

Farah, Afghanistan  
March 24, 1965

In the morning of New Year's Day (March 21) there was a country fair. With a difference. First, the Boy Scouts had races and a tug of war, and sang some songs. David, of course, sat with the men and I with the women for the show. Then all the men left to see the plowing contest and all the animals were paraded in front of us. I never saw a purple cow, but I saw a purple chicken and a pink, blue, and purple baby camel. And such scarves the animals were wearing! But you'll see the pictures. There never was a country fair in the States with camels and gazelles, I'll bet. Then they judged the animals while I alternated between sipping tea, talking to a teacher from the girls' school, and snapping pictures. Then some of the Boy Scouts danced the attan (it's a circle dance with a lot of turning around in it) waving handkerchiefs, to the music of a horn and drum. Wish we'd brought the tape recorder. Then they called on some men from the crowd to dance. Hate to say it, but the men, who hadn't practiced, were much better. They were wearing Afghan dress and when they turned around their shirt tails flared out. The handkerchiefs of the boys were a poor substitute. They danced and danced, getting faster and wilder, until finally the boys practically had to push them out. They didn't seem to get tired at all, although I'll bet they were. There was an old man who looked at least 70 – so thin that he looked as if he'd disappear in a breeze, but he lasted as long as anybody, although he left the fancy steps up to the younger men.

There were some beautiful horses there, but the ones I admired were much too thin according to the other men. Several of the horses were blindfolded because they were too wild, and there was some fancy riding going on in the background. At the plowing contest, all the spectators crowded around to get close to the Governor, who was supposed to be judging the contest, but he was so surrounded that he couldn't see it. The oxen in the plowing contest were helped by six men, one to guide the animals and hold the plow, five to shove the people out of the way. This was the most disorganized fair I'd ever seen. The Governor and other dignitaries planted some trees, and as they turned away, the trees were trampled into the ground by the crowd. Most of the judging was finally done by the Director of Agriculture, who would leave the crowd for a moment, look at the animals or whatever, push his way back to the Governor, hand him a slip of paper, and the Governor would yell a name and give the prize to the man - if he was able to push his way in. The crowd was about 1/3 soldiers and Boy Scouts who were methodically and futilely kicking people out of the crowd. Half of the crowd, and the pushiest half, were the minor dignitaries who were supposed to be there, but were competing for positions nearer the Governor. When he saw me, he hauled me out of the crowd and kept me next to him during the judging, much to the disgust of the various provincial directors. At one time, the crowd so enraged a bull that he went berserk and headed for the Governor. Everybody dived out of the way, leaving a pile of bodies on either side and a clear path to the dignitaries, but as the bull charged, a bunch of Boy Scouts hit him on the side, knocking him into one of the piles of escapees. He stumbled a couple of times, finally fell, and when they got him up he was docile. Then everybody came charging in to see if the Governor was o.k. – stepping on the kids who had been under the bull - and everybody moved off, quite happy. The kids

were all right, just bruised, but it was a little strange. The kids seemed to think it was all great fun.