

The HERALD

Spring 2008 — Number 35

Our Legacy

Fresh Efforts in the E&E RPCV Legacy Program

A new project is launched. More on the way.

By Bob Matthai (Addis/Gondar 63–65)

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*Editor's note: In an article in THE HERALD in 2003, E&E RPCVs president **Marian Haley Beil** (Debre Berhan 62–64) announced the formation of the RPCV Legacy Program to enable our members to sponsor and raise money for development projects in Ethiopia and Eritrea under the tax-free umbrella of the group. For four years, in addition to her other duties acting as den mother to us all, Marian, with great success, cheer led the fund-raising efforts and dealt with the countless administrative tasks of keeping the books, corresponding with donors and sponsors, and sending off checks. Last year **Bob Matthai** (Addis/Gondar 63–65), fresh from a successful career in fund raising and managing non-profit groups, was asked to join the E&E RPCVs Board and take over running the Legacy Program. He enthusiastically agreed. In recent months he has been hard at work writing guidelines, analyzing fund-raising strategies, coping with problems, and generally re-organizing the program. Here Bob shares with us some of his thoughts about where he and the Board of E&E RPCVs hope to take the program. We urge you to support the Legacy Program: donate some funds to one of the projects or become the champion of a new project — or both.*

IN 2003 E&E RPCVs established the Legacy Program to allow the more than 2,500 Peace Corps Volunteers who worked in Ethiopia and Eritrea from 1962 to 1976, and again from 1995 to 1999, to continue their tradition of service and assistance to the countries we all care so deeply about. The concept is simple. Projects are proposed by RPCVs who agree to serve as the project's "champion." A champion should be a former PCV or PC staff member who served in Ethiopia or Eritrea and agrees to sponsor and manage the project. The champion submits a proposal describing the needs the project will meet and the people who will be served. The champion and a NGO (non-government organization) that will carry out the project in country jointly set measurable goals for evaluating the accomplishments of the project.

The champion is responsible for finding a NGO with a proven track record of providing services or programs in Ethiopia or Eritrea. This allows the project to follow the model we have been using with some success. Rather than trying to create a totally new program from scratch and manage it from the U.S., we found that teaming with an accredited NGO

Many employers sponsor matching gift programs and will match any charitable contributions made by their employees to not-for-profit organizations such as E&E RPCVs. Some companies even match gifts made by retirees and spouses. Ask your personnel office if your employer has such a program. If so, obtain and fill out the simple form and send it with your donation to the E&E RPCVs Legacy Program. A few minutes of your time may allow you to double your Legacy contribution.

in-country allows us to deliver the needed services with greater ease, efficiency and accountability.

Once a Legacy Program project is approved by the E&E RPCVs Board and gets under way, the champion is responsible for maintaining close contact with the NGO to ensure that funds are being spent appropriately and that project goals are being achieved. Finally, the champion must personally contribute 10 per cent of the first year's project budget and assist E&E RPCVs in ongoing fundraising efforts for the project. A project might run for only a year or could operate over several years.

THE PROJECTS

Relying entirely on the efforts of volunteer champions and supporters the RPCV Legacy Program has raised nearly \$80,000 from its start in 2003 through the end of 2007. These funds have supported four education and health projects. Two of the projects are on-going and two have been completed. A new project has been approved by the Board and is about to get under way. And, finally, a potential champion is working out details for yet another new project to be submitted to the Board in the months to come.

NEW

Ethiopia Reads in Awassa

The new Legacy project is championed by **Lois Shoemaker** (Asmara 62-64). In an enthusiastic email to THE HERALD, Lois writes: "I'm jazzed! I recently discovered an amazing four-year old program serving the children of Ethiopia, called Ethiopia Reads. It's a grass-roots program to provide libraries and books to children. I was so impressed with the good work they are doing that it has now become my passion and I'm eager to share it with you, my fellow E&E RPCVs, and that it become a Legacy Project."

Continues Lois: "To give you some idea of the project check out: EthiopiaReads.org, which opens with a bit of Ethie music just to trigger your memories. Based in Addis and Denver, Ethiopia

Reads runs literacy programs in Addis Ababa and the Awassa area. The group founded the Shola Children's Library, the first free public library for children in Ethiopia. Last year, Shola logged more than 60,000 visits from boys and girls, many of whom have never attended school or even held a book before discovering Shola. Yohannes Gebregeorgis, the founder and very effective leader of Ethiopia Reads, delivers a contagious message of establishing libraries to change the tide of literacy for the kids. That's really what got me involved. A one-time Ethiopian political refugee, Yohannes immigrated to the United States, earned his Master's Degree in Library Science and spent 13 years as a public librarian in the United States. In 2003, he moved back to Ethiopia to make a difference, to establish Ethiopia Reads and open Shola Children's Library."

In several interviews Yohannes credits a Peace Corps teacher with giving him his first book. The PCV may have been **Doug Mickelson** (Yirgalem 62-64). [See Mickelson's account of that event on page 4.] Now Lois wants RPCVs to join Yohannes again in search of books. Writes Lois: "Possibilities abound for those of us who choose to become involved with this amazing opportunity called Ethiopia Reads. We can support book shipments to plant libraries in Addis, Awassa and beyond. The organization is truly making a difference in the lives of thousands of children. I look forward to your support. Together, we surely are 'a mighty force'! As Emerson said: 'To share often and much . . . to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, this is to have succeeded.' Please join me in supporting Ethiopia Reads."

The goal of the Ethiopia Reads in Awassa is to create a safe, inviting and resource-rich free library and literacy training center for children, teachers and library workers in the southern Ethiopian city of Awassa. Donations will fund this new branch of Ethiopia Reads for the first year.

Borana Student Advancement

One of the continuing Legacy Projects, Borana Student Advancement, is championed by **E. Fuller**

Torrey, a former Peace Corps staff physician in Ethiopia from 1964 to 1966. The aim of the project is to increase enrollment and retention of disadvantaged students, particularly girls, in far southern Ethiopia.

Many students in Ethiopia's Borana District have difficulty staying in school because their families are semi-nomadic. Additionally nearly all Borana students labor under a disadvantage because during the early years of their schooling teaching is done in the local language, Oromiffa. Consequently the students are late in developing their skills in Amharic and English, lagging far behind students living in other regions of the country. They find it hard to compete in national exams and for university entrance. This project levels the playing field by providing Borana students with summer courses in English, mathematics and the sciences. This component of the project also provides much-needed summer jobs for university students from this region who teach in the summer program.

Additionally, given the particular difficulty of providing girls with schooling throughout the year, female students chosen on the basis of their scholastic performance are provided with school uniforms, books, supplies and, for those whose parents migrate seasonally, room and board.

The Borana Student Advancement project was started in 2005 by the registered Ethiopian NGO Mega Vision Developmental Association (MVDA), which is administered by Teshome Shibre Kelkile, M.D., Ph.D., and Woizero Tirufat Bekele. MVDA administers the Legacy project and funds.

A donation of \$35 can give six disadvantaged boys and girls summer advancement courses in English, math and science. A donation of \$70 can give 12 boys and girls summer advancement courses in these subjects. A donation of \$120 can keep a girl in school for a full year

HIV Books for Rural Communities

HIV/AIDS Books for Rural Communities is the other ongoing Legacy project. Begun in 2004, it funds the

distribution of medical books to rural health care providers dealing with HIV/AIDS and innumerable other medical problems. The project champion is **Marian Haley Beil**. For this project E&E RPCV is partnering with the respected Hesperian Foundation, publisher of health care manuals used by health workers in remote communities around the world. Donations to this project enable Hesperian to fulfill all book requests they receive from Ethiopia and Eritrea. Included with each requested book is a copy of *HIV Health and Your Community*.

The initial project goal was to raise \$6000, an amount that would make it possible for Hesperian to fulfill requests from 200 communities — the number of communities in which Peace Corps Volunteers had served over the years. This goal was met in January of 2005, but the project has been extended because demand for the books continues.

A donation of \$50 provides the funding for one set of books to be shipped to Ethiopia or Eritrea. A gift of \$250 gives a school, clinic or hospital a Health Care Library which is a collection of 10 books and 3 pamphlets. RPCVs are urged to make their donations in honor of their "other hometowns."

Completed projects

Two projects have been completed. **Nancy Horn** (Addis Ababa 66–68) championed a project called Girls' Advisory Councils Support which was aimed at improving primary education, especially for girls. This project was designed to last for a single year — 2006, and during that time E&E RPCVs donated more than \$7,000 for its support. Girls Advisory Councils were formed at participating schools and made up of female teachers, older female students, parents, prominent members of the community, local government authorities, traditional leaders, and, oftentimes, members of clergy from all faiths. The Councils conducted programs to raise awareness of the value of girls' education. Many began to address harmful traditional practices in their communities including early contract marriages which were taking place as early as 4th grade and female circumcision of very young girls. Some Councils



GIRLS ROCK! with the help of Girls Advisory Councils sponsored by Legacy funds

worked on the tutorial needs of girls.

Nancy reported that "some Councils decided to construct desks when community members saw that their children were sitting on the cement floor on sacks. Some built separate latrines for girls and boys which turned out to be a deciding factor on whether parents sent a young woman to school throughout the year. Other Councils added classrooms to ensure that children did not have to travel farther to continue schooling." When possible, communities were asked to contribute in-kind materials, labor or even funds to the improvement projects. As a result, more funds were added to what E&E RPCVs provided. In her final report on the project, Nancy included a long list of accomplishments attributable to the impact of the Legacy Program contribution. Among them were: Girls are

staying in school longer; community awareness of the value of girls staying in school has been heightened; and girls who are staying longer in school are acting as ambassadors, creating community campaigns to encourage parents to allow their daughters to stay in school.

The second project that has been completed is Vocational Training for Children at Risk championed by **John Kulczycki** (Debre Ziet 63–65) and **Scott Morgan** (64–66). The project provided vocational training for about 30 needy teens, almost all girls, living in Addis. The project was ended in 2007 by vote of the E&E RPCVs Board. The final disposition of some excess funds raised for the project is now being resolved. 🇺🇸🇪🇪

Please support the RPCV Legacy Program projects.

A donation form is available on page 39.



Doug 2008

Remembering the power of a book

By Doug Mickelson (*Yirgalem 62-64*)

RECENTLY, I DISCOVERED a November 2007 article in the *Kansas City Star* describing the work of Yohannes Gebregeorgis in acquiring books for Ethiopian students through a program he began called Ethiopia Reads. Yohannes said he had been taught by Peace Corps Volunteers in Yirgalem, where I served--can it be?--an incredible 45 years ago.


Yohannes was one of my students. My memory of him in my 9th grade homeroom and English class is slightly dim, but I have strong memories of the group of students to which he belonged. They lived near us, and I remember their difficult learning environment, and their passion for books and education. The obstacles they faced were considerable. They were a group of 6–8 boys who shared a house and a single, bare light bulb hanging from the rafters that illuminated the room for doing homework. Electricity came on at 6:00 PM and was turned off at midnight each day. They came to Ras Desta School from throughout Sidamo province. Many traveled over 400 miles and lived away from their families in order to go to school. Yohannes' group of students was outstanding. They were bright, motivated, eager, dedicated, and above all, committed to improving Ethiopia.

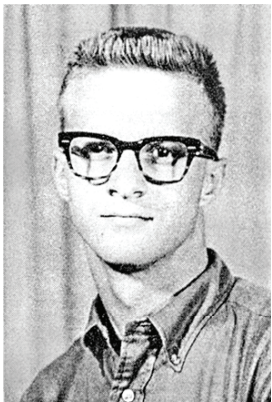
Teaching at Ras Desta was a challenge. The school's supply of books was meager. The Peace Corps

provided us PCVs with additional books and instructional supplies that we were able to use in our classes. I recall spending a lot of time typing short stories on mimeograph masters for duplicating and distributing to the students — but the books really had an impact.

I don't remember exactly when I gave Yohannes a book, but I think it was the first book he ever had for himself. Who would have predicted the power that books in a 9th grade classroom in a rural Ethiopian village would have in shaping and informing Yohannes' life? It's incredible to believe that I had played a role in his commitment to learning, loving books, and working hard to bring books to Ethiopia.

Reading about Yohannes has brought back a rush of memories. I went from Black Earth, Wisconsin, population 585, to Ethiopia; it was like a step into a history book. Learning about Yohannes, his struggle to survive and ultimately his commitment to books and Ethiopia has been a life affirming experience for me.

Doug is Associate Dean for Graduate and Continuing Education at Mount Mary College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. 



Doug 1962

Beginnings, and Beginnings Again

A new PCV in Ethiopia recounts the start of her service

By Christen Smith (Debre Markos 2007—)

THE SUMMER OF 2007 passed by me in a whirlwind of packing, paperwork, and anticipation, and before I knew it, it was October and I was on my way: sitting in row 27 of the plane that would bear me to Africa for the next 27 months of my life. I remember that eventful final college semester filled with deliberation and eventual decision. I remember the dread I had of that inevitable question — “So what do you plan to do after you graduate?” My friends were going on to medical school at Chapel Hill, graduate school at Carnegie Mellon, respectable jobs in finance and management. I was going to Ethiopia.

Sitting on that plane was doing nothing to relieve the nagging feeling that maybe I really was the crazy one of the bunch. Every element of my surroundings seemed to underscore the extraordinary nature of my chosen course. Jangling Amharic music poured insistently from the overhead speakers. A wizened old woman with decorative tattoos on her chin and neck took the seat beside me and began peeling the lemons she had brought to settle her stomach.

Forty-two of us boarded that plane as the first Peace Corps group to reenter Ethiopia after a ten-year hiatus. We were en route to in-country training to become health and economics Volunteers, assigned to support and improve a network of HIV/AIDS prevention, control, and care. We were 34

women and 8 men, including two married couples. Our group boasted seven Masters International students and several others already holding graduate degrees, two nurses, two physical therapists, a dental hygienist, a registered dietician, and two former military servicewomen. Six Volunteers were serving their second Peace Corps tour in Africa. Then, of course, there was me, one of a handful of 22-year-olds fresh out of undergrad, convinced that I must have been assigned to the program in order to fill some Peace Corps quota for naïve youthful idealism.

Whatever forces had conspired to bring me to Ethiopia, I wasn't allowed much time to ponder them. Upon landing, we hit the ground running. After three days in Addis we were bused off to Wolisso [Ghion to PCVs from an earlier era] for training. In our first day, we were armed with the Amharic phrases deemed most immediately necessary for our survival: “Where is the bathroom?,” “I need ___,” and various statements in the spirit of, “No, really, I couldn't possibly eat another roll of injera.” Our Ethiopian facilitators taught us such important cultural tenets as, “During the night, we use pee pot to respond to the call of nature.” One demonstrated proper squatting technique for the pit latrine. And at the end of the day, with this newly acquired knowledge under my belt, I was sent off to live with my new Ethiopian host family — who spoke no English.



Ten weeks of training in Wolisso unfolded in a roller-coaster initiation into Peace Corps/Ethiopia. The monotony of classroom lectures existed alongside the thrill of dazzling African sunsets, incense-filled coffee ceremonies, and careening *gari* rides over rough dirt roads. Daily frustrations — feelings of isolation from family and friends, struggles in walking the tightrope of cultural sensitivity, harassing cries of “YouYouYou!” and “MoneyMoneyMoney!” from children in the street — were tempered by the little personal successes gained every day in language acquisition and cultural adaptation. Longing for old, familiar things was mixed with the excitement of a host of fresh adventures.

Through all the ups and downs, twists and turns, my host family and fellow Volunteers kept me anchored. It is difficult to explain the sort of love that invites a stranger into its midst with open arms, that cares unconditionally, that by most accounts has so little, yet insists on giving so much. But this is the love that I found with my Ethiopian host family. From the meals prepared painstakingly for my

weak American stomach, to the vigorously scrubbed laundry that I wasn’t allowed to wash myself, to limitless patience with my dreadful Amharic, to the beautiful little four-year-old girl cuddled up on my lap, this was the love that was shown to me every day. It was a love that instructed and strengthened me. It was a love that carried me through. Much the same could be said about the support I received from my fellow Volunteers, with whom I shared profound new experiences and underwent common trials. In time, we grew accustomed to relying upon one another. Then we discovered yet another roller-coaster paradox of Pre-Service Training: growing closer every day to the people around you, while knowing that one day very soon you will be taken away from them.

Eventually, it was time once again to go. My host family gave gifts of tea, spice, *meetmeeta*, *dabbo kolo*, a fork, a spoon, a butter knife -- and many tears. They even offered to wash my dirty laundry whenever I came back to visit them, in the same way that any coddling American mother bribes her children to lure them back home to her. We PCVs



ETHIOPIA XXV: Ethiopia’s newest Peace Corps Volunteers at the American Embassy following their swearing-in

Peace Corps

wished each other luck and promised to keep in touch, then went our respective ways, half north to the Amhara region and half south to Oromiya.

AND SO, ONCE AGAIN, I found myself on the brink of a journey, not sitting on a plane this time but standing in the middle of an exhaust-filled city bus yard. Even at 5:00 in the morning, the station was already bustling. Buses traveling to destinations all over Ethiopia cleared their ways through a pulsing sea of people to line themselves up in one of four constantly shifting rows. As each bus parked, the sea closed in around it, with little swells closest to the vehicle. A ticket seller would emerge, shouting, "GonderGonderGonder!" or, "JimmaJimmaJimma!" or another one of seemingly infinite varieties of this chorus — and then take off running at a full clip as all of his would-be passengers shoved, grappled, and swarmed after him, too numerous by far for even three buses to hold. Weighed down by my eighty pounds of luggage, I formed the one motionless eddy in this frenetic whirlpool of humanity, which ebbed, flowed, and surged in response to each new call. After hours of fighting mad currents, I finally heard my call: "MarkosMarkosMarkos!" At the time, the name meant nothing to me; yet, it was

everything to me, my life for the next two years.

A simple seven-hour journey on a crowded public bus, down into and back out of the gaping Blue Nile Gorge on a winding and only partially paved road, over the river on a cracking bridge, under the midday sun with all windows closed against the billowing dust -- and I was home. But it was not like any home I had previously known. In this place, I would have to make my home, and the process of learning, meeting, and adapting that began once before during training, would begin all over again.

My formal introduction to Debre Markos was aided by my work supervisor, the HAPCO (HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office) coordinator for the administrative district, a gentle giant with an exuberant smile whose graying head towers a good six inches above his Ethiopian peers. Scurrying throughout town, carried along in his energetic wake, I met government administrators, NGO directors, association heads, school principals, traffic cops, real estate agents, kitchen supply salesmen, and the local gynecologist. At each stop on our whirlwind tour, my supervisor passed along what he had gathered from the Peace Corps' workshop on American culture and communication: "Americans like privacy . . . Also, don't touch them." Several times, I was ushered to the front of large community assemblies and asked to introduce myself and my mission, which I did proudly in a level of Amharic proficiency approaching that of an Ethiopian five-year-old.


Two months later, my introduction to Markos continues, now on a more informal level despite its falling under the official name of "community assessment." My days are spent in talking to the directors of various local organizations and observing their programs, trying to gain a clearer picture of this network of HIV/AIDS response in which I will serve as a link and technical advisor. With the help of a broad spectrum of community members, assets are identified, challenges and gaps are discussed, and potential solutions are generated. In this way, I am using my first three months at site to gather the information that will direct my future work. After



MARKOS, MARKOS, MARKOS: PCVs Christen Smith, left, and Kristen Straw with all their worldly belongings prepare to board the bus to Gojjam

in-service training brings this period to a close, a new phase of implementation will begin.

Beginning and beginning again — this has formed the essence of my Peace Corps initiation. In a way, it is also an elegant reflection of the larger themes of the Peace Corps' celebrated return to Ethiopia — beginning and beginning again. Here in Debre Markos I have been approached by many people who remember affectionately the beginning made

by the PCVs of the 60s and 70s, and they have welcomed our beginning here again with great joy. They recall with warmth their kind American teachers and friends and look forward to beginning those relationships again with us. And so, while this prospect of beginning can appear daunting to us at the outset, we carry on with the assurance that we are building upon the strong beginnings that have gone before us. 

The New PCVs are assigned to two regions — Amhara and Oromia. The sites and the number of PCVs in each.

Amhara:

Addis Zemen — 1
Adet-1 Gonder — 3
Bahir Dar — 3
Dabat — 1
Debre Markos — 2
Debre Tabor — 1
Dejin Bichena — 1
Dessie — 2
Enjibara — 1
Finote Selam — 1
Haik — 1
Kemise — 1,
Kombolcha — 1
Metrole Mariam — 1
Tikil Dingay — 1

Oromia:

Adama — 2
Agaro — 1
Assela — 2
Amba — 1
Bishoftu — 2
Dhera — 1
Gore — 2
Huruta — 1
Jimma — 2
Metu — 1
Mojo — 1
Nekemta — 2
Welenchiti — 1
Ziway — 1

E-Mail from Peace Corps/Ethiopia

Editor's note: The new group of PCVs in Ethiopia not only have Peace Corps-issued cellphones (a security measure), but painfully slow dial-up access to the internet at computer bets. So they email and blog. A lot. Here are some selections. More can be found at blogspot.com and other blog sites.

I wanted to let all RPCVs know what kind of legacy you left here in Ethiopia. For six 6 months Lisa Jordan, the assistant Peace Corps director and I traveled throughout the Amhara and Oromiya districts to identify the sites for the new group of PCVs. At every site we visited we were greeted by smiles. Over and over again we were told "Of course we know Peace Corps. My English/science/math teacher was a PCV from . . ." — and then our new friend would name an American state in a garbled but identifiable form. After awhile we were no longer surprised when we heard this. There is universal excitement that PC has "finally" returned to Ethiopia. I have met with medical consultants, the director of Ethiopian Airlines, government officials and many others who all have the same reaction when we say that we are working for Peace Corps. It is a wonderful reception. The current newly minted PCVs and the staff here thank you all. We will try to live up to your reputations.

— From Burdett Rooney
Medical Officer, PC/Ethiopia

I finally started working, sort of. On Saturday I sat in at the health center-sponsored HIV testing at the health post outside of town. I did my best to follow along with the Amharic. It was quite inspiring to see people come in for testing. A twenty-something couple came in together, and after they got their results, the man thanked me for coming to Ethiopia as a health educator. There were also a bunch of early-twenties guys who got tested, a demographic that is usually virtually impossible to convince to find out about their status. It's encouraging to see the community rally behind the cause. Whenever I mention that I'm here for HIV education, people are excited. Everyone seems to know the importance of prevention. The epidemic in Ethiopia hasn't reached near the levels of other nations, and the population seems hell bent on keeping it that way. This is the kind of climate where it's possible to actually make a difference, not just feel like you're standing in front of the dam with a finger in the hole, hoping for the best.

— From the blog of Jessica Ducey, PCV/Assela

I've found myself incredibly frustrated with language learning recently. I have the basics down, solidly. I can greet people, ask directions, order food in a restaurant, bargain, take public transit, and make general small talk fairly competently. But then there's sitting in a department meeting at work and knowing vaguely what the topic being discussed might be, but not being able to follow along for the life of me (let alone imagine contributing anything to the discussion). There's having a little, sick, old man approach me on the hospital compound and ask me for something and not catching a word of it. There's trying to ask my neighbors if they have baby kittens (a very pregnant mom-cat has been in my yard a lot in the past few weeks) and having them hold up every cat in their place saying, "is this your cat? Is your cat lost?" There's getting a plate of bread ("dabbo") and a *macchiato*, rather than a double macchiato. The learning feels far less rewarding than at the beginning; progress is so much slower and so much subtler.

— From the blog of Anna Talman, PCV/Bahir Dar.
Talman gave an address in Amharic at the PCV swearing-in ceremony at the American Embassy

I'm writing to you on my laptop in the hope that I can just cut and paste this into email when I find an internet café [called a "computer bet"]. I use the term "internet café" very loosely as they tend to have only 1 computer and everybody stands around watching you type while also hoping that you'll hurry. What pressure! . . . I have a CELLPHONE! and all incoming phone calls are free for me. I have no idea whether or not you can find a decent price to make an international call to a cell phone, but I would sure love to hear from you. The cell phone has been nice even for my friends here to keep in touch. It's not uncommon to receive a few text messages each night as people check in on each other to see how you're surviving.



Peace Corps

NEWLY MINTED: Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter (India 66-68) with PCV Rebecca Hodel at the swearing-in ceremony at the American Embassy.

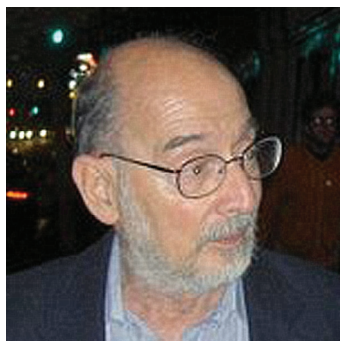
— Email home from a PCV

Like most Ethiopians who speak English, it turns out Mesatu was taught by a Peace Corps Volunteer back in the 1960s. She was black, and he went on for a while about how pretty she was and how it was the first time he learned that Americans came in "black." It never fails to amaze me how many people's lives were touched by PCVs and how many still remember their Volunteers vividly. They ask if we know "Bob" or "Ashley" — usually forgetting that I'm at least twenty years younger than them and their Volunteer is probably older than my parents by now. But still, it's exciting to be in a place where Peace Corps has such a long and respected history. Certainly makes our job easier.

— Jessica Ducey, PCV/Assela

Another volunteer who was visiting town came down with some serious gastrointestinal nastiness last weekend. She was unable even to keep down the anti-nausea medication our medical director had prescribed, and was having trouble making it from the bed in her hotel to the toilet without feeling lightheaded. A stool sample was described as "raspberry lemonade" (gross, I know...). Needless to say, she was not feeling good. And needed an IV and some antibiotics, pretty badly. This, of course, would have to have happened during the worst week in cell phone reception in recent history, at 10pm on a Saturday night (which is as good as 2am in a place where public transit shuts down at 8pm), on a night when the two doctors I know were both out of town, and when all of the roads in Bahir Dar had been torn up for construction. I got to test my emergency network here in town, rustling up an all-night clinic, a car to come pick her and another Volunteer up at the hotel, and another to pick me and a third visitor up at my house to accompany them to the clinic. The good news is that, four liters of IV fluid, some heavy-duty antibiotics, and an unpleasant night spent at the clinic later, she's feeling much better. Unofficial diagnosis: shigellosis. Not something I'd like to get. Ever. In some ways, though, it was good to be able to test out what to do in an emergency with something that was serious — real — but not immediately life-threatening.

— From the blog of Anna Talman, PCV/Bahir Dar.



A Progress Report

Not too bad, not too good

By Shlomo Bachrach (Staff 66-68)

THE ONLY THING ONE CAN SAY with any confidence these days about the situation in Eritrea and Ethiopia (as well as Ethiopia's Somalia adventure) is that it could be worse. For a while it looked like everything would be worse by now, but fortunately things have stabilized at the merely terrible level. One weak cheer for the Horn of Africa.

Let's review the key flashpoints: the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, Ethiopia and Somalia, the Somali region in Ethiopia (often called the Ogaden — ethnically Somali but historically ruled by Ethiopians or clan leaders). And we'll leave room for brief comments about other issues that haunt Ethiopia and Eritrea these days including a newly erupted crisis between Eritrea and Djibouti.

The Ethiopia-Eritrea border

Claiming that fighting is imminent on the 600-mile border between Ethiopia and Eritrea sounds like "crying wolf." This is wrong. In this case, crying wolf has proven useful. One reason war hasn't broken out is that the periodic alarms about impending war have kept the spotlight on the border. This makes it harder for either Eritrea or Ethiopia to fake a provocation or plan something reckless. Eritrea was reckless in 1998 when it began the war with Ethiopia and its frustration today is off the charts, but maybe Asmara has learned its lesson.

Ethiopia is better prepared for war today than it was in 1998, but its serious internal problems, plus Somalia, argue against Addis starting something with Eritrea. If Eritrea attacked, Ethiopia would unquestionably push to take Asmara and undoubtedly succeed. But it would find Eritrea impossible to hold. Its goal would be regime change, not occupation. For Eritrea, starting a war would be equivalent to regime suicide, though President Isaias might well escape with his life. War is unlikely except through miscalculation or as a result of rogue acts by fanatics.

Last November the Border Commission made good its threat to go out of business if the physical demarcation of the border had not yet started. Eritrea then formally accepted the "virtual" border shown on the Commission's maps and declared that Ethiopian troops were now occupying Eritrean territory. This establishes a legal pretext, if Eritrea wants one, to attack Ethiopia.

But I assume that Eritrea knows that it can't fight an extended war against an enemy 15 times its size in population and with a far bigger economy. With 10 per cent of adult Eritreans in uniform, the economic burden is crippling for an already poor country of 4 million. Resentment of the draft appears to be widespread. A stream of draft-eligible youth escape to the Sudan and Ethiopia despite knowing that their families will pay with arrests and fines. If

Eritrea is attacked, there is no doubt that the army would rally behind Isaias. If Eritrea starts a war, however, it is not so certain that all army units would march to war.

The blame for this stand-off is shared. International law is clearly on Eritrea's side. Ethiopia agreed that the decision of the Border Commission in the Hague would be binding, then rejected the decision when the town of Badme, strategically and economically of little value but the place where Eritrea attacked Ethiopian troops, was declared to be in Eritrea. Ethiopia was not appeased when Eritrea was declared the aggressor. Despite a stream of denials, qualifications, contradictory statements, conditional acceptances, etc., it is Badme that is the bone in Ethiopia's throat.

Isaias rants and threatens. He has made Asmara a haven for Ethiopian opposition groups and for Somali Islamists. Isaias demands that the U.S., the EU, the UN and the African Union honor their commitments as guarantors of the 2000 cease fire agreement that commits Ethiopia to the Hague process. But one by one all have turned their backs on the agreement and abandoned Eritrea.

Isaias has international law and a collective promise from the world on his side, but he has nothing to show for nearly six years of waiting. Famously reckless, he recently raised the stakes by forcing the UN peacemakers out of Eritrea. Ethiopia is now asking the few remaining UN officials to leave because it doesn't want to have them only on its side. As usual, the Security Council remains frozen like a deer in headlights.

Prime Minister Meles must be happy with the status quo. Ethiopia continues to violate its agreement while Isaias draws most of the criticism for ejecting

the UN. Meles needs only worry that a Democrat will win the White House next year and be less interested in him as an ally in the War on Terror.

Ethiopia and Somalia

In Somalia, Ethiopia has managed to dodge some political bullets although some of its troops have not been as successful at dodging real ones. Casualties remain "acceptable," meaning they aren't heavy enough to arouse the Ethiopian public. In a recent interview Meles claimed that they were only in the "hundreds." Somali casualties are much higher, but that is only partly Ethiopia's fault. Of course, Ethiopia troops periodically shell and clear neighborhoods in Mogadishu with tragic results, but many more civilians are victims of badly targeted mortars and roadside bombs set by Islamist and clan-based fighters.

There are more than two sides in the Somali fight. Islamists initially imposed some welcome order



NO END IN SIGHT: Ethiopian troops in Somalia

when they took over Mogadishu 20 months ago but resentment grew against their arbitrary justice and fundamentalist rule. Mogadishu's residents didn't rise to defend the Islamists when the Ethiopian army chased them out, although they might want

them back today. Somalia would not be at peace if Ethiopia withdrew, though the level of violence would certainly be lower. The Somalis will eventually have to sort things out for themselves no matter what kind of deal is made at a future negotiating table. Ethiopia's invasion has been a massive blunder, a gross overreaction to an empty threat from a few big-mouthed Islamists.

The Ethiopians believe they need a fig leaf to cover their exit from Somalia. The Bush White House would be offended, but Bush is the lamest duck imaginable and in no position to protest strongly. In April Meles said that Ethiopia would be out of Somalia within a year. Many believe that only the arrival of African Union or UN peacekeepers can provide cover for an Ethiopian withdrawal. A simple exit would look too much like what it would be: an Ethiopian defeat.

News reports of Ethiopians taking up positions in rural towns to secure them against the Islamist Al Shabab suggest that the number of Ethiopian troops in Somalia might be going up, not down. Meles said there are "2,000 to 3,000" troops in Somalia. Other estimates suggest the number to be 10,000 or more. About a quarter of the promised 8,000 AU peacekeepers have arrived but their governments must be wondering whether this will turn into another endless peacekeeping mission with casualties they will have to justify to the folks at home. The UN's failure to stand up to Eritrea should raise grave doubts about its reliability as backup.

Reconciliation between the Islamists and the Ethiopian-backed Somali government is still remote but there are hints of talks about talks and the tone of the rhetoric is less intemperate than it was. Real progress could happen suddenly if the Islamists drop their refusal to talk until after an Ethiopian withdrawal.

The ingredients for a compromise are visible. Would the parties keep to an agreement if a settlement is reached? Would they honor compromises made over their own non-negotiable demands? Until the outsiders are gone, no one will know. It is unlikely that a solution will result in a stable,

unified Somalia with a functioning government. Success, at best, would be some kind of interim arrangement that will give the situation a chance to work itself out over time.

The Somali region in Ethiopia

The violence in Somalia is probably the main reason the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) isn't seeking unification with Somalia. Who in their right minds would want to attach themselves to dysfunctional Somalia? In recent months the Ethiopian government appears to have dampened down serious ONLF violence, although perhaps the fighters may only be lying low, recruiting, training and arming.

Ethiopia appears to have engaged in a kind of scorched earth policy in the Ogaden, shutting down life-sustaining commerce, impeding distribution of humanitarian aid, barring foreign visitors, journalists and inspections except on stage-managed tours. With so little news coming from this quarantined district, one has to assume that Ethiopia has a lot to hide. Common sense and some fragmentary reporting — although not evidence acceptable in a court of law — finds them guilty of human rights abuses. And they stand guilty until proved innocent.

Eritrea versus Djibouti

A minor but unresolved issue in the Horn recently flared up again: the border between Djibouti and Eritrea. This has its roots in a badly drafted treaty in 1900 between Italy, the colonial power in Eritrea, and France, which ruled Djibouti. According to a retired Ethiopian diplomat now living in Washington DC, the border dispute also led to tension between Haile Selassie's regime and France.

The issue is symbolic since the land has no strategic or economic value. The diplomat remembers visiting the area, Ras Doumeira, and finding only a small café run by an eccentric Frenchwoman who preferred to live in isolation, away from the noise and crowds of metropolitan Djibouti. He referred to it as an "oasis", the only place for many miles

around where one could get a cold beer. A few small buildings where the woman and her workers lived completed what might be called the town.

In 1995, Eritrea brought troops to the area, at the same time that it was clashing with Yemen over control of the Hannish Islands in the Red Sea. International arbitration awarded the islands to Yemen. Eritrea subsequently withdrew its troops but published a map in 1996 that claimed some 40 square kilometers of territory that Djibouti also claims. This is where things stood until Eritrea's recent actions.

It is not clear why Eritrea decided to stir things up at this moment. Is it a distraction from internal problems? Does Djibouti's importance as Ethiopia's only significant port play a role in this? Is it somehow related to the occasional role Djibouti plays as host to meetings of Somalis on different sides of the fighting?

The Arab League has announced that it would send a mediation group. The Ethiopian diplomat does not trust Arab impartiality and prefers mediation by the African Union. David Shinn, a professor at American University and a former American Ambassador to Ethiopia, who kindly provided the historical context from 1900 and 1995-96, suggested that The International Court or a similar body would be suitable. "I doubt that it will become a major issue," he wrote. Or as President Isaias put in an interview with Reuters: "We decline the invitation to go into another crisis." Perhaps.

Other haunting issues

After a quick look at a few major indicators, one can say only that Ethiopia's economy seems to be on a stronger path than ever before — if the numbers are real. Annual GNP growth is low-balled at 6 per cent (a strong number) or as high as 10 per cent (an astonishing number) for the last three or four years, depending on which source you use. Inflation is now over 20 per cent, which is unsustainable and devastating to urban residents. Food prices are rising even faster than that. Farm prices are so high that some farmers — the ones who grow more than

they eat — are finally prospering. Subsistence farmers are out of luck, as usual.

Though still largely an agricultural nation, Ethiopia is finding it hard to come to grips with the new urban reality. The census is finished but the government has withheld the results, most likely because of what the numbers would reveal about the ethnic and religious makeup of the country. The politically dominant Tigreans might be fewer in number than the 7 to 8 per cent some have forecasted. Urban populations are visibly swelling. Some say that the population of Dire Dawa is close to 500,000 — an astonishing number. There are a number of cities above 200,000, probably including Makele, Awassa, Jimma and Bahr Dar. Dessie and Gondar are probably well over 100,000. These numbers are speculative, but the national population is generally reckoned at around 80 million.

Money and Politics

For a change, economic growth in Ethiopia might be greater than population growth. In Eritrea the picture is bleaker. Drought has affected some areas, the defense budget is crushing, remittances from abroad have not kept pace and foreign investment is small, driven away by official policy. Support from friendly Gulf governments is widely assumed to be keeping the country afloat. In exchange for what?

In Ethiopia, while the human rights situation has eased slightly (some political prisoners released, a few token gestures toward a freer press and broadcast media), personal freedoms are still under pressure. Critical blogs are blocked. Maybe the growing economy has helped dampen protests. The human rights situation in Eritrea seems unchanged. All media are government controlled. Dissenters disappear from sight. Only approved churches are allowed to worship. Foreign journalists are admitted only for short visits. Opposition leaders languish in jail, incommunicado. Authoritarian control seems absolute. One positive note — and it is not trivial — is that relations between Christians and Muslims remain calm. 



Ethiopia news

Compiled and written by Barry Hillenbrand

POLITICS AND THE NATION

Food: famine amid plenty

All the indicators point to a very good year for Ethiopian agriculture. Good weather plus a record of 11.2 million hectares under cultivation (up four per cent) promise that Ethiopia's harvest will be at least 10 per cent larger than last year. In January a UN Food and Agriculture Organization report based on interviews throughout the country said: "it seems that the overall food situation is highly favorable, with an increase in food availability and possible access for a large number of vulnerable groups. At the aggregate level, the country is able to cover all its cereal requirements. Stocks are expected to increase and a relatively large quantity of grains could also be exported." Since more than 80 per cent of the population earns their living from the land, that should be good news. And it is. Indeed for the last four years Ethiopia's crops have been at bumper levels.

Yet disquieting reports keep popping up amid all this cheery news. Various aid organizations and NGOs continue to issue warnings that a large number of Ethiopians face drought and possible famine this year. "About eight million chronically food insecure people and an additional 952,503 acutely food insecure people in Ethiopia will require food or cash assistance in 2008," said the Famine Early Warning Systems Network in a report issued in March. A month earlier a different UN report said that more than one million people were suffering from drought in Ethiopia's Somali and Borena regions in the far south of the country. And a few days after Prime Minister Meles stood up in Parliament in March to deny that his government was ignoring a drought in

eastern and southern parts of the country, Fortune, a respected Ethiopian business magazine, sent a reporter south to Borena in Oromia Regional State. He found cattle undernourished, suffering from lack of water and growing very weak. Some were dying and those taken to market were bringing low prices because of their condition.

In May more children suffering and dying from malnutrition in the South were reported. Reuters said that in Siraro, 220 miles south of Addis, a feeding center has treated 233 very sick children. Says Viviane Van Steirteghem of UNICEF: "The great tragedy is that Ethiopia had been making some impressive improvements before this drought." Now, UNICEF says, 126,000 children are suffering from severe malnutrition.

Rice's Ethiopian sojourn

Secretary Condoleezza Rice visited Ethiopia in December but in the manner of her famously tourism-challenged boss managed to spend a remarkably short period of time in-country. She did cram a lot of business into the single day she spent in Addis. Mostly she hung out at African Union Headquarters where she shuttled between meetings with African leaders and ministers with the goal of tackling conflicts in eastern Congo, Somalia and Sudan and preventing a border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The usual take on U.S.-Ethiopian relations these days is that the U.S. and Ethiopia work closely together on security issues, especially fighting Islamic extremism. Washington has no firmer ally in the region than Ethiopia. So it was a bit odd that Rice twice chided Ethiopia in public.

First, Rice warned Ethiopia not to do anything rash on the border with Eritrea. Said Rice: "I also urged Prime Minister [Meles] to avoid any acts that might heighten friction between Eritrea and Ethiopia and



Prime Minister Meles

to take concrete steps to lessen tensions on the border. There must not be a resumption of hostilities initiated by either side.”

Rice also had some words of warning for Ethiopia about the Ogaden. In recent months reports of human rights violations by Ethiopian troops have been a steady staple of reporting from the region. Ethiopia has been accused of keeping humanitarian relief supplies from those suffering from drought or displaced persons from Somalia. There have been charges of Ethiopian troops leveling towns and killing civilians. Addis denies this.

But the U.S. House of Representatives is not convinced. It passed HR 2003, the Ethiopian Democracy and Accountability Act, which threatens to deny Ethiopian government officials entry visas to the U.S. over human rights violations. The Bill also threatens to withhold military aid of at least \$1.5 million. Rice explained to an Ethiopian television interviewer that the Bush administration opposed the Resolution. But she warned: “I said to the Ethiopian leaders with whom I met, it will help if there is attention to humanitarian circumstances and conditions in the Ogaden and in other regions on the borders. There really does need to be support for people who are caught in the most difficult circumstances, displaced people, refugees. And humanitarian quarters really do need to be maintained. I understand the security concerns, but we can’t allow this to get in the way of helping innocent people who have just been caught in the conflict. And that will help the Administration to make very clear that we are resolving these problems with Ethiopia voluntarily and that there is no need for something like this particular House resolution.”

Diplomats booted—first, Norway, then Qatar

Ethiopia, despite its poverty, has long played an active and proud diplomatic role in the world, punching, as the British would say, above their weight class. This stress on diplomacy stretches back to its role as the sole African nation in the League of Nations. A diverse list of missions and embassies have long been a cheerful feature of Addis. But in September in a move which surprised many in the normally congenial diplomatic circuit

in Addis, the Foreign Ministry asked six Norwegian diplomats to leave. The reasoning behind the move, which shocked and angered the Norwegians, was complicated and not very clear. Reuters quoted Seyoum Mesfin, the Ethiopian foreign minister, as saying, that “soldiers in Eritrea are fully financed by Norway. By supporting those who destroy the peace process in neighboring lands, Norway is undermining the Ethiopian government’s work to achieve peace . . . Also in Somalia and Sudan, Norway supports terror groups.” The Norwegians denied supporting any rebel group. However, the large Tamil community in Norway has ties, indirectly, with Eritrea which has supported the Tamil Tiger separatist movement in Sri Lanka. Norway, which seceded from Sweden in 1908, has long had sympathy for separatist movements. Norway had been supplying about \$5.3 million in aid to Ethiopia, but as a result of expelling the diplomats, aid was reduced by one third.

In April, Ethiopia broke relations with Qatar. In a sharp announcement the Foreign Ministry said: “Ethiopia has decided to break diplomatic relations with the State of Qatar. Ethiopia has displayed considerable patience towards Qatar’s attempts to destabilize our sub-region and, in particular, its hostile behavior towards Ethiopia. Qatar has now, however, become a major source of instability in the Horn of Africa and more widely. All those who are prepared to foment instability in Ethiopia and undermine the country’s security have been given support and encouragement by Qatar. This has gone beyond Qatar’s strong ties with Eritrea. It has indeed provided direct and indirect assistance to terrorist organizations in Somalia and other areas. Whether in Somalia and in other parts of the Horn of Africa — including within Ethiopia — Qatar has been one of the most important supporters of terrorism and extremism in our sub-region.”

In reply, Qatar simply announced that the government was “astonished and denied that the state was supporting terrorism.” Qatar is, of course, the home of al-Jazeera radio and television which provides what is considered by the West to be friendly coverage to Islamic movements. But Qatar also serves as base for U.S. forces operating in the Gulf.

Opening fresh air waves

The Christian Science Monitor reported in December that the heroically patient Meaza Birru waited eight years to open a commercial radio station — the first in Ethiopia. Meaza began regular programming on her radio station in December, one of only two people to get FM radio licenses from the Ethiopian government since it legalized commercial radio in 1999. Considering Ethiopia's record on press freedom, some skeptics think that issuing two radio licenses is a token gesture, yet it could be a watershed. Tafari Wossen, a leading communications consultant, says the new private radio stations may stoke the growing demands for free press. "My generation had no concept of press freedom," he says. "Now the public is developing a taste for it." Though she knows she will be monitored closely, Meaza says she is taking the first steps to a freer media. "I believe it is a process, and this is the beginning," she says. "The public should have a choice, and I hope many others will come in the future."

If Meaza sets an agreeable precedent, then more may be allowed to follow. If she does not, she could lose her license, or even face criminal charges. "I don't agree with this idea of letting the media say whatever it wants," says Desta Tesfaw, deputy director general of the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority.

"This doesn't work in developing countries."

Good reviews for Ethiopian adoptions

When it comes to adoptions, the celebrities get all the attention, often unflattering. So when Angelina Jolie adopted a baby girl, called Zaharra, from Ethiopia, the media was all over the story, ultimately discovering that Zaharra's natural mother was not dead as the baby's grandmother

had told the adoption court, but merely on an extended walk-about. The mother told Reuters that she knew she could not care for the baby and so "I decided to flee rather than watch her die." She left the baby with her grandmother who put the baby up for adoption. In any event, the natural mother is delighted that her daughter was "adopted by a world-famous lady. I wish them both all the success they deserve." The adoption court says all the papers are in order.

Indeed, orderly seems to be the way Ethiopia is running most of the orphanages which serve as staging centers for children up for adoption. Last year The New York Times ran a long, favorable article about Ethiopian adoptions, praising the system which brings adoptive parents together with children needing a home. The Times quotes Sandra Iverson, a nurse practitioner from the University of Minnesota's international adoption health clinic, who visited Ethiopian orphanages and "left confident that Ethiopia's orphans enjoyed unusual care. 'You don't hear crying babies,' Ms. Iverson said. 'They are picked up immediately.' The other signature of the Ethiopian system is that adopting families are encouraged to meet birth families and visit the villages where the children were raised, a cutting-edge practice in adoptions. Some agencies provide DVDs or photographs that document the children's past."

The HERALD heard from **Doug Worthinton** (Lekem-
ti 63-65) who tells of the son and daughter-in-law of friends who adopted a daughter, Elefe, from Sidamo. Part of the email: "When Elefe arrived at the orphanage in December there was concern that she was underweight, but she did well there and the LA pediatrician found her to be 60th percentile for weight and 95th percentile for height. The parents are especially amazed by the latter, because they think her mother (who appeared to them to be about 14, though the paperwork says 22) is about 4'8"! Those of us who served in Ethiopia know it would not be unusual for a 14-year-old girl to have a baby. I believe that through this adoption the new parents have given Elefe an excellent chance for a much longer life (her life expectancy would have been 48) and a much fuller life, as well."



WELCOME HOME: Elefe and her new family

ARTS

Finally, a millennium hit — and protest

In September, when the country celebrated the beginning of the year 2000, EC, Addis Ababa hosted L.A.-based hip-hop group the Black Eyed Peas in a new, multimillion dollar concert hall. The reception was tepid, if respectful.

As part of the nation's year long millennium celebration, Texas R&B diva Beyonce Knowles was booked for another concert. The reaction from an audience of 5,000 adoring fans was anything but lukewarm. Beyonce struck a chord among young Ethiopians who usually are steadfast fans only of music sung in Amharic. The reception was hysterical when Beyonce came onstage for her two-hour concert. Maybe it was her selection of outfits covered in sequins or made of a shiny, space-age material that included a sort of a modern interpretation of a hula girl with shiny black tendrils replacing the grass skirt, and a high-necked Victorian-style top set off with a sequined diaper.



MORE THAN HOT: Beyonce in Addis

Despite — or perhaps because of — her outfits, many in the crowd appeared to genuinely enjoy Beyonce's performance. "Rap music doesn't suit Ethiopia," said local music promoter Michael Melake, 36. "Ethiopians need a melody.

Rap music is all about the black American experience, and we don't relate to that." Local nightclub owner Enoch Nicano, 30, provided a slightly simpler explanation for Beyonce's huge fan base in Ethiopia. "She's hot," he said, then paused to reconsider. "She's more than hot." Concert organizers were a little more delicate about why Beyonce was booked and why Ethiopians are so fond of her. "Because she loves Ethiopia," said Mulugeta Aserate, a member of Ethiopia's millennium secretariat.

Not only did Beyonce win over young fans, but, it seems, she was a hit with the patriarch of the

Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abune Paulos, who met with her before she performed. The meeting was not popular with the students at the Theological College of the Holy Trinity, Ethiopia's top religious college. They organized a hunger strike to protest the meeting, as well as the close ties between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the government, and restrictions on the students' right of free speech.


As many as 30 students from the college were hospitalized. Daniel Techale, a 28-year-old alumnus who lives at the theological college, said, "She provoked the whole situation," he said, accusing the patriarch of "practically a nonreligious act. It's unacceptable, or inappropriate, to say the least."

Teddy-Afro jailed

In mid-April Ethiopia's sensational stage performer, Tewodros Kassahun — popularly known as Teddy-Afro — was taken to Addis Ababa Central Prison at Kaliti after a hearing in front of the High Court requesting bail on murder charges. Dressed in a red T-shirt and black pants, he appeared nervous and seemed unable to focus when talking to reporters gathered inside the Court, but he managed to maintain his innocence. "I've yet to compose my thoughts," Tewodros said. "Nevertheless, I haven't hit anyone with a car."

On November 3, 2006, Addis police investigators arrested Tewodros, alleging that he left the scene of a car accident that killed 18-year old Degu Yibelte, a street dweller from Gojjam. On the night of the accident, a phone call from a taxi driver supplied the police with the license number of a BMW said to be involved in the accident.

Later that night, police found a BMW owned and driven by the singer smashed into a concrete barrier that blocked a road under-construction around the Gurd Sholla area. The license plate numbers matched those of the accident car.

Tewodros was released on bail, but now the court is deciding whether to release him again while awaiting trial for homicide. 

Eritrea news



POLITICS, THE PRESS AND TOURISM

Just what is happening?

It's very difficult to keep tabs on Eritrea these days. Any news coming out of Asmara is very tightly controlled. Recently Reporters Without Borders, a journalistic watchdog group based in France, ranked Eritrea number 169 on its 2007 Press Freedom Index. That was dead last, behind North Korea (168), and Turkmenistan (167). And well behind Burma (164) and Vietnam (162). Says the Reporters without Borders annual report: "There is nothing surprising about this [new lowest rating

for Eritrea]. Even if we are not aware of all the press freedom violations in North Korea and Turkmenistan, which are second and third from last, Eritrea deserves to be at the bottom. The simple reason is that the situation has gone from bad to worse. The country has been cut off from the rest of the world since major police round-ups in September 2001. The privately-owned press has been banished by the authoritarian President Isaias Afewerki and the few journalists who dare to criticize the regime are thrown in prison. We know that four of them have died in detention and we have every reason to fear that others will suffer the same fate."

The report continues: "News that does filter out of Eritrea is as rare as it is terrifying. Prison guards, who fled abroad in 2006, revealed that at least three of the journalists who were arrested in 2001, died in prison between 2005 and 2006. And on January 11, Fessehaye Yohannes, known as 'Joshua,' one of the most important figures in the country's intellectual life, died from the effects of appalling prison conditions in Eiraeiro in the north-east of

the country where the highest profile prisoners are held. The family was not informed about the death of the co-founder of the weekly Setit, poet, playwright, and theatre troupe director and his body was not returned to them."

Free Dawit

The concerns of Reporters without Borders about the press in Eritrea were echoed by some 30 Swedish newspapers which urged the government to do more to secure the release of journalist Dawit Isaak, held in an Eritrean prison for six years without trial. The newspapers said that Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt "must now exert clear and strong pressure on the Eritrean government to liberate Dawit Isaak." An Eritrean with Swedish citizenship, Isaak was arrested in September 2001 along with a dozen newspaper owners, editors and journalists accused of being Ethiopian traitors and spies. In their statement, the Swedish editors denounced what they described as Stockholm's "diplomacy of silence" on behalf of Isaak. They said the policy had produced no results.

The editors called on Reinfeldt to push the European Union to take Isaak's case into consideration when negotiating aid to Eritrea. The EU has preferred a program of diplomacy that keeps contact with Asmara open, albeit it on a quiet — they called it "stealth" — level. In May of 2007, development programs worth \$180 million over five years were approved by the EU. The EU called on the Eritrean government to "adopt a constructive approach to the resolution of regional crises as well as to progress in human rights and press freedom." But on the day the agreement was signed, President Issaias scornfully brushed aside critical questions from European journalists about human rights in Eritrea during a joint press conference with EU Development minister Louis Michel in Brussels.



TOUGH TIMES: Eritrea's President Isaias

In a frank and open interview with Reuters, Eritrea's President Isaias dealt with two of the most controversial issues facing his country: elections and human right.

"[Elections have] to come ... I have nothing to benefit by postponing a political process. I wouldn't like an election a la Kenya-style or the Zimbabwean style, or the Palestinian style, or the Afghani style. [The timing of an election] is not anything personal. I will stay as long as it takes. That's not my choice, that's not my preference. It has to be decided based on the situation on the ground ... I will not be scared by someone coming telling me 'well you have to go, we have to find a change' I'm not a fool."

"A very small number [of people have been arrested] and we are not shy to say these are individuals who've done harm to the national security of this country. We are not questioning the fact that we have done this and we will continue to do it. This has nothing to do with human rights. No one has the right to point a finger at us."

The BBC expelled

Eritrea, like Ethiopia, has also kept foreign journalists at bay. Visas for visiting journalists are hard to come by. And the few resident foreign reporters who remain in Asmara work under difficult restrictions. In March, Peter Martell, the BBC correspondent in Eritrea was called to the Ministry of Information where — as Martell reported — a "a battle scarred war veteran leaned towards me across his desk. His finger pointed towards a heavily-underlined copy of a report I had written the day before. 'Why,' he said, spluttering with rage, 'do you say we silence critics?' The former rebel, now a top official in the information ministry, was angry because I refused to name two ex-freedom fighters I had quoted expressing disillusionment at life in Eritrea today.

'You will not work again, until you tell us the names of the people,' he added. Given Eritrea's grim record for jailing its critics, I declined politely to reveal the names. I was then made to surrender my work permit. After just over a year reporting from Asmara, it was my last official story from inside Eritrea." So Eritrea booted another foreign journalist out of the country. (Martell, in a curious move, recently returned to Eritrea, at least temporarily, reporting for Agence France-Presse.)

Meanwhile, out on the reefs with the tourists

Since there's not a lot of good news to write about from Asmara, it's no surprise that the government takes the few visiting journalists out to the Red Sea to report stories about the country's tourist virtues, specifically the coral reefs which lay off the coast. Here the good news is that the reefs are pristine and thriving. "Around most of the world, especially Asian and African coastlines of the Indian Ocean, coral reefs have been plundered in one way or another, the most damaging activity being

explosive fishing," stated John Veron, former chief scientist with the Australian Institute of Marine Science and a foremost expert on coral reefs.

"The reefs of Eritrea look as if they have been in a time warp — they have not been touched." What's more because these reefs exist in very warm coastal waters, they may be able to survive global warming and be used to replant or reseed reefs which have been declining because of global warming.

And, of course, the reefs offer a potentially lucrative opportunity for tourists. Veron pointed out that just north of Eritrea, visitors to Egypt's Red Sea reefs generate more cash than visitors to its famous archaeological sites. "The Eritrean reefs are a tourist industry gold mine waiting to be opened," Veron said. Some tourists have already arrived seemingly undeterred by concerns of renewed conflict with Ethiopia or reports by human rights groups that the Issaias government is guilty of widespread abuses. On Sheikh Seid, also called Green Island because of its thick cover of mangroves, one of 354 largely uninhabited islands scattered along the desert coast, a group of tourist snorkeling over the reefs reported to be excited by the sights beneath the waves. "The colors are fantastic," one swimmer said, emerging out of the sparkling blue water. "The fish are all around me." No politics in sight.

THE BORDER ISSUE

The UN withdraws. Predictions of war. Again.

Last fall when Ethiopia would not agree to the formal demarcation of their border with Eritrea, the Border Commission — set up to broker a final settlement of the Ethiopia-Eritrea war which cost thousands of lives in the nasty war of 1998–2000 — disbanded. Sir Elihu Lauterpacht, the Commission chairman and a distinguished lawyer,



TIME TO GO: UN peacekeeping troops on the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea



said that the Commission had done its work. The Cassandras in the press declared that war between Ethiopia and Eritrea was only a matter of time. Time passed. No war.

Now, the 1,700 troops of the United Nations peacekeeping force that has been patrolling the 25-kilometer-wide buffer zone between the two countries for the last seven years are about to withdraw. Again, knowledgeable folks — including UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon — are predicting that war is only a matter of time. The withdrawal of the UN forces, said Ban, “could result in an escalation of tensions in the border area with the risk of a resumption of open hostilities, despite declarations by the two parties that they have no intention to restart the war.”

Eritrea precipitated the current crisis by imposing flight restriction on UN aircraft and cutting off fuel supplies to the UN peacekeepers. When it became impossible for the UN to operate from bases inside Eritrea, it began pulling troops out. It was clear that they were no longer welcome. “President Isaias underlined that the stationing of the peacekeeping mission in the border has no legal justification as the commission’s ruling has already been virtually demarcated on the map,” said the Eritrea Profile, a Ministry of Information newspaper. Ethiopia followed suit by saying that it is disinclined to allow the UN troops to stay only on its side.

Eritrea is annoyed with the UN because the Security Council will not insist that Ethiopia live up to its pledge to accept the 2002 Border Commission’s rulings. Ethiopia has made pious announcements about more talks, but it is clear that Addis does not want to withdraw from the area around the town of Badme, the hugely symbolic town which was the flash point of the war and which the Commission said is Eritrean territory. The Algiers Agreement which ended the war said that both sides would accept without changes the decision of the Border

Commission. Eritrea has declared that it has accepted the Border Commission’s “virtual demarcation of the border. Ethiopia says that “virtual demarcation” is a “legal fiction.”

Is war inevitable? The Ethiopians may be re-enforcing the border area with fresh troops but they are unlikely to move unprovoked. As Ethiopian president Meles told Newsweek in an interview: “We’re not going to war with Eritrea because we don’t want to. One stupid war is enough. On the Eritrean side, I think what’s keeping them from going to war is the recognition that if they were to do so they would not profit from it.” Ethiopia has troops in Somalia and is fighting rebels in the Ogaden.

Eritrea’s intentions are more difficult to fathom. Ethiopia and the United States continually accuse Eritrea of supporting anyone fighting Ethiopia in Somalia and the Ogaden. Eritrea may also be complicit in terrorist attacks inside Ethiopia and elsewhere on the Horn of Africa. Washington continues to threaten to put Eritrea on the list of nations supporting terrorism. But harassing Ethiopia on the margins — if that is what Eritrea is doing — may be enough conflict for Eritrea for the time being. A full scale war, Asmara knows, would ultimately be disastrous. Still Eritrea, with a tiny population of 4.1 million, has the largest standing army in sub-Saharan Africa. The World Bank estimates that military service, which is compulsory for all, accounts for 11 percent of all employment. Eritrea also has friends like Iran and Sudan who are urging Asmara to continue its efforts at inflicting pain in the side of the West by harassing Ethiopia, Washington’s strong ally.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Lots of self-reliance, not much progress

In November 2007, Eritrea marked the 10th anniversary of the nakfa, the currency issued by the optimistic new government of the newly independent Eritrea to replace the Ethiopia birr. The banknotes, reports Agence France-Presse, eschewed war images in favor of drawings of schoolchildren, farmers, a busy port and a renovated railway. In short, the

The intimidation of his original cast by Eritrean government supporters forced Falorni to recast his film five days before shooting, and what a stroke of good fortune that turned out to be. He found actors in an Eritrean refugee camp in northern Kenya whose own sad reality gives his film all the authenticity it needs. Falorni, Italian-born but based in Germany, clearly developed amazing rapport with his young Eritrean performers, all non-actors working in their own language, Tigrinya. Everyone has a firm grasp on his or her role. Even the smallest parts come across as clear, distinct personalities. And there is never a sentimental moment or an overreach for emotions from anyone.

— From a review of “Heart of Fire” in *The Hollywood Reporter*

pictures featured areas Eritrea needed to focus on as it reconstruct the war-shattered infrastructure. Ten years later, much of Eritrea still awaits reconstruction and the optimism of the brightly colored banknotes is long gone. The country does not survive on a renewed internal economy, but on loyal members of the Eritrean diaspora who pay a 2 percent income tax for the honor of maintaining their dual citizenship and on the large remittances sent home to support relatives still in Eritrea.

And there is aid. The European Union continues to pour some development money into Eritrea, but a score of NGOs and aid organizations, including US AID, have been expelled. President Isaias contends this is not because Eritrea has devised a program of self-reliance, like, for example, the one devised in Burma in the 1970s. He says that he has a rather more nuanced strategy. He believes that Africa relies too much on foreign aid. Africa — and Eritrea — should not always expect international help when a crisis arises.

In an interview with IRIN, Isaias said: “[Our policy] is not self-reliance. It is not even food security per se . . . We aspire to increase production in agriculture and fisheries to enable this country to export food commodities, processed or raw. We can now confidently say we have gone a long way to secure food. We need to do more to achieve the level that will take us to a situation where we can say we are beyond self-sufficiency. So it is not a question of self-reliance or isolation or what-have-you in the vocabulary of many who can only think about third world countries in terms of hunger, famine and crises. That is not the case here in Eritrea.”

He continues: “Depending on outside support may have its positive consequences but the negative consequences always outweigh the positive consequences. It is highly risky to think that external humanitarian support will bridge the gap [in food security]. You may end up not bridging the gap but widening the gap in the long run. So you will have to be careful judging where you sign and what you choose.”

ARTS

Controversial child soldier film and book

“Heart of Fire,” a new film by Italian director Luigi Falorni about a young girl’s experience as a child soldier in Eritrea was all the talk when it opened at the Berlin Film Festival in February. Some of the talk was dangerous trash talk — so dangerous, in fact, that the lead actress sought asylum in Europe. The movie tells the tale of the recruitment of Awet (played by Letekidan Micael) and her older sister into an Eritrean militia unit as child soldiers. The rebels fight both the Ethiopians and other rival units.

Critics of the film who have been extremely vocal say that the movie distorts history. They claim Eritrean liberation forces did not use children as soldiers in their 30-year struggle for independence from Ethiopia. The movie was based on *Feuerherz (Heart of Fire)*, a best-selling autobiographical account of the independence war by Eritrean author Senait Mehari. The book, now translated into English, was reviewed in issue #33 of *THE HERALD*. Senait was granted asylum in Germany where she is now a successful singer. But her book caused considerable controversy in the Eritrean community. In April, Droermer, the publisher, announced a settlement of a libel suit by a woman who the book describes as a brutal commander of a Liberation Front unit. “Rather, she was a 12-year-old student at the Tsebah school [in Eritrea],” the company said in statement. “It was a regrettable error.” Critics say the book is studded with other errors and exaggerations.

The film, based on the book, ignited new flames of protest. Reuters reported that at a press conference in Berlin, Falorni defended his film which he says is a work of fiction and that the issue of children serving as soldiers was not at the heart of his film. “Today in 2008, we have an image of child soldiers which is very fixed,” he said. “I don’t want to equate Eritrea with Uganda or Sierra Leone. This was not actually about politics for me. I wanted to make a film about hope, about a girl caught up in

a war, what she sees, and what she learns. It wasn't my intention to make a film about children who are kidnapped."

But Eritrean critics were not satisfied. Said one: "This film is shaming 30 years of Eritrean struggle. In Eritrea, when we fought, we never used children." But Falorni says that his film stresses the "heroism" shown by those who fought for Eritrea. "In Eritrea there were children who fought. And they did so willingly. The official version is that they were sent back to school. There are pictures which show the opposite was true."

His explanation did not satisfy Mahari Seghid, an Eritrean working for African Refugees News. He told the Berlin press conference: "I come from Eritrea and in the 30 years of war, we never used child soldiers. This film shames 30 years of Eritrean struggle. Girls were never taken away to a camp to be trained as soldiers."

Eritrea refused to allow Falorni to shoot the film in Eritrea, so he made it Kenya. Shortly before filming was due to start, most of the largely Eritrean cast walked out because of threats. They were subjected to what they called "telephone terror" from Eritrean officials. Said Falorni, "We were on the verge of having to give up." But he recast several roles with Eritrean refugees from a nearby camp. Two leading parts were taken by Ethiopians whose voices were dubbed into Tigrinya. Film critics, undeterred by the political controversy, praised the film. The producers are now searching for a distributor for the film in the U.S.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

All that glitters may be gold -- and trouble

President Isaias Afwerki, in an interview with Reuters, predicts a bright future for Eritrea's economy. Yes, they will push forward toward self-sufficiency in agriculture, but it is gold which sparkles in the future. Isaias said that Eritrea's first gold mine would begin producing by the end of 2009. Gold mining would be the beginning of a metals industry with large reserves and the potential to drive development. But Isaias said his government would

work carefully so that the new mining industry would both provide social benefits for Eritreans and avoid the so-called "resource curse" that has bedevilled other African nations that become suddenly flush with wealth from natural resources. A half a dozen foreign firms are exploring in Eritrea and experts a boom in both gold and industrial metals.

"The gold reserves in this country are not comparable to anywhere in the region -- Sudan, Ethiopia, anywhere else," Isaias told Reuters in an interview. "The reserves and potential are there. It's huge." For all Eritrea's air tight control of the media, Isaias has granted interviews to a surprising number of visitors from the Western media. If you get a visa, you see the President, it seems. Isaias is a thoughtful talker, especially when it comes to development issues.

Canada's Nevsun Resources Ltd will likely be the first company to start mining production. Nevsun says it expects its Bisha project to produce around 1 million ounces of gold, 750 million pounds of copper, and 1.1 billion pounds of zinc over a 10-year life. "It should be the first one. Realistically, I would expect [the mine to start in] mid-2009 or by the end of 2009," Isaias said.

"The blocks [to success] are many. The ventures are diverse," he said, adding that full mining development "will take some time." Dangers lurk in the new found riches when they come. "We shouldn't depend on natural resources. That may turn out to be a curse." Isaias told Reuters. "We may be misled to believe that everything will be solved because we have huge mineral reserves. We need to be careful on how we use this resource for a sustainable course and development in this country. That resource is the property of the people."

Isaias, known as a Marxist revolutionary when he fought for independence from Ethiopia, has no problem cutting deals with foreign companies to develop the economy. He told Reuters: "Our profit-sharing policy with our partners is fair - we take our share, and they take their share. It is not government intervention. This has nothing to do with economic philosophies." 

Gebrselassie has doubts about running the Marathon in Beijing

But Ethiopia has the other (long) distances covered

By Barry Hillenbrand

WILL HE OR WON'T HE? Ethiopia's most famous active runner, Haile Gebrselassie, is caught in the midst of a flurry of speculation about his intentions for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing which start in August. In a dramatic announcement, Gebrselassie, who suffers from asthma, said he was inclined not to run in the marathon because of the pollution expected in Beijing. Gebrselassie set the current world record in the men's marathon in September 2007

in a dramatic race in Berlin. His statement renewed the debate about the air quality in Beijing and China's suitability to host the Games.

But Gebrselassie did not quite slam the door. He might consider running the race, he said, if the venue were moved away from the city. "I do not want to rule anything out at this point," he said. "This decision is not about me. It is about all athletes who will be competing. Our safety has to be protected. If

the International Olympic Committee makes the decision to switch venues, then I may compete depending on how my training is going."

Losing Gebrselassie in the marathon would be a blow to the Olympics. The marathon is, after all,

a signature event in the Olympics. As the world record holder Gebrselassie would be the man to beat. If, that is, he runs. "I have nothing against China or their hosting of the Olympics. They are doing a great job," he said. The issue is the air and his health. He has been building his strength aiming at Beijing for the last year.

If Gebrselassie does not run the marathon, he says he may try to compete in the 10,000 m. He knows the event well. He won four consecutive world champion titles in the distance beginning in 1993 and won Olympic gold medals in the 10,000 m in Atlanta in 1996 and in Sydney in 2000. But he placed a disappointing fourth in Athens in 2004. After the Athens embarrassment, Gebrselassie, now 34, began concentrating on marathons, leaving the shorter distances, like 10,000 m, to younger men like Kenenisa Bekele, who did win the gold in the 10,000 m in Athens. So returning to the 10,000 m may be a problem for Gebrselassie. "First I have to qualify for the Ethiopian team. That is not easy," he says. Indeed it may be very difficult. Says Ethiopia coach Woldemeskel Kostre, "We really admire him, we love him, we respect him but he's not ready to run 10,000 metres at the Olympics."

BUT FEAR NOT, Ethiopia has lots of talent even without Gebrselassie running the marathon. Overlooked in all the flurry of publicity about Gebrselassie's temporizing remarks is that Ethiopia's long distance runners — both men and women — have made an amazingly strong comeback since their



VICTORY AT THE BRANDENBURG GATE: Gebrselassie at Berlin

miserable showing at the 2006 Mombassa Cross Country World Championships where, suffering from heat and humidity, they were defeated by Kenyans and a sole Eritrean. But this year, following a good showing at the 2007 Osaka World Championships, the Ethiopians triumphed in the 2008 Cross Country World Championship held in March in the more accommodating climate of Edinburgh, Scotland. Success in the Cross Country Championships has long been a strong predictor of success in the distance races of the Olympics.

In Edinburgh, Ethiopia took gold in both the men's and women's long course races. In the men's, Kenenisa Bekele had to overcome a fair amount of adversity. First he arrived in Edinburgh late because he missed his connection in London because his flight from Addis arrived late. He spent the night in London where the food upset his stomach. Once the race began, Bekele had other problems. In the third lap of the race, someone caught Bekele's shoe from the rear forcing him to stop and re-tie it. Said Bekele after the race: "I knew it would make the rest of the race tough. After the shoe came off I

began to think a great deal about what I had to overcome. If I had tried immediately to catch up it may have affected the rest of my race but instead I controlled my pace." Bekele finally caught back up to the leader, defending champion Zersenay Tadese of Eritrea, who tried to shake him off with bursts of speed. It didn't

work. Bekele stayed tight behind Tadese and two Kenyans. But in the final lap Bekele made his break, passed the three runners and won.




HEADING FOR VICTORY: Dibaba joyfully finishing the 8k

The women

In the women's 8 km Championship race, Tirunesh Dibaba dramatically put a cap on Ethiopia's return to the front of long distance running. She shrugged off any doubts about her fitness in the final 400m of a grueling race. She leapt from fourth to first on the craggy hillside of Haggis Knowe, before unleashing her trademark finishing kick that brought her home over the soggy mud in 25:10, five seconds ahead of her teammate Mestawet Tufa.

Linet Masai from Kenya claimed the bronze, but with Ethiopians in sixth (Gelete Burka) and ninth (Meselech Melkamu), it was the women in green and yellow who claimed the senior women's team title for the seventh consecutive time and the ninth time in the last 10 years. Dibaba was delighted. "Last year as a team and as individuals we did not do well, and disappointed the country but this is redemption," said Dibaba, whose younger sister Genzebe won the junior women's title earlier in the day. Dibaba said that at the end of the race she felt sure she "could catch up with the leading three. I saw there were Ethiopians [waiting and cheering at the finish line] and I knew I could do it."

And so . . .

With Gebrselassie, Bekele, and Dibaba, plus a host of other top-quality, but lesser-known, runners in top form, Ethiopia is clearly ready for the Olympics. Now all that remains is for Beijing to clear the air a bit. 



AT THE FINISH LINE IN EDINBURGH: Bekele wins gold

Book Review

1896

by F. B. Davis (Gore 63–65)

Wasteland Press, 2007

240 pages, \$25.00

Reviewed by William Seraile (Mekele 63–65)

FLOYD DAVIS, WHO spent two years as a PCV in Gore and never visited the highlands of Tigre Province nor the battle area of Adwa where an African army defeated the Italians in 1896. But, nonetheless, he has written a remarkable historical novel that highlights black resistance not only in Ethiopia, but in Zimbabwe and the United States.

1896 — a simple and rather stark title — boldly describes how Ethiopians successfully defended their land; how the Ndebele and Shona uprising against European settlers in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) failed, and how African-Americans were subjected by law and brute force to accept a Jim Crowed second-class citizenship after briefly enjoying the gains ushered in by the Reconstruction Era after the end of slavery.

In his 1963 Peace Corps trainee biographical sketch, Davis listed “creative writing and journalism” among his interests. Using superb research skills, a vivid imagination and highly interesting prose, Davis has written an entertaining novel. His description of Booker T. Washington aptly captured the enigmatic racial leader whose accommodation view endeared him to a racist society. Davis’s depiction of a horrific lynching documented the hypocrisy of a nation that professed that “all men were created equal.” His tale of black resistance foreshadowed the struggle that came decades later during the Civil Rights movement.

I had been to Adwa, which was not far from my Peace Corps home in Mekele, but I never thought much about the logistics of the battle until I read *1896*. Adwa is located on a high plateau area but the surrounding terrain is composed of highlands with switchback roads. Often I traveled on the roads enroute to Asmara or Dessie and I wondered then

about the difficulty of attempting to cover this area sans automobiles or other powered vehicles. In 1965, accompanied by a guide and a donkey, I took a three-day hike from Dessie to Lalibela. It was an arduous trip crossing high altitude passes. Davis vividly describes the difficulty the Italians had attempting to trek across the highlands with pack animals and artillery while trying to cope with the scarcity of food, the extreme cold of the night air and the fear that men in all wars feel.


Although Africans in Rhodesia had to endure over a half-century of oppression before freedom fighters established Zimbabwe and African-Americans had to struggle with the assistance of the United States Supreme Court and Congress to end legal discrimination, Ethiopians had a victory that like that of Japan over Russia in 1905 stunned the world of white supremacy. Davis’s description of this victory captures the ecstasy felt by the soldiers. He writes:

“Now they shouted in triumphal delirium at their victory, leaping high in the air and shaking their heads in frenzied spasms that sent their lion-maned collars flying in the air. They yelled out war cries and shouted praises of their battlefield exploits amid the maddening scene around the huge bonfire atop the mountain. The enemy had been put to flight, their dead covered the battlefield and their dream of empire lay buried in the dust.”

1896 is a fascinating book. Copies can be obtained via amazon.com or barnesandnoble.com.

An Ethiopian Album: A Photographic Journey through Nature and Culture

by David Tannenbaum & Jose Luis Vivero Pol

THE HERALD received an email from David Tannenbaum about his new photo book on Ethiopia. The book has a forward by Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher of the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Agency and his wife Sue Edwards, a noted conservationist. We’ve not seen this expensive (\$149) self-published coffee table book, but if it has appeal, check out: www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/170034 



Reunions

Ethiopia II

Lobsters and a boat ride in Maine

By Roger Sprague (Addis 63–65)

At our EE II Reunion in Seattle in the summer of 2006, **Ed Lynch** (Nazareth 63–65), organizer extraordinaire, suggested that we should have the next reunion in Maine. Because I was the only E&E RPCV living there, guess who ended up the chairman of the reunion committee? I didn't really know what I was getting into. But I got plenty of help. **Bob Matthai** (Addis/Gondar 63–65) agreed to set up a reunion web site and devised an excellent registration and payment form. **Gloria Curtis** (Asmara 63–65), who has long served as the unofficial but very active president of our group, agreed to handle the correspondence and help me with finances.

In the past, we had had our reunions in large cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle and even Addis, where there were Ethiopians and Eritreans living, but here in Belfast, Maine, there were none. The closest Ethiopian restaurant was actually an Eritrean place in Portland, a hundred miles away.

But more help was at hand! Back in 1964, **Lane**

Tracy and I invited Tadesse Gebre-Kidan, one of our college students who needed a place near the university to live, to move into our spare room. After graduating from the Business College, Tadesse worked for the World Bank and later was the ambassador to Canada from Ethiopia. He and his family now live in Ottawa, and they agreed to come to Belfast and to help me with the reunion. They

promised to bring some injera and wat, but no siga wat (remember those pesky custom rules!).

The committee picked the weekend of September 21st for the reunion. Bob got the web site up by early June. Expecting about 30 to 40 people, we settled on the Comfort Inn as the host hotel. They also had a nice restaurant for our Friday night banquet. As it turned out, more than 70 people came. The Belfast Harbor Inn took the overflow. Our three-day program of events which started with the Friday night banquet, followed by a Saturday morning meeting, a boat ride around Penobscot Bay, a lobster dinner, and Sunday morning brunch at my house.

Sounds easy. And some of it was. I made arrangements for the use of the meeting room at the Belfast Library for our general meeting. For our boat trip I booked the "Good Return," Belfast's largest excursion boat. The folks at Young's Lobster Pound said that handling 75 people at a time is an every-day occurrence for them.

Needless to say, there were a few bumps along the road. Tadesse and his daughter Kidist arrived on Thursday. Kidist and her mother Etsegenet had made injera and wat for the Sunday brunch. But to their dismay, they had left fifty ingeras back home in Ottawa. Bob Matthai called **Barry Hillenbrand** (Debre Markos 63–65) who had stopped

in Portland to meet up with **Steve Silver** (Wolisso/Chion 63–65), and made arrangements to have Barry and Steve pick up forty ingeras at the one Ethiopian (opps, Eritrean) restaurant in Portland before driving to Belfast. Tadesse and Kidist were greatly relieved.

For our Saturday morning meeting, **Shlomo Bachrach**, a former Peace Corps staffer in Ethio-



PROPER FORM: Host Roger Sprague tucks in



SNAPPY SNAPPER: Bob Matthai found time to take everyone's picture

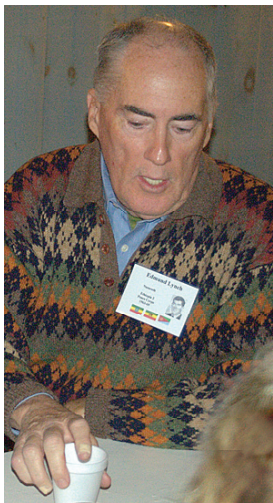
pia who runs an indispensable news web covering the Horn of Africa, gave a talk and brought us up-to-date on Ethiopian and Eritrean affairs. **John Kulczycki** (Debre Zeit 63–65) was the master of ceremonies who kept us all on a time schedule. Several people had brought slides of Peace Corps days of the past, and every enjoyed seeing them.

In Saturday afternoon we headed off for the boat ride. Wouldn't you know it? The only day that the sun didn't shine was Saturday. The bay was hazy and damp, and the visibility was not very good. To my surprise, the captain had hors d'oeuvres and drinks set up for us, and they had blankets for those who were cold. It was, after all, September and Maine. I was a little disappointed with the weather, but no one seemed to mind because we were all having such a good time talking with each other.

The Saturday night dinner at Young's Lobster Pound was a great success. For some it was their first time at a lobster restaurant like this. Said one befuddled RPCV: "This is the first time that I have been to a lobster factory." No lobster wat was served that night, but plenty of wat would be available the next day at the departure brunch at my house. I had been cooking wat for a week and freezing it. **Marjorie Taylor Mansfield** (Debre Markos 63–65) had sent me a large quantity of berberi along with recipes.

There was be plenty of Ethiopian food to eat. I also made several quiches for the faint of stomach and served muffins and donuts with fruit juices and tea and coffee. With the help of Kidist, my friend Ellen Berry, and my sister Barbara, everyone was well-served and had a comfortable place to sit because I had managed to gather tables and chairs enough to seat 60 people.

The week-end went by much too fast, but we will meet again in Denver in the summer of 2009. At the end of the reunion, after all of the bills were paid, we had \$1200 to donate to Ethiopian charities via EEE RPCVs Legacy Projects with nearly \$100 left in the account for postage and mailings for our next reunion. 🇪🇪🇪



SERIOUS POINT HERE: Ed Lynch after lobster dinner



ON THE BOAT RIDE, BACK RUBS WERE EXTRA: Back row: Ann Damon, Aud Lynch, Ed Lynch; front: Phil Damon, Marvin Vinande



WAITING FOR THEIR BOAT TO COME IN: Bob Taylor, Carol Taylor, Jonathan Foote, Helen Foote, Marjorie Taylor Mansfield



ETHIOPIA II'S SUNNING ON THE TERRACE: (from the left, Nancy Dean Nowak, Peter Arquin, Linda Arquin, Len Nowak, Pat Dewerth Corbett, Gigi Ott Wietecha, Ron Wietecha, Barry Hillenbrand

CDC to host reunion for Smallpox Eradication Volunteers

From 1967 to 1976 more than 48 PCVs in Ethiopia worked in the Smallpox Eradication Project that ultimately wiped out smallpox in the country. These PCVs roamed the remote areas of the country giving smallpox vaccinations. They developed a richly deserved reputation as rugged individualists who lived off the land and slept in the backs of their Land Rovers.

Recently E&E RPCVs received a note from Dr. David J. Sencer, a former Center for Disease Control official, about a reunion the Center will host for the smallpox eradication teams that served in India, Bangladesh and Ethiopia. The reunion will be held at the CDC headquarters in Atlanta, July 11–12. After hearing from Dr. Sencer, E&E RPCVs president Marian Beil forwarded Dr. Sencer's note to the RPCVs who are listed on the group database as having worked on the smallpox project.

We have already heard that some RPCVs will be attending. Any PCV involved with the smallpox work is most welcome. There will be the requisite dinners and picnics where folks can eat well, drink beer and

tell tall tales. Attendees will also have a chance to make a contribution to an oral history of the project which the CDC is complying. Those interested in more details should contact Dr. Sencer at: djud@mindspring.com

The SEP experience had a great impact on the lives of many of the participants who continue to work in the health/medical fields. Marian Beil passed on an email from **William Longhurst** (Debre Zeit; Mizen Tefere 68–69) who wrote: "I was surprised to receive a letter from you concerning smallpox eradication Volunteers in Ethiopia. I was a 7th grade teacher but did work in the program in SW Ethiopia in the summer of 1969 in the village of Mizen Teferie and the surrounding area. We also gave a BCG inoculation for TB at the same time we did the smallpox vaccinations. The experience piqued an interest in medicine. Upon my return to the states I reentered college for premed. I eventually became a pediatrician and spent 24 years in the Indian Health Service, mainly on Indian Reservations in the West."

Travel Notes

Addis Scenes

Visiting old haunts and former students

By Dick Lipez (Debre Markos, Addis Ababa 62–64)

Editor's note: John Coyne, THE HERALD's good friend and reliable supplier of Peace Corps intelligence and arcanisms, sent us a email dispatch from Djibouti researching a spy thriller novel. Lipez, writing under the name Richard Stevenson, is author of a successful series of mystery novels chronicling the exploits of gay private eye Donald Strachey.

IN MAY, 1991, WORKU SHAREW, a pacifist, went looking for a gun. The final battle of Addis Ababa was underway. The unravelling forces of the Marxist lunatic Mengistu Hailemariam more crazed than ever as they dug in were attempting to hold the city. Addis was encircled by Tigrayan, Oromo and other rebel forces. Everyone expected a blood-bath as the communists went down fighting and many scores of a non-ideological nature would be settled.

Worku headed a household of 16 in his compound in the Ambo Road section, a residential neighborhood near the city's main market. In his house were his new wife Abeba and 14 siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews. As a free-lance guide and interpreter for the top writers and photographers who visited Ethiopia, including a National Geographic team, Worku was both chief breadwinner and repairer of bad situations — of which there had been many over the 17 years since Emperor Haile Selassie's overthrow and murder.

Unable to locate a gun with which to protect his family, Worku supervised the building of barricades. Everyone hunkered down for the weeklong siege. While thousands died in those horrifying days, the worst fighting bypassed Worku's neighborhood and he and his family survived. In February, 2008 in that same house near the Ambo Road, my partner Joe Wheaton and I were the guests of Worku and Abeba for a traditional Ethiopian feast. The meal included rich and pungent keye wots and superb injera. The meal concluded with the ritual of the coffee. The Addis power failed during the coffee ceremony, so we contentedly drank our coffee by candlelight.

The coffee ritual had to compete for our attention with their daughters Betamariam, 9, and Misgana, 6, who attend English-language schools. Worku and Abeba, a lovely and gently self-possessed teacher's assistant, joked that their children spoke better English than they did. Betamariam said she wasn't sure whether she wanted to attend college at Oxford or in America. Worku, a former student of mine whose American education I helped arrange in 1964, bemoans the abandonment of Ethiopian educational institutions by the country's privileged classes. However, my guess is that his formidable children will follow his example and not his words.

I recalled another former student, Getachew Birhanu, as being a skinny little kid who was bright but shy, and a little



FRIENDS TOGETHER AGAIN: Worku Sharew, Tadessa Beshaw and Dick Lipez



TEACHER AND SHY STUDENT: Dick and Getachew in 1963



JOLLY PALS: Getachew and Dick in 2008

sad. Now he is a portly, jolly, confident wheeler-dealer who seems to steer his Toyota with his knees and shift gears with his teeth as he plunges up and down the Addis hills, a cell phone in each hand, doing petroleum deals and planning a dairy farm. Getachew and his wife Kelmwa also over-fed Joe and me wonderfully. And they, too, recalled the bad years when Getachew, then a TV journalist, was denounced by somebody for having a casual conversation with an American official, and he had to give up his career in order to save himself and his family.

Worku and Getachew took turns showing Joe and me around Addis, a city I once knew well but now barely recognize. The post-Mengistu economic expansion has been impressive, even though “these guys” — as the Tigray-dominated government is often referred to in mostly-Amhara Addis — are what Getachew called “communists in camouflage.” Anyway, some Ethiopian Robert Moses has gone to work on the city which when I arrived in 1962 was just a gigantic African village. Now it sports a “ring road” and avenues and boulevards going every which way, and a skyline that looks like San Diego’s. Someone insisted to us that a rich Arab was planning a 120-story office tower in the Piazza area at the top of Churchill Road. I said that was going to require an awful lot of eucalyptus scaffolding.

Joe and I stayed at the Ras Hotel, a \$30 a night Mussolini-era relic. Peace Corps/Ethiopia types may

think of this as carrying sentimentality too far. It’s good we stayed there, though, for on our first day we walked into the bar and spotted — Peace Corps! They are back, after a ten-year absence. About 40 volunteers are spread around the country doing AIDS education and prevention work in conjunction with established NGOs. The program, as the five young men and women we met described it, sounded a bit vague and wobbly at some of the sites. But the Volunteers have been on the job for under two months, and they seemed to us clever and game and, with backgrounds in public health, qualified. So they might end up being useful.

Health note: the Peace Corps Volunteers we met were in Addis on short medical leave, dealing with stomach and breathing problems. Addis is at 8,000 feet, and Joe and I both felt the effects. I’m posting this from Djibouti, at the lower end of the Red Sea. (I’m researching the setting for a spy thriller.) There are no altitude problems here in the former French Somaliland, but breathing in this heat and humidity is like breathing through a wet sock.

More on Djibouti later. Joe, of course, finds it enchanting and can’t wait to hurry back — despite his opinion that many of the Somalis here and all of the foreigners “look like killers.” The small Djibouti section in the Lonely Planet “Africa on a Shoestring” guide refers to the train that runs between Djibouti and Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, as now being “dilapidated and unreliable.” That of course piqued Joe’s interest, too. 🇪🇹🇪🇹

Back in the Classroom

A PCV returns to Ethiopia to teach teachers

By Loretta Huber Davis (Asella, Arussi 68–70)

The Light of Hope Ministry is an interdenominational ministry with links to the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship working with communities in Ethiopia. Loretta Huber Davis describes the Ministry's work in Ethiopia as "promoting the holistic development of the Arssi Oromo people. Basic needs of the communities, care for the whole person, are addressed in the following areas: literacy, water and sanitation, primary health education, food security, gender equality, sharing God's love with sensitivity and respect, and promoting peace and reconciliation between people and faith groups."

IN THE SUMMER OF 2007 I went back to Ethiopia for a month and taught English to 75 Ethiopian elementary teachers in a summer school in Shashemane.

As we left Addis and traveled south to Shashemane, 200 km south of Addis, that first week, I was struck by the nice highway that connects the two cities. But then I saw a man plowing his field with two oxen and a plow. I had to ask myself: in what century did that start? We saw this old "technology" of plowing in all agricultural areas we visited.

We spent most of our month in the classroom with 75 elementary teachers. The group was about a one-third women and two-thirds men. We grilled them for six hours a day to improve their English. What happened? Well, we listened to their bad English habits day after day. Most were unable — or unwilling — to change their habits because many thought that their English was very good.

The teachers were not employees of the Ethiopian government, but worked for the Light of Hope Ministry (LOHM) — the organization that sent me to teach in this program — which has built 22 new elementary schools in the southeastern part of the country since 2004. Most of the schools teach first to fourth graders, but several are now being expanded to include higher grades. The LOHM has plans to build as many as 100 schools. The schools will be turned over to the Ethiopian gov-

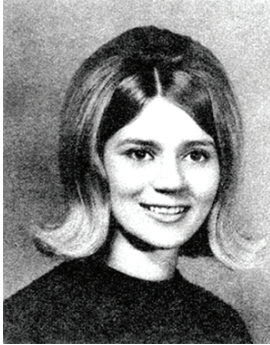
ernment in five years after each is built, but until then LOHM hires teachers and runs the schools.

These days in Ethiopia, each province or state can decide which language they want to use to teach their children in elementary school. Amharic is not taught in all areas, although it is still the national language in Addis. Now English is taught from first grade, but not all classes are in English until the ninth grade. When we were in Ethiopia, students started learning English in third grade, and then from seventh grade, the medium of instruction became English. As I see it the English part of the student's education has slipped backwards.

Because our class sizes were small, we were able to talk very personally to these teachers. I was very moved by their faith and hope for the future. Many people are getting educated at the college levels or just below that, but they are concerned because there are very few jobs available when they get out



BACK TEACHING AGAIN: Loretta Huber Davis with friends in Shashemane in 2007



Loretta 1968

of college. We met two owners of a teachers college, who told us that the government sent out a letter in 2007 telling them to stop training teachers since many could not be placed in teaching positions after graduation.

IN SHASHEMANE, we would walk down the street to go to the Internet Café, which was three computers — but no café — in a small shop. We saw many beggars, just like in the 1960s. Young men stood around on the side of the road with apparently nothing to do, but there were no young women standing around since that's still not considered proper. Extreme poverty was everywhere, and then we'd see educated young men walking along with cell phones to their ears heading for the Internet shops wanting to practice their English.


There are many new three-year colleges around Shashemane and the Ethiopian government has now passed a law allowing foreigners to start colleges.

We stayed in the nicest hotel in Shashemane which featured hot showers and TV in our rooms. I was thrilled. Others in our group weren't so happy about the filthy carpet in the rooms, but I pointed out to them that the cleaning women had nothing to clean carpet with. Tile would have been a much better option.

I had some trouble adjusting to all the oil — I think it was palm oil — used in cooking *waf*. Had I forgotten or are cooks using more? We ate Ethiopian and “ferenge” food at mostly ferenge restaurants. No one else in our group had been to Ethiopia be-

fore and they didn't particularly care for the food. We went to Awassa several times to eat foreign food and it was quite good.

WE TRAVELED EAST OF SHASHEMANE up into the mountains to see some of the elementary schools built in coordination with the Light of Hope Ministry, the Ethiopian government and local villages. After all these years many of these villages still do not have an elementary school. In that southeastern part of Ethiopia, most of the people are Oromo. Our Christian group was led by an Arssi Oromo man who has come back from Canada to help his people. These mountain villages reminded me so much of Asella where I was a high school teacher as a Ethiopia X. The villages show little evidence of change, except there was a working TV in every *bunna bet* we went into. They did not have very many channels, but they did have a few TVs in those mountain villages.

WHAT'S NEXT? Well, I received an email inviting me to come back and teach ESL in summer school again. I will leave in late June with two other teachers from my church. Currently we plan to use only 8 teachers this summer to teach 100 elementary teachers, and those ESL instructors have already been selected. If you would like to know more about LOHM, want to be an alternate, or considered to teach next year, or just catch up with me, please email me at: ldavis100@gmail.com. LOHM is also looking for additional US churches to partner with to build 78 more schools for the Oromo people in SE Ethiopia within the next few years. 

Friends

A Personal Update on Ethiopian Coffee

By Daniel Close (Bekoji/Arusi 66-68)

The first time I realized that a small Vermont company called Green Mountain Coffee Roasters was really taking off was when, years ago on a flight from JFK to Burlington, I was served a cup of GMCR coffee. "Hey," I said, "this company is doing something right!" I was referring to their marketing tactics, which were good, and still are. One of their recent initiatives has them teaming up with Paul Newman's daughter Nell to serve Newman's Own Organics special Fair Trade and organic blend of coffee sourced and roasted by GMCR and served at 658 McDonald's outlets in the Northeast. In addition to the McDonald's account, GMCR serves over 8000 other wholesale account customers.

But Green Mountain is more than good marketing or good coffee. It is also a good neighbor, both in Vermont and worldwide. It contributes at least 5 per cent of its pretax profit annually to support socially responsible initiatives and has a history of supporting social and environmental causes.

Best of all, from our point of view, it buys a lot of great Fair Trade Certified Ethiopian coffee. This Fair Trade organic coffee, Yirgacheffe, is purchased from the Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union (OCFCU). The money that the OCFCU has earned through its Fair Trade coffee sales has allowed this coop to expand and improve their coffee processing facilities and the quality of life of its members and their families.

Recently, **Dick Howrigan** (Jimma, Addis 62-64) and I attended a fantastic presentation on the Oromia initiative given by Rick Peyser, Director of Social Advocacy and Coffee Community Outreach for GMCR. Rick spoke of the OCFCU and the locations south of Dila (Shashamane/Moyale Road) where Yirgacheffe was grown, and the cooperative efforts between the Coop and Green Mountain to market the product. They have done well with it. In 2003 the Specialty Coffee Association of America awarded OCFCU's coffee third place in their cupping trials.

Late in March, I spoke with Rick again during one of his short stays in town. He updated me on the status of the trademark dispute between Ethiopia and Starbucks. The dispute is being resolved. A worldwide licensing agreement involving global licensees has been presented by Ethiopia, and already over 70 licensees have signed on, including Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Starbucks, and over 20 Japanese firms.

In May, at the SCAA Conference, Brand House (UK) will present the branding program it has developed to support Ethiopia's coffee brands — Sidamo, Yirgacheffe, and Harrar — to this network of licensed distributors. Although no royalties will be involved, the Ethiopian providers and global licensees will work cooperatively in a combined marketing effort. A firm from the UK will be hired to help with branding. It is hoped eventually to delink the Ethiopian coffee products from world commodity exchanges in an effort to develop more stable prices.

Photo Contest

The Center for Fine Art Photography in Fort Collins, Colorado, will host a show of photographs taken by Peace Corps Volunteers over its long history. Images selected for the 2008 Peace Corps Exhibition will be exhibited at the Center's gallery during the International Peace Corps Reunion from August 20 to August 30 in Fort Collins. The images will also be posted on the Center's website for two additional years. There are also plans for a traveling exhibition.

The pictures must have been taken by current or former Peace Corps Volunteers during the period of their service overseas. The pictures will be judged and selected by Dr. Anthony Bannon, Director of the George Eastman House in Rochester New York. There are no fees for submitting images. The show is underwritten by Beet Street, the sponsor for the Peace Corps Reunion. You can learn more about the reunion events at <http://beetstreet.org/Peace-Corps-Reunion> and the photo competition at: <http://www.c4fap.org/cfe/2008PEaceCorps/corps.asp>

A Breezy Letter

Dear Editor,

I read an article in the Summer 2007 issue of The HERALD (pg 13) regarding plans for future energy production in Ethiopia. It mentioned hydropower, geothermal, and wind power generation. I sent that article on to Dave Blittersdorf, who runs a local company called NRG in Hinesburg, Vermont, that makes components for wind power generation, because I thought he might be interested in it.

He was. In a return letter, he said he would have to check the wind maps to see how much wind might be available in Ethiopia. I received an email from Dave Gurr who mentioned possible high wind areas along the Rift Valley highlands. He also mentioned that a good place to begin might be with the Ethiopian National Meteorology Agency.

Does anyone have any further information on wind conditions in Ethiopia? Regions, altitudes, etc? Also, if you know of any wind experts or companies currently doing business in-country, I would appreciate any of that information as well.

One of NRG's main products is a portable wind measurement tower which can be monitored from a good distance (and in more comfortable conditions). It seems to be selling like hotcakes worldwide. If you would like to know more about NRG — a green company if there ever was one — go to www.nrgsystems.com

Thanks for any information you can send.

Dan Close (Bekoji 66–68)
Underhill, Vermont
ihighmeadow@comcast.net

Passings

▷ We have had an email from **Joe Tenn** (Addis Ababa 62–64) who tells us:

Jim Binder (Addis Ababa 62–64) died of cancer on February 7, 2008; he would have been 70 in April. After earning his B.A. at San José State University,

Jim joined the Peace Corps, and I met him during our training at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Shortly afterward we found ourselves teaching in the same school, Prince Mekonnen, in the Mercato of Addis Ababa.

Jim taught history, and since there were no adequate texts, he wrote his own. He was amused when an administrator suggested he omit the French Revolution, as a list of its causes sounded too much like a description of Haile Selassie's Ethiopia. One of our students was Bahru Zewde. One of the leading historians of Ethiopia today, a past director of the Institute of Ethiopian



JIM BINDER in his *tillik sew* garb.

Studies at Addis Ababa University, and the author of several highly-regarded books, Dr. Bahru explained in an interview a few years ago how he became a historian:

The turning point was, I think, in the eleventh grade. The influence of my American teacher, a Peace Corps Volunteer, was very decisive because, at that time, I was, more, a science student or mathematics student. Basically those were my strong points. At the time, my idea of history was a jumbled collection of dates, figures and names which were all boring. But, after that experience of a new kind of history, then I said 'this

is my field.' I saw the potentialities or the possibilities of history. And, as early as the eleventh grade, I decided that history was the subject for me."

Jim Binder was Bahru's history teacher. After the Peace Corps Jim earned a Ph.D. at the University of Virginia, taught political science and public administration at Grambling College, California State University/Chico, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the University of Maine/Presque Isle. He retired to Eureka, California. He is survived by his wife of 41 years, Carol, and daughters Leila and Rachel.

▷ The HERALD has also learned that **Dorothy M. Gustafson** who served in Ethiopia III in Harar from 1964-66 died on March 16, 2008.

▷ The Ethi 1's of Debre Berhan sadly learned of the death of one of their own — **Bob Savage** (62-64) who died three years ago of a heart attack. They were contacted by Bob's son who was interested in learning about Bob's life as a Volunteer.

Bigger numbers for Peace Corps

In January, Peace Corps announced that Peace Corps has received its highest appropriations ever in FY 2008 in the amount of \$330.8 million. This is an increase of \$11.1 million over its FY 2007 funding level of \$319.7 million. With those funds, Peace Corps plans to open new country programs and build upon its successes in 2007.

The Peace Corps achieved a 37-year high in FY 2007 with 8,079 Volunteers serving in 74 countries throughout the world. In 2007, Peace Corps Volunteers were sworn-in in Cambodia for the first time in that nation's history. And, as we all know, Peace Corps re-entered Ethiopia. Minority recruitment increased to 17 percent, the highest percentage since Peace Corps began tracking ethnicity in 1987. In February 2007, Peace Corps launched a new initiative focusing on the recruitment of Volunteers age 50 and over. Peace Corps claims that to date the number of 50+ applicants has increased dramatically. It's never too late to re-up for another tour, which is precisely what **Gayle Bradshaw**

Washburn (Gondar 63-65) did recently. She's due to leave for China as a PCV trainee in June. She promises to send *THE HERALD* a full report on the joys and sorrows of doing Peace Corps the second time around.

Books Available

Thinking of brushing up on your Amharic? E&E RPVCs has been given a set of Amharic language books and will ship them to anyone send us a check for \$5.53 to cover the postage on the 10.5 pounds of books. The books include: An Amharic Textbook of Everyday Usage by Wolf Leslau, 1965, 686 pages, spiral bound; An Amharic Dictionary Amharic-English, English-Amharic by Wolf Leslau, 1965, 686 pages, spiral bound; Fundamentals of Amharic, Units I - III, Peace Corps Project, University of Utah Press, 1966, 272 pages, paperback; Amharic, Basic Course, Units 1 - 50, Foreign Service Institute, Department of State, 1964, 502 pages, paperback; Amharic, Basic Course, Units 51 - 60, Foreign Service Institute, Department of State, 1964, paperback.

Save the Date

It's never too early for Peace Corps people to plan a big party. Peace Corps has already begun thinking about its 50th Anniversary celebration for 2011. Two dates have already been scheduled. On March 1st, the anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's signing of the Executive Order creating Peace Corps, there will be a gala evening event at the Kennedy Library in Boston. (Dress code to be determined.) And beginning September 22, the anniversary of the signing of the Peace Corps legislation, a four day celebration will take place on the Mall in Washington. The traditional wreath-laying at JFK's grave, with walk across Memorial Bridge bearing flags of all PC countries, will take place on September 25.

Seeking

Loretta Huber Davis (Assella 68-70) would like to reconnect with **John Hamilton** (Assella 67-?) who trained with Ethiopia VIII-Littleton, MA.

Former Ethiopia Country Director (62-64) Harris Wofford, a strong supporter of Democratic party candidate Barack Obama, has introduced him to audiences on several occasions.

Perhaps most noteworthy was when Wofford spoke before Obama's crucial speech on race and Rev. Jeremiah Wright delivered on March 18 in Philadelphia.

Wofford also appeared with Obama on December 5, 2007, at Cornell College, Iowa when Obama promised to double the size of the Peace Corps from 7,800 Volunteers to 16,000 by its 50th anniversary in 2011.

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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 those who replied cheerfully and promptly to our requests to write some lines for the various 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@eastafrika-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; USA Today; Visafric; The Washington Post; www.reliefweb.int.

Please send us a note

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 a cranky letter-to-the-editor to:

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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)

or

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(To save on high postage costs, international subscribers will have a full-color .pdf version of THE HERALD emailed to them. Subscribers in the U.S. may also receive their magazine via email in lieu of a hard copy.)

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. Send to:
 E & E RPCVs, 4 Lodge Pole Road, Pittsford, NY 14534

You can still make a difference

Join in and support the E&E RPCV Legacy Program. The needs of Ethiopia and Eritrea are even greater than when we served there as PCVs. You can still make a difference by contributing to an existing RPCV Legacy Program project or by starting your own Legacy project.

A new Legacy project has just been approved by the E&E RPCVs board. There is room for additional Legacy projects and we are also exploring ways that the Legacy Program might provide mini-grants for projects of PCVs now serving in Ethiopia. If you have any ideas or suggestions for additional RPCV Legacy Program projects or ways to help in-country PCVs, please contact RPCV Legacy Program manager Bob Matthai (Gondar, Addis 63-65) at rmatthai@sbcglobal.net.

To contribute to current Legacy projects, use form below. (You can make donations on line at eerpcv.org/legacyprogram/donate)

Please send your completed form with your check made payable to EERPCV to:

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Would you like to make a donation on behalf of or in memory of another person? This recognition will appear at www.EERPCV.org. _____

Please indicate the project or projects you would like to support. Contribution amounts show what gifts can accomplish, but any size contribution is welcome and can make a difference.

Borana Student Advancement

\$35 can give 6 disadvantaged boys and girls summer advancement courses in English, math and science.
\$70 can give 12 disadvantaged boys and girls summer advancement courses in English, math and science.
\$120 can keep 1 disadvantaged girl in school for a full year.

I would like to donate \$_____ to Borana Student Advancement.

HIV/AIDS Books for Rural Communities

\$30 can give 1 rural healthcare worker 2 important reference books on HIV/AIDS and general medical care.
\$60 can give 2 rural healthcare workers 2 important reference books on HIV/AIDS and general medical care.
\$90 can give 3 rural healthcare workers 2 important reference books on HIV/AIDS and general medical care.

I would like to donate \$_____ to the HIV/AIDS Books for Rural Communities.

Ethiopia Reads in Awassa

\$30 can buy 30 high-quality, multi-lingual books for children.
\$60 can provide training materials for 3 literacy workers.
\$110 can provide two weeks' salary of a library worker.

I would like to donate \$_____ to Ethiopia Reads in Awassa.

TOTAL ENCLOSED _____

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.

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