trees and was gardening from early childhood. I had four brothers. My mother was an artist. In fact you can see a portrait of Mozart she painted upstairs.

My father did many things. His last job was teaching jewelry making at a college in Arizona. My grandfather was an inventor in San Diego and made a pump for the US Navy which went in ships and two of my great-uncles were admirals.

After my father was gone, my mother raised us by herself. Among other things she taught us the importance of delayed gratification. At meals she would hold off giving us dessert and have the eldest read aloud a literary passage, the next one do literary analysis of it and the next one do an analysis of the analysis and then we would move to the next sibling and do it

again until we had all had a turn at each activity before we would get dessert.

Was there one person in your childhood who had a large influence on you and your career path?

Yes, I had a teacher in secondary school who said to me and wrote in my yearbook: "You are my hope for the future of the English language." While incredibly daunting, that encouragement really inspired and sustained me.

Was there one particular incident in your childhood that was a life changer?

Yes, at the age of 8, I was taken out of public school and bused to a special school in San Diego for gifted children after undergoing a battery of testing and being told I had a photographic memory. At the age of 8, I was told I was ostensibly reading at the graduate level. But I was truant about 1/3 of every school year and usually not the best student.

Let me guess, you were in the library?

Correct. I wrote my first book of poetry at the age of 18 and it was that teacher mentioned earlier who inspired me. I was eventually offered a full scholarship to college and studied music at conservatory but instead I was in and out of school and became an itinerant musician playing keyboard and woodwinds while I composed music.

That must have been tough at such a young age to be out on your own.

I performed across the eastern U.S. and in San Francisco and also in Vancouver, British Columbia. For awhile I was the regular or head minstrel at the Medieval Inn in Gas Town, Vancouver. I was offered a recording contract and have been recorded in a film playing music. But after a year plus I tired of the irregularity of an itinerant musician's life and went back to school.

When I went back to college I tested out of many undergraduate courses through College Board CLEP and also in specific courses at college thereby skipping about two years of college. After graduating from college I went to a seminary for two years to study Hebrew and Greek but it was not my cup of tea and too

dogmatically conservative. During this time I was a resident poet in the school and composed movie scores and choral music and became a full writer member of the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) about 1980. The redeeming merit of seminary was that for my Master's thesis they let me write an epic poem on Faust which was over 500 pages long, probably a very unusual method of getting through but surprisingly well-received. In fact I can show it to you upstairs in our library - among about 10,000 books in this house. I've waited quite a while but it will likely finally be published soon. After seminary I went to Berkeley for philosophical balance and greater objectivity.

Over the years I have also written program notes for operas including "Tosca and Roman Monuments" for the San Francisco Opera, reprised recently in their publications, and also on Lucretia for the Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen, among other musicology ventures.

Why did you eventually specialize in Alpine archeology?

I've always loved mountains and live annually in the Alps in various seasons. I'm fascinated by the Romans, the Celts and Hannibal so Alpine archeology pulled these interests together and eventually led me to sites in Tunisia, Spain, the Alps and Italy courtesy of National Geographic Expedition Council.

The National Geographic Society has sponsored many of your archeological expeditions. During any of your exhibitions did you ever find any artifacts of Hannibal?

Not absolutely verifiable physical evidence in the kind of artifacts normally expected - except those already found in museums - but over a decade we have found geomorphological, geological, paleo climatic and other scientific support like the lichenometry record for Hannibal's passage through the Alps in relatively stable environments well-timed to fit his passage around 218 BCE.

Let's talk about Iran. What debt do you feel that our Greco-Roman heritage has to ancient Persia?

Well everyone accepts that Alexander conquered Persia but in truth Persia also

conquered Alexander. It greatly changed him and his regard for non-Greeks and made Hellenism possible. The math of Euclid and Archimedes came only after Alexander's trip to Persia.

When did you go to Iran and what did you see?

Although having studied Persian culture and physical remains and materials for decades, I first went in 2015 by invitation. Before that I was often on archeological sites in Spain, Sicily, Jordan and other places which were heavily influenced by the Persian World, incredible places like the Alhambra and Generalife in Granada, Spain, or the Norman and Zisa Palaces of Palermo and other Sicilian locales. While I was in Iran I visited the National Archaeology Museum in Tehran, the National Treasure of Iran, the Great Maidan and Safavid Mosques of Esfahan and the Chehel Setoon in Esfahan which has many paintings in Reza Abbasi's style. For me Reza Abbasi's miniature paintings are visual poetry.

What amazes me about Persian miniature painting is how emotion, unspoken dialogue, an event, a place in time and the character of an entire era can be captured and preserved in such a small two dimensional space. I believe you went to Iran in 2015 as a guest contributor to the documentary "5000 years of Iranian Engineering" produced and directed by the Alumni Association of the College of Engineering of Tehran University. What did your research and speak about in that film?

I worked on the parts about Ghanats and irrigation of deserts as well as wind towers and early pioneering metallurgy and stone working in Persepolis among other details; these are some topics I also spoke about as an invited lecturer for the event in 2015.

I also have written and done research on the Darius Canal from the Red Sea to the Nile which was the precursor to the Suez Canal and on Xerxes' Pontoon Bridge among other details for *Engineering An Empire: Persia* as well as for Dr. Farzin Rezaeian's "Seven Faces of A Civilization" and others of his books and virtual reality projects like "Persepolis Recreated".

Dr. Hunt, it has been a great pleasure speaking with you in your home

and having been the recipient of your hospitality, your erudition, your wine, chocolate and dried fruits and nuts and to admire the trees and flowers in your garden. I want to thank you on behalf of Persian Heritage Magazine and its readers for your wonderful contribution to this interview. You are truly an amazing 21st century Renaissance man and Persophile.

The pleasure has been all mine. I want to acknowledge that my wife has been instrumental in keeping order in my life and career without which I would not be where and who I am today. I am also blessed with three grown daughters, one of whom, Beatrice is also a painter.

Thanks for the interview and I look forward to a new era of Iranian and American friendship and cooperation in every field.

I as well



An Overview of the Military Activities of Russo-Soviet Aircraft Against Iran (1914-1988)

part four

Dr. Kaveh Farrokh

Despite their overwhelming military superiority over Iran, Soviet aircraft and armour would have faced serious challenges from Iranian combat aircraft (see d-g below) had the development of the Iranian air force been allowed to proceed. The Soviets were duly concerned with the growing technical and military capabilities of the Iranian air force (Pryor, 1978, pp.68). As noted by Cossa (1990, pp.42) the Soviets protested that there was "...no justification for such a large-scale buildup of Iran's armaments" and stated that Iran's growing military strength "went far beyond the scope of legitimate defense needs and created a dangerous situation in the region". The 1978-1979 revolution in Iran was in Soviet interests as it halted and diminished the expansion of the Iranian air force. With the exception of the arrival of an unspecified quantity of spare parts for the F-16s before the revolution (Babaie, 2005b, pp.440), no F-16 aircraft or any of the aforementioned military aircraft (combat aircraft, aerial tankers, AWACS) were delivered to Iran as a result of the revolution. Only 284 of 714 Phoenix missiles for the F-14As arrived in Iran before the revolution (Cooper & Bishop, 2004, pp.17). The revolution also resulted in executions, trials, and purges of Iranian air force personnel, however as subsequently demonstrated during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), the post-revolutionary air fleet proved especially effective for the duration of that war.

(D) IRANIAN COMBAT AIRCRAFT AGAINST SOVIET-STYLE ARMoured THRUSTS (JUNE 1974)

Iranian pilots had received high quality US training enabling them to challenge Soviet type armour on the ground. The Iranian air force's growing abilities against Soviet type ground forces was vividly demonstrated in June 16, 1975 when Iraqi armoured units composed of Soviet-made T-54/55 tanks escorted by self-propelled ZSU-23-4 anti-aircraft artillery crossed Iran's southwest border and invaded Khuzestan province. By this time the Iraqis had received classic Soviet training in armoured warfare in which rapidly moving tank formations would thrust into enemy territory escorted by mobile anti-aircraft platforms.

The Iranian air force reacted quickly the same day (June 16, 1975) by dispatching four F-4Es armed with Maverick air to ground missiles. The Maverick-armed F-4Es were escorted by another four F-4Es armed with anti-aircraft missiles in case the Iraqi air force decided to intervene. The "Maverick" F-4Es rapidly targeted the leading tanks of the Iraqi armoured spearhead and destroyed 12 Iraqi tanks with 12 Maverick missiles in less than 20 minutes. The rapid destruction of the lead elements of the Iraqi armoured spearhead allowed Iranian ground forces to counterattack the next day (June 17, 1975).

These operations resulted in very light losses for the Iranians (3 Iranians killed in ex-

change for 88 Iraqi troops). Notable was the lack of response by Iraqi air force aircraft, none of which scrambled to intervene against the F-4Es. The Iraqi self-propelled ZSU-23-4 anti-aircraft batteries invading Iran had also proved ineffectual and no Iraqi SAMs (surface to air missiles) had been fired against the F-4Es. This may partly explain why Iraq ordered a very large number of SAMs from the Soviet Union just two weeks after their failed invasion of Iran (Cooper & Bishop, 2000, pp.62).

The performance of the Iranian F-4Es had been accurately predicted a year before in detailed studies by the USAF Aeronautical Systems Division acting in conjunction with the Hughes Aircraft Company in late 1974. The USAF-Hughes findings reported on the sharply rising skills of Iranian pilots. One portion of the report for example stated of Iranian pilots' proficiency "...to deliver the AGM-65 missile accurately on target ... exceptionally heavy cockpit workload, which the Imperial Iranian Air Force pilots have had no difficulty mastering" (Consult USAF Aeronautical Systems Division & Hughes Aircraft Company, US DoD, Washington Archives II, MF89 #47T. See declassified extracts of the report outlining the deployment of the AGM-65 in combat in 1972-1979).

The implication of the 1974 USAF-Hughes report and the June 16-17, 1975 incidents against Iraqi T-54/55 tanks was that Iranian F-4Es were able to inflict heavy losses against Soviet armoured forces had they chosen to invade Iran in the 1970s.

(E) THE TU-22 BLINDER AGAINST IRANIAN ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERIES (MAY 1974-FEBRUARY 1975)

The Shah of Iran had been militarily backing Kurdish guerrillas of the KDP (Kurdish Democratic party) in Iraqi Kurdistan from 1974, and worked with his American and Israeli allies against Baghdad. US and Israeli weapons soon reached the KDP through Iranian territory. The KDP managed to defeat numerous Iraqi armoured thrusts into Iraqi Kurdistan in 1974-1975 (Tucker, 1987, pp.319). It was during these operations when Iranian anti-aircraft crews demonstrated their abilities in shooting down a Soviet manned Iraqi air force supersonic bomber, the Tu-22 Blinder. Iraq and the Soviet Union had concluded a Friendship and Cooperation Treaty in 1972 that resulted in the delivery of modern Soviet combat aircraft such as Mig-23 and Tu-22 for the Iraqi air force.

The supersonic Tu-22 Blinder had made its combat debut supporting the Iraqi army's operations against the KDP in May 1974. The Iraqi Tu-22 bombers were being flown by Russian pilots as Iraqi pilots were still undergoing training and could not fly the aircraft at the time. Soviet-manned Tu-22s continued to bomb the KDP well into September 1974, however these in general proved ineffectual. This was mainly due to the tendency of the Tu-22s to fly too high which compromised the accuracy of their bombing runs.

This however may have been due to reports of Iranian US-made HAWK anti-aircraft missiles deployed close to the Iran-Iraq border. Tu-22 operations of note were the bombing of KDP headquarters in Haj Omran (with indifferent results) and the successful destruction of the Hamilton Bridge. The operations and communications of Soviet-manned Tu-22s were monitored by Iranian military stations operating close to Iraqi Kurdistan.

The situation further escalated as Iranian military and Special Forces personnel became directly engaged in combat inside Iraqi Kurdistan in support of the KDP (Mafinezam & Mehrabi, 2007, pp.32). By January-February 1975, two regiments of Iranian troops as well as Rapier and HAWK anti-aircraft missiles for use against low and high flying Iraqi aircraft were operating inside Iraqi Kurdistan (Cashman & Robinson, 2007, pp. 275). These missile batteries proved their efficacy by shooting down up to 18 Iraqi aircraft (consult reports in the French *Le Figaro*, December 17, 1974 and *The Washington Post*, December 17, 1974). It is unclear if any Soviet-manned Tu-22s were among the destroyed aircraft. Iran however succeeded in shooting two more Iraqi jets in mid-February 1975, one of which was a Russian-manned Tu-22. The military implications of this incident upon potential Soviet-Iranian conflicts were significant. Had the Soviet Union chosen to invade Iran in the 1970s, its bombers, notably the Tu-22, would have suffered losses against Iranian HAWK anti-aircraft missiles. The F-14A could also pose a major threat against Tu-22s.

(F) SOVIET STRATEGIC BOMBER (TU-95) FLIGHTS INTO IRAN (1970-1978)

There are reports of So-

viet strategic turboprop Tu-95 bombers flying over Iran from their bases in the Crimea during the 1970s and 1980s (Polmar, 1991, pp.1991). It remains unclear whether any of the Tu-95 bombers violating Iranian airspace were intercepted by Iranian combat aircraft, (notably F-4Es and F-14As). The role of the Tu-95 was most likely to engage in reconnaissance to gather information on Iranian defensive capabilities and military installations. The Tu-95 would most certainly have been a critical military asset in a Soviet invasion of Iran; In addition to high-altitude bombing, the Tu-95 could also deploy air to ground missiles against Iranian targets. Nevertheless, given the rising capabilities of the Iranian air force by the late 1970s, Iranian combat aircraft such as the F-14A (and the impending arrival of F-16s and F-18s) could have achieved a number of successful interceptions against Tu-95 strategic bombers, especially during a Soviet invasion. The possibility of such a scenario is based on the successes of the Iranian air force against high-performance Soviet combat aircraft such as the Mig-25 in 1977 (see g below) as well as on successful interceptions of Tu-95s by US Navy F-14s during the 1970s and 1980s.

(G) AERIAL ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN THE MIG-25 FOXBAT AND IRANIAN COMBAT AIRCRAFT (1977)

By the late 1970s, Iranian combat aircraft had demonstrated their abilities against Soviet military aircraft entering Iranian airspace. The fast and high-flying Mig-25 Foxbats flew out of Soviet bases in the Caucasus into Iranian air space to conduct reconnaissance, confident in being able to outrun Iranian F-4 Phantoms. With its high speed (Mach 3+) and high operational ceiling (up to

29 kilometres+) the Mig-25 was ideally suited for penetrating Iranian airspace. Many F-4s did scramble to intercept but the Mig-25s were easily able to evade their Iranian pursuers. The Soviets' luck finally ran out when an F-4 finally managed to surprise a Mig-25 in 1977.

The F-4 successfully fired an AIM-7 Sparrow missile towards the Foxbat, which was hit. The stricken Foxbat then crashed inside the Soviet Union (Cooper & Bishop, 2000, pp.41).

Undeterred, the Soviets launched more Foxbats into Iranian air space. The Shah finally decided to allow the F-14 Tomcats to enter the fray to "meet" the Foxbats. On August 1977 five drones were launched by F-4s for "target practice" by Phoenix-firing F-14s (Jenkins, 1997, pp.24). The drones mimicked the flight and performance of the Foxbats. Four of five of the Phoenix missiles hit their targets, with the fifth having malfunctioned.

The Soviets tried one more time a few weeks later by flying another Foxbat into Iranian airspace. This time it was directly "greeted" by an F-14. Despite flying at 65,000 feet at Mach 2+, the Foxbat was locked on by the AWG-9 radar of the Iranian Tomcat (Cooper & Bishop, 2004, pp.17). The Soviets quickly backed down – all of their Mig-25 flights into Iranian airspace ceased.

The military implications for the Soviet Union were profound, especially if it had chosen to invade Iran. In such a scenario, advanced Soviet combat aircraft (i.e. Mig-25) attempting to achieve air superiority within Iranian air space would most likely have incurred losses against Iranian interceptors.

The Tomcat did in fact succeed in shooting down Soviet-flown Foxbats during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-

1988) after the revolution in Iran (1978-1979) (see further below).

IRAN-IRAQ WAR (1980-1988): RETURN OF THE MIG-25

Before analyzing Soviet aerial operations against Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, it is necessary to address misconceptions with respect to the Iranian air force, especially those pertaining to the role of Iranian F-14As during that war.

Many reports claimed that the Iranians were unable to utilize the full capabilities of these aircraft (i.e. Bergquist, 2002, pp.53), notably the aircraft's AWG-9 radar and deadly long-range air to air Phoenix missiles (i.e. Sreedhar, 1985, pp. 127).

Western authors even cited as fact Baathist news claims that Iraqi jets had downed several Tomcats (i.e. Peacock, 1986, pp.43). Detailed Western post-war publications have now questioned and revised these analyses.

The British-based Air Forces Monthly journal reported that "Despite many reports to the contrary, the type [F-14A] was instrumental in defending Iranian air space... it used all its weapons to near perfection shooting down any type of combat aircraft in the Iraqi inventory...(Grolieau, Badri-Maharaj, Subroto, & Aloni, 2002, 177, pp.30)...the Tomcat shot down at least 95 Iraqi combat aircraft, at least thirty of which were confirmed as AIM-54a Phoenix kills... seven and ten more were listed as probable kills...(Grolieau, Badri-Maharaj, Subroto, & Aloni, 2002, 169, pp.64)" (see also Nadimi's reports on the efficacy of the F-4 Phantom during the war in *Air Forces Monthly Special*, 2000; Grolieau, Badri-Maharaj, Subroto, & Aloni, 2003).

The World Air Power

Journal reported that during the war "...the presence of one or two Tomcats was usually enough to send the Iraqi jets scurrying away. Only one Iranian Tomcat was confirmed as shot down in air to air combat during eight years of war..." (Noush, 1999, pp. 32; see also report by Noush in Aircraft Illustrated, 1999).

It would be no exaggeration to state that despite Iran's small numbers of available Tomcats during the war, these more than compensated against the vastly superior numbers of Iraqi aircraft (numbers of these having Western and Soviet pilots).

Soviet (specifically Russian and numbers of East German) pilots flying Mig-25 combat aircraft did partake in combat operations against Iranian air force F-14As, and against Iranian ground-based air defences. Details of these air combats have been in-

vestigated and tabulated by Cooper and Bishop. Soviet motives for engaging the F-14A interceptor were rooted in researching and calibrating the combat effectiveness of their Mig-25 interceptors under combat conditions, especially the capabilities of their newest Electronic Countermeasures (ECM) and fire suppression systems against the F-14A. Soviet involvement was also part of their overall policy (especially after February 1984) to help Iraq militarily win the war against Iran (which may partly explain the usage of Soviet made chemical weapons by Iraqi forces against Iran during the war – consult Polmar, 1991, pp.31).

The Mig-25 was often deployed for deep penetration missions into Iranian airspace and against Iranian oil terminals at Kharq Island in the Persian Gulf.

to be continued

Teenager Adrian Mulder Fights Hardness of Life

Adrian Mulder, who is now 17, was born to an Iranian mother and a Dutch father. In his early childhood he was among those kids who have "special needs." Consequently, for a number of years he attended specialized schools that provide education for this category of children. But he gradually was able to put the difficulties of his early years behind and not only joined a regular public school, but also proved to be a remarkably studious and gifted student. Adrian began writing poems in English when he was only 4 years old. His own parents at first didn't pay much attention to this particular talent of their son, but now they are proud of his remarkable literary talent. His Iranian grandmother was the one who passionately encouraged him from the moment she saw his first poems and continues to support him in order to nurture his poetic talent and refine his craft.

WHO AM I?

*I am a cat waiting to be adopted
I am a light green on a black day
I am a pine cone waiting to fall
I am a book waiting to go back to the library
I am Venice during a flood
I am as happy as a dog that got his ball back
I am a sundae waiting to be tasted
I am a merry Christmas
I am an item waiting to be invented.*

"SICKNESS BE CEASED"

Adrian wrote this poem when he was 12

*The days I have missed School
very painful they are every days I disappear
Is one day too far.
I feel that I am the only one in the sea of sickness
who can never truly recover.*

*If I had a choice,
I would most differently choose
to take the easiest pattern out and go to school.*

*so you see my sickness is fact
home now is a prison
and nor even I can escape that.*

*I will try my very best but
the best cannot stop time.*

*At the end of the day,
sickness is more than pain
it is torture to the mind.*

A LITTLE WORM

*Inching its way to the unknown
its life is so short
it's so insignificant yet, to little warm
life is long and the day is grey
little worm inches onward.*



An Interview with
Dr. Lily Afshar
One of the World's Foremost
Classical Guitarists

Persian Heritage

You were born in Tehran, Iran. Your roots, however, date back to an area in the northern portion of Azerbaijan, can you tell us about this?

My grandfather, Mirza Reza Khan Afshar was born in Rezaiyeh, Azarbaijan. His mother was from the Afshar tribe in Rezaiyeh and his father from Gorgan, Iran. My grandmother was born in Tabriz. They had both moved to Tehran where my father Houshang Afshar was born.

Can you tell us about your parents and your moving to the United States?

My father worked with my grandfather who had started Iranian Airways. My grandfather was the founder and chairman of the Iranian Airways from 1944, was former Minister of Roads and Communication and a member of the parliament.

It was a tradition in my family to study abroad. My grandfather studied Political Economy at Columbia University, and my father studied Electrical Engineering at Birmingham University in England and then at Stanford, where

he studied Transportation Management.

I was encouraged by my father to pursue music and I studied at the Boston Conservatory where I received my Bachelor of Music degree. I then went to the New England Conservatory where I received my Masters of Music degree and finally to Florida State University where I received my Doctorate of Music.

I became the first woman in the world to receive a Doctorate in Classical Guitar Performance.

At ten years of age you were introduced to the guitar while visiting a cousin who was taking lessons, was this in Iran?

Yes.

Prior to that did you have any interest in that instrument or any other?

I had an interest in music and was curious about it. I would listen for hours when my sister practiced the piano and I was curious about the notes on the page and how they sounded. But I was not in love with any instrument until I discovered the classical guitar.

Was your family involved in music?

My grandmother used to play the tar in her youth. My father played violin and piano beautifully.

What was it about the guitar that attracted you?

The warm sound of the classical guitar drew me to it. Also the fact that you could hold it, be so intimate with it, that you could play it by yourself and you did not need an orchestra to accompany you. I also liked the idea I could play it in the middle of the night so quietly that no one would wake up!

Your dad bought you your first. Do you remember your early years playing the guitar?

I remember so vividly as if it was yesterday. I first had private lessons at the house, but the teacher would give me all this music theory taught at the University to copy, while he would strum and then he would ask me if I understood it and then leave until the following week. One day my grandmother was

at the house listening to the lesson, and after the teacher left, she said, how come he was playing the whole time and not you? So I told my father and he sent me to the Conservatory. I would go twice a week for evening classes. These classes were three-hours long, and the teacher was good and caring. I would arrive a half hour before the class would start and was the last person to leave. I loved it so much. After one year of study there, I gave three duo and solo concerts at the Youth Palace (*Kaakheh Javanan*) and the German Church. I remember all concerts being so packed.

We know that you eventually came to the Boston Conservatory of music. What about your education and what made you become interested with this conservatory?

When it was about time to graduate from high school in Iran, I knew I wanted to continue playing my guitar, but I did not know that you could get a degree in it in college. So first I enrolled at Boston University as an undecided major. After two weeks of orientation when I noticed that they didn't offer guitar, I withdrew. One day someone told me about the Boston Conservatory and I went there and auditioned for the guitar teacher. I moved to their dorms the next day. It was a great school and I started practicing 10 hours a day. I was the first guitarist to ever receive a scholarship to this conservatory. In 2011 I was honored by the Boston Conservatory with the Distinguished Alumni Award.

You also attended the New England Conservatory of music where you received your Master's degree in music, while there are there any experiences you would like to share with us?

New England Conservatory was a bigger school than Boston Conservatory and one could get lost in the crowd. I remember being impressed by the strings and the orchestra. I played a lot of chamber music, guitar and flute duets, guitar and string Quartet, and guitar and voice.

At Florida State University you studied with Bruce Holzman and became the first

woman to receive a Doctorate of Music in guitar performance. How did that feel and how did this impact your life?

It took me five years to get my Doctorate. During that time, I also travelled to Italy to *Accademia Musicale Chigiana* to study guitar with Oscar Ghiglia, a former student of Andres Segovia. I also entered competitions. Every time I came back to Florida State, I would play better than when I left. Ghiglia would teach me about music and interpretation, and Holzman would teach me about technique, so I had the best of two worlds. Tallahassee, Florida was a small city compared to Boston; not as cultural. So I spent a lot of time closed up in a practice room practicing. This plus my travels to Italy, summer studies at the Aspen Music Festival, and Banff School of Fine Arts in Canada advanced my playing. Florida State used to use me in their advertisements for the school of music.

The fact that I was the first woman in the world to receive a Doctorate in Classical Guitar performance only hit me after I received the Doctorate. It was and still is a huge deal in Iran and when I go there every summer (14 years so far), they write it up in the press.

Did your Persian roots impact your music?

While I was studying at Florida



State University, I also started arranging Persian music for the guitar. I remember at one concert in Florida, I played my arrangement of the Persian lullaby (*Lalae*). After the concert, an Iranian woman came to me saying how much that piece touched her. She was moved to tears. Since then I have done many more arrangements of not only Persian, but also Azeri music. My *Five Popular Persian Ballads* have been published by Mel Bay Publications, INC. and there are many more available on my website at *lilyafshar.com*. I play them consistently in concert. I think I have added to the repertoire of classical guitar. My western audiences can now hear folk music from Iran and to most it is a new experience.

Your continued education took you around the world. Which places were most memorable?

Italy for sure. I travelled all over Italy and studied with different masters. My friends and teachers were great Italian guitarists. I also loved Venezuela. Guitar is part of their culture. I also loved studying in Banff and Aspen, the nature was marvelous.

Let's look a bit at your professional career as a musician. First were your parents in support of this path or were they hoping for a more stable and conservative career for you?

Education was very important to my father, but when I look back, I see that he was waiting to see what I would choose myself. Before guitar I used to go to art classes, but my father said I can do better. I respected him very much and when he bought me a guitar, I could not get away from it. He got me teachers and encouraged me further. He said to have diligence to reach an international level. As a classical musician himself, he knew how much work it would take to play brilliantly. I think he could tell very early on that I was suited for this. He was very proud when I received my Doctorate and got the teaching position at the University of Memphis.

Expand on your accomplishments in recording, writing and teaching music.

I have seven CDS. My first one, **24 Caprichos de Goya**, comprises 24 pieces for guitar based on *Los Caprichos*, satirical prints by the famous Spanish painter and print maker, Francisco Goya. The music is composed by the Italian composer Mario Castel nuovo-Tedesco.

The second CD is **A Jug of Wine and Thou** (a name taken from Omar Khayyam's *Quatrain*) on which I recorded my *Five Popular Persian Ballads*, Turkish, Spanish and South American music.

The third CD is **Possession** which includes four world premieres by American, Spanish, Turkish, and Croatian composers. The fourth CD is **Hemispheres** on which I play music from the East and West.

I premiered a new work by Iranian composer Reza Vali called *Gozaar*, based on traditional Persian music. I installed quarter-tones on my guitar neck in order to play the quartertones required in the piece. The guitar all of a sudden sounded like a se-tar, and at the same time I could play Western music on it.

Hemispheres had seven world premieres on it including works by Polish

and American composers. The fifth CD was recorded in Iran. It is called **One Thousand and One Nights**. I perform my arrangements of Persian and Azeri music along with Spanish and South American works. The sixth CD is called **Musica da Camera**. It is chamber music and it has the world premiere of a Russian piece for strings, clarinet, percussion and guitar, along with tango music by Piazzolla and a Sonata by Paganini for violin and guitar. The seventh CD is all my arrangements of Bach for guitar and it is called **Bach on Fire**. I have also released **Virtuoso Guitar DVD** with Mel Bay, where I perform and talk about the pieces.

I have been teaching at the University of Memphis since 1989 and it has been a great experience. Every summer I travel to Iran to perform and teach.

Who are your favorite guitarists of the past and of the present?

My favorite guitarist of all time is and will always be my mentor Andres Segovia. As a little girl in Iran, I used to listen to his records and wanted to be

like him someday. I eventually got to meet him in 1986, when he was 94 years old. I performed for him in his master classes at University of Southern California. Segovia had selected 12 guitarists internationally to play for him. It was a thrill to play and study with him. Segovia was a real musician and great human being. He set a great example for other classical guitarists to follow.

Do you have any ambitions for future collaborations with other musicians and if so who?

I would like to do more chamber music recordings in the future both in Iran and the US, maybe incorporating tombak with guitar.

Is there a message you would like to leave with our readers, especially with the younger generation?

I always say keep an open mind, work hard and stay positive to reach your goals.