

KhabarNameh

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انجمن گروه صلح ایران

**A MODERN MOSAIC:
IRAN, AMERICA, AND PEACE CORPS INTERCONNECTIONS**



SAN DIEGO, OCTOBER 2019

SAN DIEGO CONFERENCE

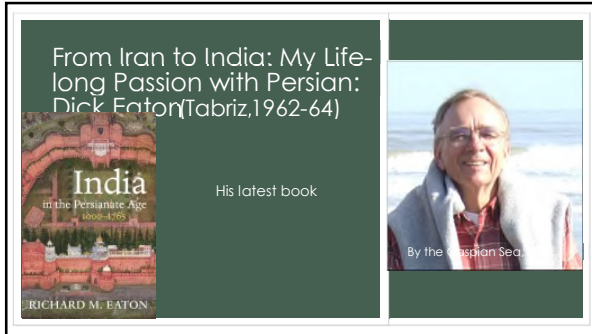
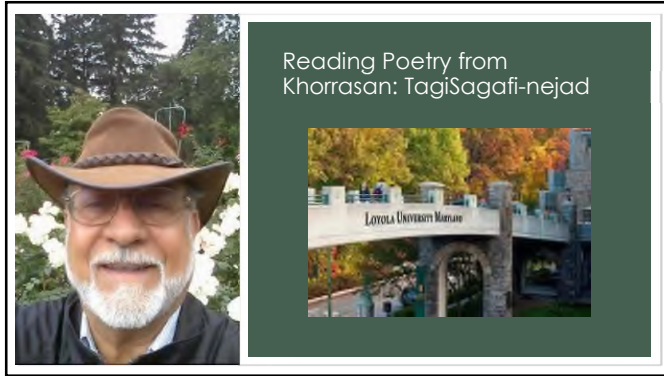
By Douglas G. Schermer (Semnan, 1966-67)



Under the umbrella of **Modern Mosaics: Iran, America, and Peace Corps Interconnections**, the San Diego conference featured three themes: first, our history both as individuals and as an organization, second, the cultural contributions to America from the Iranian diaspora, and third, our response to current political challenges.

Here is a list of the presentations. Videos are available for viewing at www.peacecorpsiran.org.

- Historian **Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi** shared her insights into the history of the Peace Corps in Iran from the perspective of international relations, while PCIA historian **Genna Wangsness** talked about her work documenting the history of Peace Corps volunteers in Iran. In addition, she displayed two tables full of notebooks and pictures. Her notebooks were organized by training groups with as complete a list of volunteers as we have assembled.
- **Jason Rezaian and John Limbert** talked about their experiences as prisoners in Iran, referring to a “hostage industrial complex” but also emphasizing the importance of diplomacy.
- **Jahangir Golestan** shared his film, *BAM 6.6*, about the medical care Iranians provided for an American woman caught in the 2003 earthquake.
- **John Krauskopf** brought the pre-publication version of the *PCIA Anthology* and gave authors an opportunity to read their stories to the group. He also brought his collection of books by PCIA authors.
- **Matthew Shannon** from Emery & Henry College shared his research on the work of Presbyterian missionaries in medical care and education which foreshadowed the efforts of the Peace Corps. Several former missionaries and missionary children were in the audience.
- **Rea Keech** related the story of an enduring bond between three volunteers and the family of Mostafa Rahbar in Semnan.
- In keeping with our mission to share our understanding of Iran and Iranians, **Persis Karim** shared her work at the Center for Iranian Diaspora Studies at San Francisco State University.
- The cultural contributions of the Iranian diaspora were highlighted with the presentation Saturday night of Joanna Garner’s play, *The Orange Garden*, by Iranian-American students under the direction of **Mahmood Behroozian**, and **Shahrokh Yadegari** showcased the *Scarlet Stone*, a multimedia presentation based on the Rostam and Sohrab story from the *Shahnameh*.
- **Kerry Segel** organized readings of Persian poetry. There were recitations in Persian and a discussion of the impact of Persian from Istanbul to New Delhi and beyond.



BAM 6.6, Humanity Has No Borders

By Douglas G. Schermer (Semnan, 1976-77)



Jahangir Golestan

Bam 6.6, Humanity has No Borders, a film by **Jahangir Golestan** about that 2003 earthquake, tells a heart-rending story of a young American Jewish girl and her fiancé as they journey to the historic town of Bam in the heart of Iran. Her fiancé died as a result of his injuries, but the girl lived thanks to the efforts of Iranian medical teams in Kerman and Tehran.

The film documents their journey as they travel to Bam, and features interviews with the Iranians who helped them in the aftermath of the earthquake. Then the scene shifts to the U.S. where we meet her parents who describe their positive experiences in Iran as they meet the doctors and nurses who treated their daughter.

Both the Iranians and Americans spoke in emotional tones. When the film ended, not every eye in the audience was dry.

Jahangir was present to explain that the film was about the love and compassion of Iranians towards these two American tourists when their journey took a tragic turn. The film was not about devastation; rather, it was about the open hearts of Iranians towards their American guests.

Bam 6.6, would make an excellent presentation to local audiences. Those interested in this may contact Golestan at golestanparast@sbcglobal.net.

The Orange Garden

By Tom Klobe (Alang, 1964-66)



Joanna Garner

A reading of Joanna Garner’s award-winning political drama set in 1970s Iran and the U.S., presented on the evening of October 5, portrayed the angst of American and Iranian youth attempting to come to terms with historical events that swirled around them. Escaping the fate of his buddy (Gabor) who is sent to Vietnam, Iran Peace Corps Volunteer (John) is caught in the political and cultural crossfire of the times. The play is set to the poetry of Rumi, 1970s rock, and the lyricism of the Persian language.

Playwright and musician Joanna Garner, daughter of Iran PCV Steve Horowitz, was inspired to write the play from the stories, Farsi phrases, and Persian cultural traditions that she was immersed in as she grew up. Noted actor Mahmoud Behrouzian, who directs theater at the Persian Cultural Center in San Diego, directed the reading. Mahmoud studied drama with RPCV Don Laffoon in Tehran.

In the 1970s, when America’s youth had lost its innocence and was questioning its idealism, a new American social consciousness was being forged. PCV John escapes to Iran to “do good” in a developing country and to find his personal grounding in the spiritualism of the dervishes. But he is swept away when he finds a new and secret love along with the passion of Iranian youth for social change. The play captures the tenor of a time when the youth of the world took on the responsibility to initiate change. In our current times of escalating international tension, this is a theme worth revisiting.

The play provides needed perspective on how individuals live and think while history is being made. However, the performance suffered from some expressionless reading and the confusion of multiple roles by various readers. Strong actors and even minimal sets would heighten the play’s impact and relevance.