

Journeys

Posted on [March 30, 2010](#) by [bhillenbrand](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

Remembering an artist and a friend

Menjiye, the famed Gurage faga master, has vanished from Emdeber, but his work, including some of his famed beds, still remain to be used and admired

by Philip LeBel (Emdeber 64-67)



THE MASTER
CARVER: Menjiye,
right, with friend

During our Fulbright stay in Ethiopia last year, my wife Danièle and I happened by almost sheer chance to meet with a former Peace Corps Group IV Volunteer, Kathleen Moore (Emdeber 64-66), who was assigned with me to the village of Emdeber back in 1965. We had stayed in touch periodically but had not seen each other in decades. We met in Addis at the home of one of our former students, and tried to do a bit of catching up.

Out of that conversation, Kathy remembered coming across an article on Menjiye, the Ethiopian Gurage Fuga wooden bedmaker whom I had come to know back in our Peace Corps days. Through him I arranged for the carving and purchase of some two dozen beds during the three and a half years that I lived in the village. Most of these went to various visitors who wanted to have one of their own.

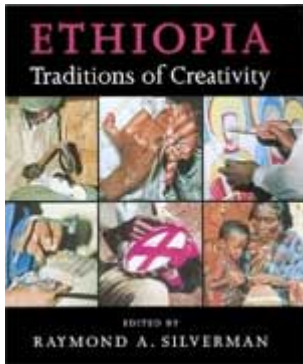


PCV DIGS: Menjiye's bed, circa 1965

When Danièle and I returned to Ethiopia on the Fulbright Senior Fellowship in the spring of 2009, we were fortunate in being able to make a trip to Emdeber, along with Charlie Ipcar, another PCV who spent the 1967-68 year in the village as well. Charlie also knew Menjiye.

On that trip we asked about Menjiye but few seemed to know where he was or what had happened to him. Some indicated that they thought he had passed away. While Menjiye may now be gone, Kathy had come across a book that included an essay on Menjiye and the art of Fuga woodworking. It was written by Alula Pankhurst and Worku Nida in 1994 and was included in a volume called [Ethiopia: Traditions of Creativity](#), edited by Raymond A. Silverman, and published in 1999 by the University of Washington Press. (Ed note: the Silverman book is currently out-of-print, but used copies are available through Amazon. In another article that can be found on the Web, Silverman profiles Menjiye who tells Silverman that he had lots of American friends when “piscor” [Peace Corps], was in country.)

I was delighted to come across the Pankhurst article. I found the descriptions of Menjiye very much the way I remember him — bright, creative, jocular, elusive, and independent in spirit. We sleep every night on one of Menjiye’s beds that I managed to get shipped back to the U.S. some 40 years ago. And so, Menjiye is with us even now.



40 YEARS LATER: Menjiya's bed in the U.S.

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Journeys

Posted on [March 2, 2010](#) by [bhillenbrand](#) | [22 comments](#)

Much different. Much the same

A PCV from the '70 returns to Ethiopia to set up a memorial library and enlists the help of an eager group of current PCVs. Culture shock! Some comparisons — mostly favorable — are inevitable

By Janet [Danzl] Lee (Endeber 74-76)

“Once a Peace Corps Volunteer, always a Peace Corps Volunteer.” Those words could not have rung more true as when I returned to Ethiopia in August 2009 and connected with current Volunteers in Mekelle, Tigray Region. I returned to dedicate a library in memory of a colleague, Dr. Thomas Hooyman, a fellow faculty member at Regis University near Denver where I am a librarian.

Nearly a year earlier, I had introduced Dr. Hooyman to Ato Yohannes Gebregeorgis, the Founder and Executive Director of Ethiopian Books for Children and Educational Foundation, an organization that is establishing children’s libraries in Ethiopia and working to build a reading culture through the introduction of high quality, locally-published bilingual children’s books. Dr. Hooyman conducted an interview with Ato Yohannes on the university radio station. The two men became fast friends and dreamt of building a literacy radio station together. A week later, Dr. Hooyman was killed in a motor vehicle accident.

Shortly after Dr. Hooyman's death, a campaign was begun to raise funds to establish a library in his memory in Ethiopia. We settled on Mekelle as the site for the library. Mekelle turned out to be the perfect spot for building a memorial library to my friend, not too small and not too big. During my Peace Corps days, I had never been to Mekelle. Volunteers were restricted from going that far north. After all, I served during the overthrow of Haile Sellasie and the initial reign of Mengestu and the Derg. Times and circumstances have changed and Peace Corps Volunteers are once more assigned to Tigray.

Because Peace Corps had been reintroduced into Ethiopia — for a second time — a year or so prior to my return, I contacted Nwando Diallo, the Peace Corps Country Director, who forwarded to me email addresses of the Volunteers in Mekelle. Email in Ethiopia!!?? That was my first hint at culture shock. I contacted the Volunteers, **Shelley McCreery** from Illinois (Mekelle 09-), **Danielle Hoekwater** from Michigan (Mekelle 09-), and **Nick Strnad** from Ohio (Mekelle 09-), to alert them of my arrival and the project at hand. They promised to set that week aside to help with the project. They emailed me their cell phone numbers. Cell phones!!?? Second blast of culture shock. I didn't even have electricity or running water during my stay in Ethiopia in the '70s. I was quickly set straight. The cell phone coverage was bad. There were rolling brownouts every second or third day. There were issues with the water. Perhaps things hadn't changed so much after all.

I thought back on my days as a Volunteer and reflected on niceties that I or others missed. So, I offered to bring any needed supplies: sanitary products, contact lens solution, chocolate? The response? Reese's peanut butter cups, Cheez-Its, Peanut M & M's, pretzels with salt. Would it be asking too much to ask for a Dr. Pepper? I tried, but the good Dr. Pepper was confiscated in Amsterdam. Remembering how difficult it was to find current reading material, I carefully packed several copies of Barack Obama's *Dreams from my Father* and Dinaw Mengestu's *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*. I had met both authors, but their signed copies were securely left at home.

It is a pleasant 45 minute flight from Addis Ababa to Mekelle. We arrived the obligatory two hours ahead of time, took off, and enjoyed the smooth ride. As the plane neared the airport, the pilot circled the airport once, twice, three times as he made a determination that it was not safe to land due to the heavy rains. So, the plane flew back to Addis to wait it out. Everyone took this in stride. It was the rainy season after all. A few hours later, we boarded the plane and took off once again. This time the pilot could see the runway and we landed safely.

After we gathered our luggage, supplies, books, and computers, we proceeded to find taxis. All of a sudden I realized that I didn't speak the language. We were in Tigray and they were speaking Tigrigna, not the Amharic that I had studied further south. Then the rains hit again, a great deluge. The taxi driver took off, the muddy rain pelting the windshield. Only one of the two wipers worked; fortunately, it was on the driver's side. As he pulled over to the side of the road, I hoped that there was indeed a side of the road since the area was somewhat mountainous. All the while my young companion, Rachel Scott from the Seattle Public Library, held her hoodie over her head. I had visions that soon Ato Yohannes would be building "The Rachel and Janet Memorial Library." After a few more delays for the driver to pull in rain-soaked luggage from the roof of the taxi or clean off the wiper blades, we arrived at the hotel safely and took a deep breath.

The Volunteers came quickly to meet us and I distributed the goodies. The chocolate was a definite hit as were the books which would surely make the rounds. We were later joined by **Cauchavius Watts** from St. Louis (Wukro 09-), as he passed through Mekelle for a day on his way to Addis Ababa.

But first, let me deal with my visit to a typical Peace Corps residence in Mekelle. My first house as a Volunteer had a thick thatched roof; the second house was made of mud and eucalyptus branches. When the rains came I would stand at the door and listen to the rain pelt the roof. I was mesmerized by the heavy rain since it is a rare occurrence in Colorado. The houses in Mekelle were made of stone rather than mud, but a Peace Corps residence is much the same

on the inside no matter what the region of the country: a couple of chairs, a table, a three-burner propane gas stove, open shelves rather than cupboards, a bed, a poster or two, and a map to remind the Volunteer just exactly where he or she is. An outdoor kitchen was nearby, complete with a small wood pit for making injera. And everywhere we walked we were followed by children yelling, "Camera! Camera!"

Still there was work to be done. We were on a mission. The Volunteers quickly jumped into organizing the books on the shelves, setting up two computers and a DVD player, cleaning, and interacting with the young students from the school. This gave us time to compare our experiences, frustrations, joys, and worst case illness (schistosomiasis, giardia). Many things had changed for the better. Much was still the same. Ethiopia is still a beautiful country with children who will easily steal your heart. Surprisingly, I think my living allowance was higher thirty-five years ago. We soon became a true Peace Corps family, sharing my shower (not at the same time) complete with hot water, lip balm, water bottles, and Ethiopian food. The library dedication was beautiful, made all the more powerful because of our shared experiences. Shelley thanked Ato Yohannes profusely for bringing the library to Mekelle rather than setting it up in Addis Ababa.



Cauchavius Watts, Janet Lee, Shelley McCreery, Danielle Hoekwater and Nick Strnad

The City of Mekelle was so impressed with our work and commitment, that it offered Ato Yohannes and Ethiopia Books for Children the use of a magnificent building for a future library. As Ato Yohannes, Nick and I toured the facility, Nick commented, "Why do I get the feeling that I will be involved in this project?" Because Nick, you are my right-hand man. He later admitted that it was one of the best weeks he had in his Peace Corps experience.

Not only did we become a Peace Corps family, but we continue to work together on a Peace Corps Partnership grant application to support the new Mekelle Children and Youth Library. We hope the library will be dedicated in August 2010, only a year after we first met. (Peace Corps [Partnership Grants](#) allow people in the U.S. to donate tax-deductible contributions to projects PCVs are working on.)

(Similarly, Ato Yohannes and [Ethiopia Reads](#) is working with an E&E [RPCV Legacy Program](#) project, under Champion **Lois Shoemaker** (Asmara 62-64), to build six school libraries around Awassa. More news on the progress of the Awassa project in an upcoming issue of THE HERALD.)



Work continues with Ato Yohannes to expand the new library in Mekelle. I will return to Ethiopia this July to help him set up this library and Nick and the others will be at my side. It will be called the Segenat Children and Youth Library in memory of the child soldiers who fought during the revolution. We plan to have a children's reading area, a spot for youth to study, reference materials, meeting rooms and an instructional room complete with computers.

The Sports Page

Posted on [March 2, 2010](#) by [bhillenbrand](#) | [3 comments](#)

Snow Job

Ethiopians and Eritreans are terrific in the Olympic games, as long as they can wear shorts and run long distances. But what about the Winter Games? Do they ski? Does snow exist in Ethiopia? Here's the whole story

By Barry Hillenbrand (*Debre Marcos 63-65*)

Yes, at least one Ethiopian does ski. And, yes, there is snow in Ethiopia. Well, sort of. Robel Teklemariam is an Ethiopian skier and participated in the 15-kilometer cross-country race in the just completed Winter Games in Vancouver. More astounding is that this was Robel's second Olympics. He skied for Ethiopia in the Turin Games in 2006. Robel did not learn his skiing in the Bale mountains or the Gojam highlands, but in Colorado where he attended boarding school while his mom, an official with the U.N., was posted to North Korea.



Robel Teklemariam

Robel snagged a skiing scholarship to the University of New Hampshire and then continued hanging around the ski slopes after college. On a whim he decided that he would try to ski for Ethiopia in the Olympics. Easier said than done. Robel had to set up a Ethiopian Skiing Federation and get recognized by the powers at the International Olympic Committee. Then he has to get enough qualifying points at cross country ski competitions.



Ethiopian ski fans at the Olympics

But he managed to get all his blue stamps of approval in time for the 2006 Games where he 83rd out of 99 competitors. He was not discouraged by his showing — hey, he finished the race! — so he crisscrossed Europe last year once again building up his competition points to qualify for Vancouver. He just managed to place as the last qualifier and was seeded last in the starting gates. The race was a struggle since he had less training time this Olympics than he did in Turin. Robel finished 93rd out of 95 skiers, some 12 minutes behind the winner. Still he had support from a vocal group of Ethiopians who turned out to wave Ethiopian flags and cheered him on his way. His mom, who now runs the The Nile Restaurant in Richmond, Va, was also there to support him.

Robel says he has made strides in making Ethiopians aware of skiing, but skiing-mania is not about to sweep Ethiopia. Indeed, there is some question about whether it snows in Ethiopia. Robin, whose flawless, idiomatic American-accented English makes him sound like one of those snowboarding dudes, told an AP reporter that there was no word for snow in Amharic. He calls himself a “Baradoe Shartate,” which he loosely translated as “ice slider.”

We posed the word-for-snow-in-Amharic question to **Grover Hudson** (Addis 63–65), who has taken his Peace Corps language training in Amharic and turned it into a high-flying university career in Ethiopian linguistics. Grover is professor emeritus in linguistics at Michigan State University and author of *Essentials of Amharic*. Hudson reports that Thomas Kane’s Amharic-English dictionary translates *bärädo* as only ‘hail,’ while Wolf Leslau’s English-Amharic dictionary translates ‘snow’ as *bärädo*. But Hudson adds:

I have talked to some Ethiopians who tell me that snow and hail are distinguished in Amharic as *qällal bärädo* and *käbbad bärädo*. *Qällal* and *käbbad* are usually translated ‘easy’ and ‘hard’ (but *käbbad* also ‘heavy’), but whereas in English we can say both ‘a hard test’ and ‘hard as a rock’, we can’t say ‘an easy test’ and ‘easy as a pillow,’ *qällal* and *käbbad* work both ways in Amharic. But, again and as we know, most Ethiopians have no experience of snow, so never have cause to distinguish snow and hail.

It’s an old cliché that Eskimos (Inuit, to be PC) have many words for snow, distinguishing its many forms, but not English. But in fact English speakers who significantly experience snow in its different forms readily come up with ways to name these: drifting snow, blowing snow, wet snow, dry snow, etc. Linguists like to say that languages are highly evolved and perfectly adapted to the needs of their speakers.

Hudson recalls — as many of us might — that “hail, termed ‘*bärädo*’, once covered the ground in Yirgalem, Sidamo, in my Peace Corps days. You can imagine what a racket it made on the tin roof of my house.”

And just a few weeks ago we received an email from **Loretta Davis** (Asella 68–70) who has been going back to Ethiopia each summer to help prepare teachers for schools that her church, the Light of Hope Ministry, is building in the southeastern part of the country. LOHM runs the schools for five years before turning them over to the Ministry of Education. During her visit to Ethiopia, Davis spent some time in the Bale National Park, followed by a visit to the hot springs pool at Wondo Genet where she had a chance to warm up a bit. The spring water is so hot, she says, that next to the pool they boil eggs and cook potatoes.

But on the road to Goba, she had a surprise. Reports Davis: “We were speeding through Bale Mountains National Park trying to reach our hotel in Goba before dark when we came around a corner, and we all said ‘SNOW.... WHOA’ to our project leader who was driving the car. We had to take some photos of this.” And so we publish Davis’ picture of white stuff in Ethiopia, with the question: snow, hail, or *bärädo*? Let us know. Just click on Comment below. Send us your snow pictures.



It sure does look like snow to us

Posted in [The Sports Page](#)

3 Comments

Letters to THE HERALD

Posted on [March 2, 2010](#) by [bhillenbrand](#) | [4 comments](#)

Welcome back, HERALD!

In addition to comments that readers posted onto the stories in our first set of stories, we received a few other letters. A sampling

To THE HERALD:

Good to have you back. We look forward to a good read.

Timothy McDonald (73-76)

To THE HERALD:

Terrific! Thank you very much. Words of praise, but more important, I'll send money.

Karen MacDonald Rosenthal (Addis, Harar 67-68)

To THE HERALD:

Just seeing the photo of Ethiopia made me cry. Now I want to go back. I was there from 1964 – 1967 in Debre Zeit. I don't think I can run a mile anymore however so I doubt I would make the cut.

Peggy Goetzke (Debre Zeit 64-67)

To THE HERALD:

Thank you, Marian and Barry. Thanks to this message I finally finished reading the last issue. I had bogged down at page 32. Like you, I keep busy in retirement. I appreciate THE HERALD very much. Just one comment: You give all these good arguments for going electronic and then ask us to mail you a check for the Herald? How about taking PayPal?

Joe Tenn (Addis 62-64)

• *You have a good point. We are working on getting PayPal so that you will not have to mail that check to us. Thanks for suggesting it. Stay tuned.*

To THE HERALD:

Barry, I can hardly find a pay phone; I don't subscribe to Face Book, My Space or Twitter and now I have to get THE HERALD exclusively by e-mail. THANKS!!!

William Seraile Makele (63-65)

To THE HERALD:

hey barry.... i'm thrilled you are online with the herald. it's brilliant! the links are wonderful and faceted. i owe back taxes; probably 3-5 years. can we pay online? we are working in france this year; daryle is head of the american school of paris in an interim position. the only constant in our lives is our email address. maybe that's why im so stoked that you are now totally online. i guess marian is responsible for much of the layout/ internetability (like that word?) of the herald. thank god you're all so tech savvy. keep up the great, fabulous, wonderful work; it must seem thankless, but be thanked!

ciao for now and thanx again for the herald. love it.

Dannie Gold Russell (Addis 63-65)

• *It's a delight--and an occasional puzzle--to see your no capitalization style again and we hope that you write for us at THE HERALD as you did a few years ago.*

To THE HERALD:

Whoopee. Glad to hear THE HERALD is back in an electronic form. I do have a question. Will my membership to the NPCA country group cover the subscription to THE HERALD or is that separate?

I am starting to plan for attending the 50th anniversary in DC. Know a lot can happen between now and then.

Thanks for your help.

Darryl Haynes (Merababaye, Gemu Gofa 69-71)

• *Yes, if you paid the \$15 to NPCA to add on your country of service group, that will cover your subscription to THE HERALD.*

To THE HERALD:

It was great to hear from you again. This new version of THE HERALD looks like a really good start and a professional job that must have taken lots of effort. It feels like my contact with Ethiopia RPCVs has been minimal over the past year. I miss the connections with the group. I look forward to the 50 year reunion and other activities.

I am disappointed with the first year of the Obama administration and with the Congress. It's scary to think what the world will be like when my one and only (so far) grandchild, Brooke, who just celebrated her 2nd birthday, grows up. Over the years I've found that the group whose values and opinions I most value are Peace Corps volunteers. It would be interesting to hear how others feel about what's happening in the world today.

Peace,

Ray Donaldson (Ambo, Debre Berhan 62-64)

Reunions

Posted on [March 2, 2010](#) by [bhillenbrand](#) | [3 comments](#)

ETHIOPIA VII: Let's organize a reunion back in Ethiopia

Encouraged by the enthusiastic and nostalgic responses to Peace Corps she encounters during her frequent visits, Nancy Horn suggests organizing a reunion in Ethiopia

By Nancy Horn (Addis 66-68)

I have been going to Ethiopia on average twice a year for the past five years to consult with the largest Evangelical Church there. While in country, I have met many Ethiopians who were taught by PCVs. I met two former students who were taught by ETHI VIIs (my group), earned their PhDs in the US and are now working in development. I am very interested in learning how many VIIs are ready to make a group return trip some time during 2011. The timing would not interfere with the 50th anniversary celebrations Peace Corps has scheduled for Washington for September 2011.

I am willing to take the leadership in organizing such a trip along with a committee formed by any of you who are interested. Two years ago I did the organization for a group of teachers who went to Ethiopia to provide a week of teacher training to church-school teachers.

If you are interested in taking such a trip, please send me an email (or a letter) providing some of the following information:

- Name, email contact, telephone number, and mailing address.
- Town and years of PC service.
- Number of people traveling with you.
- Price ceiling per person.
- Preferred month of travel, plus one or two alternatives.
- Departure location.
- Number of days you want to spend in-country, beyond the three travel days in and out of country.
- Activities you are interested in.
- Willingness to serve on the planning committee or raise funds for the reunion, or both.

Please send your replies to me at horn.n@att.net, or 1225 South Lorraine Road, #212, Wheaton, IL 60189. I would appreciate a response by March 31. I will be moving in April and all the numbers will change. I'll report back to you in THE HERALD on the response.

I should be returning to Ethiopia this summer. I thought I might place an advertisement in the Ethiopian newspapers trying to get in contact with those who were taught by PCVs during the period September 1966 to June 1968. With the responses and a bit of networking we can plan a gathering, probably in Addis Ababa, for us all. We will have to do

some fundraising for this as there may be quite a few people. Do let me hear from you by the end of March, and I'll set things in motion.

Posted in [Reunions](#)

[3 Comments](#)

Historical Notes

Posted on [March 2, 2010](#) by [bhillenbrand](#) | [1 comment](#)

Awsa and the Puzzle of Punt

We all knew that Ethiopia was the mythical land of the Queen of Sheba and Prestor John, but did you know that it may also be what the ancient Egyptians called the land of Punt? A respected paleontologist — and long time friend of Peace Corps — explains

By *Jon Kalb*

One of the greatest mysteries of African archeology is the location of the fabled land of Punt, an important trading partner with ancient Egypt from at least 4888 to 3167 years ago. Much attention has focused on countries bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, but with little conclusive evidence. I propose that Punt was in Ethiopia, centered in the area of Awsa — as it is known geographically — in the lower Awash Valley. This hypothesis draws from pictorial and hieroglyphic records of a trading expedition sent to Punt 3495 years ago by Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt. The expedition was equipped with five ships with sail and 210 men, including 30 rowers.

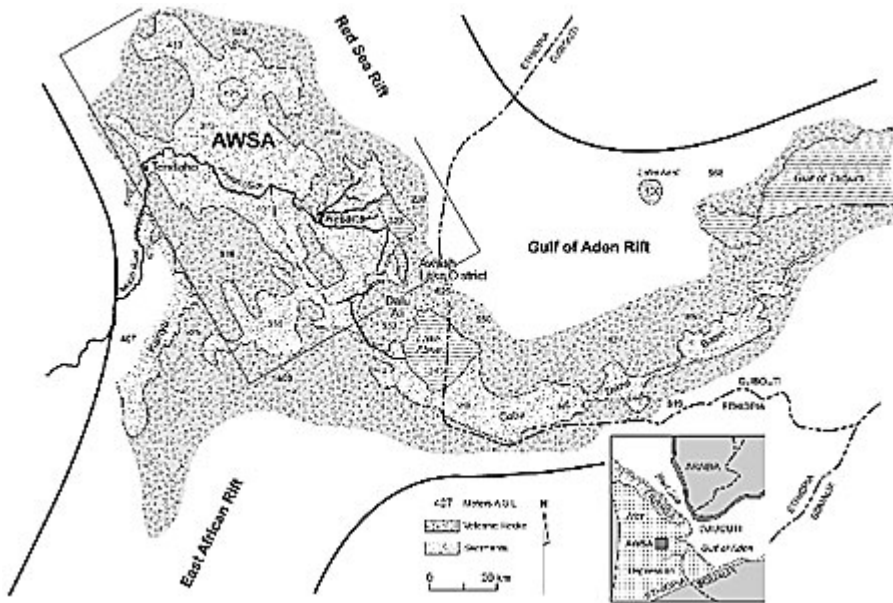
The major objective of the mission was procurement of myrrh incense, considered vital to Egyptian religious ritual. In previous years myrrh was obtained from Punt through intermediaries, an added expense the Egyptians were determined to avoid. As a result, the expedition was instructed to take the most efficient route to Punt and trade directly with the myrrh sellers. In previous years the Egyptians traveled to Punt many times along a well-established route. The most expedient way would be sailing to the southern end of the Red Sea, then to the western end of the Gulf of Tadjura, then walking overland through a series of east-west basins to Lake Abhé, the southern boundary of Awsa. The route was direct and the Gulf offered a protected and secluded harbor for the Egyptian ships. Most importantly, the journey led to established myrrh growers.



John Kalb in Ethiopia - 1973

The expedition records reveal that the Puntites, like their Afar counterparts, raised cattle and lived among a diverse African wildlife. In the mission records Punt is depicted as forested with “inaccessible” channels and dome-shaped

huts with stilts. The combination of flooded stream courses and stilts indicate a period of high water levels, although at the time of the Hatshepsut mission water levels were falling. The more solidly built Punt houses reflect a more permanent livelihood, perhaps greater attention to trade, in addition to livestock, whereas traditionally the Afar are more mobile and exclusively pastoralists. Climatic conditions today in Awsa are characterized by “accessible” channels, shallow lake-levels, reduced forests, emerged marshes, and dome-shaped huts without stilts.



Awsa lies just above the Horn of Africa and due west of Djibouti, crossed by ancient trading routes. It is drained by the lower Awash River in the area between Tendaho and Lake Abhé. Some 6000 square kilometers of sedimentary lowlands are surrounded by desert, towering volcanic cliffs, basalt plateaus, and volcanoes. Awsa is unique for its location at the triple junction of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and East African rifts. It is also known for its water level fluctuations, cluster of lakes (the “Awsa Lake District”) fed by the Awash, and its fertile wetlands. Early Arab writers note that the Afar nomads occupied northeastern Ethiopia by at least the 13th century, no doubt drawing on the traditions from earlier settlers. Crude earthworks and primitive irrigation methods suggest Awsa was cultivated to some degree by at least the 16th century.

The largest town in Awsa is Aysaita situated on the banks of the Awash River in the middle of the Depression. Given its strategic location, Awsa has long served (and levied) traders and others passing to and from the African hinterlands, the coast, and the neighboring highlands. Archeological excavations may one day reveal Aysaita was built on top of earlier (Puntite?) settlements.

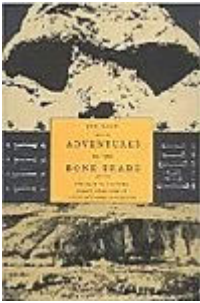
The importance of myrrh to the Hatshepsut mission is referred to repeatedly in the expedition records, particularly the acquisition of 31 “fresh myrrh trees.” In return for the myrrh and other goods the Puntites received items such as daggers, hatchets, and jewelry. The Egyptians succeeded in trading with Punt without intermediaries; however, it is unlikely they reached the area where myrrh is grown and obtained seedlings directly from the sellers, as claimed by Queen Hatshepsut. Also, it would not be surprising if the Puntites showed some reluctance to hand over to their trading partner such a commercial item as myrrh seedlings, since it’s apparent the Egyptians would use them to grow their own myrrh. Ultimately, this could undermine Punt’s lucrative trade in that product. On the other hand, by trading seedlings perhaps the Puntites were gambling that the Egyptian agriculture experiment would fail, which apparently it did, since future expeditions to Punt continued to purchase large quantities of myrrh. Overall, it is apparent the Puntites themselves invested little in this commodity; rather, acting as middlemen they obtained the

plants from the growers, which presumably they sold to the Egyptians at a profit. A nearby source of myrrh would be the neighboring Somali lands known since antiquity for its high-quality myrrh.

At this stage we can say that Awsa fits a number of criteria — historical, geographical, and geological— favoring the Punt/Awsa hypothesis. In the mission record, the Egyptians treat Punt (Awsa) as the source of the myrrh; instead, it is apparent that Punt served as the intermediary between the Egyptians and the myrrh sellers. Although the Egyptian plan to trade directly with the myrrh sellers was unsuccessful, and the attempt to use seedlings to grow their own myrrh on a large scale in Egypt failed, the Hatshepsut mission succeeded in renewing its ties with Punt and returning to Egypt with ample stores of myrrh and other products from the African interior.

Until archeological evidence or some other unequivocal documentation places the land of Punt in the land of Awsa, a case for Punt's location in the central Afar Depression remains speculative. Nevertheless, the above scenario linking the Gulf of Tadjura with the Africa mainland serves as an analog to other trading missions, such as those from southern Arabia that likely developed ties with Awsa. It would certainly be worth surveying select areas in Awsa for such evidence of commercial interchange. In 1971 on the margin of Lake Abhé I found a site littered with the cumulative debris of past visitors: cowrie shells, pottery shards, obsidian microliths, vertebrate fossil fragments, and donut-shaped stones used on digging sticks on nearby stone agricultural field grids, all situated to document traffic coming and going from the Gulf of Tadjura.

• This article was adapted from an article by Jon Kalb published in [Nyame Akuma](#), a publication of the Society of African Archeologists, Number 71, June 2009. The author was a resident of Ethiopia from 1971-1978, where he was director of the Rift Valley Research Mission, and a friend of many PCVs who served in the area. He is author of [Adventures in the Bone Trade: The Race to Discover Human Ancestors in Ethiopia's Afar Depression](#) and is a Research Fellow with the Vertebrate Paleontology Laboratory of the University of Texas at Austin. He can be reached at j.e.kalb@mail.utexas.edu.



Click on the book cover or the bold book title to order it from Amazon. Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs, an Amazon Associate, will receive a small remittance. All earnings from Amazon will go to the RPCV Legacy Program.

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1 Comment

In Memoriam

Posted on [March 2, 2010](#) by [bhillenbrand](#) | [1 comment](#)

Sister Mary Jane Sweeney

1918–2010

A beloved member of Ethiopia XVI, Vocational Education, Sister Mary Jane died in Kentucky in January



Jane Sweeney
in the Ethiopia

Sister Mary Jane was an enthusiastic Peace Corps Volunteer in Addis Ababa where she taught typing and shorthand at the Tefari Makonnen Comprehensive Secondary School. She taught 28 classes a week with about 30 students to each class. Several afternoons each week she would walk from her home to the Empress Menen Orphanage, where she helped tutor the older girls in English. Sometimes she would hold recreational hours with story telling, informal dramatics and singing. She assisted an orphaned high school student get through school by providing him with money for food and living expenses.

Until her health declined Sister Mary Jane came to our Group XVI VocEd reunions held every few years. She was deaf in one ear but despite that was a great Peace Corps Volunteer and we all thought her a “credit to our cause.” We all loved her very much and will miss her quiet presence at our next Group XVI meeting which is scheduled for July 2010 in Tigerton, Wisconsin.

Sister Mary Jane spent her final years in The Loretto Motherhouse Infirmary in Nerinx, Kentucky. She donated her body to science and a wake service was held on January 8, 2010 with a Memorial Mass the following day.

Craig Winfield Johnson

1946–2009

A PCV in Adwa, Craig Johnson went on to practice law in Silicon Valley

Alice Gosak (Harar 64-68) sends a newspaper clipping from California noting the death of **Craig Winfield Johnson** (Adwa 68-69). Craig trained in St. Thomas, Virgin Island with Ethiopia X. He met and married **Deborah Kendall** (Adwa 68-69) while they were serving in Adwa. After Peace Corps Craig earned a law degree from Stanford and practiced law in the Bay Area specializing in high tech startups. He died of a sudden and unexpected stroke.

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Craig Johnson
in the Ethiopia
X-St. Thomas
Training Book

1 Comment