

ilar statue, measuring 115 feet. These Buddhist shrines and the hundreds of grottoes of various shapes and sizes in the cliff testified to a past thriving civilization, reminding me of the cliff dwellers of the American southwest. We paid a guard to hike around the idol and photograph it.

We were then driven to the only hotel in the area. Surrounded by a protective wall, this new one-story adobe hotel had been operating for only three months and yet it was the most primitive of the hotels we had stayed in thus far. Our clean rooms, carpeted with mats, were just large enough for two rope beds and a crudely assembled wooden nightstand. I could easily touch the low ceiling in the center of which hung a lantern powered by a generator which was turned on for only a couple of hours each evening. A separate building housed the only toilet and shower facilities used by both men and women. We were the only western tourists here.

Before dinner several of the fellows and girls went for a hike, but my sneakers were still wet, so I went to the hotel restaurant which had two potbellied stoves. The adobe restaurant, located in the center of the hotel grounds, resembled an elongated sunken igloo, for only the rounded roof and a small portion of wall were visible above ground. Inside, small rectangular tables jutted from either wall creating an aisle which led to the hot stoves and to the kitchen beyond. Nino and Brian, who had also fallen into the stream, were already here toasting their shoes. Our footwear was dry by the time the rest of the group joined us.

In the lantern lit atmosphere of gracious hospitality, our

waiters served us a delicious meal of soup, salad, pilaf and chai. This time we even dared to eat the salad because Bamian appeared to be clean and we had such a craving for fresh vegetables. After dinner an Afghan band played exotic music entertaining us, taking our minds off of our uncertain futures.

Jen and I left early to get ready for bed. It was apparent by our casual appearance as we washed our faces and brushed our teeth that we had forgotten that the bath facilities were coed. One ominous unshaven turbaned Afghan walked in followed by two other men. They spoke to each other, laughing at what they saw and then went about their business without paying much attention to us. However, I decided to forego the sponge bath I had planned and made a quick exit with Jen.

We were up the next morning by 6:00 for devotions given by Elizabeth and had breakfast at 6:30. Before each of us, the waiter placed a box lunch of fried chicken, boiled eggs, bread and an orange for our day's return trip to Kabul.

At 7:00 we were first driven to the ancient site of the city of Bamian where some of its adobe dwellings were still intact despite the exploits of Genghis Khan. It's hilltop location gave us a panoramic view of the entire valley and the escarpment of grottoes and statues.

Leaving the valley, we detoured to the base of another high cliff. A grove of alders and barren fields bordered by a brook extended from the foot of the cliff atop which stood the remains of a "red fort." Inside the cliff was a stairway leading to the top and on the next hill a winding path also led to the fort. We had

an hour to explore.

I climbed halfway up the hill only to come down and rest next to the clear clean brook. Only its babbling, a gentle breeze through the alders and the distant voices of my traveling companions broke the stillness. The busyness and pressures of the West seemed so irrelevant; where were they anyway? How blessed it was to experience such remoteness in the 20th century.

All too soon, we boarded the buses only to discover that one had an axle problem. We sat in the buses for an hour while the drivers administered a temporary repair job which merited an even slower drive back to Kabul, approximately ten hours.

Midway back, we reached the same village where we had lunched the day before. We stopped here again for our thirty minute lunch break. All of the girls except Janet and I headed for the orchard loo before eating.

After eating, I left the group to find a closer spot. Not far down the road, I located an alley formed by high walls around each home. I walked into the alley and around a bend where I thought I would be hidden. However, to my complete mortification, while in the process of pulling up my jeans, I heard feet running toward me. The scene proved embarrassing as I came face to face with a group of local children from six to sixteen. I motioned them away but they wouldn't leave. My school teaching tactics proved futile here. Rearranging my clothes in their presence, I humbly walked out of the alley; and then, for exercise, began running back to the group. But the children, thinking I was running from them, began pelting me with stones. The thought of be-

ing stoned to death in Afghanistan flashed through my mind. Fortunately, I outran my pursuers and made it back to the girls feeling only the sting of one rock. Since I hadn't learned the lesson before, I learned it now: never again would I venture out alone into a primitive society.

Somewhat dazed, I told the girls of my experience and warned Janet to be careful as she started off. Within ten minutes she returned crying and scared. She had unknowingly ventured onto someone's property and the family dog had attacked her, biting through her sweatshirt, blouse and T-shirt into her lower back, puncturing the skin. Jen and Megan, two of our nurses, dressed the wound. Other girls tried to comfort her, but we all entertained the thought that the dog might be rabid. There was no one who understood English well enough to help us, not even our drivers. The fellows couldn't find the dog. What could we do? Pray!

Janet calmed down as we continued our journey, and the group tried to help by playing silly games and singing. We arrived in Kabul very late in the evening and told Neil and Graeme about Janet's misfortune. They still had not had any news from the General's office and no date had been set for us to leave.

Kabul
Sunday, April 4

Today the news of a settlement spread like wildfire. We would be leaving tomorrow! We learned that the boy was not hurt after all. However, the bus company would pay the family a specified

sum of money for the "accident." The possibility existed that the whole traumatic event had been staged for baksheesh. This was not an uncommon occurrence in this part of the world. The police returned Graeme's passport and driver's license, restricting him to drive no more than eight hours a day while in their country.

Janet, at Neil's recommendation, went to a clinic in the morning where her wound was cleaned and dressed. At 5 P.M. an English speaking, middle-aged Afghan doctor in a western business suit came to our room to see her. As Jen and I packed our cases, he treated her wound and administered a tetanus shot. He doubted that the dog was rabid, but told Janet she would have to make the final decision regarding the rabies shots. His manner was very professional and we learned that he had been educated in Kabul, Delhi and London where he had received his medical degree.

Kabul to Kandahar
Monday, April 5

At 7:30 A.M. we left Kabul. Paralleling a trade route which undoubtedly thrived with caravans in days gone by, we headed southwest through more barren mountainous territory, but enjoyed a smoother than normal ride on an American built road. Neil noted that Alexander and his army, on its eastward march (336-322B.C.) probably traveled through much of this area.

In spite of the fabulous significance this area held for those of us into "ancient history," the day on the road was long

and proceeded like those of the past with the usual activities and napping. The totally relaxed napper's body position and facial expression with closed eyes and open mouth were a source of constant amusement to us. More often than not someone would sneak the napper's camera or use his own to capture and record for all time the somnolent traveler. Weeks later upon development, many of us would be surprised to find among our prints our own sleeping portraits.

Comfortwise for napping, we all had our own unique style. I slid down my seat with my knees pressing against the back of the seat in front of me, my relaxed head dropped, my chin almost touching my chest. Some days getting comfortable for napping was not as easy as others. One day on the road in India, Robert, after trying unsuccessfully to relax in his seat, resorted to stretching out in the aisle using his parka for a pillow.

Around 3:30 P.M. we entered Kandahar, now experiencing warm spring weather. Neil assigned us rooms in two small mud brick neighboring hotels. Here rooms with rope beds, floor mats and dangling light bulbs as well as coed bathrooms with only porcelain slab toilets and cold water sinks were the rule. To Jen's chagrin, she would have to share a room with Derik, a quiet good-looking flight instructor from Adelaide. Both of them must have been somewhat put out by the arrangement, but in the end were good sports.

Before dinner, a group of us took a walk with Neil to find a popular bakery specializing in American cookies. Walking

through the old section of Kandahar, we passed the octangular domed mausoleum of Ahmad Shah who united the country in the 18th century making Kandahar its capital. The baked mud brick walls of the city laid out by him still stood. Neil added that Alexander had founded this city naming it Alexandria as was his custom with the various cities he founded on his campaigns. Kandahar's strategic location on the trade routes of central Asia caused it to play host to a number of conquerors including the Arabs in the 7th century, the Turkic Ghaznivids in the 10th, Genghis Khan in the 12th, Tamerlane in the 14th and Babur in the 16th. Today it is still a chief trade center and the country's second city. Of significance to Muslims, the cloak of Muhammad is said to be in one of Kandahar's mosques. Finding the bakery, we all went slightly berserk from the aromas of the baked cookies; oatmeal and chocolate chip were our favorites.

That evening we all gathered in the dining room of the larger hotel for dinner. To the accompaniment of loud Afghan music, we enjoyed a meat loaf dinner and pound cake for dessert. Some of us lingered on after our meal to mix with another Australian bus group originating in London bound for Katmandu.

Kandahar to Herat
Tuesday, April 6

We were awakened before dawn by the ever familiar sound of the muezzin's call to prayer. Today on a Russian built road, we drove northwest making good time despite the long distance. Like Kandahar, Herat was founded by Alexander and was known then as

Alexandria. On the old trade route linking Persia to India, it too had been fought over from earliest times and later by Genghis Khan who rampaged it and Tamerlane who made it his capital in 1381. Even the British found it to be of importance.

Entering Herat around 4 P.M., we were enchanted by the quaint horse-drawn carriages with jingling bells called gharries used as local cabs which kept pace with the bus. However, our attention was soon drawn to the luggage pen where Brenda, twenty-nine, a strict-looking music instructor with short curly brown hair, was in a state of panic. Her stocky frame was bent over the pen as she rummaged through it extricating her shoulder and sleeping bags. A couple of the girls untied her sleeping bag as she quickly searched her shoulder bag looking for her passport.

Graeme parked the bus in front of our hotel, another drab building located on a busy corner. The bus detail unloaded the cases and Brenda tore into hers, but to no avail. Her passport was not on her person, not in her luggage and not in the bus. It was lost!

Meanwhile, Neil gave us our room assignments and made a quick decision to return with Brenda to Kandahar to look for the missing document. She had to have it for the next day's border crossing into Iran. Phoning the last hotel was out of the question; it was not wise to alert the locals of a missing passport nor the authorities, considering our recent Kabul incident, so the only alternative was to backtrack there immediately.

Giving Graeme last minute instructions in case anything

should happen to them, Neil and Brenda flagged a taxi which they hired to take them to Kandahar. They hoped to be back the next morning around 8:00.

The rest of us flocked to our second story hotel, gaining access from the street up an enclosed stairway. From the stairway, we crossed the lobby-dining room to two long halls of identical rooms with cold white plastered walls, bare floors, rope beds and shadeless windows. The bathrooms were at the end of each hall.

Mealtime was quiet as we were preoccupied with Neil and Brenda, especially with the possibility of their being stranded in Afghanistan. We were also concerned for Janet as she was considering returning to Kabul for the rabies shots.

So after dinner, Robert called for a time of prayer in his room. Seated on beds and the floor, we listened as he read from Psalm 91:

WE LIVE WITHIN the shadow of the Almighty,
sheltered by the God who is above all gods.

This I declare, that he alone is my refuge, my
place of safety; he is my God, and I am trusting **him**
him. For he rescues you from every trap, and
protects you from the fatal plague. He will shield
you with his wings! They will shelter you . . .

With these promises in mind, we spent time in prayer for our friends and each concern. The weights lifted as we ended with a song. Confident that direction and answers would come,

all we had to do now was to wait.