



Robert L. Steiner Jr.

November 7, 2017

Robert L. Steiner, Jr. passed away November 7, 2017. He was 96 years old and died peacefully at home.

Steiner was born and raised in Tehran, Iran to Presbyterian educational missionaries. He spoke fluent Persian. He returned to the United States as a teenager to attend Mercersburg Academy and the College of Wooster where he met and later married Margaret Sherrard.

Steiner devoted most of his career to building cultural, economic, and educational bridges between the United States and countries throughout the Middle East and Asia.

After WWII where he flew for the Navy, Steiner studied at Columbia University earning a Master's degree in International relations. He spent the next 10 years working in the U.S. Foreign Service and with various nongovernmental organizations. In 1950 he returned to Iran for two years working as the cultural attaché for the American Embassy. In 1959 Steiner left international service to become a chicken farmer and high school teacher in Vermont. Four years later United States Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver asked Steiner to head the first Peace Corps program in Afghanistan. Four years later Steiner returned to Washington D.C. to head the Peace Corps North Africa, Near East, and South Asia (NANESA) division under then director Jack Vaughn.

Continuing his deep interest in international affairs, Steiner assumed the directorship of the University of Hawaii's Center for Cross-Cultural Training and Research in 1969. A decade later Steiner founded InterLink Language Centers then headquartered in Princeton, NJ.

Steiner and his wife Margaret retired to Lancaster, PA in 1995. He is survived by Margaret, his daughter Patricia, sons Bill and his wife Kristi, John and his wife Noriko, Chip and his wife Martha, brother Edwin and his wife Doris, four grandchildren and one great grandchild.

A memorial service is scheduled for Saturday, January 20, 2018 at 2:30 p.m. at the Bachman Center, Homestead Village, Lancaster, PA. Please check the funeral home website, <http://www.thegroffs.com>, or feel free to e-mail Chip Steiner directly at chippersteiner@gmail.com

Tribute Wall

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“ I just learned of the death of Bob when my December copy of *FRIENDS OF AFGHANISTAN* arrived in the mail. My heart goes out to all of Bob's family and I am grieving myself for the loss of someone I cared a great deal about and who impacted my life as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Afghanistan (1964 - 1966) immeasurably. Bob and Sherry were, in some ways like loving parent figures to many of us who were in our early 20's and just beginning to step out into the world on our own. To fly from NYC to Kabul was so life changing and quite a shock those first few weeks and months. The Steiners were so solid, so calm, and so reassuring as they guided us into our villages, new homes and new jobs. I was placed quite far from Kabul, about 100 miles west of Kandahar, in Lashkarghah with several other volunteers. I remember Bob was always available (by radio contact -no phone service then) to answer questions, give advice and assure me I was doing a great job. . More than once he instilled a measure of self-confidence in me that I sorely needed. The last time I saw Bob and Sherry was in Vermont at our last Peace Corps reunion. My husband suffered a serious fall on our way into Brattleboro and we were in the emergency room at the Brattleboro Hospital. Here comes Bob, Sherry and the late Lou Barfield who had heard about the accident and were there to support me and see that Michael was getting the proper medical care. I treasure those reunion days we all had together and how I was reminded of people who meant the world to me.

I send my love and heartfelt sympathy to all who loved and treasured Bob Steiner. May he rest in peace. Phyllis Burroughs Heffron Ames, Iowa amesnanaxyz@gmail.com

Phyllis Heffron - January 11, 2018 at 07:21 PM

NR

“ Sorry this message is somewhat dated. I cut out this obit and have read it several times. I was so entranced with the incredible life Mr. Steiner had, what a wonderful life! With great interest I read of his contribution to The Peace Corps.

My Grandmother's brother was Donald B. Watt. Uncle Donald started "The Experiment in International Living." About 1937 R. Sargent Shriver was a member of a group of students that went to Europe, later he became an advisor and tour specialist. When John F. Kennedy requested Mr. Shriver to begin the Peace Corps. and set up the policies etc. he contacted Uncle Donald to assist him with the mission statement etc.

Donald B. Watt was the son of Peter & Laura Watt, the founder of Watt & Shand, department store in Lancaster, now The Marriot in Penn Square.

For more than 1 year I have been writing a book about Peter T. Watt, my Great Grandfather. My goal is to complete this book in 2018. I have devoted a chapter to Donald B. Watt and with your permission I would like to use the info from the obituary in the book. If you and the family would like to add anything else, please contact me. Thank you and my deepest sympathy to you and then family. Mr. Steiner had a wonderful life and contributing greatly to society. Peter T. Watt had a favorite Bible verse, Luke Chapter 12, verse 48. This is where The Lord is directing those who have much, then much will be expected of those.

Sincerely;

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Nancy C. Groff, RN/BSN - January 08, 2018 at 10:14 PM

“Janice and I first heard that Bob and Sheri were living in Lancaster, PA while I was teaching and administrating international studies and overseas programs at Villanova University as their first Director of that university-wide program in 1986 - Jan was teaching upper level math at a local high school. Soon after, Jan and I called and arranged a visit to their delightful home in Lancaster. We arranged to spend a day driving out from Havertown (just west of Philadelphia) and spending the day with Bob and Sheri.

Little did I realize until that meeting that Bob was the interim Peace Corps director in Tehran, Iran while I was teaching English to high schoolers in Mahabad (Kurdistan) Iran. In fact, Bob already had the difficult task of initiating new Peace Corps programs in Kabul as the Peace Corps director of the PC Afghan program. In the spring of 1965, Clea Shook, the former Iran director lasted a eight months or so when he was dismissed. Bob, in his characteristic way "filled in" though it placed additional burdens on him in maintaining two PC programs at the same time. He did it with flying colors. I had only heard about Bob at the time from my station in Mahabad so it was a great pleasure for Jan and me to spend that first of a number afternoons in the Steiner living room.

Bob and I actually did some research together in hunting for the grave site of the famous Presbyterian missionary educator of Alborz College, Tehran - though Dr. Samuel Martin Jordan was well-known among Presbyterians and Iranians alike, my Iranian colleagues in this country were asking me over and over again if I knew where Dr. Jordan was buried. They wanted to put flowers on his grave site. The Presbyterian archives on South Street in Philly had little information for me so I suggested to Bob, if he had the time, to accompany me to New Park, PA in search of the Jordan cemetery plot. We left with little more than a map of southern PA and a general notion about where to look for Presbyterian churches in and around New Park. After stopping in a convenience store in the area, we found the phone number for the Presbyterian church and manse in New Park and called the Manse. Yes, the Jordan family had a

large plot in their cemetery and we were welcome to come by which we did. We not only found the plot of Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Jordan, we also found a distant relative of Dr. Jordan named Katherine Brown who had married one of Dr. Jordan's nephew and lived in the area. We also met with her that famous day of exploration, visited her home, and discovered that she possessed nearly all of the Jordan archives. Bob was overjoyed to meet Katherine and to put some flowers on Dr. Jordan's grave site as he knew Dr. Jordan from his own years in Iran from 1921 to the 1940s and his college days at Wooster College.

I was always impressed that Bob remembered his Persian and all the hours we spent together talking about the Peace Corps in the 1960s, US-Iran relations, and his deep love for the peoples of Iran including his loving memories of growing up in Tehran. Bob's father was one of the honored American faculty members of that famous Alborz College teaching staff. I am a member of a national organization called Peace Corps Iran Association and will be relating my times with Bob, my former interim boss and good friend to other Peace Corps volunteers. Bob Steiner was a progressive and honorable man, to himself and family and to his country. I am very proud to have known Bob and Sheri, so Jan and I send our deepest sorrow for Sheri and his family's loss. We will never forget what a credit Bob and Sheri were and are to our country. He's on our minds and in our hearts forever. Blessing on you, dear Bob, khoda hafeez, rafeeqam azizi. Tom and Jan Ricks of Havertown, PA.

Tom and Jan Ricks - November 22, 2017 at 05:56 PM