

## The Herald

News for those who served with the Peace Corps in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

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MONTHLY ARCHIVES: JUNE 2014

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### Editor's Note

Posted on [June 26, 2014](#) by [eerpcv](#) | [2 comments](#)

by Janet Lee (Emdeber 1974-76)

In this issue readers will find an article by recently returned Nikki Therrien (Masha 2009-2011 and Addis Ababa 2011-2013). Searching for a way to continue giving back to Ethiopia, she discovered United for Health Abyssinia, a nonprofit based in Boston, MA that focuses on diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis. Perhaps a Legacy Project is in the making.

We all know that Peace Corps Volunteers are innovative and creative, but who would imagine that one would discover his “Inner Wild Man” in a remote village? David Hunt (Debark 2008-10) did just that while working out in a local gym, using discarded car parts for weight. See how he used social media to raise funds for a versatile piece of exercise equipment called “Monkii Bars,” turning a passion into a small business.

Many of us have had opportunities to return to Ethiopia and have been blessed by the experience. Richard Sherman (Adigrat 1968—70) returned to Ethiopia in February, his tenth trip back since his close of service in 1970. In “Ethiopia Redux: An Extraordinary Month of Teaching,” Richard describes teaching a specialized course to a group of students at the Defense Engineering College in Addis Ababa as one of the most rewarding experiences of his life.

On occasion *The Herald* will reprint articles that have been published elsewhere. After reading “We Wait for the Sun: Fury is more tolerable than fear” by Carol Beddo (Bahr Dar 1964-66) and “The Lion in the Gardens of the Guenet Hotel” by John Coyne (Addis Ababa 1962-64), readers will surely agree that these pieces are worth a second look.

Dan Close (Bekoji 66-68), author of “The Glory of the Kings,” [reviewed in](#) *The Herald* in February, 2014 has once again had his creative juices flowing. We publish for the first time, a poem he wrote for the Ethiopia VII reunion in North Carolina, April 2013.

And last, but not least, Book Reviews! Two of the titles are by former Ambassador to Ethiopia David Shinn, whom I had the opportunity to meet at a presentation in Denver in February. Enjoy!

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**2 Comments**

# E&E RPCVs Group News

Posted on [June 26, 2014](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

**By Janet Lee (Emdeber 1974-76)**

In conjunction with the Ethiopia VII reunion held in Chicago in late May, and hosted by Nancy Horn, the E & E RPCV Board met for a business meeting.

*Current board members include:*

Marian Haley Beil (Debre Berhan 62-64) – President and Treasurer

Leo Cecchini (Asmara 62-64)

John Coyne (Addis 62-64)

Gloria Curtis (Asmara 63-65)

Barry Hillenbrand (Debre Marcos 63-65)

Nancy Horn (Addis 66-68) – Manager of the RPCV Legacy Program

Janet Lee (Emdeber 74-76) – editor, The Herald

Don Schlenger (Woldiya 66-68), whom we welcomed as a new Board member

Jackie Schlenger (Woldiya 66-68), whom we welcomed as a new Board member

In attendance at the meeting were Beil, Cecchini, Curtis, Hillenbrand, Horn, Lee, D. Schlenger and J. Schlenger

## **Thanks to retirees**

The Board (on behalf of all RPCVs from Ethiopia and Eritrea) extended their thanks to the following RPCVs who have stepped down from the Board for their service: C. J. Castagnaro (Harar, Debre Zeit 64-69), Dave Gurr (Addis 62-64), Carol Mauritsen McDonald (Harar 64-66), Judy Smith (Asmara 63-65), and Jim Solomon (Massawa, Jimma 63-65).

## **Grants for PCPP projects**

The Board voted on and approved that E&E RPCVs would establish a procedure to contribute funds to [Peace Corps Partnership Program](#) grant requests of any PCV currently in Ethiopia upon receiving a direct request from the Volunteer. Notice of the availability of grants will be communicated to the current Volunteers formally through official communication from the Country Director and informally through postings on social media.

## **RPCV Legacy Program**

Nancy Horn, manager of the [RPCV Legacy Program](#), urged all RPCVs to [consider championing a RPCV Legacy Program project](#) — and donating to the [three existing projects](#).

## **Seeking additional Board members**

The Board would like to add two RPCVs to its membership due to resignations. It is especially interested in having representation from training groups that served in Ethiopia from 1995 to 1999 and from 2008 to the present, and Eritrea from 1995 to 1998.

Board members receive no payment or reimbursement for any expenses incurred for their service. On all but rare occasions all business is carried on via the Internet. If you would like to apply, please contact Marian at [marian \[at\] haleybeil \[dot\] com](mailto:marian@haleybeil.com).

## Thanks, Nancy!

The E & E Board is grateful to Nancy Horn for organizing the Ethiopia VII event and inviting the Board to participate. As can be seen by the accompanying photo, a good time was had by all.



A mix of Ethi 7s and Board members

Posted in [E&E RPCVs Group News](#)

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## Projects

Posted on [June 26, 2014](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

# Tuberculosis: the Untold Story

by **Nikki Therrien (Masha 2009-2011 and Addis Ababa 2011-2013)**

We've all been there on that long bus ride cross country in Ethiopia: hour six, 90 degrees, sweat beading on your forehead and all the windows sealed. There are countless stories the people on that bus could tell about why they are on the bus, but there is one story that's not being told. It's the reason many of the passengers are taking the six-hour bus trip to the hospital for the seventh time this year; it's the reason why everyone is suffering through the heat; it's the reason why, despite the stuffiness, the windows are all shut. It is the story of tuberculosis (TB).

In 2011 Ethiopia ranked seventh among the 22 high-burden TB countries in the world with a prevalence rate of 560 per 100,000 or nearly 150,000 cases (WHO Global Update Report 2011). Despite its ubiquity the disease is largely misunderstood and can become a more serious problem.

Many cases of TB are untreated, and those who do receive medication often do not finish the six-month regimen. Patients often stop taking their medications due to barriers such as their poor awareness about the disease, yet even those most informed about the disease have few resources to address it. The obstacles include: the unavailability of daily TB care in their communities, the long distance from home to a health facility, the long wait-times at the facilities, the high volume of patients in the hospitals where doctors and nurses don't have time to counsel them about the disease and treatment plan, nor do the hospitals have the proper facilities to isolate and treat people with suspected TB, and finally the high stigma around TB. All of these impediments create the risk of patients developing



Child with TB

multiple drug-resistant TB. And the disease continues to spread in the community.

During my service in Ethiopia I found that TB was severely neglected. Even as a PCV it was difficult to obtain funding and build programs around this highly communicable disease. While the framework has expanded a bit since my time, during my service all of Peace Corps-Ethiopia's projects were meant to focus on HIV/AIDS. While those programs were important, I often felt that diseases like TB were a much more pressing issue. For the most part people knew how HIV was spread, but TB was more mysterious. After returning home from Ethiopia in January of 2013, I continued to seek out ways to continue working for my

second country. That's when I found [United for Health Abyssinia](#). UHA is a nonprofit based in Boston, MA that aims to prevent and control the spread of TB and reduce morbidity and mortality through building the capacity of hospitals and communities in Ethiopia one community at a time. As an RPCV, this organization appeals to me for a number of reasons. It's addressing a real need, it follows the Peace Corps standard of helping communities help themselves, and the director, Sisay Akalu, who founded the organization, is deeply committed.

Dr. Sisay Akalu grew up in Gondar, Ethiopia but has spent much of his adult life in the US practicing medicine. A few years ago he was informed that his brother had become ill and needed help. Dr. Akalu visited his family in Ethiopia and learned that his brother, like many other Ethiopians, had TB. Because of improper medical management, his brother's case became increasingly difficult to treat and he spent years in and out of the hospital. Alarmed by his brother's lack of knowledge and the realization that if his brother was having these troubles then so many others were too, Dr. Akalu decided to do something about it.



Dr. Sisay Akalu

In 2013 Dr. Akalu founded United for Health Abyssinia. Partnering with regional hospitals, the non-profit aims to identify gaps in services, evaluate existing programs, conducted local health education programs and organize communities to be active participants in their own health.



To achieve these goals, United for Health Abyssinia has a three-pronged approach starting in Debre Tabor in the Amhara region. The first step is to improve the physical capacity of Debre Tabor General Hospital by building an isolated ward for the treatment of patients with active TB. The special ward will have well ventilated rooms with negative pressure systems that minimize the chance of spreading the infection to other patients and staff. The second step is to train and utilize health extension workers (HEWs) to employ the DOTS ([Directly Observed Therapy - Short Term](#)) strategy of medical management. This strategy requires HEWs to educate patients on their

treatment and also watch patients ingest their medicines daily to ensure adherence. The final step is to increase awareness and minimizing stigma in communities through rural education campaigns.

The real beauty of UHA is its approach to development. As RPCVs we are trained and retrained on the idea of sustainable development. UHA's role in the fight against TB is to mobilize resources and train community members. The actual programming and implementation is entirely Ethiopian based. Dr. Molla Belay, the CEO of Debre Tabor Hospital, along with the classes of medical students at Gondar University, has taken on the responsibility and will carry the mission of UHA. Once the programs are proving successful UHA will pull out and move on to another community in another area of Ethiopia. It's an organization that I am proud to be a part of.

If you'd like to learn more or get involved with United for Health Abyssinia please check us out at [United for Health Abyssinia](#) or email me at

[nicolet@healthforabyssinia.org](mailto:nicolet@healthforabyssinia.org)

For those of you in the Boston area stay tuned, we'd love to meet you at future fundraisers throughout the year.

Posted in [RPCV Projects](#)

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## Opportunities

Posted on [June 26, 2014](#) by [janetlee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

# Discovering the Inner Wild Man

by [David Hunt \(Debark 2008-10\)](#)

I discovered the Wild Man late one night in year two of my Peace Corps service in a small town known as the gateway to the Simien Mountains — Debark. It wasn't by accident either. I had been waking up more and more often in the middle of the night with entrepreneurial breakthroughs — both for my ongoing Peace Corps projects and for future venture ideas.

In many ways, my Peace Corps experience could be described as a dogfight against bureaucracy, constant attention, and unending frustration — not exactly the ideal environment for creativity. But somehow I was at the most creative, optimistic and energetic point of my 22 years.

My invigorated state of existence can probably be attributed to a combination of being surrounded by a classroom of young, eager students who dreamed big, some of the smartest entrepreneurs I've ever met; the thin air at 8,000 feet; and my solitary existence without peers, parents or colleagues to squash out-of-the box ideas.

Whatever the cause, it fueled late night searches for the long-missing link to a business idea an old friend, Dan Vinson, and I had been discussing over sporadic Skype calls at odd hours in the day. We had both reached the best





shape of our lives in really non-traditional ways.

I had recently discovered a “gym” only a block from my house where I had been living for a year. I joined immediately for the reasonable price of \$2/month and started lifting car parts regularly with a handful of guys in my town.



Dan was a backcountry wilderness ranger in Sequoia National Forest at the same time, and he had built an “all-natural” gym in the wild using trees, rocks and logs. We both agreed that our atypical workouts were not only much more fun than going to the traditional gym, but were getting us much better results.

We knew that this more natural way of moving and working out, functional fitness if you will, was something that would benefit a lot of Americans.

Furthermore, we were both experiencing a simpler, more basic state of being — an increasingly desirable state for Americans (see the growing popularity of Yoga, Mindfulness, Tiny Houses, etc.); we both knew America needed to be re-introduced to the “Wild Man.”



Hans Holbein the Younger, sketch for stained glass window @1525

The Wild Man is a mythical presence entwined in medieval European lore. It lived on the outskirts of the villages, weaving between the town and the forest, and represented each community’s connection to nature. From my remote mud hut in Ethiopia, it was fairly easy to realize that as technology has taken over our daily lives, we’ve slowly become disconnected from the natural world, and the general population of America is being completely removed from their connection to nature. Dan and I decided to bring back this connection through outdoor workouts.

Now, nearly five years after discovering the Wild Man, we’ve begun to make some progress with our business idea. In March, Dan and I launched a Kickstarter campaign for monkii bars — an ultra-portable fitness device that enables you to workout anywhere. We aimed to raise \$25,000 in 39 days. We surpassed our goal on day 2 and continued on to raise \$111,000, which will enable us to launch our product and a brand that will revolutionize fitness.

Through all of this, I continue to share our story, the story of the Wild Man, and the story of my start in the Peace Corps working alongside Ethiopian entrepreneurs and learning how to embrace the wildness, passion, and purpose that have carried us to our success today.

Learn more about monkii bars at [our website](#) or to see our successful campaign visit [Kickstarter](#).

## Journeys

Posted on [June 26, 2014](#) by [janetllee](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

# Ethiopia Redux: An Extraordinary Month of Teaching

by **Richard Sherman (Adigrat 1968-70)**

I want to share with my fellow Returned Peace Corps Volunteers in Ethiopia a recent extraordinary experience of teaching in Ethiopia. My involvement in teaching a specialized course for a group of students at the Defense Engineering College was one of the most rewarding of my life.

I believe that we all grew by leaps and bounds through our teaching of young, usually eager, Ethiopian students years ago. We Peace Corps Volunteers likely benefited as much as our students did — and maybe more. Some of my former students from Adigrat, Tigre now sit in positions of authority in the Ethiopian government. When the opportunity to teach this most recent course was presented to me, I had no idea how it would fulfill my best dreams as a teacher.

I have probably been back to Ethiopia ten times since my Peace Corps stint ended. Logistics and technology did not work well for me in Addis during my month there in February 2014 — some things don't change any too quickly. However, the people component of the trip was fantastic.

In addition to the lectures and readings I gave to the 49 army engineers in my class, I assigned a term paper to be generated by teams of five students each. The assignment was to develop a business plan for a new or existing business. I had few assumptions or expectations as to the results I would receive — but this was to be the sole basis for evaluation in the course.

As fate would have it, these students were simply waiting for this opportunity. They all manage quasi-government factories for an organization known as METEC and had been working without the benefit of business plans in their respective areas. These were bright, ambitious young people who wanted to see their industries and the country move forward in positive ways. They could have been the sons and daughters of our former students.

About half way through the course, some of the students sat down with me and emphasized that these projects were not just an exercise for them, they expected — with the proper guidance — that some of the plans being developed would actually be funded by METEC and/or other government and private sources.

This came as great news to me as I anxiously awaited the final papers to be submitted. I worked closely with many of the teams over the remaining weeks and began to anticipate what I finally received: an absolutely outstanding group of plans that are indeed fundable in selected cases. The plans were for industries manufacturing such items as lathe cutters, wire and cables, machinery cutting tools and irrigation pumps. All the papers were in the A to B range. If realized, these plans will add an industrial component to Ethiopia's development that was unimaginable in the past.

I have requested that the students keep in touch to let me know of any practical results that might be implemented. The plans have price tags of between one and ten million USD for the most part, and my fondest dream is that one or

more of these business plans will be implemented. What a bonus for teaching a short course in Ethiopia, after 46 years.



*Richard Sherman, Ethiopia X, earned his doctorate in Politics at Brandeis University. Later in his career, he consulted on fund raising, loan sourcing and marketing and is still involved in the later two on a part time basis.*

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## Reminiscences

Posted on [June 26, 2014](#) by [janetlee](#) | [1 comment](#)

# We Wait for the Sun

*Fury is more tolerable than fear.*

by **Carol Beddo (Bahr Dar 1964–66)**

(Editor's Note: "We Wait for the Sun" was originally published in: [The Best Women's Travel Writing v. 9](#), [Travelers' Tales, 2013]. Used with permission by the author and the publisher.)

EVERYONE IN THE VILLAGE is congregated at Bahar Dar's dirt airstrip, each of us dripping sweat in the hot afternoon sun. But not one of us is thinking about searching for shade. We've come out of respect to witness Flora's coffin as it is loaded onto an Ethiopian Airlines DC-3. Tropetas is leaving with her, and we don't know if he will ever return. The elderly Greek couple has run our village bakery for decades, and now Flora will be buried in the Greek cemetery in Addis Ababa.

Tropetas beats on his chest as if it's a drum. He's worked himself into a sweat that soaks the hair on his head, absorbs into his cotton shirt, and flies off his body with each successive strike of his powerful fists.

Four men dressed in Ethiopian Airlines khaki uniforms push a rolling luggage carrier across the bare red dirt. On it is the coffin, a simple, ordinary, plywood shipping crate bizarrely festooned with colorful airfreight tags — yellow, green, blue. The tags are in constant motion, cheerfully waving and bobbing about in the mid-afternoon wind coming off Lake Tana, as if celebrating a festive birthday party rather than solemnly mourning a tragic death.

We mill about the airfield, encircling the silver plane, until we move to open a pathway for the metal stairs being wheeled out to meet the plane's passenger door. Tropetas is oblivious to everything except Flora, who's dead and in



Carol – 1st day of  
Training  
1964



her coffin, his deep voice locked in a continuous chant. “Flora! Flora! Aaaa-waaa-waaaa-waaaa, Flo-raaa! Flo-raaa!” Over and over, shouting in an anguished voice that booms as if through a megaphone, trying to call her back.

The uniformed men roll the luggage cart to the airplane, pause, and instead of lifting the shipping crate into the cargo hold, slowly, with the dignity of pallbearers, carry it up the stairs and into the passenger section. Tropetas follows close behind, still bellowing his calls to Flora, keeping a rhythm by thumping his chest, one fist after the other. I imagine his public grief must be mixed with fury at his helplessness and failure to protect his wife from attackers.

Early this morning, while the air was still cool and fresh, I first heard the news: Last night, two men invaded their home, assaulted and murdered Flora, and stole their savings. I felt my usual disconnect from yet another harsh village reality and even now, while everyone around me seems completely consumed with loud sobbing or funereal wailing — the traditional and respectful observance here of any death — I feel only plain and simple sorrow.

Living here as a Peace Corps Volunteer, I’ve seen how the Amhara people accept death in this grand, ceremonial way. They embrace loss with a rowdy ritual, for to resist suffering is considered unnatural, against God’s plan. Acting out today’s sorrow makes it possible to wake tomorrow and to celebrate life with gratitude for a new day.

Never before have I witnessed such dramatic grief, and seeing Tropetas in this state increases my sweaty discomfort under the oppressive sun. Soon the damp hair on my head will drip sweat onto my shoulders. I’m sticky with heat under my arms, between my breasts, and where my thighs touch beneath the hot tent of my skirt.

For me, it seems Flora’s death was an aberrant burglary and murder. And since there is no way to make things right, my quiet, modest sorrow is all I can summon. I cannot behave as if I am an Amhara, and I don’t want to.

On my walk home, I buy a box of powdered milk at Alem’s *suq*, a convenient stop on the way from the airfield.

“These *shifita* are mercenaries. Eritrean mercenaries,” Alem informs me from behind his service counter.

I know he’s speaking of the robbery and murder. He says it as though something actually has been determined, but this is the first I’m hearing of it, and I’m skeptical. Living in this village, I’ve learned it is a place where an opinion is allowed to quickly become a fact, where too often nothing will stop conjecture from becoming a false truth.

“Uhhh, Alem,” I say, “we’re way far south of Eritrea. Why do you think Eritrean *shifita* would be down here in Gojjam Province?”



He hands me the cardboard milk box and a few coins in change. I’m only half listening for the response, already contemplating my next task. This morning I boiled water and left it on the stove to cool. Right when I get home, I’ll try once again to mix the powdered milk with that water, something I have to do at least once a week. But even though I use an eggbeater, I’m never able to eliminate lumps. I’m considering the wisdom of straining them out. But do Sue and I even have a strainer? Maybe we should just give up on the already-stale Kellogg’s cornflakes we bring back from Addis Ababa.

The cornflakes are no longer crisp, the powdered milk doesn’t even taste like real milk, and the lumps are disgusting. Each morning, the only thing truly crunchy about our cornflakes is the sugar we sprinkle on top.

“They don’t all stay north and fight in the border war,” he says, returning me to the errand I came for. Now he emphasizes his words by loudly spitting a disgusting, thick wad of yellowish sputum onto the hard-packed dirt floor;

generations of tribal hatred ooze from this Amharic man. “They raid homes here to pay for their secession movement. Disloyal Eritreans!” He speaks the last words in an obscene growl. “Be careful, *weizerit* Carol,” he says, addressing me as Miss Carol for emphasis. “Tonight you must lock your doors and shutters tight.”

His words walk with me on the path through the eucalyptus forest to our home. I ask myself: what does the battle for Eritrean secession have to do with me? And of course I lock up at night, but why “must” I tonight?

A widespread, fearful chatter had started at daylight and was soon enhanced by the throng at the airport. Everyone had heard something, seen something, or had suspicions. Was an item missing from someone’s compound, or was it simply misplaced? Was a certain chicken taken, or had it merely not returned from its morning or afternoon scavenger? Fewer eggs in the nest — had someone helped himself? The stories got invented and reinvented, but always with one essential question — are the two *shifita* still here? By day’s end, it seems suspicion and distrust provide our only defense against harm. This is why a stranger is noticed in this little village. And two strangers together might as well be a dozen.

It’s taken until this evening for me to realize how naïve I’ve been. I should have understood earlier what everyone else already knew: The *shifita* are looking for cash money and American women not only have money, we are also defenseless. All day I’ve been able to keep the murder in some distant, comfortable perspective, but now I’m uneasy. Am I merely joining in the village hysteria? After all, I’m from someplace else, and I expect to go back there. Since I’m not really from here, I tell myself, I needn’t and shouldn’t fall into irrational fear.

But I know I will be lying awake tonight, listening for strange sounds. This is a village without telephones and, as far as I know, there’s no one to call for help anyway. How ignorant, helpless, and ill-prepared I am. It’s not something I grew up with, learning how to protect myself from the most basic of threats — assault and burglary. Would it have been too difficult for the Peace Corps to include the possibility of real dangers during our three-month training? Or did such things not occur to them, just as they had never occurred to me?

We ask the boys to move Sue’s bed into my larger room. Neither of us wants to be alone this night. I decide to keep our one sharp kitchen knife in my bed, insisting that Sue arm herself with our scissors. And this is it; we have nothing else to serve as weapons. Sue wants to flip a coin for the knife, but I refuse. I don’t believe she would be capable of inflicting a knife wound on anyone. Of myself, I have no doubt — I will. We agree not to turn off my bedroom’s single light bulb hanging on a wire in the middle of the ceiling. She has never really stopped being afraid of the dark, and I have to admit, I do feel safer with the light on.

“Please do not worry, Madam,” Alimaw says in his new, manly voice, which has thoroughly changed from the boy’s voice he had when we took him into our home. He’s the oldest and tallest of the three boys who live in our extra room. They’re students at our school, all from poor families in distant villages; they do simple chores for us, and in return, they have a place to live and a small allowance. But only Alimaw — who is self-appointed — is the kindly caretaker of the American women Peace Corps teachers.

“But what if they come here?” I ask. “We’re all alone out here in the forest.”

“We will stay together in the house,” he says.

“But what if they are out there?”

“We will know they are here if we hear stones thrown on the roof, Madam.”

“What? Why?” This seems totally crazy. “What do stones on the roof mean?”

“*Shifta* make the noise to see if we are home, or if we have mean dogs.”

“But we don’t have dogs. What do we do?”

“Madam, we turn on all the lights.”

“Huh? Why? To show them we are inside?”

“Yes, Madam. And we do not open doors or shutters until dawn.”

I’m working hard to control a searing, hot fear as it rises from my gut and enters conscious thought. All my life I’ve hated feeling afraid or helpless. I don’t know which feeling I hate more, but I do know that as this night wears on, I’m getting angry at the *shifta*. And fury is always more tolerable than fear.

We doze off finally and are awakened by *Bang! Rattle rattle rattle. Plop!* Sue and I both sit up straight in our beds and stare at the ceiling. *Bang! Rattle rattle rattle.* The tin roof announces our predators, no mistake. I grasp my knife and have not a shred of hesitancy to use it.

Now at 4 a.m., teeth clenched so hard and tight I fear cracking a tooth, I am determined that I will not die tonight. Not in this country. I refuse to die a victim here. *Bang! Rattle rattle rattle. Plop!* How many times must I hear this?

Alimaw is deliberately making noise as he moves through the house, turning the lights on, all bare bulbs hanging by wires from the ceiling in each room. There are few glass windows in Bahar Dar—thankfully, none in this house. For the first time, I see the wisdom of sturdy wooden shutters that lock or open only from the inside.

Now — sudden gunshots in the eucalyptus forest. How surprising that they sound like toy cap guns. *Pop pop.* Over and over. And no way to know what is actually happening. No voices. No authorities shouting commands or *shifta* begging for mercy. Suddenly it’s quiet again, completely silent, and I know I’ll spend the remaining hours of this dark night with teeth clenched in my dry mouth, tense, waiting. Am I safe? In danger? Can I stop being scared now?

“Madam,” Alimaw says through my closed door. “The lights are on. Also the porch light.”

“Were those gun shots, Alimaw?” I’m speaking so rapidly I fear he may not understand my words.

“Yes, Madam,” he says in a calm, hushed voice.

“How do we know if they were *shifta* guns? How do we know if *shifta* are still out there?”

“We wait for the sun, Madam.”

Not just this day, but every day, news travels with morning light. Alimaw learns first thing that two *shifta* were captured.

“Oh dear, dear,” Sue says in the high-pitched tone she uses when she’s frightened. I hear this voice frequently, because Sue is frightened of so many things here, even the bugs.

“Where were they captured, Alimaw?” I ask. I want more information, and quickly.

“Madam, they were very near.” Alimaw is hanging his head. He does this when he doesn’t want me to read his emotion.

“Oh dear! Oh my goodness!” Sue says in that tremulous soprano, while I say nothing.

Perhaps I should feel relieved by their capture, but a clot of hatred forms in my heart instead.

Alimaw leads us outside to the constantly growing group of neighbors, all heading together in the same direction, as if we’re a herd being led to morning water. Walking within the group, I’m absorbed in thoughts of what happened in the little village. Flora’s murder and Tropetas’ hysterical grief affected each of us. Everyone was threatened, even we who intend to be in Bahar Dar only for our two-year stays.

The traveling mob of villagers, the women’s heads covered with their white *shamma* to protect against the damp morning chill, begins to squeeze down into a narrow column of women. Sue and I step in with them, while the men stand apart, tall, slim, and barefoot with stick-thin calves below their once-white jodhpur trousers. The men have wrapped their shoulders and heads in thick, white, cotton *gabi*. Each man has a *doula*, and some lean on them, the tall poles grasped upright in one hand like a staff. Others hold *doula* across their shoulders with both wrists resting over the top, with hanging folds of *gabi* draping below their elbows like feathery white wings.

Even as the column lurches forward in stops and starts, each woman huddles against the women beside her, as well as the women ahead and behind. This tight, close group carries with it the familiar, rancid body odor of the provinces, a combination of the rank smell of *kibbay*, a culinary butter also used as a hairdressing and skin lotion, and the stale smoke of indoor cook fires. At last we reach a jail — the first time I become aware that there is one — a three-sided building, its fourth side open to the elements, enclosed only by iron bars and a locked iron door.

We feel righteously entitled to view our enemy, two despised *shifta*. Though they remain in the morning shadow, far back from the bars, we see their disdainful expressions. They seem arrogant, completely unrepentant, as they stare directly at Sue and me because, as usual, white *firengi*, foreigners, stand out anywhere. I pass along with the line and, never looking away, glare my hatred back at them. This hatred is new to me, rising easily from beneath my breastbone, a concentrated heat that stops and sticks in my throat. Our tormenters are caged like animals, and I want them punished. I want them to see me and my gloating, triumphant sneer.

The next morning, I’m walking to school early to prepare for another week of teaching and am surprised to see the village gathered again, this time on the bare, open land between the airstrip and our school. What they are looking at is too awful to believe. And in this instant I know what everyone must have known and understood would happen, even though I didn’t.

Suddenly breathless, I can no longer silently bear the painful pounding in my chest. “Ahg. Uhg.” It is all I can say, repeating in rhythm with my heart. My lungs stop. And then I’m panting, out of breath, and I want only to be able to move my feet, to run away as fast as I can and pretend I never saw this. At the same time, I truly cannot believe that what I am seeing is real. I try to take it in with small, quick glances — two *shifta*, a rope tight around each broken neck, heads off-kilter from their bodies, trousers soiled by the emptying of bowel and bladder.

But yes, it is real, and I understand exactly why they have been left to hang here for these hours since dawn, the time of execution. It is hard to do, but at last I am able to look at them, dangling from ropes attached to newly erected scaffolds. We stand together, all of us staring at the dead men, considering what each of us understands and feels about what has happened here. Happened to us, and to our village.

How is it I can feel glad? I wouldn't say happy, just glad, satisfied to see those men hanging by their necks, dead, knowing they cannot harm me. Primal revenge.

So much at once. Anger. Hate. Revenge. Satisfaction. Worse, I have learned two terrible things: I could kill to save myself; I could get over feeling bad about doing that.

So here we stand, we who lusted for revenge, and now we're avenged, satisfied that two men are dead. But for me, this bright satisfaction suddenly tarnishes, because I am also deeply, deeply ashamed.



Carol – just before leaving Bahr Dar – 1966

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*Carol Beddo, a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ethiopia, 1964—1966, returned to her Peace Corps station in 2003. Flooded with memories, she began to wonder: Who was that young woman? While writing those memories, Carol is coming to understand how the Peace Corps experience provided a foundation for the rest of her life as a community activist and as a consultant in public policy, political campaigns, and elections. Numerous personal essays by Carol have been published in the San Jose Mercury News. Her Peace Corps stories have also appeared in anthologies: [The Best Travel Writing 2009](#) and [One Hand Does Not Catch a Buffalo: 50 Years Of Peace Corps Stories](#). The Peace Corps anthology received the Silver IPPY (Independent Publisher Book Awards) for travel essays in 2011. “We Wait for the Sun” won a gold Solas Award in 2012 for Travel Memoir.*

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## Reminiscences

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# The Lion in the Gardens of the Guenet Hotel

by **John Coyne (Addis Ababa 1962–64)**

(Previously published [www.peacecorpswriters.org](http://www.peacecorpswriters.org) in 2006. Used with permission by the author)

IN THE FINAL DAYS of our in-country training in the fall of 1962, we had a celebration dinner at the Guenet Hotel in the Populari section of the capital, Addis Ababa.

The Guenet Hotel, even in 1962, was one of the older hotels in Addis Ababa. It wasn't in the center of town, but south of Smuts Street and down the hill from Mexico Square, several miles from where we were housed in the dormitories of Haile Selassie I University. While out of the way, this small, two-story rambling hotel, nevertheless, had a two-



lane, American-style bowling alley, tennis courts, and a most surprising of all, a caged lion in its lush, tropical gardens.

At that time in the Empire no Ethiopian was allowed to keep a lion, the symbol of His Imperial Majesty's dynasty. The Emperor, Haile Selassie, whose full title was Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, Emperor of Ethiopia, had a private collection of animals, including the Imperial lions, antelopes and monkeys, as well as cheetahs, all at Jubilee Palace, his royal residence.

There was also a small government lion park near the main campus of Haile Selassie I University at Sidist Kilo, a quarter mile below the American Embassy. This park had about twenty full-grown lions in a large circular cage and sometimes late at night we would hear them roaring in the distance.

Occasionally, and rarely, a wild lion would wander down from the nearby Mt. Entoto looking for food and be spotted by townspeople and that would create headlines and eye-witness accounts in the next day's morning paper.

So, seeing a lion up close and personal in the heart of Africa was something special for a group of young Americans new to Africa.

Over 275 Peace Corps Volunteer teachers had arrived in Addis Ababa in September of 1962 at the end of the African Highland long rains. We were the first Peace Corps Volunteers to Ethiopia and in our final days in Addis Ababa, before being dispatched to our teaching assignments throughout the Empire, we had a farewell dinner at the Guenet Hotel. It was the first time any of us had been to the Populari section of the city or seen the lovely gardens of this hotel or their caged lion.

Well, actually it was a caged lion and a large German shepherd dog.

As I recall when I first saw the lion the German shepherd was stretched out comfortably between its paws and both were calmly gazing out through the bars of the small cage at the lot of us. The dog, of course, came and went through the narrow bars but we were told by the hotel staff that he always spend the night sleeping inside the cage, curled up with the lion.

I WAS ASSIGNED to teach at the Commercial Secondary School in Addis Ababa and in the early fall of that year was living in the Populari section of the city, near the Guenet Hotel.

The Peace Corps had issued bicycles to whoever needed them to get to school and I had gotten into the routine of riding back and forth to classes and also of stopping off at the hotel for a coke or coffee after school to correct my students English homework while sitting in the gardens of the Guenet surrounded by thick bougainvillea bushes, wild roses and carnations, and gnarled cedars draped with streamer-like with leaves. It was here that I came to know the lion and the German shepherd, who often slipped out through the bars to beg food from me while the male lion stood at attention against the bars of the cage silently watching the transaction. They were quite an odd couple. On one of my mid-day rides home for lunch, when I was pell-melling down a steep hill of the city, an American pulled his car up along side and singled me to stop.

He turned out to be a TWA pilot employed by Ethiopian Airlines and he invited me, and several others Volunteers, to a "home cooked" dinner that weekend. It was his way of welcoming the new Peace Corps Volunteers to the Empire. Trans World Air Lines had managed Ethiopian Airlines since 1946 and by the time we reached the Empire in '62 over a third of the trained pilots were Ethiopians. The management by TWA of the Ethiopian Airlines is one of the great early success stories of private development in Africa.

The American pilot who invited me to dinner had been in-country for several years and when I mentioned the Guenet and the lion in the garden he asked me if I knew the story of how the lion had gotten to the hotel. It seems the first American TWA director in Ethiopia had raised the lion from a small cub in the garden of his home's compound along with the family's dog. The lion was such a household pet that everyone who visited the house treated it as such.

THERE CAME A TIME when the CEO of TWA worldwide came to Ethiopia to meet the Emperor and visit his overseas operation. He arrived at dawn in Addis Ababa on an overnight flight from Europe and immediately took a morning nap at the director's home.

Late that afternoon, rested, the CEO was sitting with a half dozen American pilots who had stopped by for a drink and to visit with their boss from America. They were all sitting in the living-room of the house with the French doors open to the garden watching the African sunset and enjoying the first cool breezes of evening.

Sometime towards dusk, the lion, who had been asleep in the sunny terrace beyond the French doors, woke up and ambled passed the open door, gazed in at the assembled group, and then ambled off.

No one commented about the lion, as all the pilots knew about the animal. However, the visiting CEO had no idea the full-main lion was a household pet and sat petrified at the sight of the African beast, loose in the garden and just yards away from him.

Terrified, he didn't say anything until the next morning when he confessed to his host what he thought he had seen, thinking it must have been a frightening fantasy caused by his fear of being in Africa.

IN TIME THE AMERICAN manager's tour was finished and he and his family decided to give the lion to the nearby hotel as the tame animal could not be returned to the wild. The German shepherd, however, would go home to America with the family.

In the weeks before their departure from Addis, the lion was successfully transferred to the gardens of the Guenet Hotel, but when the family realized the German shepherd was so lonely and unhappy with the loss of his companion they decided to leave the dog, giving him to the Guenet where both animals could live peacefully in the small cage in the hotel gardens. And it was there that we found them when we arrived in Addis Ababa.

I LEFT ETHIOPIA in the mid-sixties and did not return again until the early '70s. While I had a short list of old friends in Addis that I wanted to see, high on my list also were the lion and the German shepherd in the gardens of the Guenet.



Coyne at Lalibella in the mid-'60s

A day or so after arriving in Addis, I took a taxi to the hotel which had thankfully not changed much in the years I had been away and I walked into the garden to find the cage.

The cage was where I remembered. However, the door was wide open and the lion was gone. Sitting alone in the middle of the empty concrete floor was the old German shepherd.

I walked inside to the front desk of the hotel and asked about the lion and was told the animal had passed away only months before. In fact, it was such a news event an article had been written about his death in the *Ethiopian Herald*, the English language newspaper in the country. The staff found a copy of the article that detailed the demise of the lion and I sat down in the lobby of the old hotel and read the account.

Several months early when the lion was suffering from an infected tooth, doctors from the Pasteur Institute of Ethiopia decided to drug the animal so the tooth could be extracted. Unfortunately the dart of drugs was too much for the old animal and it died before it could be saved. The hotel had not yet decided what to do about the lion cage for the dog still lived there, spending his days waiting for his lifelong companion to return.

I gave the article back to the receptionist, thank him for the information, and then I went out into the garden and walked through the open gate and inside the cage. I knelt down beside the German shepherd and petted the old dog one last final time, then I left Addis Ababa and Africa.

I have never been back.

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