

Wednesday evening-- March 17, 2010

Our trip getting to Afghanistan has for the most part been uneventful. On Monday, March 15, Fary and I rented a car, drove to Los Angeles airport and took the 16 hour non-stop flight to Dubai. There is a nice hotel next to the airport where we checked in and had a somewhat late meal. I was up around 3:30 AM Wednesday morning. We caught a cab at 5:00 AM for our 6:30 flight to Kabul. When we got to the airport we could tell there was a bit of a problem. The plane needed some part that was being flown in from somewhere. That resulted in a delay of about 3 1/2 hours.

While we were waiting for the flight we struck up a conversation with a fellow American stranded passenger, Tom Little. We soon realized we had met a few years before. Tom has lived in Kabul for the past 40 years. He works for a Christian organization that operates ophthalmology clinics and trains Afghan ophthalmologists. He did this during the Afghan hippie days, during the Russian invasion and later under the Taliban. He has never been bothered by anyone. He travels by bicycle most of the time in Kabul since it is faster than being in a car on the congested streets. He will be in Jalalabad next week to explore setting up an ophthalmology center there. That was the topic we had talked to him about over five years ago and we had lost track of each other. We plan to meet up with him when he is in Jalalabad and perhaps can tie one of our internet based telemedicine programs into an eye clinic he may set up.

I made a few phone calls while we were waiting as we realized our appointment schedule for later in the day was collapsing as the hours went by. We had known this type of delay happens often so we had made our less important appointments for this day of travel.

When our flight finally took off there were only about 10 passengers on the Boeing 767. A few of the people were getting very special treatment but we never did figure out what that was all about.



Coming into Kabul the snow covered mountains were as pretty as ever.—see picture. Once on the ground in Kabul, we went through customs quickly and were met by our long time Afghan friend Mohammad Ishaq. Kabul has a new terminal but no one greeting passengers can get within several blocks of it.

We went straight to the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and met with Joel Reyes, the World Bank (WB) program officer overseeing all the partnerships WB is funding between Afghan and US universities. The San Diego State University (SDSU)/ Nangarhar University (NU) ESL program runs out in April of this year. Although SDSU has accomplished everything it committed to during this time frame, there remains additional work to be undertaken to fully roll out and implement a four years BA in

English program at NU. It is probably that WB will work out an additional round of funding these types of partnerships through the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education down the road but there will be a hiatus for six months or more before details are worked out. Thus, we talked about different approaches to consider to keep the ESL program moving forward and on tract. Thereafter we met with Sukumar (who works for the MOHE) about some of the logistics. It is going to get complicated since Sukumar has the corporate memory and is leaving the program at the end of April. Further, Karzai has not been able to get most of his Ministers approved by Parliament so the MOHE and others have caretaker short term top level people.

Fary and then checked into our guest house which is next to the Ministry. We contacted Chancellor Aman Hamidzai who had been the Chancellor at NU and now is the Chancellor at the Education College in Kabul. He had arranged for us to meet Deputy Minister Osman Babury (MOHE) earlier in the day but we had missed that meeting. Aman suggested we go back to the Ministry and we might be able to catch Mr. Babury at the end of the day. While waiting we met a Mr. Khalid Haris who works in a USAID funded program known as Afghan Higher Education Project-HEP. This is a program we have been trying to get information about for years but have been stonewalled. Khalid was very forthcoming about the program. After more than three years they are finally looking at doing something to help with medical education. (They have been focused pretty much exclusively on teacher training for the last three years.) When we advised Khalid about what we have done to set up a computer lab at the NU Medical School, work out a NATO funded internet connection, provide on-line medical English scholarships to medical students through a program run by University of California San Diego and that we have a network of medical professionals in San Diego and elsewhere readily willing to assist with telemedicine and medical education, he expressed much interest in our programs and we both see opportunities for collaboration.

We then met with Deputy Minister Babury. Chancellor Hamidzai knows him well and talked about the virtues of our Rotary involvement at NU over the years. Mr. Babury may well be in a position to recommend some supplemental funding for the ESL program at NU.

The Chancellor then joined Fary and me for dinner at our guest house which is right next to the facility where he lives. At dinner time I realized my Afghan weight losing program was in full swing. The day started with a banana the hotel in Dubai left in my room, a candy bar I purchased during the three hour wait at the Dubai airport, and couple of cups of tea at our meetings. For dinner a green salad was served which I never touch in these types of places, with the main course being, from the best I could tell, potato and onion cooked into something that resembled a pizza with no flavor. I avoided the yogurt that others were complaining about.

After dinner I was able to connect with Susan through a Skype phone call.

Now it is time to hit the sack. Tomorrow our day starts with the driver picking us up at 7:00 AM, solid meetings all day, and dinner with Abdul Hai who used to work at the Afghan Ministry of higher Education. We forgot to plan time for lunch.

Thursday evening March 18, 2010

Today was busy as anticipated. I won't bore people with all the details of the meeting but will be sending separate e-mails to those who are involved in the programs we discussed during our meetings.

The day started leaving the guest house at 7:00 AM for a meeting with Nashita Deputy Country Manager, Ahmed Javed and two of his associates. That company is subcontracting with a company called VIZADA which company is providing a satellite internet connection to Nangarhar University. We are interested in how it is being proposed that the internet signal will be distributed to the five different campuses at NU since we have some responsibility regarding the implementation of that distribution. We also will want to get a proposal from Nashita/VIZADA to replace the internet signal Afghan Telecom is presently providing to the high school sites in Jalalabad where we have computer labs. The meeting was productive with much follow up to be undertaken by both sides.

We then went to the office of Afghan Small and Medium Size Enterprise Development (ASMED) sponsored by USAID through DAI. We met with Quinton Collier and Louisa Daly. Our Rotary Club Foundation has a sizable grant through ASMED called *Light up Jalalabad*. This has many features relating to bringing technology to various sectors in Jalalabad. They are pleased with our progress and advised we have substantial latitude in how we spend the funds. Apparently we have a very good track record within various US agencies in Afghanistan and thus there is a high level of confidence in allowing us to deploy the funds within some fairly broad parameters.

We then met with representatives of Afghan Telecom (Ahmad Khan and Nasratullah Wafa) to discuss concerns we have had with internet service they have been providing to the labs in the high schools in Jalalabad and sites we are using at NU through NATO funding. ATF has capacity issues but agreed to double the dedicated bandwidth being provided to the high schools. It is not clear when their capacity issues will be resolved or if they will be able to adequately address the disruptions in service which are frequent.

We then went to the US Embassy and met with a collection of people (Beverly Mather Mather-Marcus, Mary Nell Bryant, Kerrin Ann Barrett, Waleed Hakim, and briefly with Angela Gezma). We provided background information about our involvement in Afghanistan. We reviewed the status of the GCEP in providing internet to the students in Jalalabad and using the internet to connect with high school students in the US. We talked about how American sponsored Lincoln Centers in Afghanistan could incorporate some aspects of GCEP through their programs offered to students in various cities in Afghanistan. We further discussed the possibility of moving the Lincoln Center in Jalalabad to the new building we will be building at the NU College of Education campus.

As we were leaving the U.S. Embassy, we ran into Flouran Wali. Flouran is an Afghan American who traveled with Fary and I to Afghanistan on our first trip in November, 2002. She now works for USAID and had just returned from New York.

We returned to the guest house and had dinner with Abdul Hai who used to work for the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education and now works for the World Bank. He had been directly involved with the

partnerships between NU and SDSU and provided us some overall insights into the WB funded partnerships program.

Tomorrow morning we head for Jalalabad expecting a slower pace for a few days.

Friday evening-March 19, 2010



Today went pretty much as anticipated. We drove to Jalalabad which normally is about a two hour drive. It took a bit longer because of a semi on fire on the side of the road. Not sure what that was all about but it did not seem to relate to any military activity. I did not feel the need to stop to get out and ask what was going on.

Fary and the driver fixed a lunch of our main staple here at the NU guest house—tomato soup and some potato type of casserole. Fortunately some of my beer was still left over from my last trip. It was about 85 degrees outside when we arrived so the beer supply has since diminished pretty quickly.

Fary and I went to the female dorm we built to inspect some things. There is still work to be done but we will be hiring someone else to do the work since we have not been satisfied with the first contractor. Overall the building looks great and they have done a nice job with the landscaping. We then went for a walk along the canal at the back side of the campus and found some kids playing—see picture below. We strategized for the planning we need to do for the next couple of days here while the Afghans take time off to celebrate the Islamic New Year on March 21.

We were working on our plans after our walk when someone rattled our security gate. We had unexpected guests being the NU Chancellor, his wife, daughter, son-in-law and two armed guards. It turns out the son-in-law is an Afghan MD from Germany who is interested in how to put to good use the computer lab



we have set up at the NU medical school. He is involved himself in some on line learning sites for the medical profession. He will be here for a while and we will hook up later to explore possibilities.

I may wait an extra day before my next journal entry since most of the next couple of days will simply be spent at the guest house working on the computer with Fary as we prepare reports and proposals.

Sunday afternoon March 21, 2010

Today is the New Years Day in Afghanistan which falls on the first day of Spring. As such, everything is shut down here. Most things were shut down yesterday as well. Fary and I have used the time for follow up communications regarding our series of meetings in Kabul. Also we have had some guests.

Brandon Mendoza and Ben Siepel joined us for dinner last night. They both work for the Jalalabad office of the Afghan Small & Medium Enterprise Development Program (ASMED). Our Light up Jalalabad program falls under ASMED although we report directly to the Kabul office regarding LUJ. The meeting was essentially social in nature. Brandon and his father, Dr. Art Mendoza, came to Jalalabad about four years ago as part of the San Diego~Jalalabad Sister Cities program. Brandon came back as a volunteer a couple of years ago and then last year took a job here. They shared many insights about what is going on in the country and the challenges faced in the working environment here. Certainly bureaucracy within the Afghan governmental structures makes it difficult and being sensitive to security issues is also an impediment. Yet they are running several successful programs here in getting small business up and running.



Fary and I (pictured left) went for a walk this morning along the canal that runs along the back of the campus. It is much cooler today but still pleasant. We talked with several students who were also on walks. One student is in his first year of law school at NU. He believes Afghans should be left to themselves to solve their own problems and that the presence of the international elements-military and development- are creating the security issues in the country. He would just like Afghanistan to be left alone by outside interests. It has never had much of a chance to do that. He does not believe that civil war would develop if everyone left. He is 20 years old which means he has no memory of the Russian invasion and occupation and would not have been affected much by the Taliban regime since he was only eleven at the time of its removal. So I realized that those entering university at this time really did not have much exposure to the ruling of the Taliban that affected adult society and women more than children.

Later in the morning we were visited by four Afghan professors we have known for some time and who all have been to San Diego. We talked about the English program in which three of them teach and about Rotary in Jalalabad where three of them are members. There was much discussion about campus politics much of which would not be appropriate for me to detail in this journal. Suffice it to say that elements

within a university here have much more informal influence in the administrative affairs of the university compared to the US. This can range from fixing failing grades of students to the hiring of totally incompetent professors. It creates a frustrating environment for professors and students who do not take their academics seriously. One of the best professors we have been working with has decided to work only part time at the university. When we first learned of this we were quite disappointed but now realize his talents can better serve the country in a different environment. Hopefully he will stay engaged with the university in some capacity and help in a leadership position someday.



It sounds like the Jalalabad Rotary Club (pictured on the left) is functioning well. They have adopted a school in an outlying area of Jalalabad. The school is primarily for girls through grade four with about 450 students. Fary sent four boxes of school supplies to the PRT in Jalalabad and we will take the items that young kids can use to the school. We will also explore using some of the funds our Rotary club has donated to put a water well in at this school—not sure what that will cost.

I was just interrupted by the sound of numerous kids who somehow breached our guest house security and are running around the grounds. It looks like they have a small one crawl under the gate that is dead bolted now but can be open and shut for cars. Once inside, the small child can slide open the dead bolt and let everyone else in. So our investment of intimidating razor wire on the top of the wall is totally useless. I think we need to put in a concrete base below the gate to keep people out. But Afghans are ingenious. They can find a way to get in if they want to. Fortunately, we have many friends here at the university and even the fundamentalists we know are friendly towards us. They seem to appreciate the fact that we are taking time and energy to help their country.

Monday evening--March 22

We started the day driving into downtown Jalalabad for the first time on this trip. The city is bustling with activity of all sorts. It certainly does not give the impression of a place with serious poverty nor any signs of unrest—just thousands of people going about their daily routine. This is how we have found Jalalabad in the past but perhaps there is more business activity and are more cars on the street than what we have seen before.

We met with Almas who runs our Global Connection and Exchange program. He provided a power point presentation updating us on the program. Presently there are about 450 high school students in Jalalabad in the program using computers with internet connections on a daily basis. All told for this year there have been about 1,500 Jalalabad high school students in the program. Some students just take the 28 days of intensive computer training but some stay in for many months. Those who do stay in are the ones who are most active posting messages on the internet for others to respond to. They use both Facebook and a NING site for these postings.

We reviewed with Almas a few suggestions we had made. One is using a website developed by Voice of America for Pashto or Farsi speakers to learn English. He presented this to his teaching staff and they all like it and plan to see that students take advantage of it. He also commented on the information we provided to him about a Smart board. We believe a U.S. company may donate two of these to our programs here and they will be both fun and useful for educational purposes. We also suggested he experiment with some free programs in the public domain that replicate the Microsoft office suite. These will work well in the GCEP labs. They even have some more advanced features that the Microsoft Office suite.

We also reviewed with Almas our plans for the GCEP summer program in Jalalabad and our plans for Almas for when he comes to the U.S. in June. He has passed his visa exam and now is in the black hole known as “processing”. That can take a few weeks or a few months.

We went to the GCEP lab shared by several high schools. It is located next to his office at the NU College of Education. The lab has 14 computers and we will be providing five more. We have arranged through NATO to have a high speed internet connection at this lab. Almas has some large posters on the wall with sayings like: *Education is the best Element for the Development of a Nation; If you want to be Respected be Respectful; and Education is the Right of both Man and Woman.*

We then went to a high school next door to look at a project that is the result of a small grants program undertaken through GCEP and funded by San Diego~Jalalabad Sister Cities Foundation. Fary has been in charge of having about 10 GCEP high schools submit grant applications for \$150 each. Each project needs to benefit the student's school or the community. A team of students needs to be organized and they need to seek community donations as well--such as labor, supplies or funds. This particular project was to rehabilitate a cistern that provided drinking water to the students and to build housing for the pump station for the cistern. The students are very proud of this project. Almas will be providing a comprehensive report to us when all projects are finished. That may be as early as the end of this month.

We then met with Dean Farmanullah who is head of the NU Education Faculty. We reviewed with him the building we will be building on his campus to provide computer training classrooms for students, an auditorium, and other facilities. There are about 1,000 students in the NU College of Education with no one provide access to computers or computer training for these future teachers of Afghanistan. Thus, we will be doing so under LUJ. Although the U.S. government is providing large amounts of funds for professor training in the education faculty under a program known as HEP, it has been made clear to us that none of these funds can be used to support students.

We also saw a number of women painting outside walls and rooms at the College of Education building. It was explained that these women are generally widows and USAID is providing funds for them to work. It was a bit of an unusual sight.

We then went to the Public Hospital and met its director. He advised that the 10 computers Fary arranged for in January are providing valuable administrative support for the hospital and they are connected to the

internet. We plan to follow up with an Afghan American physician we know who has developed software to assist hospital administration in Afghanistan.

We were joined by Dr. Pardis who is the Director of Public Health for Nangarhar Province. (We had brought him to San Diego in January of 2009.) His office oversees the mid-wifery training program and nursing training program. We recently learned that the computer lab for the mid-wifery program is not connected to the internet nor is the computer lab for the female nursing program. We had Almas with us to evaluate the situation and we believe in the next few days he will be able to light up all the lab computers to the internet through LUJ program. We will be making available to those programs the medical databases we have compiled which are open source accessible through the internet. We also are arranging for a scholarship sponsored by LUJ for one of the mid-wifery teachers to enroll in the on-line Medical English program offered by UCSD.

We then visited the NU Medical School where we had previously set up a 34 station computer lab with some of the computers connected to the internet through the connection we arranged provided by NATO. This lab is working well. We have about 20 professors enrolled in the classes and both male and female medical students. The lab runs from 8:00 AM until 10:00 PM. We are advised they are making good use of the on-line medical data bases we have provided to them.

From there we visited the Abdul Wakail High School where we have one of our GCEP labs. The students were all engaged in using the lab resources. One of the students gave a small speech thanking us for the opportunity for computer training and ending the isolation they had previously felt. He indicated they are now communicating with other students in various parts of the world and enjoy that very much. It was a moving speech--particularly considering that we arrive unannounced.

We then went on a quest to find tomato soup and beer. From the best we can tell, no tomato soup exists in Jalalabad after stopping at six markets. We found the same true for beer but that was less surprising. Unfortunately Fary has taking a real liking to beer creating an unanticipated inventory control problem. After our driver dropped us off at the guest house I suggested he not return until he could find some beer. He returned an hour later with a case of Heineken for a cost of \$72—about half the cost of what I pay for a keg at home.

We also visited the NU International Learning Center. Unfortunately due to campus bureaucracy the fifty laptop computers there have been removed to storage until they are properly taken into inventory for the university. These were provided by World Bank funds and apparently the computers did not go through the formal ceremony for a hand over. So for now they are banished to storage until this gets resolved. The internet signal is still strong at the ILC and is used by students with their own laptops sitting outside.

We then went back to the guest house and spent some time with Ishaq. We had thought the Chancellor was going to join us for dinner but instead we were called to go to dinner at his house where we were joined by the three Vice Chancellors, a couple of professors, Ishaq and a few others. We had a good meal under the stars with Fary getting eaten by mosquitoes.

So it was a pretty full day.

Tuesday evening-March 23.

We thought this was going to be a low key day. I was going to spend some time at the medical school in the morning and Fary was to spend time on the main campus. We then were going to go to a meeting at the College of Education at 3:00 PM and the PRT (U.S. military base here) at 5:30 PM.

Yesterday when we were at the NU College of Education the Dean invited us for a 3:00PM meeting when some folks from USAID program known as HEP were coming to meet with him. We were familiar with the program and have been critical of it since they have a large amount of funds but are not allowed to use funds for students-just faculty. Further they are supposed to help with medical education but there has been no evidence of that. In fact, one of our programs funded by another branch of USAID which was supporting the medical school computer lab was not renewed because this was under the jurisdiction of the HEP program but, as noted, was doing nothing.

Rolling back the clock a few days, this morning I recalled a brief encounter I had had in Kabul with a young man, Khalid, who is with the HEP program. I met Khalid while I was simply waiting for another meeting. I took the opportunity to advise him about my concerns regarding the program and he advised they had just been approved for funding for medical education-- four years into the program. I mentioned what we have been doing at the NU medical school with the internet lab and computer training and we agreed to reconnect later.

Last night at dinner I had spent substantial time with the Chancellor son in law, Dr. Wardak, and learned more about his background in medicine receiving his MD and MA in public health in Germany and that he speaks six languages. He has a desire to work with the NU medical school on a long term basis.

This morning when I thought about the HEP people coming to Jalalabad, I called Khalid to see if he was coming and if he would have time to talk about possibilities for the medical school. I had assumed the purpose of the visit was just to talk about the College of Education. Khalid put Michael, the Chief of Party for HEP, on the phone who had remembered meeting me several years ago. (That was a rather contentious meeting where we were pretty much invited to leave because we asked if any of the \$40,000,000 in their program could be used to pay an internet connection of \$500 per month for the NU College of Education.) Michael advised they would have a medical person with them and perhaps we could meet.

I then went to the medical school with Dr. Wardak. He had preciously arranged to put video projectors in six of the classrooms hooked to the ceiling and wired for a computer connection- but did not supply computers We then visited our computer lab at the med school and learned the professors are working hard to learn power point to use with the projectors. In assessing the situation and our funding available, I realized we could buy desk computers for the six projectors and jump the internet signal to the six classrooms so they would be hooked to the internet for online classroom presentations. I think we can do this for less than \$10,000.

I talked to Dr. Wardak about the HEP people coming and advised we should try to arrange for him to meet with them. We then went back to the campus and were requested to come to the Chancellor's guest house. We were advised that the meeting with the HEP folks would be in the Chancellor's office and there would be no meeting at the College of Education. We briefed the Chancellor about the background of the HEP program, provided an update and about what we are doing at the medical school, and what else we can bring relative to internet utilization working with the projectors. We then met with the HEP folks and the conversation eventually turned to the programs we have been running at the medical school for the last four years, where things stand today and what we will soon be doing. They were all ears. Fortunately they have big bucks and have the potential to bring a level of professionalism to the programs at the medical school that we cannot do simply through volunteer efforts. They are looking forward to working with us and building off of what we have put in place. It looks like a great opportunity for the medical school. If we had not been given the incorrect information yesterday about the HEP meeting with the College of Education we would not have been involved in this nor would have Dr. Wardak. I don't think anyone knew the HEP folks were coming to talk about the medical school. Certainly no one at the medical school knew. Tomorrow we will go with the HEP folks to the medical school and report back to the Chancellor later in the day.

In the middle of the above activities Fary and I met with one of the Vice Chancellors about the 50 computers that had been removed from the ILC. It turns out that someone from the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education came to the campus a while ago and advised the computers had not be properly logged in. Accordingly the computers needed to be put in storage until this logging in process was complete. Apparently this amounts to the university appointing a staff person to "be in charge of the computers" and paperwork needs to flow through the Ministry for this to be complete. So that assignment will be made and the computers will quickly be brought back to the ILC without waiting for the paperwork to receive the final stamp of approval.

We also had a chance to talk to the Chancellor about proceeding with the ESL program by requesting some capacity building funds from World Bank to fund a gap period. He is supporting of this but we have some budget issues to address and some procedural hurdles to get through. I will send a separate e-mail to those involved with this. They know who they are and should get to work on the budget.

We also brought up the topic of our desire to submit a grant application to a US govt. entity to create an entity we will call for now the Institute for Global Understanding to be based at the ILC. It will run workshops and seminars sometimes with international speakers, speakers with high level national recognition, and speakers or program of local interest addressing topics like human rights, alternative livelihoods (to growing poppies) the role of women under Islam etc. He is strongly in favor of this and we will proceed. Again those who are involved with this will be getting more info directly from me. This type of program is necessary to have independent funding for the ILC and guest house after the World Bank funds run out.

In the evening we went to the PRT and had dinner with the Commander, two USAID representatives and some of our solders stationed at the Jalalabad base. We picked up four boxes of school supplies that have

been donated to Fary which we shipped a few weeks earlier. (We need to break Fary of this habit of accepting donations for school supplies since it is a hassle to deal with and it would be better just to have money and buy things here.)

You may have noticed there is not much talk about lunch in these journal entries. We have yet to have lunch. There is no time and few acceptable public eating places. So my Afghan diet is in full swing only mitigated a bit by \$3 beers.

Wednesday evening-March 24

Today started by going to the NU Medical School and meeting with the HEP folks there. Dr. Khalil spoke for the med school. We know him well since he was on the GSE team to San Diego in 2005. The discussion focused on what HEP can bring to the table, which is substantial, and in doing so leveraging off of what we have set up at the computer lab. They also can do good things independent of us.

Fary and I left the meeting early to meet Dept. of State representatives regarding the building we propose to build at the NU College of Ed campus that will house a US sponsored Lincoln Center. The DOS folks like the location and will recommend it positively to some people who have reservations at DOS. With or without a Lincoln Center, the building will serve a good purpose. The DOS folks should be thankful we are thinking of them to house their LC at this facility.

We then went to the construction site of the Nasrat II School. We are facilitating the Rotarians in Canada who have matching funds from the Government of Canada to build this school. Construction is going rapidly. It may get completed before the target date. Year 2011 is the Centennial year for Rotary in Canada and this school project is in honor of that centennial—but in may get finished in the 99th year.



After that we went to the Medical School Teaching Hospital. We met with its Director Dr. Khan who also was on the 2005 GSE team. We briefed him about the HEP program for about five minutes and then the HEP folks showed up. The Teaching Hospital provides clinical learning opportunities for the medical students. There should be possibilities for HEP to provide some support for this. The facility has a good room for an internet lab and multi media center. We advised the HEP folks it could be set up in about 10 days for about \$10,000. They advised they were not sure they could get this done until sometime in 2011. They will get back to us on this. If they cannot do it soon, we can do it under LUJ and have it fully operational by the end of April, 2010. HEP has millions to spend but are not as nimble. We may be able to partner with them using our ability to do things on the ground fast but looking to them for professional content that we cannot provide very well.

We then had a debriefing session with the Chancellor reporting on the day's activities. After that we invited the HEP folks to the guest house for further discussions. I think we are all convinced there is a good fit somewhere and we just need to leverage off of each other's resources and abilities.

Our guest house overlooks the dorm we built so we mentioned that to them. They also had obtained from somewhere a picture of the building we plan to build at the NU College of education. I am pretty sure that after a couple of days with them they are trying to figure out who we are and how we are doing all these things through a Rotary Club. They probably think we are really CIA using Rotary as a front. Maybe Rotary headquarters in Evanston is about to get a visit.

I did not bother to tell the HEP folks that during the day I received a call from NATO asking for permission for NATO to use some of the funds NATO has allocated to us for a purpose a bit different but still consistent with our original grant from NATO. That may have taken them over the top. On a related note, the ground coming into our guest house is being dug for trenches to bring fiber to the GH for the connection we have arranged for through NATO.

After our guests left we realized we had a bit of a problem. Our food supply had dwindled to the last can of tomato soup and a diminishing beer supply. The Chancellor then called and advised he was sending some dinner over for us. So we survived another day in paradise.

Friday morning- March 26.

This report is on yesterday's activities-March 25.

We started the morning planning the trip to go to a school further out of town on the same road you take to go to the Rotary School which school is supported by the Rotary Club of Jalalabad. Fary had received four boxes of donations for some kids somewhere in the U.S. which we had previously mailed to the PRT here. So we decided to donate these items to the school the RC here is supporting.

While planning for this Dr. Basir Mangal arrived at the guest house unannounced. (He had been in San Diego for one month this summer under Rotary's GCE program.) He is an Afghan surgeon. He is presently on leave from a neurosurgery fellowship in the Ukraine. When he finishes his training he says he will be the only trained neurosurgeon in Afghanistan. About a half hour later Ishaq showed up as well. He advised his reason for coming was to discourage us from going to the school we planned to visit. He indicated the area has changed and is considered insecure.

We took advantage of the time with Basir and Ishaq to plan to visit a CAT scan clinic on Friday to see about bringing the internet to that clinic to support telemedicine with doctor's assistance in San Diego.

Our meeting point for the school visit was the Rotary school. Fary and I left for that to meet up with the local Rotarians. As we arrived at the school at 9:00 Almas called and advised that the Rotary school was having a special ceremony at 10:00 AM for the students who had complete two small grants projects at the school. One project was to install trash cans and the other was to fix broken chairs.



While waiting for the local Rotarians we walked around the school. The PRT has done a great job undertaking some badly needed cosmetic repairs. Additionally the students painted one of the classrooms and want to paint more if we buy the paint. The students seemed to have taken a keen ownership interest in the school. For the small grants project they raised additional funds in the community and worked with local vendors and contractors to assist with the project. Some of the male students helped the female students on things the females could not participate in for cultural reasons—like going to the market to talk to local vendors about purchasing the trash cans.

Eventually Safi Dost, President of the Rotary Club arrived (the only Rotarian participating) to take us to the other school. I was not going to go and strongly suggested to Fary that she not go. We both ended up staying at the Rotary School and enjoyed the special ceremony the students put together. One of the village elder leaders was there. He has been at the school various times starting with the original ground breaking ceremony. Safi took the boxes to the other school and used Fary's camera for pictures with the kids.

We then hooked up with Almas at his office and met with representative from Nashita. We requested they undertake a site survey to propose what would be involved to bring the internet to all high school in Jalalabad.

After that meeting broke up we went with Almas to the Teaching Hospital so he could do an initial assessment to set up a computer lab-multi media center there.

While there, we received a call from a Dr. Taj—an Afghan American. We had met him in San Diego a year or two ago when he was doing some translation work at Camp Pendleton. That meeting had involved some ideas he had for Jalalabad that did not fit with our plans. It turns out he is in Jalalabad, heard that we were in town (through the information network in Afghanistan that would put our CIA to shame) and wanted to get together with us. We met for tea at the Spingar Hotel. He has established an institute in his name for computer science and English and will be having a dedication ceremony this Saturday which we will attend. I should note that there seem to be numerous institutes such as this if the names on the buildings we see are accurate. Of course he points out how institute is top of the line. He has no identified

funding to support this institute and the other various programs he is in the process of launching. None of these fit within what we might consider funding even if we had excess funds.

We then met up with the carpenter we use so that Fary could review with him some bills that World Bank has not paid which are more than six months old. They total more than \$20,000 and he has had to pay funds for wood and supplies etc. Fary will try to break the payment log jam—stand back—you may hear the noise over there.

We then returned to the guest house to get caught up and prepare for a Skype call with Steve S this evening. Ishaq arrived unannounced and we spent a couple of hours reviewing options available to continue the ESL program during the gap period from when the original contract ends and the next round of funding which may open up towards the end of 2010. Without going into details, the options are not good. Fary was on line and thought Steve Spencer had just come on line. I called him on the phone and woke him up at 5:00 AM. Fary had misread a Skype chat from yesterday.

The internet at the ILC on campus was not working so we sent to the TAJ for a call with Steve S. in about an hour. The first platoon of Dave Warner's geek squad has arrived at the Taj so we spent some time with Ken who we knew from the past and met some baby geeks. Also Dave seems to attract a collection of young people who are advised it is interesting to come to Jalalabad and hang out with those of us doing things here. We met with Rachael who is interested in visiting some of our schools. Fary talked to her about joining us for some of our site visits.

We then contact Steve S. on Skype and had a good in depth call with a strong connection. After that we talked to Susan on Skype. Fary then decided she wanted to get back to the guest house rather than participate in the Thursday night rituals at the Taj. I elected to stay and participate in the compulsory drinking and hearing about what everyone is doing. I got some great insights from Ken and Todd regarding ways to get the internet from the main campus to the city center.

I got back to the guest house around 10:00. Fary watched a movie and I went to bed.

Saturday morning- March 27

The pace was slower yesterday. In the morning we met up with Ishaq, Dr. Mangal and Dr, Wardak and went to the clinic operated by Dr. Jan Anagha Malakzai. In this clinic he has an x-ray machine, ultra sound machine and CAT scan machine. He also operates a pathology lab and hopes to soon get an MRI machine. This is a for profit clinic but he also provides service to those who cannot pay. Additionally, he has a lecture room where he provides workshops for other doctors in town. He is a young man who speaks English and works seven days a week in his lab. We were there on a Friday which is usually a day when these types of businesses are closed. The clinic was very busy.

Although he is well trained in utilization of the equipment he advises he and others sometimes have difficulty interpreting the images they prepare. This is the only clinic of its kind in all the Eastern Provinces in Afghanistan and it does not have an internet connection. We talked about bring the internet to his facility with some other equipment to allow for electronic transmission of images. We mentioned that Dr. Dorros who operates the University of California-San Diego teleradiology lab interprets images from around the world and he and his staff are willing to donate their services to assist. Likewise, Dr. Hamed Bayat a U.S. licensed Afghan American nuclear cardiologist has offered his services to help interpret echo cardiograms. Dr. Steven Emmet, a San Diego dermatologist, has offered to assist on diagnosing skin lesions through pictures that can be sent just using digital photography. Dr. Art Mendoza who head up pathology at the Mary Birch Hospital in San Diego is looking to help out on the pathology side. He should be in Jalalabad next month.

Dr. Malakzai is very interested in this and willing to expand his humanitarian outreach. The next step is for Almas to assess the clinic to get the internet set up appropriately under LUJ. We then need to determine what equipment is necessary to facilitate the transmission of images. Pete and Kim from Medweb may be here in April and can help as can Dr. Dorros who can advise from San Diego. Fary and I see great potential here for this.

We then went back to the guest house. Fary and I worked on getting caught up on our paperwork. After a couple of hours, we took a break, sat on our deck, had a couple of beers and relaxed for a bit. It is beautiful here at the guest house. The weather is perfect and it is very quiet except for the noise of the birds and the mullahs call out to pray.

We had planned to call Tabasom and Wahida in the afternoon to invite them for dinner. (These are two young women who were in San Diego last summer under Rotary's GSE program.) But when we were about to do that Tabasom called. We invited her for dinner but could not reach Wahida.

We had some extra time so I played one of four CDs I have of tapes of Ronald Regan's speeches starting with his supporting speech for Barry Goldwater. What a pleasure it is to hear his voice and the messages he conveys in simple terms. I know he is not everyone's favorite but he is mine and Fary likes him as well. Ishaq actually met President Regan when Ishaq traveled to the US many years ago. Luck guy.

Tabasom came with her brother about 7:00 PM. Dr. Mangal had brought a feast for us this morning for our dinner and we only made a small dent in it. Tabasom is waiting for the results of her national exam to determine if she can go to the university. Her first choice for study had been listed as medicine in Kabul but she has changed her mind with her first choice now to be English at NU. She may hear while we are here. Presently she is teaching computers in our GCEP. She does this at the Bibi Mariam High School next to the university. Many of the university's professor's kids go to that high school. We are arranging for the internet connection to go to that high school through the program with NATO. This has been agreed to by NATO since that school serves the greater NU community.

Tabasom's brother is a fine young man. His English is good and he is quite knowledgeable. He is 22 and has been struggling to pass the national university exam having taken it twice. He is hoping third time is a charm.

Today is going to be busy so I need to sign off for now.

Saturday evening-March 27

Today started with two NEDA representatives meeting with us at the guest house. MIC (Moini International Consulting) has a contract with NEDA to put fiber in the ground to distribute the internet signal throughout the NU main campus. Additionally, we want them to make two separate proposals for us. One will be to additionally distribute the signal to the four campus sites downtown. The second one is to provide a proposal to connect the internet to all public high schools in Jalalabad plus the public hospital and the CAT scan clinic. We went from the guest house to the Taj to introduce the NEDA folks with a couple of the super geeks. The super geeks had good interaction with the NEDA folks and there are mutual opportunities for them to work together on things that do not involve us as well as the NEDA folks getting some intel that helps our projects.

We went with one of the super geeks—Todd- to meet with Almas to confirm what needs to be accomplished to provide internet to all high schools. It turns out Almas had the GPS coordinates for all but three of the schools and he can quickly provide that. The NEDA folks also have the GPS coordinates for the NU campus sites in the city center. Apparently there is software where one can punch in the GPS sites and it optimizes the routing for the internet cloud to be created to serve all sites. Fortunately we don't need to understand how this works.

We also reviewed with Almas the budget he has worked up to set up a computer lab at the Teaching Hospital. It will cost less than the \$10K I projected. When I find time, I will send that projection to the HEP folks and see what they think. Can they do that before year 2011 or do they want us to put it in next week at our expense?

Fary then stayed at the Global Connection site near Almas' office and spent time with the high school girls developing a seminar on domestic violence as part of their small grants project. Almas, Todd and I went to the CAT scan clinic to undertake the assessment to bring the internet to various rooms in the clinic so that it would be set up for telemedicine. Todd took the GPS coordinates.

We then returned, met Fary, and received a brief demo on the domestic violence presentation. The high school girls did it in English for our benefit although the presentation for their formal audience will be in Pashto.

We then went to the Public Hospital and had lunch with Dr. Pardis. We needed to review with him some questions Rotary International has about the administrative efforts relating to the polio eradication efforts in Afghanistan. If Dr. Pardis' information is correct, there have been no reported polio cases in

Afghanistan so far in 2010. It has been only one of four countries left in the world where the wild polio virus circulates.

Fary and I then went to the dedication ceremony for the Institute Dr. Taj is setting up. This was unfortunate. We sat through 90 painful minutes of speeches in Pashto. Media was there and we were placed in prominent positions in the front row. We realized we had no reason to be there and although funding was desperately needed it would not come through us. We left before it was over to go to the Rotary meeting.

There was some confusion on our part as to whether the meeting was at the Spinghar Institute where it is typically held or the Spinghar Hotel. We first went to the hotel. After a thorough search of the car we heard it was at the Institute. On the way to the Institute we heard it was at the hotel. When we returned to the hotel they waived us through with no search so we now know how to get a bomb into the hotel simply by creating confusion about where a Rotary meeting will take place.

The meeting was well attended probably because we were there. We were pretty much the program talking about activities we are undertaking with the RC of Jalalabad and what is in store for the future under some changes the Rotary Foundation is going through. Two of the Rotarians are going to the District Conference in Karachi, Pakistan and three of them plan to go to the International Convention in Montreal if they can get Canadian visas.

We then came back to the guest hotel to decompress. It looks like our next two days will be pretty busy and after that we will start doing clean up on follow up items and work on our short list of open items.

Sunday evening--March 28

We spent the entire day today going to the GCEP high schools where we have our internet labs. The purpose was to review how the computer related programs and interactions are working and also to learn about the small grants programs at each of the schools. Rachael joined Fary, Almas and me for this. Rachael is staying at the Taj and interested in things going on in various programs in Jalalabad.

We started at the Wazer Mohammad Gul Khan High School. The small grants program for that school is to build a large cistern to provide water for students. The boy's computer class combined financial resources with the girl's computer class for this major undertaking. The footings are being put in place and the walls will soon go up. This project has been developed and is being supervised by the students. We visited the computer classes for the girls at the school. They are going well. The female students in charge of the small grants program from the female side did much of the presentation.

From there we visited the Bibi Aisha High School for girls. Their project included providing trash cans for the student body to use. Again they had a strong student representative describing the project and talking about utilization of the computer lab.

We then went to Abdul Wakail Boy's High School. We had been there a few days ago. They also have a trash can project and also a landscape project for the school which they refer to as their plantation project. They talked about the importance of having a clean and friendly environment to be conducive to learning.

We then went to the Mia Omar Boys School. They also had a trash can project and repeated much of what we had previously heard about the benefits of the GCE Program.

We then went to Bibi Zainab Girls School. This school has 6,000 female students in two shifts. It seemed like all 6,000 were there at the same time. Most of the students sit outside for lack of classroom space. They too had a trash can project. It is next to impossible to describe what it is like being at this school with so many female students. They have a very strong female teacher in the lab who is a graduate of the GCE Program.

From there we returned to the Wazer Mohammad Gul Khan High School to meet with the male students regarding their progress in the lab and talk about their cistern project.

Finally we ended up at the Bibi Mariam School. The teacher at our computer lab there is Tabasom who was in San Diego last summer under Rotary's GSE Program. She is teaching computer fundamentals while we wait for the internet connection to reach the school. That will be provided through the connection NATO is providing to the NU community probably sometime in May.

The CDMA internet is not working at the guest house. Fary and I were leaving at night to use ILC internet when Tabasom, brother, and cousin showed up at the guest house with dinner for us. So after dinner with them we came to the guest house to deal with e-mail and sending this journal entry.

That's all for now.

Monday evening—March 29, 2010

Today started at 6:30AM chasing down Ishaq and then going to the ILC for a Skype call with Steve Spencer and Janus Supernik who head up civil engineering at SDSU. Also present were six NU engineering professors. To demonstrate how convoluted things are to make progress here, we talked about the logistics we are going through to send six Afghan professors to Poland to learn English. They should be headed out in April-- inshalla. We then talked to Ishaq and Steve S. about the steps we need to take to package these various remnants of the NU ESL program for World Bank funding if NU approves. We also talked about developing a proposal for separate funding for an Institute for Global Understanding to be run through the ILC. We need to develop these proposals very soon. We hope to meet with the Chancellor tomorrow or the next day regarding these items. He was in Kabul today sending his wife home to Germany.

We then picked up Rachel and went to the NU Computer Science Department in the city center. There we have set up 50 computers with about 20 connected to the internet. Interestingly some of the students have their own laptops as well. The internet signal is slow there and I will discuss it later in this journal. They

asked for reference books and we told them if they develop good internet searching skills many of the resource materials they can use should be available through the internet. We then went to their library. The only things of interest there were 500 of the 12,000 English dictionaries we had donated back in 2004. We advised we would be putting 400 of these to better use by distributing them to the GCEP high school students and would let the remaining 100 continue to gather dust in their library.

From there we went to what we knew would be a useless meeting with the Jalalabad office of Afghan Telecom. We advised them that I had been in communication with NATO in Brussels and advised that we had run a bandwidth test and that our lab is only receiving 80 kbps when we have contracted for and NATO is indirectly paying for 2 mbps bandwidth. They advised that their head office in Kabul has problems in delivering capacity to Jalalabad and they are in the process of working this out. They also advise that the sites on the public domain to test bandwidth are inaccurate. We look forward to changing ISPs as soon as possible for both the NATO contract and the one supporting our high schools and other sites.

From there we went to the NU Medical School computer lab and met with some of the female students who had advised they have things to talk about with us. The first topic was easy since they mentioned their instructors need computers to run the projectors in their classrooms. We advised we would be providing these as well as internet connections to some or all of the classrooms with the projectors.

Their second request presented some interesting discussion. The presently live in a house next to the medical school (they call a hostel which we call a mini-dorm) with 48 female students often with eight per room. The living conditions are very bad with no privacy when some want to sleep and others want to talk or study. They asked if we could help. A potential solution is to move them to a female dorm at the NU College of Education which is about 10 minutes away-- brand new and spacious. If NU administration is agreeable to this, the university could use busses it has for exclusive transportation back and forth for the girls. Although the girls do not like the present arrangement, most seemed to have no interest in the option of moving to the other dorm. One girl plainly stated she could never take the risk of a 10 minute ride with her classmates between facilities. Others seem to share that sentiment but there were scheduling issues as well since they are not all on the same class schedule. The bottom line seemed to be most would prefer a miserable existence for the next five or six years rather than deal with the risks and circumstances relating to a 10 minute bus ride. This interaction tells much about the cultural differences we are dealing with. To get into medical school in Afghanistan one has to be near the top 1% of those who even can take the national exam.

I received a call from Dr. Pardis cancelling my 1:30 appointment to review his budget as in country administrator as Rotary's polio eradication representative. So I went with Fary and Rachel for a small grants seminar under our GCE Program sponsored by the Tajrobawi Girls High School at the CETC. The focus of the seminar was to talk about violence against women in Afghanistan. This was a topic decided upon by the female students with the content developed by the students. The audience included male and female students from all our GCEP schools except the remote Rotary School. Also present were students from the NU College of Education. Several of our GCEP instructors were there as was the NU Dean of the College of Education who made some introductory comments.

It was an incredible session. They had a well organized Power Point presentation—mostly in Pashto but with some English for our assistance. The session was totally interactive with much audience participation. Part of the program resulted in audience breakout groups making their own suggestions on flip charts from some of the questions raised with breakout team leaders summarizing comments for the audience. They provide just enough English translation to assist us without affecting the flow of the program.

We learned about a Pashto practice in dealing with murderers. The family of the murderer must offer a female (preferably a sister of the murderer) to the family of the victim to be a wife (preferably of the brother of the victim) and the score is settled. This woman is never fully accepted into the family and of course this is horribly unfair to her. But once this transaction takes place the score is settled. I think this really still happens in Afghan Pashto society today.

From there we dropped Rachel off at the Taj and met with Dr. Aziz at the guest house. He has been the contractor for the female dorm we built at NU and we have some issues with him before making final payment. He is a wonderful gentleman but not the best of businessmen or contractors. However, anyone working on construction projects at this university has challenges beyond belief in dealing with the NU administration let alone construction in Afghanistan. I think we can come to a basic understanding and still have respect for each other and continue our friendship.

As Dr. Aziz was leaving the guest house our next round of guests arrived: Israr, Safi, Sayad, and Arbab. The meeting was strictly social in nature. They all said they want to invite us out, but because of security, we should not travel at night and that is a bit of a risk for them as well. A few significant points came from the discussion. The biggest risk these days is kidnapping for money—nothing to do with being from the West although those from the West are rich value targets but so are rich Afghans. The Afghan informal information network is still one of the best in the world. Essentially “everyone” knows Fary and I are here. The “everyone” goes well beyond the university community. But because we are not “new” “everyone” is OK with our presence here. We are very well known commodities and not likely to be bothered. Essentially all elements of Jalalabad society are OK with our presence and what we are doing. We also learned that the Taliban are struggling financially. In the areas where they operate freely (not in Jalalabad) they have resorted to Mafia style tactics by going to local businesses and demanding “protection money”. This is being demanded from people that have had businesses in these Taliban areas for years. So not only are they hurting financially but they are less liked than they used to be.

I am forming some philosophical thoughts I hope to share in the future. These thoughts have to do with my view of the US interest’s here (militarily and on the development side), how we are perceived, what we are doing and should be doing, and how my individual efforts should be prioritized to fit into the mix in the future.

Tuesday evening--March 30



It was a clear day this morning and as we drove into Jalalabad the snow capped peaks were visible from what I think is the Hindu Kush mountain range. Not sure if the mountains will show up in the picture.

We met with Rotarians Sherazad and Israr and went to the office of the local Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). This organization had had a representative at a meeting of the local Technical Working (TWG) group at a meeting of the Provincial Development Council (PDC) when our bridge project was being considered for funding by the PRT. (They love acronyms here.) Mr. Hakami, Director of the MRRD had expressed the view at the TWG meeting that MRRD may be funding the bridge project and thus consideration of funding it through the RPT was postponed. We learned today from Mr. Hakami that MRRD has plans on the drawing board but no identified funding for the bridge. Thus he now welcomes the efforts of the PRT funding the bridge through the PRT and will advise the PRD at the next TWG meeting that takes place April 7. That should allow for the bridge project to go forward. We learned that there are nine TWGs in Nangarhar Province and the PRT provides \$330,000 of funds each month for projects each TWG recommends that are community supported and based. These funds come from the US Department of Defense budget rather than USAID.



From there we went to the Nasrat II School to see how the construction is going. This will be such a great project when the girls no longer need to sit under the trees-rain or shine. We met with the contractor who advised the structure will be complete in three months. They will need to wait a bit before they can paint the building. It looks like this will be finished ahead of schedule and well ahead of what the Canadians we are assisting are planning.

After leaving the school we stopped by to meet with our local carpenter and advised he should start building the student desks and benches for the school and the furniture for the administrative offices. He does much of this work in his back yard for a building that will have 20 classrooms and 9 administrative offices. We worked it out with the contractor that our carpenter can store the finished furniture on site before the building is ready for occupancy.

We then met with the English Professors in the English Department. I can't go into all the details regarding that meeting, but suffice it to say they have their difficulties. For example, the professor who "teaches English" to the Economics Department had found an Economics book in English on the internet and downloaded it for the purpose of reading the book to the class for the English teaching he provides.

We then met with Ishaq at his office and talked about some administrative issues relating to our projects at the university. We still don't have the computers returned to the ILC, the engineering department has had some major equipment dropped off but not installed, no one knows how much capacity building funds are available through the World Bank, payments by the World Bank are behind schedule etc.

From there we went to the local SHEP office at NU to meet with the folks who administer the World Bank Funds for the Ministry of Higher Education. I wanted to talk to their finance guy to find out about the availability for capacity building funds. It turned out he had just left for a funeral for one of his cousins who died as a result of a shoot out that had also killed the other shooter a few days ago. So no one knows anything about the financial issues nor does anyone know much of anything about engineering equipment being delivered but not installed or many other things.

After leaving the meeting I remembered something I read many years ago about four brothers that seems to succinctly describe the situation here as follows:

There were once four brothers: Everyone, Someone, Anyone and Noone. They had a very important task to do. Everyone was sure that Someone will do it. Anyone could have done it, but Noone did it in the end. Someone was angry because it'd have been Everyone's job. Everyone thought that Anyone could have

done it, but Noone realized that Noone will do it in the end. In the end, Everyone was angry at Someone because Noone did what Anyone could've done.

We then came back to the guest house. Dr. Wardak met with us for a few hours to review several of his good ideas to help the university. We have a short reprove before one of the SHEP guys plans to come here at 9:00 PM to discuss who knows what.

Meanwhile I just inadvertently froze a \$3.50 beer. (Inflation has hit the beer market since my arrival.)

Wednesday evening—March 31, 2010

We drove into Jalalabad around 8:30. I have never seen the sky so clear here. The City is literally surrounded by mountains and on most sides with snow capped peaks. It is a bit like being in the Canadian Rockies but in a lush green valley with the Kabul River flowing through it. The setting is truly spectacular.

We went to the Education Directorate and met with the acting Education Director—Abu Zahid. We have known him since our first visit here when he was the emcee for the ground breaking for our Rotary School back in 2002. The previous Director, Mr. Azizi, is now Governor of Laghman Province. Our meeting was primarily social. We did advise that we hope to put a second floor on the six classrooms in of the Rotary School. We also shared with him the incredible success of the GCE Program which is due in large part to the leadership and support coming from his office. His comments related primarily to the friendship we have established over the last eight years and the support we have provided for education in Jalalabad.

We went with Almas to the Medical School for him to assess putting six computers and computer desks in the six classrooms with the projectors already in place and bring the internet connection to each room. Later in the day he provided the cost estimate of less than \$4,000 and the work will be complete next week.

We then went to the dedication ceremony that had been arranged for the small grants project for the Abdul Wakail School. Their project involved many facets: Putting trash cans in the courtyard; planting and maintaining vegetation in various locations (their environmental project) getting funds and donated supplies from the community; establish an accounting system for control of funds and an invoicing system; getting large flags of Afghanistan and the Education Ministry on flag poles they set up at the school; placed numerous small Afghan flags around the school, and putting on a workshop for the number one student leader in each class to discuss the importance of protecting the environment and having students take pride in their school. As a result of this workshop, several non-GCEP students were today engaged in painting their classrooms while we were there. The GCEP students were very thankful for the donation (\$150) but more thankful for the opportunities this offered the students to become involved in the ways mentioned above. The small grants team members each gave a short speech about the project and what it meant to each of them.

We then met Dr. Pardis at the Public Hospital. Rotary headquarters had asked that we review and update his budget to set up and office and field activities for carrying out Rotary's responsibilities to fight the polio virus in Afghanistan. A few budget modifications were made and I will be sending a revised budget to Rotary.

We then met with Almas and talked about the various aspects of GCEP. Amazingly, he is looking for ways to improve the program and serve it better himself. There is not much to say on that topic. He also

mentioned that his brother was reviewing my past journals on the internet and came across an entry back in 2004 where I had met his brother at a Women's Center in Jalalabad. We then accepted an invitation to have dinner at Almas' house Saturday evening. We have made it a strong policy not to have dinner at our friend's houses since that starts a daisy chain reaction for invitations and we need our evenings free to get caught up and to de-Arghanistanize ourselves to the extent possible. But we did make an exception since we both are anxious to meet the members of this remarkable family.

We came back to the guest house and met with Shams who is one of the English Professors on the permanent faculty. We were joined later by Gul who is also an English professor on contract. We had asked them to meet with us to encourage them to apply for Fulbright Scholarships for Masters' Degrees at Allinat International University in San Diego. We reviewed with them what needs to be done and when. It is a long shot since last year Afghanistan awarded 30 scholarships from a pool of 900 applicants. We can make a strong case regarding the importance of each of these individuals to the ESL program at NU.

Fary and I then went to the ILC where the internet is much faster. We spent about two hours working to get her e-mail program open which had had a bad Afghanistan experience. Fortunately (for my sanity) we were successful.

The Chancellor came back from Kabul today and we met at his guest house for over two hours briefing him on various proposal relating to proceeding with the ESL program after the World Bank funding runs out, developing an operation plan for the ILC tentatively designated and the Institute for Global Learning, and seeking funding for IT administration at the university and a few other items.

We then returned to the guest house and met with a NU engineer who has worked on developing what is known here as the Bill of Quantities for contractors to prepare bids for the College of Education Learning Center we plan to build. He has spec'd it out and projected a cost of over 100% more than we had estimated based on past building experiences. This will go out to competitive bid and we should be able to fill the gap. We will plan a groundbreaking on Sunday.

Fary fixed dinner which is becoming pretty simple--warmed up the leftovers remnants from what people have given us in the past, throw in some beans and cauliflower, and scrape some potato bits into a pan, warm up something they think is bread here and make the best of it. Even Fary needs to drink beer to wash this stuff down and I believe beer is becoming our primary source of nourishment.

But who is to complain when we have daily rich interactions and much appreciation by the local Afghans? To the rest of the world Afghanistan may be a war zone, wasteland with wild people whom we should not care about, but to us it is a beautiful place with many close friends where, with rather small efforts, a big difference can be made.

Thursday afternoon-April 1

Rachael joined us for the day. We started the day by meeting with the NU English students in the first three years of the SDSU/NU partnership program. No professors were present so that we could have a candid discussion. There were over one hundred students in the auditorium. The session went well considering we were setting ourselves up for a full on bitching session. Most of the concerns were on topics we have no control



over such as the quality of the professors the university has hired. But we were able to emphasize the importance of the training we have provided and anticipate continuing to provide. The students would like to travel to English speaking countries but in the absence of that, at least have some native English speaking teachers. I don't think they appreciate the magnitude of the security challenges for a US employer to send an employee to Afghanistan to be here even for just a short term assignment. They also want more access to the ILC for where they can use the computers. We think this is something we need to discuss with NU administration. They also are concerned about lack of classroom space particularly as the program expands into its fourth year. They also would like to have audio visual presentations for their English Language learning. It seems like the auditorium could be used for this. One of the female students showed us her class schedule after our session. Several blocks of time are labeled "TBD" (To be Determined) which means there is no subject being taught during that time period and perhaps no instructor or students. It was a bit unclear to us. For the most part the students were polite and diplomatic and expressed their strong appreciation for what we have been doing to help over the years.

From there we went to Almas' office to scan a wire transfer document to send to TP Bank back home to help pay for some of the computers we are putting in place while here. We met with the girls who had put on the Violence against Women Seminar and again congratulated them on the job well done. A more thorough report can be found on the on the NING site at: <http://gceafghanistan.ning.com/>

We went to the Rotary School to talk to the students about another project they suggested. They want to paint the rest of the classrooms. They gave us a projected cost for paint of about \$300 for 12 rooms. We want to add to that to have them also paint the multi-purpose room.

We then went to the medical school so that Fary and Rachael could meet with the female medical students at their hostel. It is in bad shape but we can't do anything with it that would be meaningful. Ironically the older students seem to be rather satisfied with it even in its poor living conditions.

We then stopped of at the US supported Lincoln Center and met with its Director Mr. S. Amrullah "Omaid". He explained its operation and invited us to attend a leadership seminar later in the day.

From there we went to the Spinghar Hotel where the Orange Blossom Festival was taking place. This is a regional event in the spring when the smell of orange blossoms is in the air. Some booths were set up sponsored by a woman's organization where women were selling handicrafts. We just missed the presentations by the poets (all in Pashto) but it looked like several hundred people had been in attendance.

We had some extra time so we visited the International Orphan Care facility sponsored primarily by Mike Whipple from Orange County. This basically is a well managed vocational training school for teenagers--most of whom are missing a senior family member. It is not a residential facility. They have a computer lab with very old computers (we may be able to provide a few new ones), tailoring rooms for boys and girls, an English program, small medical clinic, mechanical repair shop, and a carpentry shop. I think about 200+ students participate in some fashion. It is run by a delightful couple who have an adorable

four year old daughter. She would proudly recite her ABCs for us.



We then returned to the Lincoln Center for the leadership presentation. It turns out the primary presenter was Rafi Said, who had studied on a Rotary Scholarship in San Diego and who we see often

while here. He had an excellent slide presentation which was primarily in English even though he talked in Pashto. I requested a copy of the presentation and it may be good for use in our GCE Program. During the meeting a Mr. Saboon Waheedullah arrived to speak to the group. His is an Advisor to President Karzai and a former Commander who had a prominent role in fighting the Russians. We were told his talk was about leadership but it seemed to us it was more of a lecture about sustainable boredom.

We are soon off to the Taj where we understand the geek platoon has just received reinforcements for the Thursday night drinking.

Saturday morning--April 3

Yesterday was a non-working day in Afghanistan. We attempted a Skype call from the ILC but the codes were changed so we could not get on-line. We went to the Taj for our call with Steve Spencer and Marla Federe bringing them up to date on the various SDSU/NU ESL partnership issues and put together our game plan for going forward. It is a bit complicated with some substantial unknowns.

We then drove with Merab and Ishaq to the village to be served by our bridge project. That takes about an hour traveling on what some people think is a road. Or we could have gone by inner tube raft across the river with a kid using a shovel for a paddle in about 15 minutes. I am still looking for a third alternative.



The have no electricity at the village. We are going to place the portable solar generator we previously purchased at this village. They will use it to light up the mosque which is the central meeting place for the men. (The women do not have a place to meet from what we can tell.) They will attach LED lights to the generator at the mosque and also use it to charge things like cell phones. One young man had a radio that could receive power from 4 sources—solar, hand crank, batteries or AC adapter.

The solar basically runs it and he was listening to a Cricket match between Afghanistan and UAE. Ishaq advises the radio costs about \$7.00 on the local market and has AM, FM and some short wave channels. Apparently there are some educational programs on the channels and the PRTs have been providing these radios to the villagers free of charge. Looks like a great program.

We advised the villagers we hope to get word on the bridge project following the PDC TWG meeting with the MRRD and PRT April 7. We expect the results will be favorable and if so we will use the Rotary funds for various things to enhance the village with pre-approval and within guidelines of the Rotary Foundation. We were served tea, bread and some unrecognizable stuff that Fary and I passed on.



We then returned to the guest house. Dr. Mangal stopped by with some gifts and fruit. The meeting was social but we did ask that he arrange for a meeting with the Dermatologist he had previously mentioned so we can talk to him about being involved in our telemedicine activities. We also passed on to him some information Dr. Hamed Bayat in San Diego had brought to our attention. Hamed has a nephew working near here who has met a young boy who has a type of leukemia and needs a bone marrow transplant. Dr. Mangal will arrange for an examination by a Jalalabad pediatrician.

For the evening we went to the PRT. We were joined by Dr. Wardak. We had dinner (rib eye steak and mashed potatoes—first meat in several days—Fary had lobster) with a number of folks there. Sergeant Chris Borden is from Massachusetts and knows people in the Rotary Club there who asked him to find something for them to get involved with in Jalalabad. We will make the connection with the Rotary Club of Jalalabad. We also met the new USAID person who will be at the PRT 2 years. His name is Rod Stubin. He has a Ph.D in anthropology and just finished serving a 6 year stint as a director of a Peace Corps Division in Western Africa. He will be a good person to work with.

We are now back at the guest house after a fairly relaxing day. Watched the movie *The Proposal*.

Sunday morning—April 4

The place is alive with Easter celebrations--just kidding.

Yesterday morning we visited Shams' ESL class at NU where students were making presentations. The presentations were pretty sophisticated taking about things like use of past participles and the difference

between use of the “request words” can should, will and would--words we use without consciously thinking about the subtle distinctions for how much emphasis one puts into a request.

We then went to the NU Shiria Law Department. Last year we used some Rotary funds to purchase a computer and printer for the Dean, a heavy duty copy machine and shelves for their library. This department is where the fundamentalists reside and as such are the ones most likely to be skeptical or even hostile to our efforts. It was for that reason that Israr recommended we spend some funds to help them. We met with the Dean and one of his English speaking colleagues. They could not have been more gracious towards us and, from the best we could tell, it was sincere but one never knows. Fary explained how Rotary has no religious or political affiliation since this department is where the rumors start to the contrary. The Dean spoke quite clearly how he had personally researched Rotary and was fully aware of what Fary was saying. In fact he suggested Rotary provide some identifying materials to put on the donated items so people in the Shiria Law department would appreciate what Rotary has done for their program. We will follow up on this and perhaps do this for many of the other things we have donated over here.

We then met with the medical students at NU who will be enrolled in UCSD’s on-line medical English program. We emphasized the importance of their hard work and success if this program is to expand. Long term we need to find a way to Afghanize such a program so it can be fully administered in Afghanistan without paying a fee to UCSD for each student taking the program. We believe Dr. Safiullah here has the ability to act as the administrator. We need to see if we can find funds for this somehow.

We then went to the medical school and Fary met with the Mid-wife instructor who we have enrolled in the program. (I was not allowed in that building for fear I might be in the presence of a female without a person of high authority with me. I don’t know if I am that dangerous or they are worried about my sex appeal.)

We then came back to campus and met with Mirwais who is the new head of the English Department. He is a very good person doing a very good job in the face of many challenges. It is too bad he is on board at the end of our program rather than from the beginning. We talked about staffing for the existing program and what we can still do to help the program. I think the main enhancement we can support is to have group sessions in the auditorium using native English speakers who are in Jalalabad randomly or working for NGOs and to also have multimedia presentations all the way from culturally appropriate movies projected on a screen to web based programs and discussions.

We came back to the guest house and met with the representative from NEDA (which company is installing the fiber network at the main campus). He explained why they are doing some of the things in for the installation in anticipation of questions that will likely be raised. For example, some buildings will have larger racks for servers than other buildings. In his experience he knows that some Afghans will think that if their building has the smaller rack they are getting an inferior product which is not the case. He has some suggestions for some minor extra items such as UPS devices to deal with irregular and unstable electricity so that some of the equipment does not blow up with the inevitable power surges. We will approve everything he requested. One may legitimately ask why it is Fary and I who are involved at this level for the installation of the NATO band width coming to the university. The answer to that question will require a few beers. The NEDA rep. also is putting a proposal together to extend the university fiber to the Bibi Mariam School. We will definitely want to do that to bring the internet part of GCEP to that school using the NATO bandwidth. It will cost about \$4,000 which we can pay for from LUJ.

We did a bit of paperwork and then met Almas at his office. He briefed us on the groundbreaking ceremony he has arranged for the College of Education Learning Center building which will take place this morning.

From there we went to the Rotary meeting which is held at the Spinghar Institute, Hospital and University—don't ask me what this place is but it is a big building with a meeting room that is very well furnished. We talked about their upcoming one way out GCE with a Rotary district in Michigan. It has the potential to be very successful if they can get the US visas. Dr. Wardak was supposed to be the speaker but for some reason he advised he would not be attending. So they brought in a speaker who is President of some Jalalabad doctors association. He talked for about a half an hour about what is wrong with the Public Hospital—clearly a personal crusade for him. My guess is he wants our efforts to support things he is involved in rather than the Public Hospital. With one exception he did not have constructive suggestions about how to address any of the issues he raised criticizing the Public Hospital. He did bring up the issue of the ultra machines we donated to the hospital. That has been a problem from the beginning. Hospital staff have advised parts are missing, (which is not the case) or they need the manual (which has been provided). The bottom line is that they have said originally they knew how to use the machines when in fact they do not and they seem to have resistance to receive training that has been offered. The Rotary Club wants to take on as a project what can be done to see that these two machines are put to good use. Fary and I welcome these efforts. Some resistance may come if the recommendation is to locate the machines elsewhere—particularly if some doctor's group wants them in a private for profit clinic. But even that is better than no use at all of the machines. Fary will be sending an e-mail to the Director of the Public Hospital so advising.

Following the meeting I met with Gul about a part time job opportunity. This follows a discussion I had with an American at the Taj Thursday evening. He has been here three years disposing of caches of explosives found around the country. He has an Afghan national staff he needs to have trained in some English for words like “PLEASE DON'T TOUCH THAT—RUN LIKE HELL-DUCK” etc.

We then went to Almas' house for dinner. To go the final distance the car travels down an alley about the same width as the car with a big drainage ditch down the middle and at one point has a 90 degree turn. It was interesting going in but far more interesting going out pitch black in reverse.

As anticipated he has a remarkable family but what was not anticipated was their remarkable history. There are six brothers and two sisters. His father and mother are still alive and well. All family members live in one compound including their children. They pool their income according to what their father decides. The number under one roof is now 23 but about to be 24 when Almas' wife gives birth this month or next month. I spent the evening in their dining room with Almas, three of brothers, father and two of the young kids. (Two brothers were at a wedding) Fary was there most of the time (she did spend some time elsewhere with the ladies) but none of the female family members came to the room. I knew in advance this would be the case. Although it would be permissible for me to see Almas' sisters at the schools where they teach, there would be no way I could ever see them any of the adult women at their home. That is simply the Afghan



way—even for this family that is highly educated with at least two of the brothers who have spent substantial time abroad.

During the heaviest fighting between the local freedom fighters and the Russians, the family was not able to leave the country. It would cost too much and the family was too large. This biggest problem was the danger with all the shrapnel in the air from the constant bombarding of missiles. The family survived by digging caves under their home and living in the caves for four years. By necessity someone would go out for food and water but sometimes they would go for three or four days without food. When the fighting finally subsided, the children went to school being put in the grade appropriate for their age but not consistent with where their education left off. The oldest brother went from grade four to grade nine having missed the four years in between. He said he had to study very hard and in some fashion taught himself English. He then taught all of his brothers and sisters English. One brother went to Russia and studied for several years. The father speaks no English but does speak Dari and Pashto and Fary advises the mother only speaks Pashto. Somehow Almas and his siblings are native speakers of both Pashto and Dari even though Dari was not spoken at home. The men are all gently good looking Afghans and clearly very intelligent.

The brother who spent time in Agriculture works for IF Hope which is an Afghan NGO founded by James Richie. He asked if we are at all involved in agriculture in Afghanistan. I explained what we had looked at for bio fuel but how nothing had yet developed. He then advised that there is a high level vocational school for agriculture where students study for three years following the ninth grade. At that same facility they have a high level technical school where Almas received his technical training. So although this is a vocational school, some very good students go there. It also has constant electricity. Almas will visit the school to determine if there is enough English spoken there to bring in the GCE Program and to be sure school administration is receptive to this. If so, we can consider something that we had given thought to in the past. Have GCEP set up for the Afghan agriculture students and see if we could hook them up with 4-H clubs in the US. If so, as a start I would want to see if the Newport/Priest River Rotary Club could help make that connection. Likewise the students in Orville, Washington State likely have a 4-H program.

Today will be our last day in Jalalabad. We have some loose ends to take care of after the dedication ceremony. We are hoping no guests show up today.

We attended the ground breaking ceremony for the College of Education Building. The Chancellor was there as well and the Dean of the Education faculty, many professors, local media, students, Israr, Dave Warner,



Todd Huffman and some Afghans who I do not know. When I was asked to make remarks I did so talking about the project and our history in Jalalabad but this also offered me the opportunity to talk about the eight years we have enjoyed working with Ishaq and what we look forward to in the future in working with him. I then gave him the recognition plaque provided by President Steve Weber of San Diego State University--also signed by Steve Spencer and Fred McFarlane. Israr translated my remarks as well as the inscription on the plaque. It was a good opportunity to talk about the virtues of what Ishaq has done for the university to the assembled masses. After the ribbon cutting and the laying of the foundation stones, we had tea with some of the dignitaries. I am still a bit uncertain about how-to pay for the whole thing but the contractor for the Nasrat II school who is doing a great job for us did provide a bid \$50,000 less than what the NU engineer projected. But it still is much higher than what we originally budgeted for.

We then meet with the male GCEP instructors with Almas and the GCEP IT person. We held a general debriefing about the program and talked some about the future---particularly what we are looking to do this summer and the potential for expanding the program if we can get some additional funding. We received pile of gifts I hope to get into Fary's luggage.

We then had Dr. Mangal bring Dr. Ihsan Ullah (Kamawali) to the College of Education to meet with us. He is a local "skin doctor" as his card reads. He speaks English and is interested to experiment with telemedicine by sending digital photos of skin lesions for remote diagnosis. It turns out he works at the University Teaching hospital part time where we will be installing the internet based computer lab. All we need to do is buy him a digital camera that can take high quality pictures close up (any recommendations from anyone) and then use our technology for remote diagnosis. He will need to be set up on e-mail and receive just some basic computer training which Almas can arrange. He is fluent in English so we should not have any language barrier. This may be a good experiment with expansion potential.

We then went to the ILC and to our total amazement all 50 laptops and related items have been returned thanks mainly to Fary's persistence and tantrums. We do have five multiple battery chargers but they are set up for 120 voltage. We need to get transformers. We have three batteries per computer to deal with electrical outages. Additionally we learned some of the AC adapters have a way of walking out of the room when students and professors need replacements for their own laptops. We may need to contract with TSA to get some of those fully picture body screening machines to check people when they walk out. Not sure how the ladies in the Burkas would feel about that.

We are back at the guest house and will be meeting with Ishaq shortly, then Dr. Aziz about the payment for the dorm, and then Dave and the geeks about NU IT administration.

We reviewed many open items with Ishaq but time ran short when Dr. Aziz arrived. We still have not come to an agreement with him for the final payment for the female dormitory. It is a bit awkward since he did get horsed around by the university quite a bit.

We then went to the Taj to meet with Todd Huffman and Dave to get some guidance for developing a proposal with a budget for setting up an IT department at NU. They were very helpful.

We are told Israr will show up tonight—which will be a violation of no guests on our last night here rule. I am going to sign off for now since we have a lot of organizing to do to get ready to go to Kabul tomorrow.

Kabul, Afghanistan--April 5

I woke up this morning with an Afghan cold. So I am glad I have antibiotics with me and that Fary did not use them all up when she had her cold a couple of weeks ago.

We were dropped off at the DAI guest house this morning to catch a ride with one of their program officers and his driver who have permission to drive into the Jalalabad airfield. (Interesting memories since the last time I saw this place I was leaving in a helicopter in the middle of the night during a lightning storm heading for Baghram Air Base for gall bladder surgery.) We were there at 9:30AM for our supposed 10:30 USAID AIR flight. There is no terminal so you stand in the dirt, eating dust (which blended well with my running nose and the scented tissues Fary gave me—who puts the smell in these tissues?), standing directly in the hot sun while waiting. (Fary found a monkey to play with—not sure of its nationality.)



We talked to George Roemer who was waiting for the same flight. We had met him a couple of times earlier this trip at the PRT. He works for USAID on the agriculture side. We talked about our desire to bring the internet to the agricultural vocational school and hook the Afghan students there up with 4-H students in the U.S. He thought that could work but cautioned that 4-H tends to be younger students and many drop out around high school age. He

recommended we also consider FFA (Future Farmers of America) which typically involves students of high school age and even a bit older. They have a strong organization and George has been very much involved in that organization since he has spent much of his career in agriculture and dairy farming. He also has spent his time in education and spoke with passion about the possibilities for GCEP in the agriculture field working with the US FFA members. He offered to put us in touch with some of the FFA leadership—particularly in Wisconsin where he is from. Assuming we bring the GCE Program to the Jalalabad agriculture school—which we will do if there is enough English used there—we will definitely want to follow up on this connection. I do not know if the Afghan students at this vocational school go on the university so we will have to give some thought as to how this may fit into our Pre-College Institute theme. But we can use LUJ funds for the installation and this fits well into the vocational aspect of the LUJ program.

After three hours at the airfield dirt patch we finally got on our six passenger plane and took the half hour flight to Kabul. It then took over an hour to go about five miles driving in the City so we were a half hour late for our 2:00 PM appointment with Afghan Telecom (ATC) even though we had allowed a buffer of about three hours. We talked about the fact that we are not receiving the bandwidth requested for GCEP and, on the NATO side, the band width contracted for. They will send a technician to test our sites since on their end they say we are getting the amount contracted for under the NATO contract. Part of the problem is that they have split the bandwidth to provide a limited percentage of band width contracted for to each site—five sites under the NATO contract and five sites under the separate GCEP contract. That does not allow for using unused capacity at certain sites when not all capacity is being used at other sites. They say they can change that. They also say that in 10 to 20 days work will be complete that will allow a huge amount of additional capacity to go to Jalalabad. Since we receive very favorable pricing from ATC we hope this proves true particularly as we look to add sites for GCEP and add computers on line at existing sites for both the NATO program and GCEP.

We are now at the German Guest House and will leave for an Italian dinner shortly, meeting up with one of our USAID program officers (Louisa) and her fiancé (David). Louisa was a Rotary Exchange Student and David is a young Rotarian in Washington State.

Our driver obtained directions for what we thought would be for how to get to the Italian restaurant. We arrive at a big gate and could smell the garlic. We banged on the door to no avail. We then called the restaurant to let us in. After several conversations in several languages we determined that we had been give directions to the office of Louise and David which was nowhere near the restaurant.

Our driver then made some more calls and learned the restaurant was in a different part of town. Several traffic jams later we showed up at a gate where our driver could not pass. Fary and I then proceeded to walk through a highly secure compound looking for the restaurant. On various occasions we were asked for our identification and went through many security gates. After about a half mile we saw the sign for the restaurant. Louisa and David were waiting for us.

The menu was inviting but Fary said she was not hungry since she was not feeling well since she had not eaten all day—sounds like a female thing to me so I did not inquire further. She had some vegetable soup. I had some tomato soup (which I thought had been taken off of all the shelves in the country by the underground Taliban during this recent trip), some meat lasagna, and some decent red wine—not of local origin. We had a good conversation with Louisa and David much of which was about Rotary in general. They are a delightful young couple who will be paying the bills for the US efforts in Afghanistan in their taxes long after we all are gone.

After dinner, Fary and I needed to find our car and driver. For reasons unbeknown to us, we left the premises a different way than we arrived. After about five security gates later we began to wonder where we were. Fary said the place “seemed like it was in a war zone” I responded “duh” which unfortunately needed no translation. After wondering aimlessly in the dark for a while we finally asked one of the guards where we were and how we could get out. We were in some sort of German compound. We had the guard talk to our driver on the phone and through a serious of guard handoffs we were escorted to an exit where our driver was waiting. One should not get the wrong impression. We were very safe, the weather was comfortable and there were enough guards around with guns and smiles we knew things would eventually work out OK But the charm of Afghanistan is definitely wearing off. But where else could one go while being in Afghanistan, having an Italian dinner in a German compound with an Iranian lady and a couple of 20 something Americans—a five in one international package.

We have a meeting at the Ministry of Higher Education tomorrow and then will head to the Kabul airport and go through about 10 security checkpoints and wait endlessly for our flight to Dubai. We should get to Dubai around 7:00 PM, overnight there, and then fly to LAX Wednesday arriving the same day. Susan will pick us up.

I probably won't do any more journal entries until we return unless something interesting comes up (not likely to be good interesting” since we have nothing good scheduled except returning home).

I hope I have time to capture and type some overall impressions about the trip and things we perceive here and add those thoughts to the journal. Not sure if I will be able to find the time or motivation to do that with so many other things to do upon our return.

Del Mar, CA April 7 8:00 PM

Yesterday we had a final meeting with Sukumar in Kabul at the Ministry of Higher Education to review some logistics affecting the NU/SDSU English partnership. We flew that day to Dubai (with our plane leaving a half hour early) where we spent the night.

We left this morning from Dubai arriving at Los Angeles this afternoon on the sixteen hour flight with a 12 hour time difference. Susan met us at the airport and drove us back to Fary's place. We dropped Fary off and then Susan and I came home. As always it is great to return to San Diego.

Random Observations and Reflections

Questions I am often asked include the following:

- What is our purpose of staying in Afghanistan? On the military side? On the development side?
- Are we making progress?
- What do the Afghans want?
- How are our efforts perceived by Afghans?
- What is the role of the Taliban?
- How do Afghans view their own progress?
- What do Afghans perceive as their biggest problems?
- What do we (and the Afghans) think of Karzai?
- How do Afghans view their own government and the role of democracy in Afghanistan?
- What is happening in the education sector?
- Is our money being well spent?
- What about the poppies?
- Do Fary and I plan to expand our efforts outside of Jalalabad
- What do I think of Greg' Mortensen's efforts?
- How long will I remain involved in activities in Afghanistan?
- Do I (or we) plan to write a book someday?

Let me share a few thoughts that address in general terms some of these inquiries. Chapters could be written on each inquiry and there are others more knowledgeable than myself on these topics.

Let me start by observing that in all probability never in the history of civilization have so many resources from the developed world been deployed to a place as underdeveloped as Afghanistan. What the U.S. and others are doing for Afghanistan cannot be compared to things like the Marshall plan following World War II. In the latter case, we were rebuilding societies which in many ways resembled our own in their stage of development and their cultures. That was also true in our desire to assist Japan as quickly as possible. In my view, we had the common objectives of needing to provide a geographic counter balance to the anticipated dominance of the Soviet Union and that was a driving force in addition to our humanitarian objectives following World War II.

Contrast that with Afghanistan, which as my wife Susan described in our trip in 2008, looks like a place still living in Biblical times. And is a society in which in many parts of the country one half of the work force i.e. women are not allowed by cultural reasons to participate as full members of an economic society. This is not a Taliban imposed restriction but one that has been in existence at least in the Jalalabad area for centuries. It is self imposed and reinforced by peer pressure-not by government- and is not about to change in the near future on a scale of any noticeable magnitude.

The U.S. went into Afghanistan in October of 2001 to take out the Taliban as the governing body which had been providing safe harbor for Al Qaeda to operate. That was accomplished in a matter of weeks. After that we wanted to be sure that the Taliban would stay out of power and we also wanted to see a ‘responsible’ government in place that would not again harbor Al Qaeda. I think we also realized that we had made a mistake in the past in supporting the efforts of the Afghan resistance to take out the Russians without then assisting in the rebuilding of the country after the Russians left. Since much of the U.S. efforts in those days was on a somewhat clandestine basis (read Charlie Wilson’s War), perhaps it did not occur to our leaders to take an active role in rebuilding the country in which we were indirectly responsible for having its governing body defeated. But today, after the removal of the Taliban, I think it was clearly in the U.S. best interests to assist in providing the framework for a new and responsible government to be in place and I would hope that there is some type of moral obligation that a victorious power bears in assisting to provide for the stability of a society where it has just caused the removal of the governing authority. So in my view it is against this backdrop that our military and development efforts started out after the removal of the Taliban from power in late 2001.

We now find ourselves almost eight years later experiencing war fatigue and continuing to pour billions of dollars into a country that has a corrupt government, which government is recently making anti-U.S. statements. The citizens of this society feel less secure than they did under the Taliban. Folks back home just read and hear in our media about further U.S. casualties, inroads the Taliban are making, shutting down of schools and harm to persons assisting in the teaching of females. So questions are being asked to me by persons who generally have supported our efforts in Afghanistan—what is our purpose for staying there? And President Obama attempted to address this issue when he simultaneously announced the troop increase and the anticipated date to start to withdraws the troops to the confusion of many including the Afghans. In his speech he carefully articulated the objective as being to defeat Al Qaeda in Afghanistan without reference to the Taliban.

But from the best I can tell, Al Qaeda is not operating in any meaningful way in Afghanistan and they have more friendly environments from which to operate such as the tribal areas in Pakistan in which the Pakistan government does not control and the area known as Somalia where no government exists, or places like Yemen and Saudi Arabia. I leave it to the CIA to determine if those observations are correct, but there is little reason for Al Qaeda to operate in Afghanistan.

So who is the enemy and why are they fighting. We use the phrase Taliban to define the “bad guys” in Afghanistan. Some certainly are religious zealots with hatred towards the west. Some who have joined these ranks are young men brainwashed in the madrasas schools funded primarily by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and perhaps other interests. Others are individuals who are offered money to feed their families if they take up arms with the Taliban and still others are intimidated into working with the Taliban for fear of reprisals against themselves and their families. These latter groups have no religious dog in the fight. And I would speculate that the Taliban do not speak with one voice. A few trips back we were advised that when the bus full of South Korean Christian females was taken by the Taliban the Koreans were negotiating with the wrong group of Taliban for the release of these women.

The geographic area known as “Afghanistan” has never functioned as a sovereign state like those that exist in the Western World. Allegiances are ethnically based with little respect for any central authority. Tribal leaders with their own influence, militias, and funds extracted in a variety of ways to enhance their influence, is where the real power and authorities lies in Afghanistan.

It is against this backdrop that we are trying to assist a national government that we hope can develop a well trained national military force with allegiance to the national government. The hope is that the combination of well functioning government and well trained military will provide sufficient security and

stability for those with anti-west interests to not be able to function in most parts of the country. It looks to me that the role of our military is to maintain the peace to the extent possible while the national military is being built and trained and to engage directly with the “Taliban” elements to reduce their ability to disrupt the Afghan government and to reduce their influence with the local populations. It appears the U.S. now better realizes the importance of developing alliances with regional leaders and to have them understand they have more to gain by being our friends than harboring our enemies. This can be done through direct military assistance and allowing for development efforts to take place that will benefit those under the control of the local leaders. And we need to do this while respecting the extreme cultural differences between our societies. I believe this is possible. Is it working?

The efforts of Fary and I started out in November of 2002 when we and Afghan-American Flouran Wali first ventured into Jalalabad. We successfully built a school that now has around 5,000 students—both girls and boys. The school is fully supported by the local community yet it is located in an area considered insecure—whatever that means.

We have been encouraged over time to become involved in a variety of activities that have been the subject of my journal reports over the years. These have related primarily to education at all levels and in helping the medical/health care sector. We have been introducing technology as fast as possible and facilitating English language learning. In doing so we have witnessed thousands of girls of all ages going to school with the full support of the Afghan society. All of our efforts have been welcome and we have developed a strong social network of Afghan friends and professional colleagues in so doing. We have never been discouraged or encountered negative forces in proceeding with these efforts. We have always concentrated our efforts in Jalalabad.

In doing our activities, we generally have not talked much about politics with our Afghan colleagues nor have we spent much time talking about our cultural differences except as they may impact our work schedule—like religious holidays etc. We don’t avoid these topics—they just aren’t pertinent to what we are trying to accomplish and did not need to be discussed in establishing and maintain friendships. Nevertheless we do receive much information from Afghans about the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and we also receive information from U.S. persons who have been stationed there either through military postings or as contractors working for U.S. companies.

I would like to comment on one significant cultural difference that is a strong positive as it relates to Afghanistan. In Jalalabad (and perhaps in most of the country) people live in extended families. It is common to have more than twenty persons living in one compound in a communal fashion. In addition to parents, there are many aunts and uncles, in-laws, grandparents etc. As such, children have a very strong support system even if a parent may be missing due to death or refugees status. Accordingly, it does not seem that children growing up in Afghanistan face the types of problems we face here in the U.S. Just yesterday we had a program at our Rotary Club about an organization working in San Diego that has over 600 paid staff who deal with issues like juvenile delinquency and related issues through after school programs and other means. Our government spends millions of dollars supporting these types of programs. The problems being addressed often relate directly to a dysfunctional family typically where there is a single parent working to raise several children. With the extended family concept in Afghanistan, such programs are unnecessary.

In the time frame from 2002 to 2004, the U.S. development efforts were not very visible to Fary and me. It seemed that most activity was taking place in Kabul from what we were told. Further, in January of 2005 we were unable to identify any support going to higher education in Afghanistan and that was after a series of discussions with U.S. personnel at our Embassy in Kabul. But we were advised (correctly I should note) that that would soon be changing.

I contrast that situation with the present one where there are visible signs of development taking place in many parts of Jalalabad including Nangarhar University. Buildings are going up all over and roads are being built. Very large sums are being spent on physical infrastructure. But as Fary and I have learned from our first project, it is much easier to build buildings than it is to see that the buildings serve a useful purpose. There remain physical issues like providing electricity for the building and funds for administrative support to keep the building clean and in good repair. But what about what takes place within the building? You can't just expect the humans who will use the building for education to do a good job. The task of developing the human infrastructure is much more formidable than building the roads and buildings. And here we do bump into serious cultural issues. For a woman to travel somewhere abroad or even within Afghanistan to further her education has challenges. Consider the situation mentioned in my above journal about the female medical student who would rather live in horrible conditions within the compound of the medical school rather than take the unacceptable risk of a ten minute bus ride in a university provided bus surrounded by her female medical colleagues. Or the engineering professor who came to San Diego to work on his Master's Degree in Engineering only to find he could not stand being in an apartment with a television being watched by his Afghan peer professors. Or the issue of the High School English teacher we brought to San Diego only to have him skip out on us and seek asylum here. These examples are exceptions not the typical case but they do represent some of the obstacles to building the human infrastructure that is necessary for the improvements of the physical infrastructure to make a meaningful difference.

It is against this above backdrop that I will offer observations on some of the questions posed at the beginning of this section.

I believe it is essential for our military to continue to work in Taliban strongholds. The Taliban will not waste much of their resources fighting the U.S. Marines. They are not stupid. So they leave a few martyrs and a few IEDs behind to make our job more difficult but they head for the hills. We then have the opportunity to work with the local populations to determine what they want and how we can best help. The modern framework to do this is working with locally based technical working groups-TWGs. These local groups set priorities for funding by the U.S. They make presentations to the PRTs who fund their projects with funds I believe come from the U.S. Department of Defense. We learned that in Nangarhar Province where Jalalabad is located nine TWGs each receive \$330,000 per month from the PRT for these community projects. This strikes me as a good way to deploy financial resources and hopefully is being done throughout the country. I am sure there are inefficiencies and corruption in this process but even with those shortcomings it is better than doing nothing and just looking for a military solution. I have been advised by a former high ranking Department of Defense person that the mission of the U.S. military is changing on a worldwide basis. We need to use DOD resources to engage local populations to win their support against subversive elements. The guns and tanks alone cannot win the wars of the future-we need to win the hearts and minds of the locals and redirect DOD resources to compliment the Department of State resources in this regard.

I think this approach is well received by the locals since they have a significant role in the decisions being made. It also provides serious income to the locals and economic development for their communities. Yet we know the locals are looking forward for the time will come when foreign troops are not present. Who would not want that? Yet most believe the country will break into a civil war if the NATO presence were to leave. However I am finding this is no longer a universal concern.

I believe for incorrect reasons the locals think the presence of the NATO forces has led to the insecurity of their country. They are comparing today's situation to the rule under the Taliban. In those days there was higher security but at a much higher cost. The Taliban were ruthless in dealing with those who they

did not think complied with their desires. If one behaved according to the rules of the Taliban the streets were safe for him. But today local Afghans fear not the Taliban but kidnappings by thugs for ransom money. This did not exist under the Taliban perhaps in part most people were poor and the rich were protected by or part of the Taliban. So this element of insecurity is not a result of the occupation by the west. And the insecurity is real. Jalalabad is a peaceful place but the locals do not go out at night. Afghans working for even local internet companies do not carry business cards when they drive from Kabul to Jalalabad for fear of being identified with a company that has money and thus making them ripe for kidnapping.

Also under the Taliban there was little or no corruption. But that probably had more to do with the fact that there was no money in the country during that time. Contrast that to today when there are billions of dollars going into Afghanistan often through the hands of local officials. And fortunes are being made by locals fleecing other locals through bribes etc. I am not sure that this is any worse on a percentage basis than many other third world countries where corruption has existed for decades such as even our neighbor Mexico or many African countries. Yet it is new to Afghanistan because there now is much money coming into the country and it is passing through local hands as it is being deployed. Nevertheless corruption and insecurity are the two biggest concerns of all the Afghans we have met.

I also think the Afghans have been very disappointed with the “democracy” brought to their country. I believe they are more disappointed with the results than the process. Expectations were high and enthusiasm for voting was high during the first presidential election. But after five years of Karzai rule, many were indifferent about casting vote the second time. Democracy did not produce a good leader nor did it solve the problems of Afghanistan. I think there is a parallel between the expectations anticipated and the results obtained in Afghanistan to what happened in South Africa after the election of Nelson Mandela except that Mandela remained a respected individual but delivery on expectations fell well short in both instances.

Regarding Karzai, I suggest one take a look at *Afghanistan and Decline of the American Power-- President Karzai's anti-American shift is a statement about the standing of the Obama administration in the region*, Wall Street Journal, April 9, 2010 by Fouad Ajami; found at:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303720604575170182337302108.html>

This article describes how Karzai is playing the U.S. like a fiddle and we seem to not be able to do anything about it. He is unpopular in Afghanistan but there has been no viable alternative. Ethnicity has more to do with who will be elected president rather than qualifications or likability. Karzai is Pashtu and that is the dominant ethnic group in Afghanistan—end of discussion.

The poppy production presents several interesting dilemmas. There is a desire in the U.S. to reduce the supply of poppies in Afghanistan as though that may help solve the drug problem in the U.S. I am told most of the opium from Afghanistan ends up in Europe but in any event it is hard for me to believe that dealing with the poppy production in Afghanistan addresses the demand problem we have in the U.S. There is the concern that poppy production provides funds to the Taliban. It probably provides funds to local leaders some of whom are Taliban. But the poppies are grown by subsistence farmers who receive a cash advance from those up the economic food chain to grow the crops. When the crops are grown the loan is repaid in kind and the farmer is given enough to live on until the next growing season. Those above the farmer make a profit to finance who knows what. But if we deal with this at the farmer level we are disrupting an economic social structure that can have adverse consequences for all involved in this chain including the farmer. So if we are in the business of trying to win the hearts and minds of the locals, is the best way to do this by disrupting production of a local crop because we have a demand problem in the U.S. and some folks are making a profit because of our demand? I do know that when there has been consideration for eradicating poppy crops by spraying chemicals on them all hell has broken loose. In

fact, I speculate that some bad guys put planes in the air doing some spraying in the past just so that the U.S. would be blamed for this to create anti U.S. feelings with the locals—not a bad strategy.

Getting down to the more personnel side of things, Fary and I have limited our efforts to Jalalabad and, at least for me, I will keep it that way. We were fortunate to be introduced to Jalalabad by the Pakistani Rotarians since it was the closest big city to Peshawar, Pakistan where Fary had done her volunteer work with Afghan refugees in early 2002. When we started in Jalalabad virtually all attention was in Kabul so we were not bumping into other organizations there providing similar services. We have come to fall in love with Jalalabad while really not liking to be in Kabul with its congestion and lack of charm. But more importantly, we have a strong social network of friends in Jalalabad we can rely on to get things done. Two in particular stand out but there are many others. We have been working with Mohammad Ishaq from the first day we set foot in Jalalabad in November of 2002. He is one of the most remarkable individuals I have ever known. He is a devout Muslim but tolerant of other religions and worldly in his views. He is wise beyond his years and has the respect of most everyone in the community from the governor on down. The other individual we have come to rely on is Almas a twenty three year old Afghan. We have yet to find anything he can't do and he usually accomplishes what we request within forty eight hours. Beyond that he is a natural leader and uses these leadership skills in working with the local team he has developed. If Fary and I were to venture into other locations in Afghanistan, as is often suggested, we could not be as effective as we can be in Jalalabad. And since Jalalabad has so many needs and will for who knows how long, why should we work elsewhere?

A week does not go by when I am not asked “have you read Three Cups of Tea”. I am also often asked have I met Greg Mortenson or do we have plans to work with Greg and his organization? I have read both of his books. Stones into Schools is his new book. When offered the opportunity to have lunch with him in San Diego I had a schedule conflict. Fary did join him for lunch and I have heard him speak. My philosophy and objectives and thus approach are different than his. From what I gather from his books, Greg likes to tackle large challenges and go to places at the “end of the road.” These are places that have serious challenges to get to and are not likely to ever be served by others. In carrying out these efforts an adventure exists that also makes for good reading. That helps his fundraising through writing about what he has done and that results in speaking engagements that results in fundraising that supports his organization which does have some significant ongoing costs for administration and travel in addition to the cost of building schools in remote places. I totally admire the work he has done and continues to do. He is an inspiration to so many and has accomplished things that no one else dares to do.

My approach is much different. I go for the “low hanging fruit” and in so doing try to impact as many as possible with as efficient use of financial and human resources as possible. Additionally, the efforts of Fary and I in most instances, build upon educational infrastructure that already exists by providing internet access and enhanced educational opportunities to those already in place. By bringing technology into schools and assisting building English teaching resources we are breaking the cycle of isolation under which Afghans have endured for decades. These efforts have more than pure humanitarian objectives. By breaking the cycle of isolation I believe we are offering opportunity and hope where here has been little in the past and also makes it more difficult for subversive elements to influence those who take advantage of these new tools we provide by gaining access to information from around the world. And in doing so we are representing who Americans are and what we stand for. (Although Fary is an Iranian immigrant, her core beliefs and values are 100% American and you won't find a better representative and advocate for what it means to be an American.) Greg represents the same core values and as such is helping American interests abroad but our focus is different in the other respects mentioned. Additionally, until recently Greg has avoided working with the U.S. military and has not received money from the U.S. government. When Fary and I first arrived in Afghanistan we looked up the U.S. military and have been keeping them advised of our efforts from the beginning. In some instances the U.S. military has supported our Rotary

School and we have received funds from the U.S. Department of State and USAID to assist our efforts. Although everything we do is run by the Afghans for the Afghans, we want to be sure they know not only the people of America are working to help the Afghans but through our efforts our U.S. government resources are as well.

Susan often asks me how long I will stay involved in Afghanistan. I don't have an answer for this. I can say if our efforts are no longer welcome, or it becomes unproductive or too dangerous, I will disengage. I do tend to start things in Afghanistan I look to others to carry on. I hope many of the programs we put in place somewhat as pilot programs will someday be taken over by the "big guys" U.S. NGOs with paid staff and large budgets to continue what we have put in place. I do wonder what will happen to the computer labs we have set up in schools when the funding runs out for our teachers, fuel, for the generators and the internet connectivity. But I would hope that someone will figure out that it is in the U.S. best interests to keep these programs running for quite some time but that assumes rational thinking by our decision makers. I have more confidence in our Department of Defense in that regard than other institutions.

I am cognizant that I spend a huge amount of time on Afghanistan related projects and it does impact the amount of additional discretionary time I have. I will soon turn sixty three and want to make sure that there is some balance in how I spend the years I have left while I am able to be physically and mentally active. I expect that to be many years but there are no assurances. So I don't have a time frame to disengage or reduce my efforts but these are things I do think about and will do more so as some of our projects wind down and as new opportunities are presented.

Regarding writing a book, I am not sure the true story is a very interesting read. I could put together what would read more like some articles in Newsweek rather than a griping story. I have not done a good job of documenting human interest stories along the way as I keep my journals. If I had done so, I probably could have developed a better read. But also I would think it would take a huge amount of time to write a book and right now I don't have the desire to spend the time or impose the self discipline necessary to undertake that task. Maybe someday that will evolve but by then Afghanistan may no longer be of as much interest as it is today.

Steve Brown

