Afghan Connections
دوستان افغانستان

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Available to anyone interested in the country and people of Afghanistan

GOING BACK TO KABUL

In the March 2003 issue of Afghan Connections, Dr. Cedric and Norma Emery reported on their impressions of Kabul and their medical work. Dr. Emery sent this update. He is a urologist and Norma is a nurse in Ventura, CA.

Norma and I are planning to return to Kabul July 2nd for two weeks. A German company, Karl Storz, Inc., is giving me a wonderful large assortment of new urological endoscopy equipment to take with us that will bring the Ali Abad Hospital in Shari Nou up from the 19th century to the 21st century. I'll teach the surgeons how to use the equipment, and Norma will teach the OR nurses how to clean and care for the equipment. The latter is the most important of all.

Some of my patients have donated about $3,000 for the northern Kabul orphanage, so Norma will supervise some projects there, too.

A physician friend recently returned from Kabul, and he says Kabul is still very safe and a lot of good projects are going on. Unfortunately, the world press continues to highlight and focus on the negative things that happen in Afghanistan and ignores the wonderful areas of progress.

If any readers want to help the hospital, send checks directly to me and I will buy used, but good surgical equipment for the hospital and take it with me. There will be no tax write-off.

Cedric and Norma Emery
1360 Say Road
Santa Paula, CA 93060

REPORT FROM BAMIAN
By Don Meier

Don Meier was a PCV in Iran, 1966-68, and lived in Kabul, 1975-78.

I've been working as a Field Program Officer in Bamian for USAID Afghanistan since late February. I am with about 50 U.S. Army soldiers on a PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) base, which is something of an experiment that is supposed to be a model for the military in Iraq. My job consists of supervising USAID-funded projects in the region, such as the rehabilitation of schools and clinics, once that activity begins.

In the meantime, I'm assessing opportunities for potential interventions in the area that are beyond the resources of other donors or the capacity of other agencies to implement, like some large-scale dams and bridges. I'm rather dismayed by all the recent unwarranted criticism about the slow pace of reconstruction activities in Afghanistan. There is a lot more taking place than credit is given; you have (Please see MEIER on page 3)

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Friends of Afghanistan
FOA was begun within the National Peace Corps Association. Membership is open to everyone.

Mission: To build an international network of people interested in Afghanistan (RPCVs and staff, people from other organizations, interested Afghans, and other friends of the country) to exchange information about Afghanistan.

Goals: a) To facilitate a peaceful and constructive dialogue about Afghanistan; b) To inform the members and the public about these issues and about organizations assisting the Afghan people; c) To serve as the alumni organization for Afghan RPCVs and staff.

Newsletter: The FOA newsletter, Afghan Connections, welcomes articles of general interest, which may be edited for style and length. Membership dues ($15 a year) include a year's subscription to the newsletter.

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WEST OF KABUL, EAST OF NEW YORK
Book Review by Debra DeBondt
(PCV Kenya, 1997-2000)

Perhaps you got the e-mail during those shocked, nervous days after 9/11. [It was reprinted in the Sept. 28, 2001, Special Edition of Afghan Connections.] Written by an Afghan-American, it was a powerful statement of life for Afghans under the Taliban. And it countered the violent American voices that urged “bombing Afghanistan back to the Stone Age.” For the e-mail’s author, Tamim Ansary, that message, written in a moment of passion and sent to a handful of friends, became a life-altering event. To his shock, it reached countless people all over the globe and inspired him to tell his story in West of Kabul, East of New York.

That story is of a bi-cultural man. Ansary’s Afghan father, sent by his government to U.S. universities to “acquire Western knowledge,” returned to Afghanistan in 1945 with a bride, then the only American woman in Kabul. Ansary spent his earliest years in a world now lost. He brings it alive as he describes the comfortable private realm of his extended family’s walled compound in a universe of such dwellings and interconnected families. When he was nine, he moved with his parents and siblings to Lashkargah, where his father worked on a US-funded development project. There he attended Afghan schools and played with American kids. When the opportunity arose, he eagerly accepted a scholarship to attend high school in the U.S.

All during his adult life, Ansary wanted to reconcile the disparate worlds of his lineage and experience. His story reflects his endeavor to accommodate the Afghanistan he remembers from his childhood with the country that it became while he was assimilating into American life. We follow him on a journey through North Africa and Turkey in his quest to understand the radical Islam that his brother was drawn to as compared to the Islam of his own boyhood. He says in the book’s epilogue, “Growing up bi-cultural is like straddling a crack in the earth.” His efforts at straddling, told in his powerful prose, are a gift to us on the American side.

(MEIER, continued from page 1)

to remember that we’re starting with what even President Karzai calls a “bombed-out shell.” There is a limit to the absorptive capacity of this society, but progress is being made step by step.

Although the security situation seems to be deteriorating in some of the Pashtun-dominated areas of the country, Afghans continue to look to the United States to provide the peace and stability that they so desperately want.

AFGHAN NEWS AND PHOTOS

Bill Loughner sent the following web sites that update Afghan news daily:
http://dailynews.yahoo.com/fc/World/Afghanistan
http://www.afghandaily.com/
http://afghanistan.newstrove.com/
http://www.afghannews.net/

Betsy Amin-Arsala forwarded this site that has photos by Douglas R. Powell:
http://geoimages.berkeley.edu/GeoImages/Powell/PowellAfghan.html

Bill Mittendorff sent this site which he says is “a fascinating slide show on how Afghanistan’s Shias mourn the death of Hussein.”
http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/culture/articles/eav042503.shtml

FOA PRESIDENT’S STATEMENT

by Nancy Cunningham

Recently I received an article that referred to RPCVs looking down on people who haven’t had the experiences we RPCVs had. I think it’s important for those of us who served in Afghanistan to avoid feeling resentful that the world, especially the US, is finally taking notice of Afghanistan, and not have a "proprietary" attitude about the country we know and love, and which was neglected for so long. We should continue to share what we know about the people and culture of the real Afghanistan, and do our best to see that it is not forgotten again.

WOMEN’S INTERNATIONAL LITERACY SUPPORT (WIL)

The following is an excerpt from information provided by Jane Jackson, Founder and Chair of WIL.

We believe that all women and children of the world deserve an education, therefore enhancing the possibility of world peace. WIL’s goal is to provide funds for school supplies in countries where educational systems are either non-existent or severely impaired.

We chose Afghanistan as our first project. WIL sponsored a Spring Ball and sent the proceeds (through CARE) to Afghanistan for school supplies. We invite you to become a participant in this endeavor for literacy. COLLECTIVELY, WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE.

Contact information
Women’s International Literacy Support
P.O. Box 133384
Chicago, IL 60613-0384    janejackson4757@aol.com

FOA FINANCIAL REPORT

Each year NPCA affiliate groups are required to submit a report to the NPCA in order to maintain their affiliation. Part of the 2002 report is a financial statement summarized below.

INCOME

Opening Balance: $4988
Membership Dues $4053
NPCA Rebates 2025
Donations 402
Total: $6480

EXPENSES:
Newsletter $1277
Dues to NPCA 1375
Affiliation Fee 248
Misc. 101
Total $3001

BALANCE: $8467
SCHOOLS FOR AFGHANISTAN
By Tony Agnello (PCV Afghanistan, 1972-74)

The Orchard Park Educational Outreach is a service organization at the Orchard Park High School (OPHS) just south of Buffalo, NY. Our group, for which I am a co-advisor, has acted locally, nationally and internationally, giving our students the opportunity to feed the homeless, provide scholarship assistance to children orphaned by the attacks of 9/11/01, support earthquake relief in India, and provide supplies to an orphanage in Bosnia.

Our largest effort has raised funds to build schools for the women and children of Afghanistan. Each of our village schools will be built for about $10,000 to $12,000 since we are working directly with local authorities.

Presently, we have 10 schools in western NY with projects focusing on educational aid for Afghanistan. One group is called "Schools and Futures," a phrase that came from one of our students. The statement to a local news program was "We're building schools for Afghan children so they can build futures for themselves."

Educational Outreach raised funds from the community, churches, school clubs, and the Buffalo Teachers Federation, which made a contribution of $5,000. The OPHS recently had a faculty basketball game and variety show that raised almost $3,000. I'm looking for partner schools in Canada to make the school construction project an international effort.

I plan to coordinate the construction of three schools during a visit to Afghanistan in early July. The first two schools will be built through the generous guidance, support, and administrative efforts of Tom Gouttierre and Abdul Raheem Yaseer of the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Their colleague in Kabul, Mr Azimi, has already done initial feasibility studies and site investigations for school construction near Baghram. The third school will be built under the direction of Afghans for Civil Society out of Cambridge, MA and Kandahar. This group is directed by Sara Chayes and Qayoom Karzai, the President's brother.

I would like to recruit students in U.S. public and private schools as well as colleges and universities to achieve a self sustaining "critical mass" of activism directed at Afghan projects. I have been contacted by numerous RPCVs and other community groups regarding similar projects; I want to encourage leaders to begin fund raising and look for partner groups to form coalitions.

Here are some suggestions for getting started: Establish a steering committee and set clear and simple goals. Map out a plan with a time line; make sure that you meet your financial goal even if you have to extend the time. Ideas will flow from your steering committee for fund raising. Contact student groups in numerous schools and form a coalition of schools to help. Find a teacher for whom issues of gender equity resonate and have him or her recruit students. Create a student-to-student initiative from our kids to theirs, fighting the next generation of the war on terrorism through idea exchange and educational opportunities. Get churches involved. In our NY experience, we received 25 percent of our funds from churches.

Anyone interested in learning more about what we have done in New York should feel free to contact me for a review of our activities in order to see whether duplicating our Afghanistan project is feasible for your group.

Tony Agnello
C/O Orchard Park HS, 4040 Baker Rd.
Orchard Park, NY 14127
716-822-3123

samangan72@aol.com
POSTHUMOUS EDITORIAL IN REMEMBRANCE OF SUSAN

It's been a year since my wife, Susan Aronson, who edited Afghan Connections for several years, passed away. While going through some of her old e-mails, I found this letter she had written in February 2002, to a friend who had asked what she thought about the U.S. bombing in Afghanistan. I include it as a tribute to her, her philosophy (and wit), and because what she wrote is also pertinent to Iraq. Editor

Dear Mike,
You are so right about the heavy-footed, heavy-handed "saviors" charging into countries they know very little about... If we put those extra billions of dollars requested by George W. Shrub for military expenditures into food, aid, building infrastructure, taking weapons away from the warlords, and watching who the heck the U.S. is bombing, we'd be a lot better off. "Friendly fire" has always seemed an oxymoron. Why can't the military differentiate between the innocent villagers and the Taliban?

And why should everybody in the world have to speak English? Where are all the people who could actually communicate with the people we need to reach? The CIA and FBI and other intelligence organizations screwed up because they didn't have people handy to translate critically important documents in such a major world language as Arabic, for Pete's sake.

What does the average American know about Islam and all the different shades of it? We certainly know all Christians are not alike (or even likeable), and neither are all the Muslims. No one religion should claim to have all the right answers.

When I watch (never listen to – always mute) the commercials on TV, I can certainly understand why a large part of the world has its serious doubts about the U.S. and the developed world's concern for the poorest people.

We don't need the cars, the cosmetics, the medications, the food, the financial planning, the cell phones, the alcohol, the clothes, and most of the other things advertised. We're talking basics here. We HAVE the resources to provide the world with food, clean water, decent shelter, and education – but we don't use them (the resources) wisely. Now if WOMEN ran the world, it would be a different story, in my humble opinion.

This may be a bit more than you'd asked, but since I still can't talk much, I can sure still write. All of us will be glad when I'm off some of the medications and am through with the chemo. You caught me mid-cycle, which accounts for the length of this reply. Right after chemo, I'm down for about three days. Bummer.

Take care, and VOTE DEMOCRATIC.
Susan

Susan died on May 7, 2002.

WAR VS. REBUILDING

With all of the media attention on the war in Iraq, it is pretty certain that much less attention will be paid to the rebuilding phase. The same has been true in Afghanistan. Anita Creamer, a columnist for the Sacramento Bee (April 25, 2003) put it well.

"And so we blink away the unruliness of complexity. Next please... Times of transition can be difficult. Maybe that's why we want to rush through them, to flit away from one story to the next, to brush aside the complications and minimize their importance. But moving on doesn't always include solving and moving beyond. Any movement at all can seem like progress, even when it's not. Patience simply isn't our strength."
IN MEMORIAM
CAROL HELM, 1922 - 2003

Carol Helm died March 16, 2003 at Hospice of the Valley in Phoenix, Arizona. She was born Carol Hope Shaw on December 20, 1922, in Lorain, Ohio.

Carol enjoyed a varied, colorful and adventurous life. As a young woman in Ohio, Carol was an office worker for wartime defense industries. She married Gordon Garber in 1943 and after the war, made a home for them and the three children that followed. Carol worked in a variety of real estate sales and management positions while raising and educating her children.

Following the death of her husband in 1972, Carol went back to school, earned her teaching degree and joined the Peace Corps. She served in Afghanistan for five years as an instructor at the Institute for Industrial Management for the Ministry of Education in Kabul, Afghanistan. Her major responsibility was teaching business skills to Afghan high school students. Having a love of Afghanistan, she continued to live in Kabul. She worked in an administrative capacity for the U.S. Agency for International Development for the University of Nebraska at Kabul University. She also served with the CARE/Medical Chief Medical Officer at Avicena Hospital in Kabul.

After returning to Arizona from Afghanistan, she pursued the teaching career that she loved. She designed and taught classes for adaptive education and special needs students. Carol continued her education, achieving multiple masters degrees in challenging aspects of education.

In 1994 Carol became reacquainted with an American businessman, H. Max Helm, she had met in Kabul almost 20 years earlier. They were married in December of that year.

Carol loved turning strangers from around the world into heartfelt friends. All of her Internet friends were dear to her — the letters are worn off the key caps on her computer, which she used nearly every day of her life until the last few weeks. We all are better for knowing her.

She is survived by her husband Max; children Gary and Sharol Garber, and Noelle Collins; and several grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The family requested, in lieu of flowers, a contribution to the Arizona Cancer Center, P. O. Box 245024, Tucson, AZ 85724.

Thanks to Bridget O’Conner for forwarding this obituary to Afghan Connections.

JUXTAPOSITION

Allen Merriam writes, “A friend produced this

Monuments destroyed by the Taliban/Al-Qaeda - 2001

postcard on his home computer. I took the photo of the Bamiyan Buddha on August 26, 1966. The picture of the World Trade Center was taken by a former colleague. . . . To juxtapose these monuments seems appropriate since they were destroyed exactly six months apart by like-minded extremists.”

NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL

An editorial titled, “Job Half-Done in Afghanistan,” which appeared 5/15/03 in The New York Times, stated that the Bush administration “did not adequately concern itself with issues of internal security” and “seriously underestimated the amount of aid” required. As a result, Karzai’s government has been weakened. Feuding warlords with private armies (estimated to have 100,000 fighters) control most of the country. U.S. efforts in training troops

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(EDITORIAL, continued from page 6)

for a national army is progressing slowly. The security situation has slowed private investment and economic growth which means too little revenue is being generated via taxes to pay public sector workers. The editorial calls for “Washington... to augment its efforts to bring security and development to Afghanistan.”

NPCA NEWS

Dane Smith Steps Down
From 3/1/61 Spring Issue (2003). On Jan. 7, Dane Smith announced his resignation as president of the National Peace Corps Association. Smith, who has served as chief executive for 3½ years indicated he would like to leave office as soon as the board hires his replacement. He said, “I believe it’s time for some new blood [and] new leadership prepared to give the requisite time and energy.” Smith said that he wants to spend more time with his wife and family. He hopes to remain active in NPCA activities. Smith was chosen as president upon his retirement from a 33-year career in the Foreign Service. He served as a PCV in Ethiopia/Eritrea, 1963-65.

Annual General Meeting August 1-3, 2003
From 3/1/61 Spring Issue (2003) Come to Portland, Oregon for NPCA’s Annual General Meeting and President’s Forum August 1-3 and enjoy a Northwest vacation. In addition to the meeting, there will be workshops, an international bazaar, a career fair, and an exhibit by the Committee for a Museum of the Peace Corps Experience [see page 10]. The AGM will be at the DoubleTree Hotel in downtown Portland, 310 W. Lincoln Street. Register for NPCA events at www.rpcv.org and call the DoubleTree for room reservations at 503-221-0450. The group rate is $85 per night for reservations made by July 21 under our “TPHOLs” group name.

If any FOA members plan to attend, please let me know so we can arrange to meet. Editor (see box on page 2 for contact information).

2004 NPCA National Conference
Chicago has been selected as the host city for the 2004 NPCA National Conference. The Chicago Area Peace Corps Association (CAPCA) in conjunction with the NPCA will hold the four-day conference August 5-8, 2004. The theme of the conference will be Celebrating a Legacy of Service. CAPCA is currently looking for the support of other interested organizations in the Chicago area and nationally. Potential presenters, volunteers, sponsors or those with any additional questions should contact the NPCA 2004 Conference Planning Committee Chair, Trina Janes, at chicago2004@rpcv.org or 312/645-9400 ex. 35 or CAPCA President Stephanie Arnold at msarnold@gsb.uchicago.edu.

MAIL FROM HITHER & YON

Huntsville, AL – March 3, 03 – Donald Hill sent the following: "Afghan Group 2 Volunteers: Only four copies are left of an Afghanistan picture book (unbound, 30 pages, 8.5 x 11, with hundreds of candid pictures). It was printed in 1965 by the volunteer printers in Afghan Group 2. Free of charge to the first four volunteers to call (256) 721-9231."

Mattvale, NY – March 3, 03 – Dick David writes, "I am doing fine; my lung problems are about the same as two years ago so I am grateful for that. I am still working as a home health aide and love it very much, although I do tire easily. I will be 64 this summer, Enshahalla!"

Bozeman, MT – March 4, 03 – Karen Tkach writes, "The recent newsletter was so full of positive news about Afghanistan. Sometimes it is hard to keep up the hope for the Afghans. Your newsletter was very good. Thanks."

Falls Church, VA – March 5, 03 – Nasrine Gross writes that her website on Afghan Women has changed to www.kabultc.org.

(Please see MAIL on page 8)
(MAIL, continued from page 7)

Paoli, PA – March 5, 03 – Bob & LeeLee Devenney write, "As always, great to hear news from RPCV's and news about Afghanistan."

Vancouver, BC, Canada – March 8, 03 – Karl Perrin writes, "It's inspiring to hear from those still working for peace in the Middle East. Mary Lyn Villaume assures me that her Cairo accent (in Arabic) is good enough to avoid harassment in Egypt. I pray for peace."

Pullman, WA – March 11, 03 – Miriam Stratton writes, "I thoroughly enjoy and find the newsletter very informative. Thank you for your effort in getting it out."

Liberty Glen, MS – March 17, 03 – Glen Huff writes, "I am interested in returning to Kabul to do something, so if anything else comes along, please forward it . . . ; basically, I am a teacher."

Omaha, NE – March 19, 03 – Abdul Yaseer writes, "It has been a very busy year for us here at UNO/Center for Afghan Studies, and both Tom [Gouttiere] and I have made several trips to Afghanistan since the fall of Taliban. Things are moving in the right direction there, but there are still a lot of challenges and problems. People are hopeful and optimistic of the future, but they have a little concern in the back of their minds about the possible reduction of attention and support by USA and international community due to the . . . war with Iraq."

Watford, UK – April 03 – Ros Scherler writes, "I have been living and working in Cambodia for the last year and enjoying it immensely – working as an education adviser in Phnom Penh. Many challenges but an interesting life as volunteer with V.S.O."

Kabul – April 2, 03 – Nazir Halim writes, "The majority of Kabul University professors, lecturers, and staff have been visiting different institutions of higher education in Germany, including the University of Bonn. That institution had a relationship with some Kabul University faculties up to 1978, and now that connection has been re-established."

Atlanta, GA – April 15, 03 – Barb Runyan writes, "I'm interested . . . in the next [Sept.] newsletter with the listing of different programs working in Afghanistan. When I retire in less than 5 years, I want to go back!"

Herat, Afghanistan – April 24, 03 – John Barbee writes, "I enjoyed the latest FOA newsletter with the article from Cedric and Norma Emery very much. I was in Herat for three months this winter and was impressed at the 'normalization' of life there, albeit with high influx of refugees and IDPs. There was one children's project that was just being started with some help from a USA Sister Cities person there."

Mumbai (Bombay), India – May 13, 03 – Nancy Cunningham writes, "I think about Susan so often, especially now that it has been a year [since she passed]. She was such a wise person . . . I remember so well her insights and good judgement and ability to bring people together."

"On a personal note, my next [State Department Foreign Service] assignment is Paris. I will return to the US in January, have home leave, six months of French in Washington, and move to Paris in late August 2004. All Afghanistan RPCVs can visit – remember the French were very supportive of Ahmed Shah Masood."

**PEACE CORPS ARCHIVE PROJECT**

RPCV Mythographer Bob Klein (Ghana 1961-63) and James Roth, who is the RPCV Collection Organizer at the John F. Kennedy Library, are collaborating on a project to collect oral history interviews and personal papers from individuals who have served in the Peace Corps and to facilitate the deposit of such materials in the RPCV collection at the Kennedy Library. For more information about this project, contact Emily O'Rourke at the NPCA (emily@rpcv.org).
RENEWING AND NEW MEMBERS


MEMBERSHIP NOTE

Thanks to all of you who renew your FOA membership on time. Please check the address label for your renewal date. You are due to renew when the date is highlighted in yellow. Dennis

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR FRIENDS OF AFGHANISTAN

Name(s): ____________________________________________________________

Mailing Address: __________________________________________________________________________

City, State, and Zip: ________________________________________________________________________

Telephone: (Home) __________________________ (Work) __________________________

Fax: __________________________

e-mail: __________________________________________________________

Dates of Years Spent in Afghanistan and Location(s): ______________________________________________________________________

Occupation in Afghanistan: ______________________________________________________________________

Current Occupation: ______________________________________________________________________

___ $15 Friends of Afghanistan (one year individual or family)

___ $50 Friends of Afghanistan and NPCA (one year individual) $135 Three years

___ $65 Friends of Afghanistan and NPCA (one year family) $180 Three years

************

___ Please check here if you prefer your name be omitted from a roster of members (available only to members; not for sale).

For single-year memberships, make check payable to Friends of Afghanistan and mail application form and check to Dennis Hamilton, c/o 9025 Chantall Way, Sacramento CA 95829-1717. Membership will be recorded for the newsletter and the check forwarded to Dennis. For overseas subscriptions, please add $5 (if only FOA); $20 if also NPCA. Thank you!

For three-year memberships, please make check payable to NPCA and send to 1900 L Street, NW, Suite 205, Washington, DC 20036-5002. The NPCA will send your FOA dues each year to the FOA treasurer.
SPECIAL ISSUE OF AFGHAN CONNECTIONS

The September 2003 issue of Afghan Connections will include information on numerous private organizations that are providing humanitarian and reconstruction aid to Afghanistan.

Members have commented that such information can be shared with groups and individuals wanting to know about organizations to which they can contribute.

The editor would appreciate receiving suggestions for organizations to include. Please send information and ideas to me at the address below. Thanks for your help on this project. Dennis

COMMITTEE FOR MUSEUM OF THE PEACE CORPS EXPERIENCE (CMPCE)

The CMPCE (an associate member organization of the NPCA) aims to inspire connection with the world by sharing the Peace Corps experience of living among diverse cultures. The CMPCE believes that Peace Corps Volunteers' rich understanding of world cultures can be harnessed to prepare engaging exhibits on a number of subjects such as farming, cooking and dining customs, educational systems, economic challenges and opportunities, and the roles of women and children. The museum also will address issues such as Peace Corps' institutional history, US/world political and social history as reflected by the Peace Corps, stories of volunteer life and descriptions of current projects.

For more information: www.peacecorpsmuseum.org

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