

Fragile Bridge

By Suzy Hopkins

We were frantically yanking the chair cushions and couch pillows down to sit on the floor to avoid being hit by crossfire. I knew none of the people sheltering in this large ornately decorated room at the American embassy in Iran. All foreigners are welcome when the fighting begins. The Geneva Conventions require warring factions to avoid innocents and all occupants of embassies. I was sitting next to an older man from Spain. Somehow I communicated to the man my Spanish was limited to what I learned from Sesame Street while watching with my son – *agua* (water), *abierto* (open) and *cerrado* (closed). He laughed. He indicated his English was picked up from watching the same TV show with his little granddaughter. We just smiled at each other reassuringly every time we heard gunfire or a bomb explode outside.

Loudly one of the blasts shattered a window and knocked the lights out. Instinctively, in the dark, we reached for each other's hands. Our hands formed a temporary, fragile but vital bridge. At that moment it was all the hope we had for our futures.