

Abraham Tahsili: Notary *with* Vision

Abrahim Tahsili was born in Tehran, Iran, on June 9, 1928, and lived there until he and his family emigrated to Canada as Landed Immigrants on February 2, 1980.

Before coming to Canada, he worked for the Iranian Radio and Television Organization.

Asked why he became a Notary, Abraham says, “My uncle was a Notary Public. He knew that my MBA and my interest in being at the service of the public in general would be a good foundation for being a Notary. He used to entice me to become a Notary and let me do part-time jobs for him with good pay.”

When Abraham came to Vancouver, approximately 300 Iranians were living in BC. He knew Canada was a paradise that would be the future home for many international immigrants. “Now the number of Iranians in BC is almost 50,000. New applications for coming to Canada from Iran have passed 600,000.



With granddaughter’s pet

With a conservative assumption of three people per family in total, that means 2 million more people will come here from Iran. All these newcomers need notarial services.”

Commissioned as a BC Notary in 1986, Abraham chose to practise in Vancouver’s North Shore area because the percentage of Iranians is higher there than in any other area in BC. He was the first Persian-speaking Notary in BC. “Fortunately,” he says, “two other Notaries—Katayoon Roohani and Fariborz Khasha—are now providing the public with excellent service in Persian and English and I am proud of both of them.”

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When asked if he had a mentor, Abraham says, “I believe I have been very lucky to have so many mentors—all BC Notaries who have directly or indirectly helped me learn from them and to improve my service every day.” He has served as a mentor to help many newcomers settle here to begin a new life.

“For me, the most important aspect of being a Notary is when people come to me for advice, guidance, consultation, and so on, because I am an elder of the community. In some cases my service changes the course of life of a family, in a positive way.

“Let me give you an example. A few years ago, an Iranian couple was walking



With grandson Pasha

on West Georgia Street, Vancouver, when they met another Iranian by the name of Mo. The couple was so depressed and devastated that Mo asked them to go to a coffee shop to sit and talk.

Abraham says Mo asked them why they were so sad. The lady said, “We have a problem. We are from San Diego, California. In the past five years, we have paid a lot of money to an American Immigration lawyer to help us get our



With grandchildren Abrisham and Pasha



With wife Minu and daughter Arya

Green Cards. Today we had an appointment with the American Consulate in Vancouver for an interview and to receive our Green Cards. The Consulate told us that in four documents in our file, the spelling of our names and our dates of birth are completely different. The lawyer said, 'Because I do not know which one is correct and which one is the real you, please go back to San Diego and apply again.'

Mo had advised them to visit Abraham before going back home to California. After talking to them for half-an-hour, Abraham learned that "because of their lack of English, their

teenage cousin had helped them fill in some of the forms. Their careless lawyer in California did not cross-check the forms to find the mistakes the cousin had made."

Abraham prepared two *affidavits*. "Based on what they told me, I explained the reason for the mistakes and ended the respective *affidavits* with, "The true and correct spelling of my name is so and so and the true and correct date of my birth is so and so." The couple left his office with the *affidavits*.

"Three hours later, they called me. I did not need to be with them to know their sheer exuberance. Their voice was the best messenger. Cases like this are the most satisfying aspects of being a Notary."

From 1983 to 1989, Abraham was actively involved with a group of 15 people to establish a Cultural Centre for the Iranian Community. Unfortunately, due to finances, the Centre did not survive.

"Nowadays, there is a new group active for the same cause. I am in contact with them and I hope this time it happens."

His special interests are poetry, history, and philosophy. He also likes reading, walking, playing backgammon, and watching tennis and basketball.

When asked what is most important to him in life, Abraham responds, "My family and knowing that I am needed." ▲