He was a staunch supporter of the Afghan cause.”) One summer, he worked for the Harvard Student Agencies’ travel guide Let’s Go—The Southwest United States.

Commencement Day in 1994 was anticlimactic, Farivar says: “I felt I had completed my American mission and would go home to serve. But in 1994 there was a vicious civil war in Afghanistan and it was too dangerous to go back.” (His parents and three sisters had relocated to England.) So he made a postgraduate choice that sounds classically American: he took a year off to drive cross-country with a classmate, doing things along the way like working at a youth hostel in Arizona.

In 1995, Farivar landed his first full-time job, with a news-sharing joint venture run by the Associated Press and Dow Jones, publisher of the Wall Street Journal, in New York City. Though the job was “the fastest track to becoming a foreign correspondent,” Farivar’s work visa didn’t allow him to go abroad on stories. He did the next best thing and covered the United Nations; he also wrote a daily column on the energy market for both the Dow Jones news wires. His international background and language skills helped: in addition to English, he knows classical Arabic, Uzbek, Urdu, and the two Afghan national languages, Dari and Pashto. He spent 12 years as a single New Yorker, living in Brooklyn and then Jersey City, developing a good circle of friends, taking weekend jaunts outside the city, going to several World Series games, enjoying the nightlife, cultural life, and “great restaurants and bars.”

In 2007, he decided that he’d “better move back to Afghanistan now, or it wouldn’t happen.” There was some pressure from his family to marry, and after completing his book he finally returned to Kabul, taking a 25 percent pay cut to accept a job with Internews: teaching journalistic skills to young Afghan reporters. That soon morphed into his position at Salam Watandar. The next year he settled into an arranged marriage with his wife, Malalai. They named their son, born in 2010, after an American: “Muhammad Ali—The Greatest,” says Farivar. “He is one of my heroes, as an athlete and as a champion. Ali is very well known as a Muslim. We are a Muslim family, and I’m proud of it.”

Farivar’s assessment of his countrymen’s mood now is that “No one wants the Taliban back. That was a brutal regime. I think there’s still a great deal of support for the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. It’s important for American officials to separate the long-term civilian commitment to Afghanistan from the military involvement.”

Kabul, which he characterizes as a boom town, “goes through phases,” Farivar explains, “but it is generally not as dangerous as it seems from afar. The attacks you hear about are targeted, not random, so unless you’re in the wrong place at the wrong time, you’re generally safe. There was a major attack in January [2010] that happened less than a hundred yards from our office—of all the windows in the building, the only one blown out was in my office. I was woken up at 6:00 a.m. that day and directed the coverage from home. There was also a big attack on the Italians, only 150 yards away from where I live. I went home and found that all the windows on our block had been shattered. The window-makers made a killing that day.”

Yet life goes on. He used to put in 12-hour days; since his marriage, he has managed to cut them down only to 10- or 11-hour days, six days a week. “I gave up an active social life in New York, but

Return to Harvard Day

The HAA invites all reunion-year alumni and their families to return to the College to experience the full academic day of an undergraduate on April 6, 2011. Attend classes and lectures, have lunch in the House dining halls, tour the campus, attend a student-led panel discussion on undergraduate life, then wind down the day by joining students in the Cambridge Queen’s Head pub. For details, contact the HAA at 617-496-7001.