



# THE VILLAGE VOICE

## THE PERSIAN CONNECTION

By Sara Pedram and Crystal McGee DePue

Persia is one of the oldest civilizations in the world, known for its philosophy, literature, art, food, and architecture. Additionally, one of its early kings (Cyrus the Great – 600-530 BC) is still known for “treating [all his subjects, whether domestic or conquered] with esteem and regard, as if they were his own children.” Now



known as Iran, Persia has unfortunately become a land that few Americans ever visit or know much about.

In the mid 1950’s, two travelers came for the first time from their birthplace in Iran to live in the United States. Though they had many differences and never met, their stories have now come together here, due to the growing friendship of two Bradford Village residents. Enjoy reading their stories below.

Crystal McGee DePue was the first to arrive, coming with her Oklahoma parents who had completed their first five-year stint as missionaries in Tehran (Iran’s capital city) for what they thought would be a one-year furlough. Unfortunately, her father’s declining health prevented the family from ever returning to the country they’d come to love and consider home. Adjusting to life in America was hard for Crystal, who was bilingual, speaking both English and Farsi, because her rubric for knowing which language to use (Farsi for all shopkeepers and workers; Eng-



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*Villagio Bradford Village Independence Parade pictures inside!*



# 7TH ANNUAL VILLAGIO INDEPENDENCE PARADE



Photos by  
Paula Brooks

## THE PERSIAN CONNECTION *CONT'D*

lish for close friends and family) did not work in America. It was also a disappointing blow, when after days of eating out on their arrival in America, she finally saw rice on a menu, but when it came to the table, rather than being the lovely, fragrant basmati and saffron rice that she desired, she was served a gluey, white ball that had no taste. Her embarrassed parents quickly tried to hush the wail that ensued! Fortunately, when they got an apartment, her mom could cook something more similar to the food she missed so much. To this day, her comfort food is “Looby Khoresh,”



Above: A Persian necklace belonging to Crystal

a green bean and tomato stew served over rice and topped with plain yogurt!

Crystal still has many artifacts from Iran that show what Iran was like in the days



Crystal's Persian rug

*“...their stories have now come together here”*

that her parents were missionaries and the Shah was still in power, including a beautiful Persian rug that is older than she is! As an adult, Crystal took four years of Farsi lessons trying to get back the language she lost. She learned enough to say hello and that she was born in Tehran, which always surprises the Persians she encounters.



Painting by  
Manouchehr

Manouchehr (Manny) Pedram came to the USA as a college student not long after Crystal arrived. He, too, had trouble finding ways to satisfy the longing for the delicious food he craved from his homeland. His first experience in an American grocery store was trying to find yogurt. No one knew what it was, so he began making his own recipe and continued



*A Persian mirror belonging to Sara*

this in his Persian kitchen for many decades.

In 1955, he arrived in Topeka, KS as a student at Washburn University. Later, he attended University of Kansas where he received his Ph.D. in Philoso-

phy of Education in 1963. In the early 1970's he moved to Kansas City, where he raised a daughter and son.

In the summer of 1994, Manny (a fabulous dancer!) met Sara at a Singles Dance in Kansas City, and after three years of long-distance dating, they were married. His new bride quickly joined him working for the non-profit "Global and Multicultural Education" (GAME) that he founded in 1982, which held biennial conferences from 2004-2018 on "Activism for Human Rights." Manny found many outlets

for improving multicultural relationships, including the annual Peace Builder Awards luncheon, Earth Day celebrations, and Foreign Language Creative Writing contests, to name a few.

As a fundraiser for GAME, Manny wrote a cookbook, "The Creative



*Persian art belonging to Sara*

Art of Persian Cooking," which was very popular! Carrying his passion for multicultural relationships further, he and Sara traveled to many countries, including Cuba, Russia, Germany, and other European countries.

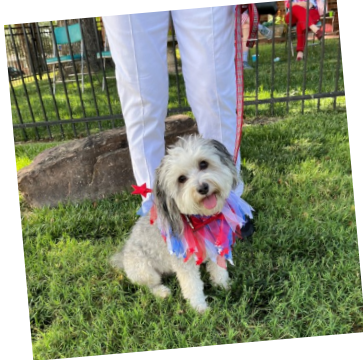
A copy of Manny's last book, "Global Discontent: The Mosaic of Cultural Diversity" is available in the Bradford Village library.

Though Crystal and Manny never met, because of Crystal and Sara's friendship here at Bradford Village, Manny's cookbook has finally given Crystal a means of cooking foods that she's missed for over 70 years!

Wikipedia contributors. "Cyrus the Great." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 25 May. 2024. Web. 31 May. 2024



*Photos by Paula Brooks*



Photos by Jennifer Fraase

## LARRY FRENCH



Larry was born in Bethlehem, PA, where he attended elementary school. His family moved to Altus, OK in 1985 where he attended

Junior High and High School.

He is the oldest of four children, one brother and two sisters.

He met his wife in Altus. She has worked in the dental field for 20 years. They have seven children and six have graduated from Edmond Memorial High School. The youngest child, a son, is in sixth grade. Larry said they first had three boys, then three girls, then one more boy. They are blessed with 13 grandchildren and all of the family lives here in the Edmond area!

Larry shared that he worked in the oil field for five years, followed by employment with a steel door company. He and his family are active in their church community and also involved in sports with their children and grandchildren. Larry operates his own handyman business, called French Kiss Handy Man Service, LLC.

When asked about hobbies, he said fishing is his favorite way to spend free time. He often fishes at Lake Arcadia with his sons. Also, he loves to grill and smoke meat for family and friends.

Larry joined the Bradford Village maintenance staff in October 2022. He is dependable and does excellent work for all the residents here. We are glad to have Larry, with his smiling face and cordial demeanor, serving all of us when we need his help!

~ Sara Pedram

A note from Caitlin: Larry has won two Cornhole Tournaments in staff competitions and is our current reigning Champion.



## DID YOU KNOW... THE STATE TREE OF OKLAHOMA?

By Joan Hirnisey

*This story is excerpted from my "Taylor Family History," written by my mother's oldest brother, Nat Massey Taylor, my sister Joyce Faye Wall Harvey, and myself.*

Nat, my mother's oldest brother, was born in a log cabin in Somervell County, Texas, on Feb 7, 1895. The family moved to Roger Mills County, Oklahoma, in 1899. At age 15, Nat was the youngest ever to be issued a teacher's certificate in the state of Oklahoma. He was admitted to Southwestern Normal (now Southwestern University) in Weatherford, OK, by taking an entrance exam. A lifelong learner, Nat later received a degree from Oklahoma University at age 48. He taught and superintended schools for 30 years. He served as State Representative from Rogers Mills County for one term and represented a district in the state Senate for eight years. While in office, Nat introduced the bill that made the redbud the state tree of Oklahoma. He wrote this poem to commemorate the occasion:

### WHEN THE RED BUD BLOOMS IN SPRING

You may rave about the beauty  
of the Rocky Mountains grand.  
And view with awe the splendor  
of the Alps of Switzerland.  
But after you have traveled  
And have seen these many things,  
You will come to Oklahoma  
When the Red Bud blooms in spring.



Photo by Jim Hirnisey

You may admire the live oak,  
or the splendor of the pine.  
And there are other stately trees  
That glow with foliage fine.  
But of all the many praises  
That shall forever ring,  
Nothing equals Oklahoma  
When the Red Bud blooms in spring.



~Nat M. Taylor  
OK State Senator; Poet Laureate, 1937



Photos by  
Jennifer Fraase



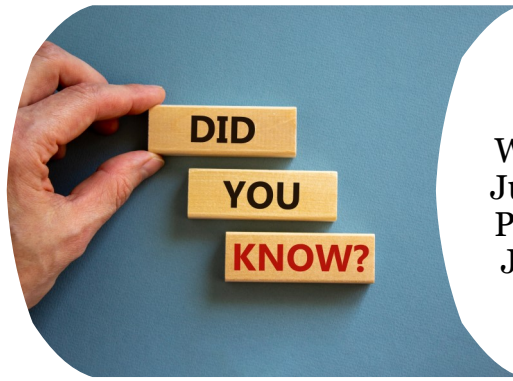
Photo by Jennifer Fraase



Photos by Caitlin Cairns



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## DID YOU KNOW?

We need YOUR stories. Just like Sara & Crystal's Persian Connection or Joan Hirnisey's family story on the previous page, we all have interesting things to share

about ourselves, whether that's an interesting place we've lived, a unique job we've had, or a special family history. The Village Voice team wants to interview YOU and learn your story. Please contact Joan or Sara if you have a "fun self-fact" to share!

## THE BRADFORD LIBRARY

The Bradford library committee is always hard at work, making sure the books stay organized and shelved correctly, and also creating beautiful and interesting displays to entice library visitors to pick up a book. Did you catch their June display featuring Bradford Authors? If you didn't, you can still find all the featured authors' works inside the library. Stop by soon to see their Summertime display!



## FROM THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

*The scripture teaches that Jesus went about doing random acts of kindness. Luke 6:31 says "so in everything do to others what you would have them do to you. This sums up the law and the prophets."*

*As his disciples, should we not also go about doing random acts of kindness?*

*— Jim Davidson, Chaplain*

