



By Andy Sussman

1. The overwhelming sense of wonder and anticipation with every one of the stops of Cycle 10's Boeing 727 24-hour charter flight (Philadelphia-Gander-Prestwick-Rome-Istanbul-Beirut-Damascus (all 15 minutes of that hop)-Baghdad-Tehran-Kabul, realizing that we were get-ting closer and closer to Mars.
2. Heat and dust, followed by heat and dust, leavened occasionally by dust and heat.
3. Growing confidence as my Pushtu began to improve, and much more confidence after ar-riving in Jalalabad and quickly learning that Pushtu was really hard, Dari was much easier, and I could get by 90% of the time with Dari -- which I began to pick up on the street.
4. The best bread, melons and hashish, and the most hospitable people on earth. (Sorry, Iran.)

5. My students-- 9 girls, aged 15-19 from Jalalabad, Laghman and nearby villages, at a new nursing school -- first of its kind. Realizing that I was the first man with whom they'd ever been in a room without a male relative, and dealing with it by announcing that I was their brother, and getting them to buy it.
6. A very annoying 5-year-old kid loudly "Mister Katchaloo"-ing me down the street until I turned and flicked open my Afghan-made switchblade knife, and the improper but genuine satisfaction of watching him running away down the street as fast as he could, howling and pissing himself.
7. The best sales pitch I've ever heard, at a Nangrahar village specializing in the manufacture and sale of weapons, where a 10-year-old kid stuck a derringer in my face and asked: "Hey, Mister -- Do you want to buy this gun?"
8. Live geckos on the walls of the house to keep down the bugs.
9. WTs and their enthralling and sometimes ridiculous travel stories. When bored with one another, I or one of the roommates would go down to the bazaar and, when a bus with some on board arrived, offer a place to stay and food for the night in exchange for them. We stopped after an appalling incident with a French couple, whose dream was to get to Paki-stan, buy a bunch of heroin, return, sell it and start a commune in Provence. They left, and returned 2 weeks later, broke, having given their money to a friendly chap who promised he'd be "right back with the stuff." Their new plan was to prostitute her here and there en route back to scrape together travel funds -- with no apparent knowledge of the local going rates in any of those countries. We gave them 400 afs for bus tickets to the Iran border on condition that they never show themselves in Afghanistan again.

10. Fishing with Afghan friends in the time-honored traditional local way -- tossing a lit stick of dynamite into the Kabul River, and then wading in to collect them.

11. Finding the point at which servant theft was tolerable but not a firing offense. Firing one who liked to peek into our bedroom windows at night.

12. The unjustified but real feeling of comradeship with Afghan strangers at a teahouse in the cold moonlit darkness of Balkh, waiting for a morning bus.

13. Visiting friends in Lashkar Gah and galloping with them on one of their horses through the ancient deserted city outside of town.

14. Projectile diarrhea -- and later, Doc Johnson signing my copy of his medical guide for PCVs, dedicating the chapter on that ailment to me.

15. Feeling safer on the streets of Kabul at 1 am while looking for a taxi than I ever did in New York.

16. The night of Eid, when I and some others climbed onto the roof of Jalalabad's Green Hotel and lit off a very large bottle rocket. It went up and blew up, and the large, bright embers slowly drifted down.... straight for the wooden roof of the Pakistan consulate -- and this when tensions were very, very high with India. Realizing that we might have just started a war, we ran as fast as we could towards the horizon. The embers burned out two feet above the roof.

17. Dana Bonnin.

18. The Afghan spreading the excellent bazaar rumor that the American Medical Mission Sisters (nuns and nurses), who had a portable altar for when a visiting priest might pass through, thought they had God in a box.

19. Friendships that have stood the test of time, in particular Bob DeSoucey, and the Fotis (now just Mary -- Sebastian died way too young), and the Shaeffers, and Gary Fenton.

20. The single best thing I learned from Afghanistan and the PC = how to deal effectively with others who differ completely from you, on their own terms. Both served me well later during my years in Iran, and more so when I began to practice law.