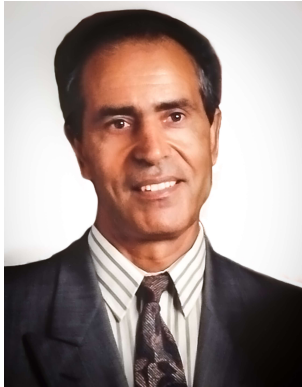


## To Know Our Zoroastrian Visionaries & Leaders - Baa Bozorgaane Zartoshti Aashena shavim

By: khosro esfandiar mehrfar

Some are here & seems they are not, and some are gone but will always be here.  
**(Bazi haa hastando nistand. Bazi haa nistando hastand)**



Such is the case with the late Mohandes Iraj Mavandadi. a true Zoroastrian who lived all his life with the ever-last, ever-fresh principles of Din-e-Behi of Righteousness and followed the path of Asha paved by our prophet Zarathustra by the 3 universal principles of Goodness.

The late Mohandes Iraj Mavandadi, a leader and a visionary was born on August 1941 (19, Amرداد, 1320) to the late Jamshid Mavandadi & Morvarid Khosravi Mavandadi in beautiful city of Ghasemabad, Yazd in our motherland of Iran. The 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest child of seven children, he recognized and appreciated the decency and the hard work from the very early stage of his productive life.

The young Iraj attended elementary & high school in Yazd and at the same time he was studying he continued to work on his family farm to help his parents and younger siblings, something that was popular with most but not all the other Zoroastrian families at that time. He finished the high school & by this time, situation was getting better and made him to move to Tehran in search of better and more productive job. He got hired by the Bank of Sepah as his first job. Several years of honest and dedicated work at the bank brought him reputation as was the case for almost all of the Zoroastrians who were following the tenant of Din-e-Behi. Building some nest eggs and some savings, he met and fell in love with Mehrtaj Rashidi. They married and moved to city of Ahvaz in August of 1967 at the age of 26.

The late Mohandes Iraj Mavandadi's second love and interest was always in development and construction trade which has always been encouraged in our Faith as a constructive way to make life better for all, providing shelter and homes for the people. He started his first small business in construction in the city of Ahvaz, a type of business that due to his hard work, honesty, passion and commitment grew to be a very successful and reputable business in years ahead.

His first love was his wife and his Family as much as he loved his religion of Dine-e-Behi. Therefore parallel to his construction business, he was also instrumental in community services of the Zoroastrians of Ahvaz and soon was asked and joined the board of directors of the Zoroastrian community of Ahvaz. Feeling the importance of higher education & the knowledge, wisdom and respect that the education will bring in to help for a better job for his business and for the Zoroastrian communities, he moved to America with Mehrtaj Khanom and their 2 young daughters to fulfill his goal.

Hard work, honesty and dedication which was the hallmark of the late Mohandes Iraj Mavandadi's life helped him to earn his Bachelor of science from Lincoln University in Jefferson city in the state of Missouri in the year 1977. He continued for his higher education with graduate studies and 2 years later in 1979 earned and received his Master of science from Pittsburgh State University in the city of Pittsburgh in State of Kansas. Knowing he can be instrumental in the progress and constructive development of his beloved motherland of

Iran, he moved back after his graduate school with his family and started to work in construction business. The winds of revolutions and his beloved country, the mother land of Iran being in the process of major fundamental changes delayed his plan to be part of the progress in Iran and thus he immigrated back to America with his beloved family. It should be noted and remembered that during all these hard times in America and in Iran, it was Mrs. Mehrtaj Khanom who with patience, wisdom and support for his husband made all of his upcoming success possible. In fact the energy and the main force of all of the late Mohandes Iraj Mavandadi's success, achievements and tremendous contributions he made later to the Zoroastrian communities has always been his beloved wife.

Moving back to America in 1979, he started his first construction company Ozark Construction. This was the first step and the start of his successful career in America. Familiar with the state where he had spent some years in previously, he naturally migrated to the State of Missouri, but soon he found out there are not too many Zoroastrians and for that matter even Iranian living there. His love for his culture, his identity and that of his young Family and his care and passion for his Faith, Din-e-Behi of Zarathustra and the history and heritage which he felt responsible for, made him to constantly search for a place in America which was the closest possible to these priorities in his life and he finally decided and chose southern California for that purpose. This was his choice based on his decision to be close to other Zoroastrians and thus for raising his young family of now 5 with the arrival of his youngest daughter.

Back to his 2<sup>nd</sup> love which was development and building as a constructive way of helping others and also being successful at the same time, he founded his 2<sup>nd</sup> construction company, "Standard Construction Company". This time he expanded his construction operation and designed and built both residential and commercial buildings, of which a few sample of his masterpiece works were later acknowledged & recognized by the industry. The Standard Construction Company started building some of the finest buildings in State of California, which are all a beautiful reminder of the life of this great man. Soon his excellent design & masterful buildings earned him a place and a membership into the prestigious "Western Regional Master Builders Association".

It did not take too long for the young Iraj to get involved with the Zoroastrian communities of southern California, composed of less than 30 families but united to have a place of worship to keep the flame of Din-e-Behi and our Faith alive. He soon became a member of the Board of Trustees at the very first Zoroastrian temple which was located in city of Anaheim as part of the late Arbab Rostam & Morvarid Khanom Guiv philanthropic investments to help the community to gather and do their Zoroastrian worships & ceremonies as was with several other places that these 2 dedicated Zoroastrians did for the rest of the small but growing communities of Zoroastrians in the north American diaspora away from the motherland of Iran.

Soon with his 2 close and dear friends the late Mr. Shahrokh Mizanian and Mr. Borzu Arghavani, they started the very first Gahanbar at the newly established small Zoroastrian center in Anaheim. Our Gahanbar ceremony, a millenniums tradition that bounds all of us together as Zoroastrians was crucial to these 3 men and they made sure it was conducted regularly for as long and as much as they could. And the late Mohandes Iraj Mavandadi made sure that he and his Family and Friends attend the ceremony, a task he insisted and attended for as long as he was physically able to attend and do so.

The number of Zoroastrian immigrants in the 80's started to increase to the point that the current temple was small and the necessity of a larger center became increasingly apparent. Caring for the future of Zoroastrian communities, a habit he had institutionalized internally and in other Zoroastrians around him, they all started to search for a better and larger place which could respond to the ever-increasing rate of immigration. Their search was not just for a better, larger place quantitatively but also some place to have with pride which qualitatively would be at the same level of our historical pride and honor.

His search with the help of the other caring Zoroastrians lead him to a vacant land in the city of Westminster as the high value & the best choice and with the generous donations from the late Arbab Rostam and Morvarid Khanom Guiv, the land was purchased. The late Mohandes Iraj Mavandadi was one of the most important "Good Thoughts & Good Deeds" individual Zoroastrians who were instrumental in making this great achievement in the life of every single Zoroastrians of southern California possible. Due to the full & unbroken trust that the leaders of the community including the late Farangis Khanom Shahrokh whom under her leadership and direction this critical project had started, profoundly had in the late Mohandes Mavandadi, the important and in fact crucial responsibility of the plan, design, develop. Build & delivery of the temple (first of a kind) was given to him in a unanimous decision by the board of Trustees under the leadership of Farangis Khanom Shahrokh. Soon, the late Mohandes Mavandadi found a caring & responsible Zoroastrian Parsi architect by the name of Keki Amaria and delegated the design of the temple to him.

Inspired by Persepolis, the building was designed by the ideas from the capital city of Achaemenid empire which are still the pride and proof of the glorious Persian history. After many hours of hard work with specific attention to the details the prestigious, beautiful and exemplary temple of California Zoroastrian Center was completed and delivered on time and under budget. The full profit of about \$125,000 which was the standard norm of the business was fully returned back to the center through the care, love and generous Good Deeds of the late Mohandes Iraj Mavandadi, a few trait of his character which he was well known for, not just for as long as he lived his productive & prosperous life but forever imprinted in the hearts and minds of many Zoroastrian who knew him personally or heard of him. As just one of many of his Good Deeds, and as a staunch advocate of Zoroastrian Youth progress and advancement, he was instrumental in Zoroastrian Youth sports and was among the early leaders who recognized its importance & helped both financially in a tangible way and also by just being there and inspiring many Zoroastrian Youth.

He continued to take full care of all the needs of the California Zoroastrian Center, now well known for its pioneering design and build and named after the late Guiv due to his generous original donation of about \$450,000. for the purchase of the land that Mohandes Mavandadi had identified. The Center per request of the Trustees of the Guiv Foundation is now named "Arbab Rostam Guiv California Zoroastrian Center". Due to his selfless dedication and enormous contribution to the Zoroastrian communities of southern California, he was one of the early members of the board of Trustees who served on the very first administration and for more than two decades after until the early 1990's when he was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. Despite this debilitating diagnosis, he proved his amazing strength and commitment to his family and community by continuing to work and contribute to the Zoroastrian Community for many incredible & impressive years. It was during this trying time that with the enormous strength and powerful positive mind which he possessed as a true gift of Ahura

Mazda, he obtained his real estate and broker licenses and started his own real estate company named Cameo Realty with the sole purpose to help friends and family purchase their homes.

The paralyzing dreaded Parkinson disease was gradually taking its toll. However in spite of that and even when he was no longer physically able to, with an iron clad conviction he had, he continued supporting and assisting the center and Zoroastrian community however he could from the sidelines and in a low key, low profile way. He was a firm believer of Dine-e-Behi and the fundamental prayer of Ashem Vohu to “Do Good for the Sake of Goodness and Not for Expecting any Rewards in Return”. In a life long achievement and years of services to the Zoroastrian communities as well as personal accomplishments, in a special ceremony he was honored by the “Arbab Rostam Guiv California Zoroastrian Center” in May of 2008. This was an award he took full pride in earning it.

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016, this great man of our time, and a Zoroastrian who lived all his life by the tenant of Dine-e-Behi, following the path of Asha with its golden, ever-fresh, ever-last principles of “Being Good” as the hallmark of our Prophet Zarathustra passed away in peace in his home in Corona Del Mar, California with his beloved wife and daughters at his side. He will be dearly missed and always remembered as a loving husband, caring father and grandfather, loyal friend, accomplished builder, a visionary leader & a dedicated Zoroastrian.

**May his beloved soul rest in serenity and tranquility in the abode of Songs of Zarathustra in the proximity of God of Zarathustra, Ahura Mazda.**







