

ULTRA

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**Georgette Mosbacher
and a world of Texans**



INTERNATIONALLY TEXAN

The concept of an integrated world, a world where the differences among peoples are celebrated, not feared, and one where ethnicity is seen as an enriching element, has been a dream of many for centuries. John Lennon sang, "Imagine there's no countries. It isn't hard to do." Marshall McLuhan wrote of the global village, a world in which territorial boundaries fade as communication between peoples flourishes, fostered by the advent of improved technology. One way to achieve this dream is through the liaisons formed between individuals—sometimes through a business relationship, sometimes through a social meeting, and often through immigration.

Texas is becoming increasingly international as its natives form international alliances. Our state is home to more than 856,000 foreign-born Texans from more than 30 countries. Every populated continent is represented here. We also help educate the world: Nearly 24,000 collegians in the state hail from other nations. The result is a cosmopolitan richness that enhances life here and affords us the opportunity to expand our personal boundaries—for each of these Texans brings new interests, new experiences, and a new dimension to our state.



JASMINE AZIMA

By Blair Calvert Fitzsimons
Photograph by Bob Cardellino

When Iranian-born Yasaman Azima moved to Texas in 1976, many of the simple facets of daily life baffled her. A can of cat food in the grocery store looked no different than tuna to the seventeen-year-old. Driving on the expressway was new and bewildering. And the movies she watched on television were always interrupted by someone wearing blue jeans or selling soap.

But Azima, the daughter of a well-respected Iranian professor and a registered nurse, did know plenty about her field of study, math and science, which had won her a coveted four-year scholarship to the University of Texas in Austin from the Shah's government. When she arrived in the United States, she had just two months to learn English before

enrolling in the engineering program, but she still completed her undergraduate degree in three years. Today, using the Anglo version of her first name, 30-year-old Jasmine Azima is owner and president of the San Antonio-based Jasmine Engineering, the only female-owned MEP (mechanical, electrical, and plumbing) engineering firm in the state. A generous donor of both money and time to local causes, she was awarded a Young Outstanding Woman of America citation in 1987.

Azima arrived at school a wide-eyed teenager who had led a sheltered life. "I had never taken a taxi by myself in Iran," she says. "I was a child that they used to take everywhere." Austin, with its sororities and fraternities, parties, and all-night eateries, was exhilarating. But in many ways Texas reminded her of home, with its culture of hospitality, its oil-based economy, and the underlying Mexican influences of machismo and Latin temperament. And she soon discovered that everyone loved foreigners. "They loved the accent, and they thought foreigners were rich and foreigners were nice and foreigners were good-looking. Even during the hostage crisis they were nice to me."

Azima had traveled extensively in Europe with her family when she was young, and her parents had European and American friends. As a result, many Western ways—dress, religion, dating customs—were not new to her. The more abstract ideas of democracy and egalitarianism were a surprise. To her amazement, she discovered that a poor student could sit next to a rich one in class and have the same opportunity to learn. "You didn't have to be somebody's daughter," says Azima. "I was even amazed over the telephone because in Iran you have to pay a bunch of money to have a phone. Here if you're president or just an average guy you can have a telephone and pay your bill and have the phone connected in twenty-four hours. In Iran the waiting list can be eleven or twelve years unless you know someone and pay the price on the black market."

Even before the fall of the Shah, Azima decided she wouldn't return to Iran. By that time, she had come to expect the advantages offered by life in the United States. But there were tradeoffs. In Iran her family was well-connected and well-respected. To make a name for herself in this country was a challenge, but it was one she relished. "I love to be in a position of not getting anything easy," she says. "I like to see that everything that you work for, you go through hell to get."