

Afghanistan: home for NU faculty members

by Lori Clepper

Before Assoc. Professor Gerald Boardman and his wife leave for Afghanistan in January, they intend to eat a lot of lettuce, tomatoes and grapes.

Food there has to be boiled at least half an hour to ensure that it is sanitary, so fresh fruits and vegetables will not be available, Boardman said.

That is just one of the changes the Boardman's and eight other families will have to make when they move to Afghanistan for the next two years.

The families, who were chosen from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and UNL faculty, will advise the faculty and teach at Kabul University in Afghanistan. Ten teachers from Kabul will spend a year at UNO.

The exchange program will be funded by the federal government in the form of a contract signed by UNO, the largest ever awarded to UNO. Beside the teaching and supervision which the NU faculty members will provide, portions of Afghanistan which have never been charted before will be mapped by some of the faculty members.

The families going say they are excited and happy. But despite the help of those arranging their stay in Afghanistan, the preparation and the change they will be going through will be tremendous.

"They told us that when we went to Afghanistan, it would be like stepping back 1,000 years, Mrs. Boardman said. They have no modern conveniences, their sanitation is way behind and they still have the custom of women wearing veils. It's going to be quite a cultural change."

"We're just going to try to see everything we can," said Mrs. Otis Cross, whose husband, an agricultural engineer, will help set up curriculum and courses at the University of Kabul. "We're going to miss our family, (their three oldest sons will remain in the country), friends and, of course, Nebraska, but the experience is a chance of a lifetime."

The native Afghanistan language is Persian but the families will be provided with an interpreter. Their school-age children will go to school in Afghanistan but will not have to know Persian to attend.

The families have been provided with houses which they haven't seen yet but which are described as "large and comfortable." At their own expense, the families have been urged to hire servants for the house because of the change in cooking and sanitation.

"They tell us though that we can have any of the American food we want, as long as we can train our cook to make it," Boardman said.

There are shots to take, passports and visas to get, and decisions to make about selling or renting the houses, what to do with furniture and how much luggage they need. Even new driver's licenses are required. They told us if we showed them our Nebraska driver's license, they'd roll it into a cigarette," Mrs. Boardman said.

Faculty members named for the trip so far include: Dr. Gerald Boardman, associate professor of educational administration at UNL; Dr. Marvin Johnson, professor of industrial and management systems, NU system; Dr. Richard Gibson, vice-chairman for civil engineering,

NU system; Dr. Otis Cross, associate professor of agricultural engineering, NU system

and Dr. Harold Davis, chairman of the department of industrial technology, NU system.



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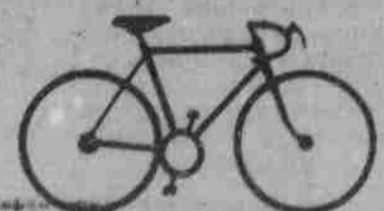
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