

My escape from the danger of imprisonment during the revolution in Iran

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1975 Unification Church Missionary to Iran



Photo date and location unknown

It was time for me to leave Iran, I didn't want to but the government was about to fall and my visa was soon to expire putting me in a dangerous situation. The members and I arrived at the airport amid snow flurries on January 29, 1979. The city had been nearly shutdown due to the strikes against the Shah's regime fomented by Ayatollah Khomeini, (who had been exiled to Iraq after his son had tried but failed to assassinate the previous Shah years before. Khomeini's son and others were killed in the attempt.) It was a desolate drive to the airport with much less traffic than the usual chaos. My heart was heavy thinking to leave the nation True Parents had given me to love. There was a sadness underlying everything people did, due to the division within the nation among the pro and anti-Shah elements. The struggle had been going on for at least six months and was building to a head. A few days prior to my departure I had listened to a speech by the Shah on the radio, where he had confessed he had not realized until now how much he had been kept in ignorance by those around him about the extent of corruption in his government. From my imperfect Farsi (Persian language) I understood that he was expressing regret and sadness and hoped for a restoration of peace in the land.

The airport had been closed due to the strikes against the government. I had been to the airport two days before, but there was no way to get out of the country. We returned home defeated and the more than 40 members worried I might get hurt or arrested when my visa expired. Beate, the German missionary, had already left and Ryuji, as a Japanese man, wasn't really in danger. They were all deeply concerned for my protection. They would never forgive themselves if I suffered, was jailed or was seriously hurt; and I didn't want them to suffer because of my presence. Foreigners were beginning to panic as the anti-Shah elements became more bold and aggressive against Westerners, especially the newly 'hated' Americans. It reminded me of a gang of children seeing no adult in sight, jumping up and down in abandoned frenzy, not unlike the children in *Lord of the Flies*. But this was only some of the people; there were still many more good people in Iran. Nonetheless, we never knew who was a friend or who might fly into a fury if they realized I was a *khareji* (foreigner, an increasingly pejorative term in Iran).

We had heard rumors of people attacking those whom they thought to be former secret police (*Savak*) with the small fruit knives people carried. 'A messy puddle of human being was left on the sidewalk afterward,' I was told, but Iranians like a well-embellished tale. But these were just 'rumors.' My experience was that Iranians were loving, yet emotional people, not used to violence. I couldn't imagine these rumors to be true, but in every barrel there are a few bad apples. And the strikes, especially in Tehran, had been increasing in violence and fervency. So I had to leave.

I had visited the American Embassy at one point and ended up talking to the CIA representative. He didn't say that he was CIA but he let me understand his job by what he told me. There had been demonstrations in front of the University not very far from the Embassy every day. He told me people would gather and wait for the TV cameras and when they arrived they would make a lot of noise and shake their anti-American signs. When it was discovered they were being paid to do this, the embassy suggested to the Iranian government that someone hire the same people to do a pro-Shah demonstration! It worked, the cameras showed up, they shouted and waved their signs. The members and I had seen that oddity on the news one night and wondered why suddenly, and only for one day, there was a pro-Shah demonstration. The man at the embassy said that the government wasn't interested in doing it again and he thought that was a mistake. The airport was still not open, but a few planes had tried to land just to get people out without the usual support of the tower in wintry overcast conditions. The previous day a Pan Am flight skidded off the runway onto a soggy, snowy field and the people at the airport had to hire locals in trucks to push the huge plane back onto the runway so it could take off. The turn-around was speedy for fear of retribution by angry crowds. I don't know how many people got out on that plane.

The only reason I could get a ticket was because of my wonderful "brothers." Ryuji Kuranaga, the Japanese missionary, who rode on the back of spiritual son, Nasser Zomorrodian's motorbike, a few days before. They went to every airline office in Tehran looking for a ticket -- a ticket to anywhere safe, but just out of Iran for me. The other brothers, Essi Zahedi, Hossein Temorijam, Shahrokh Namiranian and others, had stockpiled gasoline in the corner of the backyard after hours and hours of standing in line at gas stations just in case they might have to drive me to the Turkish border. Finally, Ryuji and Nasser found a lone ticket -- thank God for Lufthansa -- a one way, first class ticket for \$880 -- more than \$3,000 in today's dollars. To pay for the ticket everyone pitched in with whatever money they had, including Jose Lim from the Philippines, just to pay for the possibility that I might get out and be safe. Our German sister, Beate Wilhelm (Lauer-Schmaltz) had gone on ahead to Germany and safety, and when Ryuji and Nasser discovered I could go to Frankfurt too, they felt their prayers had been answered. I was amazed at their inventiveness and stick-to-itiveness, but a first class ticket? I'd never flown first class anywhere before, and the thought of leaving my beloved Iran in comfort went against everything in me.

I arrived at the airport with a van full of earnest, young Iranian men determined that I was going to get on that plane to safety, no matter what. (The women needed to stay out of sight for their own protection.) When we arrived, we could see that the area inside the simple airport was wall to wall squirming bodies, like a can full of worms. People weren't panicking -- yet -- but they were pushing and shouting and trying to get through to the gate and board the only plane on the ground, whether they had a ticket on Lufthansa or not. People wanted out.

My wonderful brothers naturally formed a 'V' formation with me in the middle and literally pushed their way into the mass of struggling bodies; shoving all shapes, sizes and nationalities aside. Their precious sister was getting on the plane 'come hell or high water.' Amazing to me was that it worked. They protected me with such determination that I found myself staring at the very stressed-out Lufthansa agent, who told me my ticket was good for this flight but that the way to the gate was completely blocked by the roiling crowd. He asked me, "Can you jump?" I looked at the place he was pointing to and it seemed far, to the other side of the conveyor belt.

Hossein, said, "Yes, she can!" I stepped up and he and whoever else propelled me up and out from the area as I jumped. It seemed as if I was flying through the air to the agent's waiting hands on the other side. I was shaking but amazed that I sailed over the barrier to the offices behind. I turned to look at my wonderful brothers, and others who had their faces pressed against the windows in the back of the room with such downcast looks. I hadn't said a proper goodbye and hadn't hugged them or given them my last 'words of wisdom.' Because of the circumstance I felt ripped out of their embrace and love. I waved goodbye knowing that I might never see some of them again. All my investment of nearly four years was being offered up because I was no longer safe in my adopted homeland. Because I had that precious first-class ticket, the agent made sure I could get to the gate by guiding me through the offices to the tarmac. What a sendoff.

I joined the throng of other passengers who were rushing to the plane, often worriedly looking back over their shoulders. Some were running while looking behind "just in case." I hoped that no one would fall while they turned around to look as they ran. I bumped into a man who announced to me that he was from *Transcendental Meditation* and would I like to hear about their ideas? (Funny, witnessing on the way out of the country.) I told him I had my own group, "the Unification Church." "The Moonies?" "Yes," I said, "and I just left 40 wonderful Iranian members here to fend for themselves. I hope they will be alright." He was more than just impressed, he said, "Wow."

With no help from the empty tower, the plane took off. The visibility began to weaken due to a mist forming over the field and everyone held their breath until we successfully rose from the ground and up into the air. After some moments the passengers gave a loud, collective sigh of relief and enthusiastically applauded the captain and crew. They sighed and applauded again as the announcement came that we had

left Iranian airspace. As I looked out my first class window I ached from the rushed departure. Did I say goodbye enough? I really had not expected to leave that day and I certainly thought I would return soon. What about the people I couldn't see before I left? I hoped they would forgive me.

I did not want to go. I had determined I would live in Iran for the rest of my life if that is what God wanted me to do. But God cannot always control an angry mob who felt the power and freedom of dissent for the first time in many, many years. The Iranian people seemed "drunk" with the new freedom to march, shout and express their pent up anger and resentment at everything in their lives: lack of good jobs, stupid neighbors, the congested traffic at every corner and angry wives – they were not just angry at the Shah and the imperfect government. But the Shah was an easy target much like a red flag to an angry bull.

The government did need to change and I had felt that the Shah was beginning to get the message, but in reality good change is revolutionary. The Shah had done a great job in the 1963 "White Revolution," but most people hadn't understood or forgot what he had liberated. He had taken back the land from the wealthy Mullahs and given it to the tenant farmers to own. In one blow he had weakened the overly-powerful clergy and ended serfdom. And whose family lost the most land? -- Ayatollah Khomeini's. I was friends with one of his very-Westernized cousins and she told me how the entire family was angry at the Shah because all of them had to work for a living once the clergy had lost their lands to the serfs to own for the first time. It was considered a holy act to leave one's land to the mosque. That made for a lot of land being owned by the religious leaders. She told me she was even willing to wear a veil (*chador*) to get her family's land back. I heard later that she left the country in fear due to the oppression of women. I wonder if she ended up in the USA.

Most people didn't understand that it's the culture that takes much longer to change than the people in power. The treatment of women and the attitudes about the family and girls' education needed to be upgraded and democratic principles learned and practiced for it to take hold. Freedom wasn't something the populace knew how to handle or even what it looked like in everyday life. True freedom actually means that you have to respect all dissenting opinions, even those of people you don't like! Taking responsibility for that freedom was farther behind. And the negative thinkers already had a well-thought out plan to control the populace. It quickly went into effect after the Shah left, three days after me. And much worse oppression descended on formerly free Iran.

Within months after I left, vigilantes would roam the streets punishing women and girls who didn't "properly" cover themselves. Businesses disappeared if they sold "Western" goods that were thought to undermine the religious life of devout Muslims. The Jews were badly persecuted and driven out, until Ayatollah Khomeini spoke with the Chief Rabbi on TV and said that Iran needed the Jews to stay. In the years following, the Jewish community would eventually be asked to deny the Holocaust and other "Jewish truths" in order to continue to live safely in Iran, their ancient homeland. But the Baha'is left, nearly en mass. Their prophet, Baha'u'llah, came after the Prophet Mohammad, who, according to Islam, was the last and greatest prophet. So the Baha'is were *persona non grata* religiously and feared for their lives. Many found their way to the US, Europe or other parts of the Middle East. Those who remain are denied many rights of education, employment and security just for being Baha'i.

The Shah had tried to import democracy and reforms into his nation. Telephones and technology had increased greatly, there were better roads into the villages, and a social security system was beginning to be set up so the beggars would have no excuse to clog up the streets with their children. (Many of them had been thought deformed by their own parents (I was told) to gain sympathy from passersby.) And widows without families wouldn't have to resort to questionable work to support themselves. But the education of democracy had not begun in earnest, except for those who could study abroad. The Madrassas still taught fundamentalist Islamic principles and passed on the narrow male-chauvinistic culture and thought of the past in strictly gender-based schools, which had markedly different curricula for girls and boys. The Shah's father had tried to outlaw the veil, but poor women didn't have the money for good clothes and many women suffered from the leering looks, comments and affronts of the men who were unused to seeing women without their entire bodies covered. The Shah relented and allowed women to use the veil again if they chose. Many did but others chose a variety of dress, mostly Western, some, so skin tight that I wondered how they could breathe. Young men too often wore shirts opened to the third button and so tight that every ripple from every muscle could be seen. But few men ever went bare-chested.

Good grief, I was persecuted as a female, merely for riding a bike one day. Women had some rights since the Shah's reforms but they were giving them up and putting the veil back on for the sake of the 'revolution.' Their excitement and euphoria lasted less than six months. Anyone not wearing a veil was persecuted, beaten and even some uncovered women would have acid thrown in their faces by fundamental vigilantes by the following summer. Hell was descending on formerly forward looking Iran. The Shah would definitely roll over in his grave, as would his father, once the Islamists fully gained control. And forget religious freedom, it was a concept no one cared about and didn't learn about in any school. Islam doesn't teach religious freedom and if you change from being a Muslim to some other

religion you can lose your life and your children will be given to a faithful Muslim family. Without the practice, wisdom, and experience of democratic principles, people didn't know what to do with their new found freedom. An immature system of domination set in to soothe the fears of those who saw what was going on, and the hated secret police, *Savak*, would be replaced by the new Islamic police, "protectors of the faith," and the elitist Revolutionary Guard.

On the plane as I left my beloved Iran, I opened the first class gift bag and found not only slippers and an eye mask to block out the light, but a toothbrush, toothpaste and socks. Then the stewardess offered me champagne and chocolate. I was stunned and couldn't eat anything. How could I celebrate and eat well when Iran and my precious brothers and sisters were suffering so much? I turned my head to the window and my tears dripped down my cheeks in silence. I felt such guilt and sadness at being separated from my efforts to love the people of Iran since I arrived in May of 1975.

Clear as a bell, I heard God's voice say to me. *"I wanted to send you off from Iran with a joyous band playing loudly in the airport, flags waving and grandmothers and children crying and cheering for you, but I couldn't. The best I could do for you is to give you a first class ticket to Germany where you will be safe and loved. I will still be here in Iran loving and looking out for your spiritual children. They will survive."*

I was so surprised. I could actually see the flags waving and the happy faces of those grandmothers, kids and all those people I had loved and served in Iran, sending me off victoriously -- in my mind's eye. The grateful crowd held many faces I had known and loved, especially the mothers of my members, Mama Zahedi (the mother of Hossein, Mariyam, Essi, Foozie, Abbass, Hassan, Maliheh, Khosrow and Manijeh) and other Muslim, Jewish and Zoroastrian mothers standing in the center of the crowd. So I ate the chocolate, but I still couldn't celebrate with champagne. I did somehow find hope rising inside of me once again from God's words and wondered what the future would bring. Would I ever return to Iran again? Would our members be able to continue teaching about the principles of peace?

Reflections on the revolution:

I thought back on what I had seen during the months of turmoil that led up to this fateful, parting day. The first image was a beautiful demonstration on a Friday in 1978, the Islamic religious day, of people marching south down *Shahreza* street; women and children carrying flowers, offering them to the soldiers on guard along their path, singing and enjoying the new situation in Iran. It was like one huge picnic. This was the first ever of this kind of demonstration and it seemed that the people were saying, "Give peace a chance."

Yet, I also remembered "Black Friday" soon after where, when the demonstrating people gathered at the *Medon-e-Shahr*, the city government center, the point at which several streets emptied into a large circle, where cars would drive around seeking another avenue exit. The center had a huge flag pole, some flowers and a huge chain around the center reminding me of the pictures of the place of torture in front of the palace in Esfahan, during the ancient kingdom of Persia. I wondered if this place had been a place of torture in the past too. Bad karma. The crowds became congested and young men with bullhorns shouting at the people, pushed the crowds forward toward the young soldiers (from the villages) guarding the government buildings until --in fear of being crushed by the confused mob, they began to shoot at the legs of the people to make them move back. But when the crowds moved back they were repelled by those same angry, shouting men to move forward for whatever reason people use to force a confused crowd to do as they want. Panic and chaos ensued and many were trampled. Many were eventually shot.

How can I say this when I wasn't there? Because up in a tree was one of my friends who was a serious student of the Koran. He had been watching from the sidelines in amazement, and when the shouting and pushing began he wisely climbed the nearest tree. Good for him, because around him people began to trample one another in a stampede to get out, but due to the "Arabic-speaking men dressed in black shirts," the people couldn't escape. My friend had been in support of the demonstrations until then, but due to his good Arabic study, he realized that these men weren't from Tehran, and maybe not even from Iran, in fact he wondered if they weren't Palestinian. He saw how they manipulated the crowd until panic broke out. That day a photograph was taken by a Pakistani photographer in the morgue; I believe I saw the number written in Farsi on the last body in the row as '3,124.' (This photographer was the brother of the local UPI representative, who was my friend.) My memory may not be reliable, but I do know that it had four digits. The newspapers reported less than a hundred had died that day. I could see that things were going to get much worse.

That same friend and others including myself saw other things as well. One day coming from the public bath, I saw a group of middle school boy students, led by two male teachers, who rushed into a bank and began to empty it of papers, desks, chairs, etc. They then set fire to all of it in the street. When the soldiers arrived some of the boys were still there and got arrested, but their teachers were nowhere to be found. The bank was owned by Baha'is, I think. I ran home just as the soldiers arrived, and decided to bathe at home from then on.

Other friends reported seeing a Citroen car speeding along a main road with a passenger standing up in the sunroof opening, lobbing Molotov cocktails into banks. I was told they hit about 20 banks that day all in a straight line, but it made it look like a lot more people were doing it but it was just one driver and the expert pitcher. Many nights the electricity went out around 8 or 8:30 pm. The water was shut off too. Our group stayed indoors due to the curfew and prayed, slept or read by candle light. It was so depressing. Sometimes we could hear a demonstration nearby and wondered how they got away with it under curfew. It lasted for half an hour then stopped. What had happened there? No gun shots were heard, why had they suddenly stopped? Several days later, one of my younger students told us that he lived in an apartment house on the circle where one of the demonstrations took place. When he looked out of the window on those nights he saw no one gathered there but he could hear them. He and his mother climbed to the roof to see what was going on. On a nearby roof was a loud speaker from which the sounds of a demonstration came. It lasted a few nights until the police figured out where the sound came from. The man running the recording was arrested, of course. But few people really knew what had actually happened. It stimulated some to be bold enough to leave home during the curfew and try to join the demonstration. I imagine that a number were arrested for being out after curfew.

I also remembered when I first realized that something was going on 'underground.' I was standing in line waiting to use the public pay phone. I was afraid that our house phone was bugged, so when I called our members I had to use a pay phone to protect their anonymity. I had on my usual dark sun glasses that were darker on the top to hide my hazel-colored eyes. I got into a conversation with a young man, 14 or 15 years of age. During our conversation, he asked me when I had become a Muslim, I explained that I was actually just studying Islam and had not converted.

He said I should change my name when I did to *Maryam* (Mary, the mother of Jesus who is considered a godly woman in the Koran) or something to show that I had converted. (Susan could be pronounced as *Suzan*, an inward burning desire, or *Sussan*, a needle. Not a very good name for a Muslim.) He then began to tell me that for many months at his mosque they were listening to cassette tapes sent from Ayatollah Khomeini in Iraq. He was teaching them about how to create a revolution. This boy was very excited and trusted me I guess, because he told me that they were beginning to gather sort of defense at the mosque. I realized that some Muslims don't have any theological quandaries about stockpiling weapons in a house of worship. I don't know if I ever made that phone call, I was too stunned. This was sometime in September, 1978.

The Lufthanza plane droned on and my body began to unwind. I had wanted to do a campaign in Iran with banners saying, "Forgive, Love and Unite" for Iran to stop the violence, just like our Unification movement had done in the US during the Watergate crisis. Our American members became experts at demonstrating and public speaking about uniting behind the principles of democracy and protecting the dignity of the office of the President of the United States. But Nixon eventually resigned in shame. Someone suspected he did so after his wife threatened to leave him.

When I presented this idea to our Iranian members, they convinced me that we were not protected by the same laws of freedom and public respect for the views of others. They expected me to be arrested or beaten senseless by angry crowds if I held such a demonstration.

Wonderful Iranian hospitality:

All these terrible memories floated unbidden into my mind during that long flight to Germany. Yet, so many good memories pushed them aside and reminded me of the beauty of the Iranian heart. The people welcomed me into their homes and treated me like family more times than I could remember. In Ann Arbor, Michigan where I grew up, the Asgar family had two sons, and a grandmother who visited regularly, and numerous relatives studying in the US over the time we lived near each other. They were a loving family, and we enjoyed many wonderful times together. They became a second family to mine. I even learned a few words of Farsi from them and ate some Persian food. My home still has a huge red Persian carpet that they bought for my parents and has stayed with us all these years. Their presence, through that carpet, is a constant in my home.

So when I landed in Tehran 12 hours later than I expected, in May of 1975, it was the middle of the night. I didn't have anywhere to go, no idea of a hotel to stay in overnight and the airport was just too small for an American girl to spend the night in. So the Persian boyfriend of my fellow-traveler got on the phone and found the phone number of the Asgar family business. The caretaker answered and gave the phone number of the Asgar family (Asgarzadeh) home.

And who should answer the phone in the middle of the night? That awful boy who used to throw acorns at me (with alarming accuracy) when I was a kid, Kambiz. Obviously, he had grown up and in fact had just come home from nightclubbing with his wife and was still awake when the call came through to his family building. He came to the airport to pick me up and over tea interrogated me about "Why in the world did you choose to come to Iran?" He finally took me home to sleep on his couch until the morning.

I was awoken first by the birds flying around outside my sunlit room, and then by voices in the hallway where I found my parent's best friends (who were visiting from the US) talking to Grandma Mina who lived across the hall on the third floor. They knew I was coming but didn't know when to expect me. I had in fact not planned on staying with them but just wanted to visit them after I had found some place to stay. I actually spent 42 days with them living on the first floor with Safieh's sister and her husband, who was also Kamal's brother and Kambiz' parents. The feeling of family and Persian hospitality welcomed me and helped me get settled on my own.

They fed me, kept me safe and worried about me just like surrogate parents. I was welcomed by an Iran filled with love. I also got to see my former dentist, Jamal Asgarzadeh and his wife, Ferri. Jamal was another brother of Kamal. And then there was Soheila, daughter of my hostess. She was a few years older than me and a puzzle to her parents. We had known each other in Ann Arbor and she drove to school with my cousin, Carole, who lived with us while she went to high school. Soheila was unusual to say the least, awkward and not really connected to the world around her as a child. In Teheran, she welcomed both Beate and me into her world for a while and Beate stayed with her until we found an apartment we could rent together. But Soheila lived separate from her parents which was unusual. She did live in an apartment owned by the family and a caretaker lived in the building, but in the middle of the night she would pound out music on her piano and sing at the top of her lungs. She loved a bohemian style of life, she said. But I couldn't figure out what that meant. We visited her often after we got our own apartment but something changed in her life and she became so upset saying she didn't want to meet with us anymore.

Yet Beate and I stayed friends with her until our presence in Iran became a police matter. We had to stop visiting the entire family to keep them safe. My "second family" had helped me get safely settled and I will be forever grateful to them for their unconditional love and care.

I was invited to lunch one day at the home of a girl student early in 1975. The mother made their favorite dish, *kal-ay-paw-che*. Her mother was very proud of her "stew" because it is a national treasure. I didn't know what it was until my tongue grated against another piece of tongue in my mouth. Then my student told me that I could find the greatest delicacy in the bowl, "brain." *Kal* means "head" and *paw* means "foot" of the sheep. I did my best to eat that delicious stew but I couldn't finish my bowl. After lunch my student's little sister came and sat by me. I told her (through translation) that she had on a lovely skirt. Her face fell and she got up and went into another room. She came back and handed me her skirt as a gift. I asked my student what this meant, and she told me that when you compliment something someone has, good manners require that they must give it to you as a gift. Quick thinking made me say that I loved the skirt ON her and her face lit up like the Fourth of July and she gladly took her skirt back. On that day I learned two lessons: I should complement very carefully and always say, *Bay shomah miyad --*"It becomes you," (or it goes to you)." I didn't want to get any gifts that weren't really meant for me and break the heart of a sweet, dutiful girl.

I also remembered a visit to the home of Essi's sister, Maryam, in the north. She and her husband slept with their kids and gave me their bedroom no matter how hard I tried to dissuade them. Actually in retrospect, I realized that not only were they honoring their guest, they gave me the only room with real privacy except for the toilet! To add to her generous spirit she had her children call me *Khalleh Suzan*, which meant that I was her 'sister' and should be called 'aunt' out of respect. I was always treated with such love and kindness. [Maryam and her husband brought her mother to the US one time in 1989 and they visited my home and met my family. It was so wonderful but my heart was so heavy from all the memories flooding back and my Farsi had begun to deteriorate from lack of use so I couldn't communicate as I wished. I hope they understood the source of my sadness and still understand my gratitude and love.]

The heart of the people of the nation:

I struggled to understand the people of Iran as their lives, language and culture was so very different from mine. One day a young man had made a pass at me and I brushed him off with an angry look. Later that day I saw that same man in the park with his baby daughter walking along so proudly. He didn't recognize me and just paraded by in the evening with a happy heart. I realized that family is the key, and was convinced again and again of this truth. Men alone could be awful, but men with (even) their daughters were loving and admirable. They love family and are generous always.

There are also free water cans on the street with a metal hand on top so anyone can get a drink in the warm summer months as an example of their generosity. Seeing the love of family was the beginning of the trust I followed in finding the people God had prepared for me to witness to. Iranians love God and they love their families. They also love their nation, although there is still tension between the various tribes that make up the population. There are also obvious differences in some people due to dress, accents, and attitudes. In the far northwest you will find *Turkomen*, Turkish people who long ago traveled from the Russian steppes. Most ended up in what is now Turkey, and in northern Iraq, but a good number occupy the area in Iran next to Turkey. They have their own dress, language and Persian accents. Some

are Sunni, but most are Shi'ite.

There are also darker skinned Iranians in the southwest, who look much more Arabic than most Iranians and they are seen as 'lower' than the normal person because their skin is darker, racism exists everywhere.

And of course there are many jokes about different areas or cities, they are reminiscent of 'Polack' jokes in the US about Polish people being simple or stupid. There is also a beloved national fool: Mullah Nassrudine. He carries his donkey in one story in order to be fair when his donkey complains of being tired. Humor is enjoyed everywhere in Iran, crossing over all barriers.

I understood that to be normal and maintain one's sanity in such a different land "one should be able to laugh at oneself." I heard Papanas Choi say this in San Francisco when I was a young member. This led the otherwise stern Mike Warder to play the fool in a skit on God's Day 1972! So at times I remembered to laugh at myself. One day on a busy street in Teheran, I got a flat tire in our Japanese van.

I was alone and so I pulled over to figure out how to change the tire. As I worked a small crowd of peasant men sat down on the curb near me to watch. I struggled and struggled and wished I had some help. I looked at those humble peasants and said in Farsi, "*Well, instead of just watching, why don't you help me?*" They got up and left. I was shocked. I said to myself, "*Why did they leave instead of helping me? Is it because I am a woman or a foreigner?*" Then it dawned on me that they probably didn't know how; they didn't own a car and had probably never changed a tire in their lives. Maybe they were watching me to learn how to do it! So I laughed at myself and somehow that van made it home. I hope they forgave that rude *khareji*, it certainly gave them a good story to tell at home.

On Fridays (Sabbath) you will see so many Iranians enjoying a picnic with family and friends on a spare piece of grass or even just dirt under a shade tree. I have been welcomed numerous times to share in their food even though they didn't know me. They are friendly, welcoming people who make very good friends. Only extreme religion, ignorance or politics get in the way. Most of the time, any suspicious nature can be overcome with a sincere smile, but to really win them over I had to be unchanging in my love and consistent in my actions.

Above the entrance to many homes you will see a sign in Arabic saying that 'a guest is a friend of God.' This is the source, perhaps, of their unchanging open hospitality. Another aspect of their hospitable nature is the practice of giving you food and drink until you explode. This is called *tarrof* meaning the practice of being a good host by giving unconditionally. So often I heard and used the expression, no *tarrof*--meaning I or another isn't doing this out of required hospitality. But I did learn to leave a little food on my plate, or a bit of tea in a glass just to send the message that I had no more room. My mother would be horrified if she heard about this, I was trained to absolutely clean my plate to be in the "clean plate club" as a child. And I learned to always be aware of the amount of food the Iranian family had and eat only a portion that doesn't take away from anyone in the family.

Most nationalities have pride. For Iranians this is just a part of the culture and finding out the results of that pride can be most challenging. One of my early spiritual children came from a poor family yet he won a scholarship to go to college. He always insisted on paying for tea or food, until we didn't see him for a while. My worst fears rose up and I sought him out. Finally we discovered that he had used up all his money buying food for us and decided to wait until his family sent him more before returning to our home. Under much pressure he agreed to let us pay for ourselves at least. I thought we had lost him, but it was his pride that kept him away because he couldn't be generous anymore. He is still in our movement but living in the US with his faithful family.

A source of pride for our members came one day when Beate brought home a flier that talked about a meeting in a church "revealing the dangerous Moon sect." About 12 of us attended that meeting in the basement of the American church building. I asked our members to spread out and sit quietly in the audience until I had a chance to hear what was being said. An American, Dr. Goodman, spoke about how "this sect" didn't believe in Jesus and thought that their leader was the messiah instead. He said a few other incorrect things. Finally, he asked for questions. I stood up and told him that in fact Unificationists believe in and honor Jesus as the son of God, love him and follow his tenets. There was an audible gasp from the audience comprised of mostly sweet looking grandmother types. But one very agitated young man jumped up shouting, "Blasphemer!" I smiled at him as I had dealt with blind prejudice by ignorant Christians in the US before. I stated that I was a missionary in the country, sent personally by Rev. Moon since May of 1975. Then in a grand gesture I raised my arms and opened them wide and said, "Let me present our members in Tehran." They were beautiful young men and women who proudly stood for the first time as Unificationists. They were Muslim, Zoroastrian, Jews and we three missionaries, American, Japanese and German, former enemies in World War II. Dr. Goodman was flabbergasted and couldn't say much after that. We skipped on our way home, such a wonderful feeling to be able to openly declare our faith instead of the usual underground fear of being discovered.

The First Chicken:

Beate and I found a simple apartment finally after weeks of looking in the beginning of our mission. It was on the third floor next to a 'busybody neighbor.' As a celebration Beate went out and bought a whole, small chicken at a local store. She brought it home and prepared it to be cooked whole. We didn't have an oven but we had bought a gas stove top with a propane gas tank and two burners and a big pan to cook it in. We used this burner for a year until we moved to a better home with a real stove. After the chicken was done we sat down to eat it and after one bite we both spit it out. "What on earth had happened to our chicken?" Beate cut deep into the chicken and found 3 soft eggs inside and all the innards! Iranian chickens are not cleaned at the butchers! What a shocking lesson. They are only plucked and beheaded. We laughed at our ignorance, Beate went out again and bought another chicken and from then on we cleaned out everything before we cooked it.

Spiritual experiences or 'miracles':

The only way I could survive and succeed was by God's support and guidance, so this section could go on for many pages. I should begin with how I came to be chosen to go to Iran. After our 1800 couple blessing in Korea, we were housed in the Hajimanyama bowling alley in Tokyo, Japan witnessing for the Budokan New Hope Festival speaking event by Dr. Bo Hi Pak. We were told that those who didn't have a very important mission to return to, should choose three countries as a possible missionary nation. In my typical matter-of-fact way I thought for a moment and began to write down Nicaragua, Hong Kong and.... then it hit me like a brick wall... Iran. My parents' best friends were from Iran, as were their many relatives whom I had known my entire life. I suddenly heard my mother relating to me how she felt "pushed" to impose herself on this shy Iranian woman down the street. It was against her nature to do so, as she usually only went where she was invited. Yet over the years she and 'Sofie' Asgar (Safieh Asgarzadeh) together with her husband Kamal, who taught dentistry at the U. of Michigan, became the very best of friends, more like sisters really.

I suddenly realized that God had 'set me up.' This had been His plan all my life since my mother found her best friend. It was like God had dug this hidden ditch and I just fell into it and He rolled me down it to where I stood that day. The nations on the list didn't matter, I was going to Iran. This had always been my destiny. When the roster was announced, by then president of the US church Neil Salonen, he made a mistake and announced someone else going to Iran. The sister sitting next to me said, "Oh Susan I am so sorry." I held up my hand and said, "Wait," and sure enough, Neil corrected himself saying that "Susan Fefferman would be going to Iran." That sister (wish I could remember who it was) was surprised both at my confidence and that I was actually going to Iran. From that day on I knew that God was in the driver's seat. This began my ever deeper and intimate relationship with God as my mentor, protector, very best friend and parent.

My next spiritual experience was while I stayed with Sofie's sister in her big, safe house in Teheran, where I started a 40 day prayer condition. I recited the pledge and prayed every single day. And every day I ended up in a heap on the floor. I have a strong constitution so this was quite surprising. Near the end of each pledge I either fainted, threw up, got so dizzy that I couldn't stand or was knocked over by 'something.' I struggled on with a croaked, "This I pledge and swear" each day. My knees worked well usually, but not during this early time of each day. On the fortieth day I heard a squeaky door hinge open above me and 'felt' that if I prayed in a strongly vertical manner my prayers could pass through the Muslim ceiling and reach God. The second 40 days was easier but it was still a battle. Each time thereafter when we started a new condition or campaign trying to move forward, the members would have to hold me up by my arms as I swayed doing the pledge. From this I knew I had to be very disciplined and careful in what I did and said, no excuses would be tolerated by the Islamic spirit world. I couldn't relax nor be comfortable any more.

I had a spiritual experience connected to the Imam Ali (the first imam), the nephew and son-in-law of the great prophet, Mohammad, and his true successor, according to Shi'ism. He was the fourth leader of the young Islam, and Shi'ism comes from him. Many times I was told of his superior character, of how he stayed in his home for 22 years to avoid bloodshed until he could assume power over the faithful. His reign was short-lived. His sons Hossein and then Hassan each took a turn but died quickly in the violent struggle for control. In the Shi'a tradition there were 12 Imams, the final one being the "hidden messiah" who will return in the Last Days when the judgment of the evil will occur and the resurrection of the good will complete the age. In the first year, I witnessed to Essi Zahedi, and while I was talking to him in our first center I saw Imam Ali standing behind him, as if giving him a blessing.

On an eight city prayer tour, we visited Imam Reza's (the eighth imam) mausoleum which is in northeast Iran, in Mashad. Beate and I wore chadors and held them over our faces to hide our 'foreignness.' While we were inside the tomb it was so crowded and a bit scary with people bowing, wailing and praying, placing a stone on the floor to which they touched their foreheads. The brothers had let us go on ahead, and they followed close behind. We couldn't move around inside and couldn't feel anything holy (it was on the special holiday in remembrance of Imam Reza). When we got outside and walked away I heard his voice, "I am sorry that I couldn't welcome you properly inside my remembrance place; I am sorry that it

does not have such a good atmosphere." Suddenly, as one of us shifted our chador to make it hang better, a man in the crowd said out loud, "These are foreigners, they must get out!" The brothers stayed to the side, not wanting to get into a fight and they knew we usually had novel ways to get out of trouble. But we were really nervous. One man stepped up and said to the crowd, "Wait, they must be studying to become Muslims. Let us question them." And so they did. "Who is buried here?" "Imam Reza, the eighth Imam." "And who is his son?" "The ninth Imam." He turned to the crowd and said, "We must let them pass, they wish to become Muslim." Needless to say, we got out of there quickly.

First members:

We worked so hard to bring new members. When Hossein Teimorijam (known as 'Dr. Mohammad Jam' in Los Angeles) finally joined us we gathered in our empty prayer room (our altar was a cardboard box with a scarf over it) in our first center. When Hossein prayed for the first time he offered a simple prayer in English. In my mind I suddenly saw God doing cartwheels around the prayer room in glee. It was so funny and joyful. God did the same thing when the first sister joined and prayed in a different prayer room two years later. Maliheh Zahedi, was "given to me" by her mother to raise in Teheran at 16 because she wanted Maliheh to be with us and learn all she could. Perhaps her mother also understood how Maliheh suffered at the hand of Abbas, her older brother, who seemed to hate her, or some of her rather cruel male cousins. She thrived living with us and I was so grateful to have another woman in our center.

During the revolution my Jewish spiritual daughter, Mahvash Saberan, spoke some very angry words to me on the phone and let me know she didn't want to continue our relationship anymore. I said little, and after I hung up I looked out the window where a heavy rain dripped down the panes. I wept and wept and my heart ached. God spoke to me and said that His heart had been broken into tiny shards thousands upon thousands of times, yet He continued. I regained my determination and pledged to love her and the others no matter what and to carry on against any odds even if my heart would be smashed to pieces.

Another experience happened during the revolution, at night while I studied alone in my room by candle light. I either fell asleep or fell into a spiritual state. I 'awoke' to find myself naked and tied to four corners of a bed. Above me stood a handsome but terrifying man, laughing in an awful manner. I knew that he was going to rape me and he was really enjoying the idea of it. He knelt down between my legs and just before he penetrated me he threw back his head and laughed a horrible laugh. At that desperate moment I stretched up my neck and took hold of his throat with my teeth, clamped down and shook my head hard, left and right until I felt the blood trickle down into my mouth and nostrils. I never let go, nothing else mattered. He would not win in this battle. I suddenly awoke shaking in my normal room, appalled at what I had done. I could still feel the sticky, salty blood in my mouth. I wiped at my tongue but found nothing. I realized I had ripped out the throat of Satan. I then heard the members outside my door talking about why all the noise from the demonstrations stopped and perfect silence filled the air. After that I humbly realized that I could harm another person if it was required for me to save myself or someone I loved. Prophet Jacob move over, I beat the devil!

A beautiful experience during that same time occurred during a dream. I awoke in my dream to being a baby sleeping between my parents who happened to be my True Parents, Father and Mother Moon. They were asleep but as I moved in shock at where I was, they turned toward me and both held me. I began to grow and grow until I reached my true adult size. I was worried because a 'baby' me in their bed wasn't so bad but a 'big' me was not appropriate. Yet they both hugged me and comforted me so that I fell asleep again and awoke in reality renewed to deal with another day of Iran falling apart. Another day in tears I saw the image of True Parents move in their picture frame and they nodded their heads to me as if to let me know they were 'watching' me.

My greatest spiritual experience in Iran I wish to share with everyone in the world. It involves the 'secret' I discovered about God's nature and the nature of His love. This happened in 1977 before I was exiled to Turkey. I had been going through a rough patch. I had been receiving threatening phone calls from a radical group and had seen the same car following me around town. I also had a strained relationship with Ryuji and Beate and felt isolated and a bit lonely which told me my relationship with God was not what it should be. I hadn't lost faith in God, but I had no energy and little faith in myself. I couldn't pray anymore and feel heard. I was alone at home and I tried to pray again and again to no avail.

My busy mind wandered to the "what if" section of horrible scenarios and I saw myself giving up and just wandering alone in Iran (too much drama in my mind). I saw myself in rags wandering the streets and I imagined that various men could just grab me, use me for their dirty desires, and then I would just lay in the gutter waiting for a truck to run me over. I tried to call God once more and finally tried the word, "Papa" which I never used for anyone before. I saw Him far off, He was very busy but my call made Him turn toward me and look over His shoulder to see who had called him, "Papa." I cried out again louder with all of my heart. He had to come to me! He couldn't resist the love that I had for Him and was propelled toward me even in my ugly, dirty state. He couldn't resist no matter what condition I was in! I understood that He is controlled by love, and unable to resist love even in the worst person. I was liberated and wiped my tears away and determined to start anew. Later Ryuji told me that he and Beate

both felt like I didn't need them and so they also felt isolated and alone. My nature as a loner had pushed them away and I apologized for that and determined to be a better sister to them.

The greatest loneliness

I felt was when I couldn't experience God. I often felt lonely when my spiritual children pulled away from me and of course all of us felt lonely missing the foods and the comforts of home. But I tried to be happy just where I was with only a few Kitkat chocolate bars eaten along the way. As long as I had God with me I was "home." Only once did I eat Iranian pizza, it didn't satisfy. Iranian ice cream is made with rose water so it never satisfied my homesickness either. I did buy a Betty Crocker cookbook in 1978 and introduced our members to some familiar and new recipes. Their favorite was homemade mayonnaise which they put on everything, and three-bean salad. One other funny thing was that I introduced buttered popcorn to the members who laughed so hard they nearly fell down. No one puts butter on "Elephant farts" (their name for popcorn).

Conditions I made:

When I first landed in Teheran I stepped with my right foot on the ground and claimed the land as my elder sister, Barbara Buroughs, told me to do in 120 day training at Barrytown, NY. I was her team leader and she was the most humble and best team member and always supported me.

The *foozool* taming condition: In our first center, we three missionaries lived in a third story apartment building in a busy neighborhood. We began to get to know our neighbors and the local merchants. Our immediate neighbor with whom we shared a party phone line (she would listen to our conversations sometimes so we had to be careful in what we said), invited Beate and me over in hopes her sons would get interested in us, marry us and move the US, achieving a coveted status. Of course when our guests, which were all young men, began to arrive to "study English" she was incensed. After a while I began to notice that the local merchants treated me different, as if I was a 'fallen' woman. I realized probably that the *foozool* [busybody] next door was bad-mouthing us. An inspiration came to me for us to clean the hallways in the building before anyone got up in the morning, making an offering in secret.

So we arose early before we heard people rising for early morning prayers. One of us swept the hallways from the roof down three floors to the front door, another began washing the floors from top to bottom, the third one did door stops, walls, etc. Obviously we were terribly dirty when we finished so we each took a shower before we headed out to work or witnessing. As the 40 days moved on, we noticed people opening their doors just as we quietly closed ours and heard a hushed gasp as they discovered yet another mysterious clean hallway. So the next day I said we should get up 15 minutes earlier so we wouldn't "get caught." This went on day after day with us getting up a little earlier to foil discovery. We totally shocked the *foozool* and kept everyone wondering, we could feel the questioning energy as that building had never been cleaned so well. Jeff Tallakson, our tall missionary from Afghanistan, decided to come visit just at the exact time we needed a taller person to wash the upper walls standing on a chair, and so he did. We even cleaned the windows above people's doors! Eventually the lady next door would run from meeting me, her conscience was getting to her, maybe. The merchants began to smile at us again and treat us with respect, the word got out about the 'wonderful' foreigners living in our building. Finally, the neighbor across the hall, a nice Armenian Christian woman, caught us about 3:30 am one morning and tried to tell Beate that we all should take turns, not just us. We knew we had 'won the heart of Esau' and when we turned in our quit notice and the residents, including the *foozool*, didn't want us to move away! But we did move to a much more private area with lots more room, cleaner and no stairs!

For our first workshop in the mountains we held a prayer vigil all night in a leaky tent on a mountainside across the valley from the house we stayed in. *Maman* (Mother), Essi's mother and hostess, was worried about snakes biting us so we had to place garlic all around our camp. In the morning the sun shone brightly and we could teach the lectures. This was soon after True Father's Yankee Stadium rally. I remember because a boy who nearly died on the day of the speech in New York, was in a weird near death motorcycle accident was still bruised but able to join us. Each time we held a workshop in that mountainous retreat, *Maman Zahedi* would offer conditions of absolute service with a grateful heart. She never really heard the Principle through, and never talked about it much with her children; but she grew in heart and understanding each year. She became my close friend and helper. Together we got both spiritual and physical things done and she gave me a scolding when we didn't come for a workshop as she had expected! She asked me how can she serve God if we don't come to her home? -Wonderful, spiritual lady.

Maman made dough, had her grumbly husband knead it and then baked the bread outdoors in the adobe oven no matter the weather. She or her husband went down the mountain to barter for milk and honey, and she grew or raised the rest of the food; all of it prepared over a kerosene stove or an open fire in the yard. She had the biggest heart of all. I will love her forever. She trusted me completely. One afternoon in Teheran when I was struggling from an over-active thyroid, she found me resting. I awoke to her pounding on my chest in tears saying, "You shouldn't be ill! I should be ill so you can do your important work."

Needless to say I got up and didn't rest again. I wondered if True Father hadn't miraculously taken over her body to give me an important message! I eventually got the correct medical treatment and could continue working. But from that encounter I asked myself: "what is it I am supposed to be doing?" I realized that I could do all the physical things but I had to leave a legacy about True Parents to our members. So I began telling more and more stories about True Parents to a hungry group but I am sure I left out a few. I never thought about leaving Iran, or even of Father going to the spirit world. I am grateful that at least I gave something to those wonderful people who loved me.

One story I must share is about *Agha Jan*. *Agha* means 'sir' and *Jan* means dear. So Maman's 20-years-old, grumpy husband was carefully called *Agha Jan*. He complained and grumbled and threatened his children on a regular basis. They called him "Little Hitler" behind his back! True Father told us at Barrytown that as we won over the people they would love us even more than their own children. I never imagined that from *Agha Jan*! At first he complained about the foreigners and having to share his food, but as the years went by even he mellowed as he got to know us better and the brothers in our group could always make him laugh. One weekend we arrived to find that Maman had gone north to a funeral so we had no one to cook for us. Maliheh, the eldest of his daughters who lived with us in Teheran, said she would do it. I assented sorry she wouldn't be able to participate. A few minutes later she came running out of the kitchen saying, "We're going to be poisoned!" Her father had forcefully kicked her out of the kitchen and said that he would do all the cooking and everything instead of Maman, and Maliheh had better stay out his way. Needless to say we weren't poisoned and we ate well. It was amazing to say the least.

Some of the braver boys had to do the chicken slaughtering one time too, as women weren't allowed and *Agha Jan* was not at home. That led to me telling them how to do it from my mother's tales as a child. It was quite funny with that dull blade on those poor unsuspecting chickens being sacrificed in the name of God. The final experience was one weekend when the Hossein, the dentist didn't come and couldn't give *Agha Jan* his vitamin B shot. *Agha Jan* asked me if I could do it! I have never given a shot before but my father taught me how to do it for a high school project. So seeing the hand of God in this intimate exchange, I said, "Yes, of course." I did it correctly, even aspirating to make sure I wasn't in a vein, but it didn't quite go in far enough so a little of the serum came out as I injected it. After this I actually heard those precious words from *Agha Jan*, just as True Father had predicted: "I love you more than my children." When True Father asked me if I had been successful in 1979 in New York City, I answered 'yes' in part to this experience. 'Little Hitler' had been naturally subdued by love.

How to deal with other religions:

Iran has five religions, in historical order: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Baha'ism. In the parliament of the government, one seat is allocated each for the Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians. The rest are for Muslims: Shi'ite only. Baha'is are not a recognized religion. Every non-Muslim suffers denigration and persecution to some degree Muslims are considered higher or more worthy due to their religion. Anyone who claims to be a Muslim but is actually something else risks bad treatment, and their family will suffer the same plight. Under the Shah all the religious minorities were treated better and Baha'is owned many businesses and the biggest bank, but now it is a struggle for the Baha'is and many non-Muslim people have left the country. Many moderate Muslims have also left the country. It is always important to understand the practices of each religion and how they fit into the culture of a country. It is important to study each religion to learn the particular important practices so we can show respect and not offend.

There are also several Sufi orders that practice various philosophies. I met a few of them but wasn't impressed as they were more a personality cult or a "special knowledge" cult that excluded those who didn't "receive" the information appropriately. They weren't open to new ideas and wanted me to feel 'awe' at meeting their leader; so no witnessing success there.

Betrayal:

Although there were a number of instances where I really felt betrayed, only one is *the* official "betrayal." There was a student of mine, Hassan, who studied the Principle with us for a while. He was a tall young man with a tense look in his eyes. He didn't instill trust in us but we tried to love him. He even reported to me that his mother was grateful to me because he had started to pray again. Sometime along the way he asked if he could pray in our prayer room alone. We let him but I realized that all of our materials were in that room. I don't know what he did, but soon I began to receive threatening phone calls about my religious work in Iran. I went out and bought a device to stick on the earpiece of the phone so I could tape the calls. I had to have the brothers translate them to me because it was fast, angry talking. I also noticed a Citroen car following me a lot and wrote down the tag number. At the time, I was working for the office of the Prime Minister as an English teacher for the staff. One woman was kind and I asked her what to do if I was being threatened. I eventually turned over a copy of the car license tag and the tape. Unfortunately this led to the police escorting Beate and me out of the country, and we landed in Turkey

for the first time. [Ryuji was out of official sight and mind at the time.] The policeman said his government couldn't handle an American woman being hurt in Iran, especially after the murder of several American military contractors just before I came to Iran. We knew who the betrayer was, and he no longer came to our house. While Beate and I were in Turkey the members moved to a new home and severed ties with anyone who might be a traitor.

Years later after the three missionaries had gone our group had to split up and some were jailed for a while, someone from the government took over our house. The brothers had to kick them out to return home but the people took everything that wasn't tied down. Later several members felt they had to leave the country for their own safety. My gentle brother, Shahrokh was imprisoned and tortured repeatedly, some of it unspeakable. His hands became so swollen that he couldn't feed himself or wash himself after the toilet. Thank goodness an old man took care of him until he was released. Why did they torture the gentlest of souls? Shahrokh told me he just kept thinking of True Father being tortured in jail. This dear, kind brother is a saint in the history of the movement of Iran. He lives in upstate New York with his wife and two boys, near his brother in law, Essi Zahedi and his extended family. I saw him when he first came to the US and still meet him every now and then. I am so grateful to him for his unchanging faith. He was one of twelve Zoroastrian members when I left Iran, and the only one I gave my own Divine Principle book to, he is safe in the US and I don't know about the other Zoroastrian members, only one has connected to our brothers through Facebook.

The first attack on the American Embassy in Tehran:

I remember the angry crowd in Tehran that day. Our brother from the US, Robert Morton, who worked at the *New York Tribune* in New York City at the time, had come to visit us in Iran and I was taking him to interview Dr. Seyed Hossein Nasr, who was then head of the Ministry of Education at that time. His office was across the street from the American Embassy on Shahreza Street. (Robert had also visited the American Embassy and had met some of the staff who later would become hostages for 444 days.) We had had a reasonably good interview with Dr. Nasr who was a philosopher, and when we left his office we crossed the street in front of the American Embassy. Mid-street a group of angry young people attacked the American Embassy. They weren't successful in gaining access and the soldiers pushed them back that time but there was a lot of milling about and angry, shouted words. During a later attack on the American Embassy, the group was professionally trained and it was taken over until the moment of the inauguration of President Ronald Reagan. How they hated Jimmy Carter for the failed rescue attempt that killed the American rescuers outside of Tehran (actually they burned to death in their helicopter crash).

There's a saying that camels not only never forget, they never forgive until their resentment is satisfied.

Robert and I were both dressed so clearly Western, and I didn't have my usual dark sunglasses to hide my Western blue eyes. I told Robert under my breath, "Don't run, but let's walk real fast toward the car. I don't want to get stuck on the wrong side of the street." Just then a man came running towards us with his fist in the air. He nearly hit me in the face. But another arm, from a young man who had been walking behind me in the crowd, reached out and interrupted the line of his punch with a strong hand. He said in *Farsi*, "We don't hit women in Iran." The attacker grunted and ran off. 'Phew.' I was so grateful. Then I realized that I had been absently listening to the young men and women walking behind me talking about "teaching the foreigners a lesson." That is what had made me pinch Robert's arm in desperation to move faster and get to the car parked a few blocks north. I took a deep breath and turned around to face the voices grumbling behind with a smile before they found the courage to confront us. I spoke to them in my best *Farsi*, saying that I lived in Iran with my family and that I loved Iran. I also said that I was grateful that Iran was a Muslim country that would protect its guests. Their mouths fell open and I thanked them, smiling at the young man who had saved me, turned on my heel, grabbed Robert's arm again and headed for the car trying to look relaxed while doing the speed walk. Those young Iranian people realized that I knew what their culture and the religion practiced. It gave their conscience pause and allowed their spirit to change enough for us to flee to safety.

Robert went on to work at the Washington Times newspaper for a long time and lives in Virginia, with his wife, Choon Boon, and daughter and my family, and I now live in Maryland. We see each other sometimes and smile that smile that always takes us back to that exciting day.

Cultural differences I had to work with:

The hardest challenge was the way women were treated, especially as 'sexual objects.' I always dressed modestly, yet often when I walked alone on the street (or even with my brothers a couple of times) I suffered abuse. I called this the: "How I fell in love with Iran despite the constant attacks on my behind" situation. I was 24 years old, average build, 5'7", medium brown hair, not bad looking and definitely American. It took me awhile to understand that certain kinds of colors were wrong for Iran and that meant most of what was in my suitcase: reds, yellows and other bright colors. I even had a red, white and blue striped dress made for me by mother! Black, gray, brown and dull colors are best if you don't want to draw attention to yourself. For a while I stood out like a neon sign saying, "Here is the idiot American girl

waiting for you to do your worst to her."

I often saw a young man cross the street or move over toward me as he walked, planning on pinching my rear or bumping into my chest. In an effort to digest this annoying practice I referred to this as "the national sport in Iran" to my friends and acquaintances, and yes, to my students as well. I wanted everyone to know just how awful this practice was. I quickly learned to carry a big purse or bag over my shoulder and in sync with the perpetrator I would swing my bag just as his hand reached out for me.

Disappointedly, he found my heavy bag in his way. I eventually developed "radar" in noticing when a man/boy was preparing to attempt this rude behavior and got very good at defeating my attackers. One time a young man came right toward me and I prepared to push him aside as he walked in front of me, instead of an outreached hand I heard him whisper that "a beautiful flower doesn't need flowers." Clever guy, I was carrying a bunch of Narcissus or *nargile* that I just bought. This memory causes me to smile at his poetry and the fact that he didn't touch me. Another incident was when Beate and I were on a bus and two teenage boys sitting behind us were making insinuations about our morality, when a mother and baby got on the bus and sat in front of us. Beate and I focused on talking to the baby and when I turned around to look at the boys I was shocked to find that they had sweet faces looking at the baby. They were transformed by the baby and mother. Another funny incident was when I was walking down a main street when the boys' high school across the street was letting out. We all know the pent up energy seen at the doorway of any school. I groaned and began to hear whistles and anticipated the insulting words when a young voice raised above the ruckus called out to me, *Salam, Khanum-e-Fefferman--* 'hello Mrs. Fefferman.' The crowd quieted and a feeling of respect overcame the group. Maybe this student of mine was showing off because he knew such a woman, again I felt how precious is the respect that all ages give to a teacher in Iran.

I have to say something about Iranian food.

It is just so delicious and even now I miss it terribly and run to any Iranian/Middle Eastern restaurant I find in eager anticipation. Rice is the very best, like Basmati. Its aroma will put a bounce in your step as you drool your way to eat. Butter or oil is put into the pot most of the time so that the rice on the bottom forms a crispy layer called, *tah-deeg*, or 'bottom of the pot' which all the children and some adults fight over! Then there are the sauces which take hours of cooking and disappear in eager waiting mouths in less than three minutes. Many are made with finely chopped spinach and greens of a variety only found in the Middle East. Chopped and then fried dry until browned and then added to beef, lamb, chicken, or camel and onions with other veggies, tomatoes sometimes; and of course the unique spices we never used in the US. My American family has long been exposed to turmeric and anything else I can find with a Middle Eastern flavor.

Then there is *mosst-O-khriar*--plain yoghurt, salt, shredded cucumber (no seeds) and various other things. You put it on your rice, dip your bread in it, or add water and ice and really satisfy your thirst in the summer-- Absolute heaven. And, yes, my family calls it *mosst* and tries to pronounce the *khriar* part sometimes without spitting the words. There is another dish to die for. It is made of crushed walnuts made into a sauce with tomato paste and spread over rice. Then of course, there is the kebab which I would eat anywhere, anytime, anyplace.

In the winter there are amazing things to eat on the street. On a small heated cart you can buy a piece of steaming, hot beet wrapped in newspaper. I know it doesn't sound so inviting but you just have to be there. It was heaven. Even more of a favorite to me were the huge brown, spicy Fava beans. I think you can find them in the Hispanic food section in the US. In Iran their spicy smell is absolutely irresistible. You get them in a wrapping of newspaper and eat them by biting off one end (but not separating it) and then squeeze the insides into your waiting mouth. In the end you just throw away all the bean casings in the newspaper into the trash.

In the summers you hear vendors call out *abb-e-talebi* or *abb-hendevaneh*, cantaloupe juice or watermelon juice. In fact *abb-e-talebi* was my first taste of Iran the day after I arrived. I will never forget the flavor which told me I could be very happy in Iran. But unfortunately, skip the ice cream unless you really like rosewater, which flavors almost any kind of ice cream. But there are dozens of other sweet things to eat including my favorite *bakhlava* dripping with honey and many fresh fruits. And of course, everybody eats toasted seeds all the time. Just be careful who you sit in front of in the movie theater. Beate and I once came away with a pile of shells on our shoulders!

But two things stand out in my mind. The raw cut greens, lettuce, radishes and feta cheese that you can wrap in warm baked bread, which are served with lunch and dinner, so very fresh and healthy. And of course, the bread. It is baked fresh from five o'clock in the morning, until the afternoon. I ate four or five different kinds while I was there, but my favorite looked like a long pizza with ridges that fingers had created in the dough. The smell just makes you eat some right away before you even get home. I made a discipline for the brothers in our group to determine not to take even one bite before they got home and offered it first to the "family" instead. This philosophy comes from belief that the highest ideal is to "live

for the sake of others." Needless to say, many of the them didn't succeed. I wonder if I would have succeeded everyday myself. But they did run really fast back to our home to lessen the temptation.

Tea power: Everywhere and nearly at every hour it is served. In many cultures tea represents a bonding of friends and a time to carefully talk business. Quite often it is made in a steaming samovar with the tea leaves in a teapot heating on top as the water boils. The tea is concentrated in the teapot and the boiling water is then added to the thick starter in a cup or small glass which you must carefully hold with one finger and your thumb on the lip and bottom. It is always piping hot and you can easily burn your fingers and your tongue, but it is rich, dark and delicious. A jagged piece of sugar is placed in the cheek so that the sugar melts as the tea goes past your teeth. I imagine cavities are more often found on the outside of the molars than other places in Iran and from Israel to India too. And if you visit several homes in a day, you end up drinking 6-12 glasses of tea!

Some people read tea leaves left in the bottom of the cup, or even coffee grounds to entertain.

"Coffee" is so thick and sweet that the spoon can nearly stand on its own. One small cup a day is more than I can handle intestinally. Once I tried to read the coffee grounds of our busybody neighbor to impress her. I spoke from some inspiration in my mind, but she said I spoke correctly. I don't remember if I was speaking some "truth," complimenting her or just doing polite *taroff*.

A carpet seller offers tea to customers he feels are a good investment for him. Not just someone who will buy a carpet but someone who will respect his business and even come back, or recommend his shop to others. Someone he can actually call "friend." One does not just jump into price discussion at first, but asks about family, the weather and other things not related to business. It is a cultural practice that goes back centuries. This shows respect for the people and the value of the goods involved not just as a means to an end and then as the tea is drunk, compliments about the rugs can be made and only then can prices be discussed and haggled. Bartering is also necessary as part of the entire culture of exchange. People need to get to know each other to actually buy something so that both sides can feel happy in the end. Satisfaction of both is essential so that when the two meet again, they meet as friends not as people who have battled to rip each other off in selfish advantage-taking. Give and take is essential in the business world, creating a personal relationship is what commerce is all about and a source of joy for everyone. That is why so many business people have hated the practice of outlawing bartering. The customer and the seller often never get to know each other and the impersonal atmosphere adds to the feeling of alienation and estrangement that supports the feeling of separation into "them" and "us."

Getting around:

Iran has a unique system of shared taxis. It also exists in Turkey and probably other Middle Eastern countries. You lift your arm at passing taxis and yell out your destination. The driver has one or two seconds to decide whether he can take you there while taking the rest of his riders. Taxis were compact *Peikan* cars that can hold six people squished together. It sometimes meant running half a block if the driver took longer to decide to pick you up. Sitting in a crowded back seat or in front with the driver and another can make for a too-close encounter with strangers. Sometimes it is just you or one other rider. You never know what will occur. Once a man sitting in the back seat next to me casually opened his wallet and showed me his money. At first I ignored him but he kept nudging me and showed the money. I finally realized that he wanted to "buy" my favors. I pulled my tight fist up close to his face and shook it. Suddenly, I had more room to relax in. Another time the driver tried to cheat me about the fare thinking I didn't know what he was doing and probably couldn't speak the language. I used the most terrible insult: "Are you a Muslim?" When he answered in the affirmative, I asked him if his actions represented how a good Muslim should act. He quietly returned my money and we parted company.

In the same vein, one night I was walking home and realized I was being followed. I had been there for three years and knew what to do. I was never really afraid and by then knew the foolish man was just having romantic ideas. But I was tired and had no patience. I looked around me for a weapon and found a brick. I began to throw it up and catch that brick with flourish, until I heard a gasp and he disappeared. Iranians at that time for the most part were lovers not fighters.

The tisk of a 'no':

It took me awhile to understand that when someone pushed up their chin and tisked their tongue against their teeth they were saying "no." Until Beate and I figured that unusual cultural oddity, we really were confused. When we figured it out, we had many laughter-filled experiences and could tisk and nod up like natives.

Camel culture, or Resentment with a capitol 'R':

I am not big on keeping resentment if I can help it. It just clutters up my heart and confuses my mind. I thought I knew what resentment was until I went to the Middle East. I came to realize I was a novice at

resentment. Middle Eastern resentment is a totally different sentiment than in most American households. It is huge and passionate and deadly and is passed on from generation to generation and any slight can make it rise up like a cobra snake and strike a person in the heart. Some people don't even remember the reason for their ancestral resentment, some even get the story skewed. "It doesn't matter what the truth is, we just have these feelings and they are true," one energized young man told me. I met a camel driver one summer selling bags of extremely smelly fertilizer near our apartment. The camel was very testy that day and the driver had to stay away from his mouth for fear of being bitten. One of my friends told me about an Iranian joke, though I bet everyone from Israel to India knows this story. *A camel driver had made his camel very angry and nothing he did could get his camel to move. After some thought, the driver removed his clothes and laid them in front of the angry camel. The camel smelled the clothes, and then began to stomp on them, spit on them, and even urinate on them in frenzy, until he was emptied of his resentment. The camel driver shook out his clothes and put them back on and they went off peacefully together.*

I was told this is the nature of Middle Eastern people. I began to see this aspect of resentment as the Revolution unfolded. In this situation no apology would work, only the full expression of the hatred and anger could "empty" the person of his or her resentment. Yet they still remember as the emotion attached to it has powerful historical patterns. When I counsel or teach about relationships, I always emphasize that an apology is only good if it is accepted. Sometimes we need to keep apologizing in different ways until we move the heart of the person who is angry at us. I wonder about the Middle East, what will it take to heal?

Now as I watch the nightly news I see images of angry people during the "Arab Spring" and read the mounting numbers of deaths, rapes, burnings and beatings. Christians and their churches are being destroyed in Egypt with no punishment, no recourse for the cruelty and damage done to Christians whose only crime is being the ancient minority in an old land. Christian and Mandaean girls are kidnapped in many countries and forced into marriage with Muslim men. The anger and arrogance are so thick you can cut it with a knife. How can Islam be the last and final religion when it is so evil in its practice? I know that the history of most religions is filled with blood and conquest but this is the modern age. Shouldn't all religions have evolved closer to the ideal of their makers? Shouldn't we realize that the blood that runs in my veins is the very same that runs in yours? Every mother suffers to bring children into this world, every mother cries when their child dies. We are all of the same human family.

When I look at the struggles and wars from the Mediterranean to India I see a lot of expressed passionate resentment that defies diplomacy and wisdom. Suicide bombers being the most filled with resentment. I have known resentment in my life. I believe each person beginning in babyhood knows those feelings of being treated unfairly and wanting to hurt the one who treated you badly. Of course, our Western Judeo-Christian culture teaches us to "turn the other cheek" and "forgive your enemy seven times seven." And every kid learns that a good person must learn to "love your enemy as you do yourself."

Everyone suffers from the inner struggle to overcome resentment and even the desire for revenge. My poor younger brother suffered from my unkindness as we were growing up and I discovered his resentment and revenge when he finally grew big enough to look me in the eye, luckily I called our Iranian neighbors to come and rescue us before we cut each other up.

This same picture I found in Iran and in the region, but now it was between adults from differing views or different religions. It was savage and ugly and some people were damaged, some even lost their lives. The power to forgive was not respected or desired by many people, especially during the early Iranian revolution. When I saw the tidal wave of anger and resentment and the failure to ever forget, even generations later, I called this the "Big R resentment." This was historical resentment, added to generation after generation. It is based on fear and ethnocentrism. It seems a sort of tradition in the region.

But it doesn't just occur in Iran. I saw the angry demonstrations at my university by the SDS which disrupted the class schedule and brought the police to our campus at the University of Michigan in the late 60's. But no one lost their lives. It took the Klu Klux Klan to shed innocent blood on American soil in overt resentment to make people want to stop racism in America. And then there were the Weathermen, ugly stuff. It is a shame to have this kind of action in a nation that opens its doors to all those who suffer and seek freedom, honoring each religion and giving the immigrants the freedom to live and practice their religion or enjoy freedom from fear because of the color of their skin. So naively I thought that this was the worst I would see in my short life growing up in America.

As I have matured I have seen more and more ugly actions of one fanatical group against another, where life and property are destroyed because the one group thinks that they are 'right' and the other are 'wrong' and deserve to be punished. Or one group has been "wronged" and revenge needs to be extracted. In each case, the attackers feel that they have the "right" to seek revenge and the destruction of the other. Didn't Hitler feel he had a "divine right" to create the *Sonnenkinder*? (He wanted to create a pure race with no flaw that was superior to all others and thus more capable to rule others.) This is Big R resentment.

I didn't fully realize it until I was in Iran and Turkey. I saw people with no thought of conscience or the

divine concept of the preciousness of life. I was suitably shocked at the fervor of the hatred and the violence in both Iran and in Turkey during the May Day riots in 1977. I wondered if they ever woke up in the middle of night in regret. I suspect that this anger was fed again and again, just as it is being done around the world in so many Mosques with outrageous vitriol where in the past only the loving words of devotion to God and respect for all the "people of the book" were taught. (Jews, Christians and Muslims are all 'people of the book').

I know so many wonderful Muslim people from many different countries who just don't feel they have a 'divine right' to kill or dominate another human being. These people also love their wives and children not as property but with natural kindness and respect for their feelings and ideas. In my 'book', a good Muslim is no different than a good Jew, Christian, Buddhist, Confucian, Sikh, Hindu, Native American, or even an Animist or atheist. I believe that it is natural to treat every other human being with the same respect and care that we long to have given to ourselves. I am talking about "normal" human beings, not those whose hearts and minds are burdened by fear and ignorance, or who have been "trained in hatred." Needless to say my experience of the Big R resentment made me realize how much more of a burden does our God have in trying to heal this world back to "normal" true love and human family? So I continue each day of my life to try and decrease His burden and never add to it.

Don't talk to members of the opposite sex:

As a teacher of English I was always respected and treated well. But usually boys and girls weren't allowed to mix except as cousins or with a chaperone. In the classrooms where I taught English they could mix but did not sit together. At our center they did mix and talk freely but always with the guidance that we were all "brothers and sisters" not boyfriend and girlfriend. Never were any boy and girl left alone, we were very careful and practiced the familial relations carefully. Another point was that girls' school curriculum was different from that of boys and they never had physical education or experienced an emphasis on sports. So we went to the mountains where everyone was equal and free to try their best and challenge themselves physically. We climbed the mountains during the good weather on Fridays (Sabbath) in a group and ate our simple lunch at the top or bought tea at the little hut on the way up. We spent time talking and most of the time it was me educating again about the principles of self-control, bringing God to the center of oneself and one's decisions, maintaining our purity until marriage, loyalty to one's country and family, and creating a family of true love – one man and one woman loyally loving forever, raising children who would be responsible, good citizens and good parents to their own children beyond the barriers of race, nationality, social status, and even encouraging international marriage to reduce prejudice and encourage respect for others who were "different."

We tried to keep our mingling modest and out of the public eye. But at the workshops in the mountains we felt more free. We even did the Virginia Reel square dance on a mountainside one time. Beate would play her guitar or we just sang the wordless tune as I called out the moves in *Farsi*, (I kept 'do-si-do'). It was a joyous time where we all treated each other with sincere respect and felt God's love to just be brothers and sisters, beyond being Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and Baha'is.

Still, some parents may not have liked this fraternization if they knew the details. One boy in particular suffered greatly. He was one of the many 'Mohammad' guests we had. He was young, gentle and full of curiosity. He had light hair so he was probably from some Northern tribe. I don't remember how he came to our center but he just fit in with the rest of the group. He attended workshops in the North and took notes about what he learned and what he saw. He was especially moved to get to know girls in a 'nice' way, his newfound 'sisters' made him so happy. He would just show up at our center and sit through a lecture or go with us when we went out.

One day after not seeing him for a while he came in quietly. When I looked at him, he had bruises all over his face (and under his clothes too, I was told). His father and older brothers were mullahs and very strict. One of them had found his notebook from attending the workshops. When they read that he was fraternizing with girls not in his family, they beat him within an inch of his life and told him never to see us again. But after he was able to get out of bed again he came to us and with tears and told us if they found out he was seeing us again his family might actually kill him, the youngest son in a long line of Mullahs. We didn't see much of him after that.

There were also news stories that told of girls being killed by fathers or brothers or uncles because they had fraternized too closely with a male not of their family. One story in particular made me rage inside. A girl had been sent by her father to study Islam with a mullah. The man had eventually seduced the girl and had sex with her. When her father found out, he took her to a field and tried to kill her by driving back and forth over her body in his car. He did so several times. Somehow she survived and crawled for help. Her father was being questioned by police. What happened to the mullah her father had sent her to, who had seduced her? Nothing. Now, I understand that "honor killing" is a practice found in many Muslim countries, even in the US by some Muslim families. The crime the girl commits? It can be as simple as being seen talking with a non-relative male in public.

"I am so happy to see a black person":

I didn't realize that I missed seeing and relating to black people, good ole African American, slave descendant or not, people that I grew up with, fought and made peace with, gossiped and laughed with; people in shades of mocha and chocolate of every warmth and glow. Arabs were dark and had wavy or kinky hair but their internal selves and the look in their eye weren't the same familiar "home" to me. I am not saying the trite, "Some of my close friends are black." But WE are Americans together, used to each other and most of the time comfortable in each other's company. The melting pot of America has so many beautiful shades and 'flavors.' African Americans are part of my favorite landscape, especially since I discovered God.

We kids grew up together barely noticing skin color unless there was obvious hurt or violence interjected. The first day in my new second grade I brought home several new girlfriends. When my mom saw them she said something about the "United Nations delegation." I fought with and made up with numerous black girls in middle school, one in particular was Delores Middleton, I heard she became a Playboy Bunny after high school! We were just a couple of ignorant kids who didn't always hear about how the races were part of the same family. At least I was lucky enough to finally learn that. "In God there is no black or white..." I missed seeing people of color in the grocery store, or in line at the bank, bumping into each other in K-Mart or on the street, chatting with whom ever happened to be next to me, even swapping stories of our friends or families. I just didn't realize how much I missed them until I saw a very tall man walking down the street in Teheran one day. He was so obviously an American, an African American. Without thinking, I ran up to him impulsively and said with much enthusiasm, "Hi there" grinning ear to ear as if I had run into a long-lost friend. He stepped back in surprise and asked me, "Do I know you?" It was then I realized how much I had been missing people of color, people of the American landscape that I was homesick for.

So I said, "It's been so long since I saw a black person!" He looked puzzled and managed to get around me and continue on his way, probably wondering who that crazy 'white girl' was. You never realize how much you miss something or someone until they are gone. On that day I realized something about myself. I love all kinds of people naturally, unless they do something terrible to frighten me or hurt me. I came to know something about my insides, I was a lover of all flavors of people and I believed that they are my brothers and sisters in the human family. I had grown up to be a person who could love anyone.

I discovered the hard way that people didn't always trust me or what I was saying. Maybe it was because I was an American, or a woman or an American woman or because my ideas were too idealistic. Maybe it is just human nature. But to me I felt that I had to invest again and again, with tears and much disappointment but investing yet again, forgetting the pain and keep investing until somehow the person could believe in my words and trust me. Maybe I was too idealistic, too full of hopeful expectations. Whatever it was my heart was trampled on again and again just when I thought I had been successful. Every person did it in a different way. I wonder if I trampled their hearts sometimes too.

Not everyone disappointed me, the mothers of my members somehow didn't. Maybe my expectation of them was not as high. I suspect they – being mothers – just understood me better. And they were proud of me as a girl doing the impossible. They were proud of me because I was a vivacious young woman who treated their sons and daughters as family without any sexual undertones.

Prison or exile:

I didn't go to prison but both Beate and I had to leave Iran for a while in 1977, because we had received threatening phone calls and the police wanted us to leave so we wouldn't be hurt. The police told me that their government couldn't handle an American woman being injured and asked me why I thought I should talk about religion when I was an English teacher. We went to Turkey for four months and worked there. Then we returned with different passports and worked more quietly and no longer had legal jobs. We let the members be the public face for us. Ryuji somehow didn't have the same problems as we two and supported the members while we were away. He had to renew his visa regularly by going to Turkey every three months as he never held an official job in Iran. Plus, the Japanese people were never considered someone to worry about, there were so few of them and as a small nation they didn't have many enemies.

While in Turkey, Beate and I first lived with Harald and Ellie Unger. He had been an earlier missionary from our church from Austria and found Ellie who had been a missionary for the American Congregational Church, when the 1800 blessing came he asked to be blessed to her even though her total experience had been only with him. He was a quiet and unassuming man, she was a noisy American, a great match! They never had children until the 1980's for some reason, so it was hard on them waiting for the fulfillment of love. Harald drove a VW bug and was an avid gardener. He once filled his car with bat dung because it was great fertilizer for his vegetables. Elizabeth, or 'Ellie' reported that the car smelled for months! Growing food saved them lots of money when it was hard for them to make money in Turkey, I think he taught somewhere.

There were many Japanese missionaries who found refuge in Turkey and needed a place to stay and the Ungers always took them in, no matter the number. Beate and I didn't want to burden them and rented the basement apartment two floors down to give them more room, Beate bought some yellow paint for our little apartment but it turned out to be so loud that we actually had to repaint our bedroom just so we could sleep!

Once I dove down in the Black Sea and collected kelp, brought it home then laid it all over the Unger's house to dry so the Japanese brothers would have a taste of home. Needless to say, I was only popular with one group!

We witnessed while we were there and I found Hassan Ali Dehmen who sold leather jackets in the Istanbul Bazaar, when he asked me "What are you looking for?" I answered, "God." He sputtered and we went to his shop and I began to teach him. He fell asleep in every lecture so I don't know what he learned but when Lady Dr. Kim visited Turkey she just loved him and said he had such wonderful ancestors! I also found a Turkish-Iranian man, Mahmood who had married a Turkish girl. I taught him too but it was so difficult for him to change. We met on one of those long bus rides between Iran and Turkey and he watched me take care of the people around me, especially mothers with several children. He later told me he thought I was either 'crazy' or 'very special.' Evans Johnson, a missionary who couldn't stay in his country, also had an apartment down in the city and we visited there all the time. We met and talked to the people he witnessed to. Istanbul is full of history and sights and smells that are so different. We often would take a ship out to the islands to swim in the Marmara. We collected mussels and built a fire then threw the shells in. They would open up and we picked out the meat and dipped it into some butter I warmed in the largest shell. I cringe at the sight of a mussel now; free food has its limits.

Turkish men always tried to get Beate and me alone, and they were always disappointed! But I loved the simple things about these people, I especially liked the way the bus driver's helper would so kindly move us back so he could pack a dozen more people into a crowded bus! "*Kardeshim*, please move back." *Kardeshim* means family members, so his words were warm. But I always had to watch the hands of the men around me. Sometimes I would just chant my husband's name to make a vibration around me that protected me, it worked! Another time a man fondled my rear and I had just had enough. I turned around in a very crowded space and yelled at him in English, "You creep, stop that!" and pushed him away even though it was so crowded. He was very embarrassed and the women on the bus gave him the "evil eye" they all knew what was going on even if no one spoke a word of English.

On May first, 1977 there was a May Day demonstration and 33 (or so) people were trampled to death. Everywhere you could see the Maoists and Marxists, they all wore fatigues; one with the pants tucked into the top of their boots, the other with the pant legs left out, that was their only difference in dress. A bus driver told me that one day a passenger on his bus shot at a passenger on a bus across the street. The two drivers just drove away quickly to remove the threat. A famous saying in Turkey is: *Allahin day-deo-lur* meaning something like 'all that happens is the will of God.' So when someone on the street dies a driver just goes around. I felt fear in Turkey because of this cavalier attitude toward life and death, especially in a bus on a narrow mountain road in the middle of the night where I could look out over a precipice and see way down the hillside just below my window in the moonlight.

After I returned to Iran with a new passport (I used my married name now, but got harassed sometimes because I was "Jewish.") I had to make 'visa trips' every three months to Turkey to renew my visa. I sometimes had to stay in a motel at the border when the driver needed to rest for the night. I was always on guard. One night I was in my hotel room when a young man said I had to move to another room as my room was a double and he wanted to give me a single. I stupidly followed him to a smaller room on a higher level. All night long those boys knocked on my door saying, *Khanum, khanum*... "Mrs., Mrs...." I just ignored them realizing my mistake and tried to sleep. In the morning I met the friendly government official, Mehmet Bey, who was traveling to the next town, sitting next to me on the bus, and he asked me how I slept. I told him, "Terribly because of (pointing to) those two boys who banged on my door all night long." Parroting what they had said and done allowed everyone a clear picture of my night in the hotel. The hotel manager got an earful from Mehmet Bey and I will always remember him kindly. Another time I was crossing Lake Van on the route to Turkey from Iran when two teenage boys approached me in a cheeky manner and asked my name. I answered, "*Teaze* Suzan", meaning aunt Susan and they straightened up right away realizing I knew what was expected from them and wouldn't allow their bad behavior. Knowing the cultural practices of a country can help in many situations.

My time in Turkey was only four months and then for a few days every three months. On a return by train to Iran one time I met William Kittich and his Japanese brother in law. Bill had met his Japanese wife studying Islamic Jurisprudence in Iran, fell in love and married. They spoke Farsi together as she didn't learn much English. The Japanese brother in law spoke only Japanese and a little English. I witnessed to them and they came over to our apartment in Tehran. His Farsi was so over the head of our members they didn't know what to do with what he was saying. He was already full up so he didn't receive much from us. He used his superior Farsi as a tennis racket hitting away any ideas we put forth. I later found out he worked for Dr. Sayed Hossein Nasr (former Minister of Education under the Shah whom Robert Morton

had met in Iran) in the US and both of them attended an ICUS conference in Miami one year. I was there with my then, four year old Donsu, Bill wasn't so happy to see me, but Dr. Nasr has always been gracious.

I also wish to add that in addition to Jeff Tallakson coming to help with our "foozool cleaning condition," Evans Johnson visited us and was well known to our members. They laughed a lot with Evans, he is a great brother. He visited, after we three missionaries left, to check on our Iranian family. He wrote me that the members were praying in a rather unique way: "In the name of Susan, Beate, Ryuji and True Parents." I wrote a letter to them asking them to just stick with True Parents; how wonderfully funny. John Boles also visited us and helped me draw up an architectural plan for a new workshop center in the mountains at a higher elevation from Maman's home that the members would build themselves.

It was a two mile walk up into the woods. He also helped teach a young Korean man with little English, whose name was "Haywan." In Farsi, *hayvan* means animal or wild. So the members joked a lot at the young struggling Korean man trying to find his way in the world. We had several wonderful Japanese brothers too, from Iraq, Egypt and other Middle East nations. When we were going to do our first workshop in the mountains, Kanno arrived just in time from Egypt. I met and asked, "Can you be the brothers' team leader?" He answered, "Yes." "Oh yeah, what is your name?" He was that kind of brother, always saying 'yes.' His first wife had been European and had left him and the movement. Later, at his re-matching in New York in 1982 I saw him struggle with being matched to another Western sister. I went to his side and said, "Kanno, look at her face, she can love anyone. And she is kind and thoughtful." I didn't say that I had never seen her before but when the heart is motivated by love we can see the "truth." Shirley Kanno was indeed a woman who could love anyone with kindness and gentleness. They had many happy years together. They have three children, two girls and a boy and gave an offering child to a childless couple. He suffered deeply from stomach cancer years ago and passed on. Shirley now lives in Italy with a second husband, a comfort blessing. I often see her eldest daughter in New York and always let her know how much I love her parents.

The heart we had to have to achieve winning spiritual children:

'Desperation' and 'never give up' are key words. In Iran, we prayed and prayed and we went out again and again. My spiritual children were constantly on my mind, more than food, sleep and thoughts of home. I was so focused I sometimes forgot where I was and only looked for them. As foreigners, we were interesting to most people we met, so they wanted to talk to us. Being spiritually guided and finding spiritually guided or open people was key to our success. In a session in Barrytown Training center, NY just before going out to our mission countries, we were allowed to ask True Father questions. I asked him how to witness to a Muslim, he said, "Good question ... witness to spiritually open people." It was invaluable advice. He meant the ones who could hear or feel God guiding them. Also, the ones who had an open mind helped a lot in witnessing in a Muslim country. And, it was dangerous to change one's religion, especially for a Muslim. I never denied Islam but tried to fit the beliefs into the context of what we were teaching, after all there is only one God.

Talking about God is not so strange in a country like Iran, but getting to the deeper beliefs was dicey. I taught the Divine Principle with Jesus being a prophet in an historical line of all prophets and then added more of the Prophet Mohammad and his contributions to following God. Restoration was focused on the concept of reestablishing True Parents as the universal example for all people. No one thought about True Parents before, but this idea had some attraction. The Prophet Mohammad had one especially precious wife, Khadijah, and a daughter, Fatimah. He married others, especially widows "so they wouldn't be alone, and tempted to sin." But he treasured his primary wife, who was older than he, and she is honored by Muslims worldwide. Also, people had parents and each family had a certain dynamic between husband and wife. Usually the wife/mother would be the boss at home, yet humble to the husband, and the husband was the boss outside the house. For women, especially daughters, could have no relationships with men not of their immediate family. Though restrictive, it protected girls and reinforced the idea of "True Parents." True meant to them remaining pure until marriage. The family members and cousins were very close, and many people married their first cousins because they knew them. But that practice is changing to follow the scientific view that inbreeding is dangerous.

I cried bucket full of tears for my spiritual children, I ached, I struggled, I walked on and on alone or with my two missionary partners, but I never gave up. I ate, drank, and slept for my spiritual children, I was obsessed. Once after much heartache over a certain person, Ryuji told me to 'forget him if he causes you so much pain.' He only meant to comfort me because he couldn't stand for me to suffer so, but I could do nothing but ache and pray. This person, Eshagh Zahedi, became the leader of our movement after I left. He translated the Divine Principle carefully and many other things so the members would have "spiritual food" to live by. He translated the book of True Father's speeches entitled: *Twelve Talks: Rev. Sun Myung Moon*.

Then, he even won the trust of the imam who gave permission for printing so that the members could publish thousands of copies, and the members fundraised with the little books! The members had no concepts. If I had been there I might have fainted at their fundraising during the revolution and difficult

time that followed, and then they would have lost their confidence. This new experience challenged them all but provided some of the best testimonies and escape stories possible and they raised money!

I taught that True Parentism was the ideal of the messiah. It worked pretty well. The Shi'ite people expect their messiah, Mehdi, to be married. Mehdi is the 12th Imam in a line from Prophet Mohammad's daughter and nephew, Ali, the first Imam in Shi'ism. Mehdi disappeared at some point and is expected to return at the Last Days. Jesus is also expected to return at the same time. The Zoroastrian teachings that Jews and Christians adopted long ago are shared by the Shi'ites: Last Judgment, cataclysm, near magical happenings, angels, and the believers going up to Heaven.

But one thing that helped bring success was **constancy**. If I had acted badly they wouldn't have trusted me and thus they wouldn't have believed. We three missionaries actually lived like brothers and sisters, laughed together without any sexual vibes, served each other in any way, and according to our members let no cultural bias block our relationship. So I actually can say, we always checked our fallen nature, always tried to be fair and practice the love that True Parents gave us. This moved our guests to become members. It was nearly impossible to leave their families and their way of thinking but somehow many did. We had no more than a dozen living together at one time, but we had at least 30 plus at every workshop in the mountains, three hours by rickety train to the north. And we always made extra food for the guests that would just show up. Thank goodness Beate, Essi and I, made good money. Ryuji luckily continued to receive his \$300 a month stipend from Japan.

I finally landed in Frankfurt, Germany from Iran.

At the airport in Frankfurt I saw a young man with the "look of a brother" looking at me expectantly. Yes, he was a member of our movement sent to pick me up by my dear friends, Reiner and Barbara Vincenz, who were the leaders in Germany at that time of the "Vereinigungskirche." (Unification church in German) We had gotten to know each other in 1974 in Cincinnati and Chicago and I loved them dearly. They put me up and let me sleep in if I wanted and allowed me to heal from the rigors of revolution and separation. I jumped into the climate of the movement there after a few days and even witnessed to someone I saw in an old church! I also reunited with Beate. We called Iran together one time and spent the weekly food budget for the center on the phone call! But our 'children' were safe and surviving without us.

Overall I spent two weeks in Germany where I was able to attend a workshop with guests who spoke English and did some site seeing in several cities. I also worked on my autobiography that Father Moon had asked all missionaries to write. It was called "The First Thirty Years." It was extremely naïve and will remain unpublished, but I have used it in the writing of my work in progress, *Mission to Iran: Underground and Inspired*. Unfortunately, it was the only time I ever visited Germany. But I met many wonderful sisters and brothers who I have seen again in other venues over the years, one in particular would become my dear sister in Bowie, Maryland later on.

Angelika Selle, who at this writing, is now the national president of *Women's Federation for World Peace, USA*, an organization I dedicated heart and soul to for over 20 years. WFWP is another great love of my life which demanded and received total dedication and sacrifice from me.

I felt safe in Germany, despite the language and very long vocabulary words. I saw "peaceful demonstrations" by Turks there and realized that a struggle would come to Germany as well. But my real sigh of relief came as a surprise to me when I finally landed in New York on January 29, 1979. (Even though I had hoped to turn right around, and head back to Iran again). It was not a just a sense of "home" or "safety" it was also a realization that my roots, my ancestors, who had lived and died for a greater good and had sacrificed to build this great nation dwelled. I actually believe that so many blessings in my life have somehow come from their exemplary lives somehow.

They came before me, paving the way, and they somehow supported me in my work for a better world. The Shah, or *Shahanshah* of Iran (King of kings) would follow me several days later and eventually die in New York, away from his beloved home, I too had lost my beloved 'home.'

A note on my fellow missionaries, Ryuji and Beate. I have been told that they are no longer active in our movement. I love them and couldn't have done it without them, they are a casualty of the war between the forces of light and dark; and to find the strength to overcome all the difficulties we faced is superhuman. They protected me and helped me when I needed it the most. My love for them and especially for all our members came directly from God. His love flowed through me to all of them. It was only my own criticalness and fallen nature that blocked Him giving them more. I wish I could have given them much, much more.

Ryuji Kuranaga joined our church around the same time I did in Japan. He was an 1800 couple with a strong wife I suspect. He was a gentle soul. He didn't come to Iran for six months after Beate and I did, he said, because he was afraid, and because he heard that "a strong American sister was in Iran." I later found out that his father had had a stroke on the right side of his body and was partially paralyzed. While

we were in Iran one of his brothers died, then the eldest son of another brother died and then his father died. Ryuji didn't abandon his mission. I don't know how he did it. Then one day I was giving a lecture and "Yuj" staggered in the door. He had been hit by a motorcycle. A young man helped him home. I asked him if he was 'OK' he said, "Don't worry about me continue teaching." So I did, but something nagged at me and I went to check on him. I realized he needed to go to the hospital immediately. Luckily one of our guests had a car and we put him in the car and instead of taking the long way around on one way streets he backed into the 'short way' against the one way streets and drove the six blocks backward. This is a unique driving phenomena in Iran, go backward on a one way street as if no one would notice!

We arrived at the hospital in the very nick of time and they removed part of his bleeding liver. The doctor said he only had minutes to live. After this trauma, Ryuji began to witness. A fear block had been removed. He brought two unique members, both from Esfahan, both very precious. Albors was executed by the government years after we left, for running guns to the Kurds in Iraq. Nasser is well known in Southern California as a hard working brother and visits Iran regularly to witness to new people and to comfort the members. He still drives me crazy with all his antics but he is irreplaceable.

Beate Wilhelm Lauer-Smaltz married young and one day found her husband in bed with her best friend. Her broken heart led her to join the movement in Germany. She was four months in the church when she was sent to Iran. She was an inexperienced self-starter who played her guitar at all gatherings. We all loved her even though she never brought any new members. But she worked hard to be a loving 'aunt' to all who came to our center. She taught German until we were kicked out of the country. During her time she made a lot of conditions. She fasted seven days three times, and did a 40 day liquid-only diet to comfort the boy who had his jaw wired shut after his motorcycle accident on the day of the Yankee stadium speech in NY. Before she did any fasting I had trouble sitting next to her when we ate. I felt anger coming from her and a glutton spirit. I met other German sisters in time and felt that same spirit. Their ancestors ate until they were full and then threw it all up and ate again, while my Irish ancestors starved to death. But Beate changed from her fasting. Not only did she lose some weight but she began to look more feminine, even beautiful. But she couldn't break through in witnessing. During the last year Ryuji and Beate became intimate against our teachings, while in Turkey getting new visas. They hid their secret relationship and tried to support me in the last year we worked in Iran. I heard that they left our movement after I went to the US and later married in Germany. They lived in Germany where they had one child. I also heard that they divorced and Beate married an Iranian man. They put up with headstrong and bossy me, loved me despite my imperfections and kept their secret until I was safely back in the US. I know they never wanted to disappoint me but we all face terrible temptations. I don't know where Ryuji is but I wish them both well.

Back in the USA:

To finish this testimony I wish to share two deep experiences. The first came when I visited Belvedere after I had returned to the US and prayed at the holy rock. I had a clear vision of the connection of the holy grounds all over the world being connected by 'tentacles' reaching through the earth. Just before I left Iran I visited our humble holy ground that True Parents established in 1965 to pray for the safety of our members, our movement and God's Will for the nation. At Belvedere I felt drawn through the holy ground to the one in Iran, and 'received' that whenever I prayed at a holy ground my prayers would be passed through the earth to Iran and my members.

The other experience was quite wonderful. As soon as I arrived in New York (the future Katie Zahedi picked me up, and I told her tales of my members including Essi, who unbeknownst to us would become her husband in 1982!) I was given a room in the New Yorker. I showered and changed into clean clothes and then went on the 'hunt' to explore the New Yorker. Very soon I found out that True Parents were in the building. I figured I couldn't just go up to the 30th floor and announce myself, even though True Parents had called me back, but I quietly snuck up the stairs to their floor. When I opened the stairway door I saw a brother named Randy, whom I had known years before. I told him I had just come back from Iran because Dr. Pak said True Parents wanted to see me. So I hung out in the hallway sharing my experiences to an enthralled security guard, and as luck would have it Dr. Pak walked by the door and saw me. He said, "Susan, come in True Parents will want to see you."

This was the moment I had waited four long years and many tears for to finally be reunited with my True Parents, the ones I loved and happily represented in Iran. When I walked into the room where they were sitting together I froze. All my emotions came rushing up into my throat and I had to use all my energy to not break down sobbing. True Mother came to my rescue and whispered, "Korean bow." I thanked her with my eyes and did a fairly steady bow.

Father waved and said, "Sit down." In relief I did. I had always been happy to see them, to be with them, to listen to them, no matter how long; but seeing them after such a long time was so overwhelmingly wonderful. Father asked me about the mission and I told them about how many members we had, (40) the religions, and even Maman Zahedi and how she supported me. Then he asked me if my members could be trained and become leaders in Iran. At that moment in time I realized with a start, that I had been

successful. I said, "Yes" and knew that both Essi and Hossein would make good leaders. Essi did lead the movement for several years before escaping through Pakistan to his new bride, Katie. They lived in the region for several years.. Both of Essi and Hossein had to flee Iran because of persecution of our movement. We were known by the government and persecution could have become deadly. They now live in the US. Hossein returned to Iran with his family for a while, but it became too difficult. His presence there helped the members though, and others followed him to the US. Yet, there is a healthy remnant of our members in Iran keeping the faith. Most have never seen True Parents physically, but I hope the internet gives them a chance. Essi's spiritual great grandson led the movement from exile in Turkey for several years where the members would come for workshops. He now resides in Korea with his family and continues to translate True Parent's words for the members scattered far and wide.

And Nasser Zommodian (Zomorod), who lives in Los Angeles, goes back nearly every year to encourage and teach the members. Our members hang on in faith and love. The little seed I planted has grown deep roots regardless of the fanatical politics in Iran. Again, religious freedom does not exist and people who change their religion may die but our members continue to believe and practice living for the sake of others.

But the best was yet to come when I was with True Parents. While we were talking I began to see True Father's face change. His eyes seemed to open wider and wider until I was drawn into his heart and I felt that his heart opened to me. He was saying something about how he had lost his nation like me, but internally I felt that I had been drawn into a deep part of his heart where only a few people can go. Our shared suffering and loss had given us a unique connection. I felt two things: first I said to him in my mind, "I am willing to go to the most difficult country now!" Djibouti was the most difficult place I heard of. The report I read was that there were 300,000 men and 600,000 goats in a Muslim nation left behind in modern times.

The second thing I felt was that this experience is not just for me. I represent all of the foreign missionaries from all the countries who couldn't be there with True Parents and me. I offered up this experience to all those who had sacrificed and suffered to be True Parents' representatives. I sent my gratitude on behalf of all of them to True Father at that moment. Afterwards, Father gave Mother some money to go shopping for me so I wouldn't have such a tattered look. In the store she looked at a fur coat for me, I spoke to her in my heart and said, "Mother, I need to be humble and practical not rich." Somehow she felt my words and stepped over to a winter raincoat. I still have that practical gray, imitation fleece-lined coat. She also bought me a gray, wool suit, two blouses, shoes and a purse. I still have all but the shoes. But I understood that True Parents wanted to give all the missionaries the very best things in thanks for our service, I was but their representative.

My experience as a missionary made me a much stronger, self-reliant and spiritual person. I am deeply grateful for all the good and bad experiences. In the end, the suffering settles into gentle memories and the goodness rises to an overpowering feeling of gratitude and a strong sense of being uniquely blessed by God. Most of all I am grateful for the trust True Parents placed in me and the love of my brothers and sisters. The members named me the "mother of Iran." Today there are others who love and take care of this important nation. I hope that one day soon all nations can realize that we are actually brothers and sisters and must take care of one another.

Finally, one of the most terrible questions Father Moon asked me years after returning from Iran was: "*What is the great missionary to Iran doing now?*" I could not answer anything great but told him I was supporting several organizations like WFWP, ACC, New Hope Academy and the church. But I knew I disappointed him, because he still needs extraordinary, brave heroes to finish the work of True Parents.

I know there must be some errors in my memory, for those who remember differently please forgive me and let me know what your different memories are. Thank you. susanfeff@aol.com.

My dear husband, Dan, was busy fighting for victory over communism during my time in Iran and Turkey. He was always working for God and True Parents in many ways. We wrote letters regularly to one another and even still have a few of them. We were always "principled" in what we said and used no sappy romantic words. We didn't really know each other except as members of the same family. On my birthday in the second year he called me from the US. Neither of us knew what to say, so we just listened to each other breathe. It wasn't romantic but I felt close to him nonetheless, just being in the same space was wonderful. I kept him close to me in Iran by playing the songs he wrote, sang and recorded for me. Ninety minutes of him singing those well-loved songs did two things: it kept him 'alive' for me and gave the members a chance to hear those precious songs and get a feel for how to sing them (singing doesn't happen much in Iran except with very horizontal popular Iranian singers). This was a fantastic tool and all of us could sing together. Beate could use the tape to learn the chords so we had musical accompaniment. Even when I returned to the US and first met Dan we only shook hands not wanting to be demonstrative in public. But he was my rock and I knew being blessed to him protected me in so many ways, not only

using his name to 'chant' on buses in Turkey to keep the men away from me but also I could feel his prayers for me and my protection. He was really with me most of the time -- meaning when I let him -- as I was slowly getting used to being married! I hoped that those members who went out without a spouse to support them could find protection in some other way. I know True Parents prayed strongly for each one of us.

One day in Teheran there was a small report on the Washington Monument rally in Washington, DC. They said 10,000 people had attended, I didn't believe the report. Another time a short paragraph said that "Dan Fefferman was charged with contempt during the Frazier Hearings" on Capitol Hill! I worried a little and wondered what it really meant. Those articles were in the English *Kayhan* newspaper because a reporter had interviewed me after a front page article on True Father was published. My interview put me on the front page after a few days saying, "Special Representative of Rev. Moon in Teheran." But my photo was on the lower half of the page and Father's had been on the top part of the front page. I was in great company! Was this stupid of me to be interviewed? Who knows? True Father was a bold man, and as his daughter I wanted to be brave and bold too. Working underground was not easy for me. I don't know if this article was in a file that was later used by the police to exile me when I was being threatened by a radical group of angry young men, but I think True Father was proud of me.

My children:

Donsu Finnegan Fefferman Spratt, 7.26.1982, currently divorced. She is a specialist in autism (Masters in Special Education from Johns Hopkins U) and is an autism supervisor in Florida, a 'coach' for eight classes of autistic children. She is well respected in her field and well loved by staff, parents and kids alike, she just 'gets' those kids and loves them. She also has a special love for people of color beginning with Taj Hamad, as she helped her daddy and Taj do the garbage run at UTS when she was three years old. She gave herself the middle name 'Finnegan' while Dan and I were attending UTS. She stood up on a chair at the lunch table one day and announced her middle name. I surmised she understood that we have two families behind us and wanted to give them both representation. It stuck and we love her for it.

Kaeleigh June Fefferman Moffitt 11.6.1988, blessed to David Moffitt in 2008 in MD (Larry and Taeko's oldest son); our first granddaughter, June Sonoda Moffitt was born May 17, 2014 -- on their anniversary and is the apple of all of our eyes. ["June" comes from Persian, or 'Jahn' from poetry meaning, "my soul" or "my darling." In Teheran's pronunciation, Jahn becomes "June" and is added to a loved one's name like "chan" in Japanese or in answer to a question, "Jahn" meaning 'my dear please say it again.'] I called my daughter 'Kaeleigh June' in affection without thinking, and my husband said we should keep it as Kaeleigh's middle name. The kids chose it for their daughter to honor this grandmother, and 'Sonoda' to honor the other grandmother, Taeko Moffitt. Kaeleigh has a degree in business and family, and is currently the National Youth Pastor Advisor for our church in the US, and David has a doctor of physical therapy degree and works in a nearby clinic, his kid patients especially like him and he now takes care of all the kids that come into the office. We are not only proud of them but grateful for all they do for our community. We are awaiting grandchild number two.