

Mir Bacha Kot, Afghanistan

Journal of a teacher in Afghanistan

August – September 1970

By

Bill Mittendorff

The richest love is that which submits to the arbitration of time.

- L. Durrell

I have the fortune to have been befriended by a poet.

Until we come together again, Bill, peace.

- Hugh Coffman

October 1969



Foreword

I was one of many who, inspired by JFK's "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country", joined the Peace Corps upon graduation from college. A week of orientation and evaluation in Washington DC, preceded my arrival in Afghanistan on November 8, 1969. Over three months of cultural orientation, intensive Farsi lessons and practice teaching in the southern city of Kandahar followed. At its completion in January of 1970, I was assigned to a high school in a small town thirty kilometers north of Kabul known locally as "Sarai Khwaja" and more formally as "Mir Bacha Kot." What follows are very slightly edited entries from my journal while teaching there.

Saturday August 15, 1970

2 eggs - 4 afghanis
2 drawstrings - 6
thread -1
6 buttons - 1

Afghan dress was easier to find and more comfortable than Western, so I had new peron and tambons made and picked them up in Kabul yesterday. I have been wearing them since around the house instead of western dress. It took 7 m of cloth to make them; it's like walking around in a tent.

Sunday August 16

Some days I am sure I will be carried out of this country in a straitjacket. I fled this afternoon from my rooms in Mir Bacha Kot) to Charikar, fifty km to the north, to visit fellow volunteers Kerry Brace and Vince Marsicano. Good company. The simple fact that I could travel outside my village was a source of relief. It has been too easy to shut myself away in my room after school each day.

Monday August 17

This is somebody's birthday, but I don't know whose. I am also feeling much better. Morning is the most critical time of the day, and this morning loneliness did not find me. The Afghans call it "deq-poste-khana" (longing for home) and abhor being alone. In informal settings they will often express sympathy that I am so far from my family.

I was studying my Farsi lessons with my friend and fellow teacher Naim in one of the empty class-rooms this afternoon when I looked up to the door and felt Janet walk in. It surprised me that the sensation of her presence was both so sudden and so real, and also that her presence was a source of warmth and comfort. We have both been wondering about the change these two years will bring us.



Front gate of Lycée Mir Bacha Khan

Tuesday August 18

All of us teachers from Lycée Mir Bacha Khan went to the Kabul airport this afternoon to greet our principal Ahmad Shah back from Beirut, where he had attended a conference. There weren't enough seats on the bus we had rented, so a few of the teachers had to stand. Spirits were high. They goosed each other all away to Kabul and back.

Thursday August 20 - Independence (Jeshen) vacation begins

I spent a week in Kabul visiting friends and left with things to hold onto and store away for a while:

- Steve Thewlis' joyful guitar playing
- Janet's women's lib article
- How much Khan Zaman reminds me of Mike Riegle.
- Mantu at the Shah Mahmud restaurant in Kabul.
- Reading the news from America in Chris Bateman's Rolling Stone
- Sunset with a bunch of good people at the Bala Hissar fort overlooking the city of Kabul.
- All the festive lights strung out across the avenues during Jeshen
- Endless rumination about my plan to apply for conscientious objector draft status. Intimations of a goal off in the distance, somewhere past and beyond the draft, but invisible to me now.
- David and Allison talking - relaxed and happy.
- Kunduz melons - bright and fragrant
- Bill Mooney's outbursts of anger and frustration

Tuesday September 1 – School resumes

They found my dog about a week ago. A guy came by the house just as I was leaving (on the 20th) and told my caretaker Abdullah that he had seen it. He would show it to us if we gave him 100 afs. I gave him the 20 I had promised to anyone who found it but demanded that Abdullah pay the remainder because it was his younger son Raoul's fault that he got out of my compound.



After I had left for school, Raoul went down to see it and tried to get it back. The farmer who now had the dog said he bought it from a guy in Kabul. Once it was impressed upon him that a good dozen people, including several of the teachers and the akim sahib (local sheriff) himself, knew the dog, and after the akim sent a soldier along to make sure he acted properly, he handed it back. So I've got my dog again. Which is nice. His name is Gorg (wolf).

dog food 152 afs
lunch 12 ½
eggplant 4
onions 1
yogurt 8
total = 179

Today feels like the first day of fall. There were bright morning clouds over the Hindu Kush. The sun is notably lower in the sky than it was when I left before Jeshen. The dust is still here, but the wind is now northerly and carries with it the perfume of change.



Dawn, Hindu Kush from my house

Wednesday September 2

Pen 15

Ruler 2

½ tomatoes

I am finishing Durrel's Clea, an extraordinary book. I borrowed it from Donna, having read everything of interest to me in the official Peace Corps book locker.

Many of the teachers live in villages too far to allow a daily commute, so have rented small rooms in Sarai Khwaja where they stay for the school week and return to their families Thursday evening. At the sarai I found the mowen (the assistant principal, Abdul Wakil), Amanullah and Ghollum Ali eating almonds. We finished them off and started on grapes brought from the vines behind the school. The mowen invited me to dinner at the school but feigned surprise that he had no money and then asked to borrow 10 afs. We laughed and both agreed it was a ridiculous way to invite someone to be your guest.



Teachers at my school. Mowen far left, Amanullah third from left, Sardar Khan in white coat.

I then invited the three of them over to my house for tea and, after sunset, we returned to the school to wait for the chaprastis (resident caretakers) to fix the meal. We hadn't waited long – sitting on the broken-down couch in the mowen's 6 x 10 room – when Naim arrived in good spirits and asked us to go back with him to his home. He had not been to school for the first two days and I heard later that he had taken his whole family to Kabul for a wedding. He had returned alone – I don't know why – and asked us to keep him company.



chaprastis

One of the chaprastis brought the dinner of peppers, eggplant and tomatoes up to Naim's house from the school. It was quite an enjoyable evening, and the conversation ranged widely. I learned the Persian names for the planets from Ghollum Ali and, despite the difficulties with language, we attempted to talk about the disappearance of tradition in the face of modernization.

Whenever the mowen makes a joke about me he talks very fast. His audience of other teachers laugh uproariously. Although I never understand, we both end up laughing because I mimic his rapid-fire delivery to his face.

Thursday September 3

Pedagogy: Energy is as important as preparation in daily confronting the pupils with learning.

Lunch 14 afs choinaki, (stew in a broken teapot)

Friday September 4

Roz-e-joma, our day off

Taxi and bus to Kabul – 25 afs

After getting my mail from the Peace Corps office in Shar-i-Nau, I went to see Chris and Pat Nyhan at their home in Karte Char, having been asked to return a tape of theirs by Chris Bateman. I had never visited them before and, as it will probably turn out, may never be able to visit them again. Chris and Pat have decided to quit after winter vacation. They don't like their jobs at Kabul's Habibia High School, which they attribute to (1) the prevalence of bribery among the students, and (2) cynicism among the members of the faculty. As they tell it, due to Habibia's reputation as the capital city's preeminent high school, it attracts large numbers of rich but disinterested students. The teachers and administration are unable to resist the temptation of augmenting their meager government salaries by selling grades.

What's more depressing is that the students, aware of their teachers' weakness, retain no respect for them. Pat related an ugly incident from midterm examinations. Noticing two students copying, she walked up to them and seized their papers. The uproar caused by this attracted the Proctor who

had been helping her. The argument became heated and several more students rose in protest. The students laid hands on the Proctor and, as Pat related, they almost came to blows. In sum, they feel that teaching at Habibia is a joke.

They surmised – as best anyone can imagine a world outside his own experience – that they might have found teaching in one of the provinces much more rewarding. But set against any hopes they might have had for a transfer was the Peace Corps’ institutional reluctance to transfer anyone. And they admitted to a growing desire to move on to something new: Chris wants to get a Masters degree in Russian in England and they see nothing to keep themselves here.

Before dinner we listened to music and they introduced me to Savoy Brown and Boz Skaggs, which I enjoyed very much. The most surprising thing about the evening was how we became involved in a lengthy, good-humored, almost academic discussion. Chris asked, “if you had to pick 10 books to take with you to the moon which would you take?” And we kept at it for at least an hour.

I left Kabul in late morning and by one o’clock had arrived in Charikar, sixty kilometers north of Kabul, intending to fulfill a somewhat vague promise to visit Ghollum Ali at his house. I passed the afternoon in pleasant conversation with fellow Peace Corps volunteers Kerry Brace and Vince Marsicano who, like the Nyhans, were in cycle 2 and arrived in Afghanistan just a few months after I did.

About 5:30 I decided to at least make a desultory attempt to locate Ghollum Ali’s house. I did not want to be treated to dinner because he is not a wealthy man – making only his teacher’s salary of 1500 Afghanis a month or so. I often had trouble reconciling the 3500 per month we were allowed. The city of Charikar revealed itself to be much bigger than I had believed and finding his home – “near the mosque” – took me to three of the 20 mosques in town before I could find someone who could guide me. We walked up and down innumerable lanes so narrow that the mud brick houses rising above them two or three stories blotted out the sun a good hour before sunset.



It was quite dark by the time I knocked at the door, but Ghollum Ali himself answered and greeted me warmly. He and his son Saxi ushered me into the guest room. All the while he chuckled, and his broad smiles exhibited the many missing teeth in his round face. After the customary formalities of asking after my health, he inquired gently about why I had not come early in the day. I had forgotten, or perhaps never really known, that the meal was prepared especially for me and served at eleven that morning. His family waited the good part of the morning at the sarai (bus and truck stop) to meet me. My heart sank in shame. I protested feebly that I had not heard him indicate any special time and had not expected anything more than a cup of tea. Even so, I knew that my protestations and apologies could never excuse the trouble I had caused. I was once again made aware of how ignorant I was of my place in Afghan society and the responsibilities this entailed.

Thankfully, the warm hospitality of Ghollum Ali and his family consoled me. The evening - or what was left of it - was quite amiable. He opened his trunks of books and displayed them proudly: astronomy, meteorology, geography, history, religion and grammar were there. While geography is his main subject at Lycee Mir Bacha Khan back in my town, he was curious about many subjects.

He said that he felt obligated to know where to be able to find the answer to any question the students might pose. I have seen few individuals so in love with knowledge as he. Abdul Ghafoor “Fizeek” (nicknamed for his subject, physics), who had also waited most of the day for me, arrived shortly after Ghollum Ali had revealed his printed treasures. He brought with him a melon, which we enjoyed over some pleasant but desultory, due to the hour, conversation.

The degree of hospitality I enjoyed that evening was typical, and the Afghans prided themselves upon it. I enjoyed the welcome I received and hope to make more such visits. I find, however, that only a few other volunteers here are on such friendly terms with their fellow teachers at their schools. that might allow socializing after school. Perhaps it is the novelty of a foreigner’s presence at their provincial school and my relative isolation from the community of foreigners that allows this to happen. I am aware of my good fortune.

Thursday September 17

I went to the gardens in Paghman today with my 11A class. I had suggested earlier in the week that we have a picnic before the weather got any colder, and they wasted no time in arranging it. Fifteen students and I arrived after dark, carried our pots, food, blankets and wood to the end of a broad concrete plaza. We settled down and set up our camp at the foot of a pool that reflected the snowy Hindu Kush looming above.



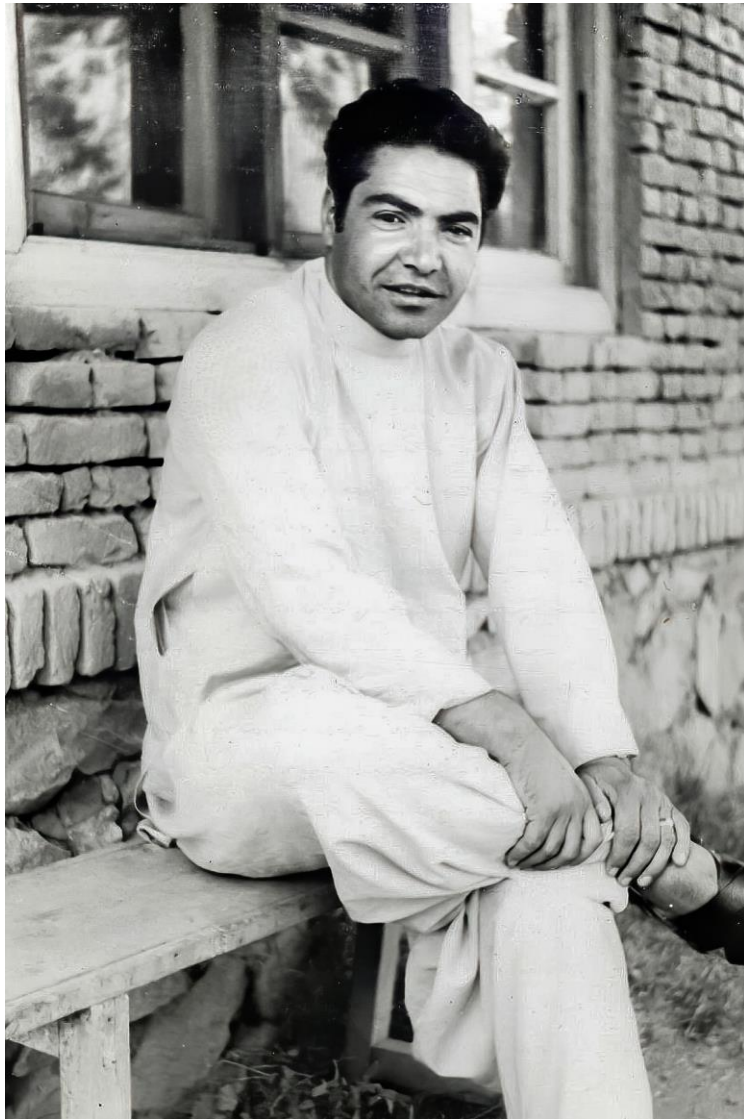
A tambour player, whom I didn't know, had come along and was accompanied by Zainullabuddin on the drum and Anjamuddin on the flute. Sayeed Chaju Shah danced for us and then, during a pause in the music, plopped down in front of Poyenda Mohammed, grinned, and pulled him into the center. Chaju sat down in his place and Poyenda danced.

Munir was in charge of cooking the pilau so he and his team stayed behind while we took a short walk. We found a spot overlooking the lights of Kabul below. A few clouds were in the sky and the light from the moon, almost full, flashed through them as they passed over us and away from the mountains. We returned to find that three foreigners had arrived and were engaged in conversation with those who had stayed behind, happily practicing their English. We invited them to eat with us, which they were delighted to accept. They were following the world-traveler circuit overland from Europe to India and had only been in Afghanistan for two days. I am sure that the music, dancing, food, and playfulness of my students amazed them.

Around twelve the travelers left us but, shortly after we had pulled our blankets around us, the quiet was interrupted by the intrusion of a *malang*, or crazy beggar, dressed in rags. He stumbled noisily among the sleeping students and shouted insults at all and sundry. We fed him, laughed at him, and he soon left. We tried to sleep again but he reappeared. Tempers soon became frayed, and Sayeed Mir Jan became especially annoyed at the insults. In frustration, he struck the *malang* who, greatly offended, left again. At his third and final visit, the students only laughed at his insults, consoled him for being manhandled, and finally hustled him off into the darkness.

On the way back to our village the next day, Mohammed Rasoul asked if I might not want to live with him and his family. The students and teachers had often expressed to me their concern that I was so far away from my own family. Being alone, in this culture, is a terrible thing. I felt honored by the sincerity of his offer and touched by his concern but declined with as much gentleness as I could muster. I knew that being his guest would involve becoming a member of his family and therefore (1) compromise my position as his teacher and (2) compromise the freedom of movement and activity I had begun to enjoy.

Wednesday September 23



Naim Mahmud

Naim invited me, Ghollum Ali, Siddiq & Sardar to lunch: good things like pilau, shurwa, boroni, yogurt and salad. Then he brought out local grapes and tea with sweets. What a spread it was!

Just after lunch, and quite unexpectedly, I was informed that an American had arrived from the north and went out to the road to greet him. My Peace Corps friend Chris Bateman had arrived with bag in hand and stopped on his way to Kabul.

It's always a big shock to have another foreigner in my village. During summer vacation at the end of July, Bill Mooney and Francie Williams came up together to visit me. As a single, uncovered woman, Francie created quite a stir, although I never heard much from the community. All three of us could sense a

quiet tension as I walked through the bazaar with her that day, and I wondered again how a woman could handle the stress of living in a place like this. I took them both down to show them my school. Finals were going on and the mowen and a few of the teachers were there. We fed the two of them grapes and tea.



Bill and Francie

Everyone except the mowen sat there stone-faced and silent. All the big, noisy men with their dirty jokes were transformed by Francie into a bunch of awkward schoolboys attending their first mixed party. I think they were both relieved when they took the taxi back to Kabul.

Chris asked to stay the night and I was happy to have the company, despite the poverty of my hospitality. My house is one room and much too small for two people. I can't really entertain anyone here because there is nothing to do but talk, and because I have nothing nice to offer them in the way of interesting food or entertainment. Chris paid no mind to his surroundings, however, and we talked about all kinds of interesting things: hospitality, John True (our immediate supervisor), loneliness, music, what our friends were doing in America, and vacation plans for winter break. It had been about a month since I had had a decent English conversation, and it was truly delightful. After listening to some new tapes: "Boz Skaggs," Dylan's "Self-Portrait," Van Morrison's "Moondance," and Delaney and Bonnie, Chris put on a spoken tape with news related by the friend who had sent him all this music. Chris's friend talked about Stanford, Nixon and the draft, the changing mood of the nation, getting married and finding a job in N. J. – all the things I might be doing in two years. It seemed very distant. Like the moon.

Thursday September 24

Swept through my classes briskly, obtained permission to be absent from classes on Saturday, caught a taxi, and joined Chris in Kabul at three. I found that Jim Carlson (cycle 2, teaching in Gardez) was coming with us to Logar province to visit Jim and Donna Templeman. After a brief visit to the Peace Corps office where Dr. Rollins gave me three shots – gamma globulin for hepatitis, cholera vaccine and a tine (TB) test – we left and arrived an hour and a half later in a town south of Kabul on the way to Gardez known as Baraki Barak. The sun had set just before our arrival, silhouetting the long, low mountain to the west. One of the two planets we saw in the now dark, clear sky was exception-ally bright, leading me to suppose it Venus.

As we looked for the Templeman's house, Jim told stories of Gardez, where he was teaching, with a dryness and droll amusement that heightened my awareness of us as strangers in this time and space. "One tribe of Pashtuns invaded the village of another tribe when the men were away and kidnapped the women. They must have had a ball with them. So the other tribe got itself together and made a surprise attack on their village. There was some kind of advance warning, and everyone who could, ran away and hid. Then, when the others got there all they could find were the children and old people. They killed everyone they could get their hands on. When the governor heard about it he said that this was too much (even for Paktia, I guess). So he called in some jets and bombed the village of the tribe that killed the people. The governor was second in command in the Army."

Friday September 25

The next morning Donna made us all pancakes, which I hadn't enjoyed for several months. It was very relaxing to be in a family, and the morning passed in conversation. Eventually, we decided on a picnic further out in the countryside, so we walked to the bazaar in search of a gaudi (horse cart) to carry us to a village that was rather distant but, John assured us, worth seeing. Somehow we never got there and after dismissing our gaudi, stopped for tea, melon and pomegranates. Feeling refreshed, we walked back to their village. While the weather was pleasantly cool, the bright autumn sunlight warmed us,

and we enjoyed the clattering of the yellowing poplars along the irrigation ditches as we strolled between the now-fallow fields.



Gaudi

Saturday, September 26

The Templemans are one of three couples that will probably leave Afghanistan after vacation. The Strohs, Chuck and Mary, want to go to graduate school. Chris and Patricia Nyhan have the same plan. John suggested that married couples might need different things than single persons and have different challenges in this strict Muslim culture. He admitted further that they may not be as willing to experiment, or to keep an experiment in living going when it no longer promises much.

Chris, Jim and I returned to Kabul and went first to the post office customs clerk where Chris was to pick up a cheap wristwatch his mother had sent. Needless to say, the watch was not there, but we did run into some interesting people while waiting interminably for them to inform us of the fact. A guy and a girl from New York, both very hip, were mailing stuff back home: postins (lambswool coats), posters and purses. The only thing I remember them saying was that their trip was an around the world package deal where they got a year and a choice of itinerary for \$1280. The idea of a trip around the world ignited my imagination. These travelers seemed to be ambassadors from a world of unimaginable pleasures, excitement, mobility and freedom, so unlike this last long, slow albeit pleasant weekend in Baraki Barak.

Sunday, September 27

I returned last night to my village and little house north of Kabul. Naim, the dear soul, let me stay for tea and conversation even though he had guests himself.

1# tom 2 ½ afs

1# pot 2 ½

1 # pomegranate 4

Wednesday, September 30

John True stopped by unexpectedly for and visited for an hour or so. I enjoyed talking to him and was more relaxed than at his first visit a couple of months prior. He brought news of those in the north: David and Alison in Taloqan are happy with their site and their neighbors, but not their jobs; Dave Moats is bored to death in Khanabad and would transfer to Faizabad next year if the Peace Corps and the Royal Government of Afghanistan would let him. Francie, the only single woman in our group, chafed against the constraints of the life she must lead as a model of decorous femininity.

Thursday, October 1

I struggled through a letter to long-lost Hugh, from whom I had not heard in some time, hoping as I wrote that he would ignore the clumsiness of my words, ignore my feigned contentment, and respond with news of Minnesota and my old friends. I found no mail at the Peace Corps office, but there met Denise Behar and was introduced to another Chris, this man a Peace Corps who had completed his contract in India and was heading home overland.

During tea inside the Kamran Restaurant, I invited the two of them and two other British tourists up to my home in Sarai Khwaja the next day. Chris had been at Denise's during Jeshen and had wanted to see an Afghan village, but had never made any plans.

Bought margarine, jelly, milk & curry powder.

Friday, October 2

The four of them arrived late in the morning. Colin and Carolyn, the two Brits,

were on their way back to England and had only a short time to spend in Afghanistan. The chartered bus they were riding, however, had struck and killed a motorcyclist and seriously injured his passenger in Jalalabad. They and twenty others were held over pending the results of the police investigation.

They enjoyed tea and the excellent local grapes at my house, then we walked through the bazaar, along the highway and down to see my school, Lycée Mir Bacha Khan. They were impressed by the fact that the school had concrete toilets, but (for the lower grades anyway) mud classrooms. It being Friday, school was not in session, and we continued east past the school to the nearby village of Karenda, where I had promised a visit to a former student.



Rooftops in Karenda

I had first visited Karenda one quiet August day when, out in the countryside for an aimless stroll, I came upon Khwaja and his friends, equally aimless. He and his friends insisted, as Afghans will, on offering me refreshment. He took me to meet his young brothers and sisters, then served mulberries and yogurt sweetened with sugar. We sat up on the roof, within reach of cooling breezes.

While I had enjoyed my afternoon, I later heard from my fellow teachers that I should not mix too freely with students or others beneath my status. Sardar Khan, a neighbor of Khwaja, and respected elder teacher at my school, was the most critical. I was sensitive to these opinions, as I needed to be, but Khwaja had, some weeks before, transferred to Qalai Muratbeg high school and, as he was no longer my student I did not feel I could refuse to visit him on the

grounds that it would compromise my impartiality as his teacher.

These concerns were soon proved moot, when Gul Mohammed, a cadet from the Kabul military academy, whose father was a rich landowner, met the four of us on the same path to Karenda. I had met Gul Mohammed previously. Mohammed Wasim, a fellow English teacher, and I were leaving school one afternoon and were passing through the bazaar when he asked with a boldness brash even by Afghan standards, if would serve him lunch. I replied by asking if it was an Afghan custom for guests to invite themselves to dinner. The cadet laughed, as did Wasim somewhat more cautiously, but I believed that my point was taken, and ordered kebab for all of us. After lunch, I took them home for tea and served them some rice pudding I had just made.

I wasn't especially happy to meet Gul Mohammad again, who had proven so abrupt and intrusive at our first interaction. After brief pleasantries, he asked what our plans were for the afternoon. I replied that I had told Khwaja Ahmad that I would pay him a visit. He pointed out that I hadn't said I would bring four other people and asked me if this might not be an inconvenience for him. I had to admit that he was right. Gul Mohammed suggested that we accompany him to his father's home, which was not far off, and partake of his hospitality. It certainly seemed to be the best plan, and after a brief debate within myself, we followed him.

The guest room he ushered us into impressed us all. It was on the third story of a huge mud brick home with windows open to three sides and views to the back garden, the vineyards and the groves of poplars. It was luxuriously verdant, and the breeze brought us the scent of gul-e-patani (petunias). As we relaxed upon the cushions, Gul Mohammed brought out his collection of guns. The old, engraved, double-barreled shotgun he showed us was kept loaded for thieves, he said, but what really fascinated Chris was a pair of British percussion-cap muskets. These muzzleloaders were manufactured in 1860 and each was stamped with the British crown and the initials "VR." He said they still used all three of them every year. (Note: The Afghans were very proud that they had routed the British in three wars between 1839 and 1919. Many of them had rifles of the same vintage as those of Gul Mohammad.)

The general himself joined us when lunch was brought in shortly thereafter. I

was amused by the reactions of Colin and Carolyn as they sat uncomfortably on the cushions and attempted to eat the shurwa, pilau and boiled eggs without utensils. They were good-natured and our host soon brought them spoons. To my surprise, Sardar Khan, solicitous and friendly, joined us halfway through lunch. It appears he was the general's cousin. I wondered later if he had learned of my visit to his village and conspired with Gul Mohammad to waylay me before I could meet Khwaja.

After tea, grapes, walnuts and raisins we were all delightfully groggy, but it was getting on towards late afternoon and the four travelers had a dinner to attend back in Kabul, so we cut it shorter than any of us wanted. Just before we departed, we stepped into the garden, where Gul Mohammed picked a good 15 pounds of grapes for them to take back to Kabul. It was a wonder to see the amazement on their faces. Just before saying goodbye they took a few pictures of the old general, cadet Gul Mohammed and the general's other son and daughters.

I was disappointed that their visit was so short, because I had never really been able to show them my home, the public garden, or the view of the long, fertile Kohdaman Valley from the hills at the bottom of the village. Their visit was refreshing because I saw the village and my life here through the wondering eyes of newcomers and amusing because, well, because foreigners are such strange people.

Tuesday, October 6, 1970

For some time, the teachers at my school had been discussing my need for an Afghan name. Today a group assembled to give me a name that would fit me as a foreigner and, perhaps even more important, a non-muslim. Wakil ("mowen"), Naim, Khwaja Saheb, Rahim, Shah Mahmud, Ghollum Ali, Sidiq and Sardar convened. The naming ceremony was to be at an informal gathering in the park and was to be followed by a party at my house. I figured that this was a good deal. After all, my nickname "Bill" meant "shovel" in Farsi, and I was curious to see what they might come up with, considering that their biggest challenge would be avoiding a Muslim name.

It took only a few minutes of discussion to decide that my Afghan name would henceforth be “Soor Gul”, meaning “red flower” in Pashto. Sardar even wrote it out for me on a paper that I held for the photo.



Afterword

Near the end of my second year of teaching in late 1971, before final exams, I was asked to transfer from teaching to a new program called Food for Work, a joint effort by USAID and their counterparts in Germany and Russia. A severe drought had affected central and western Afghanistan and this program was developed to help distribute food to the distant provinces. But that is another

story, better told by others. I left Afghanistan April 20, 1972.

I want to express my immeasurable gratitude to President Kennedy and to the Peace Corps who made my adventure possible. To my parents and grandmother Gail Rogers Likely I owe my appreciation of travel and adventure. My fellow volunteers, without whose example and encouragement I could not have endured, taught me humor and courage in adversity. Most of all I must express my profound appreciation to the people of Afghanistan, whose kindness, respect, and compassion towards a stranger in their midst changed my life forever.