

Photo by Peta Tinda



Through T

■ Tribal member Sarah Mohammed Farlow

Not her, she told us. There are no lines drawn. She will remain covered, and as we are men not related to her, nor married to her, she cannot physically contact us.

Later in the day, I stood by while Peta Tinda took her photograph, one Tribal office worker walked beside me, and said in low, ginger,

near-whisper, "Is she serious?"

I nodded and even smiled ironically.

You see, Sarah had explained it all. It is never easy being a Muslim in America and tolerance has regressed sharply since September 11, the date that still lives in infamy.

Farlow flew in from Dubai on September 8, meaning she posed a particularly ripe target for the ignorant.

"On the street in Portland once, some guy came up to me and started swearing and cussing at me," she recounted.

"I just looked at him and said 'What did I do?'"

Salem — Oregon's unflappable conservative capital was surprisingly tolerant of Sarah's presence. Except for one instance where she frightened an old lady, being dressed entirely in black. "People have been very kind," said Farlow. But that one instance caused her to switch to lighter colors in attire.

At the *Smoke Signals*, we grappled with the pertinence of this story, given that Islam hasn't exactly caught on with Natives either here or in other states. But on the other hand, we saw the originality. Sarah's story defines unique; there may not be another one like it anywhere in Indian Country. And events in the last two months have reminded Americans of all ethnicities and religious persuasions that we play a big role in the world, and none of us, even in the fairly safe and isolated community of Grand Ronde, are exempt from global events.

Farlow displayed almost infinite enthusiasm for the project, accepting our proposal to do a feature story on her immediately. To her the endeavor represented numerous possibilities, among them the chance to speak out on behalf of Islam, which has fallen into popular disfavor in some circles following the attacks on the World

Trade Center in New York. She would also have the opportunity to explain the origins of her own faith in the much-maligned religion and at the same time educate Tribal members on the basics.

For Farlow, life as a Muslim didn't begin until 1989, although her own life began 45 years ago. Raised in Portland, she moved to Boulder, Colorado in 1983 with two sons in tow. Though she

By Chris Mercier

Although Tribal member Sarah Farlow admittedly speaks very little Arabic, one need only engage her in conversation briefly before noting that seven years of life in the United Arab Emirates has indelibly affected her speech.

Her 'r's roll. Her 'h's sound choked and forced, and for the most part, her pronunciation of Middle Eastern words seems so natural and fluid often one forgets that English is her premier language.

Yet her speech, strangely, seems almost a moot point, more so in contrast with her appearance, which on the date of October 17 was cause for a few turned heads around the Tribal Governance Center, and if rumors are to be believed, some degree of alarm.

What Sarah looks like, I don't know. She floats around, swathed in her *abayhh*, eyes peering out from behind the *nacob*, and not a strand of hair uncovered by the *hijab*.

I extended a hand upon our first meeting, but she politely declined.

"I'm sorry, Chris, but I can't touch you," she said, emphasizing a fundamental tenet of Islam. "We don't draw lines."

Sarah explained what she meant while walking up to my office. My editor got the same odd reception; not that either of us was offended by it.

Many Muslim women, she said, feel that since America isn't a predominantly Islamic country, they no longer feel the need to remain covered.

"I can remember at the mall, I was wearing and a man opened the door. I don't ever remember th

~ Tribal mem

recalled the first five years fondly, Farlow admitted to being lost, to only wandering, incomplete.

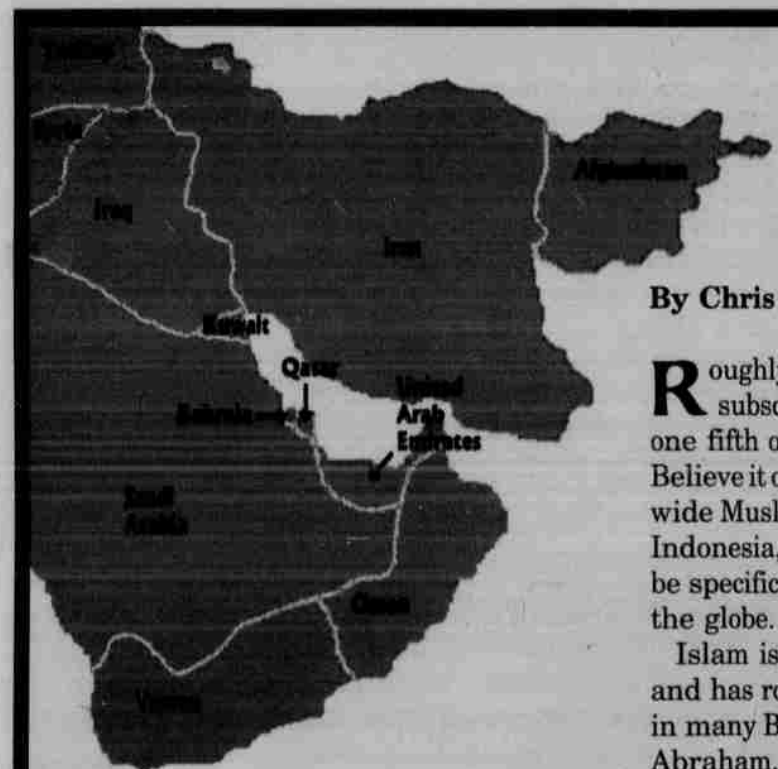
Alcohol had a starring role in her life and numerous attempts to quit ended consistently in defeat. Farlow was never entirely "well" to put it mildly as she explained and one night in 1988 mixed medications nearly killed her.

"My friends and family thought it was a suicide attempt," she said. "But honestly, it was just an accident. It was so awful when I woke up in the hospital...my boys were looking at me, the Welfare man was there too."

Almost magically, she met Adel Fitaihi, a Saudi national, shortly thereafter. Actually, "met" might be a loose term. They ran into one another in a mall located in downtown Boulder.

"We had an awkward conversation," she explained. "He spoke poor English, really. And generally strangers of the opposite sex aren't allowed to mix socially."

Fitaihi felt strongly enough about it to literally retreat from the conversation, though later on they would meet again and he began visiting her while she returned to the hospital to re-



For Sarah, Home Is A Long Way From Home
The United Arab Emirates is located in the Middle East between Saudi Arabia and Iran — and a just long-range missile south from Afghanistan.

Crash Course in

■ America's rocky relationship with Muslim

By Chris Mercier

Roughly one fifth of the world's population subscribes to the faith of Islam, with only one fifth of that even living in the Arab world. Believe it or not, a significant portion of the world wide Muslim population lives in eastern Asia — Indonesia, Malaysia, and southern Thailand to be specific, while the rest are distributed across the globe.

Islam is the world's fastest growing religion and has roots in Christianity. Muslims believe in many Biblical prophets such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ismael, even John the Baptist and Jesus. But for them God's final and ultimate message was bestowed, through the Angel Gabriel, upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad and manifested through him into the *Qu'ran*.

The *Qu'ran* is the holy scripture of Islam, com-

plete with *hadith*, sayings directly from Muhammad on how to be.

Whereas Christianity has its 10 commandments, Islam has the five pillars.

The first is the *shahadah*, or the profession of faith.

The second is *salah*, or ritual worship. Every Muslim must pray five times per day at assorted times, facing Mecca and bowing.

The third pillar of Islam is *sawm*, or observing *Ramadan*, which means fasting and no smoking or sex from dawn until dusk. Because Islam is based upon a lunar calendar, their years are 11 days shorter, meaning that Ramadan will start 11 days sooner every year.

The fourth pillar is *zakah*, or almsgiving. Muslims must contribute 2.5 percent of their in-