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# The HERALD

Spring — Summer 2001 — Number 23

## E-mail vs. Hyenas

### An Ethiopia Evacuee Reflects on His Experience in Peace Corps/China

By Luke Taylor (Este, Ethiopia 98–99)

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**T**ODAY I WAS WALKING in the Guizhou [China] rain to the local e-mail joint. Looking up at the misty sky I longed for the sunny highlands of northern Ethiopia and the small town of Este. Sure, Este had no e-mail but at least it had sun. And hyenas.

Right now, I am serving my second — and hopefully, first complete — stint with the Peace Corps. I served in Ethiopia during 1998–1999; well, at least part of '98 and '99. There was a border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea that cut my original service short. After seven months in the country, having served just long enough to begin to establish relationships in Este, teaching English in high school, I was evacuated from Ethiopia. It wasn't the most dramatic evacuation, no rockets' red glare or anything, but the timing made for an adventure I would rather not have had.

Serving those seven months . . . was the greatest, eye-opening experience of my life. "Toughest job I ever loved!" and stuff like that. Except — training not included — it wasn't that tough. I melded well with the community to which I was posted, got

along with my students, had a clean *shintu bet*, learned to like *tella*, and was even developing friendships before I had to leave. Maybe the evacuation cut the honeymoon short, I don't know. All I do know is that I loved my time in Ethiopia and was sorry as hell to leave.

After a painful, drawn-out, and rather inebriated EVAC/COS conference in Kenya, my fellow Volunteers drifted with the winds. Some re-upped immediately and were sent to places like Nepal, Madagascar, and Morocco. Some returned to America and rejoined society. Some, like myself returned to America and then discovered they had some unfinished business to attend to.

In the spring of the new millennium, after spending a year teaching [on the Navajo reservation] in Arizona, I began negotiations with Peace Corps/Washington to get back into the system. After a smooth process, I was "re-instated" and assigned to the TEFL [teaching English as a foreign language] program in the People's Republic of China. That is why in the spring of 2001, I found myself walking in the Guizhou rain.

I am currently living in Liupanshui, a medium-sized industrial city nestled deep in the mountains of Guizhou Province. I teach English at the local teachers college and most of my students will graduate to become primary school teachers in surrounding villages.

I enjoy my job. I enjoy my students. Liupanshui is located in a lush, beautiful, mountainous area, so I really enjoy my surroundings. Nevertheless, I haven't really developed the same affinity for China as I did for Ethiopia.

The Chinese people are wonderful and friendly, but they tend to lack the hospitality of the highland Amharas. Even Mandarin seems to lack the lyric beauty of Amharic.

I think I am partially to blame. Living in Ethiopia was the first time I had lived overseas. Everything was new, and I was eager as I have ever been in my life to experience it all: the language, the food, the people, the society, and yes, the hyenas. I wanted it all and was willing to work to get it. For some reason, here in

China I feel more world-weary, more willing to accept it all as old hat. The romance has gone out of ten-hour bus rides.

Seeing human beings used as beasts of burden no longer carries a sense of horror, just a sense of "Gee, that's depressing." Chinese food is delicious, but I just don't find a pot of chicken feet as appealing as a plate of *injera* and *doro wat*. The Chinese people are wonderful and friendly, but they tend to lack the hospitality of the highland Amharas. Even Mandarin seems to lack the lyric beauty of Amharic. Admittedly, this is not the best attitude to have entering into service, because China, in terms of experience, is a wholly different universe than Ethiopia, and just about everywhere else in the world.

There is another reason I haven't developed an affinity for China: it is just too different. Whereas Ethiopia was, by many standards, a very open place where I felt a degree of acceptance almost immediately, China has been and largely contin-

ues to be a closed society. I have been in China [almost one year], and I have made a personal connection with one host country national, Jiang Fang, our long-suffering head of the English department. This is due in part to my lack of Chinese language skills, but the fact of the matter is that people have been discouraged from associating with me by the powers that be.

In the larger cities on the eastern coast, the doors of China may be opening, but here in the wilds of Guizhou, I'm still knocking.

The feeling of being outside the community is one of the common difficulties face by PCVs worldwide, but the culture of rural and semi-rural China amplifies this difficulty beyond what I had experienced in Este. The children of Ethiopia and their rambunctious cries of "You!" and "*Ferengi*" were always a reminder of my difference from the surrounding society. But there were times, sitting around playing cards with friends or drinking beer in a hotel, when I was allowed to feel part of a community.

In China, the snarky "*laowai*" whispered from darkened corners and shouted from passing cars is a reminder of my difference. But I am never allowed to associate with people in such an intimate manner as to forget just how outside the community I am. There are many cultural and historical reasons for the Chinese reaction to outsiders. I readily recognize and accept these reasons, but that recognition and acceptance doesn't necessarily make things easier.

So: why am I here? There are a number of reasons. Living in Ethiopia lit a fire in part of me that I never knew existed. It showed me a part of the world that few Americans know. It also showed me that I could see parts of the world with just a little bit of commitment and effort. After having seen a bit of the world and getting a taste, I realized that returning to The States permanently after only seven months away was not an option. I needed more. And the more that I got is Liupanshui, Guizhou Province, Peoples Republic of China.

I feel strongly about Peace Corps ideals. I'm far from a "save the world" type, but I do have talents, however minimal, that I would like to share. But the fact is that the Chinese have a culture that has been developing for 5,000 years, and I don't know how much the Chinese can learn from me or even how comfortable I feel trying to teach the Chinese anything. I do know, however, affinity-developed or not, I can learn a lot from the Chinese. My feelings for China may be ambivalent at times, but this is a rare opportunity to learn about a part of China that very few people think about, yet is the heart of the country.

Finally, when I [took the PCV oath] in Ethiopia, I made a commitment for two years of service. According to the Peace Corps, I fulfilled my commitment . . . after evacuation. According to myself, though, I still had a year-and-a-half to go. After the evacuation, I was far from sure about

wanting to jump right back in again, but the entire time living back in the States, I couldn't shake the feeling of a commitment unfulfilled. This feeling of obligation drew me back into the Peace Corps fold.

Editor's Note: Luke Taylor, 30, grew up in Mt. Gilead, Ohio. He graduated from Valparaiso University in Indiana, where he majored in history and journalism. He received his secondary school teaching certificate from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, and then taught for two years at Greyhills Academy, a Navajo school, in Tuba City, Arizona. After his brief service in Ethiopia, he returned to Arizona to teach at a Navajo school in Sanders, on the Arizona-New Mexico border. After six months, Taylor and his fiancée realized "Sanders, Arizona, is a town that eats its children . . ." It was then they chose to return to the Peace Corps and go to China.

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## Big Apple's Injera & Wat

On February 28, the New York Times reported "At Long Last, New York Is Ready for Ethiopia." There are now at least eight *injera bets* in greater NY:

Awash, 947 Amsterdam Avenue/107<sup>th</sup> St.  
(961-1416)

Chion, 688 Amsterdam Avenue/93rd St.  
(874-5344)

Massawa, 1239 Amsterdam Avenue/121<sup>st</sup> St.  
(663-0505)

Zula, 1260 Amsterdam Avenue/122<sup>nd</sup> St.  
(663-1670)

Caffe Adulis E.19<sup>th</sup> St. (358-7775)

Ghenet, 284 Mulberry St./Houston St.  
(343-1888)

Meskerem, 124 Macdougall St./W. 3<sup>rd</sup> St.  
(777-8111) and at 468 W. 47<sup>th</sup> St.(664-0520)

Queen of Sheba, 650 10<sup>th</sup> Ave./46<sup>th</sup> St.  
(397-0610).

There is also the Abyssinia-Ethiopian Grocery Store at 225 W.116<sup>th</sup> St. (663-0553), and *tej* may be found at Vintage New York, 482 Broome St./Wooster St. (226-9483).

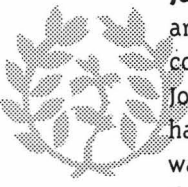
*NY Times* writer Eric Asimov is very enthusiastic about these discoveries. Three of the restaurants have opened in the past year. "This may be a signal moment for Ethiopian restaurants in New York," Asimov writes.

Aquavit Chef Marcus Samuelsson, Ethiopian by birth but grew up in Sweden, is happy to see his homeland competing with other ethnic and national restaurants, "So, in America, you now have the best Ethiopian food in the world."

# Peace & War: A 2001 Digest

Compiled by Hayward Allen (Harar 62-64)

**January 20** — Visafric (Toronto). Religious leaders from Eritrea and Ethiopia will visit each other's country to meet people affected by the war. In May, the two groups will begin meetings of reconciliation. Adi Keih, Eritrea, will be one site visited, and Adi Grat, Ethiopia will be the other.



**January 20** — An Eritrean delegation of Christians and Moslems flew to Asmara after a three-day conference in Nairobi. Spokesman Rev. Zerit Johannes noted on the arrival, "Healing process has to start now. The hostility and hatred that the war has brought has to stop. We have to look to the future, a peaceful future." The peace meetings are funded by Norwegian Church Aid. The border crossings by the religious leaders will be accompanied by the troops of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE).

**January 20** — Visafric (Asmara). According to the Eritrean News Agency, ten Ethiopian soldiers deserted through Senafe, Tsrana, and Assab. Among the deserters are a para-commando brigade sergeant and an intelligence unit leader. Reasons given were the army's evicting citizens from homes to be used as military buildings; looting; mistreatment of elderly Eritreans; and indications that Ethiopia "has not accepted the peace agreement with full heart."

**January 22** — Panafrican News Agency (Addis Ababa). A UNMEE representative told reporters that there was "a misunderstanding" over areas that had belonged to each side prior to the border

war. Called "a minor hiccup," the situation will be resolved in forthcoming discussions. A 25-km buffer zone was established as the UNMEE forces deployed their units. Consideration is to be given to the June 2000 peace pact's allowance of free movement by the UN for peacekeeping and supply flights.

**February 7** — Panafrican News Agency (Dakar). Eritrea and Ethiopia were given schedules to redeploy their respective armies from the 25-km Temporary Security Zone established by the UNMEE. Ethiopia had two weeks to clear its troops from the area, beginning February 12, while Eritrea's two-week evacuation began February 17, and ended March 3. Only after verification would Eritrea begin to restore civil administration, including peace and militia in the zone.

**February 16** — Visafric (Asmara). A three-day peace conference, "Toward Sustainable Peace" and sponsored by Citizens for Peace in Eritrea, was held in Asmara. While there were numerous constructive ideas discussed, there was a lot of venting by attendees of pain suffered and witnessed during the three-year war. Among them was a proposal by a grandfatherly farmer, "My wish and prayer is that a huge wall be built between the two countries so that we do not see or even meet each other." The consensus of the conference was that it was going to be a very long, difficult task to bring lasting peace between the citizens of both countries.

**March 2** — *Addis Tribune*. The UNMEE has set up a board of inquiry to investigate allegations of unacceptable behavior by members of the UN forces. A group of Danish UNMEE soldiers were on R&R at a Massawa, Eritrea, beach and charged with various acts of misconduct. No further comments were to be released until the investigation is completed. No date was given.

**March 13** — UNMEE press release. "Despite problems that must be resolved, the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea will not fall apart," according to Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, special representative of the UN Secretary General for the Ethiopian-Eritrean peace mission. "[We] are negotiating with two disciplined leaders, two disciplined nations, and two disciplined armies," Legwaila stated. The UN press release was sent after the meeting of the Security Council to decide if there would be a six-month extension of UNMEE's presence on the Horn. Legwaila noted the role of the 4,000 peacekeepers and 200 military observers could not exist without generosity of donor nations; he also applauded the effectiveness of the Standby High Readiness Brigade. He acknowledged that the Temporary Security Zone, set up as a 25-km corridor, still had places where opposing soldiers were only 100 meters apart and "armed to the teeth." A key element of the press release was the return of citizens to their homes, an estimated 750,000 people in the two countries.

Maps are among the chief problems to take the process to the next level, he noted. In February at a meeting in Nairobi a "political map" was tentatively accepted by both sides. The Ethiopians noted that the UNMEE redeployment map subsequently used, denied Ethiopia control over Irob, as previously administered by the government. An agreement was reached with UNMEE. Eritrea had a quarrel about the designation of the temporary zone not be confused with the "Line of 6 May 1998," that did not have a connection to the cessation of the war. Also, Eritrea objected to the UNMEE operational map's difference with the political map, which now had areas behind the Ethiopian's official deployment line, such as Irob.

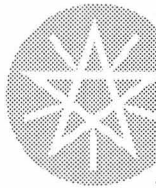
**March 16** — *Addis Tribune*. UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan asked the Security Council to extend the UNMEE mission for six months, particularly due to the difficulties establishing the Temporary Security Zone. "UNMEE peacekeepers face an

unstable situation," Anan said. "This situation has created a delicate and potentially dangerous vacuum of authority in the areas where the TSZ is to be established." Positive developments, the secretary-general noted, are the absence of significant cease-fire violations, plus the establishment of a boundary commission and a claims commission.

**April** — UN Integrated Regional Information Network (UNIRIN) (Nairobi). The Eritrean government has protested the treatment of one of its diplomats in Addis. It is alleged that the Chargé d' Affairs was "detained at gunpoint at the entrance of the Eritrean Embassy . . . by a group of Ethiopians in full military uniform." The UN press group noted that the reporting was done by "the pro-Eritrean government news agency," Visafric, which indicated that the Ethiopian soldiers had been ordered to take into custody anyone entering the embassy. According to UNIRIN, Eritrea said its diplomat was forced to enter his own car and ordered to drive to the Ethiopian government security headquarters. "One of the Ethiopian military officials . . . fired his weapon as [the Charge] entered his car," according to a letter sent to the Organization of African Unity in protest. Ordered to stop near the Ethiopian Presidential Palace, the Eritrean was told to stop the car while the officer left it and he told the diplomat to drive away.

**April** UNIRIN (Nairobi). According to the independent newspaper, *Wonchif*, the Ethiopian government began its notification process to families who lost sons in the three-year war. Although no official count has been presented, a regional expert "estimated that both sides lost tens of thousands of troops." The Associated Press reported that commemoration public events, "Honor the Martyrs," were held in Bahr Dar and Gondar on April 4.

**April 25** — UNIRIN (Nairobi). Led by US Deputy Chief of Staff General Richard Myers, a troop of American military visited both Eritrea and Ethiopia in a whirlwind one-day tour of the two nations. Gen. Myers talked with the Ethiopian defense minister and the Ethiopian chief of staff. According to the Ethiopian News Agency, discussions focused on the peace process and US-Ethiopia relations. Later that day, the American contingent flew to Asmara to meet with the president and



Eritrean leaders, where bilateral issues were discussed, including the peace process. Afterwards, the group flew to Saudi Arabia.

**April 28** — Visafric (Toronto). Eritrean Foreign Minister Ali Sayid Abdallah has asked the international sphere to “put pressure on Ethiopia to live up to the peace agreement.” Abdallah spoke to a group of journalists while on a diplomatic trip to Canada. He and his five-member team also met with the foreign minister, ministers of defense, international development, and other offices. “The talks centered on strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries, and on the resumption of Canadian development aid suspended when the border war erupted in May 1998,” the release stated. Abdallah thanked the Canadians for their humanitarian assistance to people affected by drought and the war, as well as Canada’s involvement in UNMEE.

**May 4** — UNIRIN (Nairobi). War’s detritus is being discovered in Ethiopia and Eritrea. In the Amba Alaga District of Tigray State, nearly 1500 “armaments items” have been unearthed. Interestingly enough, the devices are not part of that left behind after the Ethiopia-Eritrea war. These harken to the 1930s as Italy buried ordnance during its invasion of Ethiopia. They were found while diggers were working on a foundation for a school extension. There were, according to the Chemical Weapons Convention Implementing Department, there were 775 artillery shells, 249 cartridges, 327 grenades, 69 fuses and a stockpile of gunpowder. According to the department, Italy imported 80,000 tons of chemical weapons into Ethiopia during its occupation and has urged the Italian government to help identify sites.

**May 16**—UNIRIN (Nairobi). UN Security Council President James Cunningham has called upon Ethiopia and Eritrea to allow the UNMEE free and unrestricted access “in and around” the 25-km Temporary Security Zone, expressing that it is “a fundamental condition for the success of the peacekeeping operation.” He noted that the UN’s special representative Legwaila Joseph Legwaila has been insisting from some time that freedom of access be accorded the UNMEE. Cunningham’s declaration that the TSZ “must be completely demilitarized.”

**May 17**—Panafrican News Agency (Dakar). The UN Security Council has lifted the arms embargo imposed on the two countries. In Addis, the Ethiopian foreign ministry said the six-month embargo was “a reminder to the people of Ethiopia the injustices done to us.” The foreign ministry spokesmen looked at the embargo as being “specifically aimed at the victim of aggression, Ethiopia.” The ministry’s statement concluded with, “aggression should never be rewarded and those who commit aggression should never be appeased . . . . It is when this is done that countries making economic development their priority will have the opportunity to pursue that objective without hindrance. It is also in this manner that it will be possible to ensure durable peace and stability in our sub-region.”

**June 7** — UNIRIN (Nairobi). Sudanese and Eritrean government officials met in Asmara to discuss the repatriation of refugees, specifically in the Gash Barka Region of Eritrea and the Sudanese state of Kassala. At least 174,000 Eritreans are in Sudan, of which an estimated 65 percent are in Kassala and emigrated from Gash Barka. As of May nearly 30,000 were still living in refugee camps in Kassala and Al-Qadarif State. Much of Gash Barka falls within the 25-km wide UN Temporary Security Zone and is one of Eritrea’s highly populated areas, as well as being one of the most productive and important agricultural regions. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees seeks ways of getting the refugees back to their homeland in time to plant and before the onset of the rainy season.

**June** — Addis. It is reported that six Ethiopian political parties announced their disapproval of the terms of the peace pact between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The groups involved are the Ethiopian Democratic Union Party, the National Democratic Union, All Amhara People’s Organization, the Joint Political Forum, the Oromo National Congress, and the Ethiopian Democratic Party. The coalition seeks to have the government note its concerns and denied being aligned by a quest for power. The group seeks to have public hearings before the implementation of the peace plan. In addition, there was a call for the citizens’ rights of association and freedom of expression, in particular, the Taxi Drivers Association and the Ethiopian Free Press Association.

**June 18** — UNIRIN (Nairobi). Kenya's Refugee Consortium has expressed concern that the relatively small number of deserting Ethiopian soldiers are receiving preferential treatment over the hundreds of Ethiopian university students who have crossed into Kenya. The ex-soldiers have been granted refugee status, while the students are living in "abject dejection." A UN High Commission for Refugees spokesperson told UNIRIN that refugee status is the province of states, not the United Nations. In Kenya, there is an Eligibility Committee that decides who is "a genuine asylum seeker" and who isn't; there is a UNHCR observer who sits with the committee but has no vote.

Editor's note: a June 21 news story in *The Nation* out of Nairobi revealed that numbers of recent refugees in the ten preceding days included 20 soldiers and 103 university students, who were in a holding cell on the border, according to the Kenya Human Rights Commission, while Kenyan immigration and UN officials debated relocation and status.

**June 19** — UNIRIN (Nairobi). The Eritrean Commission for Coordination with the United Nations has filed a press release charging Ethiopian forces had attacked an Eritrean police and militia post in the UN's Temporary Security Zone. Eritrea sent an official letter of protest to the chief UN representative of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the UNMEE had verified the attack that killed one local militiaman. The government's letter states that the military incursion "constitutes a grave violation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities."

Editor's note: On June 22 the Ethiopian ministry of foreign affairs denied the attack and said that it was carried out by the Red Sea Afars Democratic Organization, an Eritrean opposition group, which stated that RSADO had killed ten Eritrean soldiers as they tried to abduct Afarians and loot their property. According to the pro-Ethiopian news agency, Walta Information Center, that incident occurred within the TSZ and that other Afars who were accused of collaborating with the Ethiopian army were fleeing their town of Bure to escape Eritrean army attacks.

**June 20** — UNIRIN (Nairobi). According to Eritrean authorities, at least 19,000 of their soldiers were killed during the two-year war with Ethiopia. A BBC correspondent said that has been significant "not least because every Eritrean family has someone in the armed forces." The casualty rate of combatants is not yet known, but the correspondent noted "it is thought to be very high." When asked about the number of fatalities, an Ethiopian Foreign Ministry spokesman told the BBC that the "Eritrean figure is ridiculously low" and refused to give Ethiopian official statistics. It should be noted that Eritrea's population hovers around three million, while Ethiopia has twenty times that total.

**June 20** — UNIRIN (New York). UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that the UN is committed to the Ethiopian and Eritrean peace process and believes the two countries are, as well. However, he is quoted in a United Nations press release, that there are also "serious difficulties." "It is imperative that the parties resolve the outstanding issues, in particular those pertaining to the Temporary Security Zone, so as to ensure that it is clearly defined and effectively demilitarized." He was critical of Eritrea's "excessive number of militia and police" in the TSZ, and commented on Ethiopia's "continued presence of Ethiopian troops in parts of the eastern sector" of the zone. Annan stressed the importance of the Boundary Commission that is working to "delimit and demarcate" the border between the nations. Similarly, the secretary-general suggested that two problems that need to be addressed by donor countries: humanitarian aid and assisting in the detection and clearance of mines and ordnance. Lastly, Annan noted with regret that "neither government has yet displayed publicly much openness to a normalization of relations." While there has been a lessening of "hostile rhetoric in the media," he said, political activities seem to be getting in the way of the peace process.

Editor's Note: This digest was compiled and rewritten from dozens of news stories forwarded to *The Herald* by Robert Crepeau. For a full listing of news sources see page 45.

# Eritrea's Celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of Liberation — May 24, 2001

By Laurie Kessler (Adi Teclesan 64–66)

**T**HE 10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE in Eritrea was special not only because it was the decade but because Eritreans feel that war with Ethiopia is over and they have defended their independence. They also believe the country has gained more recognition and support from the outside world. Many window paintings cleverly depicted the similarity of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries.

## Anticipation and preparation

Anticipation built up ever since the signing of the peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia last December, and evidence of preparation began to appear weeks ago — colored lights and Eritrean flags that were strung up along Martyrs' and Liberation Avenues in Asmara, newspaper articles, photo and art exhibits, bandstands for live music, and a mountain range for dramas at Bahti Meskerem Square.

## The celebrating begins early

All the week before, many more people than usual strolled the main streets, among them thousands of Eritreans visiting from abroad. There were official receptions, dramas, live bands, and daily parades. (We saw one comprised of five Coca Cola trucks and a flatbed with a live band. We missed the live camels.) The Peking Opera came here for the first time and presented a display of whirling swords, colorful costumes, and singing acrobats one evening for President Isaias, many ambassadors, and the two of us among the ordinaries. (We were spontaneously invited to the reception that followed by the Chinese Ambassador's wife.) Andemichael Kashai, the mayor of Asmara, told us that a famous Italian opera singer would sing at the annual Festival Eritrea in August.

## On the eve of the anniversary

On the eve of May 24 at dusk, Martyrs' and Liberation Avenues were closed to vehicles, and they filled up with people strolling, clusters of young folks, clumps of women, many men, and whole families, strolling and dancing, just as they had on the original liberation day. They were not allowed to walk on these streets during the Derg time.

As we joined the strolling before sunset, we found a reggae band from Sweden giving a concert; the lead musicians were Eritreans with dreadlocks and their backups were very blond Swedes. Some of the visiting Eritreans made themselves known when they asked me, wearing my *zuria* (traditional dress), to pose for photos. Even a group of teenage boys called out, "Mama, very nice." But friends and the women near my age seemed most delighted that I had dressed as they had, smiling and commenting in Tigrinya.

We watched the gorgeous midnight fireworks from one end of Liberation Avenue, with thousands of colored lights as a complementing foreground. Standing among the hundreds of thousands of people filling the length of the street, we were aware of their joy and dignity.

## The day of celebration

A canon salute at 6:00 a.m. greeted May 24, followed by church bells ringing throughout the city. Otherwise, it was quiet. The only crowds were at bakeries. The day featured planned lunches hosted by the neighborhood administrations, the unveiling in Martyrs' Square of a sculpture of a giant pair of the plastic sandals worn by fighters during the struggle, helicopters pulling flags and banners and dropping papers right over our



house, and the official ceremonies in the soccer stadium. A half-hour rainstorm at noon was a surprise and taken as a good omen by Eritrean friends.

We were invited to lunch by soldier-artist Elsa Yacob, so we missed the neighborhood one. Afterwards, we took in photo and art exhibits and got home in time to join our backyard neighbors watching the stadium events on their TV. President Isaias Afwerki emphasized the importance of demobilization and getting back to economic development. His address was punctuated by flyovers of three types of airplanes in separate formations, which we saw on TV and directly over our compound. There were musical dramas highlighting the nine ethnic groups of Eritrea, a birthday recognition for 10 children born May 24, 1991, a section in the bleachers that expertly flipped colored cards to create pictures and logos, and drill team routines and drama dances by hundreds of students. At the end of the colorful program, President Isaias danced with the youth, everyone sang the national anthem, and danced again.

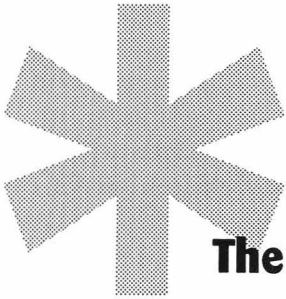
We were lucky to be here to join this celebration, our seventh since coming here to live. We witnessed the joy this year after the tension of last year, glad to be in Eritrea during the exciting time of forging a nation undertaking economic development, and defending its sovereignty. All in all it was a joyous, peaceful and patriotic celebration.

*Laurie and her husband, Wayne, both of whom served as PCVs, now live in Asmara.*

### **The Global Village: Pop. 100**

If Marshall McLuhan were still around, he'd be intrigued by another hypothetical census of the Global Village. According to Stanford University's Phillip M. Harter, if the population were 100 villagers and a census were taken it would look like this:

57 Asians  
21 Europeans  
14 North and South Americans  
8 Africans  
  
52 females — 48 males  
  
70 non-Caucasians — 30 Caucasians  
  
6 own 59% of the Global Village's  
wealth, all of whom are Americans  
80 live in sub-standard housing  
70 are illiterate  
50 are malnourished  
1 is dying  
1 is being born  
1 has a college education  
1 has a computer



## The Unofficial Ethiopian and Eritrean miscellany

Compiled by Hayward Allen (Harar 62–64)

### Border Relations

Consider the countries that surround Ethiopia and Eritrea — the Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya. This is the Horn of Africa, which has a history of border relationships, conflicts and pacification, congress and business. No matter how it is mapped, at least three of the borders face a collection of bodies of water, from the Ormo and Blue Nile Rivers to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Lots to negotiate, much to monitor.

#### Kenya and Ethiopia

Just about the time that Ethiopia and Eritrea were signing the peace accords that brought a halt to the country's ongoing border war, Ethiopia had trouble with Kenya, again. According to Nairobi's *East African Standard*, steps are now being taken to compensate for the killing of 50 Kenyans by Ethiopian militia. Even during the negotiations another 11 Kenyans were killed, including eight policemen who were part of a Kenyan security team. To complicate matters, three Kenyan captives were being held in a Somali border town, and a survivor of the security team was held at an Ethiopian military base at Bokuluboma.

According to the *Standard*, "The Ethiopian militiamen have been making incursions into Kenya in

the past few years, ostensibly chasing rebels of the Oromo Liberation Front. Kenyans on the border have been accused of giving shelter to the OLF and allowing Oromo attacks on the Ethiopian army from Kenyan sites.

Ethiopia's chief negotiator, Mengistu Ayale, remarked, "Kenya is our second home and therefore those calling for revenge would be setting a bad precedent for a relationship that has lasted for decades."

Kenya's minister of internal security, Marsden Madoka, "ruled out military retaliation" on the part of Kenya.

Meanwhile, Ethiopia closed its Kenyan border, and Kenyan student demonstrations indicate that there are still ripples on the calming waters of negotiation.

#### Eritrea and Yemen

In 1996, Eritrea fought a brief battle with Yemen for the Hanish Islands of the Red Sea. There were three years of arbitration. Recently, Eritrea's foreign minister visited Yemen to discuss the reactivation of the ministerial committee that Yemen and Eritrea had established at the time of the marine border dispute. In Nairobi, Tewelde

Medhin, deputy head of mission, assured UN journalists that "relations between the two countries are good and have been getting better."

### **Somalia's Anti-Ethiopian Protests**

Somali has accused Ethiopia of "interventionism." In New York, at the UN, a senior Somali diplomat said that Ethiopia "has encroached 60 km into Somalia's land in an attempt to create a new territory." As reported in the *Addis Tribune*, Somalia's interim prime minister was interviewed by the BBC in Djibouti and said, "Ethiopia is arming factions opposed to the government, occupying Somali districts and had recently increased its military presence in this country."

Ethiopia's minister of foreign affairs, Seyoum Mesfin, has denied the accusations, saying that the Transitional National Government of Somalia wants "to make Ethiopia a scapegoat for the difficulties faced by the TNG inside the country." He also noted that because of Ethiopia's innocence, Somalia's assertions were "potentially dangerous and could lead to the TNG to be more and more reckless."

In response, "thousands of demonstrators" marched through Mogadishu, burning the Ethiopian flag and chanting anti-Ethiopian slogans.

## **Student Protests Lead to Death and Imprisonment**

In early April, Addis Ababa students of three university campuses, Sidist Kilo, Arat Kilo, and Amist Kilo, began a ten-day protest that eventually led to the deaths of at least 41 people and the imprisonment of an estimated 3,000 students. The student demands were focused on the re-instatement of the Student Council and its publication, *Helina*, the release of students arrested months before in ethnic confrontations, and the removal of special police from the campuses. The violence began as rallying students discovered two undercover police who joined the protesters.

Subsequently, students boycotted classes and again demanded that the police be removed from the campus of Addis Ababa University. Allegedly, high school students and some residents joined the fray and other acts of violence and destruction of private property occurred. One eye-witness said, "Police engulfed Menelik Secondary School,

beat students, and fired shots. The situation was brutal." The public response was the smashing of windows of government offices, burning of vehicles with government license plates, including city buses.

The chaos created led to extensive looting throughout the city. The government closed down the university indefinitely and the primary and secondary schools for four days.

Most of the jailed students were released after a week's incarceration. Reuters reported that "Mothers waiting at the campus of AAU ululated with joy as they greeted 1,200 students driven in three lorry-loads from a police facility. Eighteen hundred other students were being held at a police training academy in Sendefa.

The government blamed the violence on "gangsters and jobless youths." The All Amhara People's Organization said that the violence could be blamed upon the government's suppression of opposition parties and their freedom of expression. "It reminds all of the infamous Red Terror [of Mengistu]," AAPO stated.

The US State Department called upon the Ethiopian government to exercise restraint and respect human rights. "While we recognize the duty of any government to preserve law and order, there are strong indications that police used excessive force in responding to peaceful demonstrations on the campus of Addis Ababa University."

Two AAU professors were arrested on May 8 for their alleged involvement in the student protests. One of the academics went on a hunger strike during his incarceration. The other, an eminent economist, said, "I was detained by the police simply because I took the Ethiopian Constitution seriously."

On May 14, the Ethiopian Democratic Action League (EDAL) blockaded the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, DC, by chaining themselves to the main gates to protesting the killings and mass arrests of students.

## **The Issue of a Free Press in Ethiopia**

In early March, the *Addis Tribune* carried an editorial about the treatment and imprisonment of

journalists. In one case, the editor of *Tomar*, an Amharic weekly, was jailed for two weeks because he would not reveal sources of stories. The *Tribune* also took issue with the fact that although the editor and his paper were licensed in Addis, he was imprisoned in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State; "this very act of banishing journalists . . . sets a worrisome precedent . . . Ethiopia has ratified the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights . . . What makes his arrest all the more unacceptable is that he was released without any legal charges being leveled against him . . . It is a serious blow to freedom of expression that the Ethiopian Constitution duly grants."

The Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association (EFPJA) protested the arresting of newspaper vendors and their four-day imprisonment. The association also objected to a five-day black-out of independent newspapers. "The government cannot find solutions to the problem [of the student riots] by cracking down on newspaper and magazine vendors in Merkato, La Gare, Piazza, Menelik Square and the Arat Kilo area," the EFPJA stated in an official commentary.

At the same time the managing editor of *Mebreq* disappeared, and the EFPJA expressed its concern about his fate.

The Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) announced in late May that two *Urji* editors had been released from prison. They were arrested in 1997. Accused of "fabricating false news" and "participating in terrorist activities," the two men were charged with contradicting a government announcement that three men had been killed by security forces in October 1997 because they belonged to the Oromo Liberation Front. The editors wrote that while they were Oromos, they were not members of the Front.

A law passed in 1992 allows the government to detain journalists "who are too critical of the government or are close to opposition movements," the RSF stated. "Ethiopia has been the biggest jail for journalists on the African continent for the past seven years."

Three editors still remain in jail. One is from *Urji*, plus an editor of the magazine *Moged* and the defunct *Gemena* who criticized the activities of the church in northern Ethiopia, and an editor of the

weekly *Tarik*, accused of writing an article in 1996 that offended the government. (Check out RSF at [www.rsf.fr](http://www.rsf.fr))

The London-based human rights organization, Article 19, filed an editorial in late May regarding the censorship of articles written about the famine of 1999-2000 in Ethiopia, titled "Still Starving in Silence." The Article 19's executive director noted "The apparent return of famine . . . makes it a matter of life and death that those who govern Ethiopia push forward urgently . . . for fundamental human rights and democratic principles." Harkening to Nobel winner Amartya Sen's concepts, the A-19 group asserts that "poverty and famine are forms of 'unfreedom.'"

Decrying the "deep-rooted culture of secrecy," the A-19 organization looks to discriminate between "structural" emergencies and "natural causes." The group also criticizes the government's lack of an "early warning system," e.g. allowing the news media to play a "role which the local media could play in safeguarding Ethiopia against a future of famine is still far from entrenched." The upshot was failure to report to the world that millions were affected by the smothering of drought information during the three-year between Ethiopia and Eritrea (Check out [www.article19.org](http://www.article19.org)).

## **Business as Unusual**

### **The Telephonic Revolution**

Mobile telephones are the business tool of Ethiopia, according to the Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation, a joint business venture of Swedish-based Ericsson-Ethiopia. Government-owned Ethiopia-Mobile counts 36,000 subscribers in Addis have cell phones. Plans are in the works to extend service outside the city. In 2000, its second year of operation, Ethiopia-Mobile's, earnings were US\$63 million. Ericsson's initial infrastructural investment was US\$50 million. The costs: A phone is about US\$200; activation fee, US\$77; deposit, US\$16; monthly fee US\$7; and calls are as high as ten cents per minute.

"With grinding poverty in the country, having mobile phones is a luxury," said Addis high school teacher Berhane Taye, who earns about US\$90 monthly. "Who can afford to pay so much money

if it is not an insignificant percentage of the Addis Ababa population" [estimated at four million people]. The Ericsson general manager, however, believes that it is possible that one million Ethiopians can afford the costs. Businessman Tekly Akalu said, "I cannot imagine doing my business without a mobile phone. It is a vital tool and affordable."

Other foreign interests have expressed interest in investing in the cell-phone system, including British Telecom, South Africa's MTN, and Malaysian Telecom which talk of forming a coalition to buy 49 percent of the government's public stock offering.

#### **High-end Cars Come to Ethiopia**

African Lakes Automotive, a dealer in BMW, Land Rover and Ford, has shown eight of its newest models at the Fifth Addis Chamber International Trade Fair. The managing director of the company predicts it will have a ten percent share of the Ethiopian market within three years. He mentioned that a couple of problems might be Ethiopia's altitude and the price of petrol. The Ford representative, however, declared a positive return to Ethiopian roads by his products, adapted to altitude and rough roads. Ford will sell commercial vehicles, minibuses, pick-ups, and panel vans.

#### **Addis Pharmaceutical Factory**

Ethiopia's leading pharmaceutical company, Addis Pharmaceutical Factory (APF), is planning on exporting its products to Sudan, Uganda and Zambia. APF is an affiliate to the "vast business empire of the Endowment Fund for Rehabilitation of Tigray," established in 1992 and now having a fixed asset value of US\$33.5 million. APF's chief factory is in Adigrat in Tigray. The factory's equipment was provided by Germany, Britain, and Italy. The facility produces 50 different kinds of drugs in tablets, capsules, ampoules, syrups and ointments. The World Health Organization has certified APF's production. An APF spokeswoman predicts that the company will produce US\$24 million worth of products per year, thus meeting 50 percent of the national need for pharmaceutical products. The rest will be exported.

#### **Rehabilitating Addis' Beggars**

"While beggary is the most widespread form of the social problem — including prostitution, unemployment and criminality — there has not been . . . to one's knowledge any program that

directly targets beggars," according to an *Addis Tribune* editorial. The writer points to the root cause as being poverty. "The needs of these unfortunate lots are immediate. It is about having a meal a day, and having a shelter to spend the night in."

There is an Addis Ababa city department beginning a study of beggar rehabilitation. "The . . . project is going to demand a large sum of money . . . What about the 'Addis Indigent Tax'? It is much more better for us to contribute from our incomes, than to hand out a penny or two each day."

#### **Electrification**

Within the next five years more than 150 towns will be provided with electricity by connecting with the national power grid at the cost of US\$52.4 million. The announcement was made by the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation, as part of a report that Ethiopia will begin its second five-year plan through 2005. The largest state to benefit will be Oromiya, where one-third of the recipient towns are located. The southern Ethiopian Regional State will have 26 towns provided with access to the grid. The other generating stations will be in Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Somali and Tigray states.

#### **Trade Delegation to US**

Early this year the Ethiopia Trade and Investment Mission, a 40-member delegation representing the government and 25 private sector companies, visited the US. They stopped in Atlanta and Houston. The group represented agriculture, tourism, transportation, communications, power, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and the garment and textile industries. The key topics were import, export, investment, licensing, and joint ventures. The delegation's press release enthused, ". . . the climate is ripe for economic success, thanks to such recent developments as the passage of the US African Growth and Opportunity Act, and responding to the peace treaty of Ethiopia and Eritrea."

One of the key announcements of the mission was the agreement with Atlanta-based Coca-Cola, which will invest around US\$50 million. Citing Ethiopia's 64 million population and large available labor force, Coke directors believe that Ethiopia's management division will provide significant quantities of Coca-Cola, not only

internally, but also to the eastern and southern African markets. Coca-Cola is also interested in joint-venture investments.

More Fanta, anyone?

#### **Special Appeal to Gondarians**

Ethiopians from Gondar living in the US have been urged to contribute to development projects in their home state. A joint cultural and sports festival was held in Gondar between those people of the northern region and the southern zone. Last year there was a Millennium Gondar Expo, and both zones were asked to mobilize for their state's development. For more information, contact Frances Scura (Addis Ababa 67-68) at fscur@herrick.com.

#### **Corruption Arrests**

According to the UN Integrated Regional Information Network, Ethiopian police arrested 20 executives of companies and government institutions suspected to have been involved in corrupt activities. Those jailed included the leader of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, who had recently split with the prime minister's faction, plus people working in the Ethiopian defense department, the Ethiopian privatization agency, the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, and others. "The crackdown was also likely to become more political in nature," sources said. The Ethiopian News Agency quoted a representative of the prime minister's office that the arrests "would herald the beginning of a series of steps outlined by the government against corruption."

#### **Russian Debt Cancellation**

Ethiopia owed US\$4.8 billion to Russia, according to the Ethiopian News Agency. The amount represents 80 percent of the total debt owed the defunct Soviet Union. The remainder of the debt will be rescheduled, with a reduction program of the Paris Club of donor nations. The UN Integrated Regional Information Network reported from Nairobi June 7 that most of the debt was incurred during the 17-year reign of Mengistu Hailemariam and was largely related to the Ethiopian military build-up. There is still a US\$5.5 billion outstanding to other donor nations and multilateral financial institutions. Most of this debt will be written off under the agreements of the World Bank initiative called Highly Indebted Poor Countries program.

#### **African Coups d'etat**

Between 1963 and 2000 at least 200 regimes have been removed either by coups, wars or "other unconstitutional means," according to the African Development Bank, as reported by Vanguard and AllAfrica Global Media. The ADB notes that 14 current leaders have been in office for a decade or two. Nine have served longer than 20 years. The average tenure of all national heads of state is 7.2 years. Between 1960 and 1989, only one was elected, but between 1990 and 2000 a dozen lost elections. To be fair, ADB points to Europe and its leadership average at 3.2 years. "The document also shows that three recently independent countries in Africa have had no leadership transitions since independence, while 11 have had just one transition," Vanguard reports. "Nigeria has had 11 transitions and Benin, 12 changes.

Of the 101 leaders deposed, two-thirds were killed, imprisoned, or banished to other nations.

## **Food and People to Feed in Ethiopia**

#### **Population**

According to Ethiopia's Population Office, today's statistics estimate that there are 65 million people living in the country. Within less than a decade, that number will rise to 79 million. Ethiopia's population has increased by 15 million in the last decade, said the office's Guenet Mengiste. Guenet's remarks were delivered at a workshop on birth control with women parliamentarians. She endorsed the policy to check the current birthrate, which is 2.7 percent and is one of the highest in Africa. Ethiopia's population is the third largest in Africa, exceeded only by Nigeria's at 114 million and Egypt's 67 million.

#### **Food production**

Mulugetu Huluka, Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture, has declared the 2000-2001 harvest as being the highest in five years. Minister Mulugetu noted that "Over 10 million tons of the food grain was harvested by small-farm holdings, and the remainder by large estates." He stated that the improved figures were the result of "extension programs . . . improved farming methods including fertilizers and pest control systems."

### **Food assistance**

The record-setting harvest follows three years of severe drought, as well as the internecine war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, according to Muluget. In January Ethiopia sought food aid for more than six million Ethiopians. The United States, the World Food Program, and the European Union pledged to meet three-quarters of the requested 640,000 tons of grain.

The food relief will help 6.2 million Ethiopians. In addition, the government asked that US\$38.6 million be provided this year to "key on non-food projects, such as rehabilitation and recovery . . . and response capacity." Various UN agencies have compiled reasons to appeal for US\$203 million for 400,000 drought victims and 206,000 citizens displaced by the Ethiopian/Eritrean border war.

Ethiopia Minister of Relief Simon Mechale has appealed to donor countries for 400,000 metric tons of food aid. He noted that his appeal for this year addressed the factors of "recovery, rehabilitation, and preparedness programs in areas as water, health, agriculture, and employment-generating schemes."

The UN's regional information network has noted that 16,000 people from Gonchaliso Enese Woreda in Gojam have left their homes to find relief assistance. According to the Ethiopian Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Department, the people left because of food shortages, low production, and "unfavorable climatic conditions."

According to the UN regional news network in Nairobi, "Humanitarian sources . . . [noted] that this was the [largest] reported movement of affected people on this scale anywhere in the country this year. If this were confirmed, it would be the first indication of food-related stress in the Ethiopian highlands since last year."

The UN network in Nairobi also reported that Tigray did not have food aid delivered to 130,000 people in March and April. The UN's representative revealed that while some districts had received food, others were disrupted by errant delivery systems. Affected were 83,000 people of Wikro, Hawzen and Ganta Afeshrum districts. Nearly 50,000 of Enda Meconni and Amba Alage districts were also affected by the failure to deliver aid.

The fault placed on those agencies involved: The Relief Society of Tigray, World Vision-Ethiopia, the Tigray chapter of Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Department, and the Relief Society of Tigray. Each blamed the other for distribution problems.

### **The Nile**

Since the days and decades of the pharaohs, the Nile's natural powers have been a subject of discussion and debate. According to three reports from Addis, the discussion continues:

The Panafrican News Agency reported that for the seventh time water resources experts from the Sudan, Ethiopia, and Egypt met. They gathered to take an in-air tour of Lake Tana, source of the Blue Nile, and the northwestern Tekezie River, as well as the Nile basin in western and southwestern Ethiopia, including four Ethiopian rivers that flow into the White Nile.

According to the agency reporter, "The tour is intended to acquaint the group with the problems Ethiopia is facing that stem from rampant soil erosion and abject poverty."

The ongoing series of Nile conferences will culminate next year, as experts from ten countries will discuss the natural and socio-economic effects of the Blue and White Niles, and what might be done to work with the rivers' powerful resources.

The *Addis Tribune* reports that the Eastern Nile Council of Ministers and the Eastern Nile Subsidiary Action Program, sponsors of the conference, achieved more than any of their earlier sessions. Ethiopia traditionally has not been satisfied with its role, which has been superceded by Sudan and Egypt. "Ethiopia has all the reasons to be unhappy when it comes to the state of affairs in the utilization of the Nile," the editor noted. "About 86 percent of the water that flows in the entire Nile system drains from Ethiopia. Or in real terms, the various Ethiopian rivers that flow into the Nile contribute about 84.71 billion cubic meters of the total annual flow of the Nile."

Despite this natural contribution, Ethiopia has only harnessed two percent of the waterpower and an almost insignificant 4 percent of the potential for irrigation. Poverty, the editorial cited, is the primary reason for underdevelopment. "Internation-

tional financial institutions and donors . . . [have been] instrumental in helping Egypt and Sudan develop the Nile, [but] were unwilling to extend similar assistance to Ethiopia.”

For a half-century, the Egyptians and Sudanese have exercised a formal agreement that the waters of the Nile will be shared only between the two countries. Over the years, Egypt has had numerous flood control and irrigation projects. The most ambitious yet may be the proposed “Peace Canal.” The intention is to move water from the Nile to the Sinai. Despite the audacity of the project — not unlike the design to transfer water of the Great Lakes to California — it is not a subject discussed with the other dozen nations with riparian connections to the Nile.

In an editorial of the *Addis Daily Monitor*, “Did We Just Discover the Nile?”. The writer bemoaned the meeting of the Nile’s bordering countries with “To announce to the world that land degradation in the Nile Basin has now become serious is like breaking news saying that the Sahara has just been discovered to contain plenty of sand.”

The degradation of the watershed in Ethiopia is creating problems for the dams and irrigation systems downriver, but the silting problem means that Ethiopia is losing valuable crop resource bases. No one can estimate the amount of soil lost up-river that eventually runs against concrete structures in Sudan and Egypt.

“The real culprits are us,” the editorial writer stated. “In the final analysis, the protection and rehabilitation of the Basin truly rests in the hands of Ethiopia itself . . . Conservation of the soil of this country . . . rests with us alone.” The writer’s conclusion regarding long-term, 20-year plans include many elements, from water management to irrigation and hydroelectric power: Reform should begin now, “because we don’t have 20 long years.”

Editor’s note: I recall in PC training in 1962 an historical footnote that Abyssinia threatened Egypt with building dams to lessen the flow of the river.

## Health Issues

### Leprosy, Hansen’s Disease

Late in January, hundreds of people walked at Maskal Square in Addis Ababa in a peaceful demonstration intended to rouse or raise public

awareness of the disease that has stigmatized and ostracized victims of leprosy for millennia. The event was part of the second annual gathering of men and women who belong to the Ethiopian National Association of Ex-Leprosy Patients, which maintains offices in Addis and five other communities. It was World Leprosy Day, and the banners read “Leprosy is Curable: End the Isolation.”

Leprosy is believed to have existed on the African continent for more than 6000 years, since Egyptians documented the disease that creates deformities and mutilations. Many RPCVs might recall seeing people without noses, fingers, toes, and other extremities. Unsanitary conditions foster the spread of *mycobacterium leprae*, first scientifically diagnosed by Norwegian Dr. G. Armauer Hansen in 1874. His research and work led over the past century to various methods of dealing with the disease.

Arega Kassa Zelelew, interviewed by Panafrican News Agency correspondent Ghion Hagos, recalled his escalating symptoms in the 1950s, when he was in his late twenties. “I’ve learned in 35 years, both as patient and a fully cured person, that it is easier in this country to cure Hansen’s Disease than to convince people that you cannot be infected from a cured person,” he said.

Arega, who is chairman of the national organization, said, “We want people to understand that leprosy can be eliminated. Those inflicted with it can be treated and cured. They should not be isolated or neglected. Due respect should be given to their dignity as any other person.”

### Editor’s note:

In our second year or so in Harar, PCVs in our group began to receive deliveries of heavy Eucalyptus wood desks perfect for teachers. They were made at a nearby leper colony. It did not take us long, American education overcoming superstition, to decide we’d love to take them home when we completed service. Of course we didn’t, but passed them on to those who followed us.

A number of us visited the treatment center in Bisadimo, a German-run medical facility, where the furniture was created. It was, as Hemingway once wrote, “a clean, well-lighted place.” Some also went to the more modest, local facility, which while not concrete block and German nurses and



doctors, was still quite respectful of the patients hoping for treatment. Meanwhile in Harar, we almost daily encountered those who were too late for treatment and were part of the beggar population that haunted the walled city's narrow streets and alleyways.

### **Meningitis, Too**

Earlier this year, Ethiopia appealed to the international scientific providers of vaccines to help provide enough inoculations to cope with a meningitis epidemic that could involve six million people in five of the nine states, as well as Dire Dawa. The other key areas, where as many as eight cases are reported daily, are Gambella, Amhara, Oromiya, Tigray, and southern Ethiopian states. In Dire Dawa, the mortality rate was two victims per day.

According to the Panafrican News Agency out of Dakar, Senegal, the appeal went to WHO, UNICEF, International Red Cross and Red Crescent, Doctors Without Frontiers, and other health organizations in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

"There had been meningitis incidents in a few areas," said Ethiopian Vice-Minister of Health Lasmissio Hayisso, "and had been checked before the disease got out of hand."

Ireland Aid sent a grant through the World Health Organization for nearly a million *birr* in May, in response to the plea, according to the *Addis Tribune*.

### **Cardiovascular Center in Addis**

In early March, the International Cardiovascular Medical Center was inaugurated. It is Ethiopia's first specialized facility for diagnosis and follow-up of cardio-problem analysis. According to the *Addis Tribune*, "In sub-Saharan Africa and particularly in Ethiopia, the most important health problems are still those related to poverty. In addition, such problems as hypertension and adult-onset diabetes . . . , which are strong precursors for heart attacks and stroke . . . are well established in urban areas. The number of heart attacks is unknown."

The ICMC has established by Swedish-based company, International Bio-Medical Development, involving Ethiopian businessmen and Ethiopians from Sweden.

### **Getting Beyond AIDS**

A *NY Times* op-ed ran under the headline of "The Best Possible Investment in Africa," written by Jeffrey Sachs, Harvard University Director of the Center for International Development. He reported that the estimate of what it will take to fight AIDS in Africa is in the \$5-\$10 billion in the next decade. "It is a remarkable bargain," Sachs wrote. "Compassion alone would be reason enough to act: to turn our back on Africa over this small sum would constitute one of the greatest moral failings in history. But even in economic terms, this task should not frighten us."

"Europeans," Sachs stated, "have just decided to spend around \$5 billion this year to fight Mad Cow Disease, which has claimed around 80 lives. About 17 million Africans have already died of AIDS."

The AIDS battle includes many fronts: TB, malaria, fungal infections, and other killer diseases. The sources would be "rich countries national budgets, debt cancellation for African countries, grants from private organizations, like the Gates Foundation, Rotary International, and from the World Bank." A recommendation is that the US government give \$3 billion annually, "about \$10 a year for each of us, the cost of a movie ticket, with popcorn," Sachs said.

### **Cataract Patients and the Lions Club**

Ethiopia's Lion's Club organized an "eye camp" at Bale Goba that enabled 438 people inflicted with cataracts to regain their sight. It was the second clinic in Ethiopia conducted by the Lions. The first was held in Gambela, where 402 patients were served. According to the *Addis Tribune*, the Lions Club of Ethiopia has, over the years, provided funds for operations that have helped 11,200 cataract-affected people. This year's schedule includes clinics at Bahir Dar, Debra Tabor, Jinka, Tigray, and Dessie, where an expected 3000 patients will be treated for cataracts, controlling onchocerciasis, and trachoma.

### **Global Warming and Increase of Hardships**

The Inter-governmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) has warned Africans of the increase of disease, famine and poverty due to global warming. According to the Panafrican News Agency in Dakar, with a dateline from Nairobi, "heavy, monsoon-like rains and higher temperatures will favor the breeding of disease-carrying mosqui-

toes, allowing them to thrive at higher altitudes . . . Changes in climate variability would encourage insect carriers of some infectious diseases to multiply and move farther afield." The IPCC Working Group 2 has been researching the phenomena that are occurring due to the changes in global patterns. El Nino has largely been responsible for alterations of the past and future problems.

Malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever, encephalitis, and cholera are among the results of the climatic changes causing the most significant medical problems. Drought has hit African catchment basins; for example, in Niger, Senegal and Chad they have decreased by nearly 60 percent. An estimated 80,000,000 people living in developing countries are mal-nourished. "Scientists say that climate change will increase the number . . . including Africa. Food shortages . . . may add to the numbers leaving the land and migrating to urban areas, which in turn could lead to more shanty towns around African cities."

Plant growth is threatened with extinction, as are animal populations. These impact on rural populations, as does the consumption of forests for firewood and charcoal. There are random attempts at energy alternatives, such as solar and wind power, as well as biogas production. There are a few national campaigns for fighting wind erosion through windbreaks, mulching, creation of ridges and rocky shelves, pruning and fertilization; these projects, however, are locally inspired and funded and, thusly, applicable only to small areas of the continent.

## **Education and Youth and Exploitation**

### **Tests and Results**

This year will be the first time Ethiopian students completing their "senior secondary education" will sit for a new school-leaving examination for tenth-grade students, according to a *Addis Tribune* editorial. "The examination is intended to evaluate students who have been educated along the lines of Ethiopia's new education policy," the paper stated. These are similar to the plus-eight exams that determine which career paths students will follow — specialized preparatory schools or vocational training centers.

Unfortunately, according to the *Tribune*, "training is either in progress or is still to be given to instructors who will be teaching in these vocational training centers. In other places, the vocational training centers are not yet equipped with the machinery and tools necessary to implement the program."

The specialized preparatory programs are underpowered as well. "Lack of sufficient preparedness . . . manifested itself in shortage of teachers textbooks, teaching materials and aids," the editorial noted. "Let us hope that the Ministry of Education . . . will come up with some kind of emergency plan to ensure at least the most basic materials and trained manpower are in place before the start of the following academic year."

### **Soccer Star and Save the Children**

British footballer John Barnes visited Ethiopia for five days. According to the *Tribune*, Barnes "thought of it as a country of famine and drought . . . [and] now thinks of Ethiopia as an historic country struggling to obtain development."

His tour, sponsored by the UK Save the Children organization, specifically visited projects in North and South Wollo. He was concerned about the disabled children and their presence in the larger community. "I was told that families are ashamed of these children and think they are cursed," he commented. After examination and coaching, he observed the children were more broadly accepted within their families and their towns. He interacted with blind and mute children, including a few soccer kicks with an auditory ball.

Barnes last visit was to a Dessie school where a child-to-child HIV educational approach is being used. There a group of 38 students, aged 10–13, had formed "Abyssinian Children Reproduction Health Club." In cooperation with the STC-UK and the Ethiopian Ministry of Information and Culture, there is a program that incorporates role-playing, puppets, and theater to broadcast ways to avoid contracting AIDS. After seeing the school's activities, Barnes gave US\$7500 to advance the program.

### **UNICEF Campaign for Girl's Education**

In a statement advocating the fight against children's poverty, the UN Children's Fund promoted the increased support of girls education

programs. "No country has ever emerged from poverty without giving priority to education," said UNICEF Executive Director [and former PCV and Peace Corps Director] Carol Bellamy. "If education is the escape door from poverty, then girls education is the key to the door." It is estimated that two-thirds of the 120 million school-age children are girls. "Compelling evidence shows that a child's well-being is strongly associated with the mother's level of education," wrote an *Addis Tribune* editorialist.

### **Child Labor**

"It is commonplace for people residing around Kera, Merkato, Piazza and Arat Kilo to see numerous child prostitutes between the ages of 13 and 16 standing in the doorways of slum houses waiting," wrote Alem Gebriel in the *Daily Monitor of Addis*. Alem told of the pimps, landlords and other "investors" who "treat them not as human beings but as their personal property." And pregnancy and illness are not justifiable reasons to quit. There is a high incidence of AIDS among the child prostitutes.

According to Alem, other female children are exploited as nannies and housemaids, paid only with a warm meal and a bed. "They are physically abused for not performing beyond their capacity," he wrote.

The Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association and other groups are working to reduce the number of predators who feed on young girls.

### **Women Labor**

An estimated 16,000 Ethiopian women are working in Lebanon as servants, as a result of a concerted and historic trafficking in female labor. The UN's regional news service does not describe their work as slavery, but the subject is important enough to involve the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Ethiopian ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and the prime minister's office of women's affairs.

The exploitation is not limited to Lebanon. "Abuse of African women working as servants had been reported in Europe and other parts of the world . . . Kenyan and Eritrean women also suffer the same fate," an IOM spokesperson stated.

## **Rail Links and Ports**

### **By rail to Sudan**

The Ethiopian ministry of transport and communications, Mohammed Drir, is considering a massive project that will link Moyale with Port Sudan via a new railway line. The project follows a joint ministerial commission meeting in Khartoum last year.

The potential construction sites are: from Moyale via Nazereth, Assela, Awash, Mille, Dalol, Makalle, Bikar and Shewoko to Port Sudan; or from Moyale via Mille, Weldya, Gondar, Metemma, and Galabat to Port Sudan.

The costs of construction of either line are estimated at US\$1.5 billion. Ministers of both countries are examining potential funding sources, according to an *Addis Tribune's* reporter.

### **Port of Djibouti**

The capacity of Port of Djibouti has been increased by 50 percent by the UN World Food Program (WFP). The agency announced in April the "special operation for infrastructure and equipment support" had been in place for two years. The cost was US\$1 million and expanded the incoming shipments to 7,000 metric tons daily.

Prior to the expanding of Djibouti's port, food aid went through the Eritrean ports of Assab and Masawa, but during the war, shipments were forwarded through Djibouti.

WFP representative in Djibouti Fatma Samoura forecast 235,000 metric tons would be sent "to the drought-stricken regions of southern and south-eastern Ethiopia . . . Many areas are still struggling to recover from the effects of last year's drought." WFP estimates that 2.5 million people will be aided by the shipments, from Welo to Tigray, from North Shewa to Harerge and Welayita.

All has not been peaceful the past few years between Ethiopia and Djibouti. Gabre Michael Paulos of the *Daily Monitor* writes that the mutual business concerns of the port and the nation have enjoyed a long history. He notes that Emperor Menelik II and a French company were given the concession to build the port. "If Ethiopia cannot use the port of Djibouti, it is not difficult to see that the economic benefits to Ethiopia and Djibouti itself will also be hampered . . . A speedy recon-

ciliation of the economic interests of Ethiopia and Djibouti,” Gabre Michael wrote.

### Port of Mombasa

“Struggling to regain its fast-fading glory of eastern Africa’s major seaport, Mombasa has received a boost with the decision by Ethiopia to begin using it to import and export goods,” reports the Panafrican News Agency.

## Ethiopia’s Gift to the World: Bet on Buna

The *Mail and Guardian* of Johannesburg, South Africa, ran an extensive article on the subject of the gift of Ethiopian coffee to the world.

“Coffee and love taste best when hot,” was quoted as “an ancient Ethiopian proverb.” To accentuate the saying, journalist Khadija Magardi writes, “If one considers that from Boston to Durban, wherever they may be in the world, no gathering of Ethiopians is complete without an elaborate, post-meal coffee-drinking.”

Reporter Margardi visited Mulu Bekele’s restaurant in Betrains, a suburb of Johannesburg, where numerous Ethiopians meet to drink coffee, as many as five times a day. “Fleeing political and civil unrest back home, the ritual is an opportunity to see each other, strengthen ties, and to remember their homeland,” he writes.

This Ethiopian *buna-bet* is no Seattle latte shop. “Mug ‘n Bean, it ain’t,” said one coffee-cup holder. Cherinet Olgira, head of the Ethiopian Community Association, believes homesick Ethiopians flock to Mulu’s café, because, “like most Ethiopian women, she knows the intricacies of the ritual right down to the minutest detail.”

It begins with the laying of long, fresh, green grass on the mat to remind the partakers of their homeland. Burning incense chases away the bad spirits. A plate of wheat, a dozen small cups, and patience follows Mulu’s ceremony. Green coffee beans are roasted on a small brazier. Cinnamon is added as Mulu moves the roaster around the room to share the flavor of the coffee roasting. The roasted beans are ground and sprinkled into the boiling water.

Magardie’s feature story adds to the lore of the drink, said to be named for an Abyssinian province, Kaffa. The reporter explains the Galla use of coffee

and fat, while others concocted porridge, and even a liqueur of fermented grounds. “The apparently restorative powers of coffee spread . . . to the surrounding Islamic world. Not only was it considered a potent medicine, but Muslim pilgrims spread the word that Ethiopian coffee was a useful potion that helped keep the faithful awake during prayers.”

Editor’s note: LaDena Schnapper (Dessie, Awassa 63–66) will offer the buna ceremony as part of the Ethiopian & Eritrean RPCVs Saturday evening entertainment at the 40th Anniversary celebration.

## Obelisk Update

John Scott Porterfield wrote:

I thought you RPCVs would enjoy reading about Italy’s latest absurd comments on the Aksum Obelisk:

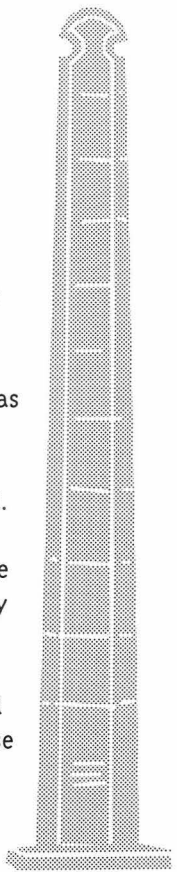
### “Italy to keep Ethiopian monument: The obelisk’s return would fulfil a longstanding promise.

An ancient Ethiopian monument taken by Dictator Benito Mussolini’s occupying Italian troops more than 60 years ago has been declared Italian, casting doubt on whether it will be returned to Ethiopia as promised. An official from Italy’s Culture Ministry, Vittorio Sgarbi, says the Obelisk of Axum has been in Italy for 73 years and has become naturalised and Italian. ‘Returning the obelisk to Ethiopia would be inopportune,’ he said, because ‘at its age it would arrive broken.’”

Editor’s Note: This digest was compiled and rewritten from dozens of news stories forwarded to *The Herald* by Robert Crepeau. For a full listing of news sources see page 45.

## Photo feature

The *National Geographic* features a photo-essay of Axum and Lalibella in its July, 2001 issue.



# Opportunities

## All-expense-paid volunteering in Ethiopia

Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (ACDI/VOCA) is a nonprofit, international development organization providing short-term overseas assignments at the request of agribusiness, cooperatives, marketing, and credit systems in Ethiopia. Their mission is to recruit highly qualified specialists to provide the technical assistance needed by the requesting overseas organizations.

All-expense-paid volunteer assignments typically range in length from two to four weeks. ACDI/VOCA makes all the logistical arrangements and pays all expenses including travel, living costs, and medical insurance. Volunteer specialists contribute their time and expertise.

Applicants should complete the on-line volunteer application at <http://www.acdivoca.org> and attach a brief description of your professional experiences (resume or CV would suffice). Once you complete the application, your name and skills will be in the national volunteer/consultant database. Also, on at the web site — [www.acdivoca.org](http://www.acdivoca.org) — you will be able see a list of our current volunteer opportunities.

Contact: Kent Ayers, Regional Manager ACDI/VOCA-California, 1008 "S" Street, Suite B, Sacramento, CA 95814; phone: 800/556-1620; fax: 916/556-1630; email: [av-ca@acdivoca.org](mailto:av-ca@acdivoca.org)

## Short-term training positions with Peace Corps

Here is some information regarding short-term training positions at Peace Corps.

Most Peace Corps field offices hire training staff locally. In the event a post is not able to identify qualified trainers, the Short-Term Assistance Unit at Peace Corps helps to identify and hire these United States Service Contractors (USPSCs) through our Short-Term Contractor Database.

Typical contract positions include: Pre-Service Training Directors; Pre-Service Training Technical Trainers/Coordinators; Language Specialists (who are certified ACTFL Language tester trainers). Other contract positions requested may include: workshop facilitators; training designers and project designers; writers/editors for materials development; monitoring and evaluation specialists; IT trainers

For more information contact Peace Corps' Short-Term Assistance Unit at [STAU@PEACECORPS.GOV](mailto:STAU@PEACECORPS.GOV)

For information about full-time positions, both domestic and international, contact Peace Corps Human Resource Management Office or visit the Peace Corps Web Site at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/employment/index.html>.

## Save the Children/Ethiopia

USAID has just announced a Request for Application (RFA) for their 5 year Basic Education Strategic Objective II (BES0II) project in Ethiopia. Specifically, this project will strengthen local capacities at the school, community and decentralized government levels to support basic education access and quality for girls. Save the Children will be bidding on this. They are looking for candidates for the chief of party and financial manager posts. Ideally, the former would be an educator with strong management of USAID multi-million dollar contracts and Ethiopia experience. The latter would have comparable USAID financial management experience in Africa.

Interested? Contact: Margaret McLaughlin, Deputy Director, Education, Save The Children, 54 Wilton Road, Westport, CT 06880; phone: 203-221-4273; fax: 203-221-3799; email: [mmclaughlin@savechildren.org](mailto:mmclaughlin@savechildren.org)



## At the Peace Corps

### **CRISIS CORPS: GUINEA**

*by Jocelyn Songco (Kebado, Ethiopia 96–98)*

I've been asked to write briefly about my five months spent as a Crisis Corps Volunteer in Guinea, West Africa last year. My role as a trainer for local staff of the International Rescue Committee (IRCO) focused on providing computer skills training in Microsoft programs to those working in IRCO's five offices along the southern Guinean border. IRCO operates in various areas and its work includes: programs in refugee assistance, such as schooling within the camps for refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia; a sexual and gender-based violence awareness program benefiting refugees and local Guinean host communities; and a program working to unite separated children with their families.

There was a clear need for computer skills among the local staff, not only for report generation, but also for project implementation and evaluation. From their war experiences to their new lives in Guinea, IRCO's staff battled incredible obstacles, yet their resilience and intellectual curiosity were outstanding. The most salient differences between my years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ethiopia from 1996 to 1998 and my time as a Crisis Corps volunteer were these: the work load was immense, and the problem of too much free time was NOT an issue; and the realities of working in a humanitarian assistance environment are quite distinct from

those of development work, though similarities, of course, exist. In a matter of months destabilizing events in Guinea — cross-border incursions between Guinea and Liberia, the ongoing trial of the Guinean opposition leader Alpha Conde, and the killing of a UN High Commissioner for Refugees worker in Guinea, among others — led to an environment no longer considered safe for NGOs to operate, and IRCO was forced to evacuate its staff.

Currently, IRCO is back in Guinea, with a reduced staff, and I am back in New York in graduate school. In terms of the value of a Crisis Corps position following Peace Corps, I feel that it was an invaluable experience where I met inspirational, incredible people, and came to a better understanding of global challenges and the role of people within international organizations.

### **How to obtain certification of Peace Corps service**

E&E RPCVs has received several requests for information on how to obtain certification of Peace Corps service for retirement credit, or teaching certification. This is what it has learned:

- 1) Find out if your state has a form that should be used to document your Peace Corps service for credit toward teaching certification, retirement credit, etc.

If there is such a form, obtain one and make a photocopy. On the photocopy, fill out the form as you would like to have the Peace Corps fill it out.

Fax to the Peace Corps Office of Certification (202/692-1771) both the blank form (which they will fill out as you would like them to) and the photocopy that you have filled out. Accompany these with a brief cover-note requesting that they complete the form.

2) If your state has no such form, fax to the Peace Corps Office of Certification (202/692-1771) a letter requesting a letter from the Peace Corps that would verify your service. In your request letter include: your full name, address, your country of service, dates of service (month and year of start and finish), what subjects and grades you taught as a Volunteer if you taught or, a brief job description, and your Social Security number.

If you have any questions, call the PC Office of Certification at 202/692-1784.

## Over-50 Volunteers marching off to the Peace Corps

The Associated Press (NY) reports that in 1966, when Lillian Carter (Jimmy's mom) was 68-years-old, she joined the Peace Corps, and was part of a one percent of PCVs who were over-50 — after, of course, the legendary retired teachers, Beulah Bartlett and Blythe Monroe (Harar 62–64). Now there is a ten percent ratio of 50+ PCVs in the field. Some AARP-types don't make it through the now-27-month term of service — "Older volunteers are slightly more likely than younger colleagues to cut short their . . . overseas assignments because of health problems, and they have a tendency to have more trouble learning new languages," notes Denver recruiter Lauren Mitchell. She goes on, however, "Younger Volunteers in the same group really depend on them for a lot of guidance."

In the 1960s, only five percent of PCVs were beyond Mick Jagger's magic "30." Now 28-percent are over 30. "A lot of today's senior Volunteers had just started families when the Peace Corps began," Mitchell says. "They say, 'I wanted to do this when I was 20, when Kennedy was President. I couldn't do it then. Now I can.'"

A recent ABC-TV report focused on the high-tech

workers who have been downsized or made redundant and what they are doing in the meantime. One option mentioned is the Peace Corps.

## Changing of the Guard

The Peace Corps has served under many Presidents and administrations. Beginning with John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, the Peace Corps has progressed through the Nixon administration, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Bill Clinton, and now President George W. Bush. We have served, and the Peace Corps has survived and thrived. With the induction of the Bush administration, there were, as always, changes in the administration of the Peace Corps. In January, many of the senior staff bade farewell to the Peace Corps. According to a recent press release, the carefully calibrated selection process will yield a Peace Corps Director by September, by which time the Congress will have reconvened after its summer recess.

## Bush nomination for PC Director

President Bush has announced his choice for Peace Corps Director. Already RPCVs are speaking out against the nomination, and articles questioning the candidate's qualifications have appeared in newspapers across the U.S. including the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Washington Post*.

The official White House announcement:

"Washington, D.C., July 25, 2001—President George W. Bush announced today his intention to nominate Gaddi H. Vasquez of Orange, California as Director of the Peace Corps. Mr. Vasquez is currently Division Vice President of Public Affairs of the Southern California Edison Company.

"Mr. Vasquez has been named six times as one of the 100 Most Influential Hispanics in the United States by *Hispanic Business Magazine* and was given the Award for Outstanding Leadership from the California State Assembly. He is a graduate of the University of Redlands and has completed Executive Studies programs at both Stanford University and Harvard University.

"From 1987 to 1995, Vasquez was County Supervisor of Orange County, California, and from 1985 to 1987, he served in the California Governor's Office,

first serving as the Hispanic Liaison and then as Chief Deputy Appointments Secretary. Mr. Vasquez was appointed to the Commission on White House Fellowships and the United States Quincentenary Commission by former President Bush.

"Mr. Vasquez received multiple appointments in the State of California by Governors Gray Davis, Pete Wilson and George Deukmejian. A former police officer in Riverside, California, he continues to serve as a City of Orange Reserve Police Officer and serves on numerous community boards including the Latino Children's Fund and the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials."

## **Presidential and Congressional Birthday Salutations**

"Now, therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America . . . do hereby urge all Americans to Observe March 1, 2001, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peace Corps, with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities designed to honor Peace Corps volunteers, past and present, for their many contributions to our country and the universal cause of peace and human progress." Governors of 36 states issued similar proclamations.

Peace Corps Day included Acting PC Director Charles Baquet appearing on the CSpan "Washington Journal" for a 45-minute segment. RPCVs called in from across the nation. One 67-year-old RPCV, who served in Lesotho, said "It was the greatest experience of my life." Baquet responded with "Older volunteers play a vital role in the Peace Corps . . . They come with a lifetime of experience and often set the standards for younger Volunteers."

## **Congressional Praise**

The first annual Paul Coverdell World Wise Schools Award for Excellence went to seven American teachers who were involved in the program named after the late senator and former head of the Peace Corps. They participated in the "Water in Africa Project." In addition, Sen. Edward Kennedy spoke of his brother's signing of the act that created the Peace Corps: "Of all the things that President

Kennedy was involved in, none gave him the sense of happiness and hope as that of the executive order establishing the Peace Corps. His faith in the power and idealism of young people and his belief in our country and what it represents at its best, has all come together in the Peace Corps."

On February 28, the Senate Congressional Resolution 18 recognized "the achievements and accomplishments of the Peace Corps over the past 40 years." Sen. Chris Dodd (Dominican Republic 68-70) spoke on behalf of RPCVs in honoring the "commitment to the spirit of volunteerism and service that President Kennedy envisioned 40 years ago." California Representative Sam Farr (Colombia) spoke, as well as Massachusetts Rep. Mike Honda (El Salvador), and Wisconsin Rep. Tom Petri (Somalia), Connecticut Rep. Christopher Shays (Fiji), and James Walsh (Nepal) added their experiential comments to the Record.

## **Peace Corps Security**

*USAToday* reported on May 14 that Peace Corps Volunteer Walter Poirer had walked out of a Bolivian restaurant in February and disappeared. The vanishing of the 23-year-old American "brings into focus the dangers of the USA's 7,300 Peace Corps Volunteers sometimes face as they engage in development work in 77 countries," wrote Elliot Blair Smith.

In the four decades of the existence of the Peace Corps, involving nearly 170,000 Volunteers, 20 PCVs have been murdered in their countries of service. Asked to comment in March, Peace Corps Inspector General Charles Smith (Ethiopia 64-66) identified security flaws, including housing in dangerous areas and inadequate supervision. In 1998 the PC established the Office for Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security.

A grisly list was provided by *USAToday* noted that a PCV who was raped and murdered while riding a bicycle in Madagascar, a PCV murdered in his home in Ivory Coast, another woman raped and stabbed to death in Gabon. RPCV Brant Silvers, who served in Gabon, said that an "outrageous" number of rapes of PCVs occurred while he was there. PC staff has confirmed that seven assaults and four rapes occurred between 1993 and 1999. Silvers has a theory, "There was an informal grapevine of Volunteer information. We found out



a lot of things that were happening in the country that weren't told us by the administration and felt a responsibility to tell each other from a safety aspect."

Despite a \$10,000 reward and six FBI agents sent to Bolivia, no information has come forward regarding Walter Poirer.

Due to recent events at a number of Peace Corps posts, the agency is emphasizing its policies position on volunteer safety and security worldwide. Michael O'Neill, Coordinator for Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security, has been briefing headquarters offices and regional recruiting offices about the agency's philosophy and policies. Peace Corps' safety and security model is based on an "acceptance," theory, which focuses on building relationships of mutual respect and trust in the local community. Components of the agency's volunteer safety and security procedures include the monitoring and dissemination of information, training for Volunteers and staff, selection and monitoring of Volunteer sites, guidance for reporting and responding to incidents, and an Emergency Action Plan (EAP).

## Top Ten Collegiate Recruiting

Of the major universities graduating the most Peace Corps Volunteers currently serving:

University of Wisconsin-Madison: 93  
University of Colorado-Boulder: 74  
University of California-Berkeley: 70  
University of Texas-Austin: 68  
University of Oregon: 67  
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor: 65  
University of Virginia: 63  
University of California-Santa Cruz: 60  
University of Washington: 58  
Pennsylvania State University-University Park: 56

The top small colleges include Middlebury, Tufts, Colby, Johns Hopkins, Dartmouth, Whiteman, University of Chicago, St. Olaf's, Willamette, Smith, Pomona, and Colgate.

## Building name change

In spite of a vigorous fight by RPCVs, Congress passed and President Bush signed a bill that names the Peace Corps Headquarters Building after former Peace Corps Director Paul Coverdell.

## National Peace Corps Association

### NPCA Budget Advocacy

The National Peace Corps Association used its advocacy listserv to promote member involvement in contacting their Congressional representatives about increasing the Peace Corps budget for 2001. According to a brief story in the NPCA's "3/1/61" magazine, the association worked with the Coalition for American Leadership Abroad to advocate to both houses an appreciable increase in the Peace Corps budget. The outcome was a four percent increase for 2001, to \$265 million. "The appropriation is still well short of the amount needed to bring the total number of Volunteers to 10,000, a target approved by Congress in 1999," the publication noted.

### NPCA and E&E Membership Drive

In conjunction with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Peace Corps, the NPCA and its affiliates, including the Ethiopia & Eritrea Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, are pushing for increased membership. At year-end, the NPCA had 10,500 members. That is about 2000 fewer than in 1999. The national association is struggling financially, as a result, even though it was able to end the year in the black. Programs have suffered, including the Emergency Response Network; "we have been thus far totally frustrated in our efforts to line up significant financial support for upgrading" the network, notes NPCA president Dane Smith.

Already contributing to the association are the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, plus the Schumann Foundation, which supports the Peace Corps Writers organization.

## 40 Big Candles on the Peace Corps Cake

Understatement: it is doubtful that all of the 160,000 Peace Corps Volunteers who have signed on the line and taken the oath since 1961 will show up in DC September 20–September 23. But the thought of 160,000 people showing up must be the secret fear of the organizers of the gala weekend, modestly titled "America Thanks the Peace Corps: Celebrating four decades/300,000 years of service."

Or 15,600,000 weeks. You figure the days and hours . . .

Whatever. The National Peace Corps Association and RPCV/Washington are organizing a whizbang weekend for all RPCVs who find themselves in the neighborhood of the Hotel Washington at 15<sup>th</sup> and F Streets. Or on the corner of Pennsylvania, too, and one block from the White House, and around the corner from a bunch of DC attractions. The subway station nearby is Metro Center.

The registration process began a couple of months ago, but there is still time and room for E/E RPCVs who want to take part in the program.

Of course, the Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs', who celebrate the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our first contingent to the Horn of Africa, are planning special events for us. Conference committee members C.J. Smith Castagnaro, Courtney Arnold and Judy Smith are putting together an exciting list of activities.

At printing time **more than 100 E&E RPCVs have already registered** for the conference. Many took advantage of the bloc hotel reservation for the group and will be staying at the Conference hub, the Hotel Washington. Although the bloc could only be held until July 1, there are still many rooms in a variety of hotels.

The program includes:

### Thursday, September 20:

**Advocacy Day:** Time to visit Congress with a simple agenda, to urge your legislators to continue support of the Peace Corps, and aggressively attack AIDS. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, AIDS is a plague upon

the people and an issue that requires our Congressional attention, tenfold.

There is also a Capitol Hill Reception Thursday evening, and time to tip a glass and nibble a gnosh with legislators and DC leaders.

### Training group reunions

Also Thursday evening, there will be time for mini-reunions of training groups. If you would like to organize one for your group, contact Marian Beil for mailing labels, email addresses, etc. to help in your efforts.

**Ethiopia I (62–64)** Dave Gurr is hosting the group at his home beginning at 7:30 p.m. You should send an email (preferred) to Dave at [dgurr@cns.gov](mailto:dgurr@cns.gov) to **let him know if you will be attending** (and if you will be bringing a spouse, etc.). If you don't have email, you can call Dave at home at 703/370-2553 to RSVP.

To get there by taxi, about \$ 25 from DC: 395 south, exit Seminary Road East, left at the fourth light, and first left turn signal (Alexandria Hospital is on the right) onto North Howard. Left next corner onto Loyola and it is the first house on the right (No. 4311).

By Metro: blue or orange line to King Street in VA. Take any bus going to Alexandria Hospital (about a ten minute ride). Get off at the intersection with North Howard. Turn right at the corner. Walk up (opposite direction from the Hospital) to the first block on the left and it is the first house on the right (4311 Loyola).

If lost, or need a ride from King Street, call before getting on the metro in DC and Dave will be at the King Street metro station — 703/370-2553.

### Ethiopia IV (64–66)

C.J. Smith Castagnaro writes:

UCLA Training Group IV —

Let's meet at the Hotel Washington bar Thursday night after the Congressional Reception.

**NOTE: We have been informed that registrants for the conference need to have photo IDs with them because some meetings will be in government buildings.**

### **Friday, September 21:**

Opening ceremonies with an address by a *tilik sew*, who at press-time remains unnamed. And the spotlight turns to the impact we RPCVs have had upon "public service, social services, education, business, international affairs, and philanthropy," as the NPCA brochure enumerates.

Friday is a busy day. There is a Career Fair called "Employers eager for RPCVs." International music will be played on The Mall, a showing of an RPCV films, a set of awards given to RPCVs and their groups, and there will be a reunion of PC staffers.

Perhaps the shining moment will be readings by published writers who served in the Peace Corps. Actually part of a two-day, ongoing program of readers, from fiction to letters home, from poetry to travel writing. Among the highlighted readers will be Christopher Conlon (Botswana), Nancy Scheper-Hughes (Brazil), Mary-Ann Tirone Smith (Cameroon), Maureen Orth (Columbia), Marnie Mueller (Ecuador), Kathleen Coskran (Ethiopia), Simone Zelitch (Hungary), Richard Wiley (Korea), George Packer (Togo) and Joanne Omang (Turkey).

"The impact of Peace Corps service on the Volunteers is evident in their writings," said novelist John Coyne (Addis Ababa 62-64), editor of PeaceCorpsWriters.org. "The writers continue in the legacy of earlier American expatriate writers like Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Anderson."

If one wants to share his or her writing about the Peace Corps experience, contact Joe Kovacs with a brief description of what can be read in ten minutes. Readings will be held at the Washington Hotel. For information, contact [Joe\_Kovacs@hotmail.com] For the schedule as it evolves, call up [www.peacecorpswriters.org](http://www.peacecorpswriters.org).

### **Embassy reception**

Plans are in the works for a reception at the Eritrean embassy late Friday afternoon.

### **Saturday, September 22:**

The day begins with the President's Forum, leading into various community service projects, career workshops, and the NPCA annual general meeting to which all are welcome.

### **Country update 1:30 pm-4:30 pm**

Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs country updates will begin at 1:30 pm.

The speakers will include:

**Ambassador Imru Zelleke** — Former Ethiopian diplomat and resident of the USA since the 1970s, Ambassador Zelleke, who was a participant in the transfer of Eritrea from British control to Ethiopia in the 1950s, will speak about the origins of Eritrea and the current state of affairs in Ethiopia.

**Joe Ciuffini** (Harar 64-66). Joe has been closely following the current upheaval in Ethiopia and has urged E&E RPCVs to take issue with the Government of Ethiopia over its repressive measures.

**John Rude** (Tessenei, Eritrea; Adi Ugri, Eritrea 62-64) John, recipient of an award from the Government of Eritrea for his service to the country, will speak about current conditions there.

**Dave Gurr** (Addis Ababa 62-64). Dave, a member of E&E RPCVs Steering Committee, will give a summary of E&E RPCVs efforts to help end the war between the two countries and the current status of the ceasefire. He will also provide an update on enCORPS which he directs.

### **A speaker on AIDS in Ethiopia and Eritrea.**

Ethiopia and Eritrea are among those African nations facing dire situations caused by AIDS. Our speaker will present the scope of the problem and what must be done.

**Leo Cecchini** (Asmara 62-64). Moderator, Chairman of E&E RPCVs Peace Initiative Committee, and Chairman of NPCA Peace and Conflict Resolution Subcommittee.

### **Dinner and music**

The day will then be topped off with an injera and wat dinner at the Addis Ababa Restaurant (2106

18th St. NW, phone:202/232-6092), musical and dance entertainment provided by the Nile Ensemble, and the *buna*-coffee ceremony presented by LaDena Schnapper (Dessie, Awassa 63-66).

There will be a **charge of \$15** per person that will cover the dinner (drinks excluded) and entertainment. **We ask that you R.S.V.P.** if you plan to attend the dinner.

#### **Embassy reception**

Plans are in the works for a reception at the Ethiopian embassy late Saturday afternoon.

#### **Sunday, September 23:**

The closing day will begin with a trek across Memorial Bridge with RPCVs walking behind the flags of their country of service — be sure you plan to participate and walk proudly behind the flag of Ethiopia or Eritrea — to Arlington Cemetery and President Kennedy's grave site, where JFK's life will be recalled, and tribute given to those who the paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving as PCVs overseas. This will be followed by a picnic and games on The Mall.

#### **Gala**

Sunday evening there will be a **fundraising** Gala at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. It will include three events: a VIP Reception (5:30 PM), the Gala which will be a program MCed by Tom Brokaw and will include a salute to Sargent Shriver (6:30 PM), and a Post-Gala Reception (8:00-9:30 PM). Tickets: \$250 for the Gala and Post-Gala Reception; \$1,000 for 2 tickets to all three events. For more information, or to order tickets, email: galainfo@rpcv.org, or call: 202-464-0465.

#### **General conference info**

To register for the conference, make hotel reservations, learn about available travel discounts, **see who else is coming to the conference**, see a schedule of events, etc. go to

<http://rpcv.org/pages/celebrate.cfm>

To register off-line, call 866-324-7103.

## **RSVP**

Please send an email note to Gloria Gieseke Curtis at

**Don\_Curtis@msn.com**

and tell her:

1) If you will be attending the Saturday evening dinner and the number of guests you will have accompanying you.

2) If you will be attending the reception at the Eritrean Embassy Friday afternoon (if it happens) and the number of guests you will have accompanying you.

3) If you will be attending the reception at the Ethiopian Embassy Saturday afternoon (if it happens) and the number of guests you will have accompanying you.

**If you do not have access to email,** contact Gloria at:

15670 W 64th Place  
Arvada CO 80007

phone: 303/422-3742

## **E&E RPCVs**

by Steering Committee Chair Marian Haley Beil

#### **To consider**

In March the Population Action International announced the results of its worldwide study of women's health. Ranked as having the world's worst women's health index was Ethiopia. The chance of a woman dying from complications of pregnancy, childbirth, or unsafe abortion during her lifetime in Ethiopia are a staggering 1 in 7.

If you would like to take a leadership role in developing possible projects that E&E RPCVs could pursue that would address — even in some small way — this tragic situation, please contact me at mhbeil@servtech.com.

#### **Habitat for Humanity**

Mary Gratiot Schultz (Adi Ugri 65-67) is an active supporter of Habitat for Humanity in Rochester, New York. She has contacted Habitat for information about its program in Ethiopia (HFHE).

Briefly, Habitat has completed 110 houses and hopes for an additional 70 this FY year. Because of the laws regarding land ownership HFHE builds on tracts of land (plots for 40-60) houses. They are in three locations: in Ambo, Wolita Soddo and Kibre Mengist. In the next year the clusters will be expanded in those areas.

The cost to sponsor a house is \$2000 which covers building materials and administrative expenses. An average of five family members live in the 2-3 room houses. If you would like to take a leadership role in exploring whether this would be a good project for E&E RPCVs to become involved with, please contact me at mhbeil@servtech.com.

#### **Thank you, Susan**

Susan Hundt Bergan (Bahar Dar 66-68) has resigned from the Steering Committee after nine years of service to our group. We thank her for her devoted attendance at conferences and committee meetings.

#### **Hayward volunteers**

The editor of *The Herald*, Hayward Allen, has volunteered to become a member of the Steering Committee. Thanks, Hay, for stepping forward.

# PC/Ethiopia's First Fatality

**T**HIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, in the spring of 1966, Adi Ugri PCV teacher Bill Olson was taking a vacation with a group of Volunteers in Gambela, laying back, chilling out, going on picnics along the shores of the Baro River. Lots of PCVs were there, swimming and paddling around in dug-outs. All were having a great, aquatic spring break midway through their terms of service. It was kind of like going to Ft. Lauderdale over Easter vacation. Steve Buff (Addis Ababa 64-66) and his wife-to-be, Evelyn Ashkenaze (Addis Ababa 64-66), had traveled south from Shoa Province to do the same thing.

"This was not the Ethiopia of cool highlands and white flowing traditional dress, but Nilotic Africa, in the blazing southwestern lowlands near the Sudanese border. The people were semi-nomadic, extremely tall and blue-black; the villagers barely clothed in the heat, and the women adorned with elaborate wide, high necklaces," Buff recalled in the online publication Peace Corps Writers "www.peacecorpswriters.org". "This was much closer to our childhood *National Geographic* images of Africa than any place we'd seen before in Ethiopia."

While Steve and Evelyn were doing their carefree vacation, a larger group up-river were swimming, wading, and floating downstream with the current. Kathleen Coskran (Addis Ababa; Dilla 65-67) described the milieu in a letter to her mother in April 1966, and recently published by Peace

Corps Writers: "It was terribly hot," and a PCV from Gore who had been to the river said it was great." So Kathleen and her friends went there. "The water was cool and nice . . . We waded out to a huge rock about two-thirds of the way across . . . The current was very swift, and we had trouble keeping our balance . . . We splashed around, floated on our backs to another rock about 200 yards downstream." Village women could be seen bathing and washing their clothes in the river. It seemed so safe.

There they watched "the boys swim and splash each other in the water." One of them swam over to a sandbar only 60 feet from shore. It was a playful time, young men and young women basking in the sun, feeling the water all around them. Some moved to rocks, some swam ashore. It was about 3:30 pm. Kathy, Bill Olson and two others decided to swim out to the sandbar. "We decided to do it . . . one by one . . . You had to get in the water, swim as hard as you could towards it and the current would bring you down to the end of it where you stood up and walked up on the bar. Bill went first."

What seemed like a relatively simple adventure turned into disaster. "We watched him swim for the sandbar, the current carried him to the end as we had expected. He stood up, and then he disappeared. We saw the tip of the crocodile; it looked like Bill said something, and then he was gone. There was no struggle; he never knew what hit him."

Steve Buff and a new friend, George Christodoulos, were paddling the river in a dugout canoe. "We became aware of a group of folks swimming in the river . . . then heard alarmed shouts coming from the group and immediately began to paddle toward the PCVs."

Villagers and PCVs, along with an American army colonel and a Swiss guide, searched the river until darkness came. The PCVs tried to call Peace Corps/Addis but the lines were down. Someone thought to call the Gore police, but the office could not transmit until morning. "Back at the river, the crocodile was sighted a couple of times and the natives shot at it," Kathy wrote to her mother, "but I don't think they hit it." Two weeks earlier, a crocodile had taken a woman washing clothes along the shore of the river.

The next morning, the colonel killed the 13-foot crocodile. "There it lay," Buff recalled, "facing the river, fluid dribbling out of its closed jaws, broad, tall, enormous, a nightmarish alien species . . ." One PCV cut open the crocodile's belly and took its contents and placed what remained of Bill Olson in a box. Kathy did not learn of this awful discovery until later at a meeting in Addis.

"The whole thing was pretty grim," Kathy wrote to her mother. "We didn't know if anybody was getting our wires, and we just didn't know what to do. The natives made us tea, brought us water, gave us bananas and mangoes, and we still had some tuna left, so we bought bread and had lunch." Since Ethiopian Air Lines flights only came to Gambella on Wednesday and Saturday, the survivors were at a loss to know where to go and when. Then someone announced that a plane was landing at the airstrip. It was a Peace Corps-leased C-47, rerouted from Dembidolla to Gambella. "We raced back to town, got our things, and boarded the plane, with the box containing the body."

Kathy recalled, "The plane was . . . unpressurized and unbearably hot. Even my skirt was sopping wet from the heat. But it cooled off after we were in the air for a while."

Once in Addis, the PCVs endured a series of Q/A sessions. "The whole thing was like a dream," Kathy wrote. "We were all pretty dazed . . . having

to tell the story at the PC office was like relating a dream . . . we just wanted to go home."

Before they could leave, however, there were more questions, as well as a memorial service at the Lutheran Church. Once back in their town Kathy and her friend were surrounded by curious and caring PCVs. "We were well taken care of, we didn't have to eat alone, and it was all right." She wrote to Olson's parents, who requested that his clothing and books be given to his students.

A slow avalanche of media attention began with the *Ethiopia Herald's* headline, "Peace Corps Volunteer Eaten by Crocodile." A decade later, stories were still being told, including Alistair Graham's 1990 book *EYELIDS OF MORNING: THE MINGLED DESTINIES OF CROCODILES AND MEN*. For the PCVs who witnessed and took part in the recovery of Bill Olson, it is a memory that does not stop.

"Evelyn and I have carried these memories with us for almost 35 years," Buff wrote in Peace Corps Writers. There is one image that remains even more vivid and constant than the rest. After I had finished my solemn task by the carcass of the crocodile, I looked up and saw Evelyn, sitting on a log a short distance away, weeping. Sitting opposite and facing her was an elderly villager, also silently weeping...those mutual tears brought home to me the tragic death of a colleague..."

"It was an accident, like any accident anywhere else, and Africa is not to be blamed for it," Kathleen Coskran ended her letter. "A tragic thing happened, and a boy was killed..."

Mary Gratiot Schultz (Adi Ugri 65–67), who served with Bill and was one of the PCVs who later refused to buy photos of the slain and butchered crocodile, presented a tribute and homage to Bill Olson at the EEE RPCV reunion in 2000. "Bill was from Ithaca, NY, and was the first of his large, extended family to graduate from college. He was a graduate of Cornell. In the Peace Corps, he trained at UCLA . . . Bill has become a legend."

## Getting Personal

### “Volunteer Who Had to Leave When He Started to Like It”

**Jim Silver** (Yerga Chefe, Ethiopia 98–99) wanted to go to China, and when he graduated from college in 1997, he figured he was a perfect fit, since his mother taught Chinese and his great-grandparents were missionaries. He applied for the Peace Corps and in the spring of 1998 he learned his assignment was teaching English in Ethiopia. It was raining as he and the 34-person group flew into Addis, according to his story in the *Vienna (VA)* and *Oakton Connection* earlier this year. Three months of training there transformed them into PCVs, and he was given a school in Yirga Chefe and 300 ninth and tenth graders, ranging in age from 14 to 32-years-old. Just after his first Timkat celebration, he was recalled to Addis, where he learned he was part of a debate to withdraw PCVs from Ethiopia because the war had heated up to the boiling point.

“I’d joined the Peace Corps to serve for two years, to teach English. I had gotten through homesickness, and real sickness, and learned Amharic, and I was just starting to really like it there, to feel at home,” he reported. “Then poof!”

Editor’s note: See Luke Taylor’s story, “E-mail vs. Hyenas” on page 1. Like Jim Silver, Taylor went to Ethiopia and was evacuated early due to the war. He later moved on to a PC project in China.

### The Brain of E. Fuller Torrey

*The Washington Post* is fascinated by the fact that Dr. E. Fuller Torrey (PC Ethiopia staff physician 64–66) has 52 freezers filled with 398 human brains and continues to get more FedExed to him once a week. Like corned beef in a deli, Dr. Torrey shaves slices to send around the world to other pathologists studying the biology of mental illness. In the meantime, Torrey has what is considered a controversial theory about the spreading of schizophrenia.

“But the most interesting brain in Torrey’s lab,” writes *Post* writer Peter Carlson, “is not stored in a

jar or a freezer. It is located in Torrey’s skull, beneath his shaggy, graying hair.”

The 63-year-old doctor got his start in Ethiopia as a Peace Corps physician, and then moved on to Alaska, and the South Bronx. For five years, he was an administrator at the National Institute of Mental Health, served seven years as staff psychiatrist at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, and did 16 years of volunteer work with homeless schizophrenics in the DC area. In between, he has written 16 books, often with ironic titles like *FREUDIAN FRAUD* and *WITCHDOCTORS AND PSYCHIATRISTS*. The good doctor now heads a \$20 million research foundation, second in size to the US government’s. “People who wouldn’t speak to me ten years ago have decided that maybe they should . . . I am alarmingly respectable now,” he mused.

Speaking to a group of high school anatomy students, who are “more interested in the yuck factor of the brain,” Dr. Torrey spoke out to the amorphous, curious, naïve audience: “Somehow, the realization that this wonderful organ that contains all your thoughts and memories just sort of melts away is pretty disconcerting.”

### E&E’s Cecchini and the NPCA Peace Initiative

NPCA’s chairman of the National Peace Corps Association’s newly formed Subcommittee on Peace and Conflict Resolution, Leo Cecchini (Asmara 62–64), gave a report at the winter board meeting in the Dominican Republic that included the thought that “RPCVs hold enormous potential to be major voices and actors in the universal effort to end all war and conflict. After all, ‘peace’ is the operative word in our name. We are the largest single group of Americans with shared experiences in foreign countries, save our military . . . We should become the key constituency in America for peace . . . RPCVs . . . make a difference in the pursuit of peace . . . We have 161,000 RPCVs to give their help and support to the task.”

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## WISE Talk

Kathleen Moore (Emdeber 64-66) published the first issue of the newsletter of the Women's International Self-Reliance Enterprise on a regretful note. She describes how eight women in the Twin Cities began WISE to help the area's immigrant women. "We planned to tell you about our four projects leaders," she wrote, "who are from Ecuador, Somalia, Laos and Ethiopia and how they are helping women in their [Minneapolis-St. Paul] communities with health care and housing and day care and school." WISE had intended "to ask for donations to support those projects and to help our tiny group of volunteer women keep going."

The WISE world then collapsed around the eight women, as one of the founders, a doctor, was diagnosed with breast cancer. "She is a doctor in her home country, where she brought health care to teenagers in the capital city and rode a mule through the mountains to deliver babies and teach midwives in remote villages." Emigrating to the US with her family, she found that her medical credentials were unacceptable, so she went back to school and scored high marks on the first half of her exams, but family and health have kept her from the second part. "Now Theresa can't work for a while, and her insurance doesn't cover all the medical expenses. So our first newsletter is one we would rather not write . . .

The message of the newsletter is "Help!" In order to "give her family the chance they deserve and have worked so hard for — to live, to learn, to succeed, and to give back their love and energy to other immigrant women. Giving is always a circle: your gift comes back to you when you least expect it."

Contributions may be sent to WISE, 67 Sycamore St., St. Paul, MN 55117.

## Looking for . . .

### **Nigussie Teklie looks for Garland James Bayley**

When Nigussie was a secondary school student in eastern Ethiopia at Gelemso, in 1973-74, one PCV teacher stood out in his education: Garland James Bayley. "After he has left Ethiopia we had few contacts by mail," Nigussie writes. "Then after I could not find his address. Would you kindly help me meet him again?"

Until the end of August, Nigussie will be at Dresden University of Technology where he is doing research. "At the end of August, I am going to Ethiopia to collect data for my research," he writes. Nigussie included two mailing addresses:

Nigussie Teklie  
Hochschulstrasse 50-0809  
01069 Dresden, Germany  
ng525678@rcs.urz.tu-dresden.de

or  
Arba Minch Water Technology Institute  
P.O. Box 21  
Arba Minch, Ethiopia

### **Kathy Quinn Thomas is looking for Bruce Hoffman (Addis Ababa 72-75)**

Contact her at: Rochester Business Journal, 55 St Paul Street, Rochester, NY 14604, phone: 716.546.8303, fax: 716.546.3398, email: kthomas@rbj.net"

## In Memorium

E&E RPCVs received the

following email:

I stumbled upon your website while doing some genealogy research. Nina Rusk Carson (PC/E Staff 64-66), my great aunt, passed away about 6 or 7 years ago in DeKalb County, GA. I do know that her experience with the Peace Corps meant a great deal to her. She loved the Peace Corps and told me many stories of her time in Ethiopia. I still wear the Ethiopian cross that she gave me after a trip to Ethiopia many years ago.

Respectfully, Shanon Rusk

Dooley

. . . . .  
We have learned that John Cohen (64-66), who worked as a lawyer as a PCV, died at the age of 58 after a long bout with cancer. According to the Harvard University Gazette, he "wrote and taught extensively on public administration in the developing world and served as an advisor to countries in Africa [including Ethiopia] and the Middle East."



### The Tracks of Evelyn Waugh and Many of Us, Too

*NY Times* reporter Ian Fisher took the train from Djibouti to Addis Ababa earlier this year. In 1930, when Evelyn Waugh was 27-years-old, precocious and very British, he traveled the same tracks. He wasn't a happy passenger, as he moved over "the intolerable land — a country of dust and boulders, utterly devoid of any sign of life." Ian Fisher, as many of us Ethiopia PCVs did, took that same marvelous RR ride, from one *babur tabya* or another — and he wrote about it.

"At every stop, armies of people emerge from tiny villages: old men, children, but mostly women in bright shawls and dresses carrying so much that they sometimes stagger. They plop their loads in the aisles, in front of doorways, beneath unwilling neighbors' feet. A walk, say, to the toilet, requires leapfrogging sleeping passengers, babies, sacks and seats — like crossing a stream on stones (except that the stones would be rattling)," Fisher complained.

"That's our way," a Djibouti accountant shrugged.

Fisher, who does his best to understand and express his misunderstandings, doesn't get to Waugh's 1930 trip until near the end of his article. Waugh had taken the trip to report on the coronation of Haile Selassie.

Menelik II built the railroad — which was begun in 1897 — and it took about three decades to complete. "In its heyday, the train took only 24 hours to cross from Djibouti to Addis. Now, as the cars and engines have aged, it takes 32 hours," Fisher reported.

The basic seat rate from Djibouti to Dire Dawa is \$14, and from DD to Addis it is \$3, compared to \$10 by bus. Educated Ethiopians appreciate the economics of the ticket, but they also enjoy the role of being a traveler across a strange land. "When I take it, I feel something interesting beyond its cheapness," lab technician Endale Assefa told Fisher. "You see things, strange things. The culture of your country. Interesting things."

### Peace Corps Writers: The Grand Tour

John Coyne (Addis 62–64), editor-cofounder of the net-zine [www.PeaceCorpsWriters.org](http://www.PeaceCorpsWriters.org), reports that the "40 Years of Peace Corps Writers: The Tour" has been moving down the road, covering many miles from New York to California and Massachusetts, Maryland, Iowa, Colorado, Georgia, Minnesota, and Washington DC. For the listing of stops, check out the website: <http://peacecorpswriters.org>. The readings will continue at the 40<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations in September. The tour has been made possible by a \$25,000 grant from the Florence and John Shumann Foundation of New Jersey.

### Literacy Project

The Books for Ethiopia Literacy Project/Ethiopia, was founded to promote the publishing of children's books as well as reading and literacy in Ethiopia. There are plans by the organization to organize a book center "with books for children, parents, teachers and social workers; to publish children's books based on Ethiopian culture, history and reality reflecting gender sensitivity, human rights, environmental conservation and peace . . . and conduct a literacy program for low-income families with school-age children."

For more information: [www.myethiopia.com/Information/Books%20for%20Ethiopia.htm](http://www.myethiopia.com/Information/Books%20for%20Ethiopia.htm). Or write Maureen Evan at [EBCEF@aol.com](mailto:EBCEF@aol.com).

### New by Ethiopia and Eritrea RPCVs

*I WANT THIS WORLD* is the title of Margaret Szumowski's (Addis 74–75) book of poetry to be published by Tupelo Press August 15, 2001. 88 pages; \$13.95. For more information, contact Margaret at [szumowski@stcc.mass.edu](mailto:szumowski@stcc.mass.edu).

### Notes from the Hyena's Belly\*

#### An Ethiopian Boyhood

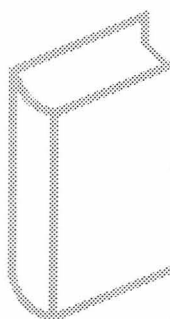
By Nega Mezlekia

351 pages

Picador

\$24.00

Considered by Hayward Allen (*Harar 62–64*)



This is my fourth draft of a critical assessment of Nega Mezlekia's self-portrait in the hard times he had growing up. Each version has been different, absorbing some ideas and rejecting others. After thirty years of critiquing books, fiction and non-fiction, I have to rank *NOTES FROM THE HYENA'S BELLY* as one of the most enigmatic to cross my eyes. Is this good or bad? Honestly, I do not know.

Nega Mezlekia's absorbing autobiography about his life in Ethiopia between 1958 and 1983, was originally published by Penguin as *NOTES FROM THE HYENA'S BELLY: MEMORIES OF MY ETHIOPIAN BOYHOOD*, and won a coveted Canadian book award. *HYENA'S BELLY* has been praised in the *New York Times Book Review*. The book has also been slammed by Ethiopians and by one of the editors who helped Ato Nega prepare the manuscript for publication. Its cover contains a half-dozen cogent quotes from complimentary critics.

*NOTES FROM THE HYENA'S BELLY* is part parable, part autobiography, part personal interpretation of historical events, and I imagine, part metaphorical fiction. It is somewhat difficult to criticize a book that teaches so much about Ethiopian life on the eastern edge of the Kingdom of the Lion of Judah. To the unknowing, it is an encouraging narrative style. It will remind many of us of the curious and fascinating details about Amhara cultural life we may have had slip away in the sluggish river of memory.

Nega Mezlekia's story begins in 1958 Jijiga with his birth, at the time when Queen Menen was dying.

\* This book is in the E&E RPCVs library. Contact Librarian Joe Ciuffini to borrow it at no cost. (See page 46 for contact info.)

The interlacing of the two events is poetic, for Haile Selassie's wife called upon the same kinds of hopeful options in Addis Ababa — "fortune-tellers and Devil-tamers" — as his father called upon a midwife who was a nun and a drunken colleague "who had once helped a passing angel, caught between the two worlds."

"The sun has risen," my father said. "I was named for his words: *Nega*."

Nega goes on to describe, almost in allegorical sequence, the various and eccentric characters who impacted on his childhood and education. Remember the measurement of school age? Reaching over the head and touching the ear? Reading the book was occasionally an epiphany. Nega's education did bring back many memories long forgotten.

There follow many revelations, many improvisations, and many personalized recollections of the troubled, murderous times of the Mengistu revolution. And then he fled to Canada in 1983 and pursued a doctorate in civil engineering, which he was awarded. That was when he began to make notes about his growing up in Jijiga.

University of Wisconsin English Professor Rob Nixon wrote the *New York Times* review of *BELLY*. Nixon, literally, falls over his fingers in praise of the book. "From the early pages, a lively cast of characters tumbles forth, a cast worthy of Gabriel Garcia Marquez."

Not an accurate comparison. GGM is possibly the century's most brilliant, enigmatic, creative novelist, even in translation. Garcia Marquez's use of language, regardless of country of origin, flows through the mind like volcanic lava, radiating heat, light, and overwhelming power.

Nixon also draws on the armed politics of the Horn and the US commitment to battling Somalia's "scientific socialist fantasies." And then he writes of the American reversal in the field to aid Somali forces going up against a now-hostile Ethiopian government. This may be true, but the only

elements of this are Nega's own loose guerilla period helping anti-Menguistu militarism.

"It is heartening," Nixon comments, "to witness the emergence of a new talent in these fallow times for sub-Saharan African literature. Africa is at risk of becoming among other things, a continent of lost stories."

That rang some bells, including one of Nebiyu Kebede Shawel. Nebiyu responded via the Internet: "I am not really sure he [Nixon] knows exactly what he's talking about. I think African literature couldn't have a better reception in the west as well as Africa. As far as I know, it is well and thriving and actually gaining momentum."

Nebiyu then proceeds to document writers working in their own languages and winning prizes, like Ngugi, Farah, Brutus, TsiTsi, and so on, including Nega Mezlekia. One of Nixon's comments irritates Nebiyu, "one that begs a different set of questions like why African writers are in such precarious political landscapes . . . . It seems to me that what began as a good review ends up missing the point as is mostly the case with philanthropy."

Nebiyu concludes with possibly the most evocative of statements: "Younger writers . . . are simply joining a rich tradition of African writers, a tradition that has seen exile, imprisonment and assassinations because it refuses to be complacent and to compromise; a tradition they embrace in spite of the recorded, unpleasant, occupational hazards (euphemism intended)."

I believe Nebiyu and Nixon are off-center, for different and opposing reasons, not so much about Africa's players on the world's literary stage, but about the significance of Nega Mezlekia. As a reviewer, I believe, one's focus should be on the ball and whether or not it goes into the net. Nega's writing and narrative style is often infuriating, confused, and lackluster, out-of-focus, and downright dull.

For me, the book was the challenging, horrifying, confusing and myopic view to what happened with the Menguistu revolution. To be honest, I found

very few literary elements that were unique or eye opening. Nega's style rambles and is understandably self-centered, as autobiographies must be. Sadly, though, I found most of everything hyperbolic and excessively self-centered. I know autobiographies are egocentric, but this one begs the question.

### **A question of authorship**

In the midst of my own critical and aesthetic confusion, I was sent an on-line *NY Times* article by Dinitia Smith, "Dispute over Authorship of a Prizewinning Memoir by Ethiopian-born Man." Her article centered upon a lawsuit involving Canadian novelist Anne Stone, Concordia University (Can.) Professor Robert Allen, and Toronto publisher Michael O'Connor.

It seems that in March 2000, a lawyer representing Ms. Stone wrote to Penguin Books asserting his client had written everything thing in the book, save for 20 pages by Nega Mezlekia. Canada's *National Post* carried parts of the letter, which included, "Mr. Mezlekia's ideas and spoken words have been expressed into written words by our client." There was also mention of alleged "threatening letters after she contested her authorship."

In a bizarre response — almost his only one — Nega Mezlekia denied her account and wrote, "I've grown up with people who would cut your throat just like that, but they always had a reason. This woman has no reason."

Ms. Stone, now a professor in British Columbia, and Prof. Allen had worked together on the editing and redrafting of Nega Mezlekia's comments and first draft. "I myself wrote several early drafts that were dropped," Allen noted. It was a process that had begun in 1994.

Penguin has denied the accusations and stands by the book's integrity unequivocally.

The story only digs itself deeper in confusion as Stone and Allen assert that Mezlekia allegedly threatened his engineering doctoral evaluators at Magill University who suggested that his thesis was, perhaps, not really his writing and contained

threatening statements. Magill spokespeople deny the accusation. Then Allen made an oblique statement about Mezekia going to Michigan to buy guns, only to have a mystical revelation that canceled the purchases.

Stone's Toronto lawyer has said that an unpublished portion of the thesis has a person plotting the killing of his professors, which was later termed as a fictional element of the document.

Asked if the *Times* would have reconsidered its front-page review of *NOTES FROM THE HYENA'S BELLY* after these revelations, Charles McGrath, editor of the *Review*, said that there would have been attention drawn to the controversy if it had been known. "The book is a book. I think we would have reviewed the book anyway, and we would have taken it seriously anyway. Whoever wrote it, it is an achievement."

### **Unraveling the book**

I realize that all of this odd declamation focuses more upon the dramatics of authorship and academia than upon the journey that brought Nega westward. But it has already served as my reasons for trying to unravel the book from the memoirs of a man who grew up in Jijiga and obviously lived through one of contemporary Ethiopia's worst anarchical times and witnessed some horrendous ways that revolution attempts to change the face of government.

Throughout this weird and controversial process, however, I do have what I believe is an authentic critical opinion about *NOTES FROM THE HYENA'S BELLY*. First, no Canadian novelist or English professor could have the faintest glimpse of what Nega, his family, his friends, his nation was really enduring, dying for, and escaping from the Red Terror. There is no doubt that they meant well in their emotion-to-prose translation, taken from a fundamentally difficult draft and recorded oral interviews translated to a publishable book. Their injured pride understandably came when their contributions and alterations eventually led to a national book award and were not acknowledged.

Ironically, it is that editorial distance and displacement that detracts from the validity of *NOTES*. I would be very interested in seeing the original manuscript. I would love to compare the passion of that series of expressions with the formal print and publishing of the roughest of drafts at the start. This is possibly the serious flaw to *NOTES*, for it is so targeted for a readership that concentrates not upon the terror of the times, the degradation of the human spirit, slaughter and rampaging vindication, but upon the cloying, so often smarmy revelations that *ferengi* might construct from a "rough draft."

Editor's note: For myself, one of the best novels or books about the conflict and war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, or on the Horn, is Thomas Keneally's 1989 book, *TO ASMARA, A NOVEL OF AFRICA*. Keneally's the guy who wrote *SCHINDLER'S LIST*. And for a Sudanese-Kenyan approach to disastrous emigration and drought, try John le Carre's latest, *THE CONSTANT GARDENER*.

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### **Adventures in the Bone Trade\***

#### **The Race to Discover Human Ancestors in Ethiopia's Afar Depression**

by Jon Kalb  
Copeinicus Books, illustrated  
389 pages  
\$20.00

*Reviewed by David Gurr (Addis Ababa 62-64)*

Although *ADVENTURES IN THE BONE TRADE* focuses on its subtitle, it also includes an excellent summary of the changes in Ethiopia's ruling structure before the demise of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie and the subsequent actions of the Mengistu Haile Mariam dictatorship. That in itself makes the book worth reading, since it fills in the void for all us who have served in Ethiopia and Eritrea by describing events from near the end of the first wave of PCVs in 1975 and their reintroduction twenty years

\* This book is in the EEE RPCVs library. Contact Librarian Joe Ciuffini to borrow it at no cost. (See page 46 for contact info.)

later. Third, it is a wonderful personal memoir that closely parallels our experience serving in the Peace Corps.

Jon and his wife Judy and their daughter, Justine, lived in Addis, first just behind the Imperial Palace and then moving to other parts of the city where the revolution passed by their doors.

The author commences with a summary of what is now known as plate tectonics and how the movement of the Somalia, Nubian and Arabian plates formed the Afar Depression. The subsequent movements of the plates resulted in an uplifting and stretching of its surface, revealing faults or "graben." These graben and the rivers that coursed their way through the depression were suspected to reveal very old human occupation as well as animal fossils, not to mention what appears to be a treasure trove of early implements covering the past few million years.

As with the ground-breaking work of Richard Leakey in the Oldavia Gorge, in western Tanzania in the early '60s, the discovery of similar human remains of hominoids in the Afar Depression are described in the book.

Although the discovery of the human remains is at the core of the book, the author went to Afar Depression to date the strata that he found in grabens and along rivers and streams. Consequently, the focus of the book changes as Kalb dates various sections of the Afar Depression and modern human nature takes over — first with collaborative discoveries of early habitation, and then when competing discoveries result in conflict among the discoverers and scientists, both American and French. The findings are important because they support Leakey's work, with both his wife Mary Nicol and his son, Louis, who is carrying on his work in the Lake Turkana region of northern Kenya.

One of the discoverers finds Lucy, the complete female hominoid that received so much attention in the popular, as well as the academic, community. She has been placed on the same branch of the hominoid tree as those that the Leakys and

other have found that are interspersed between man and some being that is considered to be the division between man and ape. And, of course, even recently, reports have appeared about a new finding that suggests a separate branch from this previously accepted single branch leading to modern man. Kalb, himself, was successful in unearthing Bodo Man.

Underlying the scientific story is the story of human interaction and subsequent conflict that pursued both Kalb and his colleagues, as they attempt to sabotage his work by alleging, among other things, that he was a CIA operative! Sound familiar? Hence, the title that he has selected for his book.

Kalb's work takes us through his trials and tribulations, changing government official and the resultant intransigence of government officials from whom Kalb must gain official permission to conduct his explorations. Again, a familiar experience to anyone who has served in Ethiopia.

For me the most striking aspect of his work is how he differed from his former colleagues by striving to assist Ethiopian and Eritrean nationals to search for and classify fossils, thereby enabling them to investigate their own country for the origins of man without having to see these treasures go to some western laboratory. Ironically, Kalb himself suffers from this by not being allowed to take samples of his finds to Texas for study, and, incidentally, because his colleagues have convinced the government that Kalb should be ejected from Ethiopia.

In the same way that our mission as PCVs was to assist Ethiopians and Eritrean nationals to achieve a greater degree of self-sufficiency through self-awareness, so was Kalb's. And he, like many of us, succeeded, even though one of his Ethiopian associates was killed during the reign of the Mengistu regime.

There is a good deal of human detail in *Adventures*, from camping right in the middle of a major caravan rout and having to roll out of the way in the middle of the night in order to avoid being



there and in Arabia sealed her commitment to Arab nationalism, and her visits to the remote Moslem Senussi sect are described in *SECRET OF THE SAHARA KUFARA* (1922) and in her novel *THE JEWEL IN THE LOTUS*. She married again in 1921, then embarked on a new expedition to western Arabia and Morocco.

In 1925 she went to Ethiopia, with a male photographer who is simply called Mr. Jones, and who isn't much of a factor in her book (though he might have been in her life). He seems to have spent most of the time in Ethiopia complaining about the trip and why he was even with her. He did, however, take dozens of bad black-and-white photographs of their thousand-mile trek across Ethiopia and what is now Eritrea. Sadly they are reproduced rather poorly in the thick, large type, 386-page book.

I'm a sucker for such books with their old-library smell and antique prose. The troubling truth is, however, that most of these travel accounts are painfully boring, especially when one thinks of where these women travelers went, what they had to endure, and why they were doing it in the first place. The prose seldom soars.

Rosita Forbes' writing is an exception. This is a very good book. Maybe it's just good because like all of you, I was there, did that, traveled those mountains, saw those sunrises and sunsets. We thought we had "discovered" Ethiopia and Eritrea, but, of course we hadn't. We, like Rosita Forbes, were just passing through.

This is a good book because of the writing and also because of the intelligent woman holding the pen.

Early in the book, she comments on maps as she decides the route they'll take across the Empire. In this one paragraph I fell in love with the woman's prose.

"That is the charm of a map. It represents the other side of the horizon where everything is possible. It has the magic of anticipation without the toil and sweat of realization.

The greatest romance ever written pales

before the possibilities of adventure that lie in the faint blue trails from sea to sea. The perfect journey is never finished, the goal is always just across the next river, round the shoulder of the next mountain. There is always one more track to follow, one more mirage to explore. Achievement is the price which the wanderer pays for the right to venture."

Joan Rosa Forbes landed in Ethiopia ten years before the Italian invasion, arriving by train from Djibouti. (Disembarking at Djibouti, she writes, "Jibuti, white and neat and empty, looked as if it had just been washed and dumped out in the sun to dry.") In Dire Dawa she is adopted by a "kindly Armenian merchant" and taken to a hotel. "My bedroom opened on to a thicket of bougainvillea pierced with scarlet poinsettias, and a heavy scented creeper hung like a curtain round my door." The Armenian tells her, "From the moment you enter Abyssinia til the moment you leave it, you will never meet an honest man." Later, Forbes would decide "many Abyssinians are honest with money, none with their thoughts."

Forbes seemed to love deserts more than the mountains of Ethiopia. She draws an interesting difference between "desert people" and those in the highlands:

I think, perhaps, that just as the boundless deserts give some of their greatest to the men who live in them, so the mountains narrow a man's outlook, shut him into a small world full of small interests. The eyes of a Abyssinian mountaineer are dull. You never see in them that splendid isolation, born of loneliness and hundred-mile horizon. There is no mountain wisdom among them as there is desert wisdom among the Arabs. They are enemies of their rocks and crags and frightened by them, whereas the Bedouin is kin to his sands and friendly to all their moods."

Not only did she study people, she also had a wonderful eye for detail.

Here is a description of a wedding reception in the old section of Dire Dawa which she came upon when she had gone to the marketplace to shop for her journey across the Empire. "It was the gate of Africa with her glare and heat and smell, and when marriage music burst suddenly from a fenced compound, there was a hint of the spell of which underlies such things."

She enters the compound with Esheti, a bodyguard whom she had just employed:

"He led the way, smiling, into a court full of servant girls and slaves, beggars, lute players and small boys who made the most frightful gurglings with fingers stuck down their throats. Half the yard had been converted into a great tent, and, when a charming host in spotless white garments bordered with green had begged us to enter, we found several hundred people, men and women, seated on the floor round an open space. There was an inner circle of men with rifles and among these danced ebony figures, white turbaned, white swathed, with long-stemmed flasks of oil, with which they sprinkled the multitude, who kept up a sonorous clapping of hands. The very black faces and very white garments made a curious contrast and, in the dim light, it was almost as if patches of shadows drifted up and down on a frozen sea."

Perhaps because she is a woman, and interested in the ways of women in Ethiopia, Forbes notes the place of women in Ethiopia in 1925. There are long and interesting accounts of marriage, divorce, and the state of women in villages as well as the countryside, much more than anything we were given in Peace Corps Training. The chapter "Concerning Women" is worth the book itself.

After Dire Dawa and Harar, her caravan moves towards Addis Ababa, then north to Asmara. The book comes with a detailed map that is useful in tracking her journey, but more interesting is a set of notes at the back of the book where she records

her journey day by day, from camp to village to town in days, hours, miles, and all with wry remarks.

Arriving in Addis there is, of course, a meeting with Ras Tafari, the not yet Emperor Hail Selassie, and Princess Menen, at their residence.

"A big house on a hill, with a long European dining-room — white walls, chintzes and thick carpets — a charming room which looked on to a garden, beyond which were a lion-crowned gate and a section of khaki bodyguard . . . While we drank champagne or tedj and ate the most marvelous creamy concoctions out of Venetian glass, we talked of Abyssinia."

Of the royal couple, she is mostly taken with Princess Menen, who is seen as much more powerful than I had realized, but Forbes admires Ras Tafari and his dreams for the Empire, quoting him saying, "We need European progress only because we are surrounded by it. That is at once a benefit and a misfortune. It will expedite our development, but we are afraid of being swamped by it." At the time of her arrival, Ras Tafari had already built a hospital near his house and a college for one hundred students was under construction. Electric lights for Addis Ababa were still being planned.

The journey (and book) is half over when she departs Addis for the north. Here in the second half of the book, the hard grind of overland travel in Ethiopia takes its course and all those thrills of new adventure are beaten down by the daily trek on mules and foot. Like all of us to come later to the Empire, Rosita and Jones took the historical tour, crossing the Blue Nile by way of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese bridge, going onto Lalibela, and then Gondar.

According to Rosita, Father Alvarez, the Jesuit priest who accompanied the Portuguese mission to Abyssinia in 1520–27, was probably the first European to see the churches at Lalibela and, for some three centuries after the Portuguese expedi-



tion, Lalibela was forgotten by the West. Then the French Consul at Massawa, Achille Raffay, accompanied by Gabriel Simon, an ex-cavalry officer, penetrated the Lasta mountains and each left a record in books published in 1882 and 1885.

The German explorer, Rohlf, followed them, but after this there were no more caravans till the French Minister at Addis Ababa, Monsieur de Coppet, and his wife passed through Lalibela on their way to Eritrea in 1923, followed by an American named Harlan, and then by Rosita and Jones.

Forbes spends a chapter on "Red Lalibela" and obviously did research on the church after she left Ethiopia. It is a clear and informative chapter, and as interesting as her one on women and marriage in Ethiopia.

Gondar she found a delight. "It was a world of ruins, half veiled in sugar cane and flowering shrubs. Out of a maze of fallen walls, with towers, pillars and broken domes scattered about them, rose the two massive Moorish castles."

She did not like the northern Ethiopians. "The people of the North were arrogantly independent, casual, voluble and indifferent. There was no hint of servility among them. The great men were hospitable and courteous, but without the spontaneous charm of the Southerners. The little men were avaricious, yet too independent to earn the *baksheesh* they craved."

Pressing on, Forbes and Mr. Jones headed for Azum and Adua the last stops on their journey. In Adua there were Italians and an opportunity to take a bath. The Commendatore met them and served lunch (after the bath):

"There were slender silver glasses for the grape-scented Asti spumante . . . It was delightful to listen to Italian, soft as the velvet which sheathes the rapier of its thought . . . Best of all there was a *zabaglione* whose foam of eggs and sugar and Marsala only an Italian hand is light enough to produce."

When the silver glasses were empty, the Commendatore asked, "What are your impressions of Abyssinia?"

I won't (and couldn't) sum up what Rosita Forbes told him. That, too, is worth reading the book. She compares Ethiopia to Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, between the illiterate old-fashioned Moslem or Christian and the product of the Beirut schools.

She says "'What do you think of our country?' is demanded by any Arab of any traveler, but no Abyssinian would put such a question . . . He is supremely content. 'This is the Habashi way,' he says to any suggestion of change."

They continue on to Asmara by Fiat lorry. And while Jones figures out that they had ridden 451 hours on mules since leaving Dire Dawa, Rosita shed her tattered boots and breeches for a skirt as they left Adua, "mist-blue as we rode north along the chain of her strangely-shaped peaks."

Forbes sums up, "We departed from Abyssinia, the richer for our cases of exposed film and a host of memories grave and gay, the poorer for the little bit of oneself that one leaves on every journey."


But she took enough with her to write intelligently about her thousand miles of journey, and, therefore, we, too, are richer for her travels in Ethiopia.

John Coyne (Addis Ababa 1962-64) is the editor of the website: [peacecorpswriter.org](http://peacecorpswriter.org) and is currently Manager of Communications for The College of New Rochelle.

A note on the Amharic words from the reviewer: In this review, I have used the spellings that Rosita Forbes used in her book."

# Remembering Haile Selassie

**Editor's Note:** I sent out an informal invitation to *Herald* contributors to see if anyone could verify the legend of Haile Selassie, His Imperial Majesty (HIM) being ignominiously driven away from the Jubilee Palace in a VW bug or van. David Gurr (Addis Ababa 62–64) replied:



**J**OHAN KALB IN HIS BOOK *ADVENTURES IN THE BONE TRADE* says the same thing (See Gurr's review page 36). He lived behind the Jubilee Palace and though I do not recall that he actually witnessed it, he was told so; in fact, his recollection is that he used to hear the cars start each morning and warm up in order to take HIM to church at 9:00 each day. After Selassie was under house arrest, Kalb never heard the cars again. The story that I read said that his remains had been dug up in the floor or Mengistu's office, HIM having been executed by Mengistu and buried there. Other reports had him buried by a latrine as an ultimate insult. Exiled family members of HIM negotiated his reburial in Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis which happened with much pomp and circumstance in November, 2000.

## **A wonderful time**

Most importantly, whenever I meet Ethiopians, I am most often told that when I was in Ethiopia in the early 60s, it was a wonderful time, really because HIM was the ruler. And, the economics of the place underscores this fact because following the two famines in '73 and '84, they never fully recovered their GNP, and with the rapid population growth, never their per capita income levels, allowing for inflation.

The war with Eritrea cost dearly, and put the nation on hold for even more years. I wonder what will happen when people feel comfortable enough to recognize the 50,000+ deaths and probably an equal among of injuries, to say nothing of the displacement of possibly 3 million people.

## **An Emperor's welcome**

We Ethi Is met the Emperor twice in Addis. First, he invited the entire group — nearly 300 of us — to the Jubilee Palace for a welcoming reception. It began with introductions, with Sam Fisk as I recall, speaking in French with the Emperor. From the champagne and [finger-food] we moved on to tej, and injere and wat wraps. Many of us were so inebriated we went out for air, and we petted one of the Emperor's cheetahs. I have 8mm film of someone putting his hand in its mouth while someone else pulled its tail! Fortunately, it was tame and in the hands of the Emperor's staff.

The second time occurred at Christmas, 1962, when a group of Addis Volunteers went to the Jubilee Palace to sing Christmas carols. Again, the Emperor let us in the door and we had food and drink and those who spoke French again spoke with him.

## **The Emperor in power**

The Emperor attempted to bring Ethiopia into the 20th Century. Ever since returning from Exile in 1941 he tried to pick and choose from various systems in the world. He adopted the European system of rote learning and school-leaving exams. Also, he had advisors from various countries, including Bascom Story, the only real American contact for us during Peace Corps Training, and who was instructed to not tell us how bad things

were. In fact, when we asked him questions about the country, he would always respond [with comments about] the scenery and the weather.

Selassie was faced with a very obstreperous group of ministers composed of older men, the vast majority of whom had never been out of Ethiopia. You may recall that in '37, the Italians assassinated more than 100 intellectuals who had gone to Europe for training. This left a void and created a situation in which when ministers returned from being educated in Europe, they entered the ministries, were sidelined, given a car, a housing allowance, an attractive secretary and little to do! HIM was the major push in moving the country from what was a 10th century feudal estate toward some modernization.

#### **Shriver pays a call**

One funny story: [Peace Corps Director] Sargent Shriver came to Addis after we had been in-country for a couple of months, and as usual, just bopped in. Of course, one does not simply bop into Ethiopia. The Emperor insisted on seeing him, and Shriver had no "soup and fish" diplomatic clothes that were required to be received as a diplomat. So the American ambassador loaned him his. However, the ambassador was much shorter than Shriver. Thus, there was a wonderful picture on the front page of the *Ethiopian Herald* showing Shriver bowing to the Emperor, with his pant legs at mid-calf and white socks showing.

#### **Film clip**

I have a brief bit of film made during the second year of my tour. The Emperor attended an event when he was dressed in a suit, rather than a

military uniform — as we had seen on the two previous occasions. I caught him on film acknowledging me with a bow to the camera lens.

I know the Emperor's checkered history, but it is the history of Europe in the middle ages, with palace intrigue, dominance of the church and a few wealthy families, e.g., one-third of the land was owned by the Emperor, one-third by Church and the remaining third by a few well-to-do families, but I loved him. And, one cannot judge the Emperor, like others in history, with our current set of values.

#### **The impact of the Peace Corps**

I suspect that we had as much to do with Selassie's overthrow as anyone. It is a sad commentary on his letting us in, in some ways. We reportedly more than doubled number of secondary school teachers in the Empire when we arrived. And we asked questions. It would appear that no one had asked questions of the Ethiopians before. I think that this led to Ethiopians asking questions about themselves and more importantly, their institutions.

In essence, letting so many of us into Ethiopia at such a critical time, a year and a half after a coup attempt, we educated but unsettled the student population. In turn, the military felt threatened, particularly having reinstalled the Emperor in power in '60, and it reverted to what military people do since time immemorial: they kill any opposition since that is what they have been trained to do.

Editor's Note: *The Herald* always welcomes other such recollections.

## Which Ugly Americans?

I ALMOST WENT TO SIERRA LEONE as a PCV in 1961. I was chosen to go but I didn't. Still I worried that if I didn't take the assignment, I was never going to serve. I called and wrote to the fledgling Peace Corps administration from Boulder to explain that while accepted, I really did want to finish my MA and get my Colorado teaching certificate. I felt a terrible sense of immediacy to the point of going to Denver for a Peace Corps enlistment rally and hounding DC-types to take me a year later when all my academic hoops had been jumped through. No sweat, I was assured, which of course I did, a lot, for a year. Then there was the honest joy of getting the letter about going to Georgetown University for training for Ethiopia's first project. It didn't seem that my exams, thesis and certification were all that important. It was like being invited to a wedding, RSVP.

At some point in Peace Corps training, we future PCVs were given a quote by William James:

What we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war; something heroic that will speak to man as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved to be incompatible.

Interestingly enough, although James did write an essay on "The Moral Equivalent of War," the quote that inspired us was from the philosopher's thoughts on "Varieties of Religious Experience." I think that many of us came to the Peace Corps for the spiritual as much as the practical aspects.

Another inspiration was Eugene Burdick and William J. Lederer's *THE UGLY AMERICAN*. Wow, I wanted to be like that guy who just figured out things and solved problems and worked with the people, and whose wife figured out why the elderly village women were suffering curved spines. That was the Ugly American, and I wanted to be like him.

Ironically, over the years, he became an anathema in foreign affairs. It seems that "ugly" and "American" created an equation that was unilateral and had nothing to do with personal physiognomy. I think we even had a copy of the novel in the footlocker of books all PCVs had delivered to their new homes.

Recently I read *THE UGLY AMERICAN* for the third or fourth time over the past 40 years. Was I impressed with how little the middle-aged homely American and his wife actually had to do with the work. The authors, it is now apparent, were primarily concerned, even in the late 1950s, with the decolonization of Southeast Asia, the emergence of the advancing southeastern Asia war with communists, and the ways the US could defuse and deflate those threatening conditions.

The book's thesis was not far from William James' "to discover in the social realm . . . the moral equivalent of war." And who played the humanitarian roles in his set of stories? Ex-soldiers, mainly. And the protagonists were insensitive, incompetent, deaf-to-change foreign and military service people. They were the true ugly Americans, not the nice folks in the field who worked with the cultural and local value-systems, language and social barriers.

So, after all these years, people don't know that the good, ugly American guys lost out to the truly ugly American bureaucrats.

Once upon a time, on a Friday afternoon, a bunch of us PCVS in Harar sat with a casual corps of U.S. Army Special Forces. The soldiers were working with the Ethiopian army to discover ways to attack and defend against the Somali incursions across the border. It was 1963. We drank Asmara's Melotti beer, while they, in civilian clothes, drank Beck's green-bottle, imported beer. Somehow in the ironic collision of peace and war, somebody

brought up speaking the local language, eating the local food, working with the people. Bragging about our pure intentions, or something like that; proudly yet somewhat sanctimoniously.

"Hey, guys," one of the Green Berets suggested, "We do that, too. We're just like you. The only difference is that we have guns." They also bragged about going after Che Guevara and doing time in some Southeast Asian countries, speaking the languages and living with the people, etc.

One year later, on the exit flight to Cairo, when most of us now-RPCVs were cheering take-off on EAL and then toasting our release from satisfactory, humane indenture, we mostly shared the realization of idealistic ideas and knew that our lives would never be the same. Some cynic in the crowd suggested that what we had been was "low intensity napalm."

I have never forgotten either the suggestion of the Special Forces or those of an RPCV. After the slaughter of teachers, scientists, and intellectuals during the epoch of the Red Terror, I always wondered how many of my students fell to the sword. Then again, during the latest two-year war, I wondered the same...

Ironically, both the Harar and the plane incidents dealt not with peace but war. And just how deep does our Peace Corps past intrude into a national, individual consciousness. How true is "low-intensity napalm" and a does a Peace Corps without guns measure up to what some of us have done over the past 40 years?

Just by being Americans . . . seeking peace of one kind or another . . . is the world a better place? Or are we just a better people because of it?

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If you would like to submit an article to be considered for publication, it would be appreciated if it is submitted digitally — via email or on disk (labeled as to software and computer used and with a hard copy).

Photo submissions are enthusiastically welcomed. They should be clear, with images large enough to be easily discerned. All photos will be returned.

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Dennis Ekberg developed an extensive website for our group at [www.geocities.com/~eerpcv](http://www.geocities.com/~eerpcv). Find "Our Stories," links to news sources, announcements and a listing of those who served as PCVs in Ethiopia and Eritrea by their training group to facilitate reconnecting.

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Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home fax \_\_\_\_\_ Work fax \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Peace Corps—Ethiopia or Eritrea service \_\_\_\_\_ City/town of service \_\_\_\_\_

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