

# Steve Brown's Afghanistan Trip Journal

Map of Afghanistan: <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/af.htm>

- **Location:** Baku, Azerbaijan  
Where's that? <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/europe/az.htm>
- **Date:** January 11, 2005
- **Time:** 10:35 PM
- **Title:** Hello from Baku

## Comments

It is now Monday evening in Baku, Azerbaijan. I left San Diego Saturday morning and was spared witnessing the Charger's overtime defeat. Not much interest in that game over here. The flight was delayed from London to Baku so I did not get to my hotel here until about 2:30 AM earlier this morning--not a big deal since with time zone differences it takes a while to figure out when it is suppose to be day and night anyway. At the airport one of the custom officials said he could take me to the front of the line that did not seem to be moving so I invested \$20 for this primarily to get through the gates before my pre-arranged ride would give up on me. My ride was there and eventually found the hotel I had booked after an unplanned for search for it.

This morning I met up with people from Relief International who took me to a school they have supported. I learned that this country needs relief efforts because there are about 1,000,000 displaced Azeris (that is what they call the local Azerbaijanis) resulting from the war with Armenia and the loss of about 20% of land they believe to be rightfully theirs. The area was depopulated since Azeris were not welcome in the area Armenia now occupies. So they have a huge refugee problem.

The good news is that there are substantial oil reserves in the Caspian Sea and a pipeline is just being completed from Azerbaijan through Georgia and Turkey to the Mediterranean Sea. That should generate some good revenues but corruption in government is so high it is not clear how much if any will trickle down.

I am also advised that for all the mismanagement the Russians did, the one thing they did right was see that everyone was relatively well educated. They even made illiterate adults go to school. There are serious language issues now because many native Azeris know Russian better than their mother language and the schools where Russian is the language of instruction offer the best education. The Azeri language based schools are catching up slowly. The problem is compounded by the fact that the country has changed the Azeri language from a Russian alphabet to a Latin alphabet. So there are only few text books in the alphabet now being promoted and the old timers can't read the new stuff

The school visited has a serious mold problem and the head master has problems having the parents take any interest in the school. I dropped off some of the English dictionaries I brought over and also provided the Microsoft Office Software to Relief International. They have funds to set up internet labs in schools but no funds for software so the donation was much appreciated.

In the afternoon I toured Baku with Natasha who is from LA and just started a six month program with Relief International a few weeks ago. She had not done much sight seeing either. We visited to old city that is still walled and a palace. The city reminds me more of a Western European City than anywhere else. It is much more vibrant than Moscow—at least when I was there in the early 90s. I think there is much promise for this place. Everyone is learning English and if they can figure out how not to have the refugee problem be too much of a drag and reduce corruption, the spirit is here—at least that's my 24 hour assessment.

I went to dinner with Bahar Salimova, a scholar who Rotary has donated a scholarship to for study in the US. She is intelligent, well motivated, and poised—and beautiful. I'm convinced Rotary will make a good investment in her but she will need more funding to fill the anticipated budget gap since the Rotary Scholarship can't cover the projected costs.

Bahar and I then went to the Rotary meeting where she was recognized and she said a few words. I was asked to explain what I was doing in Baku and talked a little about our Afghanistan activities. The club then proceeded with its election for President for 2006-07. The Club president conducting the election kept asking me for advice regarding how to run an election—like what should he do about the missing votes of the members who weren't there. When it was all sorted out the club elected its first female president and the club president made some very favorable comments about the virtues of women in Rotary. The comments seemed well received. Throughout the meeting the lady who was elected President Elect interpreted for everyone all comments being made in English and Azeri.

Off to Kabul tomorrow where I have a rather heavy meeting schedule for tomorrow and the next day. That's all for now.

p.s. If anyone knows how I can get my Google pages back to an English language based system please advise at StephenRBrown@att.net. This happened when I went to Japan as well.

- **Location:** Kabul, Afghanistan
- **Date:** 1/13/05
- **Time:** 5:15 PM
- **Title:** Transition to Kabul

## Comments

As I type this it is now Thursday morning in Kabul. (My last entry must have been on Tuesday evening not Monday or I missed a day somewhere which is possible.) Baku airport is like many third world ones where upon entry you are taken over by locals with trolleys. The shrink wrap people got a hold of me and I was finally able to stop the shrink-wrapping before they shrink wrapped me but everything else got shrink-wrapped but not till after I realize this was not an official government station. I got shuffled off to an area with about 150 people and eventually realize that I was the only one there with luggage—it was a holding area for meeting people on a flight coming in from Turkey. When I did get on the plane I realized it was a fairly large jet designed to carry about 150 midgets. Fortunately it was not full since the only way I could sit in the seat was sitting sideways. It wasn't that bad. The flight went over some vast mountain range that looked like flying over Antarctica—although I have never done that. I have never seen so much snow.

Upon arrival going through immigration only took about five minutes but it took 1 hour for the bags to be unloaded from our plane being the only one at the airport. This provided an opportunity to get to know some of the others on the flight. Many were Americans or Europeans working for non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Afghanistan. There were a couple of Norwegians in flied outfits one of whom was stopped at security in Baku for having a bullet in his backpack. Fary was waiting for me at the airport with a car and driver from Jalalabad provided by the Abdul Haq Foundation—our NGO partner in Jalalabad. Fary had misunderstood and thought my flight was coming in 5 hours earlier than its scheduled time so she got to get to know some of the local airport workers better than desired.

We checked in to the Kabul Inn which is basic but has hot water, space heaters in the rooms and private baths so it is fine. We then went to the Office of Relief International after getting an extra half hour tour of the back roads of Kabul since our driver from Jalalabad is not that familiar with Kabul and there are no street signs anywhere.

We met up with Flouran Wali who had just returned from India. Was able to access e-mail to confirm my Kabul appointments but with no extra time. Flouran will be in Jalalabad for a few of the days we will be there.

Fary and I then went to the US compound to meet and dine with Michelle Parker. The place to meet is known as the acronym CAFÉ-Café Across From Embassy in a highly secure area. The US State Department employees are in a state of semi-lockdown but they can go to CAFÉ for meetings and meals. It is kind of like a college dormitory cafeteria but with beer and wine. (Fortunately

I have three meetings scheduled there for today.) Michelle is the USAID representative for Jalalabad and also the USAID liaison for the US military Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) stationed in Jalalabad. She has access to very large sums of money for things that fit within USAID parameters. She also is very well connected with other quasi and non governmental groups working in Afghanistan. She happens to be in Kabul for training. The purpose of meeting with Michelle was primarily to see if she could provide some direction to assess longer term funding to help fund a collaborative program between San Diego State University (SDSU) and Nangarhar University (NU) relating to SDSU expertise in Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL)—I'm in acronym heaven here-, technology training and distance learning. Michelle confirmed and amplified what I have been learning through meetings in the states. It seems that USAID education funds are allocated strictly for K-12 education with no funds directly allocated to education on the university level. Also, funds are allocated by disciplines with agriculture being the primary and perhaps the exclusive discipline in addition to security. Apparently the US is about to launch a huge program called something like alternative livelihoods (nothing to do with gay lifestyles) that is aimed at re-employing those involved in poppy production. It seems that in Nangarhar Province where we are working is pretty much the poppy capital of Afghanistan and supplies a high percentage of opiates to the rest of the world. (We get conflicting information from locals in Nangarhar as to whether this still remains the case.) But in any event if some funding needs can be [packed in a way to support this alternative livelihoods program in a legitimate way that may provide access to funding. The funds will go out in huge bundles to NGOs and private companies presently submitting proposals and it may be possible to develop a program that will fit within the parameters of the funding provided to one of the award recipients.

I commented to Michelle that it would be a bit of a shame if the primary focus of US aid money in Afghanistan was meant to assist in curtailing the drug problem we have in the U.S. Her response was that the US is concerned that Afghanistan could evolve into another Columbia with lawless regions controlled by the poppy czars and this program was meant to see that that development did not materialize.

Fary and I then went back to the Kabul Inn and reviewed upcoming plans. (Hey who did that? The electricity just went out as I am typing so it may be time to close.)

Today should be a day full of meetings and working out more logistics. I hope to send this from Relief International's office late this afternoon.

Steve

**Location:** Jalalabad, Afghanistan

- **Date:** Jan 14 2005
- **Time:** 3:00 Pm
- **Title:** Full productive day in Kabul

## **Comments**

### **January 14**

As I type this it is now Friday morning in Kabul (4:00 AM) and we leave for Jalalabad by car in a couple of hours. Yesterday was a full day and I need to document it now before memory fades.

The day started with Fary and I meeting with Kawun Kukar and his colleague Malalai Wassil in the UN compound in Kabul. Both are attorneys working for UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan both attorneys with Kawun holding the position of Political Affairs officer. The visit was substantially a social visit since Kawun was referred to me by my Luce Forward colleague Adel Ali. It turns out that Kawun is also a long time friend of Flouran Wali and Bashir who is co-vice chair of the San Diego Jalalabad Sister Cities Committee. Kawun's and Malalai's responsibilities have been to assist in the election process in Afghanistan. Kawun will soon be leaving this post and has accepted a position to be the personal counsel to President Karari on Parliamentary matters. We gave them some background on the projects we are involved in and they gave us some leads on organizations and individual in the US that may have some interest in the education projects we were working on.

From there we split up. I sent Fary on a mission to see if she could find the Rotary clock in Kabul. Being 8 feet tall it should be a little hard to lose but its whereabouts were uncertain having been last seen in Dubai.

Meanwhile I met with Eric Richardson and was later joined by Fary who advised that the paperwork at the airport suggested that the clock was in Kabul on site there somewhere. Relief international will follow up and get the clock to Jalalabad in the next two or three days we believe. Eric is Senior Advisor for Democracy and Governance with USAID in Kabul. I briefed him about the projects we are involved on with particular emphasis on Sister Cities. I advised Eric that he was referred to me by David Hoffman because of the program Eric is involved in relating to matching up city administrative officials between cities usually in the US and cities in developing or transitional countries. Eric explained the program ICMA-International City/County Managers Association in detail. This is a program run and funded by USAID involving now around 30 or so paired cities. The objective is to take about 5 administrative areas within a jurisdiction and five counterpart managers in both cities or counties. Personnel exchanges take place over about a two year period where expertise is shared and hopefully transferred so that the US City officials in effect mentor on a professional basis their counterparts in the city in the developing country. The program is run by Jon Bormet in D.C. under the name CityLinks. Eric has already contacted Jon to advise that I have an interest in learning more about the program and will be contacting him. Eric has also provided brief

background info to Jon. Two cities need to be selected for the program by Jon after he visits the city in the developing world to make an assessment. If select for this program the funding usually runs in the range of \$250,000 for transportation, room and board, translators and perhaps minor projects to facility development. I will pursue this on both ends and know that there are two public employees in San Diego who have already expressed an interest in being involved in something like this even when we did not know the program existed. One person is John Mellion who works at the nursery as a horticulture specialist for SD City Parks and Recreation and the other is Ajmil Zulai who is an Afghan American civil engineer working for Caltrans. Eric seemed to be very interested in helping us get involved in this program as perhaps is in a position to assist in this regard. (Thank you David Hoffman for the referral? I met with David just before leaving San Diego after learning of his high profile position I think with USAID in Kabul in reading the flier about a talk he was to give to the San Diego World Affairs Council. It so happens I sat on the Rotary District Scholarship Selection Committee when we awarded his younger sister Michelle a scholarship to France. David appreciates what Rotary has done for his sister.)

We next met with Derek Hodgson Attaché & Senior Advisor for Education-Afghan Reconstruction Group which is part of the US Embassy. Derek in addition to having a real sense of humor and being within 14 days of retirement provided a wealth of information about education and specifically higher education in Afghanistan. He personally prepared the request with two supplemental requests for USAID funding for higher education in Afghanistan. So contrary to what everyone everywhere else has told us there is some money in the system for higher education and Nangarhar Province is specifically mentioned in the request. It is presently unclear how much will be funded. That will be determined in the next two months or so with Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to be issued in April or May and funding available around the beginning of September of this year. He thought it would be a good idea now to be working with NU to develop a proposal with SDSU that could be considered for funding in this cycle. He said proposals under this program should be presented in the \$3-5 million dollar range. (Thank you Joe Hiller and Warren Ogden for making this referral.) Derek took us to his office and gave me a big pile of paperwork I am bringing home. Interestingly in some ways Derek can and I think will be more valuable to us retired from State Department since he can then give us guidance that would otherwise not be appropriate while employed by State Dept and he so indicated. He also provided some information regarding secondary k-12 education in Afghanistan. We are interested in providing some supplemental teaching training for the teachers at our Rotary School.

Our final meeting was with Michael Macy who was substituting for Sarah Gordon. Michael is Counselor for Press and Public Affairs for the US Embassy and a very experienced and candid career diplomat. He identified challenges SDSU will be facing under the program I described. There are structural/cultural barriers to quality higher learning in Afghanistan relating to ethical problems, instruction that is not rigorous, challenging or creative, lack of incentives from both the professor's end and the students end all of which results in inferior education with degrees with no meaning and often no practical application. I think his choice would be to burn down structures, fire

everyone and start from scratch--nice diplomatic approach for someone affiliated with the US State department PR office. That aside he has tremendous insights regarding what the problems are and I think will be a willing unofficial advisor ' to assist in identifying challenges that we might not otherwise think of.

Although the meeting got off to a rocky start since there was a scheduling foul up and he didn't want to spend time with us. He became very engrossed in what we are doing, wants a summary to see if the Embassy can help with possible publicity and almost admonished us for not taking advantage of the Embassy's services in D.C. and Kabul at a much earlier stage. I shared with him that efforts in that regard had been made with less than helpful people at the Embassy. He advised we were talking with the wrong people (in a cast of thousands at US State) and suggested that in D.C he could see that Kim Archea at the Afghan Desk of Public Diplomacy can assist in addition the his services. He also said he has access to small pockets of funds that can help with things like providing resource material for NU and our Rotary School. It was a challenging meeting but a good counter balance to the earlier meetings. He was prepared to spend much more than the one and a half hours we spent (when he started by saying he just and a few minutes for an "unscheduled" meeting, but we need to go back to Flouran s office to discuss things with her and Alan at Relief International. Michael's brother Gary works at the Theology Department of University of San Diego.

Note to Steve Spence and Marla—I need ASAP an Executive Summary of what the Hansen proposal is to accomplish and even though very premature and Executive Summary of what our next step proposal will look like or seek to address everyone we have been meeting with has been asking for this.

I am out of time to summarize the meeting with Flouran and Alan over dinner at the Relief International guest house. We did review the status of:

- The micro-credit project to be funded by Rotary—they have many women borrowers ready to go
- The status of the ultra-sound machine we are delivering
- The status of development of the pediatric unit Rotary will fund at the Afghan Women's Development Center AWDC
- Finding an appropriate small project for education of adult women
- The status of donating the WEBSAT system to allow internet connectivity at the AWDC
- Their possible role as a local NGO regarding the development of a proposal for the implementation grant regarding the anticipated collaboration between SDSU and NU and
- The turnover of beer they purchased for us to take to Jalalabad

Overall the day was particularly productive particularly with the last accomplishment referenced above.

Steve

- **Location:** Nangarhar University Computer Lab
- **Date:** Jan 15, 2005
- **Time:** 4:55 PM
- **Title:** Arrival in Jalalabad

## Comments

January 15

Jalalabad Mayor Arsalai's son Sadiq, happened to be in Kabul when we were and asked for a ride back to Jalalabad with us. He met us at the hotel at 6:00 AM and we left shortly thereafter. Most of the road from Kabul to Jalalabad is like it was two years ago—not paved, solid rock in some places, washed out in other places with people passing on all sides of each other, lanes irrelevant. The road is in such bad shape that no one can go very fast so it is more uncomfortable than scary. Leaving at that hour put us ahead of truck traffic so the trip only took 3 1/2 hours. It can take five to eight hours. Some of the drive is spectacular and you go through gorges with snow capped peaks on both sides matching the color of your knuckles.

We went straight to the Rotary school. The new addition is complete except for a few cosmetic things. It is quite intimate since it contains one courtyard with six classrooms whereas the first phase has two courtyards with seven classrooms each and some administrative units. The first phase had just been repainted and looked better than ever. Having filled in the courtyards with cement and putting in a sidewalk around the entire perimeter of the facility makes quite a difference since we were last here. Also, some small landscape has been added to the interior courtyards and the entrance to the building. We need to immediately prepare the atrium area for installation of the post clock. They do have electricity running under the concrete but some concrete needs to be chipped out and bolts need to be installed in newly laid concrete. The water pump now has an electric motor that pumps water to the cisterns on the roof of the building. The electrical system works as do the sanitation facilities.

We are advised that the school now has 1,400 students in one shift. Estimates are that it is about 850 boys and 750 girls. Girls are in grades 1 to 5 and boys are in grades 1-7. Generally one courtyard is girls' classes and one is boys' classes with two extra classes of boys in the girls' courtyard. We are advised that it was difficult to find girls with a fifth grade education to then be at levels 6 or 7. Class sizes get smaller with each progressive grade. The first grade classes have removed the desks and there are mats on the floor. We are told that there are about 120 students per class room for the first grade of boys and the first grade of girls. We will plan to be at the school when it is in session. Yesterday was Friday which is like our Sunday so there were no classes in session. Classes go from 9:00 to 12:30. Inside the classrooms are pretty much bare bones and we do have funds to equip the facility.

We then went to the Abdul Haq Foundation's new facility. They just moved in two weeks ago and everything is newly refurbished or newly built. It combines their office space and guest house. Their executive director Baralyi and top program officer Ishaq reside here as does a staff of several house boys, security



personnel, cook etc. It is behind a secure gate near downtown Jalalabad. They have at least two guest rooms since Fary and I are using two of them. They have a roof balcony where we had lunch on floor mats and pillows. It is a very comfortable place to be and it feels good to settle in some place.

After lunch Fary and I went to the computer lab we had previously set up at Nangarhar University. We were joined by Hamayun Khan, the Afghan hired by AHF to be the computer supervisor. The computer room was immaculate with all computers working fine. There are about eight steps to fire things up starting with activating the generator since there was initially no electricity to the facility when we arrived. We are advised that one tank of diesel lasts for several months since even though the electricity goes off often, it usually comes back on soon. Also the lab is just operated in the morning and that is when the electricity is most reliable. Many of the professors have jobs in the afternoons since they can not live on a professor's salary. In essence, the university only operates in the morning six days a week. I utilized the internet and sent some e-mails from the computer lab and the speed was excellent. Hamayun claims ours is the best computer lab in Jalalabad and there is none better in Kabul as far as speed and reliability. (Not sure how he would know about a Kabul comparison.) I will spend some time with Hamayun at the lab to verify his skills. He says he troubleshoots for professors and does provide some instruction for them. Some professors bring small groups of their students to the lab as part of their classroom instruction.

Professor Kadwal found us at the lab. He is one of the professors selected to come to San Diego under Rotary's Group Study Exchange program (GSE). University students are taking exams now and then will be on a two week break. He advised that he and professor Dost (also a GSE team member and ESL instructor), should be able to arrange a special classroom session with their students where ESL is being taught that I can videotape for the ESL folks at SDSU. The purpose will be to assist SDSU personnel evaluate ESL teaching methodology and the level of competence of the ESL instructors and level of learning of the students. That will assist in developing the parameters for the next level proposal for collaboration between SDSU and NU. Kadwal and Dost are both in the name check process through the US Department of State relating to their visa applications so it remains uncertain if they will be able to participate in the GSE program.

We returned to AHF facilities and were joined by two groups of guests—Richard ? and Jim from IF Hope foundation. IFH was founded by James Ritchie and works in the agriculture sector. Also joining us were Colonel Jim Ruf and Major Katherine Womble from US Army Civil Affairs Provisional Reconstruction Team and Will Campbell employed by U.S. Department of State assigned to support PRT, Jalalabad. We were also joined by Mayor Arsalai and Baralyi. We indulged in your basic Afghan feast which fortunately we sat at a table. Pest trips all AHF meals we sitting on the floor and after several hours it was hard to get up from sitting "Indian style"-- probably not a PC term these days but you know what I mean.

The PRT folks were interest in knowing what we were up to and how we got involved in the first place. We had met with Richard and Jim ? before but had

not remained in contact with them. I shared with them the information I had obtained from Joe Hiller regarding his anticipated visit to Jalalabad relating to developing/enhancing agriculture extension programs in the Nangarhar Province. All were very interested in that and will or should be involved in Joe's visit. Particularly of interest should be the work AHF Director Baralyi has been undertaking in organizing and working with shura's (tribal councils) in the villages. These political units will be the ones who need to "buy into" this concept for it to be implemented successfully. IFH is already involved somewhat in ag extension so they would be a logical unit to look to for expansion for the program.

All the dinner guest say their reconnaissance tells them that the poppy planting has been reduced by 80% this year in Nangarhar Province which is known to be one of the highest poppy producing areas of the world. No one will know until a few weeks time to see what is coming out of the ground. PRT folks emphasized that the poppy eradication program is a top priority of the recently elected sovereign government of Afghanistan and seems to be supported by the official and unofficial leaders in Nangarhar.

I asked about the economic effect that will result on the local economy if the 80% reduction proves accurate. The US Government has put a program in place known as work for cash or something like that. Local populations have all submitted community work projects and if a project is selected the US government will provide the cash to employ the labor and purchase the materials for these community projects. There is a formula like \$50 for 50 days but I am not sure how that all breaks out. It is meant to be a short term fix to address the lost income for this year's poppy growing cycle. Sounds better than some of the US programs where we simply pay farmers not to grow crops. This will add to the infrastructure of the Nangarhar Province if good projects are selected and are carried out. Hard to believe a government program could make this much sense. Apparently there is an issue of how to get rid of poppies if they do start popping up. Crop spraying has all kinds of negative implications so it won't be utilized. We are told that local Afghan officials will arrange for local Afghans to go into the fields and pull out the crops if they do start coming up. I asked what this program will do to the price of heroin in the US—should interested parties buy now before the price skyrockets? I was advised that this program if successful will primarily affect the markets in Europe. The US is supplied primarily from Columbia and that production still appears to be doing just fine. Not sure who reading this journal entry will be taking any comfort in that but I do want to present fair and balanced and useful information to any readers who are interested.

I asked Will (from the State Department) about the "namecheck" that three of our six GSE team members are caught up in. He is very familiar with that process. He advised that if it has only been two months there is some chance they will emerge successfully from the process. He said that if it goes for four months it becomes much more doubtful. If it goes six months or more, then there is little chance they will emerge successfully and some folks simply never emerge from it. It sound like there may never be a flat out denial but I need to try to verify that. If accurate, this is useful information even though very troubling. We may need to soon alter our GSE plans regarding the three that

have cleared name check and bring them to San Diego while the others remain in suspense. Will advised that my contact with Congressman Duncan Hunter's office may prove useful in smoking out the status of those caught in this apparent black hole.

Will also mentioned that he expects to be at Camp Pendleton towards the end of April and beginning of May. He advised he would be willing to speak to our Rotary Club when in the area. I will try to get a couple of possible dates from him and to so advise Frank McGrath. If Frank reads this entry, perhaps he could advise me of open dates in that time frame. Will's job description is to undertake overt surveillance of what is going on in Nangarhar Province and report back to State Department.

After the guests left, we then went to Baraly's room and took advantage of what I call an Afghan Jacuzzi. They have fancy colorful stuffed mats on the floor around the perimeter of a square coffee table. The table has a quilt like material coming from all sides. You sit on the floor two per side, pull the quilt over your upper legs and put your lower legs under the table. There is some type of heating contraption under the table that toasts your lower legs and feet. We conversed for a while and then hit the sack about 11:00. This was a long but very enjoyable day—more relaxing than in the past.

Today we will go to the US Military base here and spend time with the PRT folks. After lunch there will go to NU to meet with their leaders and ESL staff to talk about the Hansen grant for constructing a collaborative relationship between NU and SDSU. Then I hope to return to the computer lab at NU.

Steve

- **Location:** Nangarhar University computer lab
- **Date:** Jan 16, 2005
- **Time:** 5:45 PM
- **Title:** Time with PRT and Nangarhar University

## Comments

January 16

Yesterday started with a four hour meeting with the US Army's Civil Affairs Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT). Attending were Colonel Jim Ruf, Major Katherine Woble, Captain Steve Schemenauer, and Pedro Mesa. They had a specially prepared a PowerPoint presentation to walk us through 1) the operations of PRTs throughout Afghanistan, 2) specific activities of their PRT, and 3) information that would be of specific interest as it relates to the projects we are involved in. The red carpet was really rolled out for us—more so than the situation seems to have warranted. The only explanation I have for that is that there is a tremendous positive success story going on in Afghanistan on virtually all fronts and they would like us to be messengers regarding this which I am more than happy to do.

The PRTs were established to bring some social stability to the “Provinces” outside of the small area around Kabul controlled by the central government. This structure is unique to Afghanistan although a related experiment was attempted unsuccessfully in Iraq after the first Gulf War. There are 23 PRT units whose total jurisdiction covers the entire country—although in some instances the coverage is in name only primarily because of the remoteness of some areas. The Nangarhar Province (where we are) is the most fully developed PRT unit and the most successful although all units are experiencing substantial success. The PRTs started out helping local Afghans and NGOs working in local areas to build infrastructure, roads, schools, public health facilities, clean water facilities, etc. Much has been accomplished in this regard but the need is infinite and resources limited. (It is clear that the US involvement in Iraq directly affects funds available for rebuilding Afghanistan.) The PRTs have recently been shifting focus to help in the building of institutions in their local jurisdictions to assist in stability. In this regard they have been working with local police units, helping to train them, and provide uniforms and weapons from the weapon turnover program that is underway in Afghanistan. Their biggest success in my opinion was to provide the field coordination that helped in the carrying out of the unbelievably successful presidential election. Every polling place in Nangarhar Province was staffed by security personnel—usually local villagers who the PRTs had worked with—to see that the election was running smoothly. Hot lines were established to report disturbances or intimidation. The system worked well with few problems and the turnout was in the range of 67%. Women and men voted at separate stations. It was pointed out that under that system the men could not tell the women how to vote. Even the warlords were pretty well convinced to participate in the process and have their people participate.

The PRT is going to help us on several fronts. The desk chairs they supplied for the school are not holding up well. The desk part is breaking off from the metal

arm. This results from a design defect that can be partially corrected by sawing off the metal that was holding up the desk part and just having chairs. Perhaps we could buy clipboards as a substitute for the desk arm. (This is a bigger problem for the PRT than us since they supplied 30,000 of these desks for schools in the area.) PRT will look into providing benches and tables for us at least for the upper school which is what we would have preferred anyway. One size desk chair fitting all does not work when considering K-12 grades. The starting grades at our school have been using mats anyway because that's what they prefer and because you can get about 120 students per classroom with mats. Also, it is unclear where the 300 desk chairs are that were suppose to be held in storage for us to be used for the middle and high school but it is clear that they are no longer available. The PRT did supply them to a storage facility for us where the first 700 were also held but they are no longer there. The short term fix will be to add more mats to the elementary school classrooms and transfer the usable desk chairs to the upper school at least until the benches and tables are supplied.

PRT also suggested that we add a wireless router to the computer lab so someone with a laptop could use the facility even if the other computers were in use. I will look into that upon my return after discussing it with the university administration. I would also like to discuss with the university administration using the lab part time as a "for profit" internet café. Two exist in the city center (ours is about 15 minutes from the city center) and it charges about \$1.30 per hour. If we get good utilization, we could come close to cover our operating costs for the center or at least reduce the subsidy we are providing presently. Right now the lab is closed in the afternoons and evenings. Most professors have afternoon jobs to supplement their \$30 per month they get as a professor.

PRT will be attending our Sister Cities meeting to see if there is a role they can play to facilitate the arrangement.

PRT is holding a meeting with local NGOs to have an information exchange regarding who is doing what. We have been invited to attend that meeting.

PRT brought in its medic who will be assisting us in evaluating how we can best use and staff the medical clinic at the school.

PRT will assist us in evaluating the possibility of setting up an internet connection for the computer lab at Nangarhar Medical School. Of course in addition to setting one up, there must be provisions for training, administration, access fees, maintenance and other operating costs. PRT is also evaluating for a third party another facility that seems to have some good wireless potential. I will try to put PRT in touch with the SDSU professor who Steve Spencer, Mayor Arsalai, and I met at SDSU that described a way to make an area of a community wireless at a very low cost—sounds too good to be true.

PRT also described a micro- hydro unit they installed into a canal that provides enough electricity for one light bulb for each of about 120 homes. Sound like something that could be a good Rotary project in the right circumstance.

Apparently this is placed into a canal that is small enough that a person could jump over.

We had lunch at the mess hall and then received a tour of their facility.

From there we went directly to Nangarhar University. We meet with the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor Student Affairs, Vice Chancellor Administration, and Faculty Chairs for Engineering, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Education, and Theology. Also present were Dost and Kadwal who are the two ESL lecturers we have been working with, the Engineering Professor who oversees the computer lab, the person AHF has hired to oversee the lab's administration and Mohammad Ishaq from AHF. The meeting lasted close to three hours.

I went through the background of how we became involved with the university, how the computer lab developed and how the proposal developed to explore ways to have San Diego State University and Nangarhar University collaborate in specific areas—English as a Second Language Training, Technology Training and Distance learning –recognizing that there is significant overlap in all three areas. I also mentioned that we might be able to add a component of teacher training since that is very much needed and may make our subsequent proposal more attractive to a potential donor.

The Chancellor then commented and provided the opportunity for others present to comments. I was concerned as his comments started because they included a litany of needs where we can not assist such as the need for faculty fellowships, student scholarships, problems recruiting quality faculty, buildings in poor shape and no equipment for their labs. But he then addressed the need and high priority for English language training throughout the university—not just in the Literature faculty. In fact the Theology Chair mentioned that they have their own English Language training program in their faculty but it is of very low quality. So of the place I least expected it, the Theology department, very much wanted this ESL training for their faculty and students.

The Chancellor then described how the computer lab has benefited the university and what I will report was information in part provide by the Engineering Professor who oversees the lab. Most of the faculty have been trained on how to use the lab and most now have e-mail addresses as well. Since the upgrade, the speed has been fast and consistent. The professors are using the lab to obtain information for their lectures. Many professors are taking small groups of students to the lab as part of their teaching. One concrete example was provide of how the lab was used to hook up with a university in Germany which resulted in eight or nine professors traveling to Germany to meet up with university professionals there. The lab has provided access which is being utilized for making meaningful connections with universities throughout the world. I don't want to overstate the success of this since it is in such early stages and perhaps the fact that some connection has been made is seen as a great end result when in fact it constitutes only the beginning of the potential to be realized.

The meeting concluded with the Chancellor advising that the university will proceed in whatever way it can to develop the relationship. A committee will be formed and we will meet with the committee in two days to start working out the specifics of the various roles to be played and what needs to be accomplished on a preliminary basis. I did advise regarding the anticipated cycle for USAID funding for higher education in Afghanistan-- with Nangarhar Province being specifically mentioned. A RFP may come out this spring that needs to be responded to. I also see this fitting in well with the overall success described by the PRT regarding what has been accomplished to date in Nangarhar Province. That fact, together with the US government's desire to establish livelihoods in one of the largest poppy capitals in the world, seems to enhance the prospects of getting government funding directed to many things in Nangarhar Province.

Three additional ideas/requests came out of the meeting. NU would like assistance in developing a web site. I mentioned perhaps a student at SDSU could assist with this. Of course, information will need to be supplied by NU but this all seems feasible to me.

It was also suggested that it would be useful if translations of SDSU professors' outlines could be provided to NU professors to see what is being taught in their courses. I suggested that in San Diego we have a well educated Diaspora from Afghanistan--some of whom are retired professors--who are looking for ways to help Afghanistan but do not have the means to travel or re-locate. This may be a valuable pro bono function they would be willing to perform. Obviously more thought and SDSU and NU input needs to be developed for this to materialize.

The third request had to do with bringing the internet to the classrooms. Some of the professors want to use what they have seen on the monitors to assist in classroom presentations. I suggested that we look into beaming a wireless signal from our lab to the auditorium which is probably less than 300 feet from our dish. Additional hardware would need to be purchased to send the signal, probably a laptop, projector and screen. I recall that auditorium holds around 250 people and it could be reserved by professors for this purpose. This idea was very well received and I want to see if I can get some cost figures for setting this up. It should be an inexpensive way to get the internet into the classroom on a limited basis.

We then spent some time at the lab catching up on things and returned to AHF for dinner. Omar Zakhilwal joined us. He is a part time professor at Kabul University and has spent many years in Canada. He also is a Senior Policy Advisor for the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development. His responsibilities include bridging the economic programs of the central government with the villages in Afghanistan. In the discussion I finally began to understand the role and issues of shuras and the controversy relating to them. Traditionally shuras were only used to resolve disputes at the village level. If a problem arose, parties to the dispute appointed representatives and the representatives operating as shuras attempted to resolve the dispute. The shuras were dispute specific and were disbanded when the dispute no longer required or could use their service. What Barayalai from AHF has been doing for the last couple of years is to go to the villages and encourage them to

organize permanent shuras that can be a voice of the people and provide a way to communicate collectively with the provincial and central governments. Historically the villages simply ignored any form of government beyond their own villages and Barayalia is pointing out to them the limitations of their traditional systems. Around March of 2003 I was advised by the local PRT that what Baryalai was doing was disfavored by the US and the Central government supported by the US. It was perceived as having the potential to create organized political units that would stand up to or take opposition with the central government. Apparently that perception has now changed and Omar advises that establishing linkages between the central government and the shuras is essential for the success of the central government, and Nangarhar Province has the best developed free standing shura system (not just there for dispute resolution) in the country. This is proving to be highly successful in the cash of food program mentioned earlier since these shuras are coming forward with work project proposals that will benefit their communities and are providing grass roots leadership for the poppy eradication program of the central government—and it is perceived as a program of the central government not the US.

Everyone we talk to acknowledges that the situation is still fragile but the programs put in place in most respects are working better than anyone ever imagined—the crown jewel being the successful presidential election. Even at the village level, the people recognize what a successful accomplishment that was.

Steve



January 18.

Yesterday I was unable to get e-mail access so two journal entries will get posted at the same time—assuming I get access today. Our computer lab administrator turned over the generator key to the janitor who was no where to be found and there was no power in the lab when we got there. We went to IF hope and there system was down. Who would of thought that I would be able to complain and poor e-mail access in Afghanistan a short while back when there was none at all?

Anyway, we started the day early with an unannounced visit to the Rotary school. I wanted to see how it operated on a normal day. Well, as soon as we show up, the day immediately becomes un-normal for the students and teachers. We could tell that the routine is to have the kids line up in the courtyards as they arrive and they go through some ceremonies. Not sure exactly what is going on. I will bring a Pashto interpreter tomorrow to try to figure it all out. The boys line up in one courtyard and the girls in the other. It looks like a bit of a military drill for the boys. Contrary to what we have been told, there are probably three times the number of boys as girls. I will attempt a head count tomorrow and try to break it down by ages or class levels. The new section is essentially finished except for putting the panes in the windows. The clock should arrive tomorrow. There were major issues in getting it cleared through the authorities and Flouran Wali moved mountains (I think Tora Bora) to make this happen. I owe her big time.

From the school we went to Mayor Arsalai's office and met with some of his municipal administrators. We talked about the City Links program previously discussed. They would like to see if San Diego and Jalalabad can qualify. Mayor Arsalai has on his wall the key to the City of San Diego presented by Mayor Murphy, the dual Sister Cities Charter, and the San Diego-Jalalabad Sister Cities Agreement signed by Mayor Murphy, himself, myself and the Jalalabad Committee Chair and. He has also made a montage of some pictures of his visit in San Diego. He knows that Jalalabad can not look like San Diego but he is taking some preliminary steps to address issues that he believes are manageable. Since the trip, he has formed a Merchants Association he meets with monthly to talk about issues relating to their businesses. He is collecting voluntary dues to be used to make their sales areas more attractive. He has become very proactive since the visit to San Diego.

We then went to what I thought would be a Sister Cities Committee meeting. Instead it was a formal ceremony attended by the committee and other interested parties. Mayor Arsalai advised that interest in the Sister Cities was so strong he wanted to open the meeting/ ceremony to everyone. He had me up on a stage with himself and there were several speakers and the local television station. School kids were there to sing welcome songs. My guess is that there were about 125 people in attendance. My interpreter said that most of the speeches were talking about the virtues and potential of the Sister Cities relationship but cautioning that this was not a charity program. I provided some history and our perspective and invited mayor Arsalai to read from the agreement document which lays it all out pretty well. I advised that I brought a token of appreciation for those interested explaining that in the US some

people like to wear lapel pins. I acknowledged that that wasn't the custom here and some may not even consider it appropriate to display the pins I had for those interested. The pins are the flags of our two countries hooked together. I indicated that as I would shake the hands of those leaving, anyone who wanted a pin could have one. Every single person wanted one. It was something to be giving this symbol of friendship to the rough and tumble looking elders as they left the hall.

From there we went directly to Nangarhar University where two of their ESL instructors had arranged special session of instruction for my video taping. I wanted to tape the classes to provide SDSU info regarding teaching methodology, and the level of competence of the instructors and students to assist in formulating the subsequent grant request for additional ESL funding. I was impressed that both classrooms were full for this demonstration even though classes had officially finished for the religious break earlier in the day. I wonder how the professors were able to convince the students to participate in this for us.

From there we went to the computer lab and the IF Hope lab as mentioned above. We then returned to AHF facility to meet with the GSE team. I reviewed with them, the status of the visas and our timing options given the circumstances. I then walked them through the professional programs we have planned for each individually and the joint activities all will participate in. I provided each of them the detailed summary I prepared for Sandi, Marge and Bill before I left San Diego. The GSE team then took us to dinner at a very good Afghan restaurant. That was appreciated since it was the first chance to have something to eat all day. (Fary said she was going to send Susan an e-mail complaining about the schedule.)

That's all for now. (Note the journal entry for yesterday has been posted at the same time as this one.)

Steve

January 17

Yesterday started off with a meeting at the Nangarhar University Medical School. This is at a different location from the main campus. Fary and I were accompanied by some PRT staff who were there to help us with an assessment of the computer lab in place at the medical school.

At the medical school we were greeted by Dr. Khahil Ahmad Behsoodwal. He is a GSE team member (who has passed name check), a pathologist and the assistant administrator at Nangarhar University Medical Hospital. He escorted us to meet with the Medical School Director. I had met with the Director on a previous visit. He started the meeting by asking through the interpreter "where was the eye care equipment I had promised on the last visit?" I explained that I made no promises when we last met, I was gathering information to see if an equipment donation could be put to good use and if so, I would try to raise funds for it. I was working with IAM/NOOR who has been setting up eye care clinics in Afghanistan for many years. IAM/NOOR has been working to see if they could secure an appropriate location in Jalalabad and find a properly trained ophthalmologist to run the clinic. It would need a business plan that would allow it to become self sufficient over time and yet have services available to all sectors of society. To date, AIM/NOOR has not been able to put that together in Jalalabad. I also advised that I had learned that the medical school has received a donation of eye care equipment prior to my last visit and it was not being used because the doctors at the hospital had their own private clinics they went to in the afternoon where they received fees for service. Thus, there were no incentives in place to use the new equipment at that hospital. The Director then turned to the PRT and said last time they were there they promised equipment and that was the last he had heard about it. The PRT present indicated that their group knew nothing about it. Perhaps it related to a meeting with an earlier PRT.

I then advised that I wanted to talk about a new topic but we had to start with an understanding that I was coming here making no promises. I had the Director repeat back through the interpreter that he understood I was making no promises before we would proceed with the discussion. I related that I understood that there had been two donations of computers to the medical school—four arranged for by Dianna Tacey through the Abdul Haq Foundation and later 16 arranged for by the Government of Germany. Dianna had reported back to me that she had been advised that her computers were not being used. There were problems with reliable electricity and the professors taught in the mornings, spent their afternoons at their for profit private clinics, and it was inconvenient for them to use the computers in the evening. Plus there was no administration or instruction regarding the use of computers. The Director had expressed a desire to have internet at their facility but I asked him to address the issues before we talked about internet. He responded that when they had just the four computers what I described was true. However upon receiving the larger donation the situation had been corrected, instruction was being provided, the electrical issues were somewhat resolved and instruction/administration was being provided. A young person was attending this meeting and he is the administrator. His English is pretty good and it does seem that the situation has improved. I responded that we understand that just

providing the equipment—especially for internet service--- accomplishes nothing. It requires focused instruction, administration, funds for monthly access fees and maintenance and fuel for the generator. So any proposal would need to contain those elements.

We then undertook a visit of the two computer rooms and the PRT went into full gear. They had four technical experts—a physicians assistant, internet specialist, LAN specialist and a power specialist. They turned the room upside down looking at the back side of the computers to determine their specifications, went on the roof to inspect where the satellite would go, and evaluated the generator in place. At their request I took some digital pictures of the room and the back side of various computers and have since sent the pictures to them by e-mail. I asked them to draw up some specifications for what it would take to properly outfit the computer rooms to have a good V-SAT system dropped in. Frankly, the situation seems ideal to then PRT and me—with the “PRT” being more important.

I consider an internet connection important at this location in part since through Rotary’s GSE program we will bringing two or three of their medical professors to San Diego to provide technical computer internet training as well as hooking them up with medical counterparts for about three weeks. We have several medical institutions in San Diego involved in the program. Further one of the members of our Sister Cities committee, Hamed Bayat, is an Afghan Cardiologist who teaches at UCSD Medical School. I see many opportunities for linkages between the San Diego medical community and the Nangarhar Medical School but internet connectivity is essential for this to be meaningful. If this is to proceed, we need to be assured by the Director and staff that use of any such facility will fit into the programs and culture of the medical schools program. It turned out that at the end of our site visit I had a very frank discussion with the Director on this topic which he initiated in very good English. When we parted he stated I understand “no promises.”

We returned for a quick lunch at AHF and then went to the office of United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan- UNAMA-Jalalabad. This meeting had been convened by the UNAMA Jalalabad Head of Office, Hassan Elhag, an African who Fary had met on previous visits. This meeting was convened for local NGOs working in Nangarhar Province to meet with PRT, learn about PRT’s activities and then have an interchange of information. When we previously met with PRT I asked if we could crash this party and sit on the back bench and we obtained approval. Much of the meeting was repetitious of what we had already learned from our previous meetings with the PRT. It was interesting to follow the dialogue of the local NGO reps. On from France asked if it was OK to remove the United State’s flags from the donated items they received from the US. The PRT advised they had no problem with that. The PRT emphasized that they and the local USAID rep have only small pockets of funds and much has already been committed by their predecessor PRT. It looks like there has not been much coordination by the NGOs generally and specifically with the PRT. It was agreed that this would become a standing monthly meeting. I see it as fertile ground to recruit Rotarians. I also came away from the meeting wondering if PRT may be able to donate some funds from their small pocket of funds to assist financing an internet lab at the medical school. There was

tremendous enthusiasm by the four PRT members at the school to jump into this project with both feet. It seems to me that the more we can involve their personnel in designing and spec-ing out the lab, the more the money minder at PRT will be encouraged to provide funds to this project as opposed to just giving funds to some NGO so support one more project of a third party.

From the UNMA meeting we went directly to the office of Relief International and met with ist relatively new director from Sweden Per Olsson (no typos—that's how his card reads). We reviewed with him how we became involved in working with Relief International through Flouran Wali, activities past, present, and possible future ones all in which Relief International plays or may play a role. Another person was in the meeting who has been with Relief International for quite some time at the Jalalabad office Manooch. He was familiar with our activities and Fary has worked with him.

We then went to the computer lab fighting the darkness. There are three locks to unlock and no light till you get inside. We made it just in time and need to take a flashlight with us if we get caught in that situation again.

We had dinner at AHF. We were advised that there had been a Sister Cities meeting that day to prepare for the meeting with us today as I type. Apparently Mayor Arsalai is expounding on the virtues and potential of the relationship and has whipped up a frenzy of enthusiasm. Many more community leaders are looking to get involved. We will see how that goes later today.

Steve

- **Location:** Relief International-Jalalabad
- **Date:** January 18 2005
- **Time:** 4:40 PM
- **Title:** Two day's entries

## Comments

Quick entry for Jan 18. Internet lab was hit by NU had high tech vandalism. It probably can be repaired tomorrow but if no journal entries come for a while don't worry.

Steve

**Location:** Nangarhar University Computer Lab-post sabotage

- **Date:** January 19, 2005

- Time: 4:12 PM
- Title: Back on line

## Comments

January 19

Yesterday we arrived at the Rotary school at 7:30 AM. I wanted to see the whole half day cycle starting with the students arriving and through the students leaving. The students started arriving shortly after our arrival most came by foot from all directions. A few came by car and bicycle. Some were dropped off by motorcycle—one motorcycle had a driver and four students. The road going by the school will soon be paved. We need a turn out and speed bumps. (Ironically even the worst of roads that are close to impassable have these very obnoxious speed bumps which are piles of compacted rocks a car has to go over one wheel at a time.) Students played for a bit—of course our presence is a major distraction. They eventually form lines sitting with boys in one courtyard and girls in the other. To encourage this process teachers are blowing whistles and swatting at the students with plastic hoses. Around 8:15 the students are lined up and one of the teachers recites from the Quran and the students chant back. Then some students get up and sing—I think from the Quran. We had Mayor Arsalai's son Sadig with us to help understand. He speaks Pashto which is the only language of the students. Some teachers speak some Dari but with their limitations and the limitations of Fary's Farsi compared to Dari, we found that too much was being lost in the translations to get reliable detailed information through Fary in attempting to communicate with the students. At 8:30 the students went to their classrooms. I took a student inventory for each classroom and found things different than what we have been told. The results are as follows for students actually present: Girls level 1--96, level 2--63, level 3--53, level 4--32, level 5--27 for a total of 271. Boys level 1 beginning 105, level 1 advanced 78, level 2-- 57 additional level 2--58, level 3--87, level 4--70, level 5--55, level 6 49, level 7--32 for a total of boys 591. Total students present--872. There was substantial absenteeism according to the teachers who take roll. I could not tell if any of it had to do with the fact that the next day the school shuts for about ten days (with the exception of our dedication ceremony for which they will hold school at normal hours) or if this was normal. I think it is normal since these folks are too poor to travel anywhere. Of the nine boy's classrooms, seven are in one courtyard and two for the youngest boys are in the girl's courtyard with the girls having the other five classrooms. In only one of the classrooms were the youngest students on mats rather than desk chairs. Almost all of the students have recently lived in refugee camps in Pakistan. Three or four students arrive each day to enroll in the school. The principal advises that the Education Ministry will only let level one students enroll mid-term. The Education Minister denies that. We will meet with the Principal and faculty later today and will sort that out.

For levels one through three the curriculum includes Islamic Studies, Pashto, math, drawing and sports—I think sports is recess. The classes are about one half hour. Subjects are changed, not teachers when an administrator goes to the middle of the courtyard and bangs a big rock against a pan—not sure why they don't use the bell that is used to dismiss school. Grades four through six

include Pashto, Farsi, drawing, sports, Quran, Islamic Studies, Geography, Geometry, History, Science and Handwriting. They go for one more hour. We also found an English class for 7th grade boys which had not been included on the information provided to Sadig—that is probably because he was talking to a teacher of girls and they did not go to level 7.

Instruction for all classes uses the same methodology. Their teacher recites something and then the students recite it back. They do this with a bit of a rhythm. . The teacher asks for a student volunteer to come to the front of the class and the volunteer recites something and the students respond back. There are several hands in the air when the teachers ask for volunteers. The teachers have a very distant relationship with the students. The students are never called by name and it appears that the teachers do not know many of their names. The teachers carry sticks that are used for the dula purposes of pointing to the white boards and occasionally swatting students. The teachers make good use of the white boards. There is a shortage of markers so runners go between classes to find out who has a marker temporarily not being used.

The good news is that the students are becoming literate and can do math through this form of education. At least a couple of the students studying English knew English better than the principal who teaches that class. The principal can read English and the students can recite back what he says as they look at a book in English. I saw no effort to understand what the words meant. The students who did know English had learned it in the refugee camps in Pakistan and I could hold a basic conversation with them. I could not hold any conversation with the Principal. We will bring a box of English dictionaries (72) in storage at NU and give it to these English students and provide one for each faculty member.

We had tea with the teachers and principal during recess. Afterwards I stuck around to talk to the principal through Sadiq and Fary went to the classrooms. I wanted to talk about the lack of girls at the school. The principal advised that the female enrollment would double in any class that was taught by a female. He said that parents do not want their girls taught by males and that becomes increasingly so as they get older. Some girls go to downtown Jalalabad for school but most stay home. More on this topic later.

Classes for levels one through three got out at 11:00 -not 11:30 as Fary had learned—a simple example of unimportant communication mis-understandings that takes place when not having a Pashto interpreter. I don't know how much of the earlier information I reported on the number of students at the school was a result of interpretation mis-understandings or a result of being provided inaccurate information. It does appear that there are a few hundred students on the rolls who were not present when we were at the school.

From the school we went to the Afghan Women's Development Center that had been provided by Relief International and equipped primarily by the Encinitas-La Costa Club but with some participation by our club. There was a major traffic jam that had the same effect of the I-5/ 805 freeway merge in San Diego with the primary difference being it was used by too many donkey carts, human carts, sheep and cattle going to the market to be slaughtered for the

EAD holiday, foot traffic, rickshaws and people leaving their vehicles to see why the vehicles were not moving—which was often the result of people leaving their vehicles to see why vehicles were not moving. It took an hour to go what should have been fifteen minutes but the slow journey gives a visitor a good opportunity to experience at street level life in Jalalabad. Vendors were everywhere and people took the traffic jam in stride.

At the AWDC we were provided a tour by its Director Fahema Mujadidi and were joined by a computer instructor Dr. Eamal Arman. He spoke English and I believe is Indian. I had four objectives for visiting the center. First we may donate the old WEBSAT system we first used at NU before upgrading to the VSAT System. The AWDC has an excellent computer room with instruction that can handle this well. We would do this at no cost to us and Relief International and the AWDC would need to figure out how to pay for access fees and maintenance. Flouran Wali has previously advised that they could do this. Next I wanted to see where the ultra sound machine would go that is presently in transit to the center and learn how they intend to operate it. They will need to move their small library from the big room it is in to the smaller room which they previously thought they would use as a clinic. We are also advised that Pakistani trained doctors are ready to rotate through and use the ultrasound machine. I advised that we have set it up with transducers so that it can be used both for pediatrics and Ob/Gyn. The third issue had to do with outfitting the clinic room with pediatric equipment. We have funds to do this and it will work well once the library is moved and the larger room set up as the medical clinic for both Ob/Gyn and pediatrics. The AWDC already has a kindergarten in it and the women using the services of the AWDC (adult education) will be able to bring their kids to the clinic. The fourth purpose was to see how we could spend a small amount of funds our District Governor wants to spend for adult female education. It is clear that they can use some resource material in the library for this and Flouran Wali will work up a request.

We then went directly to the Nangarhar University to meet with the Chancellor and the Committee he set up for developing the ESL-- technology collaborative relationship with SDSU. I wanted to stop at the computer lab to make sure the access issue to the generator had been resolved. That problem was solved but the center had been subjected to high tech sabotage the night before. Someone had broken all three of our padlocks that secure a steel gate in front of the door and had broken the door bolt as well. Once inside they had opened up the main server and methodically taken five pieces of its operating hardware to disable it. Other than the removal of these parts, they had been careful not to damage anything. I kept my thoughts to myself until our computer administrator said it was clear to him the objective was to disable the lab. There is no street value for the items taken. I don't like the coincidence that this took place during our visit when the lab has been vandalism free until now. This appears to be a message to us and perhaps the university that someone does not like the direction things are going with the technology in place and what we are proposing. The police had already come and gone. Our lab administrator attempted to use another CPU as a server but was unsuccessful. Our computer company is sending a tech from Kabul who should be able to replace the parts and get it running again. We purchased substantially bigger locks to be put on that evening. However, if someone



wants to disable the lab, they will still be able to do so unless we go to round the clock armed security. The easiest way would be to get on the roof and bang up the dish. So when we met with the Chancellor and his committee the computer lab situation took up the first part of the discussion. They had learned of it and were most upset.

We then turned to the NU-SDSU proposal. A strong committee of professors, all of who speak some English, has been put together. The Chancellor advised that the committee is chaired by the Vice Chancellor present who is clearly a very supportive and thoughtful person. Also on the committee are Dost (who is one of the ESL teachers stuck in name check), the head of the Agriculture Faculty, a professor on the Education Faculty, and the Engineering Professor who oversees the computer lab. Also present for the meeting were Mayor Arsalai, his son Sadig, and Mohammad Ishaq and Fary for part of the meeting. We went through the proposal in detail. I explained the role of Farid and emphasized that, although he is Afghan, he needs to be given the same level of respect that I would be given or a professor from San Diego State would be given. This would include providing suitable housing and transportation. They assured me that would be the case and he could choose between AHF accommodations or university accommodations for his housing option. I emphasized that although the university has many needs, the next step proposal must be developed within the parameters of what is presented in the Hansen proposal. I advised that anything ESL related could be considered which included ESL programs in all faculties including remote faculties such as education and medicine. We could consider V-SAT systems at those location, we could consider beaming a wireless signal to the auditorium—although we may not want to wait to do that. I advised we could even consider building a small guest house with appropriate security and accommodations to be available for visiting faculty. We had a lunch together with the overall time spent on this being about three hours. We will communicate by e-mail. All professors have e-mail addresses and the engineering professor checks his more than one a day. He will be the point person for communications with cc s to everyone else. He will provide us the names titles and e-mail addresses for the all committee members. As we concluded, I was asked if there anything the committee should do at this time. I suggested it start preparing a “wish list” for things to have to implement a collaborative arrangement and we would be in touch with them for more specifics. I advised that I expect to meet with the SDSU folks in the first week after my return. The Chancellor then said that he wanted to share his four primary concerns with me knowing that they were outside of the proposal and things that I was not in a position to address. His first concern is the illiteracy issue in the country. He asked how did the US meet this challenge in its development? The best I could respond was the priority the US gave to its higher education at the public level by establishing teacher training colleges and land grant agriculture colleges. Most everything else was secondary. That fact together with universal free education and providing the facilities for it seemed to me to help out in the beginning. He then advised regarding his second concern which was the need to better create friendliness between peoples in different nations to reduce the fighting. I did mention the newly created Kroc Peace Center we have in San Diego that addresses these issues. I wonder if that center would ever be interested in sending representatives to Nangarhar University to sponsor a peace workshop to be attended by NU

faculty, government officials, business leaders and perhaps even warlords? His next item was his concern about corruption—they now have laws against it but not proper incentives or enforcement mechanisms in place. All I could say was that this is a big problem in most developing countries. Be patient with the new government and support them in addressing this. The Education Faculty member said that as a university they have the responsibility to train the new leaders of the country and in this regard need to instill values and teach in ways that the institutions can work in a corruption free atmosphere. The Chancellor's final concern was the emerging drug usage problem in Afghanistan. I suggested he find some model other than the US to figure this one out. I did point out that drug use seems to have leveled off in the US and in some instances is declining but we still have a big problem and part of the problem is the crime that goes hand in hand with drug use and trafficking. In the US we have attempted to deal with this through education but there probably are other countries that would be more successful models to study.

We then went searching for internet access. We were turned down at the UN but were able to catch Relief international just before closing. I was able to send my journal entries for the last two days and download 97 e-mails in 45 minutes but quit with 18 e-mails still trying to come in. I did not attempt to upload any e-mail and hope to do that later today.

We then arrived back at AHF and the Minister of Education and his Deputy were waiting—early for our scheduled appointment. They asked if we had any requests or questions. I went into the issue of women teachers for the school first acknowledging to them there is a teacher shortage, a shortage of good teachers, a shortage of women teachers and our school is a ways out of town. According to them, the bottom line of the discussion is that if we want women teachers at the school, we need to provide an incentive and transportation. I think transportation will cost about \$250 per month for a group—we need to explore various options and incentives will cost around \$25 per month per teacher. I need to give this more thought and get some more info but if we can find 10 sponsors at \$25 per month then I can probably find the transportation money. It may not seem like what we want to do but in the final analysis it may be what is necessary to get the job done—see that refugee girls living in the area of our school have levels 1–12 available to them. The Minister advised he needed to go to another meeting. I said there were four more topics to discuss at another time—providing teacher training at the school, running the school in two shifts, allowing students to start mid term or any time in the term a proposal form Warren Ogden. . They did say they were both in agreement on the next to the last point.

We then had dinner at AHF and were joined by a delegation from the French Embassy in Kabul. I was not good company. After dinner I passed on tea, went to my room and had a beer. I have a great refrigeration system—I lean out my window and can reach a balcony where I keep my beer cold from the outside temperature. As I type this e-mail my room is cold since the electricity went off in the middle of the night so the little space heater is not working. My heat and light come from my head flashlight so please forgive more typos than usual. Can hardly wait to get a cold shower.

Steve

- **Location:** Nangarhar University Computer Lab
- **Date:** Jan 20, 2005
- **Time:** 2:15 PM
- **Title:** Another good day

## Comments

January 20

As noted, yesterday started out on the rough side. It was pretty cold with no electricity. Fary lost track of the time so we got a bit of a late start. We left AHF with Ishaq shouting in his cell phone to the computer tech in Kabul why he need to come today rather than sometime next week as the tech was proposing.

We went to the Rotary school and all teachers and the principal we waiting on the mats spread on the courtyard. I advised that they had called this meeting with us so we were there to hear what they had to say and when we finished that discussion I had some topics to cover. The principal had a list of things. The first thing he asked about would it be possible to have some sports equipment and set up some sports courts. Upon inquiry, they would like cricket, soccer and volleyball for the boys and volleyball for the girls. They will incorporate this into their curriculum as once or twice a week activities. I pressed them about after school activities and some of the teachers volunteered to supervise after school activities as well. It will probably be necessary to arrange for female supervision for female after school sports. They were reluctant to consider the girls for soccer. I pointed out that there are women soccer tams that compete in the World Cup. I joked that if they have women soccer at this school maybe someday the Afghan women's soccer tam will win the World Cup and they can say that the sport started for girls at their school. I think they may be open to women's soccer. I advised that we would walk the grounds after the meeting to see where the property lines are and how we could set up some sports courts. These would not be in the courtyards and there is plenty of ground outside the facility. It will take some grading, bolder removal and perhaps importation of dirt or sand. We have money in the budget for sports courts and so far some cost under-runs I believe for the concrete work to fill in the interior courtyards. Accordingly we will proceed to set up the sports areas and purchase the equipment. (I did not let them review our line items for budgets, but they could tell I was working off a sheet that made provisions for some things).

There next request was for teacher training. Their preference would be to have the training at the school site either on an occasional long afternoon or intensively over a holiday period when the school is not in session. We will talk to the Ministry of Education—probably the Deputy Minister—about this and also talk to the Education Faculty at Nangarhar University about this.

Next the requested a library. I advised that Relief International will be providing shelving and a few books. One that is done, we can asses the needs and see if other books can be supplied. The school will set up a system where

books can be checked out to take home. There is no reading period or "study hall" in their school day.

They then talked about teacher shortages. They advised that they thought teachers from the local area should be available including female teachers. They all seem to agree that female teachers are essential. I advised that having girls get an education in this school is our number one priority. Our donors back home are expecting this. Others in the US are following the progress of the school so this school must set a good example and have girls at all levels. I requested that the faculty form a recruiting committee to find female teachers in the local area. I suggested that this committee have interested female teachers meet with the committee and that the committee present hiring recommendations to the Ministry of Education. I requested that Fary attend these meetings and participate in the process and that for appropriate candidates we (Rotary is the "we" I think) will endorse candidates recommended and do the best we can to hold the Ministry accountable. I do not know if this will work but it is worth a shot. I would first like to see how this works and then consider as plan B finding sponsorships and providing for transport. They all seemed to like this approach and Fary will follow up after I leave.

They next requested some supplies. They mentioned again that they would like bicycles for the teachers who come from far distances. I inquired how many and the principal said 10. We have money in the budget for 10 so we can accommodate this. They want wastebaskets for the rooms. We will provide that. They want additional marking pens. We went through some math and it appears that 20 classrooms will use about 720 marking pens a year. I advised that PRT is working on providing marking pens. We should be able to cover the shortfall. One teacher wants lab equipment for the science class. This can be stored and set up in the multi purpose room. I asked him to provide his priority list for this. We have money in the budget for this.

They asked for uniforms for the school monitors. I advised we probably would not be providing those. One teacher mentioned that they want housing closer to the facility. The principal asked Fary not to translate that for me so she told me later. Note that the above requests are all modest, reasonable, and involve very little self interest.

I then turned to my list and started by advising that the principals list covered many items on my list. I related the conversation we and the ministry of Education officials about mid-term enrollment. I think it turns out a student can attend class but will not be officially enrolled until the beginning of a term. Meanwhile they are temporarily enrolled. I have asked Fary to try to sort this out regarding the 80 names the principal has of students who want to attend and to develop an ongoing process for those who show up mid term. Someone is not being straight with us on this topic.

I then talked about the Sister Schools situation and what can be accomplished to bring the students closer together. I went through what we are doing with the clock and the words on the plaque that will be next to the clock talking about common dreams under on sky. I motioned that at Doyle Elementary we

are providing maps of Afghanistan and we think there will be included in the curriculum in each class information about Afghanistan and Jalalabad. I mentioned that we plan to provide maps to each class room at the Rotary school where one laminated piece will have a map of the US with San Diego circled and a map of Afghanistan with Jalalabad circled and we can provide some information about San Diego and the US that the teachers can share with the students. They liked this idea. Beyond that, I suggested that maybe a system can be developed where notes or drawings are passed back and forth between students. We have Afghans in San Diego that can help as volunteers with translations. The faculty like this and suggested that they will set up a mailbox for these notes to be dropped off by students and then collectively sent to us. I think we can work with the PRT to arrange for the mailings and deliveries of these notes and pictures. I asked for further suggestions for the staff since this is just one idea and look for other suggestions from anyone else at any time on how we can make the sister school connection productive and intimate.

The principal also mentioned that they have the wrong type of permit to run their generator and the electric company threatens to cut off their regular power as a result. We will take this up with the governor.

During the course of the meeting the two boxes carrying the clock arrived and were carried in. We needed to explain that the long narrow box had the stem of the clock since it came in the same type of container they use here to move corpses. The concrete had been chipped away and a hole about four feet deep has been dug for the footings. The engineer had some of the drawings including one that Rick Clark had mentioned to me had a mistake but they did not have the correction. I found the e-mail on my computer that gave the corrected info. The clock seems to have arrived in good shape. The concrete will be poured and will cure for four days. The clock should be installed the day before the dedication ceremony—Allah willing.

We then returned to AHF to prepare for what we thought was to be a meeting with the Rotary officers early afternoon. Upon arrival we learned that Mohammad Ishaq had left for Kabul a few hours earlier. He had previously advised us he was staying in Jalalabad through Eads since we were there. We had not requested that he stay but this caught us by surprise. We will be able to reach him by phone so it should not be a problem although I have several hours of things I do need to review with him in person.

Fary and I were joined for lunch by Baryalai and Mayor Arsalai. I took this opportunity to talk with the mayor about the Sister Schools program in San Diego as it relates to student exchanges. I have had some very inconsistent conversations regarding this. Mayor Arsalai advised that the program was appropriate for Jalalabad females only if they stay with relatives in San Diego and he so advised the Sister Schools representatives when they came to Jalalabad to recruit. He advised that in Jalalabad families would be very seriously looked down on by the rest of the community here if teenage girls came to the US under any other circumstances. He was not influenced by anyone in reaching this decision this is simply what he believes and it does not relate to the experiences of any of the students in San Diego or their hosts. As

far as boys are concerned they can stay with whoever the program thinks are suitable families.

I then talked to Baryalai about the sabotage. He is convinced it is as a result of my presence and what we are trying to accomplish at the university. He mentioned that the sabotage took place in the evening following the Sister Cities meeting. He had given a rather long speech at that meeting talking about the virtues of connecting with America and the benefits to be derived from the internet connection we have established and hope to expand. He had talked about the relationship being built between Nangarhar University and SDSU. He advised that a NU Chancellor a few years back had been a party leader for a group at NU that used to be Taliban supporters. He said that some of those persons remained at NU and he is sure that they were the ones who did the sabotage. I asked if he felt there was any danger under the circumstances. He felt there is none. I asked if AHF has experienced any danger. He said no but sometimes they are criticized by being close to Westerners. He pointed out that what we are doing and expanding on are things that some radical elements do not like and those elements are concerned about our successes but he does not think they will be able to discourage the course of things. The vast majority of people here are fully appreciative and supportive of our efforts and will be our partners to help us be successful. So for now, Fary and I will be monitoring our activities closely and keep a keen eye out for any additional "statement" that may be made. We will take no chances and have reported all of this to the PRT. If necessary, we could move to their facility immediately and they have so advised. We are not doing anything more at the university on a formal basis and it is not in session for the duration of my stay here. Once I leave Fary does not have the same level of presence here as I do and she will continue to monitor things. I will review with her carefully the course of action she needs to undertake if additional "statements" are made and make sure she agrees to disengage if appropriate.

During lunch we received a call that the tech from Kabul was at the lab and a few minutes later got a call that the lab was working again. We went out there and spent a couple of hours getting caught up.

When we returned to AHF the electricity was not on and our bathroom was not functioning. We went to Relief International for dinner. Their electricity was working but the heating system they use is to wear more clothes rather than heat the dining area. We had not figured that out so it was pretty chilly.

When we returned to AHF the electricity was working. Fary and I spent some time reviewing our activities and played some music I had downloaded in my laptop before the trip. I am happy to report that my refrigeration system is working well for the beer kept on the balcony and in my room. When the electricity is off, I think it gets down to about 45 degrees in the room. It went off again last night but came on as I started to type this journal entry.

Steve

- **Location:** Nangarhar University Computer Lab
- **Date:** Jan 21, 2005
- **Time:** 10:10 AM
- **Title:** The pace has slowed down a bit

## Comments

January 21, 2005

Yesterday was a much slower pace as anticipated. Fary and I went to Abdul Haq Park. I am not sure what all is contemplated there but it is way too big to be for just a recreational park. I would guess it is about 15 acres. I think some of it may be used for an office park or industrial park. It is being developed by the AHF but, except for several plots of land laid out, not much is going on. Ishaq previously advised us that there is a dispute with a local warlord regarding who owns some of the property.

We went back to AHF and spent some time reviewing all of our paperwork relating to the school construction. An additional factor that will set our Rotary school apart from most, in addition to its physical appearance and size, will be the detailed furnishings we should be able to provide. All schools I have seen contain bare walls with no equipment, cabinets, etc. We need to sit down with Ishaq to review what has been spent on what items. It appears to us that we have ample funds to do the remaining things contemplated in the construction budget and the separate budget for furnishings. The big ticket item will probably be preparing the grounds for the sports courts as requested.

We then had lunch at AHF. It is overcast so we had lunch inside around gas heaters. Usually there is about a 40 degree swing in temperature because the sun comes out strong but not today. The power is now rarely on and I have a feeling that Gray Davis may have taken employment here as Minister in charge of delivering reliable sources of energy. We need to get Carl Lower over here to work on the electrical distribution and transmission grid.

After lunch we went to the computer lab which was still fully functional. Our afternoon schedule was a bit up in the air since major Womble from PRT had called earlier regarding a possible meeting with the Colonel. I wanted to talk to the PRT personnel regarding a series of e-mails I had just received from US Department of Defense personnel and others interested in assisting us with our computer project. It turned out that I talked to Colonel Ruf by phone rather than meeting with him and he briefed me on the visitation the Jalalabad PRT had previously had with Dr. Linton Wells (who is Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense and in charge of networks for the Office of the Secretary of Defense), and Brian Fila who I believe is a Deputy for Dr. Wells. Dr. Wells had called my home in San Diego while I am here and followed up with subsequent e-mails advising that he would like to be in touch with me. Colonel Ruf advised that the meeting in Jalalabad with Dr. Wells and Mr. Fila covered internet working issues for this part of the world relating to both the security functions being performed by the military and to some extent possible civilian applications. They also talked about the information network the US DOD had established to provide tsunami relief. Included in the series of e-mails were several from SDSU



Professor Eric Frost, Director of Immersive Visualization Center, Colleges of Sciences. Eric had meet with Mayor Arsalai, Steve Spencer and I when we met with President Steve Weber at SDSU back in November. Eric had then taken us to his lab and demonstrated some of its non-classified capacity. Eric advises in his recent e-mails to me:

In the meeting with Pres. Weber at SDSU with the Mayor of Jalalabad, I mentioned that Strong Angel III was going to be in Afghanistan this coming summer. Dr. Wells has been the moving force behind many of these efforts and is the sponsor for these. He is very (VERY) interested in talking to you about what can be done with communications and similar infrastructure in Jalalabad--his meetings this last week indicated that people he talked with did not even have communications or Internet things on their agenda as metrics for improvement. Dr. Wells is in charge of networks for OSD (Office of Secretary of Defense) so really knows that they are of value in helping peoples' lives.

Dr. Wells would like to talk with you and brainstorm about what might be done, like to encourage you to do more of the things with computers and communications. Whatever you guys decide --- SDSU is totally on the bandwagon ready to help both here and in Afghanistan.

Subsequent e-mail from Eric

Wonderful to hear from you--talked with President Weber and Provost Marlin about you on Monday and Pres. Weber was raving about reading your daily posts. They are extremely proud and supportive of what you are doing. Getting connected to Lin and his team would be an incredible asset to your work there in terms of wisdom and vision. I will let Lin and Brian take the lead in what they are thinking and look forward to seeing how the efforts can assist the people of Jalalabad and Afghanistan and area.

My wife was in Jalalabad in 1973 (as well as nearly all the cities of Afghanistan) doing thesis work on carpets and fabrics (two women traveling around country alone for month, youth) and has talked about what a neat place it was. Lot happened since then, including the enormous jumps in technology that could help these people as Lin and Brian have seen in humanitarian efforts in many places. SDSU is really interested in helping in any way we can, esp. with remote sensing (I am assigning gathering imagery of portions of the country as semester project to my students) and Internet and communication efforts that are of interest here.

Thanks for all you are doing---reminds me of a favorite saying of one of our favorite people, Dr. Dave Warner---doing good and doing it well.

I am still trying to sort through the various e-mails on this topic, DOD Acronyms and figure out the components of special programs like "Storm Angel II and III ". In any event, I think there is serious interest in the US DOD to assist what we are doing on the civilian side and an even increased interest in SDSU starting with President Weber and some of the technical support faculty who are quite interested as well. Most of this I will try to sort out upon my return. I have corresponded through e-mail with the four individuals involved in these e-mail

strings to inquire if there is anything further I can do while here to assist what may be a new and higher dimension of internet involvement.

I also advised Colonel Ruf about the computer lab sabotage. I had been previously told that the Jalalabad Security police would brief the PRT but the Colonel knew nothing about it. It seemed to me this is the type of thing PRT should be aware of since it constitutes an attempt to derail re-construction.

Anyway back at the lab, when Fary and I were finishing up, we were visited by Abdul "Wali" Ghafoori and later by his brother Latif, who used to be our computer lab administrator, and their father Professor Ghafoori at NU. Wali owns the main computer shop in town and is very successful in the support he provides most NGOs in town. He was interested in our lab sabotage and suggested it was the work of the ex-communist faction still affiliated with the university. It doesn't sound like ex-communists would be the same crowd as Taliban supporters suspected by Baryalai. Wali and his father then talked extensively about university politics which I think take a whole different dimension than university politics in the US. (A UCSD professor once advised me that the reason politics at universities are so vicious is because the stakes are so small.) Anyway, much of the political discussion was in Dari with the conversation directed to Fary. It seems clear to me, that we are in no position to deal with university politics and only need to try to understand the same as these politics affect the things we are trying to accomplish. When Farid Saydee spends substantial time with the NU faculty as part of this project later this year, he will be able to better assess how some of these political nuances may impact what we are trying to accomplish although it may well be that he will have some difficulty figuring things out as well.

The topic then turned to the Rotary Club. Wali is the Club Secretary and his father is the President Elect. We were joined by another gentleman who is also a member of the club. It was clear that they have an immediate thirst to learn more about Rotary and none of us wanted to wait for the return of Ishaq from Kabul. So we scheduled an officers meeting which can also be attended by anyone interested for 10:00 AM this morning in the computer lab. I have brought training material with me and we can walk them through the various Rotary web pages where additional materials are available. This training session is very much needed to broaden the leadership base in the club. So far, getting this club going has fallen pretty much exclusively on Ishaq's shoulders and those shoulders are carrying too much weight on all fronts. We ended up having spent about four hours at the lab.

We came back to AHF and tried to sort out all of the conversations we had participated in. We had just a snack for dinner and did not join the others here for the meal.

Steve

- **Location:** Nangarhar University Computer Lab
- **Date:** Jan. 22, 2005
- **Time:** 3:15 PM
- **Title:** A slower day

## Comments

January 22

This journal entry for yesterday's activities will be rather short because the pace has slowed down. Fary and I went to the computer lab and met with the Rotary Club President Elect, Secretary and Club Service Chair. We reviewed with them administrative issues relative to the operations of a Rotary Club. They are all quite eager to get off to a good start. We also provided some demonstrations regarding information available on Rotary International's web page. They have much to learn and it is not likely they will get much local support given the separation between Jalalabad and experienced Rotarians in Pakistan. Yet, through e-mail communications and visitations from time to time by Rotarians from our District and elsewhere, I think the club will do just fine. We suggested that they start with a highly visible community project with little cost. Consideration is being given to helping to fix up a local park or a part of a local park and provide some Rotary identification to this effort. They are also anxious to work with education and they will be helping with the micro-credit project being sponsored by the Encinitas/La Costa Club and our club in our district. We also talked about the arrangements for the Charter night which these Rotarians are assisting with.

Afterwards Fary and I wanted to visit the main local park to get some more ideas about having a Rotary improvement project there. We could see there were many people inside—it is gated. Once inside it is hard to describe what we saw. That day was Friday which is like our Sunday and it also is the second day of their Ead religious holiday so that may be a partial explanation. There were thousands of people and amusement rides made of wood and rope turning with propelled human power. There were swings tied to large trees and boys swinging very high in the air. There were fires with food being prepared. Roped squares with tables in the middle with prizes on them and young boys supervising ring tosses. What struck me the most is that this seemed like what could have been a pioneer celebration in the states 100 years ago with one striking difference—not a single woman present except for Fary. Upon entering, we attracted huge attention—but just curiosity. As we moved around hundreds--yes hundreds-- of people surrounded us and it became a bit difficult to move. A heavily armed security person quickly joined us and provided crowd control as we move through the various parts of this arena. Many teenage boys would practice their English with us. I have been to many parts of the world in undeveloped countries but never have I felt like I did here. It was as though these people in this park had never been around a foreigner before or that no one from the outside world has ventured into this place. It was totally non-threatening but our presence was clearly creating more interest than we would have preferred. I took a few pictures but it was impossible to capture the atmosphere.

We then went back to AHF facility and I updated some of paperwork. We are finding that electricity is rarely on here even with the generator which means no heat or light unless someone brings us a gas heater or kerosene lantern. Ishaq has some Indian DVDs we can watch on my laptop and we found a hearts game on the laptop. I hope the battery on my headlamp holds up for several more hours. I did not bother to throw in an extra one. I am glad I loaded some music into my laptop. It provides for some entertainment. Fortunately my laptop battery charges fast and I have an extra battery. I can get these charged up at the computer lab. We have taken a gas heater there to make it a little more comfortable.

This slower pace is probably good for me but something I am not used to here or at home.

Steve

- **Location:** Nangarhar University Computer Lab
- **Date:** January 23
- **Time:** 11:00 AM
- **Title:** Some unplanned activities

### **Comments January 23**

Yesterday ended up being different than planned. We thought we were going to go with Richard from IF Hope to one of the villages to look at a potential agriculture project for IF hope. However, Mayor Arsalai and his son Sadiq (I have been spelling his name wrong) showed up and advised that the Nangarhar Director of Information and Culture was waiting for us with several others from his department. So we went to his office and were joined by individuals in charge of the local newspaper, local magazine, the printing press, the local library, the local radio station, a couple of elders, and some more people whose purpose I did not ascertain.

The Director, Mohammad Hashim Ghamshareek, talked for about a half hour with Fary interpreting about what we have done for the City of Jalalabad. He talked about the historic significance of having established the Sister City relationship and yet seemed to keep things pretty well in perspective. He noted that establishing the relationship is just the first step and it does not mean that things will now be changing in Jalalabad but the existence of the relationship signifies that people in San Diego do care about Jalalabad and for that they are thankful. He advised that they can use any help to be offered since they are just emerging from 25 years of war and are starting from scratch. Above all they appreciate the expression of friendship.

I acknowledged his good perspective and mentioned that we in San Diego are just starting the process to see what this sister Cities relationship can mean from our perspective. I cautioned not to set high expectations but we are sincere in our efforts and are in this for the long haul. I mentioned that in the US and elsewhere there are many topics in which people do not agree. I mentioned that I assumed that not all people in Jalalabad shared enthusiasm for the Sister Cities relationship (and some of the other developments we have been involved in) to the same extent as the Director and others present and these discontents may discourage the closeness we are working on developing. I asked for his thoughts on this. He responded that virtually all the people in Jalalabad very much welcome the initiatives underway. Those few who don't represent a small fringe faction and are nothing more than a minor nuisance. They will not be able to get in the way of progress.

We adjourned with Fary being interviewed for by the local radio station and I was given a brief tour of the library and a community hall provided by PRT. The library is small so the Director advised he will be switching that to be his office so that his larger office could become the library. The community hall is big but has no chairs. Without his asking, I could tell he would like about 300 chairs to fill the hall. They then took me to the print shop where there were printing presses that looked about 30 or more years old but still functioning.

As we were leaving the facility, Fary mentioned to the mayor that we would like to pay our respects to the Governor sometime during our visit. Mayor Arsalai called the Governor (both use cell phones) and the Governor invited us to the palace for lunch that day. We first spent about 45 minutes talking with the governor in his formal receiving room. The topic most on his mind was the poppy eradication program. It is his estimate that Nangarhar Province will have been about 95% effective in eliminating poppy production at least for this season. (Most other estimates are around 80% but in any event it is a big percentage.) This has been done through voluntary measures using the local shuras. Now everyone is waiting to see what the international response will be regarding fulfillment of "promises" made if poppy eradication proves successful for this season. The lack of production will have a devastating economic effect on Nangarhar Province. Poppies have been grown here for over 100 years and in just one season poppy production has been essentially terminated. The Governor advises that the other provinces where they have not undertaken huge poppy eradication programs, as well as residents of Nangarhar Province, will be most interested to see what happens to Nangarhar province now that they it has fulfilled its part of the bargain. He clearly is concerned that economic aid may not be forthcoming and that will be a disaster for Nangarhar. I do believe there have been some seed distribution programs but I do not know to what extent and in any event, the governor pointed out that a substitute crop will not provide the same financial yield as poppies. I also do not know how the poppy financial yield was distributed—how much trickled down to the farmers. I recall from previous conversations on this trip, a corollary concern that if there are major substitute crops, the ability to export crops beyond what is needed for local consumption is problematic because of the poor condition of roads in and out of Jalalabad. There also is in place the cash for work program mentioned earlier, but my sense is that the funds generated for the local economy through that program will be just a small fraction of what otherwise would have been generated through poppy production. It will be interesting to follow what happens in Nangarhar province over the next few months. The stakes are pretty high and I hope the main players in this poppy eradication program, the US, UK and EU, are paying close attention.

We then adjourned to the dining hall where we dined at the largest table I have ever sat at. Not sure who all the guests were—some were part of the Governor's staff and some had come to pay their respects to the Governor during the last day of Eads. During the meal the electricity went out. The governor joked saying that maybe the Sister Cities relationship could solve their power problems. I advised that I would see if our former California Governor, Gray Davis, might be able to assist since he now has time on his hands and has substantial experiences with power outages. The Governor advises there are two long term solutions to the power problem both relating to major work at some hydro facilities. For the short term, he is optimistic that the German company Siemens may be providing some large generators. They will be able to charge businesses more for electricity if they have a reliable source and those funds can pay for the costs of running the generators.

After a late and long lunch went to the computer lab to take care of our daily e-mails. We returned to AHF after dark which was still without electricity. I had brought with me some tapes of Mayor Arsalai's visit to San Diego so we watched those for a while on my camcorder. I went to be early but the staff provided a gas heater to take the chill off some.

Steve

- **Location:** Nangarhar University Computer Lab
- **Date:** Jan 24, 2005
- **Time:** 4:00 PM
- **Title:** Rotary Charter Night and School Dedication Successes

## Comments

January 24

Yesterday was pretty routine except for the Rotary Club Charter Celebration. We went to the computer lab in the morning. Even though school is not in session there were several professors using the lab. Two are here sponsored by the government of India. One teaches Microsoft Office programs—Word, Excel and PowerPoint and also teaches off site web design—but I can't imagine for what purpose. The other teaches ESL. Both teach to professors and students and they both teach two half day sessions per day. That is unusual since the university generally only holds classes in the mornings. I mentioned that Steve Spencer may be following up with them to get some additional information that could help us develop the proposal sponsored by the Hansen grant. The contact info I have is:

Sachin Prakash MS Office Instructor SachinPrakash99@yahoo.com

Rakesh Bhatia ESL instructor (He also has e-mail but had left before I could get it. Sachin can ask Rakeh to provide Steve his e-mail address.)

Going to and from the computer lab we made some stops regarding things that Fary or Ishaq has ordered for the school. We are advised that the stone plaque for the school is finished but the guy who made it (whose business is to make tombstones) is in Pakistan and the finished stone is locked up. We will improvise by simple using an un-carved stone and someone will use a marker to provide the inscription.

We returned to AHF for lunch. Ishaq had returned from Kabul and was working on the final arrangements for the Rotary Charter Night. The planning was definitely more last minute than Fary and I were comfortable with.

We then went out to the school to see about the status of the clock and if there would be any picking up that needed to be done. The footing had been poured several days ago and they were putting some finishing concrete work on the top of the platform. We were advised that the clock would be installed later that day. It probably did get installed but once we returned to town Ishaq received a call that a certain type of screwdriver was needed so then needed

to locate that and send a car out with the screwdriver. (Rick—there is only one leveling plate—not two—in the installation kit. I don't think that presents a problem.

We then went back to AHF and reviewed the financial information for the operations of the computer lab, the two phases of construction for the school and the furnishings budget. The information provided was very complete. We have enough funds to pay for the lab administrator and diesel fuel for several more months. It will depend on any extra costs like machine repair—etc. We should have funds for at least the next six months. We pay the administrator \$100 per month and fuel costs around \$40 every two or three months.

I was surprised to learn that the costs we paid for phase one of the school included providing a small amount of compensation to an individual who had built a perimeter wall surrounding a large area on property adjacent to the school but is on school property. The area enclosed will be perfect for the sports courts contemplated. Only a couple of things need to be done to finish phase 1 of construction—installation of ceiling fans which have already been purchased with the installation prepaid, and adding screens or metal grates to the windows. We will have some phase two funds remaining in the account. We also should be able to furnish the school very well with the balance of the funds set aside from this from the Rotary Foundation Helping grant—assuming PRT provides replacement desks to be used in the six new classrooms.

Fary will be very busy for the next month overseeing the furnishing and equipping of the school. She will also assist in teaching in the level seven ESL class and will work with the professors in the computer lab at the university.

Pakistani Rotarian Zamarud Shah (who has helped us from the beginning) and Rauf Rohaila (The Pakistani District Governor) arrived mid afternoon. We caught up on many things. Rauf again add Pakistani members to the GSE team and I declined. He wants us to send used computers to Pakistan and Zamarud pointed out the cost of shipping would be more than the computers would cost on the used market in Pakistan. He asked if we could provide used books he could arrange for the books going to Pakistan in container that will be sending machinery. I advised I would see if our District Governor would be interested in this. Zamarud advised that the computer lab we established in Pakistan is working well. Rauf signed a letter I prepared acknowledging our Rotary Club—La Jolla Golden Triangle as a co-sponsor of the Rotary Club of Jalalabad. He said that was appropriate since we had done all the work. He mentioned that he did not want our club supporting the Jalalabad Club. Zamarud pointed out that a club in Jalalabad could not exist without some external support so Rauf backed off. I went through some of the details that are underway to get a club chartered in Heart, Afghanistan. I think Rauf will be supportive of these efforts being leg by a Rotarian in Laguna Beach—I am only acting as a consultant and not active in that effort. Rauf also mentioned that they do not yet know who will be the Pakistani District Governor for next year. There were irregularities in the voting, destroyed ballots and other problems so a second election as held. That election, which is yielding a different result, is now being contested as improper by the previous winner. I am recommending that we send Al Gore



and his team over to help sort this out. I think they should have some time on their hands.

Fary and I left early for the Charter night venue. It had been picked because it was typically Afghan. It is a restaurant used for significant events. Some windows are missing and the main door would come apart as people entered and left. There were about 40 people there—more non-Rotarians than Rotarians. The Major and Sergeant from PRT were there with interpreters and some community leaders. The Deputy Governor from the Governors office was there. One of the Rotarians acted as MC. Speeches were given by Charter President Ishaq, myself, District Governor Rauf, Baryalai (Executive Director of AHF and political activist) and Mayor Arsalai. I had brought with me a big three by four foot club Rotary Club of Jalalabad banner, a bell on an engraved stand and gavel, officers and director Rotary pins and regular member pins. I made a presentation to Ishaq prearranged by the Le Mesa Rotary Club in our District making Ishaq a Paul Harris Fellow. I advised that five members of that club contributed \$200 each to the Rotary Foundation for this. (I also made clear that this \$1,000 was not a contribution for the club itself.)

After the speeches and presentations we had an Afghan meal. A few of us sat at tables and chairs rather than the floor mats and pillows. My left knee advises in no uncertain terms—no more sitting Indian style for long meals. I am having some difficulty going up and down stairs but sore knee helps me not notice the new pain I have recently developed in my lower back.

I crashed early but with electric on—which means with an electric heater that is working. I am definitely shifting to the going home mode. The school dedication is today and later I will take my final visit to the computer lab for this trip. Major Womble from PRT asked me if I have been able to do what I planned for this trip, and in thinking about my response realized that the answer is yes to everything. I look forward to major decompression when I will get home. Fary will be left with a lot of follow up to do on her own. She has to be admired for her willingness to stick with this stuff. I seem to get the fun part and she has had fun also but the enchantment of being here does end to wear off over time.

I am now also providing a brief update on today's activities since I am uncertain about my computer access for the balance of the trip.

We arrived early for the Dedication Ceremony. The clock is perfect but has two correctable issues. The engineers can not get the time to be set right after explicitly following the instructions provided. Also, the clock face does not face the entrance. It is not clear if it can be rotated in place or if the booting needs to be dug out, re-poured with the bolts reset. I have sent an e-mail to the clock company regarding these items. The final result will be very good.

The dedication ceremony was well attended. Many dignitaries were present including the Nangarhar Governor, Deputy Governor, Minister of Education, Deputy Minister of Education, Jalalabad Mayor Arsalai and a few others people bowed down to when they arrived. Not sure who they were. There were about 200 present and the local television recorded the event. We held the ceremony

in the Multi-purpose room. School boys sang and as did school girls. There were speeches for about an hour and one half. The Governor gave a rather long speech very well received by the audience. I made a few comments about Doyle Elementary School in La Jolla being the Sister School and the significance of the clock as our Rotary centennial project. I then read the inscription (which is in both English and Pashto) that goes on the stone with the clock.

Sister Cities San Diego and Jalalabad Sister Schools Jalalabad Rotary School  
Doyle Elementary School Under the Same Sun and Start We look upon this clock  
And know that across the continents Others are going to school Learning  
Lessons And going home to Families We are Citizens of the World February 2005  
Rotary international Centennial La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club

We then attempted Rick Clark's impossible idea of having some video of us with kids and the kids saying thank you Rotary. Next time Rick can come here and figure out how to deal with 800 kids who all want to be in the video and all the commotion of 200 guests as we try to turn the premises into a quiet studio.

Fary and I were very pleased with how the whole event came off. We had lunch back at AHF with Zamarud Shah and Rauf Rohaila and then came here to the computer center.

That's all for now. Time to think about heading home.

Steve

- **Location:** Kabul Inn Primitive Internet Café
- **Date:** Jan 26
- **Time:** 5:15 PM
- **Title:** Snowed in Kabul Comments
  
- My flight to Baku has been cancelled with a possibility of the next one going out in two days. So date of return is uncertain and I will miss my other three connecting flights. Impossible to re-arrange new flights from here. It's been snowing pretty steadily for the last several hours. Computer access is about as limited and the beer supply. Such is life.

Steve

- Location: San Diego, Ca
- Date: January 30
- Time: 2:00 PM
- Title: Good to be home

## Comments

January 30, 2005

It is great to be back home in San Diego. Fary and I went to Kabul on January 25. My flight on Wednesday, Jan 26 was cancelled due to weather and I was advised I may be able to catch a flight on Friday the 28th. I contacted Susan and she got in touch with Laura Gable (my travel agent) and she re-booked all of my flights. It would have been impossible to do from Afghanistan—one more person I am so much indebted to—the line is getting pretty long. Kabul was pretty much snowed in so Fary and I spent time in walking distance of the Kabul Inn. It seems that there should be a good market for snow shovels there since most of the sidewalks were either frozen with ice or still covered with snow.

On Friday I had the opportunity to spend six hours in the unheated Kabul airport wondering if my flight would leave that day. They eventually loaded a handful of us on a plane with markings I did not recognize (it was not Azerbaijan Airlines which I had booked) and assured us it would end up in Baku. They were right. It arrived late at night and I took my chances with one of the hotel pimps at the Baku airport. The place I ended up was pretty nice—at the restaurant had a double scotch, nice local beef dish, and a glass of wine for \$17. Got a short night's sleep then went to the airport at 5:00 AM and was offered the opportunity to again deal with about five layers of people with their hands in your pocket to pass through various checkpoints. I took a seat watching people get rolled by the shrink wrap people who I happened to avoid this round.

Upon my arrival at Heathrow airport in London, I realized how successful my trip had been. The security people confiscated the lone beer I had remaining from my travels in Afghanistan—yes I never did run out.

After the long flight to San Francisco and the short hop to San Diego, Susan greeted me at the airport and I talked to Abby and Rebecca by phone on the way home. I had been in transit for 48 hours plus the additional 48 hour delay in Kabul.

I have a meeting 8:00 AM this morning at San Diego State with the Department of Defense folks (in town for a conference) interested in expanding internet connectivity in Jalalabad. Not sure if anything will come from this meeting. From there, will go to the open house at the Somalia Sewing Center we established which has been expanded for use by the recently arriving Bantu Somali refugees in San Diego. Last night, everything was really capped off by seeing the Feb 7 People Magazine article that just hit the streets about our efforts through Rotary to arrange for some of the Lost Boys of Sudan living in San Diego to return to the Kakuma Camp in Kenya to work as volunteers with some of their colleagues left behind. Life is good. The Rotary wheel continues to turn.

Steve