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## **Land Tenure Work Takes Vermont Resident On Global Trek**

Ray Anderson, Reporter

Tucked away in the quiet hills above Vermont's "Peculiar Corners," the rambling farmhouse of Dave and Sandi Stanfield fits the very definition of rural tranquility. It is a peaceful setting, with long views of the pristine valleys and farmland below. It hardly seems like the kind of place you would choose to leave to spend weeks in the war ravaged streets of Kabul, Afghanistan, or to face possible arrest by military police in South America.

Welcome to the long, strange trip that is the life and work of "retired" University of Wisconsin Professor Emeritus Dr. J. David Stanfield, PhD. A resident of Vermont township for more than 30 years, he has quite literally traveled the world as co-founder of Terra Institute, a Mount Horeb based non-profit corporation which focuses on issues concerning urban and rural land use and policies, environmental protection, land law, and natural resource management.

Since establishing the institute in 1974, Stanfield's work has taken him to more than 20 countries across five continents, with extended tenures in Chile, Brazil, and Albania. He recently returned from a six-week trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan, where he is exploring the possibility of undertaking a land titling project in the volatile tribal areas near the Tora Bora Mountains on the Afghan-Pakistani border.

"A [Pakistani] friend came to visit me in Kabul in July and invited me to go," Stanfield recounted. "He helped arrange to get permission from the Pakistani government to go into this area where no foreigner gets permission to go. I drove from Kabul to Peshawar early one morning. While I was in Peshawar, we went to see how the Pakistani's organize their land records. I can't help myself. The idea is that at some point we want to have a delegation of Afghan specialists in land records go to Pakistan to see how they do it."

The roots of Terra Institute begin with an invitation Stanfield received from the University of Wisconsin's Land Tenure Center in 1970 to spearhead a project analyzing land reforms in Chile. Under the government of then President Salvador Allende, Chile had instituted a Grand Reform which included the redistribution of millions of hectares of land to landless agricultural workers.

In September of 1973, Allende was overthrown in a military coup led by General Agosto

Pinochet, a brutal dictator whose regime was marked by human rights violations on a massive scale. Pinochet brought a halt to most of the land reforms of the Allende government, thus ending the university's project in the country.

"The university didn't want to continue to be involved in Chile after the change in government," Stanfield recalled. "We came back [to the U.S.] in November of 1973 and struggled with what we wanted to do with our lives. We stayed in touch with the people we had worked with; the office was still open. We founded [Terra] to help this group continue to function. The first project we had was the incubating of this organization in Chile."

Funding for the project came through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. government organization responsible for most non-military foreign aid. It advances U.S. foreign policy objectives by supporting economic growth, agriculture and trade in health, democracy, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance

"We went back in early 1975," he continued. "For the next three years, we prospered, we go to know people in USAID, and did work in research and policy work on the Grand Reform sector in nutrition studies-causes of malnutrition. There was [grant] money for nutrition work, so we became nutritionists, but always linked to the land question."

"Sandy and I decided to come back to the farm with our two kids, both born in Chile, in April of 1978. The idea was to be the U.S. office of Chile-Terra, and it was all going very well. In June, I got a call from our office in Chile saying we just had a visit from the secret police and they're looking for you. I contacted the U.S. Embassy and asked what the basis was. The ambassador just said, 'You better not come back.' I never got a straight answer why, but at least they warned me."

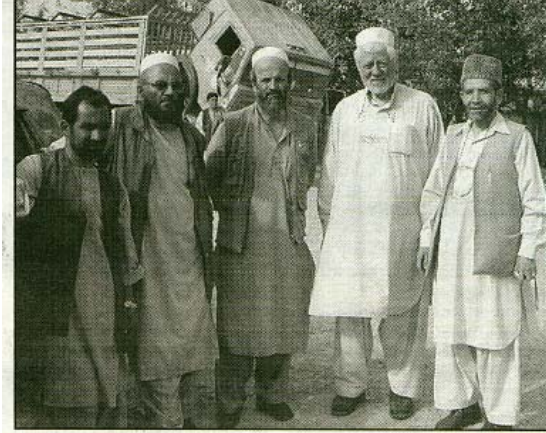
Stanfield became 'persona non grata' in Chile for more than a decade. With a change in government, he was finally able to return to the country in 1988. "I was invited to go back for a land reform conference. And nothing happened," he laughed. "I was a little worried when the plane landed at the airport in Santiago and there were soldiers on the runway with guns. I said, 'Oh, a welcoming committee.'"

Through its work in Chile, Terra's reputation became firmly established in the world community. Working with local contracting organizations, and buoyed by strong connections to international funding resources, the group has undertaken research and consultation projects in Central America, Eastern Europe, Eurasia, Southeast Asia and the Caribbean. These included a four-year land administration program in Albania; a four-year land markets development project in Georgia, Eurasia; and an ongoing land titling and economic restructuring project in Afghanistan, which was launched in 2004.

The project in Afghanistan serves to illustrate, on a basic level, the type and importance of the work that Terra is involved in.

"In our work in rural land, one of the big issues is pasture land, which tends to be unfenced, common property," said Stanfield. "Clans or groups or communities use it, it's not privately owned. So what we're trying to do is sit down with the Afghans and say, 'Who has what rights according to your experience at the local level?' Let's get it all clear."

"The U.S. Army agreed to provide satellite imagery, for free, of that pasture land," he continued. "We take those photographs to the villages and we locate the pasture land and ask, 'Who uses it, what time of the year, and for what purpose?'"



Vermont resident and retired UW professor David Stanfield, second from right, poses with project team members in Ishkimish, Afghanistan last month while overseeing a land titling and economic restructuring project in Afghanistan. Stanfield co-founded Terra Institute, a non-profit corporation specializing in land use issues in 1974. The institute has managed land use projects in more than 20 countries. Photo submitted.

And everybody sits around the table and comes to an agreement, they put their thumbprint on it, and it reestablishes the basis of land use and ownership locally. The commitment of the local people is what makes it work. Once we get the community people to agree, then we take that agreement to the state and say, 'Here's what was agreed to.' Then, if they agree, it becomes stable. We put a lot of emphasis on the building of an institutional capacity."

Stanfield officially retired from the University in February of 2004. He promptly departed for a month in Kosovo, analyzing property problems that remained after the conflicts with Serbia in 1999. Serving as a project manager for Terra Institute, he continues to travel to the veritable ends of the earth on a regular basis.

Asked if he foresees a time when the simple pleasures of being a gentleman farmer in Vermont will lure him away from international entanglements, Stanfield quotes the protagonist in British playwright Arnold Wesker's "Chicken Soup and Barley": "If you stop caring, you'll die."

"It's a question of opportunity and energy and health," Stanfield said. "So I can change the nature of the care, I guess, and do things maybe a little less taxing or dangerous, but I don't think I'll ever just stop."