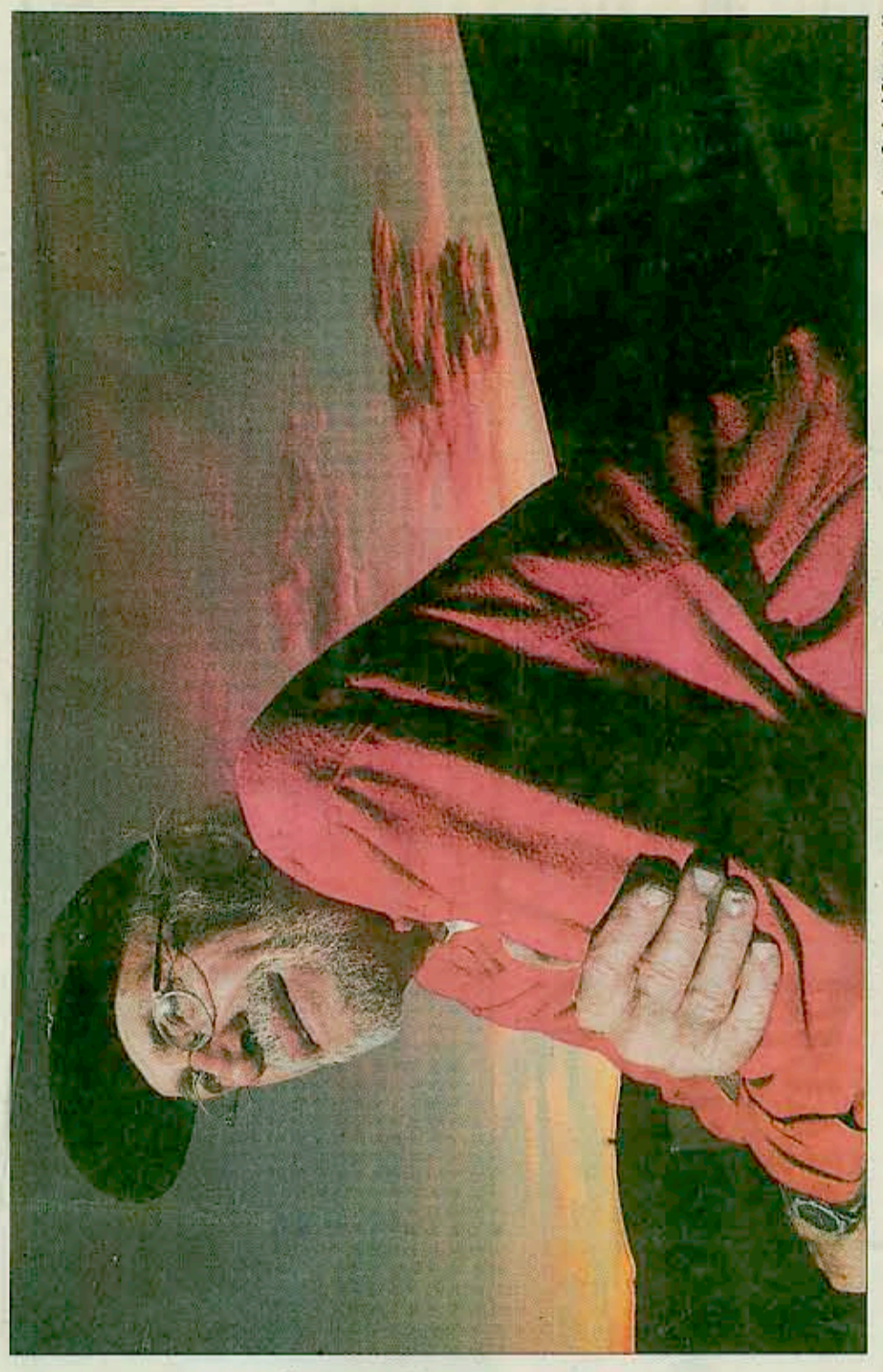


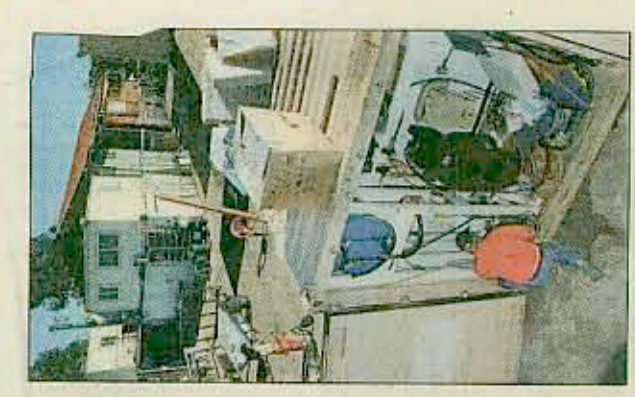
ARTS & LIVING
 Jim Rolfe, an area dentist, thinks his skills would benefit and inform people in Kabul, Afghanistan. E1



Dentist presents 'different face' of what America is about



Juan Carlo / Star staff



Juan Carlo / Star staff
 Above, Dr. Jim Rolfe works on electrical components of the mobile dental clinic he created out of shipping crates. Rolfe, left, started the Afghanistan Dental Relief Project after visiting Afghanistan in 2002 to volunteer his dental expertise at an orphanage.

KABUL
 From E1
 creating a permanent dental office in Kabul where he and other dentists can regularly donate their skills.
 "This is a man who is passionate about making a difference in the world," said Camarillo pediatric dentist Mark Lisagor. "He's almost a Lawrence of Arabia type character."
 Lisagor is among the dentists who hope to volunteer their services at Rolfe's clinic.
 Having volunteered his dental skills in spots like Vietnam, Nepal, Guatemala and Israel, Lisagor contacted Rolfe after reading about him in a dental journal.
 The Camarillo dentist said he believes Afghanistan is an ideal place to try to make a difference. "Here is this really hard-core Islamic place where from birth they are taught that if you're not pretty much to be hated," he said. "Jim's thinking the only way we'll overcome that is to let them see a different face of what America is all about, one person at a time."
 Lisagor donated several volunteer hours, a vacuum pump and a sign written in Parsi that will hang over the office.

Not an easy sell
 The permanent dental office is sitting right now in a shipping yard in Santa Barbara, almost complete after a year of work — about 4,000 hours.
 Rolfe has help and support from several volunteers and businesses in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties — including American Tooth Industries in Oxnard, which donated 37,000 sets of dentures — but Rolfe has done almost all of the construction work.
 Asking for help for a project in that part of the world, Rolfe said, "is not an easy sell." There's been so much reaction to Iraq, nobody wants to think about the Middle East," he said. Religious organizations have offered to help him, but only on the condition they can spread their religion to the Afghans. He wants no religion proselytizing associated with his project, so he used them dollars alone as the shipping crate clinic with every hour he isn't spending in his dental office. He has done everything from wiring to installing dental equipment.

Over the years, Rolfe has helped finance the effort with \$170,000 out of his own pocket. "I'm just a handy guy," he said. Not too crippling a sacrifice if you're picturing a Santa Barbara dentist with a BMW, timeshares and perhaps a splashing fountain in the courtyard of a million-dollar, hacienda-style home.
 Not even close. Rolfe, who is divorced, is living \$7,000 below the poverty level so that he can divert money to the project. He lives in a \$600-a-month condo and rides a motorcycle. He hauls donations and supplies for his project with a 1982 GMC truck with 200,000 miles on it.
 "I drive all over California picking this up," he said, gesturing to piles of secondhand dental equipment he is repairing and insulating into the shipping crate dental clinic.
 Now and then, the dentist snacks on a bit of odd sifting "I'm working outside the crate, don't step on it, so I have to keep my blood sugar up," he explained. (Regular cleaning can

prevent tooth decay, even if you eat sweets, he said.)
 He works 115 hours a week on his project and his dental practice right now.
 After putting in a long day in the dental office, Rolfe gets tired, but keeps driving himself — sometimes too far. "I've broken three times," he said.
 He shoots himself up and Novocain, sews himself up and to maximize his income from his dental practice right now.
 After living expenses, the money he makes in his dental practice goes toward his project.
 "I think I'm living on karma instead of money," he said. "The money is not very valuable. I think it's more important that I live within my conscience."

One take on terrorism
 Rolfe's conscience tells him that America, as a superpower, owed it to Afghanistan to help rebuild after the Soviet-Afghanistan war, which lasted from 1979 to 1988. "All we did was use them to defeat the Soviets," said Rolfe, whose political views are decidedly to the left. "They got credit for the war. Half the buildings in Kabul are destroyed."
 With the buildings in ruins, Rolfe said, "There are a city of 4 million people and a decimated infrastructure. Afghanistan was in Rolfe's view, an ideal breeding ground for

terrorists like Osama bin Laden. "I'd like to see the perception in the Middle East that Americans are providing medical and dental services to these people," he said. "What this dentist is doing in his small way — he's trying to right these misperceptions."
A dangerous mission?
 Rolfe still needs \$20,000 to send the mobile clinic to Afghanistan in a few weeks. The clinic will travel by freighter to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. From there, it will go by rail to truck through Uzbekistan and finally to Kabul. Besides dental supplies, the container will be stuffed with items such as toys and shoes for Afghan orphans.
 Afghanistan's roughly 3 million orphans are what drew Rolfe there in 2002. He read a story about them in a Santa Barbara newspaper and decided to volunteer to help.
 Since he founded the Afghanistan Dental Relief Project, he has returned there twice, he plans to go to Kabul in February to secure the plot of land for the clinic. In April, he will go again to attach the roof and hook up water and electricity.
 Eventually, Rolfe plans to add classrooms where Afghans can be trained to be dentists or dental hygienists. "There are dentists here, but they're not becoming adults with jobs and no opportunity," he noted. "I'm not worried about some terrorist or anti-Americans bothering me," said Rolfe, who



Photos by Juan Carlo / Star staff
 Dentist Jim Rolfe works on patient Rodney Spaulding of Santa Barbara with assistants Nelly Santos, left, and Angela Lopez at his Santa Barbara office. Rolfe founded the Afghanistan Dental Relief Project with the intention of establishing a clinic in Kabul, where dentists can donate their skills.

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 Dr. Mark Lisagor, pediatric dentist, referring to Dr. Jim Rolfe

Following HIS CONSCIENCE TO KABUL

One area dentist moved by the war-torn Middle East does what he can to help

What you can do
 The Afghanistan Dental Relief Project is in need of funds to ship Jim Rolfe's mobile dentist's office to Kabul.
 To donate, send your contributions to ADRP, Inc., P.O. Box 734, Santa Barbara, CA 93102. To deposit directly to the ADRP account, send your donations to Afghanistan Dental Relief Project, Santa Barbara Barqard Trust, Account No. 1042895.
 For information on volunteering, call Rolfe at 963-2329. For more on the Afghanistan Dental Relief Project, click on <http://www.adrprnc.org>.



In this mirror image, Dr. Jim Rolfe works in the mobile dental clinic that he built out of two shipping crates and plans to ship to Kabul, Afghanistan, at the end of January.
 Rolfe, 66, has seen numerous health needs among rank and file Afghans; dentistry was an obvious area in which he could help.
 In 2002, he founded a nonprofit organization called the Afghanistan Dental Relief Project. The project — which is coordinated in part through Afghanistan's ministry of health and education — is aimed at

consumed him ever since he visited Afghanistan in 2002 to volunteer his dental expertise at an orphanage. It affected me so much emotionally that I became obsessed with doing this," said
 "They haven't heard of toothbrushes; they don't have any antibiotics," Rolfe said. "People can die from abscessed teeth."
 If he can raise enough money for shipping costs, Rolfe plans to ship a homemade mobile dental clinic to Kabul at the end of January. He built the clinic — which includes a lab and a classroom — out of two used shipping crates.
 It's a project that has



Photo courtesy of Jim Rolfe



Courtesy photo
 Above, dentist Jim Rolfe works on a patient in Kabul, Afghanistan, during one of his visits. He plans to return to Kabul in February to secure the plot of land for his clinic. At left, is a photo Rolfe took of the residents of Kabul.

virginly anti-American, he said.
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desperately trying to meet its basic survival needs is less likely to allow terrorism, Rolfe believes. In his opinion, military force is not the answer.
 "I'm not in favor of our government's policy in the Middle East," he said. "I feel like we should be the big brother rather than the big bully."
 California State University, Northridge, political science professor Mehran Kamrava, Ph.D., agrees this is a problem that cannot be solved with force alone. "To combat terrorism through a picture of creating healthcare and a future for the people," he said.
 Kamrava, an Iranian native who specializes in Middle Eastern politics and economics, believes the dentist has indeed exposed the root causes of terrorism: "rusting poverty, a pervasive sense of despair and hopelessness."
 "Regular cleaning can

prevent tooth decay, even if you eat sweets, he said.)
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See **KABUL** on E10