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Peace Corps coming back home to Ethiopia

New PCVs will work in health and AIDS projects

By Barry Hillenbrand (*Debre Markos 63–65*)

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EVERY FEW MONTHS when Kassahun Ayeles, Ethiopia's ambassador to the United States, would run into Jody Olsen, the deputy director of Peace Corps, he would ask her when Peace Corps was coming back to Ethiopia. "We love the Peace Corps," Ayeles would tell Olsen. He would talk about Peace Corps teachers he had when he was in school. "You feel great when you have this sort of support," says Olsen. "Everybody in Ethiopia seems to know and love Peace Corps." Then Samuel Assefa replaced Ayeles as ambassador. He too would pose the same question to Olsen: when was Peace Corps coming back to Ethiopia?

Now Olsen has an answer. During the first week of October 43 Peace Corps trainees will assemble in Washington. They will attend a reception at the Ethiopian Embassy on Oct 5th, where they — and Olsen — can tell Ambassador Samuel with confidence that Peace Corps will be back in Ethiopia on October 8th. That's the date when the group will arrive in Ethiopia to begin their training program.

They will train two months in country. The training site will not be in Addis, but in Wallisso. The

training program, says Olsen, will be much along traditional Peace Corps lines, although a number of courses and procedures have changed since Ethiopia-bound Peace Corps groups trained at American universities. Language training is now firmly keyed to the region where PCVs will work. And so PCVs may not necessarily learn the country's official language. This group will learn either Amharic or Oromo depending on where PCVs will be assigned.

Cold War political science training courses like "Problems in Communism" are gone. But training in personal security and safety are now a very big deal. The problem is not so much the PCVs are especially nervousness these days, but Peace Corps is concerned about the mood back in the US. "Things [in host countries] always look more dicey from back home," says Olsen. Because advances in technology alert families to any blip in the political radar in the host country, "we have to lay out strategies so that families, friends and the folks on the Hill will be happy and remain happy." Their fears have to be squelched — and have to be squelched quickly. Peace Corps has also devised systems to get fast head counts of all PCVs in country so that

when a crisis — real or imagined — develops, PC can say to families: “All PCVs have been heard from.”

PCVs now live with host families, at least in the first months. This helps integrate PCVs more quickly into community and also provides a bit of added security for PCVs by linking them closely them to people in neighborhoods.

“If you start by living with families you land in the middle of a community and begin to develop relationships with that family and community that you couldn’t get any other way,” says Olsen.

Ethiopia now has serious political and security problems resulting from its invasion of Somalia and an active rebellion in the Ogaden. On top of that there is the continuing

border tensions with Eritrea and political unrest in Addis. But Peace Corps is not concerned about deploying a new group of PCVs to Ethiopia in what is — to put it mildly — an unsettled political time. “We know we can handle this,” says Olsen.

At least 30 of the 40 Volunteers will be funded by some money Peace Corps is getting from the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. This program is a five-year commitment by the U.S. Government to spend \$15 billion worldwide in HIV/AIDS relief work. Ethiopia is one of 15 focus countries to receive special attention and funding. In 2005 and 2006, working through a host of agencies, PEPFAR pumped more than \$80 million each year into HIV/AIDS programs in Ethiopia.

Henry McKoy, regional director for Africa for Peace Corps, says that PEPFAR offered to fund the new Ethiopia Peace Corps project to the tune of \$1.3 million a year. Peace Corps ponied up another \$1.3 million and the dream of getting back into

Ethiopia was realized. McCoy admits that there was a temptation to try and return to Ethiopia with the sort of education project that was so successful and popular in the 1960s, but, he says, starting out with a small project, half funded outside of Peace Corps, was very attractive. Small is often beautiful and certainly easier to implement. Once Peace Corps is again on the ground in Ethiopia, it will be very easy to expand into education.

Peace Corps says that it is not concerned that Peace Corps will be working with PEPFAR which also funds dozens of programs in-country that are run by NGOs as well US government agencies like USAID. Says Olsen, “In the end, PCVs are PCVs. They are trained the same way they always have been and will do the some sort of work they always have. They will be doing Peace Corps type projects.” And despite the funding, Peace Corps will be working independently of the U.S. Embassy, as it always has. The PC country director is not part of the Embassy staff, says Olsen. Peace Corps is already working with PEPFAR programs in other countries.

True, USAID workers with cars, air-conditioned houses and high salaries may be working on projects similar to the ones PCVs in Ethiopia may undertake, but, says Olsen, “PCVs today are still PCVs living on \$200 a month and living among the people they work with.” PCVs work as they do because of the special satisfaction that comes from being Peace Corps Volunteers and doing things the Peace Corps way.

Right now Peace Corps staff is scrambling to prepare everything for the arrival of the new Volunteers. Peace Corps headquarters in Ethiopia will be in the old Algeria embassy building. Security barriers are now being built into the driveway to conform with new U.S. government regulations. McKoy says that he welcomes help and support from the E&E RPCV group. He invited some of our members to speak to the trainees before they left Washington. And he hopes that as the new PCVs get settled they will be able to call upon the E&E RPCVs to financial and technical support some of their projects.



**ETHIOPIANS AND AMERICANS
IN PARTNERSHIP TO FIGHT HIV/AIDS**

The new Volunteers will be working in the communities of Agaro, Bahirdar, Debre Markos, Dessie, Gore, Gondar, Jimma, and Mojo, and in remote towns such as Addis Zemen.



Ethiopia news

WARS AND REBELLIONS

Somalia continues to fester

Ethiopia's occupation of Somalia in support of the Transitional Federal Government they installed continues to be a violent mess with no end in sight. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles has been unable to make good his promise to withdraw Ethiopian forces because the Transitional Government is not strong enough to provide security for Mogadishu, much less the rest of the country. And the level of peacekeeping forces brought in by the African Union is token at best. So it is up to Ethiopia to prevent Somalia from falling back into the hands of the Islamic Courts, an alliance of fundamentalist Islamic groups that ruled Somalia for six months before the Ethiopian intervention.

But the cost to Ethiopia is high. Insurgent fighters continually harass Ethiopian and Transitional Government forces. Additionally there is a Somali-Somalia civil war raging costing many lives.



ETHIOPIAN SOLDIERS IN SOMALIA: A long and very dangerous tour of duty

As the AP reports, violence continues in the Somali capital creating fear among thousands of residents, who have nowhere to flee. On a recent Saturday night in September, insurgent groups armed with machine-guns, rocket launchers and hand grenades attacked a government military base in south Mogadishu. The sound of the gunfire rocked the entire capital. The sound of the double barreled anti-aircraft guns used by the government troops echoed in every corner of the city. Hardly a day passes in Mogadishu without reports of explosions, hand grenade attacks and gunfire.

There were no reliable reports of casualties from these gun battles and attacks. Elman Human Rights, a local independent human rights group, estimated that the increasingly violent insurgency in Somalia's capital killed 200 civilians and wounded 400 in August. The death toll makes August the bloodiest month in Somalia since April, when a surge in violence that started in March raged in the already beleaguered city. Elman Human Rights collected its figures from hospitals, residents and its own records of burials in Mogadishu.

Efforts at bring peace to Somali do continue, but with very limited success. There is talk of more peacekeepers from the African Union. A six-week national reconciliation conference, backed by the government and the international community, was held in Mogadishu in July and August. That conference, which some had seen as the best hope for peace, closed with a raft of resolutions but little impact on the insurgency raging in Mogadishu. Islamists, and some other opposition figures, boycotted the Mogadishu talks. Still the fact that some people are talking is a good sign.

Foreigners swept up

When the Ethiopian army rolled into Somalia, thousands of Somalis fled south toward the Kenyan



SOMALI WEAPONS: All sides are heavily armed and looking for a fight. AP

border for safety. Along with them were scores of foreign nationals. Many were detained by the Kenyan police as they attempted to cross the border. Those

deemed suspicious by the Kenyans were turned over to Ethiopia. In June the Ethiopian government said that 41 people suspected of terrorism had been arrested in Somalia and transferred to Ethiopia. They included citizens of the United States, Tunisia, Rwanda, Syria, Uganda, Saudi Arabia and Tanzania. In recent months many of these foreigners have finally been released by the Ethiopian authorities. When they finally reach home they all tell a similar sad tale. Three Swedes, for example, were imprisoned in isolation, in metal cages measuring one and a half square meters. One of the Swedes said "They would try to strangle us, saying: 'today you will tell the truth. If you don't tell the truth we will cut you to pieces.' They strangled me until I passed out."

Human rights groups say that Ethiopia was assisted in their roundup of suspects by Americans who arranged that the prisoners be flown from Kenya to Ethiopia or sometimes back to Somalia. Some reports quote American sources acknowledging that U.S. officers were involved with questioning the prisoners. One American prisoner from New Jersey was moved several times before ending up in Ethiopia where he was finally released. Pressure from other countries, like Canada and South Africa, ultimately secured the release of their nationals, although no one knows for sure how many Somalis and other foreigners remain in Ethiopian custody.

Blocking food aid to the Ogaden

Controversy has plagued the delivery of food aid to the Ogaden. Several former administrators from the Ogaden and a member of the Ethiopian Parlia-

ment who defected told the New York Times that the Ethiopian military and its proxy militias are skimming food aid and using a UN polio-eradication program to funnel money to their fighters. The New York Times also reported that the biggest problem right now was a military blockade, that threatening hundreds of thousands of impoverished nomads with starvation. Several humanitarian officials said that they need to temper their criticisms of the government or not speak publicly at all for fear that their organizations might be permanently blocked from the area.

The Ethiopian government denied the charges. Officials said that the Ogaden National Liberation Front, one of the most active of Ethiopia's many separatist groups, was stealing food aid and abusing the population. The Ethiopian government has also accused the Ogaden rebels of getting arms and training from Eritrea, Ethiopia's neighbor and a bitter enemy.

After weeks of charges and counter-charges, United Nations officials and the Ethiopian government reached an agreement allowing emergency food aid into an embattled area. Nur Abdi Mohammed, a government spokesman, said food deliveries would soon begin to most parts of the Ogaden. "The food distribution has started from the center to different areas," Mohammed said. "I think it will reach most places soon. But where there is no security, there will not be deliveries."

Peter Smerdon, a spokesman for the United Nations World Food Program, said that "the food is still not there in all the zones, but there is a process under way." At the same time the agreement was announced, the regional government that oversees the Ogaden expelled the Red Cross, accusing its workers of providing weapons, money and sensitive information to the rebels. "They were spies," Mohammed said. "They were following regional officials and relaying information to the rebels. We warned them to stop and they didn't." But in a statement the International Committee of the Red Cross said that "All ICRC activities in Ethiopia are conducted in strict accordance with the principles of independence and neutrality. The ICRC firmly re-

jects the accusations made against it. A suspension of ICRC activities will inevitably have a negative impact on the population concerned, whose access to basic services will be reduced. "In early September, Medecins Sans Frontieres accused Ethiopia of denying it access to the remote Ogaden region where battles are raging between government troops and a rebel movement, but the government denied there are any no-go zones for aid workers.

Journalists arrested in the Ogaden

To make matters more complicated and difficult for the Ethiopian government three journalists for The New York Times were arrested by the Ethiopian military in May while traveling in the Ogaden. They were held for five days and interrogated at gunpoint. They were released without any charges being lodged against them. The three journalists — Jeffrey Gettleman, the Nairobi bureau chief; Vanessa Vick, 43, a photographer; and Courtenay Morris, 34, a videographer — were detained by soldiers in the town of Degeh Bur. They had entered the country on journalists' visas and were not in a restricted area. While in detention, they were moved to three different jails before being released in Addis Ababa. During questioning, Vick was kicked in the back, and all three were repeatedly threatened. Ethiopian soldiers confiscated all of the journalists' equipment, including computers, cameras, mobile phones and notebooks; none of the equipment has been returned. Detaining journalists and roughing them up is no way to generate favorable coverage, as subsequent stories from Gettleman prove.

Most puzzling news item of the month

From Ogaden OnLine, an opposition website:

August 10, 2007. Reports reaching our service desk from our reporter in Washington DC, confirm the arrival in Washington of both the chairman Mr. Mohamed Omar Osman and the foreign minister Mr. Abdirahman Mahdi of the Ogaden National Liberation Front, ONLF, at 8:15 AM local time at Dulles Airport. There are unconfirmed reports that the ONLF Chairman and his foreign minister were invited to Washington by the U.S. government for discussions on matters relating to Ogaden and the issues of the horn. The two ONLF leaders are said to have been

in meetings throughout yesterday. We are working to find out more about the arrival of the two ONLF leaders in the USA, especially in Washington and the objectives of their arrival.

New U.S. aid grants for the Ogaden

Reacting to what seems to be the end of roadblocks and food seizures in the Ogaden, the United States announced that it would provide nearly \$19 million in emergency aid for the region. At the end of August, the State Department said it is working with the Ethiopian government, international partners and non-governmental organizations in responding to the serious humanitarian conditions in the eastern region. Most of the \$18.7 million will help provide food assistance through the United Nations World Food Program. Some funds will help pay for health, nutrition, and livelihood programs.

Oil workers killed in Ogaden

In April sixty-five Ethiopian and nine Chinese workers were killed in a pre-dawn raid on an oil field run by a Chinese firm. The Ogaden National Liberation Front, ethnic Somalis fighting for independence since 1984, claimed responsibility for the raid that was one of the worst attacks to date on Beijing's growing interests in Africa. The attackers also took seven Chinese workers and a large number of Ethiopian workers hostage. The raid took place at a site near Jigjiga.

The Ogaden Front said in its statement that "the oil facility has been completely destroyed. The ONLF has stated on numerous occasions that "we will not allow the mineral resources of our people to be exploited by this regime or any firm." A week after the raid, the Ogaden Front fighters released the Chinese workers they had captured to the Red Cross. "We never meant to take them as hostages," said a spokesman, "We removed them from the scene for their own safety. We are fighting for our own rights. So we would never deprive other people of their liberty and freedom." Later, after further statements, the Ethiopian workers were also freed unharmed.

China, of course, condemned the attacks, although it welcomed the release of its workers. It demonstrated, once again, the tricky role China has set

In a statement the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry acknowledged that it had received a cargo shipment from North Korea, but denied that it included prohibited items like tank parts.

out to play in Africa. Adam Wolfe, an analyst for the “World Politics Watch,” writes that: “The instability in the region has dissuaded the Western oil majors from investing in Ogaden, but Chinese government policies encourage Chinese private and state-owned firms to take additional risks in their overseas investments. In some respects, Chinese investment can be good for neglected regions such as Ogaden. For instance, before China began exploring for oil, there were hardly any paved roads in the region, but Chinese firms have constructed new infrastructure in Ogaden — principally to get their oil out of the region, but the new roads also benefit the local population.”

Wolfe continues: “By forming an agreement with Ethiopia’s government to explore for oil in Ogaden, however, China aligned with the enemy of the ONLF. Not only does this put China’s investments at risk, it also undermines the reputation it gained in earlier decades, when Beijing backed indigenous rebels across Africa for ideological reasons. This reputation was celebrated by African leaders as a sign that China is a friend of Africa. Nevertheless, Beijing’s interests have turned more toward natural resources than ideology.”

More attacks

In May, at least 16 people were killed and dozens were injured in the two Ogaden towns of Jijjiga and Degah Abur. In Jijjiga, an assailant threw a hand grenade during a National Day ceremony, killing six people and wounding 51. Among the injured was the president of the Somali Regional State, Abdullahi Hassan, who was treated for a minor leg injury at a hospital and discharged. In the other attack, in Degah Abur, 10 people were killed and 16 others wounded.

The Ogaden National Liberation Front denied it was responsible for any attacks, claiming that Ethiopian security forces carried out the attacks to lay the blame on the rebels. “It is their tradition to blame us for anything bad that happens in our region,” said Abdirahman Mahdi, the group’s spokesman. “When we want to attack the Ethiopian government we will do so in daylight. We attack their troops and don’t hide our action. We don’t have any hand

in the attack. We are fighting the Ethiopian enemy. We are not fighting our own people.”

Arms from North Korea

The Central Intelligence Agency reported in late January that an Ethiopian-flagged ship had left a North Korean port and that its cargo probably included tank parts and other military cargo. The purchase of tank parts would violate restrictions on dealings with North Korea imposed by the United Nations Security Council. The Bush administration decided not to press Ethiopia to reject the shipment, and the vessel was not inspected after it took its cargo to a port in Djibouti for overland transport to Ethiopia. In a statement the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry acknowledged that it had received a cargo shipment from North Korea, but denied that it included prohibited items like tank parts.

POLITICS & NEWS

Pardons and unexpected prison releases

In July came the dramatic pardon and release of 38 members of various opposition parties who had been arrested, tried and convicted on a variety of serious charges including treason. They had been held in prison for more than two years. This group of opposition politicians, including the elected mayor of Addis and several members of Parliament, had been the focal point of protests not only in Ethiopia, but in the United States and Europe. Their release was secured after complex negotiations with the government with — as is the custom — Ethiopian elders acting as go-betweens. The released politicians were required to sign a letter accepting at least some responsibility for the violence that followed the 2005 elections. However the prisoners refused to apologize for their actions. Two prisoners refused to sign the letter and remain in prison, still unpardoned.

At a news conference, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said, “All of us should leave behind the past and look towards the future.” He said that the pardon was full and unconditional. This will allow the politicians to resume their political careers.



OPPOSITION LEADERS: Back in action after a full pardon *BBC-AP*

The release was greeted with celebrations around Addis, a city that had voted heavily for the opposition in the election. Hailu Shawel, leader of the opposition Coalition

for Unity and Democracy, told reporters the letter was signed under duress. "They don't change, these people," Hailu told the Associated Press. "They want to cover their losses. They know they lost an election. We know we won." Efrain Issac, a former Harvard University professor and chairman of the committee of elders, said the group would continue to work toward releasing the remaining political prisoners, adding that the talks were "a tremendous struggle."

Then in August the government pardoned and freed 32 more opposition supporters who had been arrested and held without charge following an outbreak of post-election violence two years ago. U.S. and European officials said in a statement that the latest release was "a significant gesture and we congratulate all who have worked to achieve this outcome and extend particular commendation to the Ethiopian elders and the government of Prime Minister Meles." Again a group of prominent Ethiopians respected by both the government and opposition helped mediate their release. None of the 32 opposition supporters had been charged following their arrests in 2005. Bereket Simon, a Meles adviser, said he did not know why they had been held without charge. But "the government has pardoned them. They can run for office, they can run their political organizations," Bereket said. "It is good for Ethiopia because it indicates that the rule of law is respected in Ethiopia." Unquestionably the release of this second group of prisoners helps take the pressure off the Meles government that has its hands full with the war in Somalia, border problems with Eritrea and unrest in the Ogaden.

Easing up on the press, just a bit

Reporters Without Borders hailed the release of three newspaper journalists who were set free along with some 30 other opposition members on 18 August under a pardon issued by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. The editors had been imprisoned for about a year and a half. A statement from the press organization said, "It is regrettable that they were set free because this was the prime minister's wish and not because it had been the outcome of a fair trial. The journalists had to write a letter admitting their guilt."

Two of the editors, who had been in prison since November 2005, were convicted on 30 July of "conspiring to incite disruption of constitutional rule" and sentenced to four years in prison. The other, who was arrested in February 2006, was sentenced in July to 10 years in prison for belonging to an "illegal political organization." Eight other journalists are still held in Ethiopia.

The three released journalists, however, felt that they were still in danger. They had hoped to resume their careers as journalists, but they received threatening telephone calls advising them to "disappear" or they will be killed. So the three disguised themselves and fled across the border to Kenya where they were interviewed by the Western press under the protection of the United Nations. "I am sure that I would have been killed," one of the editors told the Washington Post. "You hear all these condemnations of Mugabe," said another editor. "Meles is much worse. He is killing freely. America should change this partnership with Ethiopia on terrorism. It is allowing the Ethiopian government to kill democracy."

A rare execution

In August Ethiopia carried out its second execution in a decade when Major Tsehailu Wolde Selassie who was convicted of shooting Kinfe Gebremedhin, a close ally of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, outside an officers' club in 2001, was sent to his death. The last time Ethiopia carried out the death penalty was in 1998, when it executed an Eritrean businessman for the shooting of a popular Ethiopian general. The government did not say how Tsehailu was executed

but according to Ethiopian law soldiers are supposed to face a firing squad, .

Fatal blow or constant annoyance

Once again a round in the battle over U.S.-Ethiopian relations is being fought in Congress. While the Bush Administration has been careful not to push Ethiopia too vigorously on issues of human rights and political freedom because of the help that the government of Prime Minister Meles is providing to Washington in the war on terrorism, Congress has taken a somewhat harder line. A bill in the House of Representatives — H.R. 2003 — would restrict U.S. military assistance to Ethiopia and limit travel to the United States by certain Ethiopian officials unless President Bush certifies that the Addis Ababa government is acting to address specific human rights concerns. The legislation was introduced by Rep. Donald M. Payne, a New Jersey Democrat, and is backed by members of the Ethiopian community in Washington who have banded together as the Coalition for H.R. 2003.

Ethiopia's ambassador to the United States, Samuel Assefa, in an interview with the Washington Times, said that the bill " would be the fatal blow to cooperating security arrangements between the United States and Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a vital ally to the U.S. in this region in the fight against terrorism. The bill could cut off economic and bilateral aid at a most inopportune time." Samuel told the Washington Times that his government is addressing the human rights concerns raised by Payne and others by releasing protesters and opposition members who were arrested after the 2005 election.

But the Coalition for H.R. 2003 says that the Ethiopia government is using the political prisoners as "pawns in its shell game with the U.S. Congress." They say that every time the bill is scheduled for a vote in the Committee, "the regime trots out a hapless bunch of political prisoners and threatens the U.S. that they will not be released" if the bill moves on. Says Alemayehu Mariam, member of the Coalition for H.R. 2003. "The bottom line on the ruling regime's opposition to H.R. 2003 is that it

is incapable of making a morally and politically convincing case against the bill. So it has to resort to the thuggish tactic of strong-arming members of Congress and holding the freedom of innocent political prisoners in the balance." The bill remains under consideration in the House.

Return the prince's bones

Ethiopia asked Britain's Queen Elizabeth to return the bones of Prince Alemayehu, an orphan prince who was just seven years old in 1868 when his father, Emperor Tewodros II, committed suicide after being defeated by British troops at the Battle of Magdala. Alemayehu's ailing mother, Queen Terunish, died a few days later. The prince was placed on a ship to Britain.

Mulugeta Aserate, second cousin of Haile Selassie, who helped organize the appeal, told Reuters, "The prince was a

prisoner of war. His return would ease the minds of lots of Ethiopians who believe his rightful resting place should be here [in Addis] with his father."

The prince was seized by a British force that had invaded to free European diplomats, missionaries and adventurers jailed by Emperor Tewodros. After studying at the Rugby School, the prince began officer training at Sandhurst military academy. He died in November 1879 of suspected pleurisy at the age of 18 at the home of one of his tutors.

"It is too sad! All alone in a strange country, without a single person or relative belonging to him. His was no happy life," wrote Queen Victoria in her diary



PRINCE ALEMAYEHU: An unhappy boy exiled in a faraway country

Malaria accounts for up to 20% of deaths in children under five. In a malaria epidemic in 2003, 114,000 people died of the disease in a nine-month period.

Queen Victoria who had befriended the boy before his death wrote in her journal: "It is too sad! All alone in a strange country, without a single person or relative belonging to him. His was no happy life."

The young prince is buried in the crypt of St. George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. There has been no response from Queen Elizabeth or the British government on Ethiopia's request for the return of the prince's remains.

Block that blog

According to OpenNet, a Web watchdog, the Ethiopian government has been blocking scores of anti-government websites and millions of blogs hosted by Google's Blogger service. Ethiopian bloggers responded to the news with a string of defiant posts. OpenNet told Reuters that it had gathered technical proof that Ethiopian authorities were filtering out the IP addresses of political websites and had blocked the entire Blogspot domain, home to millions of blogs across the world. A spokesman for Ethiopia's Ministry of Information dismissed the claim as a "complete fabrication". But OpenNet said the evidence was "overwhelming".

Contract signed on Axum obelisk

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre signed a contract with the Italian construction company Lattanzi SRL for the re-erection of the Axum obelisk on its original location. The obelisk, 24 metres high and weighing 150 tons was returned to Ethiopia last year from Italy and is resting in a field near where it was taken by the Italian army. Archaeological digs are currently being carried out to prepare for its re-installation. The total project budget of \$2,833,985 has been provided by the Italian government, which also financed the transportation of the obelisk back to Axum. Work is expected to start, well, err, soon, but we have said that before.

Speaking of building contracts

The United States government will construct a new \$140 million embassy building inside its present embassy compound. Clearing ground inside the

compound in Addis Ababa has already begun and the construction contract is due to be awarded to an American firm in October 2007. The four-story building, looking a bit like a ship (or so it is said), will be erected right in front of the Ambassador's residence, on what is now a large green area. It will house embassy offices.

In 1945 The American Embassy moved to its current location from its previous location in the Mercato, a.k.a. American Gibe. The white building that now serves as the ambassador's residence was built in 1920 by the Japanese, who used it as their legation before they were expelled from the country for their support of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. When the Americans took over the compound, they promised Emperor Haile Selassie that the white building and two somewhat historic tukals also on the compound would always be preserved.

HEALTH NEWS

Malaria netting

Bjorn Ljungqvist, UNICEF representative to Ethiopia, said that more than 340,000 children under five will die of preventable causes including malaria in Ethiopia this year. UNICEF has distributed 18 million mosquito nets over the past few months providing protection for 9 million households in what is said the largest campaign of its sort in Africa. The country plans to raise the distribution to 20 million before the end of the year. This, says UNICEF, will enable Ethiopia to reduce the number of children who die annually from malaria. Malaria accounts for up to 20% of deaths in children under five. In a malaria epidemic in 2003, 114,000 people died of the disease in a nine-month period.

"No children need to die of malaria and with the success of the millennium Anti-Malaria campaign, we are on the verge of achieving a remarkable milestone for child survival in Ethiopia," Ljungqvist said. In order to support the ongoing malaria campaign, the government of Japan donated \$1 million to UNICEF. "Young children and pregnant women are most at risk from the severe effects of malaria.

We believe that the fight against infectious diseases is the main health agenda of the time,” said Japanese Ambassador to Ethiopia Kinichi Komano.

Hope of remission and redemption

When the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Church, Abune Paulos, issued a proclamation in November allowing holy water to be used in conjunction with AIDS medications, many local Orthodox priests continued to tell patients they would have to choose between the two. So the Patriarch frequently reminds people that the Church approves of mixing holy water with medicine. Recently, in a sermon to a crowd of about 250 worshippers at Addis Ababa’s Entoto Mariam Church, Abune Paulos said, “I am asking each and every one of them to swallow the medicine and the holy water together. They never conflict each other.” Indeed, according to interviews conducted by AP, many AIDS sufferers find the combination beneficial. Yonas, 41, who was in the congregation, said he was pleased to know his preferred treatment was acceptable. “I feel better now. Before, they forbade me to take the medicine,” he said of his priests. “Now they welcome it.”

About half of the 140 patients who take anti-retrovirals at St. Petros Hospital in Addis Ababa also drink holy water, sometimes up to 4 liters per day, said Dr. Solomon Zewdu. “There’s no study out there that says it is working, but we don’t want to discredit faith-based healing,” he said. “All medicine should be allowed to be taken with holy water.” A patient at St. Petros, a frail 14-year-old orphan, said he was glad he was not sinning by taking medicine along with his holy water. “After I began taking the medicine,” he said with a wide smile, “I’m becoming OK.” When he arrived the hospital, he weighed 45 pounds and was on the verge of death. After a few months of treatment, he is up to 60 pounds and will return to school. A small miracle, perhaps.

HIV medicine agreement

The pharmaceutical company Roche signed an agreement with Ethiopia to provide “the free transfer of technical know-how that will make possible the [local] production of a generic anti-HIV drug” known as saquinavir. The anti-retroviral drug is

prescribed as a second line treatment for HIV infection, when patients develop resistance to first-line treatments. The normal cost of these treatments is often in excess of \$ 5,000, which places them out of the reach of sufferers in the most countries where HIV/AIDS is widespread. The agreement between the Swiss pharmaceutical firm and the Addis Pharmaceutical Factory is part of the Roche Technology Transfer Initiative launched in January 2006.

Cuban health workers

In April Health State Minister Dr. Kebede Worku and Cuban Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Deputy Minister Ramon Ripol Diaz signed an agreement to bring an additional 42 Cuban health professionals to Ethiopia. A previous agreement, signed in 2001, assigned 16 health workers to various hospitals in Addis. The new workers will work in regional and rural hospitals.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Coffee agreement: is it a good brew?

The battle between Ethiopia and Starbucks Coffee Company over control of coffee trademarks ended in late June with a widely heralded agreement between the two sides. The disagreement began in 2005 when Ethiopia attempted to get trademarks registered in the United States for three of its most recognized coffees: Harar, Sidamo, and Yirgacheffe. Starbucks objected to the trademark application. What followed was a complex and often confusing scrap involving intellectual property rights lawyers and trademark specialists, diplomats and business executives, lobbyists and pressure groups. Toss in an ambassador and prime minister plus a CEO and a NGO, and you get a very murky brew. In October 2006 Oxfam, the international charity, joined the fight by mounting a campaign against Starbucks. It used damning slogans like “For every cup of Ethiopian coffee Starbucks sells, Ethiopian farmers earn three cents.” It provided facts and quotes to the press that eagerly took up the story of victimized Ethiopian farmers versus the American business giant. Starbucks, a company that ironically is usually credited with generous employment policies and

“There’s no study out there that says it is working, but we don’t want to discredit faith-based healing,” says Dr. Solomon Zewdu. “All medicine should be allowed to be taken with holy water.”



AMBASSADOR SAMUEL: a win-win solution for all sides

ethical business practices, found itself deluged with protests.

The criticism strung. Starbucks began looking for a way out. In November Starbucks sent its CEO to Addis to talk with Prime Minister Meles. Lobbyists were brought in as mediators. In late March Howard Schultz, Starbucks founder and chairman, met with Samuel Assefa, Ethiopia's ambassador to Washington, in an

effort to make nice. Over the next three months an agreement was hammered out and announced with great fanfare and a flurry of exuberant press releases on June 20. Suddenly, Starbucks, the heartless corporate bad guy, was being "saluted" by Ambassador Samuel for "its exemplary display of global corporate citizenship." Oxfam said it "applauded Starbucks for agreeing to work with Ethiopian farmers so that they can make more off their most celebrated crop." The operative phrase was that the agreement was a win-win situation. Ethiopia wins, Starbucks wins.

Well, maybe. The problem is that the agreement has never been published because the Ethiopian Embassy and Starbucks say trade secrets were involved in the details. The press release from Starbucks and the Embassy says that the agreement is "a framework for mutual cooperation to promote the recognition of the Harar, Sidamo and Yirgacheffe designations and to strengthen the Ethiopian coffee sector, and includes the license of certain trademarks." But Starbucks will not pay a premium for these Ethiopian coffees and thus just how "recognizing" the brands will put more cash into the pockets of farmers is unclear. Starbucks will no longer oppose Ethiopia's efforts to apply for trademarks for the coffees, which is a good thing, but Ethiopia also will allow Starbucks to use those trademarks at what seems to be no extra cost. While Starbucks promises to support the Ethiopian coffee

industry, no details were published — and Starbucks seems to have frozen Ethiopia out of some recent coffee development projects it is sponsoring in Africa. And to top it all off, the agreement lapses in five years, which may mean the battle could begin again. Meanwhile, you can buy Sidamo coffee at Starbucks in good conscience. We think.

More coffee talk: make it a natural decaf

Ethiopia plans to start commercial production of a coffee variety with naturally low caffeine that was found growing in the wild. Decaffeinated coffee accounts for 10 percent of total coffee sales in the world. "Coffee research centers are in the process of planting seedlings of natural coffee with low caffeine varieties, to enable Ethiopia to supply the world market within the shortest possible time," said Abera Deressa, State Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. In July 2004, a Brazilian scientist, Paulo Mazzafera, declared he had discovered a variety of naturally decaffeinated coffee from 6,000 specimens collected in Ethiopia in the 1980s.

Fly Ethiopian

The CEO of Ethiopian Airlines, Girma Wake, says that the airline is working on expanding its international destinations. It is looking for permission to fly to Toronto, New York-JFK, Chicago O'Hare and Atlanta. EA's current North American service comprises six-times-weekly flights to Washington Dulles. Wake said the carrier also is considering two more destinations in India and China where it currently serves five markets combined. The airline currently operates 24 Boeing jets and five turboprops. It will take delivery of its twelfth 767-300ER before the end of the year. It will introduce its first 787 in September 2008 and will take a second the following month. "By 2010, I expect to have a total fleet of 30 jets," says Wake.

Ethiopian Airlines now employs 260 Ethiopian pilots, but new airplane acquisition and the fact that some cockpit crew members left Ethiopian to join carriers in the Middle East and Asia have forced it to hire foreign pilots. At present the airline has ten foreign pilots from Africa, Europe and South America on its books. Wake said that to meet the growing

October 2006, Oxfam statement: "For every cup of Ethiopian coffee Starbucks sells, Ethiopian farmers earn three cents."

June 2007, Oxfam news release: "Oxfam applauded Starbucks for agreeing to work with Ethiopian farmers so that they can make more off their most celebrated crop."

demand for pilots, the airlines was expanding its pilot training school. Wake said the airline needed to hire more foreign pilots. "We give priority to Ethiopians, but when the need arises we hire foreign nationals," he said.

The Ogaden: it's more than just dessert

Ethiopia has signed a deal allowing the Malaysian state oil firm Petronas to develop natural gas in the Ogaden. The agreement focuses on the development and marketing of Kalub and Hilal gas deposits in the Ogaden. A Ministry of Mines and Energy official said \$1.9 million would be paid in "administrative costs," but gave no total value for the deal.

Petronas is expected to lay down a pipeline to transport the gas to a nearby port. But because Ethiopia is landlocked, the pipeline may have to be built through Somalia where Ethiopian troops are currently supporting the interim government. The line could go to either to Bosasso in the Puntland region or Berbera in breakaway Somaliland. Experts say that the Ogaden Basin, a gas-prolific area covering 350,000 sq km, is believed to contain gas reserves of some 4 trillion cubic feet.

But the Ogaden National Liberation Front has already warned oil companies to stay away. "Pursuing oil and natural gas exploration activities in Ogaden at this stage can only be characterized as gross corporate irresponsibility given the war crimes being committed," said the Liberation Front in a statement. "Recent claims that the government has been able to realize military gains are designed to give a false sense of security to oil companies."

The Ethiopian army has been deployed heavily in the region in an effort to rout out the rebels after an attack on a Chinese-run oil exploration field in April that killed 74 people. The government is claiming they have pacified the area. But says the Liberation Front statement: "The regime of (Prime Minister) Meles Zenawi does not have control of Ogaden."

Faster YouTube downloads

Ethiopia is working hard at trying to bring its Internet and telecommunication network up to date. The problems in the system were discussed at the World

IT Forum held in Addis this summer. Debretsion Gebremichael, the director general of the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation (ETC), the state-owned communications company that controls all lines, said that CISCO has six engineers currently working on a project to provide short-term solutions to ETC's present sluggish broadband Internet system. ETC introduced broadband with a flourish and lots of promises in 2005. But while more than 30,000 customers signed up for the service, they discovered that it was not faster than the old dial-up service which continues to attract users because it is far cheaper. Debretsion says that the work done by CISCO should provide a short-term improvement within a year and that ETC's new fiber optic system should speed things up even more within 2-3 years. Debretsion admitted that the present system "has become a bottleneck" to the country's development projects, but that ETC is confident improvements will be made soon.

In August Siemens completed a 185-kilometer optical fiber cable installation stretching from Gondar to Metema, a town on the Sudan border. Then the line was run across the border to the Sudanese town of Gelebat where it was linked to the rest of the world via a Verison network based in Jeddah. Gondar and Addis were already linked with a fiber optic cable. This completes a 4,000 km fiber optic cable project currently installed in six directions across the nation linking a total of 113 towns.

Can you hear me now?

At the same three-day telecommunications conference, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said, "rapid progress for countries such as Ethiopia in this [telecommunications] area is not a choice, but a necessity." Studies have shown advancement in telecommunications, including Internet and telephone, is a key booster of socio-economic development, as well facilitating general progress and the well-being of communities. At the conference Ethiopia announced plans to double the size of its telephone network by putting 1.2 million new phone numbers on the market. Abdurahim Ahmed, a spokesman for ETC, said the expansion, along with technological improvements, will cost \$21.7 million. This expan-

Ogaden National Liberation Front statement: "Pursuing oil and natural gas exploration activities in Ogaden at this stage can only be characterized as gross corporate irresponsibility given the war crimes being committed. Recent claims that the government has been able to realize military gains are designed to give a false sense of security to oil companies."

The country now produces 800 MW of electricity from hydropower dams, reaching only 19 percent of the 75 million population. The plan is to generate over 4,000 MW of power and install 135,000 km of distribution lines by 2015. Also required will be 12,000 km of high voltage networks to electrify 6,000 towns and villages providing access to electric power to over 50 percent of the country's population.

sion is in addition to a \$200 million contract to upgrade the mobile network that the government signed last May with a Chinese telecom company.

Ahmed said improving telecommunications was "ammunition to reduce poverty." He said the government regretted not putting greater effort into its telecommunications sector until a decade ago. "We didn't give it due attention," he told the Associated Press. Indeed the system has been long hampered by corruption, bad service and high tariffs. Ethiopian newspapers have reported that several senior officials at the state telecom company have been fired for corruption in the past months.

Ethiopia may get more telephones, but it may not get text messaging any time soon. Text messaging is now forbidden because a spate of post-election violence in 2005 when opposition protesters were accused of using the service to arrange anti-government rallies.

And now the numbers

Ethiopia earned more than \$1.3 billion from exports in 2006/07, just missing its \$1.5 billion target. The numbers were up from \$1.1 billion exported in 2005/06. Ethiopia exported 176,390 metric tonnes of coffee earning \$424 million in 2006/07, up from the 153,155 tonnes that grossed \$365.8 million in 2005/6. Oil seeds and spices fetched \$267.5 million, below a forecast income of \$343.7 million.

Most commodities underperformed, causing the country's annual foreign currency revenue to be less than anticipated. Meat and live animal exports were hurt by a ban slapped on Ethiopia from its major traditional buyer United Arab Emirates last November. This followed scares over an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever in neighboring Kenya. But gold preformed well. The country exported 5.58 metric tonnes of gold, about a third more than anticipated.

But while the numbers for exports were good, Ethiopia still ran a large trade deficit. The country paid a total of \$4.7 billion for imports ranging from industrial machines to fuel.

Turn on the lights

Reuters reports that Ethiopia, whose population is expected to swell from 75 million to more than 100 million by 2015, plans to light up the entire country in the next eight years. The country now produces 800 MW of electricity from hydropower dams, reaching only 19 percent of the 75 million population. The plan is to generate over 4,000 MW of power and install 135,000 km of distribution lines by 2015. Also required will be 12,000 km of high voltage networks to electrify 6,000 towns and villages providing access to electric power to over 50 percent of the country's population. The construction of five new hydropower dams is expected to be completed by 2010. Geothermal and wind power generation in addition to hydropower dams during the next eight years will help achieve total electrification of the country by 2015. The cost of building the dams, which runs into billions of dollars, will be met by the government, the World Bank and loans from international financial institutions.

Don't rip off my disks!

Hundreds of artists, publishers and producers of Ethiopian music staged an unprecedented demonstration to complain about the ineffectiveness of current copyright laws and demand new measures to protect their works against fraudulent copying. The demonstration, which included veteran artists such as Mahmud Ahmed, was held in conjunction with World Intellectual Property Day.

The two hour-long demonstration took off from Maskal Square and headed to the Ethiopian Parliament building. As the artists made their way towards the Parliament building they shouting slogans such as "We urge immediate protection for our rights." Artist Aregahagn Worash, coordinator of the demonstration and Board Member of Ethiopian Musician Association, said the aim of the demonstration was to express "our grief and concern over illegal copying of our works." The artists complained that the government's failure to enforce copyright legislation left them "poor and hungry."

Those Italian roads are now Chinese

The Chinese Road and Bridge Corporation, a Chinese construction firm that has been out-bidding all comers recently, clinched deals worth \$66 million from the Addis Ababa City Road Authority in recent bidding. These projects made up about two thirds of the new contracts. Included are hunks of very famous Addis roads: Masqal Square to Kaliti road spanning 9 kilometers, the juncture at the Coca Cola factory to Teklehaimanot Road via Abnet square stretching 2.5 kilo meters, the Africa Union-Pushkin Square-Mekanissa ring road spanning 4.1 kilometers and Sost Kutir Mazoria-Bisrate Gebriel-Tele-Desse Hotel road and Tele-Pushkin Square road together stretching 4.6 kilometers. Another Chinese firm, named UE Industrial, managed to grab a \$2.68 million project to install street lights along the roads the Authority itself constructed earlier.

The market keeps blooming

Ethiopia's cut flower business continues to expand at a rapid rate. Tsegaye Abebe, chairman of the Horticulture Producers and Exporters Association told Reuters that Ethiopia earns about \$65 million from flower exports annually. Tsegaye said, "The flower sector in Ethiopia is growing at almost 200 percent annually. New growers come into the business everyday, while existing farms are being expanded," About 75 investors have developed 750 hectares under greenhouses and another 150 hectares of tunnel or open field production. The government is processing land purchase applications by 100 international investors who would like to grow flowers. Nearly 70 percent of flowers produced in the country are exported to Holland for re-export.

More gold in them hills

Ethiopia is a centuries old gold producer and exporter. And new lodes are found — although not always reported — all the time. In March, privately-owned National Mining Corporation (NMC) announced that it had found an estimated 10,000 metric tonnes of gold in southern Ethiopia. The discovery was made near Dawa Dagiti in southern Oromia region. "When production starts the country could earn up to \$1 billion from gold exports," NMC administrator Melaku Beza told a news conference

in Addis Ababa. But, ever weary of claim jumpers, he gave no more details. NMC, owned by Saudi tycoon Mohammed Hussein Al-Amoudi, has concession rights to explore for minerals in 85 square kilometres in the area. Melaku said the company was also studying evidence of large silver deposits in northern Amhara and Tigray regions.

Culinary tourism: in search of the perfect kitfo

The New York Times, the Washington Post and host of other publications continue to write stories about the wonders of travel in Ethiopia. The New York Times recently (March 18, 2007) sent food writer Danielle Pergament off to Addis to write a 2,300 word epic for the Travel section about the high end of the restaurant scene. Pergament is a very serious sort of culinary travel writer who is usually off hunting the best trattorias in Florence or the perfect mustard shop in Paris. On assignment in Addis,



A COMBINATION PLATTER: Ready to feed all five senses

Pergament discovers "a rich and unexpected food culture" in "a country that serves up grass-fed beef and organic vegetables by default. There are no trendy macro-organic-vegan movements; rather, the livestock graze in open fields because there are no factory farms, and vegetables are rarely treated with pesticides because farmers can't afford the chemicals."

Even before she eats, she is charmed by “the most decadent hand washing I’ve ever had: after I soaped up, the waitress poured warm water over my lathered palms, then gave me a warm towel. She lighted a stick of incense on our table, and the room filled with the scent of sandalwood.” At an upscale Addis restaurant called Habesha, she discovers the joys of eating, well, habesha-style: “Eating injera is a sensory feast — the sweet smell



HABESHA RESTAURANT: The service is terrific, the injera a sensory feast *NYTimes photo*

of sandalwood, the rhythmic drumming from a trio of musicians, sporadic bursts of flickering candlelight, and a sweet and spicy meal that clings to my fingers. All five senses are abundantly fed.”

After learning the fundamentals, Pergament goes in search of the perfect kitfo. She first samples “assa kitfo” which she describes as chopped fried tilapia. The recipe, she surmises (since the chef will not reveal a trade secret) “calls for batter-fried tilapia, mixed with onions, chili peppers, spicy sauce and something else I can’t quite place.” The chef tells her: “It’s the part you don’t know that keeps our customers coming back.”

Then Pergament goes for the real beef thing at the Teshomech Kitfo House, which is “hidden down a bumpy, unpaved road flanked, by abandoned dwellings and small flocks of sheep.” Inside the restaurant she finds “one room, where three women in white butcher’s coats were chopping up raw meat with machetes, discarding fatty pieces and neatly arranging the choice ones. The meat was brought to a second room, to be spiced, seasoned and occasionally sautéed.”

She is offered cooked kitfo, but decides to go for the genuine thing and watches “a teenage sous

chef pour melted butter over raw meat, warm it in a wok and sprinkle it with bright orange powder known as *mit mita*, a fiery mix of red pepper, mustard seed and salt.” Pergament says she was “squeamish about eating the kitfo, but my curiosity got the better of me. It was faintly oily from the butter but warm and spicy, not unlike steak tartare, but with more kick.”

She moves on to The Tarik House, “a white clapboard butcher’s stand in the Lideta neighborhood.” There she finds two “men, each in a white butcher’s coat, silently sliced up a side of beef. It looked like something from a meat locker, except it was not cold. In fact, the cows hanging on the wall are never frozen, going swiftly from organic grass fields to these racks, with a brief stop at the slaughterhouse. But Tarik House is not only a butcher shop, it is also a restaurant. And here’s the thing: there’s no kitchen. The dish of the house is *tire siga*, or raw meat.” But she admits: “This time, I could not do it — I dunked the injera in the *mit mita*, squirted the lime juice on, and found it plenty flavorful without the meat. Yet I could not help thinking I was missing out.” Yes, no doubt, she was missing something. Like a tapeworm. 🚫🚫



A FEW WINNERS, MANY LOSERS

The war simmers on with little hope that peace is in sight

By Shlomo Bachrach (Staff 66-68)

EVER SINCE ETHIOPIAN TROOPS crossed into Somalia in December 2006 to toss the fundamentalist government of the Islamic Courts out of Mogadishu and help install the Transitional Federal Government (T.F.G.), it seems as if there are many more losers than winners in this continuing war. And even more discouraging, it also seems that those few winners who have emerged are those who are feeding off the chaos and bloodshed.

The losers

Until there is a change in the balance of forces, both Somali camps — the Islamic Courts and the Transitional Government — are trapped in losing positions primary of their own creation. Of course, they both have powerful foreign enablers, but their leaders brought their difficult situation on themselves.

The Islamic Courts were defeated by the invading Ethiopians last December and January. They had foolishly taunted the Ethiopians by advancing on the Transitional Government's capital

of Baidoa. They knew that Ethiopia had vowed to protect the T.F.G. in Baidoa and that Ethiopia already had some troops in the provisional capital. The Courts threatened to invade Ethiopia, renewing Somalia's past attempts to annex the Somali district in Ogaden. They were daring Ethiopia to act, and Addis took advantage of the challenge even though the Courts had only some machine-gun-mounted pickup trucks and a militia largely composed of untrained teenagers. Ethiopia's invasion led to the immediate collapse of the Courts' rule, and incidentally exposed the unpopularity of their fundamen-



ISLAMIC COURTS FIRE: Mortar rounds are everyday occurrence.

talist Islamic government when few Somalis rose to support the retreating Courts militia which quickly melted away.

The Courts may be down, but they are not out. A recent U.N. report states that although the Courts are removed from power, their fighters, while dispersed, remain available for action. They have large amounts of weaponry, including anti-aircraft missiles, grenades and mines safely hidden away. Their fighters have maintained constant pressure on the T.F.G. and Ethiopian forces and inflict substantial casualties. Of course, they also take heavy losses themselves.

The Hawiye clan has allied itself with the Courts, but they are more motivated by politics than religion. As the largest clan in southern Somalia and dominating the Mogadishu region, they flatly reject T.F.G. rule under Abdullahi Yusuf, a traditional rival from the Darod clan. They know that they will be offered only an unacceptable role in a Transitional Government. For now, this is enough for them to continue their alliance with the Courts. Nearly all the Hawiye leaders and the entire Courts leadership demand complete Ethiopian withdrawal before meeting with the T.F.G., which they would then be able to dominate.

The Transitional Federal Government is still little more than the figurehead — and the loser — it was when it was created at an international conference in Nairobi in 2004. It had the support of regional African governments and was greeted with relief by the African Union, the United Nations and many governments including the United States and members of the European Union. Everyone simply wanted the Somalia problem to go away. The Somali people were not consulted, however, and few welcomed the new government, much less the

new president, Abdullahi Yusuf. His decades-long relationship with the hated Ethiopians effectively undermined his position and forced him to make Baidoa his capital since his government was unwelcome in Mogadishu.

No one believes that the Transitional Government can survive very long after Ethiopia's inevitable withdrawal. Peace keepers from the African Union or elsewhere — and there are only a handful there today — will not fight on behalf of the T.F.G. This would leave the Transitional Government at the mercy of the fighters from the Islamic Courts, who would certainly repeat their victory of last summer. The presence of thousands of Ethiopian troops does not prevent Somali policemen, government soldiers and unlucky civilians being killed in the streets of Mogadishu nearly every day. These dead are the saddest of losers.



UGANDAN PEACE KEEPER: Looking for some much needed help, but none is likely very soon AFP

Ethiopia is also a loser, suffering hundreds — maybe several thousand — of dead and wounded. The insurgents, a term as sadly appropriate as it is ironic, claim that as many as 65 Ethiopian soldiers died in a single car bomb blast inside a military compound. But the real cost to Ethiopia is hard to estimate. Obviously it costs a lot to maintain a well-armed force of an estimated 20,000 inside Somalia, with armor and air support. How much is paid for by the United States, which considers Somalia to be on the anti-terror front line, is unknown. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Jenday Frazer and Prime Minister Meles deny that the United States is funding the Ethiopians in their Somali ventures. The cost to Ethiopia's international reputation is also great. Its questionable decision to go beyond defending the T.F.G. in Baidoa has turned into an ongoing occupation with casualties from suicide bombers, IEDs and car bombs — and no end is in sight. All of this sounds very familiar, doesn't it?

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Ethiopia now faces sharp criticism in Washington, where the Democrats introduced legislation (HR 2003) linking some aid to improved human rights performance. Democrats read a statement critical of Ethiopia into the Senate record and sent a letter to Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice expressing strong displeasure with the Ethiopian government. Ethiopia's recent release of the opposition leaders from prison has calmed things temporarily. While avoiding a direct attack on Ethiopia's Somalia policy because of the broader implications on the war on terror, Democrats are signaling that a Democratic President and Congress after 2008 will change US policy in the Horn. The House Resolution is now under consideration in Congress.

As usual, the biggest losers are the Somali people. Casualties number in the many thousands. Relief workers say that about 400,000 people have fled Mogadishu and endure wretched conditions that lead to more deaths. Drought in some areas and flooding in others have destroyed crops and hampered delivery of relief supplies.

The unlikely winners

Potentially more dangerous for Ethiopia is the support the Somali Islamic Courts gives to the Ogaden National Liberation Front, the present incarnation of the long-standing regional separatist movement. Unable to challenge Ethiopia directly, the Courts are arming and training Liberation Front fighters while providing a haven for them in nearby rural border areas in Somalia. This support has been a boost for the Front, which is also said to be getting increased aid from Eritrea since the Somalia invasion.

The Ogaden National Liberation Front claims to seek self-determination, not necessarily independence, but doesn't rule that out. It says that Ethiopia has neglected the region, that its police and army have committed rapes and

killings, and are interfering with essential commerce and the distribution of aid by international aid agencies. The Front's widely reported killing of 74 workers, including 9 Chinese nationals, at an oil exploration camp, was just the most spectacular of recent clashes.

Eritrea believes that it benefits from strengthening Ethiopia's opponents in Somalia, mistaking a short-term advantage for long-term benefit. A United Nations report accused Eritrea of being a major arms supplier to the Islamic Courts, the Hawiye clan and foreign jihadists. The quantity and quality of arms used against Ethiopian and T.F.G. troops demonstrate extensive support from outside. The growing sophistication of bombs and mines and the increase in suicide bombing — a tactic unknown in Somalia until recently — indicate that training, and probably some fighters, are also arriving from outside.

Eritrea unconvincingly denies any military role in Somalia, though it hosts some the members of the Islamic Courts and defectors from the T.F.G. in Asmara while providing diplomatic support with Gulf nations. The Oromo Liberation Front has long been active in Asmara, as are Eritrean opposition groups in Addis Ababa. Asmara's goal is to make the Somalia adventure as costly as possible for Ethiopia by tying down troops and forcing Ethiopia to defend two borders at the same time.




ETHIOPIAN TANK: The insurgents are not impressed by the show of force.

An Eritrean invasion of Ethiopia at this time is unlikely, in part because Ethiopia recently reinforced the border. Eritrea had earlier moved up troops and tanks and imposed restrictions on UN observers. However, occasional exchanges of fire could escalate into war, as did Eritrea's limited entry into Badme in 1998.

The unsavory winners in Somalia are the sub-clan based gangster warlords who thrived during 16 years of anarchy that was temporarily ended by the Islamic Courts in July 2006. Most Somalis welcomed the Courts because they removed the teen-age thugs who had ruled the streets with their AK-47s, operating roadblocks, extorting tolls and making normal life impossible. Many Somalis today openly long for the return of the Courts, preferring fundamentalist rule to warlord rule.

Is there any cause for hope?

The Transitional Government has lately offered some slight basis for optimism. A three-week clan conference with some 2,000 participants, organized by the T.F.G., ended in Mogadishu on August 30. Despite violent efforts by the insurgents to disrupt it, important issues were discussed at the conference including terms for a clan truce and elections in 2009. The conference was deeply flawed because of the absence of the Islamists and the Hawiye leadership. Most Somalis doubt that anything will come of the fine-sounding resolutions that were announced. It's also questionable whether meaningful progress has been made on establishing civil and political institutions to replace the anarchic authority of dozens of subclans and clans now operating as the government. Only time will tell whether this was a fatal evasion of the governance issue or a necessary step toward addressing it.

Where does that leave Ethiopia and Eritrea? Sadly, it leaves them staring down their gun barrels across their heavily armed border, with governments too angry to talk to each other. Both sent representatives to a meeting of the Boundary Commission in September, but each side merely restated known positions. Somalia, and now the Ogaden, remain a proxy battlefield. 


A Brief Note on the Millennium

By Ted Vestal (Staff 64-66)

SINCE THE TIME OF JULIUS CAESAR, Ethiopia, under the influence of the Orthodox Church, has used the Julian calendar. Most of the rest of the world switched to the Gregorian calendar on 24 February 1582, under orders from Pope Gregory XIII who issued a Papal Bull. But as a result of Ethiopians taking no bull, the nation's calendar labelled EC has lagged behind the AD calendar used by the most of the Western world by about seven years.

Thus, when the Ethiopian New Year was observed on September 11th this year, the nation entered a new millennium with the year 2000 EC. A major celebration complete with a big name rock band, Ethiopian musicians and expensive tickets was held in Addis Ababa. Security concerns forced the cancellation of a marathon and other events.

Ethiopians of the Diaspora held their own festivities throughout the world. Washington, D.C. observed a six-day festival from September 7-12, complete with art exhibitions, a set of scholarly symposiums, a gala at Stadium Armory, a prayer vigil and a march for democracy to the Washington Monument. Ethiopians in Dallas got a head start on millennium celebrations by holding their "Ethiopia Day and Ethiopian Millennium Celebration Program" on 2 September. I and some 800 other participants attended a cultural and fashion show and musical program, as well as a symposium with four scholars reviewing highlights of Ethiopia's last two millennia and Ethiopian-United States relations.

The celebrations garnered world-wide attention. A summit meeting of the African Union and the United Nations General Assembly recognized 2000 EC as an historic date. The U.S. Congress congratulated the people of Ethiopia on its second Millennium. Ethiopian Ambassador Negash Kebret Botor, said it is "not only for celebrating the unique and distinct nature of our system of calendar" but also "helps promote and further strengthen cultural understanding among the people of the world." 

Eritrea news



Eritrea's government has been cultivating ties with such countries as Sudan, Libya, China and a handful in the Middle East. Some are old allies who helped Eritrea in its war of independence; now they prop up a dismal economy — and give diplomatic help. 'The deepening of diplomatic relations in an easterly direction has given Eritrea breathing room,' says a Western diplomat. 'And it's been very cleverly done.'"

POLITICS & DIPLOMACY

Cleverly walking the edge?

If you listen to the talk in Washington, London and surely Addis, you will have come to the conclusion that in the last six months Eritrea seems to be moving more and more into a radical — and increasingly isolated — mode. Surely it has displeased many of its former friends. But the game it is playing may be a bit more clever than those in the West may think. A recent editorial in the Economist, reflecting an unconventional view, noted that it is true that Eritrea has become a haven for rebels and radical dissidents.

The editorial continued: "Eritrea is not only a welcoming host; it has been accused of giving rebels arms. This has annoyed its neighbors as well as the West. Yet Eritrea's reclusive, authoritarian government is less isolated than it might have been. Eritrea was once something of a Western pin-up in the new world order. It emerged from its independence struggle against Ethiopia in 1993 with strong international support and lots of political capital. President Isaias Afwerki was named a 'renaissance African leader' by President Bill Clinton.

"But, 14 years after independence, the West now sees Eritrea more as a rogue nation. Two months ago the European Union said it would engage with Eritrea to solve conflicts in the Horn, but a number of Western governments are becoming more hostile towards it. Eritrea has become used to surviving without Western support. Eritreans say that every time it has mattered, the West has let them down. They are particularly frustrated by the West's inability to make Ethiopia accept the verdict of international arbiters over the border dispute, which led to at least 70,000 deaths in a war from 1998 to 2000.

"Instead, Eritrea's government has been cultivating ties with such countries as Sudan, Libya, China and a handful in the Middle East. Some are old allies who helped Eritrea in its war of independence; now they prop up a dismal economy — and give diplomatic help. 'The deepening of diplomatic relations in an easterly direction has given Eritrea breathing room,' says a Western diplomat. 'And it's been very cleverly done.'"

War of words: the U.S versus Eritrea

In August the United States and Eritrea launched verbal attacks on each other. First Jendayi Frazer, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, announced at a Washington press briefing that the U.S. was closing Eritrea's consulate in Oakland — yes, Oakland, CA — in response to what she claimed were continued harassment of the American diplomatic mission in Eritrea. Frazer claimed that Asmara "continues to illegally detain [the U.S.] Embassy diplomatic pouch bags and refuses to provide visas to temporary duty diplomatic support personnel for the last two years." So the U.S. was closing the mission, but not expelling the diplomats who were free to transfer to the embassy in Washington. A sharp slap on the hand, but not a kick in the behind.

Then, Frazer denounced Eritrea's activities in Somalia by endorsing a U.N. report on Somalia. She said, "the U.N. Monitoring Group report clearly indicates that Eritrea has played a key role in financing, funding and arming the terror and insurgency activities which are taking place in Somalia, and is the primary source of support for that insurgency and terror activities."

In response to a reporter's question, Frazer said that the State Department is considering putting Eritrea on the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. Said Frazer, "Frankly, the information so far that

we've collected is fairly convincing about their activities, in terms of [being a] State Sponsor [of terrorism], in Eritrea and in Somalia. If they stop

their behavior, we're not looking to go down this route. But if they continue their behavior and we put together the file that's necessary, I think it would be fairly convincing." The list of State Sponsors of Terrorism includes countries such as Iran, Syria, North Korea and Cuba. Being on the list carries unpleasant consequences, especially for a country with limited resources.



JENDAYI FRAZER: debating long distance with Eritrea AFP

A reporter noted that President Isaias Afewerki was scheduled to speak on television the next day. Did the assistant secretary have any idea what he would say? Said Frazer: "I hope that what he would say is that Eritrea values its relationship with the United States and will look to improve it and will also stop any activities that are destabilizing Somalia. That's what I would hope he would say, but I have no idea what he will say."

But President Isaias offered no such conciliatory words. In an angry two-hour interview broadcast on Eritrean State television (there is no other kind), Isaias said that the American "strategy of monopoly and dominance through fomenting confrontation among peoples is leading the world to a dangerous path." Isaias charged that the United States had never supported the Eritrean independence movement and had always favored Ethiopia over Eritrea. Now, said the president, Washington was frustrated because the growing opposition to the United States and Ethiopia in their military ventures in Somalia. "If the situation is to really change at all," said the president, "The U.S. administration officials need to change their frame of thinking and put an end to their acts of adventurism, as well as weaving conspiracies to undermine our national interests."

Diplomats no more

Eritrean diplomatic passport holders are now required to have a visa when traveling to several Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt. This is because of the proliferation people claiming to be diplomats carrying Eritrean passports. Many of those supposed diplomats were, in fact, dissidents given haven in Asmara by the sympathetic Eritrean government. These passport holders included Sudanese nationals involved in rebel movements in Eastern Sudan and Darfur, Ethiopians including Ogaden, Oromo and Patriotic Front leaders, as well as Somali nationals connected with the ousted government of the Union of Islamic Courts. Until the latest decision by countries like Egypt, Eritrean diplomats were granted visas upon arrival.

About five years ago, General Abdulaziz Khalid, a key figure of the Sudanese opposition, was arrested when he entered the United Arab Emirates carrying an Eritrean diplomatic passport. He was on Interpol's wanted list. The UAE authorities deported him to Sudan where he was arrested and later released on a presidential clemency.

Iran and Eritrea

Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki held a cordial — and well-publicized — meeting with Reza Ameri, Iran's ambassador accredited to Asmara. Isaias called for increased ties with Tehran. Said Isaias: "The nuclear progress of the Islamic Republic of Iran is a source of joy and happiness to us, and we believe that access to nuclear energy is Iran's legal and undeniable right and we support Iran's stance in this ground." According to the statement by Eritrean Foreign Ministry, Isaias also noted the use of nuclear weapons by the United States against the other nations, and said, "The United States does not have the authority to decide which countries should enjoy this technology. If there should exist (nuclear) confinement, it should include countries like the US, and not Iran which intends to make a peaceful use of the nuclear energy." He invited Iranian industrialists and traders to play a stronger role in the Eritrean market.

Aside from reflecting a double standard, the E.U.'s new policy towards Eritrea is disastrous for those who are exposed to the government's terror. It is inconsistent and dangerous, giving President Isaias the chance to celebrate his victory, strengthen his grip and continue to renege on his promises with impunity.

Department of dangling modifiers

When Scott H. DeLisi, U.S. ambassador to Eritrea, completed his term in June, he issued a farewell statement which began by expressing his admiration for the "strength, courage, and perseverance undiminished" of his many Eritrean friends and colleagues. That part of his statement was clear enough. But then he made one of those grammatical errors we were all warned about by our ninth-grade writing teachers: the dangling or misplaced modifier. Oops. Wrote DeLisi: "You should know that despite increasing government violations of human rights, civil liberties, economic freedom, and democratic principles, the Government of the United States remains hopeful that one day the Eritrean people will enjoy the rewards of their heroic struggle for independence." What a whopper — or, as some cynics suggest, maybe DeLisi was just sending a message to the U.S. government.

BUSINESS & AID

China deals

Eritrea signed two economic agreements with China in July. Chinese trade with Eritrea leapt more than 350% in 2006 based mainly on increased machinery and telecommunications imports. In a January visit, then Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing partially cancelled Eritrea's foreign debt.

Details of the two agreements are vague. According to a statement by the Ministry of Information, Eritrea's new foreign minister, Osman Saleh, signed agreements that "strengthening cooperation in economic and technical domains." The statement said "The agreements include programs to expand the College of Arts and Social Science currently under construction in Adi-Keyih town."

Asmara is relying on mine operations for gold and other minerals — expected to begin in 2008 — to reverse the country's economic problems. China has been giving low interest loans, debt relief and other economic incentives to some of the world's poorest but resource-rich economies without the normal restrictions attached to Western assistance.

E.U. aid for Asmara

The European Union granted Eritrea \$90 million under the European Development Fund. Grants support "administrative capacity building, infrastructure and food aid, among others." An E.U. statement said the Asmara government is required to adopt a "constructive approach at settling regional conflicts, and to improve on human rights and press freedom." In May, President Isaias Afewerki met in Brussels with Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid. The E.U. has made several attempts at convincing the Asmara government to modify its policies on human rights and end its support of the rebels in Somalia.

Reporters without Borders, a press freedom group, has criticized these E.U. initiatives. In a statement, the group said "Aside from reflecting a double standard, the E.U.'s new policy towards Eritrea is disastrous for those who are exposed to the government's terror. It is inconsistent and dangerous, giving President Isaias the chance to celebrate his victory, strengthen his grip and continue to renege on his promises with impunity."

Equally controversial is a program funded by the German government to train journalists on the staff of the Ministry of Information in Asmara. A letter from the pressure group, the Committee to Protect Journalists, to the German ambassador in Washington said, "The training is part of a three-year cooperation agreement signed in December 2006 between DW-Akademie and the Eritrean Information Ministry. While we are convinced that the DW-Akademie trainees are receiving world-class journalism training, we fear that they will not be able to faithfully exercise their profession since the Eritrean government effectively banned independent journalism in September 2001, and continues to subject the remaining state-controlled journalists to arbitrary imprisonment and threats of reprisals against their families. Eritrea remains the only nation in sub-Saharan Africa without any independent media outlet."

The Committee urged the ambassador "use all your diplomatic influence to obtain guarantees from the

Eritrean authorities that the journalists will be able to work freely and without fear of reprisal. We also call on you to insist that the Eritrean government lift its ban on the private press, that it fully account for those journalists who have died in prison, and that it to immediately release all journalists who have been jailed without charge or trial simply for exercising their right to free expression.”

RELIGION & HUMAN RIGHTS

Patriarch succession controversy

According to an article in the Christian Post, an American evangelical news service, the fourth patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewhado Church, Abune Dioskoros, received the key to the Holy Shrine and was sworn in during his investiture ceremony and anointment at St. Mary Church in Asmara. Dioskoros was appointed as the new Eritrean Orthodox head in April and reportedly was approved unanimously by the Holy Synod. The investiture ceremony was attended by archbishops, religious leaders, senior government officials, diplomats and believers.

Critics of the Eritrean government have accused it of propping up the new patriarch after removing Abune Antonios, 79, the former pontiff, from office and detaining him under house arrest. In January 2006, Abune Antonios was dismissed from his position after criticizing the government for interfering in church activities and for persecuting evangelical churches. Mervyn Thomas, chief executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said that “in addition to the appalling mistreatment of the legitimate pontiff, who continues to be held without charge or trial, the Eritrean authorities appear determined to usurp the authority to appoint a leader for a church with a 17-century-long history.”

More church raids

Reuters reported that some 80 people including several U.S. citizens were arrested in a raid during a church ceremony in May. “A Presbyterian Church in Eritrea was raided during Sunday service on the 29th of April,” said a statement on U.K.-based opposition Web site, www.release-eritrea.org.

uk. “Following the raid, Pastor Zecharias Abraham and around 80 of his parishioners were detained. Among the worshippers on the day were some foreign nationals at least three of them Americans.”

Information Minister Ali Abdu did not deny or confirm that security forces stormed Mehret Yesus Church in Asmara. “We will not respond to trash statements. Nobody has a right to question our day-to-day internal affairs,” Abdu told Reuters. About half Eritrea’s 4.6 million people are Christian and half Muslim. The government denies persecuting anyone on the basis of faith, but has been accused by human rights groups and the U.S. State Department of violating religious freedoms.

Troubling report on religion

The State Department’s annual report on human rights in Eritrea painted a sorry picture. Particularly disturbing was the section on religious freedom. It confirmed many fragmentary reports which have come out of the country in recent months.

Here are some sections of the report:

The law and [Eritrea’s] unimplemented constitution provide for freedom of religion; however, the government restricted this right in practice. Only four religious groups whose registrations had been approved by the government were allowed to meet legally during the year. These were: Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Catholics, and members of the Evangelical Church of Eritrea, an umbrella group of several Protestant churches affiliated with the Lutheran World Federation.

Members of the nonregistered churches continued to be arbitrarily arrested throughout the year. Security forces continued to abuse, arrest, and detain members of nonregistered churches; sometimes such abuse resulted in death. Compass Direct reported that, on October 17, Immanuel Andegergesh and Kibrom Firemichel died from injuries and severe dehydration in a military camp outside the town of Adi-Quala according to credible reports. The two men were arrested two days earlier for holding a religious service in a private home. There were reports that three members of nonregistered

The soccer players took the easy route out of Eritrea. The BBC reports that 400 to 600 of Eritreans trek across the rugged border between Eritrea and Sudan a month in search of freedom. They are fleeing poverty, the military draft and political repression.

churches received a two-year sentence for violation of the government restriction on belonging to an unregistered religious group.

During the year there continued to be reports that security forces used extreme physical abuse such as bondage, heat exposure, and beatings to punish those detained for their religious beliefs, and that numerous detainees were required to sign statements repudiating their faith or agreeing not to practice it as a condition for release. There also continued to be reports that relatives were asked to sign for detainees who refused to sign such documents.

During the year there were reports that hundreds of followers of various unregistered churches (mostly Protestant) were detained, harassed, and abused. While some were detained for short periods of time and released, approximately 2,000 individuals remained in detention at year's end because of their religious affiliation,

Banning female circumcision

The Eritrean information ministry said the government has banned the practice of female circumcision, and anybody involved in female genital mutilation would be punished with a fine and imprisonment. The move follows a campaign against the practice by the National Union of Eritrean Women, which says more than 90% of Eritrean women are circumcised.

"Female circumcision is a procedure that seriously endangers the health of women, causes them considerable pain and suffering besides threatening their lives," the government proclamation said. "Whosoever requests, incites or promotes female circumcision by providing tools or any other means and whosoever, knowing that female circumcision is to take place or has taken place, fails without good cause, to warn or inform the proper authorities promptly, shall be punishable with a fine and imprisonment." The ban came into effect on 31 March.

Soccer — and other — defections

Six Eritrean soccer players requested asylum in An-

gola after their 2008 African Cup of Nations qualifier in March. "I can confirm there are these six football players and they requested asylum here. They are in the custody of the Angolan authorities," an Angolan government official said. Angola beat Eritrea 6-1 in the qualifying match.

The soccer players took the easy route out of Eritrea. The BBC reports that 400 to 600 Eritreans trek across the rugged border between Eritrea and Sudan a month in search of freedom. They are fleeing poverty, the military draft and political repression. The BBC tracked the story of Haile, who "was a translator for an international organization, until he was arrested, accused of selling state secrets to an enemy. It is a charge frequently laid against translators working for foreign embassies, the United Nations and even aid agencies." Haile escaped when he was being transported from one prison to another. Walking at night, he traveled west to the Sudanese border. Evading patrols, he found a way across. There he was arrested by the Sudanese. They were looking for money. He had none, but managed to make it to Khartoum where he had family.

Sudan is home to more than 120,000 Eritreans, but even there Haile was not safe. Eritrean government agents came looking for him. Fearing that he would be arrested or abducted, he got together with a group of seven others, and hired a truck to cross the Sahara into Libya. Deep in the Sahara, the truck broke down. The water ran out. Three of his mates died. Haile remained by the truck in the scorching sun. Finally, after six days in the Sahara the Eritreans made it to the oasis of Kufra in southeastern Libya.

Kufra was a welcome sight, but their problems have still not ended. Hundreds of Eritreans are detained in the town. Those lucky enough to leave will try to make it to the coast before boarding a rickety boat to cross the Mediterranean. Malta, which is already crowded with Eritreans, or Italy might be a destination. But for now, reports the BBC, Haile is trapped in Kufra, waiting and hoping, but still longing for his own country: "I feel very bad. I feel my country should be free. I feel very bad."  

The Eritrea-Ethiopia Border

Still hot, still dangerous

It's hard to tell which way to look in Ethiopia these days. The Ethiopian army is deployed massively in Somalia. And it is busy swatting down a rebellion in the Ogaden. But it is the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea that continues to be the flash point everyone is worried about. Recently Paul Salopek, the Africa correspondent for the Chicago Tribune, traveled to the border to take a look. Some excerpts from his excellent August report:

BADME DOESN'T LOOK LIKE the most dangerous town in Africa. Marooned at the end of 20 miles of dirt road, the tiny frontier outpost consists of a knot of rock huts, some jaywalking goats and one communal ping-pong table. Not the sort of place, one would imagine, that gives U.S. policymakers in Africa the jitters. Yet today, experts worry that remote little Badme, which is claimed by both countries but controlled by Ethiopia, may be poised to spark even worse trouble ahead — namely, Africa's next major war.


Archenemies Ethiopia and Eritrea insist that renewed fighting along their desolate 620-mile-long common border is not imminent. But diplomats, security experts and U.N. officials warn that recent saber-rattling by the two nations' leaders, beefed-up troop deployments along their heavily fortified border and even the timing of the U.S. presidential elections are all pushing tensions in the wrong direction — toward a showdown so bloody it will knock Darfur out of the headlines.

Western diplomats suspect that Ethiopia, the Goliath of the two opponents, is sorely tempted to deliver a killer blow against its smaller rival before the Bush administration, a close Ethiopian ally, leaves office at the beginning of 2009. And though tiny Eritrea has more to risk in going to war, experts say its deepening isolation from the world doesn't preclude its launching a preemptive strike. One bleak scenario: an assault on contested terri-

tory in November, when an exasperated boundary commission set up by the U.N. packs up after years of Ethiopian stonewalling, and declares the two countries' border officially mapped.

In the bloody 1998–2000 conflict, tens of thousands of Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers died in a ghastly World War I-style trench war that baffled the world. The bloodshed finally was stanchied by foreign mediation. Now, after seven years of failed U.N. negotiations, experts say the sole object of the opposing armies will be regime change: a battle to the finish. Nearby Somalia would be sucked into the chaos and violence, analysts say.

"In a post-9/11 world, that's what worries Washington," said Dan Connell, an Ethiopia-Eritrea war expert at Simmons College in Boston. "If either state were to fall, it would open up the Horn to all sorts of power vacuums and outside forces, including international terrorists. It could get very ugly."

Ethiopia and Eritrea maintain the largest armies in Africa. At the moment, well over 100,000 soldiers from both countries are dug in along their joint frontier. On July 30, the U.N. Security Council voted unanimously to extend a weak peacekeeping mission of 1,700 international troops on the border for another six months. Both sides have agreed to meet in September and wrangle over issues of demarcation. Few diplomats expect a breakthrough. 

Preparing for Beijing, runners set markers in Osaka

By Barry Hillenbrand

A YEAR FROM NOW at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing runners will be enduring stifling heat and breathing air of questionable quality in hopes of winning the most coveted title in track and field: Olympic Champion. This summer, as a fitting preparation, the IAAF World Championships in Athletics took place in Osaka, Japan, where the temperatures in August were stifling, the humidity crushing and the air quality was, well, not too bad. Still, for long distance runners who train in the highlands of Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya, the World Championships were a struggle. The marathon started at 7:00 am, in vain hopes of finding cooler conditions. When the race started the temperature was 84 degrees, but when the runners entered the stadium for the finish at 9:16, the temperature was 91, the hottest-ever finishing temperature for a world championships marathon. The humidity was 67 per cent, down from 78 percent at the start.

Thirty of the 87 starters, including two Ethiopians, dropped out of the race unable to finish. With Ethiopia's marathon master and long distance running icon Haile Gebreselassie, 34, sitting out the Osaka World Championships because, he says, he is preparing for a world record bid in Berlin, Ethiopia did not medal in the marathon. Yared Asmerom, one of Eritrea's surprising new crop of runners, placed a respectable fourth.

But lack of serious representation on the winner's podium for the marathon, did not mean Ethiopia — and Eritrea — failed make a mark in Osaka. Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele, 25, the current reigning champion in the 10,000 m, arrived with some issues to deal with. Bekele came into Osaka as the two-time world champion in the 10,000 m. He held the world record at the distance. He also won the gold medal in the event in Athens in 2004. Bekele was Ato Ten Thousand Meters.

But he was not without competition — and had a score to settle. In March Bekele's amazing streak of 27 consecutive victories in cross-country races dating back to December 2001 was broken. Zersenay Tadesse of Eritrea won the men's 12-kilometer race at the World Cross Country Championships in Mombasa, Kenya, beating Bekele who did not finish the race. The problem in Mombasa for Bekle, aside from Tadesse's considerable talent, was the heat and humidity. "Even before I started the race, I was completely shocked to see some of our junior women runners drop out or collapse at the finish line," Bekele said. "I knew that it was going to be a bad race." The temperature was in the 90s at the host golf club along the Indian Ocean. Several runners had to be carried off the course and were hospitalized.

Bekele and Tadesse traded the lead for much of the race, but Tadesse started to pull away on the final 2-kilometer lap. Bekele then dropped out of the race, his streak broken and his hopes for his sixth straight cross country world title dashed. At the finish line, Tadesse kissed his hands and raised them



ERITREA'S ZERSENAY TADESSE: winning in the heat and humidity of Mombasa

in the air amid wild cheers from the crowd. "I feel happy and proud for all Eritrea," Tadesse said. "I am very happy and have no words to express my feelings."

So Bekele arrived in Osaka on a mission to put the troubling defeat in Mombasa behind him. Said Bekele: "I even doubted whether I would return back to my best. Mombasa had affected me a lot. Nothing like this ever happened to me and I was worried." When the race began the conditions were once again hot and humid. "The weather will be difficult to handle," he said before the race.

From the beginning of the race, Tadesse took the lead at the front of the pack and set the pace. Behind him were Bekele, Kenya's Martin Mathathi and Ethiopia's Sileshi Sihine, known as the "silver man" because he is always collecting the second-place silver medal behind Bekele. Tadesse was setting the pace with blistering sub-2:45 kilometers, lap after lap. Then he upped the pace and did one 2:40-kilometer after another. At 8000 meters until only the four men remained up front.

But Tadesse could not hold on at that pace. He was passed by Mathathi and faded back into fourth place. Mathathi took the lead with three laps to go, but Sihine, motioned on by Bekele, challenged the Kenyan as the bell sounded for the last lap. Sihine passed him in an easy looping gait and it looked

for a moment that Sihine would become a "gold man." But in the final turn, Bekele turned on the afterburners, broke into his famous closing sprint, and passed both Mathathi and Sihine.

"I used everything I had to come back," Bekele said after the race, "and when I caught Sileshi, of course I had to pass him." And so he did, doing the final lap in an amazing 55 seconds. He was elated: "It's not easy to win a third time in a world championship. I'm very happy." Bekele said. "Now my big goal is the Beijing Olympics."

BEKELE'S HEROICS WERE MATCHED — even surpassed — by 22-year old Tirunesh Dibaba in the women's 10,000 m event. Dibaba is Ethiopia's young phenomenon. When she was barely 16, she placed fifth in the 5,000 m at the World Championships. At 18 she won the gold medal at the World Championship in the 5,000 m. In 2005 in Helsinki, she won the gold in both the 5,000 m and the 10,000 m, a rare double victory in a World Championship. But she was disappointed in the 2004 Olympics when she placed third in the 5,000 m, beaten by fellow Ethiopian Meseret Defar.

With a bit of help from the media always in search if a story line, Defar and Dibaba became arch-rivals. Not exactly Toyne Harding versus Nancy Kerrigan, but still the idea of "the battling D's" fighting it out added drama to meets. In head-to-head competitions, Defar has won 13 races against nine for Dibaba.

In Osaka, Dibaba, now 22, hoped to repeat her double which would mean defeating Defar in the 5,000 m. But her first challenge was the 10,000 m. She got off to a poor start. Mid-way through the race she collided with teammate Mestawet Tufa and fell. Recovering, she found herself 30 meters behind the pack, clutching her stomach. She ran on. She grabbed a bottle of water off a side-line table and continued, costing her more time.

"If it had been another competition I would have stopped," she admitted after the race, "I only continued because it was a race for my country.



MEDALISTS IN THE 10,000 METERS: Ethiopia's Sileshi Sihine with a silver and Kenenisa Bekele with the gold; Kenya's Martin Mathathi takes the bronze



RUNNING THROUGH THE PAIN: Tirunesh Dibaba pumping for the finish

I had stomach pains.” She did persist and closed the gap with the pack and ultimately, with one lap to go, took the lead. She turned on her sprint in the last lap and finished first. In second place was Ethiopian-born Elvan Abeylegesse who now races for Turkey.

Dibaba decided not to try the double, her stomach problems were too great and the heat and humidity too difficult. She dropped out of the 5,000 m. That left the way open for Defar, who had an Olympic gold, but not a world championship title. As the race began local Japanese favorite Kayoko Fukushi set off at the front and the rest of the field seemed to content to let her set a slow pace in the heat of the Osaka evening.

Defar sat in second place until the local hope Fukushi faded just before the 3,000m mark. That’s when Kenya’s Vivian Cheruiyot took up the lead running with a group of other Kenyans. Defar finally hit the front just a lap before the bell as the field trailed right across the track looking for space to make a move. Challengers came and went but Defar just upped the pace until, with 200 meters to go, she hit her finishing stride and streaked away to victory, with three Kenyans following.

Defar draped herself in a Ethiopian flag and, like Bekele earlier in the week, carried a sign announcing the celebrations for Ethiopian millennium during her victory lap. “I am the world champion and it feels great,” said Defar. But she did not forget her rival Dibaba who sat out the race. The Battling Ds are respectful of each other, no matter what the press writes. Said Defar: “Tirunesh [Dibaba] is a very strong athlete and a

good competitor for me. I am sorry she is sick and not here. But she is the 10,000m champion and I am the 5,000m world champion so that is good.”

In the end Ethiopia managed to win three gold medals and one silver in Osaka. The individual performances by its great heroes — Bekele, Dibaba and Defar — were stunning and very dramatic, but both Berkle and Dibaba failed to win their promised doubles. Dibaba and Defar did not try for doubles. Bekela failed when he finished fifth in the 5,000 m. Haile Gebreselassie was nowhere to be seen in Osaka, although his recent marathon runs have been impressive.

As a team effort, Ethiopia did not have a very good showing in Osaka. By winning four medals, Ethiopia placed seventh in the overall medal standings. Arch rival Kenya did so much better. Kenya placed third, behind the United States and Russia. Kenyan runners went home with 13 medals: five gold, three silver and five bronze. Kenya had runner depth. Ethiopia did not. Ethiopian runners did not even score high non-medal finishes.

It may be a source of some satisfaction that two Ethiopian- born runners won medals for other



2007 5,000 M WORLD CHAMPION: Meseret Defar

countries: the silver in the 10,000 m went to Elvan Abeylegesse now running for Turkey, and the gold in the 1,500 m was won by Maryam Yusuf Jamal who runs for Bahrain. But despite all the glitter of its three golds and drama of its heroic finishes, Ethiopia knows that its has a lot of work to do before Beijing.



Lucy still a diamond in the sky

by Barry Hillenbrand (*Debre Markos 63–65*)

It's a bit tricky to access, but do not miss the Lucy show on the web.

The Houston Museum of Natural Science created a wonderful Web presentation about Lucy.

To see it:

- 1) Go to www.hmns.org.
- 2) On the home page, click on the "Learn More" button under "Lucy's Legacy."
- 3) At the top of the "Lucy's Legacy" page, click on the ever-changing long rectangular pictures about Lucy.

MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS since her discovery in the Afar Dessert by the young American anthropologist Donald Johanson and his Ethiopian colleagues, Lucy, a 3.2 million year old *Australopithecus afarensis*, one of the world's oldest human fossils, is still generating excitement. In a stunning — and controversial — new museum show, "Lucy's Legacy: The Hidden Treasures of Ethiopia," which opened August 31 at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, Lucy is the center of attention, attracting massive publicity and drawing huge crowds.

Johanson is a bit startled with all the fuss about his find after all these years. He told the *Houston Chronicle*: "I am a bit surprised about the ever-expanding popularity of Lucy especially in light of so many other notable hominid fossil discoveries in Africa. Yet, Lucy continues to prevail and she has become an icon for human evolution and is the touchstone by which all other finds are judged."

Part of her popularity may be her clever name, which came from the Beatle's song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds." Part of it is that she was one of the first identifiable human fossils to be found with nearly 40 per cent of her bones in tact thus enabling scientists to unravel a great deal of detail about her pedigree. And part of it — we like to think — is that she was found in Ethiopia, a country with a considerable amount of panache and history.

The Ethiopian government is delighted with all the attention the Lucy show is getting: the stories in newspapers around the world; the segments on the evening TV news in America. Samuel Assefa,

Ethiopia's ambassador to the United States told a press conference in Houston that the show "offers two — not one — grand narratives, two grand narratives that originate in Ethiopia. First, of course, is the evolution of man, and the second is Ethiopia as one of the cradles of civilization. We see this as a wonderful opportunity to make known to the world who we are."

The Lucy show is more than Lucy flaunting her very cool bones. The show contains more than 100 artistic and cultural items from Ethiopia and provides a quick overview of the history and culture of Ethiopia, which Ambassador Samuel hopes will dispel the image of the country as a war-torn, famine-plagued land.

The first room of the show — the history room — contains early stone tools, a wide selection of illuminated Christian manuscripts and processional crosses, a selection of Korans from Harar, and the first coins minted by an indigenous African civilization. There are also paintings, musical instruments, implements of daily use, and a scale model of the famous Church of St. George in Lalibela.

The history lesson over and — the Ethiopians fervently hope — future tourism dollars generated,



“It’s a form of prostitution, it’s gross exploitation of the ancestors of humanity and it should not be permitted.”

visitors move to the next room that seems austere compared to the bright colors of the history room. To build drama around Lucy, this gallery contains only replica casts — not real bones — of many other hominid species recovered in the country, along with a video of Johanson’s describing the day he found Lucy.

Then — and only then — are visitors allowed to move to the third room to see Lucy. As the Chicago Tribune describes it: “In a darkened oval gallery, Lucy’s bones are laid out in a glass-topped black display case almost like a funeral bier. The museum also commissioned an extraordinarily life-like model of Lucy made of flesh-like plastic resins and covered in long black bear hair. A sumptuous mural of the region where Lucy was found covers the perimeter wall and depicts a 24-hour scene that starts at midnight with an artist’s rendition of the earliest hominid found so far, *Ardipithecus kadabba*, that lived 5.8 to 5.2 million years ago. As the day dawns and brightens, it follows other hominid species in chronological order, with Lucy appearing at noon, and continues through other early human ancestors. It ends with depictions of the earliest modern humans around a campfire 200,000 years ago.”

Not everyone is pleased with the Lucy road show. Many anthropologists expressed outrage that the fossils should be moved. “It’s a form of prostitution, it’s gross exploitation of the ancestors of humanity and it should not be permitted,” Richard Leakey told The Associated Press. And a number of important museums, including the Smithsonian and the Museum of Natural History in New York, have declined to take the show. Says Randall Kremer, a spokesman for the Smithsonian’s Natural History Museum, “This is one of the most important specimens relating to human origins in the world. We think it is too much of a risk to have it travel for the purposes of public viewing.” But Ambassador Samuel disagrees: “To suggest that research trumps everything else is wrong,” he says. Lucy should be used to educate. “Lucy belongs to the world. She is the origin of humanity. We all see ourselves in Lucy.” And we should all see Lucy.

There are still many other museums that are eager for the show — and the paying crowds it will bring. Lucy will stay on the road for six years. The full tour schedule has not been announced, but Chicago seems to be Lucy’s next stop after her show closes in Houston on April 20, 2008.

The Ethiopian and Houston officials who arranged Lucy’s tour made sure that she would travel in comfort and that she would not be bothered by the paparazzi looking for snaps to peddle to archeological tabloids. According to Dirk Van Tuerenhout, anthropology curator of the Houston Museum of Natural Science and curator of the touring Lucy exhibit, Lucy traveled in “two small, hard-shelled suitcases, especially made for very rare, valuable items, packed in museum quality foam with slots carved into it to support each bone individually.” She flew in a first class passenger seat accompanied by Ethiopian museum officials. Her arrival was kept secret until she was safely inside the museum.

But for all the controversy — and secrecy — surrounding Lucy’s long journey to Houston, this is not the first time Lucy has traveled. In 1974, not long after her discovery, Johanson was given permission to take her to his Cleveland laboratory for several years of study. Johanson wrapped each bone in toilet paper and thick foam padding and loaded them into a hard-shell carry-on case. Lucy unexpectedly made her first international public appearance at the Paris airport when a French custom official, who happened to be an anthropology buff, realized what Johanson was carrying and made him unwrap each piece and spread them out on a table to the delight of other passengers. Lucy was a star from the beginning. Johanson told the Chicago Tribune’s William Mullen: “She never suffered any damage on her way here, her stay here, or her trip back home.” Lucy was a good traveler from the beginning.



THE CLASSIC FORM: an icon of Santa Maria Maggiore

Centuries of amazing Biblical art

By William Seraile (Mekele 63–65)

THE BIBLICAL INJUNCTION “Ethiopia stretched forth her hands to God” could easily have been the title of a lecture given in March at the Museum of Biblical Art in New York City. Instead, the lecture by Dr. Gary Vikan, Director of the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, was called “Sacred Image:


Icons and Ethiopia.” Dr. Vikan’s talk, which was given to accompany an exhibition on Ethiopian religious art called “Angels of Light,” enlightened and delighted an enthusiastic crowd of Ethiopians and Americans.

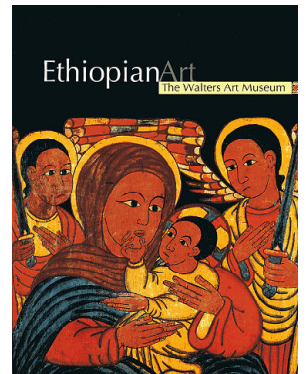
Over the years I have found that many Ethiopians in America have never visited Axum or Lalibela, and thus these kind of exhibitions are very significant for the cultural education of Ethiopians, as well as, of course, Americans. Dr. Vikan’s interesting lecture focused on the history of Christian icons of Jesus and Mary. He showed slides to illustrate how the image of Jesus, which first began in the eastern Mediterranean, has been depicted in similar manner by Russians, Greeks, Italians, Romanians, Polish, and Ethiopians.

The lecture and the exhibit provided answers to questions that I had thought about for over forty years. While in Mekele, I was able to purchase some Ethiopian religious art from a bare foot artist whose primitive and rather crude depictions look similar to Byzantine art. Ethiopia was influenced in the fifteenth century by missionaries who brought to the country paintings based on an icon from the Roman basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, which shows Jesus with a book in his left hand. Mary holds cloth in her left hand and points the elongated fingers of her right hand towards the ground.

While the missionaries were forced to leave the country, the icon remained and explains why my collection of Ethiopian art depicts the same scene. Since Ethiopians believe that they were created in God’s image, their icons of saints and stories (such as the founding of Debra Damo) have brilliant colors. Mary, Jesus and the archangels have large hypnotic eyes that signify holiness. I was fortunate to see Ethiopian biblical art in Axum, Gonder, Lalibela and a monastery at Lake Tana near Gonder as well as to spend the night at Debra Damo where religious icons were hidden from Muslim invaders in the early 16th century.

I was even more fortunate to attend the 1993 opening of Ethiopian Zion at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, a display of biblical art that attracted Ethiopians from Toronto to Atlanta. Ethiopian biblical art with its depiction of Jesus, Mary and archangels looking “black” is a major contrast to the black church in America, Africa and the Caribbean that depicted them as European. Although I had grown up in the black church, the image of a white Jesus in the stained glass convinced me that He was indeed a Caucasian. Hollywood only reinforced this belief. I felt very proud in 1963 when I first cast eyes upon Ethiopian art. I found it to be a powerful affirmation that I too was made in the image of God.

The exhibit of Ethiopian religious art at the Museum of Biblical Art ended in May. But the exhibition called our attention to the largest collection of classical Ethiopian art in America located at the Walters Museum in Baltimore. The museum published *Ethiopian Art*, a wonderful book filled with religious history and fine illustrations. It can be purchased for \$30 from the museum bookstore which can be accessed at www.thewalters.org, and then go to Store>Publications. 



I felt very proud in 1963 when I first cast eyes upon Ethiopian art. I found it to be a powerful affirmation that I too was made in the image of God.

Book Reviews

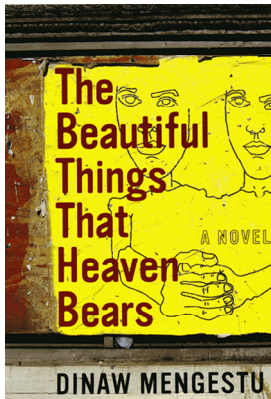
The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears

by Dinaw Mengestu

Riverside books, 2007
228 pages, \$22.95

Reviewed by Dannie Russell (Addis 63–65)

FIRST I HAVE TO ADMIT that I am a bit put off that all these 25–30 year olds are writing memoirs. What can these children know of life? At my mature age, I am now looking back; thinking memoir. What perspective can youth have? Enticed by the



irresistible title, I read *Lipstick Jihad*, by Azadeh Moaveni who was born in California into the Iranian diaspora at the start of the revolution against the Shah. After her graduation from University of California, Santa Cruz, she returned to Iran and worked for Time magazine. She didn't quite fit in Santa Cruz; nor did she precisely fit in Iran; she wrote her memoir to sort this out at age 29. It was brilliant.

Ishmael Beah from Sierra Leone wrote his memoir of a *Boy Soldier, A Long Way Gone*. He was 26 when he filled his memoir with depth, emotion, distance and urgency. Alexandra Fuller wrote *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, her memoir from an African childhood in Rhodesia. She was 33. Her first story tells of the chaos of white settlers in war-torn Rhodesia. Graphic novelist Marjane Satrapi illustrated her first volume of *Persepolis, A Story of Childhood* at the age of 34. Her extraordinary graphics depict the revolution in Teheran as she lived it as a pubescent teenager. Rory Stewart walked across Afghanistan in winter after the fall of the Taliban, and survived to write his memoir, *The Places In Between*. He was 31.

Dinaw Mengestu's debut novel, *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, is not a memoir in the truest sense. But the author is young and the book is based on research from family interviews, and,

as he infers, his own random approach to research on the Ethiopian revolution of 1975. He immigrated to the United States in 1980 as a toddler with his mother and sister to join his father who fled at the start of the era of the Derg. This might perhaps best be called a work of creative nonfiction.

In *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* Dinaw Mengestu creates credible characters who enjoy unique personalities. The Ethiopian protagonist and narrator, Stephanos, meets two African immigrant peers at their first job in America. The three remain best friends and meet regularly to reminisce and discuss life in America and the life they each miss in Africa. The Kenyan, Kenneth, an engineer, emulates his American office colleagues as his strategy for success; the Congolese, Joseph, a waiter at an upscale restaurant, drinks the remnants of wine and alcohol as he clears tables, and is a moderately inebriated, aspiring poet.

The three meet weekly, not to discuss their successes of the week, but to encourage each other and savor memories of their Africa. They drink in Stephanos' small convenience shop located in a low-income neighborhood around Logan Circle in Washington D.C. They pass time playing a mental game: which African leader led which coup? survived which attacks? in which year?

Mengestu weaves the protagonists' lives in Logan Circle with the slow-paced social life of a new white neighbor and her biracial daughter. Stephanos, whose life at his store centers around mornings with school children and evenings with winos and prostitutes, sees potential for a social relationship and perhaps the family he longs for. The three émigrés cling to the American Dream, never quite achieving attainment. Although Stephanos has pride of ownership, he never makes any money from his small neighborhood shop; sometimes no one comes into the store.

Mengestu oscillates between the trauma of Addis during the Derg, which he knows only from research, and life in America. The book is well constructed; he flips between life in D.C. and a connection with Stephanos' uncle in Maryland

to provide the information about Addis. Anyone familiar with Addis Ababa or Washington will see that Mengestu is spot on with each city. He knows Washington well from his days studying at Georgetown University, and presents the Derg in poignant, thoughtful scenes.

The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears does not move at the pace of, say, *A Thousand Suns*. Rather it builds unhurriedly at a calculated tempo, much like the lifestyle of Stephanos. This is a bit slow for my taste. I wanted more buildup to the crisis or climax with a sharp “goina” factor: what’s goina happen next? But still the book works because Mengestu is meticulous.

Beautiful Things is crafted with sparse sentences. His characters are thoughtfully created, sensitive, diverse characters. His simple plot inserts a hint of American gentrification and American racial issues. He writes with a knowing intimacy of Washington and from well-researched accounts of incidents, in particular the personal experiences of his family, in Addis during The Revolution.

The book is especially valuable for the scenes of those desperate times in Ethiopia during the Revolution. As things flew out of control under the direction of the Derg, expatriates fled the country. There was an information gap for me, a fissure occasionally filled by a bit of reporting on the removal of the Emperor or the killings in the streets. But this was well before CNN broadcasting live, breaking-news. The scenes in Mengestu’s book help fill the gap. For those of us who know and care about Ethiopia, who enjoy reading stories of immigrants or of members of the African diaspora, this is well worth the read.

A postscript: Recently I read an article reporting on Darfur by Dinaw Mengestu in *Rolling Stone*. He turns out to be a candid and perceptive journalist. I suspect he will use that material to construct a novel — or a work of creative nonfiction — based on the vivid images and the persons he wrote about from Darfur. Whatever he decides, I, for one, will be checkin’ him out.

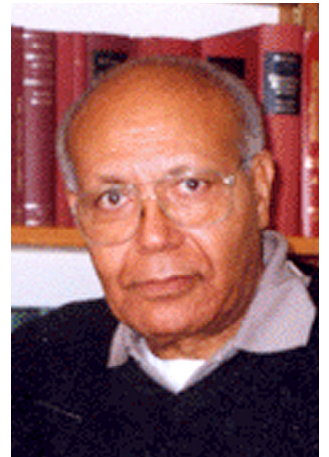
Held at a Distance: My Rediscovery of Ethiopia

by Rebecca Haile

Academy Chicago Publishers 2007
195 pages; \$17.95

Reviewed by John Coyne (Addis 62–64)

YEARS AGO, in 1988, when I was checking the winners of the MacArthur “genius” grants (just to make certain they hadn’t forgotten to call me) I spotted the name of an Ethiopian who had won this prestigious award: Getatchew Haile, a professor at St. John’s University, a small Catholic college in central Minnesota, and a famous Ge’ez scholar.



GETACHEW HAILE: From farmer’s boy to MacArthur grant genius

I know him only by his reputation. Getatchew was a farmer’s son in Shoa who first learned to read at a religious school. A brilliant student, he had won a state scholarship in the 1950s to study abroad and earned his bachelor’s degree from the Coptic Theological College and the American University in Egypt, and then a doctorate in Semitic philology from Tubingen University in Germany. He returned to Ethiopia to teach at Haile Selassie I University in the early sixties and by 1965 had been made head of the university’s Ethiopian Languages and Literature Department.

He was also involved with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a confidante of the Patriarch, and most importantly, was the Orthodox Church’s representative to the World Council of Churches. It was this Council of Churches connection that saved his life when on

Reading this memoir is almost like reaching out and touching that landscape again, visiting those familiar places we all once knew so well, as Rebecca and Jean move through Ethiopia, traveling the historic route like so many other tourists of every kind of nationality, stopping at towns where once we were Volunteers.

a quiet Saturday afternoon in October 1975, alone in the family's new home near Sidist Kilo, Derg soldiers came to arrest him.

More scholarly than political, Getatchew had recently been elected to represent the province of Shoa in the Ethiopian Parliament, the post-coup civilian body that lasted a year after the Derg took control. It was this connection, not his knowledge of Ge'ez, that put Getatchew on Mengistu Haile-Mariam's hit list. Knowing that he would be killed or taken to "disappear" in a Derg prison, Getatchew barricaded himself inside the house with only a pistol to keep away the armed attackers. His plan was to escape after dark when the young, drunken and undisciplined soldiers might miss their chance to capture him. He almost made it. As he was climbing over the compound wall at the back of the house a bullet ripped through his chest, missing his heart, but hitting his spine.

Dumped into a military van, he was taken to die in a military hospital, but because of his church connections, he was transferred to the Black Lion Hospital off Churchill Road and from there, with the help of international pressure and a friendly government official, to London for treatment. Later this friend, and others who helped Getatchew, would be killed by Mengistu. Getatchew and his wife, Misrak Amara, remained in England where he regained his health, but was destined to live as a paraplegic for the rest of his life. In their flight for help, Getatchew and Misrak left behind three daughters with their extended Ethiopian family. The oldest daughter, Rebecca, was only eleven-years-old.

Six months later, he found a position as a cataloguer of Ethiopian manuscripts at St. John's University in Minnesota. After much pleading with the Derg and help from the U.S. Embassy, the three children joined their parents to make another kind of life in the bleak and cold weather of central Minnesota.

It would be twenty-five years before Rebecca, who had attended Williams College on scholarship, earned her law degree from Harvard, and is practicing law in New York City, traveled with her *ferenji*

husband, Jean Manas, back home to Addis Ababa. She arrived as all of us once did on our journey to the Horn of Africa with the breaking of dawn. Rebecca writes in her memoir, "As we cross from eastern Sudan into northern Ethiopia, an hour or so before we are to land, the horizon finally begins to lighten. Soon, the sky over the vast highland plateau is awash in a deep, clay red."

Rebecca's book, *Held at a Distance: My Rediscovery of Ethiopia*, is part history, part memoir, and part travelogue. It is not so much a trip down memory lane as it is a clear-eyed look at her lost homeland. Well written, in places very moving, sad, and amusing, especially for those of us who lived in Ethiopia and care about this godforsaken, wonderful and tragic place.

Reading this memoir is almost like reaching out and touching that landscape again, visiting those familiar places we all once knew so well, as Rebecca and Jean move through Ethiopia, traveling the historic route like so many other tourists of every kind of nationality, stopping at towns where once we were Volunteers. The names and places are the same, but little else.

They visited her grandmother who lives near the Piazza near St. Giorgis church. "Like other parts of the capital," Rebecca writes, "the Piazza has been completely made over by the population explosion of the last two decades." The streets are filled with "idle young men," and the "flat, gray faces of the government buildings facing the roundabout [at Arat Kilo] had broken windows that gaped open like missing teeth. Shop fronts were smashed or boarded over, their display cases empty of the jewelry."

Still for Rebecca, and for us, the memories reach home. At her grandmother's compound, Rebecca enters the house and for a moment, "stood frozen in the middle of the room. Everything was familiar; my memories of my grandmother's house were fully vindicated." Here was her peaceful Ethiopian childhood before the coup and counter coups. "But I found that familiarity disconcerting, for how could the physical embodiment of a way of life

“Addis Ababa is a city of hidden sanctuaries, a chaotic and rather unattractive jumble that does not speak openly of the warm homes and other oases concealed behind tall compound walls.”

have survived so well when, as I believed, that life had disappeared? How could this house be fresh and whole when, not five minutes away, so many other buildings were battered and broken?”

Rebecca answers this question herself when she first arrived in Addis Ababa, and observes: “Addis Ababa . . . is not a city of public places. The Ethiopian capital does not boast pretty plazas, places or civic buildings designed by architects and urban planners . . . Addis Ababa is a city of hidden sanctuaries, a chaotic and rather unattractive jumble that does not speak openly of the warm homes and other oases concealed behind tall compound walls. I am not surprised by this reminder, because at the very heart of my memories of Ethiopia is just such an oasis: the solid, two-storey granite home my parents built in Addis Ababa on the eve of the Revolution.”

The tragedy of Ethiopia’s recent history begins for Rebecca, and every other Ethiopian, when they venture beyond their compound walls to make a life in their nation, or harder still, to try and leave this ancient land for another way of life. An incident is described towards the end of this memoir that sums up much of what life is like for most Ethiopians who seek to leave behind their homeland — even if only to visit relatives. Rebecca goes to the U.S. Embassy to try and help her Aunt Itiyobia, her father’s only sister, get a visa to America. This woman, 77-years

old, has never been to America, has not seen her brother, Getatchew, since 1965. She had been turned down twice by the U.S. government for a visitor’s visa. Rebecca’s father, crippled by that attack on him in the ’70s, cannot fly home again.

The family thinks that perhaps Rebecca, as an educated person, with American citizenship, can get her 77-year-old aunt a visa to America to see her brother one last time before they both pass away. At the Embassy above Sidist Kilo, guarded with concrete barricades and repeated checkpoints,


Rebecca — even with her American passport — is treated with abuse and disrespect, just like other Ethiopians. She and her aunt’s request

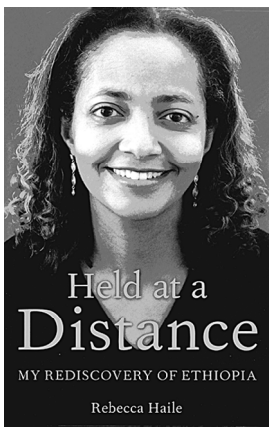
are dismissed without explanation or politeness by the simple statement: “The consul can grant or deny a visa at its discretion.” Rebecca also hears another consular officer shout at an Ethiopian, “Tell her that if she doesn’t stop lying I’ll put a note in her file and then she’ll never ever get the hell out of Dodge!” I wonder how that translates into Amharic?

Rebecca writes, “I was shocked, and absolutely humiliated. I had been turned down in an exchange that lasted less than five minutes and in which the official showed no respect for me, no empathy for my father or Itiyobia, not the slightest regret about refusing us.” Rebecca would go on to write, “I am educated, articulate, resourceful, not poor, and now American. These attributes separate me from my aunt . . . For Itiyobia — female, single, childless, elderly, poor, black, African...(she) must swallow arbitrary decisions in a world in which the odds are stacked against her, and she does not expect to come out on top.”

Rebecca came out “on top” only because of the tragic attack on her father and the family’s narrow escape. *Held at a Distance* is Rebecca Haile’s story of how she had adjusted to the two realities of her life. It is also the story of a nation that lost a generation of progress and development because of wrong turns made by the wrong people in power, beginning with the Emperor. .

The story told in *Held at a Distance*, nevertheless is a story of triumph. Like many other Ethiopians — and Eritreans — who escaped, Rebecca and her family took what the 1974 coup dealt them and made a life for themselves far from home. Getatchew went from this simple beginning in this remote corner of the world to raising a daughter who is now a successful attorney in midtown Manhattan, all within one generation.

Rebecca’s story is really our story, America’s story, of how immigrants who come to America change their lives, and also change America. The great United States, the Leader of the Free World, we might say, is a country that is fed off the tragedies of other lands. I guess that is one reason to get out of Dodge. 

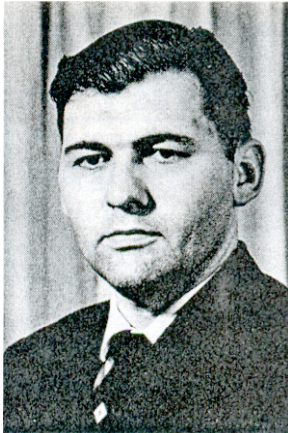


Back to Addis, into “Amacord”

Looking for some memories and a way to help again

by Jim Boylson (Addis 62-64)

IN THE THIRD WEEK OF JANUARY this year, after a 43 year hiatus, but four years earlier than planned, it was finally possible for me to see Ethiopia again, one of my three favorite adopted countries. There was always something unique and unforgettable about Ethiopia/Eritrea, which, like most of you, I still regard as still joined at the hip. Ethiopia has characteristics that grabbed at my soul, most likely because I see in the people something I so love and admire in Ireland, my first adopted land. What I saw when first we were there over four decades ago as invited — and ultimately “honored” — guests/teachers, was an indomitable spirit; a sense of resourcefulness and resiliency that, despite all their hardships and deprivations, left the people believing in themselves; their ethnic and cultural affiliations; and their country. And also, through their devout religious nature and strong sense of history, they believed that there would be a better day coming.



JIM BOYLSON 1962

What these people have suffered, in the years — nay, decades — since we were first hosted in their homeland is what Shakespeare would have called “star-crossed.” What they’ve endured since our original groups were forced to leave by the Derg takeover and since the interim groups had to quickly leave due to the borders war between Eritrea and Ethiopia is comparable to the Old Testament description of the plagues that descended on Egypt in Moses’ time. As a result, the contemporary world, via the mass media, has heard only of their negatives and despairs; and despite the fact they now can boast of having one of the fastest grow-

ing economies on the continent (over 10 per cent, last quarter), they remain ranked near the bottom in per capita income, and near the top in degree of poverty, not only in Africa, but worldwide as well.

Never mind that so much of what little they had was pillaged, robbed and is still being used to maintain the thugs and criminals that raped them in high style; that much of their northwestern population was consciously left to die of famine, and that their grazing/growing fields rapidly being claimed by the desert. All while their criminal military Junta got fat, and the world just watched. Their per capita “spirit” and work ethic has remained incredibly high, all this torment notwithstanding.

AS MY EARLY MORNING EAL FLIGHT descended I was able to see all of Addis from the air. Their newest version of Bole Airport is still close to the city center. What I saw was an entirely different capital city, virtually unrecognizable from what we once knew and enjoyed. After landing, clearing passport control with airport-issued visas, and being transported from the airport, through heavily armed military security, into the now chaotic city, my first impressions took me back to Federico Fellini’s “Amacord.” It was not simply that the “New Ethiopia,” and her once enchanting Capital City, were now just reflections of the chaotic antics and constant busyness of Fellini’s cinematic style. No it was the entire initial impact: Of seeing so many new, huge — even sky-scraper-sized — buildings, going up everywhere. Of constantly dodging both major and minor roadwork. Of traffic conditions comparable to our worst big cities. Of the addition-

al risk dimension of livestock — singly and in small herds — sharing roads and the shoulders, which are used as part of the main road. Of the new multitude of pedestrians, many crossing, weaving, wandering between erratically moving vehicles, and just generally behaving like the Kamikaze Pilots' Ground Forces. Then, there in the central part of the Old City, the once pre-colonial classic atmospheric Mercato now seems more like a gigantic Yard Sale.

All of this — individually and combined — impacted on me and was in stark contrast to the fond recollections of the Ethiopia and Addis Ababa we knew. Ahh, "Amacord," which means "this I remember." The once quaint biggest city of the country — our Addis Ababa — is no more. Even its peripheral communities — totally surrounding the city's outskirts in every direction — were poked with new construction of all sorts. And almost contiguously now are one new business park after another. I remarked to the daughter of a late old and dear friend — whom many of you will remember as the Butagaz cylinder man with his hardware store in the Piazza — that I'd like to have a dollar for every building under construction in this city now. She laughed and replied: "I hadn't thought of that, but it would certainly have paid for your plane trip!"

My several and diverse treks into their countryside — especially to the Oromia and the SE Shoa Province zones and to Jimma City, Sidamo and on the way to Kenya — brought back much of the "old Ethiopia," but now with extreme new population pressures on the land and on the roads, many of which were in varying acute stages of redoing. Plus there were new cultural conflict points, especially religious, with new mosques popping up everywhere — like mushrooms after a good rain — signaling the rapidly growing influence of Islam.

But from all this, I can so warmly and thankfully relate that these people TRULY know and practice the fullest meaning of the word friendship! After 43 years, despite all they've been through, the people I've maintained contact with over these many years, plus their families, friends and acquaintances,

were as warm, gracious and accepting as any people I've ever known. At Medhane Alem, the first school I was assigned to, and then at Tefari Makonen's Canadian Jesuit-run school, former students eagerly came forward to renew the acquaintances and — most moving of all — to warmly and sincerely thank me, and through me, ALL of us, for the great teaching jobs we did. They even thanked me for their subsequently successful careers and lives. I often felt like the biblical Prodigal Son. It was sometimes overwhelming to what lengths they would go to accommodate me and make my visit as hassle free and comfortable as possible. This experience, then, is my new baseline "Amacord"!

And how do I now see and feel about Ethiopia in the light and perspective of this new visit experience? I'm simply reminded of the observation of Alphonse Karr made in 1849, "The more things change, the more they remain the same." If you have the chance to return, as I did — and will again — I heartily recommend that you try to look through and past the dust, din and confusion of re-birth and growth, and instead focus on the labors and determination of a nation and its peoples who are striving mightily to catch up and make amends for over three decades of hard luck. And look into the souls and spirits of a people who simply won't allow circumstances of the worst of luck defeat them!

I AM NOW BACK in my California home so far removed from these scenes. I am eagerly waiting to hear from the Ethiopian Ministry of Health about my request for approval to import and distribute a new, non-chemical water purifier called SilverDYNE. This is an ionized silver compound, suspended in a double colloidal solution, which is totally non-toxic. A few drops in drinking water, or water used to wash vegetables, or even into a baby's bath water, will eliminating all micro-organic life and thus create potable water and a general fresh food sanitizer. (For more details see www.whaintl.com) When approval arrives, I'll be enthusiastically returning to Ethiopia with what I believe can be the ultimate thank-you-for-being-such-great-hosts gift. Ethiopia, in my view, has a chance to become



JIM BOYLSON 2007: No more pre-selection tension.

the first nation in Africa to change how it provides pure, drinkable water to its people. And all this can be achieved at amazingly low costs. Nothing I've ever done before in my life has provided the level of satisfaction that this project has. When, with the help of at least two major foundations, a number of NGOs that will do water resource projects, private entrepreneurs and the government, Ethiopia has its nationwide distribution system fully set up, we hope to move next into Kenya, and from there on to the rest of the Horn of Africa and beyond.

Tales of more reunions

The Ethiopia II training group met in Maine in September a few days after the turn of the Ethiopian Millennium. More than 40 RPCVs, plus assorted spouses, children and friends assembled in Belfast Maine, home town of **Roger Sprague** (Addis 63–65). Roger, with the able assistance of **Bob Matthai** and **Gloria Curtis**, organized a boat trip complete with Maine fog, a lobster bake, and finally a wonderful departure brunch at Roger's home which featured (no small feat in central Maine!) injera and wat. *THE HERALD*'s Shlomo Bachrach brought the group up-to-date on political and social events in Ethiopia and Eritrea. The group took a vote and decided that the next reunion would be in 2009 and take place in Estes Park, Colorado.

Bernard Callahan (Goba, Nazareth 67–69) reports that a mini-reunion was held in Salt Lake City attended by **Ben Coughlin**, **Bernie Callahan**, **Ron** and **Marge Bonner**, **Therese Condon Yost** and **David Moonitz**. Bernie reports that "we had a wonderful time and are seeking others to join us."

Ethiopian scholarship

Ted Vestal (staff 64–66) in one of his genial emails tells us that he was "just back from Trondheim, Norway, where the old Ge'ezers of the XVIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies held forth from 1–7 July. Five RPCVers presented papers. How's that for taking the 3rd Goal seriously?!" Seriously, indeed. The papers were both scholarly and serious. Vestal reports that "**Jim McCann's** presentation at

the first plenary session was the hit of the conference." McCann (Burie 73–75) presented a paper summarizing the work of a number of scholars and researchers which, as the abstract of the paper says, shows "surprising links between the intensive cultivation of maize and the distribution of malaria." Here's a quote from the abstract of the paper: "This paper offers a summary of the project that combines agricultural history, ecology, entomology, and epidemiology. Results from a field study site in Burie Wereda (West Gojjam) demonstrated that maize farmers had a 9.5 times great chance of contracting malaria than farmers of other crops at similar altitudes. The new research in the Jimma area examines the field evidence on mosquito habitat of maize cultivation, on the growth of adult mosquitoes, and on the local malaria infection patterns."

The breath of expertise and specialties E&E RPCVs have developed over the years is amazing. **Cynthia Tse Kimberlin** (Adi Ugri, Asmara 62–64) presented a paper called "Diverse Connections as a Model for the 21st Century: Yared Music School (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)." Here's a bit from the abstract: "The history of the Yared Music School is reflected in its original mandate to educate future teachers and musicians within a formal educational setting. Today, local and international connections with the school are facilitated by advances in technology, access on a global scale to current trends and to a panoply of resources conveyed via the electronic medium. Yet the exigencies of conflict and war pose challenges in accommodating new contexts in which music is studied, taught, and practiced. Nevertheless, these events provide a template for examining the state of Ethiopian music in general and the Yared Music School in particular."

James Quirin (65–67) now teaches at Fisk University. He presented a paper on "Using Cases to Teach Ethiopian, African and World History." The paper "discusses the process of writing and using case studies to teach history in the classroom. The major part of this paper focuses on my writing and use of a case study on Menilek II and the battle of Adwa, as an example illustrating the process of using case studies to teach history."

Neal Sobania, (Addis 68–72) is now Executive Director of the Wang Center for International Programs and a Professor of History at Pacific Lutheran University. He and a colleague from the University of Michigan presented a paper entitled “The ‘Adit’ Factor: Tradition and Creativity in the Production of Contemporary Aksum Icons,” which “examines the production of contemporary icons in Aksum through the lens of an entrepreneurially shop owner who, by serving as both a catalyst and mentor for their production, keeps this ancient tradition alive.”

Finally **Ted Vestal** himself presented a paper called “The Lion of Judah at Camelot: U. S. Foreign Policy towards Ethiopia as Reflected in the Second State Visit of Emperor Haile Selassie to the United States.” The paper traced the history of personal diplomacy between Haile Selassie and American presidents. In 1954, the Emperor visited President Dwight D. Eisenhower in Washington and a deal was cut to provide Ethiopia with arms shipments. In exchange, writes Vestal, “The United States solidified its claim on the ‘listening post’ at Kagnev Station and had access to a strategic locale on the rim of the Middle East. Even more successful was the Emperor’s visit to President John F. Kennedy only weeks before JFK was assassinated. “The end result of the short-lived Haile Selassie-Kennedy diplomacy was that both sides got what they wanted: the Ethiopians, the military hardware they desired although not as costly nor as modern as they had sought; and the United States, expanded facilities at Kagnev Station and the maintenance of a strong presence in Ethiopia in the face of spreading Soviet and Chinese activities in the region.”

With a bit of navigational skill, all these the papers can be found on line by beginning at <http://www.svt.ntnu.no/ices2007/> Or google our colleagues names.

Bridging the digital divide

Phillip LeBel (Emdeber 65–68) wrote us some months ago us about the Berkefet IT project he and his RPCV friend **David Levine** (Emdeber 64–66) are supporting along with two former students from

Emdeber, Deneke Hailemariam and Dula Abdu. Over the years LeBel and his friends have re-visited Ethiopia often and were struck by the digital divide that separates not just a good part of the developing world from the developed world, but the significant gap that separates urban from rural communities even within the developing world. To bridge that gap, the four put together a project to send computer equipment to Ethiopia. Dula Abdu, who is President of Appropriate Technology Development, Inc., in Houston, Texas, obtained a donation of 45 personal computers and server equipment from Morgan Stanley.

Recently LeBel emailed us that “we have raised or obtained pledges of around \$4,000 of the \$10,000 we are seeking [for shipping]. The 45 donated computers have now all been prepared with software, tested, and are ready for shipment from Houston. We also have been in continuous discussions with our counterpart NGO in Ethiopia, the GSPDO (Gurage Southwest Peoples’ Development Organization), who are working on details for handling the shipment once it is received and in working with us to proceed to the implementation of the training phase of the project.”

The group has put together a brochure describing the project. For more information, contact LeBel directly at lebelp@mail.montclair.edu. Or better yet, send a much needed contribution to: Berkefet IT Project P.O. Box 53573 Houston, Texas 77052. And as the brochure tells us: “all contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.”

Dr. Mike’s project

The two sisters of **Michael Brady** (Metu, Harar 68–72) wrote us recently about their efforts to put together a project to build a library in the town of Metu in Illababo in honor of their brother. Brady spent two tours as a PCV in Ethiopia. When he returned to the U.S. he became a doctor. As his sister tells us, in a lovely essay we have posted on the E&E RPCVs web site, “To his great disappointment the political situation in Ethiopia made it impossible for him to move to Ethiopia to practice medicine. While Mike never lived in Ethiopia after

1972, he visited there 15 times over the remaining 30 years of his life. He went to celebrate weddings, visit friends, bring gifts, swim in the river, take pictures and promote literacy. During a number of these trips, he collaborated with local doctors and public health officials, on initiatives to promote public health, teach reproductive health, and encourage AIDS prevention. These projects continue to make a difference in Ethiopia today.”

His sister continues: “ No one was more surprised than I was when, a few days after Mike’s untimely death in October 2003, I heard myself say, ‘We have to take half of Mike’s ashes back to Ethiopia. Only part of him belongs to us.’ My sister agreed without hesitation. In October 2005, my husband and I, with my son, our nephew and one of Mike’s former students now living in Seattle, flew to Addis Ababa with a portion of Mike’s ashes. I believe it was Michael who prompted this improbable trip, and it had its desired results. When friends and former students of Mike’s learned of our upcoming trip, they alerted the municipal government. They spoke of the love and good works of this great man, Dr. Michael Brady. They were honored that his family would bring his remains to his adopted home.

As we approached Metu in two white Toyota Land Cruisers, we were greeted at the river by 40 children in bright blue school uniforms singing, “Welcome Dr. Mike’s family.” The official delegation of adults stood behind them ready to welcome us with the traditional three-kiss greeting, bouquets of flowers and ice-cold bottles of Ambo mineral water. Later that day we were honored at a lavish luncheon put on by the municipal government. Officials showed three parcels of land and offered us our choice of them to build a library in Michael’s memory.”

His sisters have now created a foundation, called Bridge Michael Foundation, received their 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status and are working very hard raising funds and organizing details to build the library in Metu. You can contact Brady’s sisters Mary Jean Brady and Angela Mercy at The Bridge Michael Foundation, 858 NW 70th St., Seattle, WA 98117-5152. Telephone: 206.782.9101 or at bridgemichael@comcast.net

Travel Notes

Richard Sherman, Ethiopia X (Adigrat 68-70) and his wife Margaret, have relocated to Kampala, Uganda and would be pleased to see any former Ethiopia and Eritrea Volunteers who may be passing through the area. His new personal email address is richard.sherman18@yahoo.com

Deaths

- The HERALD has learned of the passing of Ethiopia VII/Utah RPCV **James Dean Camp** (67-69). No details were available.

• *Stephanie J. Stauffer writes:*

I just wanted to pass on news of my father’s sudden passing. **Kenneth D. Stauffer** (Makele 62-64; Ghana 70-71) served as a Volunteer with Ethiopia I, along with his wife, **Marty**.

Here is a link to his obituary: http://obits.lancasteronline.com/index.php?action=view&obit_id=1896510

They actually returned from Ethiopia early because my mother became pregnant with me. After college, I was a PCV in Swaziland.

My parents developed many strong friendships among their fellow PCVs. Together, they certainly fulfilled the third goal of the Peace Corps — bringing the world back home.

NOTE: You can write Marty at Etownmarty@aol.com

- *Bernie Callahan writes:*

My wife **Myra Hutchinson Callahan** (Addis Ababa 67-69) passed away on New Years Day this year.

- *Linda Seal writes:*

Please pass it on to all Ethiopia III’s. My ex-husband, **E. David Seal** (Debre Berhan, Asmara 64-66), died on October 4 in New Mexico, of Alzheimer’s disease.

E&E RPCVs – News of the group

Board of Directors

Resignation

Hayward Allen (Harar 62–64) has resigned from his positions as member of the Board of Directors of E&E RPCVs and librarian. We offer Hayward special thanks for his long service to the group and most especially for the fine and demanding work he performed as editor of *THE HERALD* from 2000 to 2004.

Appointments

New board members

Following votes of endorsement by the Board, the following have recently joined the E&E RPCVs Board of Directors:

- **Barry Hillenbrand** (Debre Marcos 63–65), who as you know, is the current editor of *THE HERALD*, and has already been slaving away in our interest.
- **Bob Matthai** (Addis, Gondar 63–65), who will take over the management of the RPCV Legacy Program.

PC liaisons

With the return of Peace Corps to Ethiopia the board has established a liaison team to offer our assistance to the agency and the new Volunteers who will be departing for Ethiopia in October. Board members **Leo Cecchini** and **Nancy Horn** have volunteered to be the liaisons. A meeting with PC Africa Region Director Henry McCoy has already taken place, and he was very enthusiastic about our offer and suggested several ways in which we can help. Nancy is currently in Ethiopia for her work and will contact the staff and Volunteers while in-country.

RPCV Legacy Program Projects

We urge you to support through your donation the on-going efforts of ETHIOPIA & ERITREA RPCVs in promoting our Legacy projects that foster sustainable economic development, relieve poverty and improve the quality of life in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Borana Student Advancement

Championed by Fuller Torrey (staff: 64–66)

This project's goal is to increase enrollment and retention of disadvantaged students, particularly girls, in southern Ethiopia, by funding projects of the Ethiopian NGO Mega Vision Developmental Association. During the summer months the association provides advancement courses for students to enable them to compete on the national level. Additionally the project provides funds to girls to make it possible for them to attend school full time. This year 60 girls will receive this assistance.

HIV Books for 200 Communities

Championed by Marian Haley Beil (Debre Berhan 62–64)

Health care workers and educators in more than 70 communities in Ethiopia and Eritrea have received *HIV Health and Your Community* and other community health books published by the Hesperian Foundation thanks to the generous donations of RPCVs from Ethiopia and Eritrea. Since the beginning of the project in 2004, we have donated more than \$16,400 to this effort that assists health care workers in communities deal with HIV/AIDS as well as many other health related issues.

Vocational Training for Children at Risk

Funds donated to this project provide support for vocational training to help sexually exploited and destitute children under the age of 19 achieve economic self-sufficiency.

The Vocational Training program is fully subscribed at the moment and work is proceeding on the development of a second phase.

Additional URL

You can now use the URL www.eerpcv.org to reach our website, as well as the longer www.ethiopiaeritrearpcvs.org.

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Peace Corps

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Washington, DC 20526
800/424-8580
www.peacecorps.gov

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journals, etc.)
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617/929-4524

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We'd like to thank those who volunteered articles, ideas and effort for this issue of *THE HERALD*. We especially appreciate the work of the book reviewers and of those who replied cheerfully to our requests to write some lines for the various roundup stories we featured this issue. It made our work lighter and the issue so much more interesting.

The news summaries in *THE HERALD* were written from dozens of items forwarded to *THE HERALD* by Shlomo Bachrach, who culls news stories about Ethiopia and Eritrea from many sources and sends them out to a long list of interested parties, including many RPCVs. He can be contacted at: shlomo@eastafrica-forum.net

Sources for the news summaries in this issue include: Addis Ababa Tribune; Africast.com; ; Agence France-Presse; All Africa Global Media (allAfrica.com); Awate.com; Associated Press; Reuters; BBC; Eritrea New Agency; Ethiopian Government Information Service; The New York Times; ONLF.org;

Panafrican News Agency; Shaebia.com; The Chicago Tribune; the United Nations Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia; U.N. news service: U.N. Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) www.irin-news.org; USAToday; Visafric; The Washington Post; www.reliefweb.int.

Please send us your emails

THE HERALD is most eager to receive submissions. Our pages are open to all. Have you recently re-visited Ethiopia or Eritrea? Have you made contact with former students or friends from Peace Corps days? Have you come across interesting articles, books, exhibitions that you think the rest of us would like to know about? Have you had some new thoughts about your Peace Corps service? About Ethiopia or Eritrea? All these would make wonderful articles for *THE HERALD*. Send us an email and we'll turn it into an article. We also enthusiastically welcome photo submissions.

Send ideas, submissions, suggestions, or even cranky letters-to-the-editor to:

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ETHIOPIA & ERITREA RPCVs

Name _____

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I would like my email address published on my training group web page: YES NO _____

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\$15 Annual fees for E&E RPCVs (Not tax deductible)

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I would like to make a tax-deductible donation of \$ _____

to the following RPCV Legacy Program project(s).

Make checks payable to E&E RPCVs and send to:
Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs
c/o Beil
4 Lodge Pole Road
Pittsford, NY 14534-4550

Does it say “Expired” above your name in the address block?

If so, it’s time to send in your \$15 fee to continue to receive *THE HERALD*, an award winning newsletter edited by retired *Time* magazine correspondent **Barry Hillenbrand** (Debre Marcos 63–65), and to continue to support other activities of Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs that include

- the RPCV Legacy Program projects
- the great reunions we organize.
- the website that has been so instrumental in helping RPCVs reconnect with friends and former students.

On the previous page there is a form to renew your affiliation with E&E RPCVs. Please continue your support of our efforts.

Testing the reunion waters

There will not be a National Peace Corps Association conference/reunion until 2011 when the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps will be celebrated. A number of Ethiopia and Eritrea RPCVs have expressed an interest in having a reunion sooner than that. In order for this to happen, we need a couple of volunteers who would like to host the reunion in their community, and are willing to locate a moderately priced hotel for attendees, a meeting space and some dinner venues — preferably one with injera and wat on the menu. E&E RPCVs, under the leadership of board member and reunion chair C. J. Castagnaro, and with the assistance of president, Marian Haley Beil, will of course handle promotion, mailings and record keeping.

If you and a fellow Ethiopia or Eritrea RPCV in your community would like to host what always turns out to be a very successful and appreciated reunion, please contact Marian at mhbeil@rochester.rr.com or 585/223-1155.

Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs

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