



FROM DUBAI TO AFGHANISTAN: BUILDING AND REBUILDING THE WORLD

BY TERESA MARIANI HENDRIX



ARVIN DAEIZADEH (B.S., Construction Management, 2004) grew up in Los Angeles, but right now you'll find him half a world away – splitting time between his apartment in Dubai and his new job in Kabul.

Daeizadeh spent 2007-09 on the team overseeing the construction of the \$20 billion Burj Khalifa (originally Burj Dubai) skyscraper and surrounding master-planned area in the United Arab Emirates. When it opened in January, Burj Khalifa became the world's tallest structure. At 160 stories, it's 2,716 feet high – taller than two Empire State buildings.

Daeizadeh is now working for ACCL International (Afghan-yar Construction Company Limited) and has been on the job since April. The civilian company is owned by Afghans and based in Kabul and includes a team of top American project managers.

Daeizadeh stopped by Cal Poly while visiting to family and friends in California in September and took time to answer questions for Cal Poly Magazine.

Q: WHAT ARE YOU BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN?

A: We build projects from small warehouses and perimeter walls to full-size camps for local and expatriate police and soldiers.

Q: WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THE JOB?

A: My current boss had worked with me on the Burj Khalifa project. I was drawn to the opportunity, because I knew him and respected him and because the company was created with the purpose of helping the Afghans. The job lets me serve the international forces, who are our clients, and help the locals by giving them jobs and training, buying local products and helping them build a successful Afghan company.

Q: IS IT DANGEROUS THERE?

A: It is, but Kabul is one of the safer places in Afghanistan. Our company employs its own security team, which we train; they are local Afghans. Whenever any of us Westerners are traveling, we are accompanied by former U.S. military or with one of our Afghan armed guards.

Q: DO YOU WORK AT PROJECTS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY OR JUST ONE REGION?

A: Our main office is in Kabul, and I spend most of my time there. But I had a three-week project in Herat, near the border of Iran. I also have an assignment that will require me to travel to half a dozen camps on the borders of Afghanistan.

Q: WHICH ACCOMPLISHMENT HAS BEEN THE MOST FUN IN YOUR CAREER?

A: Entering the international job market; there is so much opportunity. American expertise is in high demand internationally, but most Americans are not comfortable with international work. I've been able to work on larger and more interesting projects while traveling and seeing more of the world.

Q: AND WHAT'S BEEN THE TOUGHEST THING SO FAR?

A: Staying abreast of the industry and the rapid advancements in construction on an international scale.

Q: WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO MAJOR IN CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT?

A: I kind of stumbled into it. I had to choose a major when I applied to Cal Poly, since there was no "undecided" option. My stepfather was in construction in L.A., and I liked the times I worked with him as a kid. Once I got started in the program and worked alongside architecture, city and regional planning, landscape architecture and architecture engineering majors, I really started to like it.

Q: WHY DID YOU PICK CAL POLY AS AN UNDERGRAD?

A: It is an amazing school. Poly is very well recognized in my industry, and learn-by-doing was very much in place in every one of my major courses. Cal Poly fulfilled my 'checklist' – a top school, out of my hometown, with no overcrowded classes, and something I could afford. I attribute a lot of my successes to Cal Poly. The learn-by-doing education and the real-world experience helped shape me to be ready for a career and life in general.

Q: WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR CAL POLY STUDENTS (OR ALUMNI) WHO WANT TO GET INTO CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT?

A: Anyone interested in building should look into the area of sustainable construction and building. The construction industry has a significant role to play in sustainability, and I see it being a big part of how we build in the future rather than just being a trend today.

Q: WHEN YOU'RE NOT WORKING HARD IN EXOTIC PLACES, WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO?

A: I really like motorsports and have shipped my motorcycle out from L.A. to Dubai. I take it for a ride with the local Emirati bike crew whenever I get a chance – as long as it's not during the summer! ☐



Cal Poly alum Arvin Daeizadeh in front of the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Daeizadeh worked on construction of the building, currently the tallest in the world.
Photo courtesy of Arvin Daeizadeh