

**MOST
POPULAR
ARTICLES**

WISCONSIN FILM FESTIVAL

***Postcards from Tora Bora* at the 2008 Wisconsin Film Festival**

Katya Szabados on Tuesday 04/08/2008 11:00 am , (10) Recommendations

Article Tools:

Decades of attacks by a myriad of countries and occupying powers have left Afghanistan devastated, its people impoverished. Recurring Taliban control has made life stricter, particularly for women under Islamic Sharia law. We see these stories and pictures again and again on TV, and there are very few people who know a different Afghanistan.

Wazhmha Osman, the narrator in *Postcards from Tora Bora*, is one of those few people. Screening on Sunday at the Wisconsin Film Festival, the documentary chronicles Osman's return to Afghanistan after nearly two decades in the United States.

Osman, like many who experienced the country before the Soviet invasion in 1979, have an entirely different picture of Afghanistan; a place of peace, of children playing in the streets, and educated men and women learning to lead the nation. In the film, she returns to Kabul and other places from her past, attempting to reconcile her memories with the news reports she sees in her new home in America.

So many of those places are so different than she remembers them, and it's heartbreaking to watch the her try to reconcile the bombed-out swimming pool she sees with the memories and pictures she has of the place, a fun getaway and family vacation ritual.

We also watch as she tries to reconcile with her father. It's clear that Osman resents him for abandoning the family by choosing to stay in Afghanistan when the family moved to the U.S. And while Wazhmah and her sisters felt abandoned at home, the father was saving and caring for children he didn't know.

Father Osman is just one of a number of characters that Washmah enlists to try to piece together the last few decades of Afghan history. Others include street vendors, taxi drivers, the director of the zoo where she and her sisters used to go, new residents at her grandmother's house and the director of the "mine museum" in Kabul. There's an overwhelming sense of calamity; the loss of whole generations of educated people (who could lead the nation to prison or death?), the loss of countless lives for seemingly no reason, and the general devastation of Afghanistan over decades of warfare.

For all its sadness, the film is punctuated by humor of Osman, both her adult and six-year-old self, particularly in sequences where a photo from her childhood is cropped into events she could not have seen. Osman is believable, meanwhile, and the characters she enlists to help her are sincere, a sign of hope that survives.

1. [Joel Marino's dad on Madison cops: 'I've lost confidence'](#)
2. [Remembering Bob 'Cosmo' Hicks and his life on State Street and around Madison](#)
3. [Public Enemies with Johnny Depp has broad array of shooting location options in Madison](#)
4. [Welcome to Macintosh at the 2008 Wisconsin Film Festival](#)
5. [Good food, big portions, low prices at Café la Bellitalia](#)
6. [Fringe Foods: Soft-shell crab from Gotham New York Bagels](#)
7. [Living small](#)
8. [Blaska's Blog: Retaking the Downtown](#)
9. [Blaska's Blog: Fred Mohs is right about vagrancy](#)
10. [Blaska's Blog: The amazing Mr. Mohs](#)