

Yahya Emami-Khoi

July 14, 1948 - September 29, 2007



Yahya and Ladan at a small family reunion at our cousin s Iradj in Tehran autumn 2005

Friday, October 5, 2007

Yesterday was Yahya's Khatm¹.

It was not held in a mosque where such ceremonies are usually held but in a private events hall.

The ambiance was much more relaxed, people could move around, the male and female guests could interact together and thus the ritual became pleasant instead of overly dramatic, trite and boring like Khatms unfortunately most often are.

The majority of our family and family friends still living in Tehran attended. Some of them I hadn't seen since ages.

It was good to see them and reminisce about the past and Yahya.

¹ As the Persian name implies - end - it is the ceremony given for the defunct

The service started at 4 p.m. with a couple of speeches, poetry readings and prayers. It ended late in the evening after an excellent eftar² followed by a dinner at Ladan's³ mother's home for family and close friends.

The ceremony was emotional but not excessively so, with women crying and tearing their hair off. It was classy, just as Yahya would have liked.

One thing that can definitely be said about Yahya is that he never left anybody indifferent. Some loved him, some disliked him and a few even hated him but no one was unmoved or bored with him.

When he was in a good mood it was difficult to resist his charm and disarming smile!

I am sure that even some of those that didn't like him - truth be told I saw a few - came to pay their respects because at the end of the day everybody loved the true Yahya sometimes hidden by his temper, or snobbish disposition.

Although Yahya was my mother's cousin, we were about the same age. At fifty-nine, he was less than a year older than me, while my mother, his direct cousin is ninety-two. Thus the younger generation cousins always considered him as one of "our" cousins. He of course used his generational seniority whenever it suited him and jokingly reminded us that we owed him respect. Typical Yahya!

That stopped as we all grew older and it was no longer an advantage to be of an older generation...

Yahya and I were close:

- During childhood when we were playmates.

He still lived on Kakh Avenue and we were on Takhte Jamshid and later on when both of us moved to Shemiran⁴.

Yahya was good looking, talented, generous, charismatic and above all a born charmer.

One of my first memories of him is when at age eight or nine he sang - loud and well - "*La Donna e Mobile*" in front of the entire family, while I was too shy to even say hello!

At twelve (1961), I went to live in Geneva with my father, mother and siblings. Yahya went to England a few years later to go to college.

During thirteen years, an eternity at that age, we didn't see each other.

- Upon our return to Iran.

He came back, I think in 1973 and I, a year or so later. It was the Key Club⁵, Imperial Club⁶ and lavish "taghouti"⁷ receptions and parties times.

⁴ Most "well to do" Tehranis started moving out of the city to the Northern suburb of Shemiran during this period

⁵ A great and very exclusive discotheque / gathering place in Tehran

⁶ A great and very exclusive country club; it is now the "Club Enghelab" or "Revolutionary Club"

⁷ In this instance meaning just lavish upper class parties before the revolution

He married the beautiful Roya, his first wife. They had many similarities but were both too temperamental; it didn't last.

A few years later, not many, he married Suzy who was already a friend of mine; she became very close after marrying Yahya.

I attended their wedding in Paris. It was fantastic and we all had a great time.

Then came the pre-revolution with its military curfews. During this period I saw Yahya and Suzy practically every day. Oddly these very hard days were in a way some of the best in our lives with parties almost every night and notwithstanding the hardships a carefree and happy time. Part of this time our cousin Fery⁸ was also in Iran and the three of us often went skiing and hiking-mountaineering together and of course there were the regular luncheons, dinners and parties at Yahya's and Suzy's.

Sometime after the revolution it really hit us and most of our family including Yahya and Suzy left Iran. The French say "*partir c est un peu mourir*"; it describes fairly well how I felt then.

I let my house and temporarily moved to my aunt Malekeh's⁹; ironically to stay in Iran for one last skiing season before also leaving the country but in the meantime I got a job, our family house was confiscated by the revolutionary government, I had to recuperate it, etc. I stayed; but that's another story...

- Upon his second return to Iran.

Many years had passed. I had married. He had divorced and remarried and divorced his third wife before he returned from America.

We hit it off together again. We played tennis and he would often visit us in Amanieh¹⁰.

A few years later, he married for the fourth time; this time it turned out to be "until death do us part".

As it often happens, for no reason, we just slowly drifted apart and saw each other less and less.

Such is life, you grow older, everyone has their problems and responsibilities and, and, and...until one day you fall apart forever.

For Yahya and I, this sad farewell was on September 29, 2007.

He left a wife, two children an elder brother and an elder sister.

⁸ Fery was our (both Yahya's and my) hero in our youth. He died in Geneva of cancer about eight years ago

⁹ Yahya's mother, my mother's aunt but of about the same age

¹⁰ Our house in Tehran