



## TEHERAN TALES

Before you get into this you think it might be some gossip about the Shah or the Ayatollah or maybe the hostages forget about it. This piece has nothing to do with Iran. The Teheran I'll be telling tales about is a restaurant that used to be over on West 44th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues.

Now if you're wondering where Sixth Avenue is that's what we used to call the avenue West of Fifth until bozos down at City Hall decided to chane it to "The Avenue of The Americas." Now I ask you, what the hell is an Avenue of Americas? It was probably dreamed up by the same guys wo changed The East River Drive to FDR Drive. At least before tourists just had to find the East River and bingo, they were on The Drive. Here I must confess that I didn't bitch when bozos renamed Idlewild Airport "JFK" Idlewild! That's the area they built the airport on, a section in Queens that nobody in New York ever heard of. Anyhow, I'm rambling here. Let's get back to W. 44th Street and to the restaurant that used to be in the ugly vacant lot that's there now. And as long as we're going back, let's go way back to the first time I ever walked into The Teheran (Called "The T" by its owners and its regulars.)

(Author's request. Before we start you've got to promise me something. You must swear that you won't show this to anybody who might make trouble for the gentle folks I'm about to talk about. I'll be using real names and mentioning things that might be embarrassing. You see, although The Teheran was a fine, proper establishment, It wasn't exactly St. Pat's. Agreed? Okay. Let' begin.)

**It all began on September 10th, 1964.**

I remember the date because that's when I got hired by the ad agency I'd been dying to get into for years, Doyle Dane Bernbach. Back in those years, Doyle Dane Bernbach (as people called it when Mr. Bernbach wasn't within hearing distance) was the hottest creative shop in the world. If you were an art director or a copywriter, working there was like playing for the Yankees. I had an interview with Leon Meadow, the copy department manager at 4:00 that afternoon and had to sneak out of the agency I was working for, Ted Bates & company. Bates was located in The Tishman Building up Fifth at 53rd Street, so it was a ten minute walk to Doyle Dane (also called DDB).

I recall getting off at the 25th floor in The Salmon Towers building and being shocked by the dinginess of the place. DDB looked like YMCA or DMV. By contrast, Bates was furnished the way advertising agencies are portrayed in movies, with thick carpeting, modern furniture and well dressed rich looking Ivy League people roaming the halls. I said to myself maybe that's why Doyle Dane's work was so great and Bates' work was so boring. These guys were hungry.



With my heart beating like mad, my hands wet and my throat dry. I checked in with the receptionist and was told to have a seat. Two seconds later, a mousy but not unattractive girl came out and told me that "Leon was ready to see me." On the walk to his office she told me that people there thought I had a terrific spec portfolio. I wanted to hug this girl.

We came around a corner and she led me into an office that had a great view of the building next door. Behind a beat up desk that was covered with canary yellow copy paper stood a short, pleasant looking white haired guy in a rumpled gray suit who was offering me his hand. When I looked down to grab it I saw that some of his fingers were missing. They must really work writers hard here, I made it through the handshake and took a seat. Thinking about what the secretary had Just told me, I started to see dollar signs dancing in front of my eyes. I was making 10 Grand at Bates, a pretty pricely sum for a 26-year old in those days, and I figured that if the best agency in the world thought my book was hot stuff they'd offer me a bundle. Leon got right to the point. After telling me that he was impressed by my book, he asked me what I was making at Bates. I immediately gave myself a three thousand dollar raise and I said that I was of course looking to make more in the move. Gee, he said, that's much higher than what we usually pay for writers with spec books, but did I want to come there for 10 Gs?

When I walked out of his office with my new job, my friend Jonathan Gubin was waiting for me.

"How'd it go?" he asked.

"I start in two weeks."

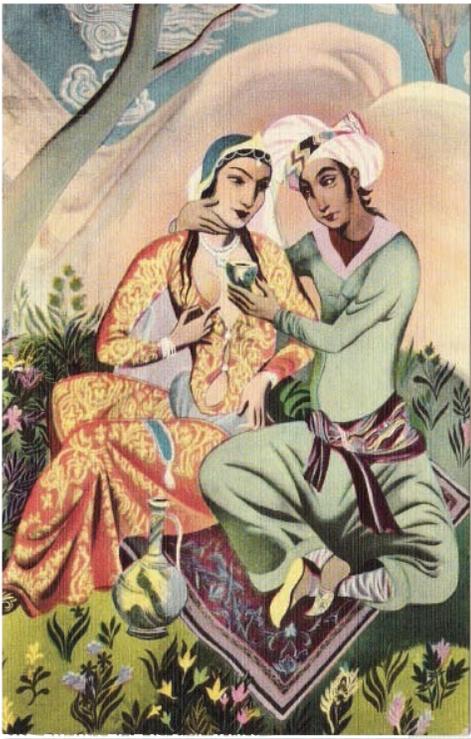
"Great. Let's go the Teheran for a drink."

## Love at first sight.

As soon as we walked in. I knew I'd like the place. It was dark, in a cozy barlike way. I hated places where the sun was shing in like some ice cream parlor in the Bronx in the old days. Also, the place seemed to be jumping. Most of the tables were full and the bar was two deep. And there were some good-looking girls having drinks together, which told me that this wasn't a crummy saloon where guys go to get a load on at bargain prices.

(On the walk over, Jonathan told me that The Teheran was a serious Doyle Dane hangout especially for creative people. He said that The Algonquin, which was a few doors west was where account people took clients but that The "T" was the In place.)

At the door a guy with wavy gray hair, silver framed glasses and a nose like Eddie Arcaro greeted us. Jon introduced me to Hank the owner and told him that I had just been hired by DDB. Hank led us to a table while an old maid type behind the cash register watched out of the corner of her eye. I was later to learn that this was Wally, Hank's partner.



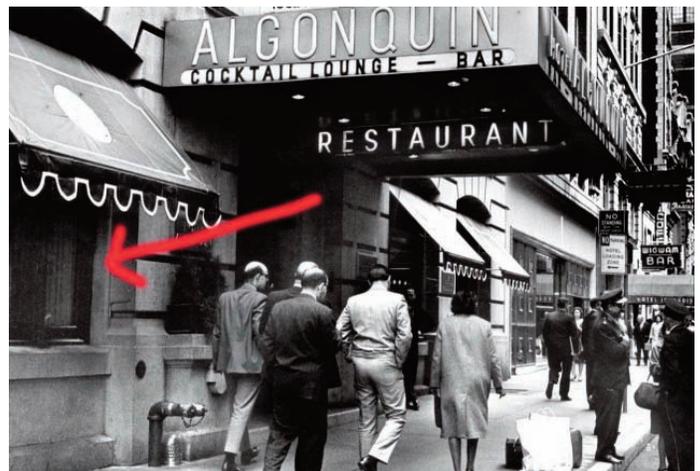
Now, as you walked into "The T" there were to your immediate left, Wally and her cash register and a small cloakroom. Beyond them was some tables and booths. Opposite the tables and booths was the long Teheran bar. As you walked toward the rear of the place there were booths along both walls and tables in the middle. The pay phone and lounges were in the rear, followed by two swinging doors that led to the kitchen. On your way to the back of the place, your senses were attacked by an awful color mural that covered about twenty feet of the left wall. It was a scene from Persian harem. Guys with bulges in their pajamas were fondling the boobs of young maidens. The whole thing was so outrageously terrible and poorly painted thar even Grandmas from New Jersey didn't take offense. The Teheran's booths and chairs were covered with 1950's kitchen vinyl in an ugly shade of green. Pieces of tape covered slits and rips. Two staircases led to the enormous upstairs diningroom. I found out later that there was a third staircase that led to the downstaris kitchen which had to be one of the most bizarre kitchens in town.

## After your first look at the menu, you did a double take. Everybody did.

On the first page there was a list of a dozen or so Eastern dishes made with things like raisins, honey, grape leaves, kumquats and Lamb. You'd expect to find stuff like that. After all, the place is called The Teheran. (Jon Gubin, the punniest man I ever met, once pointed at a friend's lamb kabob and said, "One man's meal i another man's Persian.") But when you turned the page the handshaking would start. There were a lot of *italian dishes*-- veal Marsala, eggplant parmigiana, ravioli, manicotti, steak pizzaiola. Was there some strange marriage in the proprietors' families? More confusing were the American entrees-- crabcakes, pot roast, prime rib, steaks, and the "Continental" specials like scallops, mushrooms and rice in wine sauce.

The most surprising thing about the food at "The T" was that it was really good. In the ten years that I ate there I rarely had to complain to Hank. (When you made negative comments about what you'd just eaten, a distant, glazed look would come over his face as if he didn't understand a word you said. But then he'd go back to the kitchen and check out the accused entree.)

The building that housed The Teheran had no basement so there wasn't room to save leftover food. Hank, being a shrewd cookie, turned this into a advantage. He had an hors d'oeuvre chef come in around 4 o'clock and whip up some of the best saloonfinger food around. Hank's waiters would go from bar stool to bar stool and table to table offering the stuff. There were platters of cheddar and swiss cheese slices, celery and carrot sticks, miniature



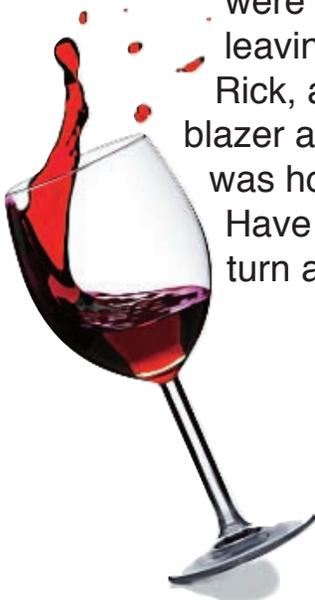
pizza slices, meatballs, chicken wings and a lot more that I can't remember. (The only hors d'oeuvre I didn't like was the chicken wings, because people kept putting their greasy bones in my ashtray. Did you ever take a drag on a butt that was dipped in olive oil and garlic?) In fact, Hank's hor d'oeuvres were so abundant and so good. "The T" came in first when *New York* magazine did an article on the best free bar snacks in town. This ticked off all the regulars, because all of a sudden droves of junior executives and secretaries began showing up every night attacking the hors d'oeuvres trays. The most ticked off of all was Hank. He'd stand there scowling at the strangers as they nursed their drinks for hours and wolfed down five bucks worth of food per person. But little by little, the newcomers stopped coming and things settled back to normal.

## The Teheran's cast of characters. Boy, were they ever.

There were so many, many names and faces you have to remember if you're telling about the regulars and once-in-a-whiles who were at "The T" in those years. Time has made my brain a little fuzzy. But I'll do the best I can. If you were there back then, and can remember some people I've let out, please let me know. I'll put them in when I revise this first draft. What I'm going to do is introduce the characters chronologically in the order I met them at my office or at The Teheran.

Jonathan Gubin and I met about three years before my first night at "The T" He was a traffic man at a long-gone agency called Kaster, Hilton, Chesley, Clifford & Atherton, and I was a junior copywriter. The agency became famous in the '60s for a before and after TV commercial it produced for a weight loss product client. Infamous would be the better word. They cast a young actress and told her that she'd be paid a special bonus for every pound she lost, which was perfectly legal. The problem was the girl ate nothing but the product and lost a gazillion pounds in just a few days. The agency then went ahead and filmed her, failing to point out her starvation technique to the viewing audience. Somebody ratted and in stepped the FTC with huge fines. Kaster, Hilton also produced a small space all type ad for an over the counter product that combated moldy shoes. It was one of the silliest ads in history. The headline read (Product Name) "It turns your shoes into fungus-killing vapor chambers." I'm telling you this so you'd understand why Jon and I would want to get out of there ASAP and go to work for a first rate agency. He went straight to Doyle, Dane. I stopped off at Ted Bates for nine months before joining him.

Jonathan is one of the brightest, funniest (assuming you like puns) guys alive. He's also one of the clumsiest, as in spilling things all over people. (His specialty is red wine.) I was at The Teheran one night right after work when a lot of creative people were toasting Rick Levine, an art director who had announced that he was leaving Doyle Dane Bernbach to go to work for Mary Wells for big bucks. Rick, always a natty dresser, was decked out in a doubled-breasted Cardin blazer and expensive Sulka tie. Enter Jonathan. Without noticing that Rick was holding drink, Jon grabbed for his right hand to offer congratulations. Have you ever seen a glass of Scotch go up in the air in slow motion and turn a white shirt brown on its way to the floor? I have. So has Rick Levine.



Henry (Hank) Mazzocco and Wally Columbo were the second and third people I met at “The T.” When you talk about the odd couple, they’re it. Maybe Neil Simon used to go to The Teheran.

Wally was a shy, thin, Italian-American 50-year old spinster who lived in a nice section of Queens. How she ever became Hank’s sidekick I don’t really know. Every day during the lunch hour and every evening until she went home at 9:00, you’d find Wally at her stool behind the cash register. She kept tracks of tabs, gave change, ran credit cards through the machine and took customers’ coats when it was cold or rainy. She would also function as reluctant banker to regular customers who cashed personal checks at “The T.” (There were no ATMs in those years.) When you first met her, Wally seemed to be sort of dull. But once you drew her out of her shell you knew she was extremely dull. There was something sad about the lady. You sensed loneliness. She never mingled with the customers nor joked with the help.

Hank, on the other hand, was your typical New York restaurant proprietor. He had ESP when it came to knowing what was going on at all time in his establishment. Sometimes, when a new customer came in who looked like a potential trouble maker, he would position himself nearby so that he could keep a sharp eye out. Once in a while, Hank would approach a regular and ask if the suspect was behaving strangely. I never saw him throw anyone out, but I knew he’d have no qualms about doing it. Mr. Mazzocco looked like he knew how to take care of himself. I also knew that he usually had .38 calibre snub nose tucked away in a shoulder holster under his suit jacket because I saw it.

In all my years at “The T”, the only violence I witnessed was the night that Bernie Weil Larry Clarke’s good buddy, knocked some obnoxious drunk to the floor with one short right. The guy had been downing martinis like soda pop, and for some strange reason walked over to Bernie and pulled at his beard. Kabong. Hank got mad at Bernie and said that he just should have told him to throw the drunk out. When we pointed out to Hank that he should have 86ed the guy hours earlier, he walked away in a huff.



I wasn't there the night they had a real barroom brawl. Three businessmen came in at about 10 o'clock already half in the bag and proceeded to drink up a storm. One of them was built like a defensive lineman. (Hank had just gone home.) It seems that they took issue with something a guy at the bar had said, and the big guy picked him up and threw him over some tables. He landed at a table occupied by Will Elder, the illustrator who drew the Little Annie Fannie cartoon for Penthouse magazine. When the three guys left, the big guy picked up a garbage pail that was out front and threw it through "The T's" plate glass entrance. As the story goes, the bartender telephoned Hank and he came back with his son, a New York City cop. They drove around the neighborhood and found the guys, Hank wouldn't tell us what happened after that.

Henry wasn't the kind of guy who threw dollars around. Getting him to spring for a drink was as easy as saying "Hey, Hank today's my birthday and I'm having lunch here for the thousandth time. How about buying me a drink." However, every year at Christmas time, he gave a little present to every regular in the place, and to any goodlooking girl he'd never seen there before.



The Teheran had a neat logotype. It even had a slogan. "Before the show, it's The Teheran." The logo was designed by Wally, of all people. It featured two cartoon drawings of a man. In the first one, he holds a martini glass with an olive in it. This drawing was done

with white tone against black. In the second drawing, he holds opera glasses. This one was drawn in black tone against white. Not bad at all. The logo appeared in a frame at the entrance, on matchboxes, and on all the presents that Hank gave out. One year it would be a plated metal case for matchboxes. The next year it would be a magnifying glass. Or a key ring. Or a ballpoint. Or a pocket size address book.

(I wish I'd saved them all. They'd bring back great memories.)

## Religion comes to The Teheran.

After I'd been settled in at Doyle Dane for about three weeks, a guy knocked on the opened glass door to my office and introduced himself. His name was Bill McNeil, and he worked in the account group. After chatting for a minute, we discovered that we'd both graduated from Iona College the same year. Then he came clean with the reason for his visit. Unlike yours truly, Bill was very involved with The Catholic Church. He said that he was doing some volunteer work for a retreat monastery up on the Hudson River and that was looking for a copywriter to help with a flyer soliciting funds. He had already lined up a Catholic art director at the agency and was happy to see my Italian surname in the memo the agency sent around to announce new creative people. (In those years, the DDB creative department was about 75% Jewish.) I explained to him that although I was born a Catholic and went to Iona I no longer practiced the religion except at weddings and funerals. But Bill wouldn't take no for an answer. He said he'd help me with any part of the assignment I felt uncomfortable with. There was no getting away from this religious fanatic.

Later that day, a guy named Gene Colagiero called me and said he was the other victim that Bill McNeil had conned into doing the assignment. He suggested that we meet at The Teheran after work and try to come up with an idea over drinks. A guy after my own heart. He turned out to be a funny guy who loved his martinis and was about as religious as Al Capone. It took us about ten minutes to come up with a concept. On a Teheran cocktail napkin. Gene sketched a pup tent that had a wooden Crucifix over its entrance. We laughed, and I jotted down a line. "If this would do, we wouldn't have to bother you for money." Then we really laughed. We figured the client would never buy the idea but at least we'd be off the hook for a while. Of course, the priest who ran the retreat house, a Father Collumkillie Reagen, loved the idea, and I just about went crazy writing body copy for the piece. Finally, the piece got printed up and was very successful at raising money for the monastery. (I still have a copy of it.)



## Chauncey gets carried away.

One of the biggest accounts at DDB, and one of the toughest to work on, was the House of Seagram. The agency handled brands like Chivas Regal, Passport Scotch and Calvert Extra, a smooth Canadian blend that Doyle Dane had renamed “Soft Whiskey.” Every May, the liquor industry promoted National Tavern Month. Ads were run nationally in newspapers to salute saloons that carried the client’s good booze.

One year, my pals Ken Chauncey and Chuck Kollewe, art director and copywriter, were given the assignment of coming up with a National Tavern Month ad for Soft Whiskey. The concept they came up with called for a visual that showed a bar full of people. The photo was to be taken from the street, looking in at the gang of happy revelers. Now, under normal circumstances the location would have been a natural for The Teheran. But just a few days before, Ken had bounced a check with Wally, and when she gave him some lip he got mad and vowed that he’d never set foot in the place again unless he was carried there. As an extra FU, he selected one of The Teheran’s competitors, The Berkeley Grill, which was just a few doors down from “The T” towards Fifth Avenue.



A notice circulated around the agency stating that bodies were needed to be in the shot, and that selected principals would be paid \$20 in cash right on the spot. The photo session was scheduled for 10:00 P.M., when most of the Berkeley’s paying customers were all paid up and on their way home. I remember killing time between drinks at The Teheran and the shoot by having dinner at some West Side dive with Al Robinson, unofficial ratpack leader at The Teheran and official Director of Typography at DDB. We arrived at The Berkeley at about 9:30 and were confronted by an unruly mob of Doyle, Daners. Naturally, everybody wanted to be a paid principal and there was only so much money budgeted so there were a lot of unhappy troopers who had hung around for hours only to be ushered to the back of the room in Siberia.

Ken was trying to mollify them and help the photographer set up the shot when we heard some shouting from where the photographer had set up his tri-pod on top of his station wagon across the street. We looked out and saw three drunken Foreign sailors about to climb up on the roof to join him. A bunch of us ran out and told the gobbies to ship out or get their asses arrested so they left.

Back inside again, Ken was perched on top of the bar directing bodies in and out of the shot when all of a sudden Al Robinson and Phil Parker reached over and lifted him up. With all of us wondering what the hell they were doing they proceeded to carry Kenny out the door and down the block to The Teheran. We followed, laughing all the way. But the gag fell apart when we discovered that Hank and Wally had already gone home to Queens and that there were only some of the staff and a few drunks left to witness Ken's glorious homecoming.

Well, the shot finally came off and the ad ran in The Times and Daily News the next week. The incident was almost forgotten until I called my mother up in the Bronx for my weekly hello. The first thing she said was "I saw your picture in the paper, you bum, with a drink in your hand talking to that blonde." It took me ten minutes to explain that my agency did the ad, and that I was supposed to be there with a drink in my hand talking to the blonde. There was a lot of silence on the other end, and to this day, I still don't think she believes me.

### **The Pasta e Fagioli Incident.**



If you'd like to taste a mouth-watering Southern Italian dish that'll make you feel warm all over on a cold winter night, get yourself a bowl of Pasta e Fagioli (called Pasta Farool or Fason by Italian-Americans who don't speak Italian.) It's a white kidney bean and pasta soup that you sprinkle with parmesan cheese and dunk your crusty Italian beard into. I've found only two places that served Pasta e Fagioli my mother's house and The Teheran.

The first time I saw it on the menu I convinced the guys who were at my table to try some. They loved it. It was a meal in itself rather than just a soup. When I told Hank that his version was just as tasty as my mother's he was genuinely flattered. He'd give me advance warnings over the years to tell me when he was featuring the dish, and I made it a point to be there for lunch on those days. When I went in for cocktails on those nights, he'd get me a big jar of leftover Pasta e Fagioli for me to take home.

One night as I was leaving Hank came over and handed me a big jar in a brown paper bag Chuck Kollwe, who was also leaving, asked what it was and Hank told him. Chuck then pointed out that he was regular, too. How come Richie gets some to take home and he doesn't? Chuck rightfully asked. So I handed Hank my big jar and he went back in the kitchen to dig up a jar for Chuck. A few minutes later, as I stepped out of a taxi in front of my apartment building on E. 36th Street, I heard a terrifying crash. The bag I was carrying was wet on the bottom and the jar of you know what fell through and smashed into a million pieces. Just my luck two good-looking couples who were leaving my building witnessed all this. I was mortified I had to find the porter and give him a couple of bucks to clean up the mess.

The next day at the office, I told Chuck what had happened. "Well, at least you had yours," I said. "How was it?" "I dunno," Chuck said. "I fell asleep on my bus and left the stuff on the seat next to me." (Of course, I never told Hank any of this.)

### The Formula For Pasta e Fagioli

- 2 cans Progresso White Cannelini (kidney) Beans
- 1 can tomato sauce (not the tiny, not the huge)
- 1 large yellow onion
- half pound dried pasta, tiny shells or tiny tubes (tubelli)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil



Slice the onion and saute in olive oil. When onions are soft add the beans, including water. Add tomato sauce. Add salt and pepper and stir. Let simmer for about a half hour, boil water for pasta. Cook pasta until it's short of mushy. Drain and add to beans, etc. Stir all together and let simmer for 10 minutes. Serve in bowls with grated cheese and Italian bread. Serve with inexpensive red wine like Gallo Classic or Hearty Burgundy.

I've made this dish, oh, maybe fifty times and it never tastes like the pasta e fagioli my mother and The Teheran used to make. But then, how could it?

## The Corporate side of The Teheran.

Much of The Teheran's customer base came from a handful of companies in the area. Doyle Dane Bernbach supplied the bulk of Hank's business because the agency was just a block away, and because advertising people tended to drink a lot in those days. Also, people in the industry knew that "The T" was a DDB creative department hangout, so there was always a smattering of writers and art directors from other agencies who would come in seeking a job. As you can surmise, many creative guys at DDB conducted job interviews with sweet young things from those other agencies right there at the bar.

Even closer to the restaurant were *The New Yorker* Magazine, Stern's Department



Store and Meyerwitz Opticians. A few New Yorker cartoonists would come by regularly, along with Ken Bosee and Elaine Matteo from management and Ann Miller and Mary Quayle from advertising. The Stern's people were a happy group--until the store suddenly folded and everybody was thrown into the street. (I was there that day. It wasn't pleasant.) For opticians and oculists the Meyerwitz folks really knew how to drink. They'd stay in their group from about 6:00 to 8:00 just about every night of the week. I knew them by their first names and thought they

were really pleasant. Just the same, when it time to have my eyes examined for a new prescription, went to the guy in my office building because I never once saw him in The Teheran belting down a drink.

Another clique consisted of some fun-loving folks led by Larry Clarke, an insurance executive who grew up in Brooklyn. There was Carole, Bernie, Jack, Steve, Barry and their friends. This group quickly became part of the Doyle Dane and *New Yorker* groups. To this day, there's a great Thursday night poker game still going on in the city consisting of guys from those three groups who met more than twenty years ago at "The T."

The last major clique, and perhaps the most important was the Yugoslavian waiter staff that Hank had assembled. Looking back, I realized that these guys had it made. They were a charming bunch of scoundrels who were either blood relatives or friends from the old country. They all were from restaurant families in Yugoslavia and were strongly anti-communist and pro America. Most of them had tons of wives and packs of kids back in New Jersey. But that didn't stop them from making moves on ladies who had had a few too many. Their names? Merinko (Mario), his brother Mike, Joe, Tito,

The Croatans were complimented by a wonderful group of Irish-American New Yorkers. Most of them were on the lunch shift. Jack The Bartender, Mary Ellen, Katie, Natalie, Kathy, Edwena and God knows how many more. Many of them had worked at The Teheran for years. The only Teheran employee I didn't care for was a busboy hors d'oeuvre slinger named Tony. He had a habit of bumping you with the tray first and then asking if you cared for any. I'd often pull a blazer out of my closet only to notice a line of dried up grease where Tony had zinged me some nights before. I complained about this to Hank. This only made matters worse. Now Tony seemed to find great joy in bumping. "The T's" patrons. One evening after we both got "bumped" Larry Clarke and I told Hank to keep the guy away from us or we'd stop coming in. This time our complaints seemed to work. Tony became the perfect tidbit server from then on.

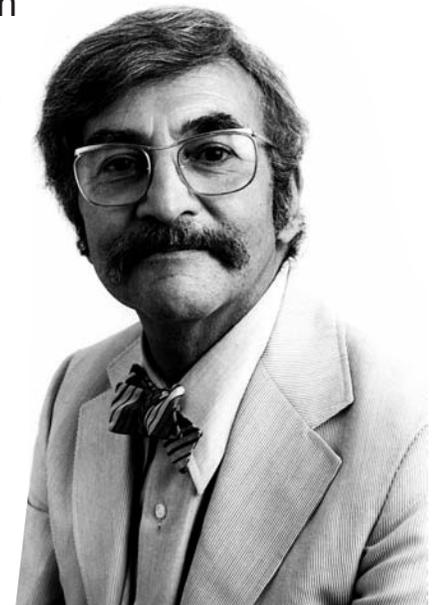
### **The little girl who sat on the bar.**

One beautiful summer evening after work, I was invited to attend a cocktail party at The Teheran for a secretary named Peggy who worked in the Polaroid International account group. She had just come back to work from a hospital stay. The party was being thrown by the three British account men who ran the piece of business--Jerry Mathes, Alex Schwabe and Rodney Woods. Our group occupied the corner of the bar closest to the front door. There was the usual chitchat about the office, and it was a happy get together until one of the girls in the group, a short dark woman in her early twenties whose name escapes me said to no one in particular "You know? I used to sit right here on the bar when I was a little girl." Naturally, all eyes turned to her.

She told us that her father had opened The Teheran just after the war. She said that, except for the harem mural, everything was different now. She described a brightly lighted place with chandeliers and mirrors that specialized in gourmet Eastern foods. She said the business was a disaster, and that her dad had to sell the fixtures to pay some of his debts. That's when Hank came in and got the lease. It was a sad story and everyone fell silent. But at least it cleared up one thing it explained how two Italians from Queens ended up in a restaurant with an Iranian name.

### **Floyd and Fred.**

No piece about The Teheran in the 60's and 70's would be complete if it didn't include Floyd and Fred. Both gentlemen were senior writers at Doyle Dane Bernbach who should be listed in Websters under the definition for "character."



Floyd was from a well to do family in Chicago. He never talked about his childhood except to mention that he had been an original Quiz Kid. He spent most of his adult life working in New York as a reporter/photographer for various motion picture gossip magazines. He must have been in his early fifties by the time he got into the advertising business. Floyd was the most intense, most compulsive man I ever met. For some reason, he owned about fifty expensive wrist watches and always wore one on each wrist at the same time. Peter Murphy, a copywriter with keen wit, once turned to Floyd at a going away party and asked “Floyd what times are it?” When you asked Floyd about this quirk, he’d get very defensive and say hat he was merely testing the watches for accuracy.

Floyd’s drink was a vodka martini on the rocks with absolutely nothing else. He’d pronounce the “wadka” because he said that’s how the Polish people pronounced it, although as far as I knew he wasn’t Polish. When he ordered his drink, he’d shake his finger at the order taker and say “Now you listen, no lemon, olive or onion or anything in it you got that?” As you might expect, this made Floyd tremendously popular with bartenders, waitresses and waiters all around town. That, and the fact that he didn’t tip on top of the tax and when he did, it was usually in the area of 8%.

Floyd went to “The T” just about every night. Although he was frequently there during lunch. I never saw him order a meal. Instead, he’d hover about until he saw people from the agency having lunch and then walk over, martini in hand, and ask if he could sit down. He’d pick up some of Hank’s Italian bread from the table’s basket and borrow a knife from someone next to him. Since he always ordered additional martinis and tipped only 8%, there was always a mess when the people at the table tried to figure out the bill.



One day, Chuck, Justin Crasto, Jim Brown and I, who were Floyd’s co-workers and friends, by the way, figured out a solution. We told Hank that we wanted separate checks whenever we ordered anything in The Teheran. Hank was reluctant at first. But when he realized we were serious, he went along with it. This one small move saved all of us hundreds upon hundreds of dollars. Because at the cocktail

hour, if you happened to walk into the place with people from Doyle Dane--people who weren’t know by Jack the bartender and who were only casually known to you--you usually wound up with their drinks on your tab. This had happened to Larry Clarke many times, too. So when he heard about our separate checks request he also talked to Hank.

Fred was also in his fifties when he joined DDB. He was born in Stockton, California and had an engineering degree in metallurgy. This provided the perfect background for him to go into the field of writing jokes and programs ideas for the Goodson/Todman production team of early TV game show fame. Unlike Floyd, who was basically a humorless man, Fred always had a twinkle in his eye. Also, Fred was about two inches taller than Floyd, and had about 50 hairs on his head compared to Floyd's 31.

One night I was telling some of the guys in The Teheran a joke. When I got to the punchline, everyone laughed except Fred. He just looked at me and asked "What?" When I repeated it and he got it he accused me of talking too fast, which I often do when I get excited about something. But how come everybody else has heard me? When I pressed him about it, Fred admitted that he was hard of hearing. So from then on I made it a point to tell him very loud jokes.

Fred sat three doors down from me at the agency. One day I heard him hollering (at about a thousand decibels) at some poor young account executive who worked on the General Telephone & Electronic account. It seems that the AE had promised the client he'd have body copy for him in a couple of hours with consulting with Fred, who just happened to be the copywriter. Fred. "Harry Harry. You're a nice guy. Why don't you do me, the client and the agency a big favor. Harry, why don't you go into some other business?" Writers and art directors came out of their offices holding their stomachs, they were laughing so hard. The funniest thing was that Harry left the agency about a month later to go with an architectural company.



Fred was married a few times and was dating when I met him. At the time he was dating a lady he called "Crazy Miriam." He mentioned many other ladies he knew over the years and I made a comment that it sounds like he was quite the mover in his day. He looked at me, and with a straight face said "You must realize that I wasn't always a short, fat man with no hair. Years ago, I was six feet three and had long blonde hair and deep blue eyes."

I sure miss Floyd and Fred.

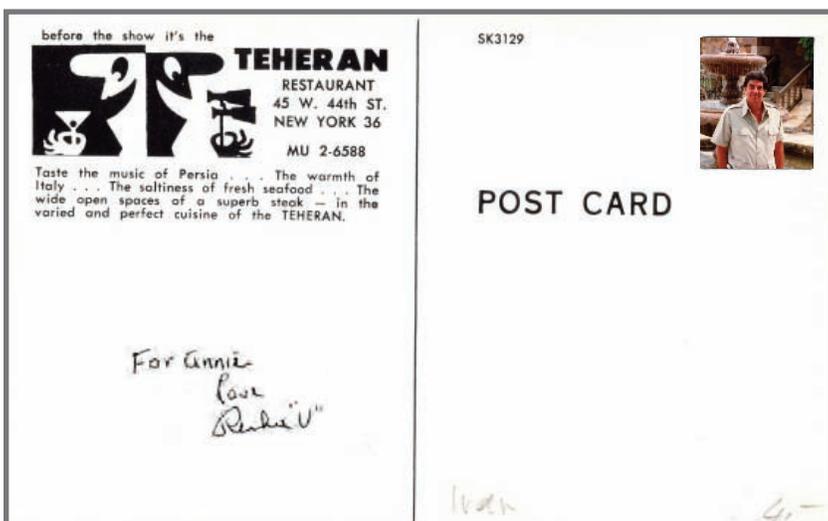
## The Grand Finale.

In 1976 I moved from the town I'd lived in all my life and took a job with the San Francisco office of Foote, Cone & Belding I'd made at least two trips a year back to New York and always made it a point to stop by The Teheran. Each time I visited the place, there was something different. Some of Hank's waiters had left and started restaurants of their own. Many customers had moved away, including all the Doyle Dane folks, because the agency took space in a fancy building on Madison Avenue and 48th Street. Also some of the store fronts in the neighborhood were new and unfamiliar to me. (The old Roylton Hotel which used to be a favorite shack up place for businessmen having flings, was now a swank top-dollar joint owned by the French.)

During the hostage situation in Iran, some angry jerks mistook The Teheran for a real Iranian restaurant and went on a campaign of throwing garbage pails through Hank's plate glass windows every night. Friends called to tell me that they'd seen him being interviewed on television news shows, and that he begged the pail throwers to stop their nonsense because he and his partner were both Italian Americans who were born in New York.

A few years ago, I heard more bad news about "The T." The people who owned the lot The Teheran was on sold it to a developer who wound up never developing anything. Hank and Wally closed the place and retired to Florida. Someone at *The New Yorker* wrote a lovely goodbye piece about the restaurant.

On one of my trips back I took a walk down West 44th Street. There it was, a big hole in the block where The Teheran once stood. I stopped for a minute and had to blink my eyes a few times because what I saw saddened me. Then I continued walking towards Fifth Avenue thinking about all the great times I used to have on that vacant lot.



Richard Vitaliano  
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