

روان افغان



Afghan Spirit

PARSA *Discovering the True Afghan Spirit*

September 2006 Newsletter

Dear Friends of PARSA:

Thanks to having Dawn Erickson in residence we are able to both update our website more frequently and get off newsletters monthly. Dawn and I grew up here together in the "60's and it is remarkable to be working with her so closely as an adult, living a few blocks from where we grew up. When we were children, Dawn was the "math wiz" which I hated, and I headed up our theatrical endeavors. Now as adults, every morning I am treated to the specter of her walking down the stairs from her room, hair standing on end with a small grey kitten perched on her shoulder, talking PARSA budgets, while her kitten who talks as much as she does, tries to discuss what is for breakfast.



**Rosemary
In Travel Gear**

Politically, Afghans are discouraged and so are the expats. People who follow the politics here say that when Ambassador Khalilzad left for Iraq, Karzai started to flounder, became indecisive and his conciliatory approach has resulted in the "Pushtunization" of the government. He has appointed people to high government positions that were not allowed to run for parliament because of war crimes. Also, the recently reinstated equivalent of the "Vice and Virtue" department has shut down all alcohol sales in the entire country. Apparently, next on their list is requiring all women, including foreigners to wear the "chador" or headscarf, and to require us to sit in the back seat of the car. I have just recently begun enjoying a modicum of freedom by wearing my "chador" more infrequently in Kabul, and I have started driving-so the news of the

impending new rules are depressing and a set back.

For my dear Afghan American friends, who fled the country during the first wars and have come back to work in various jobs and to contribute to the rebuilding of the country, the current situation feels frighteningly familiar. The military here have to beg for supplies and support and the Taliban are knocking at the borders. It is hard for me to watch my friends go through this. But I am very, very clear that if we are going to succeed here it will be because of the efforts of the organizations like PARSA who are

working directly with the Afghans.

We are now well into fall, and the cooler weather is upon us. Over the last week, we have heard rockets falling, gunfire at the parliament and this morning we woke up to air raid sirens. The security situation is giving everyone pause and making the work of development twice as exhausting. In addition to this, there are inexplicable problems interfacing with international organizations such as the UN.

PARSA has a training contract with UNDP to train and certify Assistant Physiotherapists for Khost province. We have gone the last three months without receiving our contractual payments, which means PARSA PT staff have gone unpaid because UNDP Afghanistan has apparently run out of money. We are among five great organizations that work with the disabled that have been short-shrifted in this way. My husband, Norm is trying to get to the bottom of the problem, wading through layers of indifferent bureaucracy who shrug their shoulders about the problems and say, "It's the UN." Our work here is hard enough without having to fight for money that PARSA's dedicated staff has already earned.

One sympathetic agency official when he heard our story about working for the UN without pay, commented in disbelief, "You are the service providers, the ones actually getting the work done!"

As PARSA continues to provide service to the Afghan people during these difficult times, we thank you so much for all of your support. We love your mail, please keep writing!

Marnie Gustavson

PARSA Executive Director

PayPal, PARSA Address and Your Address

Van Auburn has set up the PARSA Website at www.afghanistan-parsa.org under the donation section so we can receive donations through PayPal, as some of you have requested.

Also, note our new address in the U.S. is:

**PARSA
3246 39th Avenue SW
Seattle, WA 98116**

Moving Pictures Magazine plans to put out a PARSA advertising campaign in one of their upcoming issues. If you are interested in receiving a complimentary copy of the magazine, please Email your hard mail address to derickson_afa@yahoo.com

Orphanage/Vulnerable Children Program

By Marnie Gustavson

PARSA's orphanage program is becoming known as a new standard of care for vulnerable children through an integrated program model PARSA is developing. The model is designed to work with traumatized children, not just in orphanages but in school settings as well. I am extremely proud of the physiotherapy staff for their enthusiasm and creativity with this project. We will keep you posted on our progress!

In my fulltime job, I work for UNIFEM on a training project with Afghan women parliamentarians. One of the parliamentarians that I work with has an avid interest in the orphans in the country and their plight so I took her to visit the orphanage. I was unaccountably moved to tears when we visited the class that Guru Sewak and Atiqulla were conducting for ten young boys. They surrounded us, took our hands and just held on to us. The 230 boys are supervised by 1 adult and basically end up raising themselves. I just cannot fathom, with our (US) commitment to children, how these orphans have fallen through the cracks here.

Yasin, PARSA's Program Director had this comment "They are lovely children, but if they do not get care they will become like bandits and never leave the prison of the orphanage."



Sleeping on the Bed



Sleeping Under the Bed

The other day when I was walking back to PARSA from my workplace at UNIFEM a van approached packed full of happy young boys and my husband. They had just taken ten orphans up to Qargha Lake to swim and the boys all had been treated to an ice cream sandwich. I was shocked at what a normal sight it was and how uplifting it was to see them so happy.

A special thanks to those of you who have made this important project possible!

The Reorganization of PARSA

Mary MacMakin arrived in Kabul three weeks ago to assist with the inauguration of the new “working board” for PARSA. Accepting the new board was a critical step forward in the growth of PARSA beyond Mary’s original vision into a stable Afghan managed organization. PARSA had its first Board meeting in September with the new board members who are all very dedicated to Afghanistan. We will be posting their “bios” on the website soon and asking each of them to write a small column for the newsletters.

The board members are very busy setting policy, voting on procedures for decision-making, strategic plans and budgets while Mary is in Kabul so that she can be included in person during the reorganization.

New board members are:

US based:

Gennaro Buoncore, President of Maitl and Primrose Group, Phoenix, AZ

Kabul based:

Dr. Norman Gustavson, clinical psychologist

Jon Keeton, Program Consultant, Louis Berger

Dr. Patricia Omidian, Country Director of American Friends Service Committee

Mahouba Seraj, Afghan American and UNIFEM trainer

Continuing board members are:

Marnie Gustavson, PARSA Executive Director

Mary MacMaking, PARSA Founder and Advisor

Outgoing board member:

Bob MacMakin

At the first September Board Meeting, the board accepted Bob MacMakin’s resignation from the board with sadness. Bob has been an integral part of PARSA since its beginning and his dedication to PARSA over the years has been exceptional. He wrote the original PARSA website; handled finances and reports; and helped PARSA in more ways than can be counted. Thank you Bob!

PARSA’s 10th Anniversary was in August 2006!

Widows Garden



Zarguna, PARSA's Economic Director, completed a survey of the women in our Widows Garden Project and we wanted to share the information with you as it reveals our level of program development and these women's progress toward self-sufficiency.

In addition, through the survey PARSA found out that 35 women and girls would like to have literacy classes. PARSA is adding a literacy component to the program this fall.

Widow's Garden Partial Survey Results 2006								
Name	Family Name	Age	Mos. in Prgrm	Jobs	Disbl'd Family Mem	No. Family	No. Educ.	No. Lit. Course
Safora	Ghullshin	50	18	Sells vegetables	0	4	0	1
Parigul	Md. Ali	60	6	Works at widows garden	2	8	0	3
Nasrin	Ahmadullah	35	18	laundry and make chutney	0	6	0	2
Marina	Sheragha	45	6	Makes chutney and sauce	0	10	5	2
Mehrogul	Md. Ebrahim	70	1	Sells Eggs and chutney	0	5	0	1
Roshangul	Sadatmir	60	6	Sewing	0	6	5	1
Zarina	Faqir. Md	47	6	Sewing and make chutney	1	8	4	2
Shekeba	Md. Afzal	40	12	sells bolani and vegetables	0	5	1	3
Bibikhord	Durmohmad	47	12	laundry and make chutney	1	4	3	1
Khorsheed	Torabaz	55	12	Makes chutney and vegetable	0	7	0	2
Zebagul	Meer.Ahmad	54	12	Cooking	0	6	0	3
Marzia	Ab. Hakim	50	3	Sells chutney	0	6	5	1
Adela	Ab. Salam	45	6	Sells chutney and bolani	0	9	3	2
Belqies	Md. Aref	40	12	Makes chutney and sells	0	6	1	2
Nasima	Ab. Basir	30	12	Works at widows garden	0	7	0	1
Zakera	Gh. Mohamad	60	12	Makes chutney	0	8	0	1
Allagul	Faqir. Md	55	18	Makes chutney	0	8	4	2
Deljan	Said. Ahmad	50	6	Works at widows garden	0	4	4	1
Bibikhord	Ab. Satar	35	12	Sells chutney and laundry	0	4	0	3
Shajan	Gh. Mohamad	40	12	Sells chutney	0	7	6	1
Totals					4	128	41	35

Volunteer Updates:

About the Allahoddin Orphanage Project

By Guru Sewak

A lot of progress has been made with PARSA's work in the Allahoddin Orphanage. The staff of the Physical Therapy Clinic has developed, enacted, and maintained a weekly schedule of activities for the boys in the orphanage that includes sports, drawing, a hygiene class, and a weekly movie. We've even managed to arrange to take the boys on field trips! We have been taking the boys out, ten at a time and heavily supervised, to various spots around Kabul. Our plan, using the money donated by Marc Gold from the 100 Friends Project, is to be able to take out the entire roster of boys, ten by ten, on field trips. So far we have gone to the Kabul Zoo and Lake Qargha, which is a beautiful lake just outside the city that is great for swimming. The response from the boys so far has been great, both with the weekly activities and the field trips.



Music Time

The Physical Therapy staff has also taken it upon themselves to start doing medical referrals for the boys. The orphanage's medical resources are extremely limited and so the PT staff has started a program of taking those boys with greater medical needs to the Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital, here in Kabul. We've talked to the head pediatric surgeon at the hospital, Dr. Mustafa, who has agreed to perform all necessary surgeries for the boys of the orphanage free of charge, as long as PARSA can cover the expenses for the surgical supplies. So far Dr. Mustafa performed surgeries on four boys with hernias, and all four boys have made full

recoveries and are now back on their feet.

We've made a little progress as well in trying to get some services for the girls at the orphanage. Marnie was able to schedule a visit to the orphanage from one of the female Afghan Parliamentarians, MP Azita Rafht, and with her assistance PARSA was able to get a tour of the girls' dorms. The girls, as it turns out, are noticeably better cared for than the boys. Their rooms and dorms are cleaner and well maintained, and they have clean clothes and supplies. When asked about the discrepancy of care between the girls and the boys, the orphanage staff replied that the boys did not get as much attention because they are misbehaved and do not deserve it. Needless to say this did not sit well with MP Rafht, and partly due to her visit, PARSA has gained an audience

with the Orphanage Director to discuss the level of care for the boys and the access to services for the girls.

My own project with the boys is coming to a close, as I have just a few more days in Afghanistan, and I feel I've gotten to know the boys I've been working with pretty well over the past 6 weeks. One boy in particular has really made an impact on me: a ten-year-old boy named Juma Khan. He was one of the first boys that I selected for my group, and he's an extremely shy, quiet kid who also suffers from epilepsy. During one of the first group sessions that I conducted, I opened up the group to questions. Juma quietly raised his hand and came and sat right next to me to whisper his question in my ear. Atiqulla translated the question for me: "Are you going to be able to fix me?" His shy, earnest question is one of the many things that will stay with me long after I return the States.



Guru Sewak and friends

Khuda efaz,

--Guru Sewak

gsewak@hotmail.com

Trip to Kabul and Panjab By Rosemary Jeffcott

It is thirty-five years since the summer of 1971, when Norman and I first arrived in Kabul. The Kabul River is dry, the air dusty, the traffic alarming and the bazaars crowded. There is still far too little greenery in public spaces, including the once so lovely Darulaman Avenue, and for nearly every charming old Kabul-style house that is being restored complete with chimney-hats, there is an ostentatiously tiled and balconied horror intruding on the skyline. The large and looming new national mosque downtown and the vast college campus - a gift from Iran - on the Karte-e-Chahar side of Demazang proceed slowly toward completion, and I wonder what part either will have to play in the life of the city, which is still very much the one we knew back then with its attractive neighborhood mosques and seriously functional tertiary institutions.

While building and restoring on a public scale continues apace in Kabul, progress in public amenity is less obvious. Water is still carried, sometimes long distances, from communal wells; side streets remain in appalling condition, river beds are filthy with waste and garbage, sanitation still primitive, electricity supply fitful and nocturnal at best, and, perhaps most upsetting of all, thin plastic shopping bags as well as soft drink and drinking water bottles are being evermore widely used with no provision for either recycling or collection for disposal. It is distressing to see sheep and goats nuzzling amongst them in the streets to find vegetable waste to eat, and just plain disgusting to have them blocking gutters and drains. Where will all the garbage go if the rivers run again?

Despite these dusty, dirty and dry conditions the consolations of summer are plentiful: delicious grapes and apricots and peaches festoon fruit stalls, with the heavier melon varieties lined up below. Apples are coming in, too. Alongside them the veggie vendors arrange fresh green coriander, spinach and cucumbers along with tasty ginger, green and wax beans, okra, potatoes and the delicious, tempting nightshades my doctor warns me against: shiny eggplants, peppers and capsicums and of course Afghanistan's unsurpassable firm, flavorful tomatoes. How fondly I remember the days when Norman, the ever-smiling Akbar and I made large batches of Norm's mum's red tomato chutney from ingredients brought to our door on the backs of donkeys.

Susan Moodie, a yoga teacher, also happens to be visiting PARSA, and I have enjoyed accompanying her on visits and classes with the orphan boys at the nearby Allahoddin Orphanage in Karte Seh and also with the women at the widows' gardens cluster on the edge of town. The orphanage is pleasant and bright enough, but woefully short of equipment that might enhance the play and leaning of both boys and girls (who have not yet been exposed to yoga and relaxation). Even the boys considered most troubled and troublesome responded to some extent to Susan's movement and relaxation exercises. The women were, as usual, wonderful companions, despite the harsh, dry summer. They were also impressively responsive to yoga and relaxation.

Susan and I have taken some leaves out of their books and done some modest work on the PARSA garden, which has been yielding delicious squash, herbs, zucchini, eggplants and broccoli with tomatoes coming on. Wasse has also tended the grape vines, apple, quince and almond trees as well as a variety of pretty flowers, including roses, geraniums, fragrant evening tobacco plant, petunias, sunflowers, chrysanthemums, rudbeckia and dutzia. We visitors limited ourselves to general tidying up, weeding and overhead trimming.



Panjab Meeting



Passing out Supplies

This year I have come to help bring to fruition a project my (and Fiona's and Jenny's) sister instigated through the agency of her local Zonta club in Geelong, Victoria, Australia. Club members assembled sewing, knitting and stationery materials, as well as raising money for the purchase of sturdy kitchen equipment to be purchased in the Kabul bazaar. It was planned that all of these goods should be distributed to home-making women and their school-age children in the Panjab District of Bamyán Province in central Afghanistan. Shopping in the bazaar was time-consuming, but very enjoyable, and with the help and advice of PARSA's Ayesha, I put together kitchen packs comprising a sturdy tea kettle, a large storage or tandoor cooking container, a large bowl suitable for washing clothes or children, two small bowls, one large and one small cooking pot, all made of metal, a sheet of oil cloth for serving meals upon, and a sturdy, hand made Kabul kitchen knife.

Rosemary

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