

HOW FAR WOULD YOU GO TO GET AN EDUCATION?

TO GET TO EXETER, PARNIAN NAZARY '06 CROSSED THE KHYBER PASS | By Susannah Clark '84

For most Exeter students, June means the end of school and the chance to return home after nine months of hard work.

During her first year at Exeter, Parnian Nazary, an upper from Kabul, Afghanistan, probably worked harder than many of her classmates. But when June came, the ongoing political turmoil in Afghanistan, and concerns about possible new regulations and restrictions on travel in and out of the country, meant Nazary shouldn't return home. Had she done so, says her adviser, religion instructor Jamie Hamilton, she might not have been able to return to Exeter on time in September.

Setbacks are, however, nothing new for the 18-year-old Nazary. In fact, living in Afghanistan under the Taliban—which severely circumscribed the rights of women and girls, including their access to education—seems only to have made her more fervent in her pursuit of schooling. “More than anything else,” she says, “it is my wish to get a good education.”

Nazary's soft-spoken, friendly manner gives little hint of the trials she has endured. But as she describes her experiences, her determination is unmistakable. Under the Taliban, who took power in 1996 when Nazary was 10, Afghan women were required to wear burkas in public, something Nazary says she tried to put off for as long as possible. “It was uncomfortable, especially in the summer,” she says of the traditional Afghan robe that covers the wearer from head to toe. “It's really big, really heavy, really warm. It also makes it hard to see.”

One day when she was 13, Nazary was out in Kabul with her mother when they were stopped by a group of men. “They were shouting at me, ‘You are old enough to wear a burka! Don't come out like this!’ ” she recalls. “I was really scared.” After that encounter, Nazary just stayed at home—for a total of two years. She broke her resolution only once, donning a burka to attend her grandfather's funeral.

Unwilling to leave her home but determined to continue her education, Nazary began to teach herself math, history and drawing. Friends brought her materials for studying English as a second language—her primary language is Farsi—and after she completed two years of self-study, her neighbors began sending their daughters to her so that she could teach them

English as well. “I had about seven students,” she says. “They would bring their books secretly.” Had they been discovered, Nazary says it's likely she would have been disciplined.

After the U.S. Army arrived in Kabul, the school Nazary had attended before the Taliban seized control reopened. But it was, she says, a shadow of its former self. “All of the books had been burned, and I didn't think I would be able to get a good education.” It was then she began to consider leaving Afghanistan, and in 2003 she made her first trip to the United States, as part of the Seeds of Peace program, the nonprofit organization that brings teenagers from regions of conflict in the Middle East and Central Asia to a summer camp in Maine. It was through Seeds of Peace that she met Jamie Hamilton and Michael Gary, Exeter's director of admissions, who encouraged her to apply to the Academy. She was admitted for the 2004-05 school year.

Despite the educational advantages that coming to Exeter offered, “it was,” Hamilton notes, “a hard family decision. I think her parents were pretty amazing to let her come. But they gave her the opportunity.”

When Nazary finally arrived at Exeter—10 days after the start of classes, due to problems she encountered leaving Afghanistan—she experienced significant culture shock. Despite her studies in Kabul, her English was not fluent. “We all

worried that language was going to be an issue,” Hamilton recalls. “But Parnian's like a sponge, and every day she picked up words.” Assigned to read *Brave New World* in her English class, she took five hours to read 20 pages, so Hamilton found Farsi translations of a few of her assigned books. “But now,” Hamilton adds, “Parnian doesn't even need them. We can

see how far she's come.”

Not surprisingly, Nazary also faced some significant gaps in her knowledge base, particularly in math. But those gaps proved to be the beginning of a close friendship with dorm mate Heather Carmichael, a senior from Weston, MA, and a gifted math student. She began tutoring Nazary, who proved herself a quick study. Placed in a lower math course at the start of her first term, she finished the year at close to grade level.

Her year has been full of firsts. First bike ride, thanks to Exeter friends who found her a bike and a helmet and taught her how to ride. First viola lessons, thanks to encouragement from Carmichael, an accomplished cellist, who helped Nazary find both an instrument and a teacher. “She has a wonderful laugh and a wonderful sense of humor,” says Hamilton, “and she's made good friends who are like sisters for her.”

(continued on page 98)



Living in Afghanistan under the Taliban has only made Parnian Nazary '06 more fervent in her pursuit of schooling. “More than anything else,” says Nazary (top photo: with her adviser, religion instructor Jamie Hamilton; bottom photo, in traditional Afghan dress, with dorm mate Heather Carmichael '05), “it is my wish to get a good education.”



Kate E.Young and David Hyun '79
Lily Jane
March 9, 2004

1982
Mary Harmon and Lawrence F.
Goodson '82
Thomas Franklin
September 29, 2004

Michael C. and Donna Lau Smith (Lau) '82
Jenna Rose Yong-He
March 25, 2004
Aunt: Marjorie A. Lau '79

1983
Susan and John K. Malysa '83
Ava Suzanne
February 25, 2005

Stephen R. Mare and Cynthia L. Fuguet
Mare (Fuguet) '83
Madeleine Darcy
June 15, 2004
Grandfather: Howard K. Fuguet '55

Melissa and William C. Rhodes '83
Elizabeth Anne
March 3, 2005

Frederique and Guy B. Stear '83
Jean-Baptiste
April 16, 2005

David Hyun and Kate E.Young '83
Lily Jane
March 9, 2004
Uncle: Ian C.Young '88

1984
Kristen L. Kruger and Thomas J.
Brewitt '84
Thomas Watson
September 3, 2004
Grandfather: David W. Kruger '60
Aunt: Faith Brewitt '89
Great-grandfather: Richard S. Brewitt '40
(dec.)
Great-uncle: Richard A. Kruger '65
Great-great-great-uncle: Thomas C.
Frenyear 1886 (dec.)

Erik and Amy S. M. Egtvet
(Pfeiffenberger) '84
Julia Ann
January 20, 2005
Grandfather: Mather Pfeiffenberger '37
(dec.)
Uncle: Mather B. Pfeiffenberger '73
Uncle: John R. Pfeiffenberger '76
Aunt: Ann Pfeiffenberger O'Neill '79
Uncle: James H. Pfeiffenberger '80
Great-uncle: Andrew R. Pfeiffenberger '45
Great-uncle: Franklin H. Pfeiffenberger '47

Patricia Flynn Hurley and Patrick J.
Hurley '84
Conlan
July 3, 2004

Kristin McCommons Jones and Thomas
W. Jones '84
Owen Keith
February 23, 2005

Tara and Craig S. Morgan '84
Erin Delaney
December 18, 2004

1985
Martha Silano and Langdon Culter
Cook '85
Ruby Josephina
March 24, 2005

Grandfather: Langdon P. Cook '56
Great-grandfather: James W. Cook '24
(dec.)
Great-uncle: W. David Cook '58
Great-great-uncle: J. Langdon Cook '21
(dec.)

Eckart and Mary Flagg Horn '85
Theodor August
October 24, 2004

Michael Winston and Susan Plath
Winston (Plath) '85
Dorothy Plath Winston
May 22, 2004
Grandfather: Warren J. Plath '53
Aunt: Jenny L. Plath '82

1986
Phillippe Tinnmouth and Brit K. Dewey '86
Julian Edward Dewey Tinnmouth
October 20, 2004

Laurie G. Jacobson and Howard M.
Willson III '86
Noah
April 22, 2004
Aunt: Laura E. Willson '87

1987
Alan H. and Ellen Smith Cron (Smith) '87
Madeleine
August 17, 2004
Grandfather: Everett J. Smith '47
Great-grandfather: George W. Smith '10
(dec.)

Thomas W. and Kristin McCommons
Jones (McCommons) '87
Owen Keith
February 23, 2005

Kevin M. and Kristin Kearns Jordan '87
Anna Latimer
February 27, 2005

1988
Trevor and Carolyn Barnett
Gibson (Barnett) '88
Scott William
March 9, 2005

Adriana Carrillo-Harper and James V.
Harper '88
Isabella Elena
November 1, 2004
Aunt: Christine R. Harper '87

Christopher A. Lidstad and Wynne D.
Love '88
Piper Love Lidstad
March 8, 2005
Uncle: Peter J. Love '86
Great-grandfather: Richard W.
Howell '26 (dec.)

John F. and Christine L. Mackey
(Malone) '88
Reid James
July 26, 2004

**The Alumni/ae Records Office
appreciates your help in compil-
ing this information. Please send
news of a birth, marriage or
death to Alumni/ae Records
Office, Phillips Exeter Academy,
20 Main St., Exeter, NH 03833;
email records@exeter.edu.**

Mark A. and Thomasine N. Gorry
Shagena '88
Elizabeth
June 15, 2004
Aunt: Lisa Gorry Distefano '86

1989
Milo and Susie Cogan (Dyson) '89
William Sheridan
February 4, 2005
Aunt: Tania L. Dyson '87

1990
Christopher and Brenda Gustafson
Berg '90
Anton Lars
February 12, 2005

Susie and Milo Cogan '90
William Sheridan
February 4, 2005
Grandfather: Timothy B. Cogan '52
Great-grandfather: Bernard S. Cogan '19
(dec.)

Jonathan and DeAnna D. Edwards
(Diaz) '90
Taliah Moselle
February 13, 2005

Jodie and David Y. Lin '90
Reiley Shane Sasha
February 10, 2005
Uncle: Stephen L. Lin '87

Eric and Tricia Yoo Matuszak '90
Will
January 23, 2005

Elizabeth and Mark R. Michels '90
Marten August
August 27, 2004

1991
Brooks E. and Sara M. Bliss-Hamblett '91
Brooks Elliot Hamblett Jr.
December 29, 2004
Grandfather: Richard M. Bliss '47
Uncle: Richard M. Bliss Jr. '75

Molly and Chadwick E. Huggins '91
Charles Middleton
November 2, 2004

Nancy G. and John B. Trainer '91
Rachel
May 24, 2004
Grandfather: Edward S. Trainer '57
Aunt: Kristen B. Trainer '95
Great-grandfather: John N. Trainer '27
(dec.)
Great-uncle: John N. Trainer Jr. '55
Great-great-uncle: Robert B. Trainer '34

1992
Maureen and Shane N. Kramer '92
Griffin Shane Kramer
March 14, 2005

Matthew T. and Lindsey Mead Russell
(Mead) '92
Samuel Whitney
January 20, 2005

1993
Caroline and Kenneth W. Nelson III '93
Campbell Boone
February 12, 2005

1997
Jason and Sarah Laskis Behnke (Laskis) '97
Owen Michael
December 11, 2004

Parnian Nazary

(continued from page 4)

Perhaps the most significant first has been the opportunity to speak openly. "Parnian was living in a culture in which women were not free to speak," Hamilton points out. "She always knew her opinion mattered, but she didn't feel free to express it. She's becoming more outspoken. She realizes that she has something to say and a way of participating, not just as part of a group, but as a leader."

Nazary had the opportunity to test these new skills this winter, when she was invited to address a conference at the United Nations. "I went to talk about my experience in the United States and with Seeds of Peace," she says.

Her audience was a group of 500 international educators, and her topic was one she knows firsthand: the importance of listening to the other side of the story. "Parnian's point was that although you've been given information about who 'the other' is, until you sit down and listen to them, you never really know what they're like," says Hamilton, who accompanied Nazary to New York. "She talked about the power of that experience."

When she returns to Afghanistan, Nazary hopes to have just these kinds of experiences and to work for peace in a region that has known too little of it. "I'd love to do something for my country," she says.

"She's fiercely Afghan," adds Hamilton. "She now can imagine being one of the people who will work toward bringing her country back to health."

Nazary knows that road to recovery is likely to be a long one. "After the United States bombed my country, I thought, 'We will have peace,' but it was not true. There's still war going on," she observes somberly. But if her pursuit of an education has taught her one thing, it's that persistence sometimes pays off. And, she adds poignantly, "what other choice do we have?"