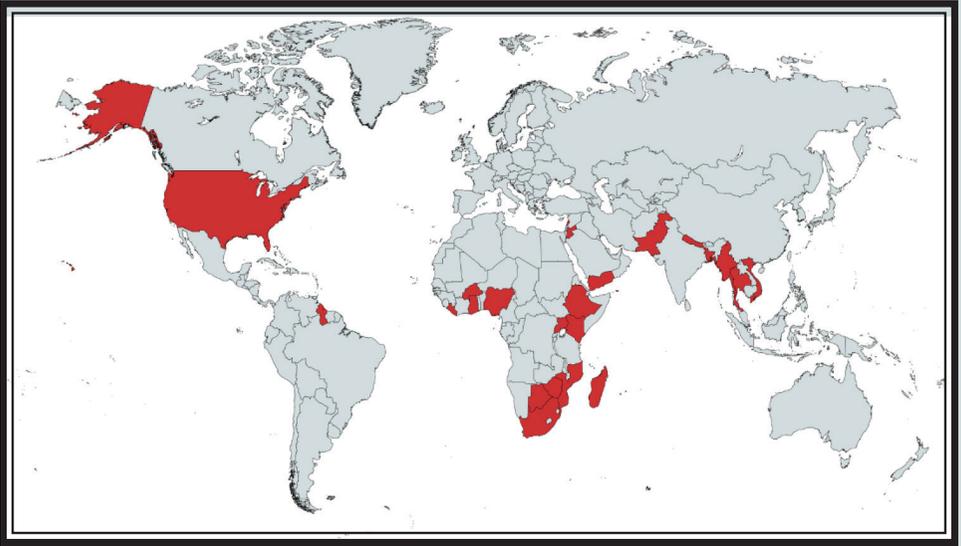


FOOD FOR THOUGHT



**50 Years of Public Health Work, Play
and Fishing Around the World**

Robert A. Miller, Dr.P.H.

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*50 Years of
Public Health Work,
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by
ROBERT A. MILLER, Dr.P.H.



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FOREWORD



I have worked in 32 countries over the past 50+ years in Africa, Asia, Arab Region, Latin America and the Caribbean. My work included: family planning, national planning for HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and community health programming, evaluation of programs, operations research (OR) projects, measuring quality of care, health education, and training at all levels. Also, included were the management of large research and technical assistance projects with USAID, The World Bank, UN Organizations (UNFPA, WHO, UN Women) and major Foundations. About 20 years ago, while working in Madagascar, I began documenting some of my experiences and thoughts in brief stories. These make up much of the following collection which have been expanded with autobiographical comments on work, play, fishing and other experiences, countries and people.

In the first draft, I tried to eliminate identifying characteristics for both people and agencies in order to protect privacy. My exceptions were my conversations with Kurt Vonnegut and Eric Erikson, as the stories would not make any sense without identifying them. Although discerning readers were expected to know agencies or people from slight clues; it was not my intention to identify them. However, if the identification of individuals was in a wholly positive context, mentioning names was a kind of a personal tribute. Later it became clear that not identifying individuals, was not telling my full story, which was changed to usually identifying people and agencies.

Openness about thoughts and fantasies could well be a mistake as gender sensitivity is considered crucial in the field of reproductive health. Some of my thoughts and deeds, no doubt, will make me look bad to some. Indeed, one colleague reviewing a story responded:

“Bob, never show that to anyone. They won’t like it and they won’t like you.”

The world of 1960s and 70s is not the same as 2021. Many of the norms, especially around gender, joking relationships and what is permissible to talk about have changed dramatically. I thought of solving some of this by having two versions of the book – the main version in which I have eliminated some of the most potentially offensive material and a “Director’s cut” which contains all of the material as originally written. I did not follow through on this thought.

While not looking forward to being attacked on these issues, self-protection is not my primary concern. At 77+ years of age, I think it is necessary to take some risks and describe my life and thoughts as they actually occurred. The snippets and stories represent a very personal statement about a long path in an important worldwide movement as part of international public health programs. In my view, my behavior, especially these days, is generally adequately self-censored – my thoughts and fantasies were not. But it is not only on gender issues that I expect criticism. Some workmates will not like what I have to say about those experiences. My perspectives are purely personal. Oh well, as the Nepalese say to every problem: “Ke garne (What to do)?”

PROLOGUE



THE EARLY UNDISCIPLINED DAYS NOT READY FOR PRIME TIME

I did not plan to go to college when graduating Fairfax High School in Los Angeles in January of 1960. My guidance counselor had basically said I was not college material. I did terribly in Latin, which I took, thinking I wanted to be a veterinarian and that Latin was necessary for a career in medicine. (My mother loved a paper I wrote titled: “Robert A. Miller, DVM.”) I also did poorly in chemistry. I planned to work for a year or two in my Uncle Al’s construction business as a laborer, save money and go to Europe for a couple of years, learn a European language, and then come back to finish my education.

The night I graduated, my uncle told me that business had not been good, and he did not have a job for me. My father and I went out to a movie that night and went home and went to sleep. At around 3AM, my father woke me up and said: “Let’s drive up to Berkeley (where my brother, Len, was going to school) and see if we can get you enrolled.”

We drove from early morning and went to Sproul Hall the next day where I told the woman at the admissions office, informally, what my grades were. In those days, UC would accept any California high school graduate with a B average and I calculated that if I declared myself a math major, and could discount my chemistry grade, it would lead exactly to a B average. However, the admissions officer indicated that my 10th grade biology class, in which I had received an A, was not a college prep course and would not be counted. My record contained an extra C.

My 12th grade English teacher had just given me a C. The teacher had an unusual grading system. If you did not do a homework assignment, you received an F for the week. Although I had done well on many writing assignments (except for spelling tests), I was undisciplined, did not do several homework assignments, and therefore received a C. I telephoned this teacher from Berkeley, and said:

“Here is the situation: I have one extra C and this C is keeping me from getting into UC Berkeley. I am not saying I did not deserve it or that your system was wrong. But do you think that a few missed homework assignments should keep me from attending UC Berkeley?” She invited me to come down to LA and talk about it further. Interestingly, my teacher gave me great credit for calling her long distance to discuss the problem. Her conclusion was that I could take a few spelling tests over and if I did well, she would change my grade to a B.

Thus, I got into college by the skin of my teeth, but I was not really ready for college. I was so undisciplined that I could not even remember the concept “discipline,” and frequently skipped classes and reading assignments. Still thinking of Veterinary school, I took college chemistry and failed. Also, my brother had convinced me that: “You can’t think without calculus” and I took and failed that also, despite Herculean attempts by Michael Commons to tutor me with the assistance of stimulant drugs. The coup de grass was delivered by my Spanish teacher, and I flunked out.

However, I discovered an area of interest prior to flunking – the social sciences in which I could do well. I went to summer school and took two social science courses, got A’s, and expected to be let back in because I had made up my grades. When my application for readmission was rejected, I made an appointment to discuss it with the Dean. He seemed angry with me. In a loud and attacking voice he began the conversation with blistering criticism:

“You came to the University of California and violated all of our rules. You avoided all the hard courses and requirements, and when you finally took them, you failed. Just

because you can do well in social science classes doesn't mean you can pass our requirements. I don't think that you will ever be able to graduate and that is why I'm not letting you back into school."

I was almost in tears and thought of getting up and walking out of his office. Instead, I said:

"Why are you so hostile toward me? You have made so many incorrect assumptions. You are blaming me for everything that happened. How much responsibility are you, as the University, willing to accept for my difficulties? I came here as a high school graduate knowing nothing about the University and its regulations. You seem to be saying I purposely violated all of the University rules. In fact, the only help that I ever received for navigating the system from my advisor, who was an astronomer, was, 'Why aren't you taking astronomy?'"

I went on further to explain that although I had failed Spanish I had, in fact learned a lot of Spanish. (There were about 500 words on a test. If you missed 35 of them, you fail. But, in fact you get 465 of them right and get no credit for that. The rest of the students all had two years of high school Spanish).

Perhaps my accusation of hostility had softened him up. Or, I like to think he perceived that there was something special in how I handled our interaction. Finally, as I had been reading Marx that summer, I told him I had been studying in the summer. He said, "If you have been studying this summer I will let you back in."

I changed from taking courses preparing me for veterinary medicine to my new declared major area -- anthropology. The course with the greatest influence was Applied Anthropology, taught by George Foster, author of *Traditional Cultures and the Impact of Technical Change*.¹ I loved the material and when I took an examination, it was like everything I read was laid out before my eyes. I remembered everything and mostly did well. Later, I went to see Dr. Foster as I

1 Foster, George M, 1962. *Traditional Cultures and the Impact of Technological Change*. Harper, New York,

was preparing to graduate and explained to him that I loved his material but I could not imagine being an anthropologist. My greatest ambition was to live and learn in another culture but that, as a representative of the most technologically advanced society in the world, I felt an obligation to make some contribution during my stay. He responded by saying: "Why don't you go see the people in public health? They will appreciate your perspective and an MPH degree is a green card for working in the field."

I took his advice and went to see Dr. William (Bill) Griffiths, who was the head of Public Health Education in the School of Public Health. As I learned later when I served as a faculty member under Bill, he had a kind of positive orientation towards men, as he felt there was a shortage of men in the field, and he liked me. He told me about a special program of funding from the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) to train people to work in voluntary health agencies. Students would do a double major in health education and public health administration. If I were interested in this program, he would accept me and give me a USPHS scholarship which would cover all tuition and a monthly living stipend. I told Bill that my wife was working and I didn't need the money. He said, "Bob, take the money!" Thus, began my career in Public Health.

Setting the Stage

A FEW LESSONS FROM MY YOUTH



ON THE DREAM OF BECOMING A BOXER

When I was 5 or 6 years old, I wanted to be a boxer when I grew up. This was 1947 or 48. Before basketball or football had taken hold of the imagination of American youth but somehow, probably because my father and uncles had some interest in boxing, I decided what I wanted as a career. However, I frequently bumped into things with my face and got bloody noses. I diagnosed my problem as a “weak blood vessel in my nose” which was going to be a hindrance to my boxing career. I grew out of it. Today, I’m afraid many kids don’t outgrow such dreams, especially when there are few others.



WISHING FOR ANOTHER CHANCE

Waiting on a bus stop bench at the age of 6 on my way to the dentist, I thought:

“If I only had another chance and could live my life over again, I would take better care of my teeth.”

I was too young for the lesson of that experience. Also, amazingly, I was alone and had no one to guide me to the lesson. I was allowed to raise my hand in the dentist’s chair if the pain of the drilling became too great.

Suicide rate among dentists is high. No wonder.



TRADING AWAY SOMETHING I LOVED

At age 7, when we got our own house at 2406 Cochran Ave, Los Angeles, I had waited my whole life for a dog. Finally, after a neighbor's dog, Rags, had pups and she had jumped up on my bare chest and scratched me kind of badly, before the days of lawsuits, we were offered one of Rags' puppies – Skipper.

My brother Len and I each “owned 50% of Skipper” and shared responsibilities. We both loved that dog! In 1950 or 51, Eisenhower, the candidate, landed at LA International and sat above the backseat of a convertible waving to the crowds as he travelled to wherever he was going. He drove by Adams Blvd., ½ block from our house. I ran down to Adams hours in advance to get my place for viewing but I decided I wanted to share this experience with Skipper. I ran home and then Skipper and I ran together, jumping over all the small hedges that separated the house plots back down to Adams.

I shredded some newspaper and as Eisenhower drove by, I threw the confetti into the air and yelled “HI IKE!” He looked down at me and Skipper and said “Hi son.” This was my first meeting with a famous man.



THE NECKERCHIEF SLIDE DEAL

My brother, Len (Broth) went to a Boy Scout Jamboree where much trading was done and came back with a 16' leather bull whip and a beautiful neckerchief slide. It had a mountain sheep superimposed on an arrowhead and was brightly painted. I loved and coveted that piece. Len offered to trade me the slide for my 50% of Skipper and I made the deal! Looking back, I cannot explain that decision. I guess at that moment I loved that ornament more than Skipper. I still

have that slide somewhere, and one might think that I had learned the lesson of coveting material possessions, but such is not the case. Houses, art, cars, boats... I still have those attachments, but I no longer trade away what I truly love.



PAINTING A FENCE

Probably around 1952, Len and I were tasked with painting a wooden gate to our back yard. We were given a quart or two of a light yellow, oil-based paint. In the process of painting, initially some splashes occurred. These were followed by flicks of the brushes, providing the Jackson Pollack –like impact on our shirtless bodies. That escalated into sword fighting with the brushes and led to chases up and down the block, where Len discovered that, although I was 3.5 years younger, I could run about as fast. When we came home, each covered head to toe in yellow paint, our mother was not at all sanguine. It all ended with a turpentine bath in the tub. Sometimes, things get out of hand.



THE CORGI PARATROOPER MODEL MOTOR SCOOTER

When I was 13, one of Len's friends sold me his Corgi Paratrooper Motor Scooter for \$35. I don't know where I got the money. The evening it arrived, I placed it in the kitchen, on the floor leaning against a cupboard, and sat looking at it half the night. The spokes were broken and I finally got it fixed in Culver City, some 5 miles or so from my home. I planned to ride it home after taking the bus to the repair shop. It would not start. I pumped the gas primer, ran and jumped on the seat

and popped the clutch. It would not start. I must have tried a dozen times. I decided to walk the scooter home. After a few blocks I thought: "Walking is not acceptable. I must start this bike." I pushed and pushed the primer, maybe 20 times instead of 3-4. I ran alongside it, put only my knee on the seat, popped the clutch, and while the engine did not start, I kept running alongside turning the engine over. Suddenly there was a pop ... pop, pop ... pop, pop, pop, and I jumped on the seat and gave it gas. I still treasure the feelings and the sound of that moment as one of the happiest of my life. And I have had a very happy life! I wish I had learned the lesson of the value of perseverance and commitment at that time. I didn't.



LUCKY TO BE ALIVE BECAUSE PLANS GO AWRY

Len and I always had a certain fondness for explosives. A favorite activity was dropping a firecracker and a marble down a metal pipe which was stuck in the ground at about a 30-degree angle and aimed toward our garage. This homemade "gun" blew many holes in our garage doors. But when Len returned from his six-month stint in the Army as a combat engineer, he brought back a fist-sized ball of C4 plastic explosive.

We had a grove of banana trees at the back corner of our house which we thought might be about to lift the house off its foundation. Convinced we could make an important contribution to the family by solving this problem, and that we were uniquely positioned to do so, we dug a hole in one of the trees, wrapped the C4 around a cherry bomb to work as a blasting cap, placed it in the dugout portion of the tree, lit the fuse and stood back. Thankfully, the cherry bomb was insufficient to create the expected explosion. In fact, it blew the C4 apart and ignited the flying segments. Sometimes it is good when carefully laid plans go awry.



MY LOVE OF HORSES . . . EVAPORATING

At ages 9 or so to 13, horseback riding was the love of my life. I got to do it once or twice a year, when Uncle Al took us to Pickwick Stables in Burbank. I even got a job at age 13 in the Mickey Mouse Club production of Spin and Marty. I was a rider on the Northfork Team. I envisioned becoming a movie star, but some kid was bothering me, and I threw him in the water trough which was probably not good for my acting career. The beauty of the thing was that, in addition to being paid, I got to sit around on a horse for most of the day.

I dreamed of the day at age 15 or 16 when I would have my own car and could go to the stables on my own (if I had \$6 to pay for the rental of the horse). That day came when I was 16 and I drove myself to Pickwick Stables. I got on that horse and quickly realized that I felt stupid paying someone \$6 to sit on such an uncomfortable seat. The love had vanished.

This lesson I learned. When you love something, try to experience it when you feel that love. Tomorrow it may be gone and you won't have fulfilling memories to treasure. I acted on that when I bought a serious 32' sailboat. I didn't want to dream of boats my whole life and realize I didn't care anymore when I finally got one. Indeed, I fulfilled my boating fantasies on Equal-Librium with Geza (my boating partner), Len and Justin.



STANDING UP FOR MYSELF

In 1958, I attended North Hollywood High summer school, repeating Chemistry in which I had received a "D" at Fairfax. At recess, I sat on a bench drinking a carton of milk with a sweet roll. A bunch of guys who were standing nearby came over and turned over the bench I was sitting on, and

in shades of lunch at Fairfax, they told me I could not sit on their club bench. I slinked away from that experience and felt bad about it. I thought if something like that happened again, I would not act so cowardly.

The next day I came out of school to where my '47 Chevy convertible was parked, and the same guys who turned over the bench were sitting on my fenders. The kid who I dropped off on the way home seemed to brush the leg of one of these guys while closing the car door.

The guy stepped back and then stepped forward and kicked my car hard. I got out and said:

“Why did you kick my car?”

“Man, like I like to kick your car.”

I knew the moment had come.

“If I want to fight you, do I have to fight all your buddies?”

“No man, just me.”

I turned to walk toward the nearby grass as I expected to be knocked down and preferred landing on grass rather than cement. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that he was swinging at me and I ducked to avoid the blow. From that crouched position, I sprung up swinging with all my might and caught him with a roundhouse blow above his eye. It split his brow and he bled. In a few minutes, I was on the ground and he was diving on me. But I kicked up and again got him in the face.

Finally, and gratefully, my teacher came out and broke it up. I had my shirt off and there was blood on my chest. I was so pleased to discover that it was his when I wiped it off.

My attacker was standing on the corner across the street. I walked up to him and said:

“I don't want any trouble. Leave me alone and all will be fine.”

Unfortunately, my giant initial swing must have ripped a muscle in my shoulder and I could barely move my arm. I wondered what I should do the next day. I called my Uncle Dan for advice.

“I could drive another car to school, park a couple of blocks away, and walk a different path to it.”

“Is that why you stood up to these guys, so you could drive another car and sneak away?”

“No, it wasn’t.”

The next day I drove my Chevy to school and parked in the same place. As I headed up the school stairs, I heard someone refer to me as “the killer.”

Coming out after school, I told the kid who rode with me to not accompany me as there might be trouble. The same guys were there. They were sitting on the car in front of mine and the one behind. No one sat on my car.

Sweet success it was!



OPENNESS TO MAKING LEMONADE

In 1962, at age 18, Michael Commons, Len and I travelled to Europe together. We had a drive-away car going to NY, a Karman Gia. Two of us sat in the front seat and our third lay on top of the luggage in the back and tried to sleep so we could alternate drivers and go straight through. Coming out of the Sierra Nevada Mountains at about 3AM, our fan belt, which drove the fan of the air-cooled engine, came off. The light on the dashboard for the generator should have come on, warning us. But the bulb was blown and it didn’t light up. We came to a screeching halt when the overheated engine seized. This was just outside Fernley Nevada.

The road heading east had a slight decline and no traffic at that dark hour. We pushed the car toward Fernley, and when it got going really well, we jumped on the fenders and coasted silently. As the sun started to brighten the sky in the East, we saw many wild horses in the desert.

I still remember that morning as one of the most beautiful in my life.



THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

At the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, I came across the painting “The Birth of Venus.” I knew this was a very famous painting. I looked at it, and wondered: “Why?” I was not moved.

Later in the day I came across a book which had a poem dedicated to the painting. I brought that back to the Uffizi the next day, stood in front of The Birth of Venus and read the poem. Suddenly I could appreciate it ... and the value of education.

Employment

BANGLADESH



1966:

**DACCA, EAST PAKISTAN (NOW DHAKA, BANGLADESH)
THE WISDOM OF ALI MAHBUB**

Preparing to go to Dacca, in 1965, I developed a special relationship with my fellow East Pakistani MPH students, Ali Mahbub and his wife, Gole Afrooz Begum (as she was known at that time). I had a lot to learn:

“Ali, I hear it is very hot in Dacca.”

“No, Bob, it is not very hot.”

“Well Ali, I understand it is 100 degrees Fahrenheit and 100% humidity.”

“Yes, that is right.”

“We call that very hot.”

“Bob, we call 110 very hot.”

“Ali, I hear that one has to be careful about cobras in rural East Pakistan as their bite is so dangerous.”

“No Bob, you don’t. Only fools are bitten.”

“But Ali, I understand you could be walking down a path, stop and lean against a tree, and could be bitten by an unseen snake.”

“Bob, only a fool would lean against a tree.”

“Bob, I hear you call your wife ‘Honey.’ Is that some kind of endearment?”

“Yes, it is Ali. I hear you call your wife ‘Shono.’ Is that some Bangla endearment?”

“No, not exactly. It means ‘Hey You, Listen!’”

I taught about the U.S as well as learned about East Pakistan.

I took Ali and Afrooz grocery shopping at the Co-Op Market on Shattuck and Cedar. I noticed that they bought

several pounds of ground beef and no other meat. I asked:

“Why so much ground beef?”

The answer was that rib steak, porterhouse steak, chuck, tri tip roast, etc., none of the other meats were labeled “beef” and they did not want to take a chance of buying pork. I explained the meat marking system.

Ali and I worked together at the East Pakistan Research and Evaluation Centre. Then he left for a position with Phillips electronics. I recall him telling me about his employment interview at Philips. They said: “You don’t seem to have appropriate experience. What makes you think you can sell Phillips electronics?”

He replied:

“I’ve been selling family planning to East Pakistanis. If I can do that, I can sell anything!”

Ali had a successful business executive career with Phillips, as well as top Senior Health Administrator with the International Health Population Research Center. We have continued to be close friends for more than 50 years. And when I visited his house in Dhaka, it was one of the only times I drank 18-year-old single malt Scotch Whiskey. (Most regrettably, after a long and successful life, Ali died in 2020.)



ARRIVAL IN DACCA: WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

Dr. Tom Croley took me on a tour of Dhaka on my first day of work in my first professional job as Training Associate for the University of California’s collaboration with the Government of Pakistan, known as the East Pakistan Research and Evaluation Centre, funded by the Ford Foundation. I was impressed by the throngs of people everywhere. There were 50 million people in a province the size of Louisiana and it was crowded (now, in 2020, the population of Bangladesh is more like 165 million!). Driving by New Market, throngs

were particularly thick. I said to Tom: “What is going on here?” He responded: “Nothing, Bob. This is life here!”

One of the great things about this assignment is that what I did was determined by what needed to be done and what would be good for my professional development. I took responsibility for the in-service training program of family planning workers in one third of the province. With Jack Nelson’s help, that was the only part of the in-service training program functioning. I edited a journal called *News and Views on Family Planning in East Pakistan*. And I conducted numerous small field research projects (what would later be called Operations Research, or OR), including what I believe is the first study of pharmacies and family planning: “Survey of the Sale of Contraceptives in Pharmacies in Dhaka, East Pakistan”.¹ An interesting finding from that study was that customers were reported by pharmacists to be behaving differently now when buying contraceptives, compared to the past, most likely as a result of the massive government advertising of family planning. Shop keepers said:

“Customers for contraceptives used to wait until the shop was empty and then whisper across the counter what they wanted. Now they act normal, like they are buying aspirin.”

It was a wonderful time professionally and all my dreams of adventure and learning another culture were coming true. I worked so closely with my counterpart, Sayed Jahangir Haider, that when my first child was born in Holy Family Hospital, I named him after this brother – Justin Shorr Jahangeer Miller (I had forgotten at a crucial moment how Jahangir spelled his name).

Haider and I supervised the East Pakistan IUD retention study.² Haider supervised the rural components and I super-

1 Miller R.A., S.J. Haider, H.T. Croley, and H.C. Gustafson. 1968. Survey of the sales of contraceptives by pharmacies of Dacca, East Pakistan. *Public Health Reports* 83:1, 49-52, January.

2 Croley, H.T., R.A Miller, S.J. Haider, and B.J. Roberts. 1968. The national IUD retention study: East Pakistan report. Paper presented to the United Nations Evaluation Team in Pakistan. Also at the Fourth Biannual Research Seminar in

vised the work in Dacca. This was the first East Pakistani study to use female interviewers who would need to be away from their home for several days at a time.

Each female interviewer was accompanied by a male guide.³ Male guides were needed to find particular people. Cultural norms prohibited female interviewers from talking to village men. And women, who they could talk to, were unlikely to know the whereabouts of the women we sought (husband's father's name needed, etc.). In one study, I tried to interview the same people before and after an intervention. Looking at the interview schedules, and noting the variations in answers, it was difficult to be sure we had found the same persons.

I got into difficulty on a related cultural matter. Our urban interviewers also traveled with guides to help find people and for protection from harassment. The trouble arose because the female interviewers demanded that they travel in a separate bicycle rickshaw than the one in which their guide rode. Since our interviewers and guides frequently feigned a kinship relationship, thus making travel together with a male acceptable, I thought separate rickshaws was an unnecessary added expense. The female interviewers argued that, being seen riding with an unrelated male in a rickshaw might ruin their reputation and their marriage prospects. I argued that we were agents of change and should not be bound by all the old patterns and beliefs. The interviewers went on strike. I waited for Haider to return and solve my problem.

Haider was a man of courage, strength and personal power and had the respect of every staff member. Once, when the husband of one of our female interviewers—Sufia Rahman—thought that his wife was having an affair with a male staff member, he hired a group of Gundas (ruffians) to beat her

Family Planning, Karachi. Published as: National IUD retention survey in East Pakistan: a preliminary report. *Pakistan Journal of Family Planning* 2:2, July.

3 Haider, S.J., and R.A. Miller. 1967. Conducting family planning research in rural East Pakistan: some experience with the standardized interview. *Proceedings, Seminar on Research in Family Planning, Second Biannual, Karachi, Pakistan.*

up. She was attacked by all the miscreants right in front of our office when she arrived for work. Haider jumped into the middle of the melee, landed several powerful punches, and sent them all fleeing to escape his wrath.

To this day, I am not fully confident that my demand for the male and female workers to ride together was correct. It certainly was not culturally sensitive in the usual conservative manner. Nevertheless, Haider backed me up 100%. He gave all the striking staff a tongue lashing, I think indicating that their rebellion against me was disrespectful towards him. He told them that he would complete the study with or without their cooperation. They would not block our success. The interviewers backed off their previous demands.

It is funny now to see what I can recall from these days 50+ years ago. Every celebration took place at a Chinese restaurant called Chu Chin Chow's where every meal began with chicken corn soup. The prawns I barbecued were as big as lobsters. And despite taking all possible public health precautions, I was sick with intestinal problems every two weeks in the first year and every month in the second. I left the country weighing 133 pounds (now 186, on a good day).

It was damn hot and very humid. We worked without air conditioning in our offices. One had to find just the right speed for the overhead fan. Too fast and you generated too much heat by chasing papers. Too slow and you longed for additional cooling. After the first rains in April, a trillion flying bugs came out. They were so thick at night that one could not open a screen door.

Every time I joined our field staff in the villages I dropped my glass lined thermos and heard the rattle of a million pieces of broken glass. I wondered how I was going to survive the day. But, with Jahangir's help, we learned quite a bit about issues in conducting research in rural East Pakistan and presented a paper on that subject at a research seminar.⁴

4 Ibid.

On my first trip to Chittagong, I asked to see the room at the small hotel in which we were going to stay. As the door opened, I was almost knocked over by the incredibly intense smell of urine! Perhaps it had been collecting for decades. I wanted to be culturally sensitive and not complain, but I knew there was no way in hell I could stand being in that room. We did better at another establishment and I do not think my rejection of the first room was held against me. In Chittagong, I found a Chinese restaurant near where we were staying where I did not get sick. I ate every meal there – breakfast, lunch and dinner.



THE EXPAT COMMUNITY

The two topics that dominated conversation in the expat community were trouble with bowels and trouble with servants. Tom Croley took responsibility for my training in how to manage servants. They do the shopping but I have to review the purchases and the prices paid to ensure I am not being charged too much. I had imported a huge amount of my favorite groceries in my sea shipment – cases of mandarin orange slices, mayonnaise, smoked oysters, toothpaste, to name a few items. I prepared a box of these to share with friends, not knowing at the time that Muslims do not eat oysters. Haider’s mother thought it very strange that we Westerners ate oysters. Haider defended us: “Mother, these are scientific oysters!”

In order to prevent thefts of all my stored groceries and hygiene products, I had a large bamboo cupboard built with a gate that could be locked. I think the only person I knew not at all concerned about stealing was Jack Nelson. His one-eyed cook, Kassim, could charge Jack just about anything and Jack

did not mind. He said it just did not matter to him. He liked his cook, and it was fine if he made a little extra income. At the time, I thought Jack's orientation was "crazy." Later I came to see that this orientation might be similar to the Buddhist training in loving kindness, and in other countries I came to share some of it. But the thievery, honesty and trust issues are never really settled in these mismatched power relationships.

Alcohol, imported from a Danish company, flowed freely in the expat community. Alcohol was allowed by the Government of Pakistan after you signed a statement to the Government claiming that you were an alcoholic, addicted to alcohol. (We always wondered what would happen if we were in an auto accident in the West and some enterprising lawyer turned up that signed document.) There was an interesting dimension to what alcoholic drinks one would be offered. Gin and tonic was a popular drink as was Scotch. But the amount one could import was a function of both the cost of the drinks plus the cost of shipping. So, one could get the most alcohol by importing lots of gin and Scotch. But beer, being heavy and therefore expensive to ship, with only a low alcohol content, was an extremely valuable luxury offered only to close friends.

Mrs. Raisunessa Huq was East Pakistan's first social worker. She was a colleague at EPREC, and my adopted mother. Her husband, Dr. Huq, taught economics at Dhaka University. The Huqs kind of adopted Deborah and me and we ate dinner at their house often. We had a certain pattern. Dr. Huq would take a walk in the evening and drop by our house and we would serve him a Scotch. Then we would drive him home and stay for dinner. I once asked Dr. Huq if he would accept a gift of a bottle of Scotch, thus providing him greater freedom in his drinking. He said his wife would never allow it in the house.

Dr. Huq was on the University Committee that heard about infractions of University rules. He told me that once a student was brought before the committee with a charge of smoking

a cigarette in front of a professor. The University was ready to expel him. Dr. Huq made a speech to the committee saying:

“This is a serious case of bad behavior that had to be dealt with most severely ... this being 1859.”

I heard later that Mrs. Huq had a photo of Deborah and me on her refrigerator door for decades after our departure. On my last trip, I learned that Mrs. Huq, in her 90s, was still alive, but suffering from serious dementia, and did not recognize even family members. Perhaps I should have gone to see her, but I did not want to see her in that state.

I think most of us in the expat community were technocrats wanting to make a contribution and enjoying the adventure and expat lifestyle. A few colleagues stand out in my memory as possible exceptions. Bjorn Berenson was the Head of a Swedish-funded communications program working in the family planning program. Bjorn had imported to Dacca a Lincoln Continental convertible. The car was so big it probably could not fit on the narrow streets of Old Dacca and the behemoth turned heads everywhere. We were invited to dinner once at his home. It is hard to believe, but he served an unfamiliar meat which many asked about. He said it was elephant. Many believed it was pork.

We had a European doctor on our team who also stood out from the usual expats. Although a physician, she did not want to touch Bengalis. In order to check their pulse, she put down a piece of gauze bandage on their wrist, and attempted to measure pulse through it. Tom Croley once had an interesting idea for a party which seemed to draw out another insight into her personality. We all shot film for color slides in those days. He invited each of the invitees to bring our 10 favorite slides and he would show them all, and the pictures would be open for discussion. We all felt it was a bit strange that every one of our doctor's slides were pictures of flowers. No slide contained the image of any person. This may have contributed to our very unkind, indeed horrible joke about her: “She came to Dacca because she misunderstood and thought the job offer was in Dachau.”



WISH FOR A DO-OVER

One of the first pieces of advice an expat received on arrival is what to do in case of an automobile accident. Bangladeshis have a reputation of being very excitable and aggressive toward drivers who are involved in an accident. The advice is to depart the scene immediately. Drivers have been beaten to death.

I was driving up Green Road in Dacca in 1967, when a young girl, maybe 8 or 10 years old ran out of the side of the road directly into my path. I slammed on my brakes but skidded into her. She was carrying a bag of China Chur, a spicy mixture of grains and seeds. Her bag and its contents flew into the air and at that moment I thought it might be her brains.

Deborah, in an advanced pregnant state, was with me in the front seat. I thought for a few seconds, and then put the car into reverse and accelerated even though local people were trying to stop me by moving into my path. I put a look on my face that said:

“Get out of my way because I am not stopping.”

I managed to turn around my Ford Zephyr, but then it died and would not start. The crowd was picking up broken bricks and approaching the car. It started and I drove immediately to the Ford Foundation Office where Mr. Osmani was in charge. He jumped in his car and drove to the scene. He explained that I did not speak Bangla, so went for help. Mr. Osmani drove the girl to be checked at the hospital and she was declared unhurt. I would not be surprised if her parents were paid some money as so many things were settled in that fashion.

I have thought of that incident many times since then. If I had it to do over, I hope that I would scoop up the child and drive her to the hospital myself. Although it might be dangerous to do so, it would be my hope that I could explain that I was taking her to the hospital in a way I could be understood, and that my general demeanor would carry the day. Thankfully, I never had another experience like that to handle better.



PLAYING MONOPOLY FOR REAL MONEY

Working for the Ford Foundation in the mid 60s, I discovered, was like playing monopoly for real money – Community Service cards read as follows: you have been awarded cost of living allowance; you have been awarded home leave, etc. Indeed, regarding home leave, I did not want to go back to the USA and the funder agreed that they would pay for anything that I could book into my travel ticket up to the RT cost of a U.S. ticket. We chose to do a great circle trip around Asia. We started with a flight from Dacca to Chittagong from where we would catch a flight to Rangoon. At the airport in Chittagong, I discovered that the Rangoon flights were highly unreliable. “We only know that the plane is coming when it is close enough to our airport for us we hear it.” Thankfully it did come.

In those days, we were only allowed a 24-hour visa for Burma. I wandered around, noting the Buddhas with flashing neon halos and found an old colonial hotel – the Strand — from which I could hear violin music. Although no one was in attendance, I was denied admission because I was not wearing a tie. Today, 50 years later, I see on the internet that the Strand looks beautiful and the rooms are \$225–\$350. Evidently it is not the same hotel which was notorious for an expat who got typhoid from eating their ice cream.

From Rangoon we headed to Tokyo, where we had been able to book a ship cruise of the Inland Sea into our plane ticket. Interesting that all the other Americans exited the tour just prior to arriving at Hiroshima. From Tokyo, we flew to Hong Kong, where I discovered that it is wonderful to arrive and terrific to leave.

We headed on Air India to Calcutta, the service getting worse as we came closer to India. Our plane landed with our food trays uncollected. In Calcutta, our hotel’s version of first-class service involved the waiter wanting to peel our hard-boiled eggs at breakfast. It was the middle of the Bihar famine. It seemed that a large proportion of the population

slept tight together under the streetlights, attracted like moths to flame.

On to Madras, and Sri Lanka, where we discovered the fabulous new Hikadooa Resort. The coral reef in the crystal-clear water was beautiful and so fascinating that I got up early the next morning to take another swim, despite my terrible sunburn from having swum the whole day previously.

From Sri Lanka, we flew to Delhi, not bothered too much by the army person who objected to my old friend, Gene Weiss, taking a picture of me under the sign reading "No Photography." Next, we flew from Delhi to Srinagar, Kashmir where we stayed on a houseboat on Dal Lake, with Gene and his girlfriend at the time, Linda. The houseboats on Dal Lake dumped sewage on one side of the boat and dipped their buckets for tea water on the other side of the boat (watch out for big pieces).

We rented a stream from the government of Kashmir for trout fishing. A government servant had the job of ensuring I catch fish. "Put the fly behind that rock." Bang, there was a strike. They seemed to know every fish in the stream which was reserved for paying tourists. Local people were not allowed to fish. Our "brothers" from the houseboat made a fire and fried the fish for a delicious lunch. Srinagar, Delhi, Karachi to Dacca, and we were back.

Although I should probably skip recounting these memories, I will mention that Deborah began spending more and more of her time at the Soviet Book Store. What they made of this I will never know. But this came to a head when she told me: "Our marriage is not going to last if you don't read 20 pages of Lenin a night." I responded: "Living with you is like living in a Chinese Communist Concentration camp and I can't take it anymore." Well, she was right! Although it took a while to end, I look to that conversation as the beginning of the end and the start of my second life.

After decades, we are both happily married to great partners. Antagonism has evaporated on both sides. Maturity has set in.



BRINGING MOH'S FIRST COMPUTER

As part of the Western Consortium's technical assistance to two agencies in 1984, we built in the purchase of an early IBM computer. Ralph Frerichs was my faculty consultant who would take major responsibility for the purchase, testing, delivery and training. I asked our staff what the Bangladeshis wanted in terms of the computer, but got no response. A few weeks before Ralph and I were scheduled to travel, Ralph called me and said: "It is time to act if we are going to bring a computer. I want to have at least a week to test it and keep it running and do not wish to bring any computer that we have not tested."

He told me what he thought we should bring – an IBM "portable" which he would "soup up" with special graphics.⁵ At that time, this "portable" was as big as a larger size Samsonite suitcase. It had a small yellow built-in screen. I told him to go ahead and order it for about \$5,000, despite the fact that at this time, the U.S. government was concerned about the transfer of technology to other countries and wanted to review such deliveries. I think my approval sealed the nature of our long friendship. He greatly appreciated that I would make such a decision without clearances from Dacca staff and the U.S. government. Unfortunately, our staff in Dhaka resented us acting without their input. The word "imperialist" was bandied about.

Our first training course involved teaching hand-eye coordination. A donkey was in one lane of a two-way road. A car was coming toward the animal in the same lane. The operator had to press a button to move the oncoming car to the other lane and miss the donkey.

Starting from such a rudimentary position, Ralph was surprised when he returned in a few months and received a

5 Frerichs, R.R., and R.A. Miller. 1985. Introduction of a microcomputer for health research in a developing country: the Bangladesh experience. *Public Health Reports* 100 no.6 (Nov-Dec): 638-647

demonstration of some programming that a staff member had performed. He pressed a button, the flag of Bangladesh come on to the screen, and the national anthem of Bangladesh was played. We wrote the entire experience of bringing the first computer to the MOH in an article in Public Health Reports.⁶



MY ONE AND ONLY FISHING EXPERIENCE

During the rainy season, the tanks (ponds) overflowed, and children put screens in the path of rushing water and caught small fish which had overflowed from the tanks. There was a tank one block from my house in Dhanmondi where I lived. I went to the nearby tank with a spinning rod and a shiny stainless-steel lure which was easy to cast. Locals were fishing with balls of pressed bread laced with ant eggs as bait, and without reels. No one fishing there had ever seen someone with a spinning outfit and lure and expressed incredulity that I could catch anything with that system. Just then I had a terrific strike from a big silver fish. I may have had him on the line for only a few seconds, and then he made a wild leap and the fish went in one direction and my lure in another. I did not care much because I felt vindicated!



RETURN TO BANGLADESH AFTER 17 YEARS

I was being driven down a street in Dhaka in 1984 when I saw someone who had been on my mind for years. I yelled to the driver to stop, jumped out and threw my arms around Mr. M.N. Rahman. He did not recognize me, thinking I was

⁶ Ibid.

Larry Green, the Training Associate before me at the East Pakistan Research and Evaluation Centre.

I reintroduced myself and told Mr. Rahman I wanted to speak to him about something and invited him to my hotel. In my room, I had a bottle of Johnny Walker Swing – 17-year-old Scotch Whiskey. It came in a wooden box and inside a velvet bag. I explained that I had been thinking about him for all of the time since my departure 17 years ago. And I was presenting this bottle of 17-year-old Scotch to him in thanks.

“You were the supervisor of field interviews and you walked through the villages on those murderously hot days. You worked so hard! And I benefitted so greatly. I have had many good jobs. I have had a wonderful life and I think often about how it all evolved because of your effort and those of the field workers a long time ago. So, I wish to present this bottle as a small token of appreciation and respect for the contribution you have made to my happy life.”

I felt so lucky to have the opportunity to share this thought!

Mr. Rahman responded by saying:

“You must come for dinner at my house tomorrow.”

I explained that I had only two days left on my trip and I had already made dinner plans each night. The best I could do was come in the afternoon for tea.

I came the next afternoon and found about 30 dishes on the table. Curries, dhal, meat, samosas.... Probably more than a month’s wages. I said:

“Mr. Rahman, I said I could not come for dinner.” He responded:

“This is not dinner. There is no rice.”



ANOTHER RETURN TO DHAKA

After 46 years (2013) since my first visit, I returned to Dhaka to evaluate a health program funded by the U.S. State

Department – an evaluation of their Bangla book from the What to Expect Foundation. I visited with my dear friends, Ali Mahbub and his wife, now known as Gole Afrooz Mahbub. Gole Afrooz had a productive career with the Government of Bangladesh. Ali had especially done very well. In addition to his professional successes, he owned the building in which a European government housed its Embassy for 40 years.

In a particularly memorable evening, Gole Afrooz and Ali invited all the staff they could locate from the East Pakistan Research and Evaluation Center for dinner. Several staff were older than I am. One quite old teetering woman asked if I knew who she was. I didn't. She was Mrs. Hasna Banu, a staff member for whom I had great respect as one of our most capable field workers. What memories we shared!

Ali had also served as Governor of the Rotary Club of Bangladesh and remained active with the organizations. He suggested that I come with him to the next meeting and give a speech on changes in Bangladesh I have noticed over the last 50 years.

On entering the meeting room, I noticed that there were two Europeans (British) and about 10 Bangladeshis in the room. The first speaker was a retired Ambassador level government official who gave a rather boring account of factors impacting Middle Eastern politics, including very negative comments about Israel, Jews, and Americans. I thought a little lighter commentary would be useful. I began my speech with the announcement:

“I have decided to speak in English this evening.”

The Europeans reacted to this comment audibly:

“Thank God!”

However, the Bangladeshis said:

“Let's hear your Bangla!”

I responded with my favorite Bangla sentence:

“Application forms fill up korben.” (Korben is the Bangla command form of the verb “to do.” “Application forms fill up” represents the Bangla tendency to use English where no Bangla words exist. Thus, as you have no doubt guessed, my sentence means: “Fill up the application forms.”)

I next indicated that this was my second presentation to a Rotary Club meeting. My first was requested by my mentor, Bill Griffiths, in about 1970. I indicated I was going to share one of my few public health jokes with which I began my Rotary presentation in Berkeley so long ago. Holding up my left hand, I said:

“Who knows why no one in a developing country eats with this hand.”

Clearly some of the people in Berkeley and everyone in the Dhaka meeting, thought they knew the answer. The left hand is reserved for cleaning up after defecation. But my follow-up comment was:

“No, you are wrong. No one eats with this hand because it is mine.” Amazingly, this generated laughter.

I went on to discuss my observations of changes over time. The only two familiar features I noticed were bicycle rickshaws and beggars. But the city had grown from a population of about 1 million to 15 million in the intervening decades. Buildings had grown from one or two stories to 10 to 17 stories. The ratio of men to women on the streets had declined dramatically from somewhere around 100 to 1 in the 60s, to a more equal distribution today. Much of the workforce had become industrial and now Bangladesh contained the world’s third largest ready-made garment industry. One morning, on a rural field trip, I came across the long lines of garment employees walking to their jobs at the factories.

Despite the progress which had been made economically, I had noticed several negative developments. The number of cars and the traffic situation had become horrible and the political situation had become quite unstable. Indeed, my Rotary speech could only be short because a hartal (travel strike) had been declared by the opposition political party and there was considerable violence in the streets that very evening. Several people were in cars that were firebombed. The meeting ended quickly with little discussion.



LETTER TO PRESERVERS OF EGRETS

Dear Preservers of Egrets,

At age 64, I had considerable time to ponder the misdeeds of my life, especially in my youth, as well as some of the good I have accomplished working in the field of public health and trying to be a good person. When I was 24 years old, because of a youthful fascination with guns and the hunting sports, I took a shotgun on the assignment to Dhaka, expecting duck hunting to be possible among the vast flooded paddy fields. I only went out once. There were no ducks. At the moment, thinking it was OK if one took them on the wing, I shot 3-5 egrets. The Pakistani man helping me, retrieved them, and killed them with neck trauma, to render them *hallal* (ritually acceptable for Muslims to eat), and I comforted some early twangs of guilt with the knowledge that someone in a hungry country was eating those birds.

I have been troubled my whole life by those events, and think about them every time I see a beautiful egret. Of course, I do not hunt anything and haven't for decades! Perhaps in the spirit of conceptual art, I always talked about a need to establish an egret foundation in atonement. Once as part of my work in Madagascar, I was interviewing sex workers and heard a story from a woman about deep sexual exploitation. She was a secretary and could not get a secretarial job. Finally, she did but only on the condition that she "put out" for her boss daily. At the end of the month, he fired her and did not pay her salary.) Her greatest wish was to be able to fix her daughter's very crooked teeth which cost \$150. My colleague and I gave her that \$150, and when I included that incident in a short story, I also put it in the context of shooting the egrets, the need to establish an egret foundation, and having a feeling that half of the \$150 donation to that woman was perhaps as close as I was going to get to having an egret foundation.

I told this story to a good friend and colleague, Bob Blomberg, and he informed me about an egret foundation.

As soon as I saw the email address, I knew I had found a place that fulfilled a special need in my life.

I made an online donation of \$100 to honor their work, and the death of those beautiful birds decades ago, in hopes that each time I encountered one in the future, I will have something more positive to think about as well.

I wished them great success in their work!

Postscript:

Having made the donation, I received an invitation to visit the egret preserve. My friend who told me about the foundation, his wife, and Faith and I made the trip to see the egrets in the trees during nesting. As it turned out, we had to walk up a long hill to get to the viewing area. I had to stop several times because of discomfort in my chest while walking up the hill and concluded that I needed to lose some weight and exercise more. I started a diary of exercise and food intake and discovered that the discomfort was coming with less and less effort. I called my physician, described my symptoms, and told him I was concerned. He said that, despite my earlier tests which did not show any problems, he was concerned. He asked me to come immediately for an angiogram. Lying on the table while the doctors were conducting this test, I expected to hear them describe what they saw. When I asked, they said that they would tell me everything when finished. And upon finishing the test, they said:

“Buddy, you are hanging by a thread! Your left descending artery, which supplies blood to half your heart is 97% blocked. If you fall down with a heart attack from that vessel, there is no getting up. We are not letting you out of the hospital. You need emergency bypass surgery.”

Well, it was a very unpleasant experience. I learned that when you can't breathe, your commitment to living is challenged. But fully recovered now, I look back on how the egrets, despite my bad treatment of them, conspired through circumstances to save my life.



SABOTAGING A JOB OFFER

I have noticed that if I am not fully enthusiastic in a job interview, I am liable to say something that sabotages the offer. I was invited to fly from Nairobi to Boston to interview for the leadership position in a program meant to strengthen management of family planning programs. When originally contacted, my response was:

“There are many managers who would love this job; my technical field is not management. How come you are contacting me?”

“We have a whole staff of managers. What we need is leadership and we think you could provide that.”

This was nice to hear so I came to be interviewed by the project’s 13 staff members. I answered one of the questions I was asked, well I think.

“One of our staff got upset about something during a meeting and threw his coffee cup against the wall, smashing it. How would you handle a situation like that?”

“I would invite the staff member to my office and tell him that, when I send one of our staff to consult in an international program, I have to have confidence that he will behave reasonably well. One more incident involving bad behavior, like the cup smashing, and I will not have that necessary confidence.”

Despite some good answers, I did make one comment which, in retrospect, seemed fatal. The Director of Asia Programs told me that after sending Thana (county) Family Planning Officers from Bangladesh on a trip to Indonesia, the birth rate in the Thana they returned to plummeted. I asked:

“What do you think could explain that?”

My interviewer said he did not know. The entire situation seemed so implausible, that I said something, which in retrospect looks stupid, but which clearly expressed my lack of confidence in the entire story.

“Do you think the Bangladeshi Thana officers learned in

Indonesia some new ways to oppress their population that they were unfamiliar with in Bangladesh?” (The Indonesian program was infamous for using, what many considered, coercive tactics at the community level.)

I did not get the job (though the individual who contacted me confessed at a much later date that not hiring me was one of the biggest mistakes of his professional career).

My brother Len and I were discussing this memory and we had an interesting idea – we create a reality TV program in which old people come on and describe major mistakes in their life. A panel of judges, and/or the audience suggests alternative approaches that might have been used, and the audience votes on what they think was the best approach. (No one is allowed to discuss their first marriage, because the one alternative is too obvious.)

NEPAL



While living in Dhaka, Deborah and I made a brief trip to Kathmandu, Nepal. In those days, we flew in a prop airplane – A Fokker Friendship, with large oval windows below the wings. That wonderful plane just skimmed the hills surrounding the Kathmandu Valley. The people working the land and their houses were clearly visible. Today, the jet goes up and comes down in Kathmandu and the passengers see little.

Tom Poffenberger was organizing a team to provide technical assistance to the Family Planning and Maternal and Child Project of Nepal. Tom, a professor at the University of Michigan, was looking for a training advisor to join his project in Nepal. He contacted Bill Griffiths and Bill recommended me. I had joined the doctoral program since returning from Dhaka. In 1971, there were few Americans who had experience training staff in the family planning program of a developing country. My Dhaka experience had set the stage for this assignment.

Faith and I had been living together happily in Berkeley since the demise of my first marriage. At that time, it seemed that few couples actually married. However, with this job offer we faced an obvious decision. Faith said she did not feature going to live in Asia as the concubine of a white guy. We decided to get married.

John Ratcliffe, my friend who had replaced me in Dacca, was ordained in the Universal Life Church for the marriage ceremony. He had written the Church and said that we were having a small, intimate marriage ceremony and we did not wish to bring in a stranger to perform it. He had heard that it was easy to be ordained in their church and he wondered if he could be ordained for the occasion. They wrote back and said that they were very pleased to hear that John was carrying out

the work of the church, and he was hereby ordained.

We held the wedding at his place in Big Sur – Las Rocas — a big Spanish house on 40 acres right on the coast. He only owned 10% of the property (and lost that in a divorce). We did not plan much about this ceremony. We used all our money (\$300) for flowers, food and liquor.

The invitation used a simple Japanese landscape drawing on the cover and said:

“In the quiet of the forest,
Beside the strength of the sea,
Under the endless sky,
We will declare our love, our joy, our happiness together.
Join us in celebration.”

Faith made her wedding dress out of old Japanese Obis. I wore my dark blue Buck Rogers long sleeve shirt with a yellow lightning bolt across the chest. As was customary in 1971, we both had flowers in our hair. We cooked chicken teriyaki and prepared skewers of lamb shish kebobs for days prior to the wedding.

At Las Rocas, we all sat in a big circle and went around the circle requesting each person to contribute thoughts, a poem, song for the occasion (requests for such contributions instead of gifts was part of the invitation). At the conclusion of our circle of individual contributions, we walked to the cliffs over the pacific and declared that “when the sun sets we will declare that we are married.” As the sun neared setting, our group broke into a long chant of “Oooooommmmm.” Many people have commented over the years that they still remember that marriage ceremony as “the best they have ever attended.” We have celebrated our anniversary most every year by going to a beautiful place to watch the sunset together.

The marriage caused a stir in my family. My mother had difficulty with the idea of me marrying someone who was not Jewish, and the idea of Faith not being white was probably a further complication. So, the relatives got mixed up in the decision, as they saw it, of whether to support my mother or me. Al Sweet, a beloved cousin, divorced from my cousin Diane, apologized to us for 40 years for not attending. I was

never judgemental about my mother's difficulties because I viewed her as a victim of her orthodox, Eastern European, Jewish heritage. And within a few years, she recognized what a wonderful person Faith is, and came to love her dearly.

Near her death, when she told me she was thirsty, and I brought a cup of water and a spoon, her near final comment to me was:

“Why so stingy with the water?”

But she also took steps to demonstrate her love for Faith, the contents of which are one of my few secrets in the world.

Our marriage was a wonderful decision both short-term and long-term. The U.S. government paid her transportation and arranged visas. She had appropriate status in the community, and our happiness continued.

Upon arrival in Kathmandu, we were met by another member of the UM Team and taken to a lovely house in Coopendal, just after the Patan Bridge, on the road to Shanta Bowan Hospital. This house, known as Brick Bungalow, was unusual. Its brick construction was not covered with stucco, and it had a slanted tile roof. Both features set it off from the rest. From that unique home, we road our bicycles in the cold mornings to the USAID office in Rabi Bowan (until our 1969 Datsun 510 arrived) where the UM team was located and where we took Nepali lessons from Mr. Atakari, who liked to take us to the market to practice speaking Nepali in real situations. I'll never forget the lesson on buying eggs:

“Phool cha? (Do you have eggs?)

“Cha.” (Yes)

Keko phool cha? (What kind of eggs do you have?)

Coocaraco. (chicken)

Hasco phool cha? (Do you have duck eggs?)

When I tried to duplicate this lesson in the market and asked “What kind of eggs do you have,” the seller answered with such an exaggeratedly mocking pronunciation of Coocaraco, that it seemed she thought I was crazy.

Kathmandu in the early 70s was a top travel destination. There were hippie travellers in the guest houses on “Freak Street,” druggies and smugglers of art and/or drugs,

CIA financed intelligence agents seeking to stir up trouble on the Tibetan border, mixed with Tibetan refugees, monks, Buddhist scholars, etc. We made friends in most every group, and with access to the U.S. commissary, where frozen chickens from Denmark cost less than local chickens in the market, and turkeys and special whiskeys were available for the holidays, we frequently had dinner guests. Our house was open to Peace Corps Volunteers recovering from their diet of onions and potatoes, and to monks and Buddhist scholars. One such scholar was Dr. Michael Aris who brought his wife, Aung San Suu Kyi. At the time, we had no idea who Aung San Suu Kyi was, nor how honoured we should be to have the chance to meet the future leader of Burma (Myanmar) and a Nobel Peace Prize recipient. Indeed, we knew so little that I cannot even remember anything about our conversation, but I remember clearly that she was there. Maybe then she was shy or retiring. She may not have said much that was memorable.

A Buddhist scholar living in Bouda, David, offered to introduce us to his teacher, Lama Tashi Gyeltsen. It was a highly-ritualized meeting but had some unusual events as well. David explained that we would be offered Tibetan tea and that we must drink three cups. We did as we were told. Lama Tashi admired an old ivory mala (rosary) that Faith was wearing around her neck. She took it off and presented it to him. In turn, Lama Tashi took off his mala and presented it to Faith. This made a huge impression on David who felt that Lama Tashi was communicating to Faith that he would teach her everything he knew.

David told me that he had been waiting for years to meet “a brother” in Kathmandu, and I was him. However, after some misplaced sexual attractions were expressed in some quadrants of this foursome, David communicated that was the end of brotherhood. “It is too much trouble to interact with you two.”

On our second visit to Lama Tashi, we both dispensed with the ritual. Lama Tashi offered us Tibetan tea. I said: “I really do not like Tibetan tea” – which I called “chicken soup without the chicken.” Lama Tashi replied, “I do not like it either.” I think we were offered and accepted hot milk.

In Bouda, we also met Roger Williams, who has been a friend for 50 years. Roger was living in a mud house with a dirt floor. He had been living in the mountains for 10 years previously, studying all aspects of wood block printing – how to make cutting tools from jeep springs, how to select wood, etc. He never sold his prints but gave them away as offerings and lived on the small donations frequently made by the recipients. He spoke fluent Tibetan. He was loved and respected in the community.

Indeed, I told Roger that he knew all the Tibetans in Bouda and was respected, and I would like him to keep on the lookout for me for nice Tibetan Rugs. I would pay him a 10% commission on any rugs that I purchased. Roger accepted that offer enthusiastically, and to this day gives me credit for introducing him to business.

Later, Roger moved to Japan, shopped at the flea markets of Kyoto, packed and sent his purchases to Faith to sell in her store, Big Dogma. There were small pieces of Japanese furniture like sewing boxes, dolls, bells and cushions, kimonos and obis and more. Faith supplied funds for the purchases and split the profit from his sales at Big Dogma.

Roger also opened a publishing company – Snow Lion Graphics – which was changed to SLG when it was brought to his attention that there was another company with that name. Roger was also a fine photographer. He produced a book that was very well received, *The Elegant Taste of Thailand*.¹ The book described Thai dishes, and then had a beautiful photo of what the finished dish should look like. The book was so successful that Roger and his wife, Francis, were able to buy a fine house in a great neighbourhood in Berkeley where they presently live. We have always treasured Roger's colored photo of the Great Stupa at Boudanath which hangs on our living room wall.

1 Sisamo Kongpan and Pinyo Srisawat, 1989. *The Elegant Taste of Thailand: Cha Am Cuisine*, SLG books, Berkeley.



ROLE OF AMERICAN ADVISORS

I soon learned the expected role of the American advisors at the FP/MCH Project of Nepal. We were expected to bring Scotch from the U.S. Commissary on all field trips. On such trips, evenings were spent drinking Scotch and playing a three-card kind of poker game called flash or flush. Nepalese drink their Scotch mixed with water. To avoid that, I had to pretend that I liked to drink it straight. I often say: "Damn if I didn't develop a taste for that."

One night on such a trip, my dear friend Dr. Gautam requested some water to refresh his drink and a clinic staff member brought him some. The water was so dirty that it was actually difficult to see through it. Dr. Gautam poured a new peg of Scotch and diluted it with some of this water. The next morning, I asked him:

"Did you notice the condition of the water you were served last night?"

"Yes."

"Why did you drink it?"

"I did not want to embarrass anyone."

Dr. Gautam smoked imported 555 cigarettes. I once asked him how he could afford to buy those cigarettes. He responded that he devoted one third of his salary to food, one third for rent, and one third for cigarettes.

Later, possibly because Dr. Gautam was seen as very smart and, therefore, a threat to higher administration, he and his wife, Dr. Lila Gautam, were transferred to a very remote town in Western Nepal, Jumla. Faith and I flew in to visit them once. From the plane, the place looked like the face of the moon. They were the only physicians in the area for perhaps 100 miles. And the region was food short. Imagine how short it was when even the only physicians serving the entire area were short of food, and had difficulty entertaining their American visitors. But one patient brought them a game bird they called a chucker (perhaps a grouse?) and they cooked it

as curry for us. It was the tastiest foul I ever ate, and to this day, I salivate thinking of it. Still later, Dr. Gautam and Lila moved to London where I lost track of them.

Dr. Gautam and I experienced a great deal of rapport. Even though he was only the Deputy Director of the Training Division, I worked closely with him. The Director, Dr. Tara Johnson, married to one of my UM teammates, Dick Johnson, was not usually at work. She also seemed a bit unstable. One day I made a serious mistake, trying to cover it with a joke. There was an attractive young trainee who dropped out of the community health worker training program. But at the graduation ceremony, I thought I saw her and asked Dr Tara what had happened. I could easily imagine that the young girl realized she had made a mistake, wanted to serve, was allowed back in and thus participated in the graduation ceremony. Tara said to me that the girl I was asking about was the twin sister of the girl who dropped out. I fully accepted that explanation, but because I was embarrassed about having even asked about this case, I said to Bill Trayfors, the USAID head of the Population and Health Division:

“You see how they pull the wool over our eyes with these stories?”

I don't know why I thought that might be funny at the time, but Tara did not think it was funny at all. The next thing I knew, I was called into the Chief's office, with Bill Trayfors, and with Tara wanting me kicked out of the country. I tried to explain I was only attempting a bad joke to cover my embarrassment for even asking about the particular case. But Tara said: “I am not going to let you sweet talk your way out of this.” Thankfully, cooler heads prevailed.

Later, I heard that Dick and Tara had moved to Afghanistan, but Tara had some kind of mental breakdown there, and was sent back to Nepal.



SURVIVAL IN LANGTANG

For me, a long-term atheist, who is not especially spiritual, visits to Lama Tashi awakened unusual feelings. Being in his presence, I felt kind of high, like from drugs, and happy. That was about as spiritual as I got until a trip to Langtang on the Tibetan border. We learned there was an empty plane going up to pick up some trekkers, and coming back the next day to deliver some people. Thus, we could fly up on the plane, and fly back the next day and we would have a chance to see if there were Tibetan mastiff puppies in the area. There were about eight people in our party – Dr. Bob Benjamin’s girlfriend, the Crosses (Kumi and Peter) and additional folks. We flew up in a chartered Pilatus Porter (STOL aircraft), landed at around 13,500 feet altitude and started running to a village. It started to snow and some French anthropologists very kindly came looking for us with warm clothing. We stayed that night at the cheese factory located there, but I spent the night hallucinating and or dreaming about Tibetan Gods as a result of altitude sickness. In the morning, I discovered that locals had stolen a bottle of wine from our supplies, but we did not make a big deal about the theft.

We headed down from the cheese factory to the air strip. The whole region was food short so we gave away our food-stuff on the way to the landing strip. The plane came flying over the strip, and us, at an altitude of about 10 feet and the pilot dropped a note out the window for us right over our heads. It said that he could not land because of the snow on the strip. He would return when it melts.

The landing strip was surrounded by stone roofless huts, which were used by yak herders. Because someone in the cheese factory had stolen our wine, we did not want to go back there. But clearly, we were in difficult circumstances and we did not know how cold it would get. Some of us started collecting firewood and dried yak dung for night fires. Others started looking for the orange peels we dropped on the strip

when we landed along with the dandelion flowers which grew in abundance. Someone had some ginger candy and we made a wonderful tea with those ingredients.

I was on the fuel party and I managed to fall into a stream from which I was attempting to pull out a large piece of wood. The fall into the water scared me. I recalled a wonderful movie, the Red Tent, which was about polar exploration. Stuck after their blimp crashed on the ice, a couple of men decided to try to walk out for help. When one fell into the water, he knew he had no chance to survive. He ripped off his clothes laid down on the ice and dreamed of a time when he made love to his paramour. I wondered if I was doomed. When I got back to our camp, I think one of the Crosses gave me their down underwear suit to wear, a bottom and top. It was warm and very comfortable and I felt saved!

Unfortunately, a memorable part of this experience is how the sharing of food was handled. We traded a pair of socks to some passing yak herders for some potatoes, but had nothing else. One couple had a rucksack with food. Now I thought they would pull out what they had, lay it out for us all, and talk about how we would decide what we should eat and how it should be divided. That was not their approach. They kept their supplies hidden and took out items one at a time to share, which was good, but not how I would have handled the situation. I took this couple out to dinner at the Yak and Yeti Restaurant after we returned to Kathmandu, but in truth, for a long time I harboured some disappointment about how the food situation was handled.



CHENGREZI, THE TIBETAN GOD OF MERCY

I had brought U.S. silver coinage to Nepal. After seeing the photos in National Geographic of women wearing old silver rupee necklaces, I had hopes that I could trade silver

dimes, quarters and half dollars for old jewellery. On my first trip outside Kathmandu, I discovered that I could not even trade them for firewood!

Lama Tashi had introduced us to the best Newari silver-smiths. Faith and I had recently bought a thangka (prayer painting) and we wanted a set of silver Tangdo (the caps that fit on the round wooden pole at the bottom of the silk mounted Thanka). We could hardly believe the beauty of the pieces that were made for us. Each exquisite silver piece had four of the eight sacred Buddhist symbols. Stupidly, I started asking our craftsman what else he could make for us – rings, bracelets. No, he said. He only did religious work (and in fact we learned that he did work for His Holiness, the Dali Lama).

Finally, we figured out what to do with the bag of silver coins my brother had given us, which we were unable to trade. We took them to the Newari craftsman statue maker, Siddhi Raj Sakya, and requested a silver statue of Chengrezi, Tibetan God of Mercy. Of course, the statue came out beautifully and Lama Tashi volunteered to do a Zung ceremony, “to give the statue life,” in our backyard. Tibetans believe that the ceremony empowers the statue. Part of the ceremony is putting many valuable and precious things inside the statue along with paper prayers. We provided silver and gold coins and some precious stones. Lama Tashi brought a suitcase full of his most precious objects, some of which his students had never seen – scrapings from the Portala, pebbles from a sacred river in Tibet, and many printed prayers. The statue was stuffed and sealed and we all celebrated. Presently that statue sits on Faith’s alter, but the Tangdo were given as an offering to the leader of the Shambhala community with which Faith is affiliated. (Interestingly, religious objects like statues are never supposed to be bought or sold. So, if one comes across an old Tibetan statue, it has always been opened. The people who would deal in such objects would always open it looking for treasure.)



LEARNING I'M A MOT

At the USAID office in Kathmandu one day, an American physician working in the USAID office, Dan, asked me: “Bob, are you a MOT?”

“What is that.”

“A member of the tribe.”

“Sorry, I still don’t know what you are referring to.”

“Well Bob, were you Bar Mitzvad.”

“Yes.”

Dan explained to me that the Israeli Ambassador was trying to arrange a Bar Mitzvah for his son in Kathmandu. The Israeli Air Force was flying in a Torah but they could only find nine men to form the minion (quorum) and, according to religious law 10 are required. To a few friends, I joked that I was going to hold out for the return of the Golan Heights. But, even though I had not been involved in Jewish ritual for 17 years, by this time I realized this was not about my feelings or needs, but how I could serve some people in their hour of need. I agreed. When I sat through the event, my impression was that the ritual really looked like it had come out of the Middle East desert thousands of years ago with little relevance to me in the present time.

The Israeli Ambassador invited Faith and me to dinner on the occasion of a Jewish Holiday. I took the opportunity to ask him what the interests of Israel were in little Nepal, and why Israel was providing instruction in martial arts to the Nepalese Army? He answered straightforwardly:

“Nepal has a seat in the UN and we need every vote we can possibly muster.”



SAYING “NO” TO AUTHORITY

One day in 1972, the USAID administrative officer who handled all the agency paperwork for the Health and Family Planning Division brought me a telex from the USAID Mission in Saigon asking the Nepalese mission to gather and send to Saigon all of the Nepalese educational materials on family planning for possible use in Vietnam. The USAID employee handed me the telex and requested me to take care of it. I said: “No.”

USAID is a fairly structured and hierarchical organization that is not used to people rejecting administrative requests. It seemed that he could hardly believe his ears and asked how I could possibly refuse the request. I explained that I had been hired to contribute to the health and family planning program of Nepal, and not Vietnam. I did not think that a national family planning program in Vietnam made sense in the context of millions being killed in the war. I was against this war and would not have gone to work there. Therefore, I would not fulfil this request.

Later, the head of our four-person UM team, Jim Fields, took care of this request. He apologized to me for doing it, but explained that he was entirely confident that it would make no difference whatsoever, and if he thought it might, he would not have done it. He was no doubt correct.



THE WORLD’S FIRST LAPAROSCOPIC STERILIZATION CAMP IN POKHARA, NEPAL

Johns Hopkins University staff provided Laparoscopic Sterilization equipment and training to Dr. Kanti Giri, Head of the Obstetrics and Genecology Department of a hospital in

Kathmandu. One day, USAID received word that hundreds of Nepalese women were coming out of the hills in Pokhara to line up to receive Laparoscopic Sterilization from Dr. Kanti Giri. I was asked to organize a research team and go document what was going on (In fact, this was the world's first experience in delivering this method in a camp setting and I believe that about 220 women came for this service.)² Our team rode in a helicopter to Pokhara. I'll never forget that flight. The aircraft vibrated so much that it vibrated the hairs in my nose. It tickled so much I had to hold my hand over my face for the entire flight.

In interviews with women and local staff we learned that the procedure was being promoted in surrounding villages as "the big injection." Some women were quite surprised at how large the instrument was and that it had to be very forcefully pushed to punch through the abdominal wall, under local anaesthetic, and complained of surprise and pain. Others were remarkably happy to be entirely finished with procreation.

After the procedure, women were taken to a tent with straw on the floor to recover. This greatly offended a female graduate student in Berkeley when she saw my report. She threatened to set up a tent on the steps of Sproul with straw as a protest. I informed the University but nothing came of this threat.

I requested two members of our team to sit in the tent and record what women said without asking any questions or talking. Besides the pain and complaints, how frightened some were, others laughed and joked, indicating that they would go to their parents' house, as they did when they delivered a baby, and would be given chicken to eat to celebrate the end of childbearing.

Polygyny is common in Nepal and I learned that one man had brought his three wives to be sterilized.³ I mentioned this

2 Miller, R.A. and P.L. Joshi. 1973. Laparoscopic sterilization in a camp setting: the Nepal experience. Office of Population, Agency for International Development. (Reprinted 1974).

3 Miller, R.A., and A.A. Fisher. 1982-83. Family planning decision-making in a polygynous Nepalese family. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education* 3(1): 17-26.

group to members of my research team and told them I would like to record everything they heard about this family. What we learned was that wives were fighting among themselves and with their husband. Those with more children wanted everyone to be sterilized. Those with fewer children wanted the others to be sterilized, but not themselves.

We happened to pick up the husband on the road, gave him a ride, and heard his representation of the situation.

“You know, I had one wife sterilized yesterday and one today. But then I thought, if I have the third done right away, they will all be recovering at once and no one will be available to take care of me. So, I will put off the third wife’s operation a little while.”

When Dr. Kanti Giri learned of this situation, she said she would not have sterilized any of them if she had known the situation. Rather, she would have wanted the husband to receive a vasectomy. She refused to operate on the youngest wife who was clearly being forced into the procedure which she did not want.

Interestingly, the following year, the youngest wife returned and requested the procedure using a different name. When she was recognized, she pleaded that she must have the operation because there is no peace in the house. She received it.



COMPLETING MY DRPH. DISSERTATION

Before leaving for Nepal, with tremendous help from my brother, we processed the data on IBM punch cards from the Dhaka Family Growth Study, to compare factors influencing the probability of a couple having a birth in the last year of the study.⁴ I thought my analysis was important because, even

4 Miller, Robert A., 1972. Knowledge and Attitudes vs. Situational Factors as Predictors of Fertility in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Thesis submitted to the University of California in partial fulfillment of the Dr.P.H. requirements. University of

though knowledge, attitudes and contraceptive behaviour were changed in the study which compared family planning communications to husbands, vs to wives, vs. to both, the birth rate had not been reduced in this population of low-level government workers living in the housing colonies. Were family planning educational factors and the practice of family planning important factors in educational programs? Or, as Kingsley Davis argued, were demographic variables such as age, and number of children more important? Thankfully, both sets of factors were statistically significant giving me something to discuss in the dissertation. Attendance of the husband at the family planning clinic was important but attendance by the wife was not. And since the only contraceptives available were Neo-Sampoon Foam Tablets, of dubious benefit, and condoms, it looked like the involvement of the husbands was definitely necessary in this population, and that condoms were better contraceptives than foaming tablets.

I had promised my young son, Justin, that I would return from Nepal to see him every six months (as well as writing him weekly, recording tapes, etc.) Although I might not have been fully enthusiastic about finishing the dissertation, in part because the boxes of reference books I was using for the background to the study had all been lost in my air shipment. However, I thought as long as I was returning to the U.S., I should try to make progress. On my first trip, I provided my committee a draft and received feedback. On my next trip, I gave them my final, and went to Mexico and went fishing in The Sea of Cortez, in order to protect my tax situation, while they read it.

Fishing the Sea of Cortez in those days was unbelievable. We chartered a boat for only \$35. We were never outside of the site of fish boiling on the surface of the sea. But the captain of my chartered boat only steered toward the fish when he saw big ones breaking the surface. We caught many!

My dissertation was accepted and I returned to Nepal as "Dr. Miller!" while Faith stayed on in Berkeley to clear up some references in my dissertation. I have always claimed that

finishing my doctoral degree was the second-best decision of my life because it conferred instant credibility whether it was deserved or not. The best decision, of course, was marrying a great life partner.



TREKKING TO TENGBOCHE

Around Christmas of 1972, we decided to fly to Lukla and trek to Tengboche Monastery in the Everest region and possibly go to Everest Base Camp. I will never forget flying into the landing strip at Lukla. It is on the side of a mountain and has a significant up slope. As we approached I could only see the mountain and the wreckage of crashed planes on one side of the landing strip. I thought we were crashing into the mountain.

We brought plenty of food, including many packets of noodles made by our friend, Mrs. Lama, and hot cereal. It is embarrassing to report that our porters in those days earned only \$1/per day which was the going wage, but our porters ate well. In Namche Bazaar, we stopped at a tea house/restaurant and ate yak meat momos. The restaurant had a yak leg hanging from a roof beam. It was white, covered by some kind of mould. The cook cut off pieces and served delicious momos. In those days there were no hotels, and if you ate in the restaurant, you were allowed to sleep on their benches. The night was made memorable by the sounds of a couple of Tibetan porters making love beside our bench.

We spent Christmas day interviewing the head monk at the monastery, and taking photographs. We relaxed, and took note of all the trekkers returning from Everest Base Camp. They were sun burnt, and hacking with coughs, sickly and exhausted. While Base Camp was only one day trek away, it was at 17,500 feet and the high altitude took an obvious toll. I can remember my thinking about continuing our trek. I thought:

“If you have come from the U.S. and have spent thousands of dollars to get here, you might not have so much of a

choice. You had to continue on to Base Camp.” But we had just come from Kathmandu, where we lived, and were free to do what we wanted. We wanted to stay, relax, take photos and that is what we did.



PROVIDING PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING FOR ERIK ERIKSON

We first met the Eriksons through Ruth Erikson, who had written a book called *The Universal Bead*.⁵ At the time, Faith had her antique shop on Solano Ave in Berkeley – Big Dogma — where she specialized in Buddhist ritual objects and art, antiques and old beads. Ruth was a customer. Indeed, at the time we first came across her book, we did not even know she was married to Erik Erikson. We discussed Tibetan Dzi beads (banded agates) at length with her. These beads were made about 3000 years ago by some lost civilization. And when found by Tibetans who lacked the long historical context, they believed the agates had been made by gods, and were extremely lucky. Ruth had discussed these beads in her introduction to her book to show how much lore was associated with some beads. We showed her specimens we had collected in Nepal and I suspect that helped cement the friendship.

One day Ruth invited us for dinner at their house in Belvedere, Marin County. She suggested we bring our swimsuit and take a swim in their nicely heated pool before dinner, which I did. The dinner was somewhat uneventful. We talked about the fact that there was an upcoming reunion of Erik’s high school class in Austria, but he could never consider attending. He did not want to share an evening with “old friends” who had most likely been Nazis during the war.

After dinner, Erik said:

5 Erikson, Joan M. and Mary Austin, 1969 and 1993. *The Universal Bead*, Norton and Company, New York.

“I would like to have your advice on a matter. This relates to a journal article I wrote discussing Bergman’s movie “Wild Strawberries.” You would not have seen the article. It appeared in an issue of *Daedalus*.”

As it turned out, by odd chance I had read that article one day when I found the journal at my brother’s house, and I told Erik so. (This was purely by chance, a kind of 1 in a million shot. I thought the fact that I had seen it though made me look like a serious intellectual!)

“Now, because of that article, the Indian Film Society has invited me to give the keynote address at their upcoming meeting in Delhi. I don’t know anything about Indian Film and I have no idea what to say. Since you have lived in the sub-continent, what do you think I should do?”

“I think you should accept the invitation and you can say anything you want on any subject. They invited you to be a catalyst and attract attendees, and out of respect — not because they believe you are an Indian film expert. They will appreciate whatever you wish to share with them on any subject.”

Erik expressed relief with this advice and hinted he would go.

I asked if he might like to visit Nepal on the trip. Erik indicated that he would love to see Nepal, but that he was very concerned (rightly) about health conditions there. He considered himself somewhat frail as a result of old age and he did not want to take undue chances.

I asked if he would be comfortable visiting Kathmandu as the houseguest of a professor of public health who would be scrupulous in taking every possible precaution— my dear friend and teacher – Ray Carlaw. Erik answered in the affirmative. I wrote Ray and he was excited at the prospects of having Erik and Ruth as house guests. Ray and his lovely wife Flo held a big party in Kathmandu and invited all their friends and colleagues to meet these illustrious visitors.

I thought of Ruth and Erik often and mourned when I saw the lengthy obituary in the *New York Times* a few years

later.⁶ It included a photo of them in their 90s, taken from behind, walking down a path, hand in hand.

Besides the mourning, I thought: “Wouldn’t it have been wonderful to receive a letter from Erik Erickson thanking me for my counselling. I would have framed it, and kept it on the wall of my office, happily, forever.” I don’t have the letter, but I have shared the story often! In addition, we received a lovely postcard from them on the occasion of our middle son’s birth — Jonas. The card had a drawing of Erik walking with his book, *Childhood and Society*, on eight stages of development under his arm, and a message from Eric and Ruth welcoming our newly born son, Jonas, to the world.⁷ This young man has just completed his PhD in Developmental Psychology, and we have given that postcard to him to frame and hang on his office wall. To me it is like conceptual art. Dr. Jonas G. Miller, most likely to be a professor of developmental psychology, has a postcard from Erik and Joan Ericson, the parents of this field, on his office wall welcoming him to the world on the occasion of his birth! Unique.



OUR CUP RUNNETH OVER

Our closest friends in Nepal, besides Drs P.C. and Lila Gautam, with whom I worked, were Nima and Sangay Lama. Nima was an extremely interesting fellow. I learned that he had been the secretary to a minister in the old (pre-Chinese) Lhasa Government. He had led mule caravans for his minister from Lhasa to Hong Kong. On one such trip in the late 30s, he was smuggling gold, and was stopped by Japanese guards who searched his belongings. He carried the gold in one shoe.

6 Obituary, Erik Erikson, 91, *Psychoanalyst Who Reshaped Views of Human Growth*, May 13, 1994, *The New York Times*.

7 Ericson, Eric 1993. *Childhood and Society*, W. W. Norton, & Company, Inc. New York.

The guard told him to take off his shoes. He took off the one that did not have anything in it, shook it, and said to the guard: "Now would you like me to take off the other shoe?" The guard answered in the negative, thereby saving his life and fortune.

Faith and I met them at their antique store at the Annapurna Hotel shopping center. On our first visit, I saw a lovely wooden Tibetan book cover for sale for \$50. It had three Buddhas carved in it. It was quite worn, suggesting serious age. I liked it, and said to Mr. Lama:

"I like this book cover. I am going to have a divination ceremony at the Soltee Hotel Casino tonight to see if I am supposed to have it or not." I did go to the casino, played blackjack, and won the \$50 pretty quickly, and quit. The next day I went back to the store and explained what happened, delivered the money, and took the book cover. That seemed to make a good impression on the Lamas!

I was also interested in Tibetan rugs and saddle carpets. Mr. Lama invited me to his house to see what he had. I walked into a room and saw them all scattered around the floor, priced at \$50 each. Pointing with my finger, I said: "I'll take that one, that, that, that, that, and that. All of a sudden, I had a Tibetan saddle carpet collection.

Nima Lama was a learned man. Faith started studying Tibetan language and culture with him and his wife most every day and we became close friends. Mrs. Lama was a terrific cook. She managed to get dried seafood from Calcutta and to prepare marvellous seafood dishes, always with the comment, "I have prepared a simple dinner tonight," while bringing out eight or nine fabulous dishes.

Once, I ran across a very interesting old rug. It was in the traditional dragon and phoenix design. However, the dragon looked like a lizard and the phoenix looked like a chicken. The dark blue background was a soft wool. There was a roughly repaired patch. I bought it for \$30. My view was that most likely it was the equivalent of a Tibetan tribal rug, made with only a loose and distant connection to the "great tradition." Mr. Lama laughed when he looked at it. His tastes were well

developed and far from this tribal rendition. I learned that the Smithsonian museum was having an exhibition of Tibetan rugs and I sent them some photos. The only rug in which they expressed any interest was the tribal dragon and phoenix. I so enjoyed sharing that news with Mr. Lama.

Mr. and Mrs Lama had sent Faith a picture of a stem cup in Oxblood red, marked with the Yung Lo dynasty, a short dynasty in the 15th century. They said that this cup was available from a recent Tibetan arrival in Kathmandu. The price was \$1,000 and they asked for advice on whether they should buy it. The only problem was that the cup was cracked. Faith showed the picture to one of her customers, and offered it for \$2000 and the buyer quickly wrote a check, without hesitation.

When Faith went to Kathmandu, the situation became complicated. In fact, Mr. and Mrs Lama had bought the cup before writing to Faith, and they did not want to sell it for \$2000. Rather they were hoping that the cup might bring \$8,000 which would have been enough for them to build a house in Kathmandu. Faith brought the cup back, and we brought it to Mr. Tsao, a Chinese dealer in San Francisco who was known to be quite expert with porcelain. He looked at it long and carefully and said that the cup was not Yung Lo, but it was very early, and quite a lovely piece. He did not estimate its value.

But he called us on the telephone that night and told us a story. A good friend of his, who was Japanese, had an electronics factory in Lebanon. He had just returned from Lebanon where he found that his factory was completely demolished. He was leaving for Japan that night (or the next?), he heard about the cup, and he wanted to bring it as a gift for his aged father to place on his altar. He thought that pleasure would balance the heartache of the factory's destruction. He wanted to know the price.

We explained that we were not in a position to accept any offers as we had to deal first with the dealer who had given us \$2000 for the cup's purchase. Mr. Tsao requested us to allow him to come to our house to discuss this further

and we consented. Mr. Tsao was extremely insistent. After a long discussion, we explained that the owner hoped to get \$8,000 in order to build a house. Thus, he made an offer: \$8000 plus two RT tickets to Kathmandu for us to return and see if there were other such cups available. That was a difficult decision. We wanted to treat our first customer correctly, but it was hard to turn down the offer that would allow our close friends to achieve a life dream. We accepted the offer, explained the situation to the first dealer, and returned \$3000 to him, \$1000 more than the purchase price he had paid. He, of course, was extremely unhappy and told us he thought we were robbed because he thought it was worth \$25,000, and if we had sold it to him, he would have shared the profit with us. Yes, I bet.

Nima and Sangay did build their house in an up and coming Tibetan neighbourhood — Jyatha Thamel — and some years later, the house was estimated to be worth \$100,000.

We frequently ate homemade noodles while visiting Mr. and Mrs. Lama. She served them with chopped green onions, soy sauce, and a special delicious hot sauce she made. She taught me to make this and I keep it in the house all the time.



INSTRUCTIONS TO MAKE MRS. LAMA'S TIBETAN HOT SAUCE

Take equal portions of crushed fresh garlic and crushed red chillies in a metal or Pyrex pot and mix.

For a half cup of chillies and a half cup garlic, add approx. 2 rounded teaspoons of salt and mix. (This is a variable that should be adjusted to taste, and I never know the exact amount.)

Separately, pour enough olive oil into a different pot to approx. cover the chillies, garlic, salt mixture.

Heat the oil to the point of it starting to smoke. Watch

it carefully as you DO NOT WANT IT TO CATCH FIRE.

Put the pot with the chillies, garlic and salt outside on some newspaper. Pour the very hot oil on to the mixture and stir. It will boil up and may spill out. Thus, the newspaper. This is best done outside because the resultant gas that comes off the mixture will bother anyone's lungs.

Enjoy after it cools!



THE CABIN RESTAURANT AND THE EDEN HASH HOUSE

A dear friend was the medical director of an NGO in Nepal. The director of the NGO had an intimate relationship with a staff member he travelled with, so it seemed hypocritical for him to tell my friend that if he did not stop living with his girlfriend he would have to leave the country. He left.

But before leaving, he visited us one night bringing sweets from the Cabin Restaurant. Faith and I did not usually partake in this aspect of local culture, but I tasted a thumb-sized piece of cake. Faith found it so delicious, that she ate the rest of the slice without attention to the contents or possible consequences. Then she started vomiting. I must have changed the sheets six or eight times. That was insufficient. She was really sick, just repeating in a near whisper "Is this real?"

Later my friend told me that he had eaten a whole piece, liked it and thought of ordering another. Staff at the restaurant asked him if he lived far away. He said that he didn't. they said:

"That is good because if you eat another slice of this cake it is not clear that you will be able to walk."

On the night before ganja and hash were being made illegal in Nepal, under US pressure, my friend invited me to go visit the Eden Hash House with him. He shared a celebratory joint with the proprietors. I spent my visit trying to purchase

the Eden Hash House wooden sign. I offered \$100. They demanded \$200 and we were unable to strike a deal. I consider that one of my lost opportunities as I believe that sign was destined to become a classic treasure.

As an affect of the change of laws, the apothecary jars with ganja were placed under the counter rather than on top, and the sign announcing, “the Eden Hash House” was replaced by a sign reading: “Eden Rug Store.”

A few months later, the building which housed the Government of Nepal burned down. It was widely believed that the fire was caused by the third eye of Shiva who was angry that his sacrament was made illegal so sent out fire through his third eye to punish the government.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 1971 when I arrived in Nepal, the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) was approximately 2%. In the 2011 DHS, the CPR had increased to 50%.⁸ My dear old friend, Michael Commons, thinks I should take credit for that rise. Of course, that would be crazy.



UPON LEAVING NEPAL

We had become very close to Lama Tashi Gyeltsen. When we were getting ready to leave, Lama Tashi made a gift to us – the keys to the lock on his monastery in Tibet which he closed and locked when he fled the country.

⁸ Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal, and New Era, 2012. Nepal DHS 2011, Calverton, MD.

THE REPUBLIC OF THE MALDIVES



In 1973, the Republic of the Maldives was not a honeymoon venue or upscale vacation destination. With 1,000 islands with a mean altitude of only 4.8' above sea level, the country had a population of about 100,000. The capital Male (pronounced Ma- Lay), had a population of 10,000 on two square miles, there were only two cars in the capital, and a repressive authoritarian government which ostracized to an outlying atoll anyone who complained.

Hired by WHO to participate in a training program for community health workers, I first went to Delhi for a briefing. I had experienced a great deal of stress regarding employment before going and I did not feel well in Delhi. Thankfully, my dear old friend, John Ratcliffe, who had replaced me in Dhaka, and was later Chief of Party, was working for the World Bank in Delhi and I stayed at his house. I told him I did not feel well about jumping on a plane at this moment and was tense about handling that situation. His advice was:

“Bob, do you think WHO would want you to get on the plane if they knew how you felt now?” When I said “No,” he said, “then you have to tell them.”

It is interesting how just putting a problem on the table, rather than trying to hide it, solves at least half of the difficulty. I explained to WHO the next day that I had experienced considerable tension the last few months and would appreciate the opportunity to rest for a few days before going to the Maldives. No problem.

On route, stopping in Colombo, Sri Lanka, I had too much Scotch to drink and ate a curry which was fiery hot. The next morning, my hemorrhoids were greatly irritated,

and I was in considerable pain. The local project office gave me a bicycle to get around; I was not able to ride it. In fact, the only time I was not in pain was when I sat in the ocean, so I did that as often as I could.

We were teaching public health education principles to a group of community health workers. It was incredibly interesting when we took them out for fieldwork in outlying atolls. We chartered a boat. Underway, we trailed a heavy-duty monofilament line with a hook and a chicken feather which was tied to a vertical pole on the boat. There was no rod and reel but we consistently caught enough mahi mahi (dolphin fish) to provide fish curry to everyone on board for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Interestingly, after six weeks of fish curry for every meal, all I wanted to eat was more fish. Despite our fishing success, I learned that I should bring some equipment on such trips. It would have been great fun to catch all those mahi mahi with a rod, reel and lures.

The villagers on the atolls we visited were excited by our arrival and made us gifts of coconuts and fish. That was all they had. We wanted them to eat vegetables, but the closest thing to that was green leaves from the trees. Naturally, they suffered vitamin deficiencies. One of their richest sources was fish livers, which unfortunately, they threw away on the beach when cleaning their catch. This practice led to large, healthy crows. Those are not easy practices to change.

On a visit to a headman's house on one of the atolls I recall that on the wall was a long, curled bull whip. I asked what that was for and was told that it was used to punish those who violated serious laws. I asked for an example of a serious violation and was told: "adultery."

I obtained a prescription for some hemorrhoid medicine and went to the hospital dispensary. While waiting to receive my medicine I took note of what was stocked on the shelves. I saw they had Preparation H, one of my favorites for managing my condition. I asked the dispenser to sell me that instead. He said he could not do that because my prescription read for a different medicine. I asked:

"If my prescription read 'Preparation H' would you sell

it to me?”

“Of course.”

I took back the prescription, crossed out what had been prescribed and wrote “Preparation H” and received it, thankfully.

I bought some things on this trip which I still value – two woven grass mats, so intricate that they are like Persian rugs. They were the only such mats I saw and I would bet that they are not made today and probably have not been made in 40 years. I gave one of the two to John Ratcliffe for helping me get there and we still have the other.

MALAYSIA



THREE MONTHS AT THE HOLIDAY INN IN KUALA LUMPUR

WHO was supporting a health education training program in Malaysia, at the Public Health Institute in Kuala Lumpur. I was hired as one of three expat teachers in the program. There, one of my major achievements was learning to say: “Orang Malayu tidak makan daging bhabi – (Malaysian people don’t eat pork). For a while, stupidly, I tried to work that into every conversation. Finally, the head of the Public Health Institute said to me:

“Bob, don’t say that. Pork is so taboo that we don’t even say the word ‘pig.’ We use the phrase ‘short cow.’”

Some years later, we had a visiting delegation from Indonesia visit UC and I planned to take them for an ethnic lunch. I offered a variety of types of food available for them to choose. They answered: “Anything except Chinese is fine.” I answered:

“You mean Orang Indonesia tidak makan daging bhabi?” They responded:

“My god! He is fluent in Bahasa.”

I confessed that was the only thing I could say.

Malaysia has three ethnic groups, Malay, Indian and Chinese, three cultures and three cuisines. Each is great. My favorite was eating at traditional restaurants where the lunch was served on a banana leaf – fried fish, curried chicken – everything delicious,

My room at the Holiday Inn had a view of the local race course. On Sunday, I could sit in my room and watch the distant horse races.

Faith joined me for the last six weeks of this three-month assignment and did some shopping for her store. The night before leaving, an attractive, exceptionally well-endowed woman was singing in the lobby. The men in the audience were attentive, enthusiastic and expressed their appreciation with thunderous applause. She initiated a conversation with me:

“What are you doing here?”

“Working in public health.”

“Oh, you are working in health. Do you think I look healthy?”

In a joking mood, I answered: “I noticed right away that you look very healthy. Of course, it is not possible to tell for sure without a complete physical examination.”

Seemingly taking my joke seriously, she answered: “I would like that very much.”

(Unspoken: OK your place or mine?) Actually spoken, “I am so sorry. My wife is in our room packing as we leave tomorrow.”

Prior to departure, I arranged for an elaborate dinner at the Holiday Inn for the students, staff and expats working in the program. My thinking was that I was indebted to everyone for a great experience and had profited financially from the per diem allowance and I would like to share it with others. In retrospect, I am sorry that I did not share the idea of having such a party with the other expat faculty and allow them to share the hosting. I don't know whether anyone else did anything like that, but it would have been nicer as a group effort.

In 1991, 14 years later, I returned to a meeting in Kuala Lumpur to present research findings on the availability and quality of services in Kenya (the first Situation Analysis study) and stayed at the Holiday Inn again. The hotel was surrounded by skyscrapers and the view of the race course was completely obliterated. Interestingly, a staff member asked me how my wife was, “with the very long hair.” Faith had made quite an impression.

A woman who worked for an international agency associated with our meeting approached me for a private conversation. She explained that her boss was oppressing her with

sexual suggestions, and frequently pulling and snapping her bra strap. I am not sure why she selected me to hear this story. I thought her husband who was an American, should tell her boss that if this behavior did not stop, he would beat the crap out of him and I shared that view with her. Also, I circulated the information to important gender focused principals in my organization, and the boss was soon replaced.



VISIT TO BORNEO

We left Kuala Lumpur on 7/7/77, my 35th birthday, to fly to Kuching, East Malaysia, on the Island of Borneo. I had waited for this date since childhood. My father had given me a tie clip in the form of a \$100-win ticket on the 7th horse in the 7th race at Haialia Race Track on that date. According to my father's story, the race track would honor the ticket. Well, I lost the tie clip but still thought the date was very auspicious. Indeed, it was. Knowing my interest, Faith wrote Lama Tashi in Boudanath and suggested that my favorite place in Nepal – the Great Stupa at Boudanath – should be painted in saffron to honor me on that special date. The monks responded that it was a great idea and they would proceed to make the arrangements. There were three ways to do it, but without time to correspond further they would just choose the middle path.

I sent a telex to my good friend, Andy Fisher, who was in Nepal asking him to visit the Stupa and take a picture for me. He did that but found that, as the Dalai Lama's birthday is July 6th, people naturally associated the painting with him rather than Bob Miller.

In Borneo, we hired a Chinese guide to take us to visit the Iban people who live in longhouses in the jungle. The guide stopped along the way to purchase biscuits, coffee and rice wine. We drove about three hours, stopped and walked a few hours into the jungle.

When we came across the long house, we could hear the pigs grunting loudly under the house. The hygiene system in place was that people defecated through a hole in the floor and the pigs clean up the residue. The noise of the pigs, and the walk in the jungle to such a strange place, disturbed me and I needed to calm down before entering the longhouse. We sat for a few minutes for me to collect myself.

We came across the Iban people on a good day. There had been a drought and it rained on the day of our arrival, which was considered lucky. Instead of farming their pepper plants or hunting, everyone stayed indoors working on their crafts. We saw weaving, basket making, wood carving and more. I thought it would be fabulous to put the entire longhouse on a 747 and take everyone to the museum in Kroeber Hall, the Anthropology and Art building on the UC campus.

In the evening, several people were encouraged to put on their dance costumes and dance to their gamelan orchestra. All who did so were rewarded with the treats we had brought. And I took polaroid photos of the dancers with the type of camera they had never seen before and distributed them. One Iban man said to me in translation:

“We are so stupid. We have no idea at all how that camera works.”

I responded (for translation):

“You are not stupid! There are only 2-3 people in the world who know how this camera works.”

That night, Faith and I slept on the veranda of the longhouse. I could see in the rafters the swords that the old men had used in head hunting in their youth, prior to the Second World War, when it was outlawed. Faith has exceedingly long hair. In fact, it hangs below her knees, still. I was afraid that her hair might stimulate the head-hunting juices flowing among the old men and, with that on my mind, I had difficulty sleeping.

YEMEN



ARRIVING IN SANAA WITHOUT A VISA

These days, airlines are very careful about letting anyone on a plane without checking their visa status. This is because airlines have to take financial responsibility for transporting someone out of a country requiring visas if they bring someone in who does not have a valid visa. As incredible as it sounds, on this initial trip to begin a project in Yemen, evidently, I did not know a visa was required. Also, I was expecting my good friend, Gus Gustafson, the Project's Chief of Party, to meet me at the airport, welcome me and manage my arrival. Unfortunately, Gus had not yet arrived in Yemen and I was not met. It was Friday afternoon and all government offices were closed for the holiday.

The Yemeni immigration official, who like most everyone else, was carrying an automatic weapon, directed me to show him my passport. When he demanded to see my Yemeni visa, I said that I didn't have one. He pointed to a bench and told me:

"Sit there! You are on the next plane out of the country."

I responded by saying:

"I am a very important person and should not be kicked out of the country. You are making a terrible mistake."

"Anyone who is as important as you say that you are could not possibly be so stupid as to arrive in Yemen without a visa."

This I took as a challenge. I began to rummage through my papers looking for something that would support a good argument. I found my agency's contract, signed by the Minister of Health. I showed it to the immigration official and said:

"Look at this. I am here to see the Minister of Health, at his invitation. This is his signature on my agency's contract."

Do you think the Minister of Health would like his guest to be thrown out of the country? Or do you think this issue might await a solution tomorrow, when your government offices will be open?"

"OK. It can wait. But I am keeping your passport."

I collected my luggage, grabbed a taxi and headed to the Sheraton Hotel where I changed into my swim trunks and went into the warm sun to sit by the pool. Chit chatting with other guests, I recounted my airport story. One fellow responded:

"You arrived in this country without a visa and you are sitting by the pool at the Sheraton Hotel? Buddy, you are doing very well."

On my next trip, I travelled (with a visa), with a gentleman from the World Bank, our funding agency. My Bank colleague seemed to have a very poor opinion of Yemenis, and fought bitterly with the local project director daily. On the flight out together, he asked me:

"So, what do you think of Yemen?"

It seemed to me this was something of a trick question. If I loved it, it would be clear that my views were contrary to his. If I hated it, it would not be good for my pending work. I needed something in the middle and diplomatic.

"Well, doctor, it is my job to recruit advisors. And it is good for the recruiter to have a positive attitude toward the country for which he is recruiting. Therefore, I looked carefully for features I could appreciate. I am happy to say that I found some."

"Yes, you did well."

I began my brief study of Arabic in Yemen. When I learn a few words of a language, I usually go out and try to use them in a real-life situation. (In Afghanistan, this got me into trouble. I knew two words of Farsi, choobash (good) and carbuzi (melon). Armed with these two words, I hurried into the bazaar with Faith to buy a watermelon. Picking up one, and patting it, I repeated several times:

"Choobash? Choobash? Choobash carbuzi?"

After about five times, the seller reached over to Faith,

squeezed her breast and said:

“Choobash! Choobash!”

I was standing there, expecting the Afghan was armed, and I did not know what to do. I threw down the melon and we walked away.

Similarly, in Yemen, my first attempt to use Arabic was to go to a store and try to buy Shamron brand bottled water. Entering the store, I looked around and then spoke:

“Aish maya Shamron? (I need Shamron water.)”

The store keeper answered:

“Sorry, we don’t have any mushrooms.”

It appeared to me that Yemini did not expect foreigners to speak Arabic and were not prepared for it. The same was true in Bangladesh. Anyway, I am terrible with languages!

People ask me:

“Bob, you have worked in so many countries, how many languages do you speak?”

I always like to answer that question with the comment:

“I prefer to tell you how many languages I have studied. Eight! In actual fact, I only speak one.”

As time passed, I noted several interesting items: fabulous architecture in Sanaa, guns everywhere – mostly AK 47s – beautiful jewellery (“Look at the quality! Made by Jews.”) And several burka-clad women. At this time, women were covered from head to toe with black garments. Only about 1.5 inches of their faces across their eyes were left uncovered so they could see. After a month or so, I began to notice that the eyes alone could be very interesting. One could be attracted to a woman’s eyes. (“Was she returning my glances?”)

On a rural trip with four or five of our project advisors who I had recruited, we were sitting in the shade when a group of local men showed up, each carrying an AK 47. We asked if we could inspect their rifles and have our picture taken holding them. Without hesitation, they handed their weapons to us!



HOW TO BE FRIENDS IN YEMEN

One day, after a long drive with the Project driver, he said to me:

“I would like to invite you to an afternoon khat session so we can be friends.” (Khat is the leaf of a small shrub which has mildly stimulating and hallucinogenic properties. Most Yemeni men and many women chew and stuff their bulging cheeks with a big wad of it every afternoon while sitting with a bottle of water in non-hierarchical groups. It is said that much local business is done during these khat chewing sessions.)

“I would like to be your friend, but I have a bad attitude toward drugs. My kids have had trouble with drugs and addiction so I avoid them. Can we be friends without me joining you to chew khat?”

“We Yemenis don’t know how to be friends without khat.”

At a later time, I managed a UNFPA-funded project that involved both Jordan and Yemen. We were going to train local workers to conduct Situation Analysis studies for assessing the availability and quality of reproductive health services in both countries, and we held a meeting of trainers from both countries in Amman, Jordan.

I liked Jordan very much. I loved the food, the beautiful buildings made of white marble, the Roman ruins, and so much more. On a field trip, I noticed the regular signs pointing out the mileage to Akaba. And like in the movie, Lawrence of Arabia, we saw the sharp black stones his warriors had to walk their camels across to attack Akaba from the rear (recall that their guns were permanently placed pointing toward the sea).



MY FIRST AND ONLY JOKE IN ARABIC

With this group, I made my first and only joke ever in Arabic. There is a wonderful restaurant in Amman, called Khan Zaman. The name translates as: “the way things used to be,” and true to their name, they only serve delicious traditional foods to the accompaniment of traditional music. The restaurant is in an old castle-like building, dark with arched ceilings. It may have been the horse stables of an old palace.

This restaurant was greatly enjoyed by all our trainees and the evening was a great success. One of the Yemeni trainees, exclaimed excitedly:

“We should have a Khan Zaman Restaurant in Sanaa!”

I responded:

“No, you don’t need a Khan Zaman Restaurant in Sanaa, because there, everything is Khan Zaman!”



MILTON ROEMER’S STUDY OF THE HEALTH SYSTEM

Milton Roemer was a distinguished professor, who chaired the Department of Health Services at the UCLA School of Public Health for eight years. Milton had studied the health systems of 50 countries. This was no easy task as he ran afoul of the U.S. Government during the McCarthy era, and had his passport confiscated in Geneva, made valid only for return to the U.S. Thus, he fled to Canada. Milt was a remarkably prolific writer and contributed greatly to the field of public health. His works, sometimes authored with his wife, Ruth, included *National Health Systems of the World. Vol I: The Countries and Vol II: Issues*. In total, he had authored 32

books and 430 articles. I gather his studies were mostly done on short consultations or at a distance because my experience with him, both in Burma and Yemen, suggested that he had not lived in a developing country, and may not have been sensitive to the subtleties of cultural differences.

The holiest place in Rangoon was Shewedegon Pagoda. Everyone who visits Rangoon visits this fantastic shrine. Its golden spire is visible from many parts of the city. All visitors are expected to take off their shoes and socks and walk barefoot around the Pagoda. Milt kept his socks on, much to the displeasure of Burmese visitors who were circumambulating the Pagoda. He claimed that he had a fungal infection on his feet and was protecting the rest of the visitors. My view is that he should not have visited the Pagoda if he could not abide by the “rules.”

Milt’s experience in Rangoon reminds me of a related experience I had in Ghana at a later time. While visiting a village, I was told there was a local holy place with a fetish god of war still in use and I could visit and see it if I wished. My first question was:

“Why would people continue to visit the god of war, when there were no wars?”

“The fetish has changed. Now it is for protecting travellers.”

I had been purchasing the normal tourist oriented African “art,” always in hopes that I was getting something authentic, but had never seen a real fetish in its natural surroundings and agreed to the visit.

The fetish was located in a small hut in an overgrown area of the village where all of the local chickens congregated. When we went there, I was checked out on the rules for visiting the fetish. I could not have had sex in the last 24 hours. I figured solo experiences did not count so said that was fine. I had to have a bottle of schnapps to pour on the ground as an offering. That was fine. I could not wear a shirt. No problem. And I could not wear shoes and socks. This was a dilemma. As an old anthropology student, I felt under obligation to have this great adventure. But on both aesthetic and public

health grounds, I did not wish to walk barefoot through the ubiquitous chicken shit. I did not see the fetish and confess I was thinking of Milt's experience in Rangoon.

In Yemen, Milt wanted to interview staff in three types of health facilities – an isolated rural clinic, a health centre and a hospital and hoped he would be able to describe the health system of the country with which he was previously unfamiliar. He wanted to visit these three kinds of facilities in one day and a Yemeni physician volunteered to be our driver for our expedition. Milt had a about a hundred questions, and the visits at each place lasted for hours. To arrive at our isolated clinic, we had to drive up a rock-strewn stream bed which threw his back out, but slowed him only a little. We learned that our driver had previously been the beloved physician at this remote clinic and the villagers wanted to prepare a feast for us in celebration of his return. Milton indicated, reluctantly, that our schedule did not permit us to partake of their hospitality.

Later, after an exhausting day without any opportunity to eat food, Milton said to our driver:

“If you name a good restaurant, I will host a meal for us there.”

The doctor/driver said:

“I will take you to a good restaurant and I will host the meal.”

Milt argued against this suggestion:

“No, you have been driving all day helping us, it is my obligation to host the meal so I can pay you back.”

The physician said:

“You are guests, so I will host.”

Milt responded to this, with a standard American solution, totally out of keeping with Yemeni culture by saying:

“Have you heard of Dutch Treat?”

At this point in the conversation, out of a kind of exasperation of seeing a violation of the most widely shared norm in Asia, I socked Milt in the arm! I certainly did not plan to do that. It just burst out of me.

A few minutes later, our physician/driver stopped to buy

us bottled water to wash the dust off of our hands and face. Milton was in the front seat, I was in the back. I got out of the car, approached Milt, and through an open window said to him,

“You know Milt, these are very hospitable people.”

To this he responded:

“I know that!”



KABABS WITH KETCHUP

An old friend, Mahmud Roshan, who was a co-student in my doctoral program and who I had hired for the project in Yemen, invited me to have dinner with him and his son in Sanaa. His son, Shami, was an extremely intelligent, 6'+ tall, broad shouldered, handsome young man. We all chatted on various subjects, during which I noticed that Shami had put a considerable amount of ketchup on his kabobs. At the conclusion of dinner, Mahmud got down to business.

“Bob, my son, Shami, has been accepted to a medical school in Canada. Canada is your part of the world. So, I want you to share with him your advice for living in your environment.”

“Shami, I have only one piece of advice for you. I'll give you my advice and then I'll explain it. Shami, don't eat so much ketchup. I tell you this because I have enormous confidence in how well you will do on your own, and this advice is, I think, the only piece of advice you appear to need and that I know. Why, you ask? You see, heavy ketchup use is a kind of stigma of the lower classes in my country. I believe you will be extremely successful because of your intelligence and other factors. You will be hobnobbing with the cream of Western society – indeed, some would call it 'the ruling class.' I don't want you to be handicapped by this stigma. There is nothing else I know that I think you will need.”

About 15 years later, I needed to contact Mahmud and

called a number I had for him at his son's house. Shami answered. Fulfilling my predictions, he was now Head of Cardiac Surgery at a major university hospital. I told him who I was and asked if he remembered me.

"Remember you! I haven't eaten ketchup since our last conversation."



BATTER UP

At an agency in which I worked in the 1980s (Western Consortium for Public Health), the Director, Joe Hafey, liked to take the staff to the opening day of a local baseball team, either the SF Giants or the Oakland Athletics. Although this was done every year, I never joined the group. I have always found baseball extremely boring and was completely uninterested. But one thing about that time which has completely disappeared, and many would say "good riddance," was that men and women working together could enjoy joking relationships, even with sexual themes. I had such a relationship with a beautiful colleague who was an ex model — Denise. I recall she told me once that she was in a restaurant having lunch, and a fellow customer, walking out, put a \$50 bill on her table and said: "It was such a pleasure just looking at you that I want you to have this little reward." I did not hide my attraction towards her. Of course, as usual, nothing ever came of this, except this memorable chat we had about baseball. Walking by her desk prior to the opening of baseball season, she asked me:

"Bob, are you going to the baseball game?"

I replied with an old cliché:

"Denise, watching baseball is as boring as watching paint dry on the wall."

To which Denise, who knew very well how I felt about her, replied:

"Well Bob, how would you like to come to my house and

watch the paint dry on the wall?”

“Denise, I would love to come to your house and watch the paint dry on the walls. However, I would rather watch the paint dry on your ceiling.”

Not long after this exchange, Joe asked me if I were attending the baseball game to which I gave the old clichéd response.

To this he said: “Bob, this is not about baseball. It is about staff morale and cohesion!” That was a perspective I had not considered. Naturally, I went with the staff. It was as boring as I had expected. At the time of the 7th inning stretch, Joe said: “Bob, what do you think?” To this I responded:

“Well Joe, all I can say is that if I have to sit through something like this every seven years, I want a raise.”

THAILAND



LIFE LOOKS DIFFERENT AFTER TWO BEERS

Thailand was the jumping off point for Dhaka, Kathmandu and Rangoon and I went through Bangkok for short trips often. I have decided not to discuss events in Thailand except to say that I learned that one could lose track of himself there especially after two beers. In fact, I developed a theory on this:

“Life looks different after two beers.”



NEGOTIATING THE BURMA CONTRACT

But I had a very interesting experience there with the USAID Contract Officer who had invited me to come and negotiate the Burma contract for Technical Assistance from the Western Consortium to the Burma Primary Health Care II Project. I had written the proposal with the help of Paul Mico, and had fended off an attack from Jerry Grossman, the head of the Health Education Program at the UH SPH. I had called the Dean of Mahidol University School of Public Health to discuss proposing some short-term training for Burmese at Mahidol. Later Jerry attacked me for not soliciting his ideas since he was sitting right next to the dean when I called. I told him I did not know he was in Thailand and certainly did not know he was sitting next to the dean during our phone conversation. He never forgave me.

Our proposal included only 25% time for the project

manager at the Western Consortium office. Although I had proposed this, and was scheduled to take the position, I had serious second thoughts about the appropriateness of the amount of time for the position.

The contract officer had about 10 topics he wanted to discuss. To me, it seemed very strange that we didn't settle anything during the first day of discussions, or even the second. We would start discussing item 1 on his agenda, get to item 10 and then start over again at one. I was especially concerned that we were not settling my position as half time. I explained to him that there was a great deal of work at the home office – recruiting consultants, lining up and scheduling our consultant trips, preparing consultants to be knowledgeable about Burma on arrival (as was made clear by the two USAID representatives who visited the Western Consortium prior to the Request for Proposals), and purchasing and arranging shipping for the long lists of materials which was part of the contract, arranging and supervising academic programs for trainees who would be sent to Western Consortium Schools (Berkeley and UCLA), etc. It seemed not to be influencing the contract officer's thinking. We would start at item 1 and go to 10 over and over.

Finally, in a very frustrated state and not really thinking too clearly, I said to him:

“Listen, I have tried to explain to you how important it is to me for the manager's position to be half time rather than a quarter time. I say this because I think it is really a full-time job. I know I can do two jobs but I can't do four. Thus, if you don't allow the manager position to be half time, I won't sign the contract.”

His response was:

“Bob, it is my job to know when someone will and won't sign and I know you will sign.” I think he was correct, but that is not what I said.

“You have me wrong. I will bring the contract back to the Western Consortium, and Joe Hafey will sign it. But I will put in a memo to the files indicating that we are initiating the project with insufficient resources available to manage it at

the home office. If that is the way you want to begin, we will.”

That was the end of the negotiation. All the 10 points were settled in the next 15 minutes, including the management position at half-time. In truth, I always thought I was never forgiven for how I handled that negotiation. The contract officer’s agreement was needed for anyone to bill for six days instead of five. It was not a problem obtaining his permission for anyone but me.



TROUBLE WITH THE DEAN

Dean Gerald Michael of the University of Hawaii School of Public Health was not an easy fellow with whom to get along. I had particular difficulty ever since the staff Board of Director’s meeting when Jerry tried to dissuade the Consortium and me from seeking the World Bank contract in Yemen. Indeed, he looked over to me, and with his finger, gave me the throat cutting sign.

Jerry was a strong supporter of Jewish causes and his participation with an agency working in Yemen was an anathema to him. As further background, Jim Lovegren, the Executive Director of the Western Consortium, asked me one day if I knew any appropriate comments he could include in a card for Jerry on the occasion of the son of this highly religiously oriented father marrying a Catholic woman. He wanted to have something in Yiddish or Hebrew that would be appropriate. I said I did not know but that I would ask my father.

I explained the need to my dad, mentioning that Dean Michael was proud of the fact that he had never ridden in a Mercedes or Volkswagen. My dad responded:

“You mean the guy is so Jewish he has been circumcised three times.”

My father could not supply the requested comment for Jim.

As a result of Jerry Michael's position on Yemen, I asked the Yemeni MOH staff about possible background considerations on our personnel: They said to me:

"We know what you are talking about. We will not ask."

That was good enough for me but not for Jerry Michael. Thus, when a Jewish guy applied for a position, I was interested, in part to prove to Jerry Michael that his concerns were not well founded. However, the more I investigated the applicant's background, the more I came across red flags. Nevertheless, I called him in for an interview and explained the nature of the project. When I asked if he had questions, he asked:

"Will I be able to buy Kosher wine in Sanaa for Friday prayers?"

The next part of the conversation I suspect now was a mistake and against the law. I said that I did not think that the wine was available, but the question raised another issue. I explained that the walls of Sanaa were papered with pictures of Yasser Arafat, and I wondered if he would feel pressure to take up a religiously charged political issue whenever Arafat's name was mentioned.

At the conclusion of this meeting, the applicant complained to Dean Michael that I was anti-Semitic. A colleague of mine in the Consortium, Shoshanna Churgin, who was on better terms with Dean Michael, mentioned to him that the accusation of antisemitism against me was crazy and he knew it. Dean Michael reportedly replied:

"Yes, I know it. But I hate to pass up an opportunity to cause Miller grief."

After complaining of my antisemitism, the applicant found himself in Hawaii and went to see Dean Michael (without an appointment). He announced his desire to see Dean Michael on the visit and was requested to sit in the reception room and Dean Michael would see him when he was free. After a few minutes, the applicant angrily approached the receptionist saying something about how he thought Dean Michael would be interested in the antisemitism at the Western Consortium, and the fact that he obviously was not

was a surprise and shock to him. He stormed out of Dean Michael's office.

I confess I was happy to hear about this occurrence because I felt vulnerable for even discussing a religious issue with the applicant and was happy that the applicant demonstrated that he was something of a loose cannon.



BROWN SUIT

One of the 14 consultants we hired on Yemen, a Mr. Brown, was hired as the facilities architect. Brown travelled to Yemen with his girlfriend. The girlfriend's 14-year-old daughter was left in the U.S. to finish her semester and I was asked if I would escort her to Sanaa on my next trip. The daughter was a lovely young woman and we enjoyed traveling together. I asked her how she felt about going to Yemen for two years and she explained that she was only going for one year because Brown would figure a way to get out of the contract and return to the U.S.

We visited the pyramids of Egypt together along the way but only stayed a few minutes because I could not stand the strategies of the hawkers.

"Please accept this present as a symbol of our friendship. We are brothers, etc."

A year after joining the project, Brown reported that the Government of Yemen and the Western Consortium were in violation of his contract which said that at the end of one year, the government had something like 10 days to renew his appointment, and that if they did not, he was free to return home. Brown then filed suit against the Western Consortium claiming that we had represented the job as a two-year position but he only received one year of employment.

I felt horrible about these developments. I talked to him and explained that I wished he would not sue us. I recalled

how I had always been available to help him through difficulties. When he kicked his girlfriend out of their apartment with her in the nude, I was the one who wrapped a blanket around her and talked him into accepting her back in.

I was in favour of calling the girlfriend's daughter to testify about his plans to only stay one year. But Council staff did not want to call a minor to testify. In the end, a settlement was reached in which the Council paid Brown \$20,000. I thought this outcome was sickening, but felt partly responsible so I felt sickened about both of us.

BURMA



I loved Burma. It fast became my favorite country. We stayed at the Kandowgi hotel, a poorly equipped living situation on the shore of a beautiful lake (an exotic dump reflective of the state of the city of Rangoon at that time).

The Burmese staff were a tremendous pleasure to work with. They worked hard despite the poor conditions and low pay. They were committed to the welfare of the Burmese people in a way that I thought was rare in my experience.

Dr. Khin Tar Tar, the Deputy Director of MCH, became a great friend. Towards the end of the contract, I experienced a benefit for consultants who were appreciated by the MOH. The Burmese staff asked me to go take a look at the community activities in Pagan, in Northern Burma, and Dr. Khin Tar Tar accompanied Faith and me on the trip.

Pagan is a place where 3000 monasteries, temples and other religious structures were erected by kings in the 10th and 11th centuries. The architecture and much of the construction was beautiful. It was said that the king would visit temples under construction and attempt to shove a needle between bricks. If he succeeded, the masons were killed. I have visited many fabulous places in the world, Pagan is a favorite.

In the last few months of the project, I replaced Ray Carlaw as Chief of Party. Ray was a dear friend, a member of my dissertation committee, and our Chief of Party in Burma. I will never forget that in New Guinea, Ray had gone into the jungle, selected a tree, cut it down, sawed it into boards, and built a sailboat from that wood. He told me that once he was lounging below deck with his very young child on board when he heard a splash next to the boat. He quickly dived into the murky, crocodile infested river, and with great luck,

managed to grab his child and get back on the boat with no harm to anyone.

Ray made a positive impression on the Burmese during his first introductory visit. Members of the MOH took him to see a training program in process in a dilapidated building. Afterwards, they asked Ray what he thought of the training. Ray responded that he thought the training was pretty good. MOH staff then asked if he had noticed the state of the venue. Ray said:

“I have conducted many training programs while sitting under a shade tree with students and therefore I did not put much weight on the state of the building when making my evaluation of the program.”

I think this comment won over the MOH staff!

Ray had an extremely insightful comment about me. One day Ray said:

“Bob, I think you flirt with disaster because you so much enjoy talking your way out of difficult situations.”

I have thought about that a great deal and recognize the truth of his thoughts especially with regard to my younger days. I hope it is less true now that I am 78 years old! Somewhere in a file in my garage I have a copy of the letter I wrote to Ray when he was dying from bone cancer. I expressed how much he had meant to me as a role model who I had strived to emulate. I was speaking truth from my heart, but if I remember correctly, it seemed to me that his humility interfered with his ability to accept my high praise.

There was some delicacy to me replacing Ray in the last few months of the project. I was young, and our project consultants included Roger Detels, Dean of the UCLA School of Public Health, and many full professors from the schools, including Ralph Frerichs, Chair in Epidemiology at UCLA, and Milton Roemer. This was never an issue raised by our consultants but it was on my mind. Faith and my two young boys accompanied me for the last months of the project and we lived in Ray’s house and continued employing his staff.



AARON'S FIRST BIRTHDAY

My favourite project in my favourite country was a Primary Health Care effort in Burma. I had taken the main role in writing the proposal and had negotiated the contract in Bangkok. Everything was tremendously exciting and memorable.

As part of the Project, we had Burmese students in our Masters of Public Health training programs in our participating schools of public health. I liked the Burmese students a great deal and tried to plan outings for them to see the sights and have cultural experiences. One time I took the Burmese students to Reno, Nevada. We drove to Sacramento from Berkeley in my car. In Sacramento, I borrowed my Father-in-law's Mercedes Benz to make sure I had a reliable and comfortable trip. It was winter, and as we drove over Donner Summit, I noticed that the outdoor temperature that I could read on the instrument panel's thermometer, said it was 10 degrees F. at our elevation of around 8,000 feet. I stopped the car at a vista point near the summit and said to my Burmese colleagues:

"I have stopped the car so you could open the door and feel the cold. It is colder outside than you have ever imagined it could be and I want you to experience it."

They exited the car for a few minutes and agreed with my assessment.

Another time, I took a couple of Burmese students to my niece's birthday party. As it turned out, this was only one of three parties celebrating her birthday and my niece was almost drowning in presents. One of my Burmese colleagues, remarking on this, said:

"This party and all of the presents are very nice! We have a different custom in Burma. To celebrate someone's birthday, we invite poor people or monks to receive offerings to honor the individual's birth."

I responded:

“Your Burmese custom sounds wonderful. As it turns out, my family and I will be in Burma for a couple of months beginning in May. We will celebrate my youngest son’s first birthday. I would love to do it in the Burmese style.”

Partly because my colleagues at the Ministry of Health were such good friends, and partly because Faith is Buddhist, everyone in the Ministry wanted the party to be implemented perfectly. Soothsayers were consulted as to the auspicious time for the celebration which turned out to be 3:30 AM. Our cook prepared a lovely feast for the monks who were invited to our home to receive a selection of offerings that would honor Aaron.

Dr. Khin Tar Tar was in charge of providing instructions on what should be done. She said:

“Bob, you stand here while I greet the monks on arrival and wash their feet. Then you greet them.”

I said: “No, I will greet the monks and wash their feet on arrival and then you greet them.”

Dr Khin Tar Tar responded:

“Don’t be silly. Americans do not wash monks’ feet. I shall do it and then you greet them.”

“But Dr. Khin Tar Tar,” I said, “I understand it is my honor to wash their feet.”

“OK! That is different. You greet them and wash their feet and then I will greet them.”

Altogether, it was a beautiful experience.



A LETTER TO MY MENTOR

I wrote to my mentor, Bill Griffiths, at the School of Public Health from Rangoon. This is the individual who allowed me to enter the program, hired me to go to Bangladesh, and later hired me to teach courses in the school. I wrote to Bill saying that I loved Burma and was having the best personal and

professional experience of my life. I said: "Not a day goes by that I am not thankful both for the skills you taught me and for the unusual confidence you had in me." Upon my return, as was my custom, I invited him to lunch. He said: "Bob, I got your letter. Do you know how many letters of recommendation I am requested to write every year? About 300. Do you know how many letters of thanks I get for doing that? About one or two."



AUDITING THE BURMA CONTRACT

A visit from a U.S. Government auditor is a tricky business. One wants to be friendly, but one cannot be too friendly. For example, it would be absolutely wrong to invite the auditor to lunch. But while engaged in small talk with the auditor, we discovered that we were both interested in boats. I happened to have a brochure of a small motorboat that interested me. I took it from my pocket, but explained that even though I had a partner, at \$15,000, we could not afford it.

His reaction was: "I don't know, Bob. It seems to me that anyone who can afford a \$10,000 Rolex watch can afford a \$15,000 boat." My response was: "Sir, you have overestimated the cost of my watch by \$9,960." His response was: "Oh, where did you get it Bangkok?" And I said: "Yes."

The auditor went through our records, and complained about the travel books I had purchased for our staff, indicating that he was going to disallow that expense (a few hundred dollars). I said: "That does not seem fair to me. The early USAID visitors to our agency stressed that they wanted our consultants to know something about the country and we should properly prepare them to come."

The auditor gave me a great lesson on this matter when he said: "Bob, perhaps you don't know how this is played. It is my job to find some expense to disallow. Now if you do not

want me to disallow the purchase of those books, I can review your records and find something else to disallow.” Of course, I thanked him for the lesson and withdrew my complaint.

Upon leaving Burma I had a small issue to deal with. I had bought an antique ivory, beautiful Buddha. But it was illegal to export Buddhas from Burma, and Faith reminded me that, since I loved the country, it was important that I follow their rules. I brought this issue up to Dr. Khin Tar Tar.

“Dr. Khin Tar Tar, if a person bought a Buddha that he was not supposed to have, and he wanted to present it to a friend in Burma, would that friend think badly of him for having purchased it? Or would she be happy to receive it as a sign of deep friendship?”

“A person who received such a present would be deeply grateful and have nothing but warm feelings towards the person who presented such a meaningful gift.”

She liked it very much!

Nearing completion of this assignment, my Burmese assistant, Tin Moe Thu (AKA Annie), asked me:

“Bob, would you allow me to show my respect for you?”

I did not know what this question meant. But I agreed. Then she demonstrated the Burmese custom of Gadaw. She knelt down before me, and put her hands together as Burmese do in prayer. This is not the kind of thing American’s are generally comfortable with, but I had washed monk’s feet, bowed my head to take blessings from a Buddha, and felt that I was participating in local Burmese culture as a respectful visitor.

In Burma, I had thought I had done my best work, and had wonderful help from Tin Moe Thu. I told her that I had been extremely happy and felt I had done well in Burma, and owed much of that to her assistance. I told her that, as she had helped me so much, I would like to do something nice for her. “What would you like?”

“I would like to come to the United States.”

“OK. I am not a wealthy man, but I can supply you with a RT ticket, and some spending money, but it won’t be a lot, and you can live in our house and help take care of the kids.”

I explained that it was difficult to obtain a visa because

the U.S. was always afraid that people would not return to their country. “You will be called for a visa interview and will be asked if you plan to return. The only way you can obtain the visa is if you really believe and communicate that you will return.”

I was also called to the U.S. Embassy as her guarantor. The main question asked of me was, “will I guarantee that she will return.”

“I guarantee that she will return unless she falls in love and marries an American. That I have no control over.”

We introduced her to our friend, Steven Halverson. They fell in love and married. I knew her in Burma as Annie. She now is Win Halverson.

I would also like to mention Aaron’s nanny, Frieda. She was so dedicated to his well-being, that when Aaron napped in the afternoon, Frieda sat by his side gazing at him continuously so she could shoo away any mosquito that might land on him. When we left, Faith wrote such a beautiful letter about her dedication and our trust that she was hired by the American Ambassador.

KENYA



SECURITY ISSUES

No doubt that our concerns about the security situation in Kenya were amplified by our visit with a senior member of USAID in Washington, who knew the country well, prior to our departure from the U.S. Andy and I asked about his views on the security situation in Kenya. He answered with a recommendation for the calibre handgun we should bring with us for home protection.

“But I thought it was illegal to import guns into Kenya.”

“I’m not talking legality. I’m talking survival!”

“So how do you import the illegal weapon?”

“You place it in the middle of a large shipment crate.”

“God forbid my son comes home late, makes a noisy entrée, and I put three bullets in him.”

Thus, after checking into the Norfolk Hotel (the bastion of the “Out of Africa” cult, outside of Karen) after we arrived, not quite fully cognizant of feelings about the country’s colonial past. We were reluctant to walk even the two blocks to the Curry Pot restaurant to have their delicious chicken dinner. And when we went out looking for a house to rent, we had a number of well-known rules in mind.

There should be neighbors on each side of the house, and behind it.

There should not be any open fields in front or in back which might allow an intruder to approach your compound wall unseen.

Better still would be a high governmental minister living on the block as he would have an armed guard in front of his house.

A thick growth of bougainvillea in front is good as it is

planted over random stretches of barbed wire unseen as the plant matures. (Faith once suggested that a terrific title for a book on Nairobi would be “Barbed Wire and Bougainvillea.”)

I found a nice house on Thego Road in the Loresho neighbourhood on the first day of looking which met most of the security criteria, and rented it. My family enjoyed living there for 3.5 years.

Cars were also a security concern. A female colleague, Annabel Erulkar, who later married Placide Tapsoba, was in the market for a car and told me she wanted a station wagon. My response was:

“But if you get a station wagon you will not be able to hide valuables in the trunk.”

“That is why I want a station wagon. I do not want to be placed in the trunk by car hijackers.”

In time, I got over security fears, but not concerns. When you lock the internal doors of your house before going to sleep every night, you know that what you are trying to do is slow down intruders, giving time for the security company to react to you pressing the “panic button” which summons them. Indeed, after 3.5 years, when I took my family back to the U.S., and then returned to Kenya, I was surprised at the extent of the relief I felt knowing my family was in the U.S. When returning to Nairobi a few years later, I thought: “When I lived here I was under the illusion that I belonged.”

I took charge of buying cars for our project and chose an Isuzu trooper for the project, which I would have personal use of when it was not needed for fieldwork. I also bought a 1967 Volkswagen fast back saloon as a personal vehicle, an interesting old car, entirely grey. We named that car “Mzee” (wise old man) after its color.

Soon after its purchase, we drove Mzee to the Nairobi National Park where it stalled and would not start. I got out of the car to push it in sight of five lions sitting in a tree about 100 yards away. I told my kids:

“Please keep counting the lions in the tree and let me know immediately with a loud shout if you do not see five in the tree.”

Thinking about that retrospectively, I did not take into

consideration the tall grass between the car and the tree. Luckily, we were able to have a ranger summon a tow truck.

I informed my employer of an interesting arrangement regarding the Isuzu and Mzee. My young children were enrolled in the Kenya International School. One day, early in my assignment, miscreants laid out boards with nails on the road to the school. A woman driving her kids to school kept moving despite four blown tires and managed to escape. But my “Mzee” was not that reliable. I decided that I would drive the Isuzu to the office when the Isuzu was not needed, and Faith could use it to drive our kids to school. I hated the idea of her being in a broken-down car in Nairobi. There were no objections to my suggested arrangements from my employer.

While talking security, I will tell one more incident. At a holiday picnic for Americans, probably a 4th of July event, a guy approached me to chat. He said that he was being offered the job of regional manager for a large soft drink firm, and would like to gather people’s opinions on security. I said:

“There are definitely security issues in Nairobi and you must take certain precautions rigidly to live here. If you can take all the precautions and still be happy, it is a great place to live. If you do not take the precautions, or if you cannot be happy after you take them, then you should not live here.”

I was very sorry to learn that this gentleman took the job, had his car hijacked on the street, and was shot in the abdomen, despite not offering any resistance, and ended up paralyzed from the waist down. Still, I thought my general advice was correct, although it was not correct for him.



GETTING WORK STARTED

Our first office consisted of a rented room at the Jacaranda Hotel. We had a bridge table, and each of us four staff members in Kenya – Andy Fisher, our Chief of Party, Cecilia

Ndeti (Tanzanian, married to a Kenyan), Lewis Ndhlovu (Zimbabwean) and I, each occupied one side of the bridge table. (Our project also had an office in Dakar Senegal where my brother Placide Tapsoba was stationed.) We had to go to the hotel office to book even a local call, so our start was not fast. But I think that close intimacy around that table bonded our team together and paid dividends later. We became like brothers and a sister.

Humor was of course one of the highlights of our relationships. It sounds terrible now, but when my Zimbabwean brother, Lewis, and his wife had a baby boy, and invited me over to see him on the day after his birth, I did not know that African babies were born without their full complement of melanin. I looked at this very light skinned son of two Africans and said:

“Beautiful boy, Lewis, but who is the father?”

Our sister, Cecilia, was a Tanzanian, married to Kivuto Ndeti, who was head of the Sociology Department of the Nairobi University. Although not Kenyan she was well loved most everywhere and extremely “well connected.” She used all of her powers to ensure that our employer received its important registration in the country. This made our staff legal, provided work and import permits, tax-free purchasing power, etc. That was her first assignment for the Council and she worked it out in six months when it normally required two years.

I had the opportunity to express the agency’s appreciation for this heroic contribution. When Cecilia’s mother died in Tanzania, she and her husband rushed to the airport to catch the last plane that day to Dar Es Salaam which would get them to her mother’s funeral, scheduled for that day. Unfortunately, they discovered on arrival at the airport that in the rush and emotional disturbance, Kivuto had forgotten his passport, and it looked like she would miss her mother’s funeral.

That day, both the agency’s representative to Kenya, and Andy were out of the country. As Deputy Director of the agency’s biggest project in Kenya, I was responsible for the Agency’s business that day.

I had in mind that, when a good friend, Lanni, shouted

to me from the street at 5AM to inform me of my father's death in Los Angeles, (our phone was not working so Faith, who was in the U.S. with her sick mother, had called Lanni with the news), I had no hesitation in rushing to the Nairobi Airport with my two sons, and buying three RT tickets to Los Angeles, even though only business class tickets were available. Much to my mother's great appreciation, we arrived at my father's funeral 15 minutes before it was scheduled to begin and the Council reimbursed us fully for the tickets. That cost was around 15 times the price of what I was considering for our beloved Cecilia, and I certainly felt the agency should not do less for our African staff than for me.

In light of this experience and thoughts, I made a few calls to aviation companies and arranged to charter a plane from Nairobi to Dar. As the acting representative of our agency, I made a speech to Cecilia and the staff and sent it to the population council in New York.

"I speak for George Brown, the Vice President of our agency, when I say, despite the terrible circumstances, we value this opportunity to demonstrate our deepest appreciation for all of your heroic work in gaining registration for our agency. We make this small gesture in your hour of need, in hopes that you will understand the depths of our feelings."

When I was next in New York, and entered our office, I was met with the comment:

"Great to see you Bob. Tell me, did you charter or fly commercial?" That was as close to criticism I ever received for that decision.



A MISTAKE AT THE CARNIVORE

Probably nearly all visitors to Nairobi visit the Carnivore Restaurant. I certainly took all of my visitors there. It was a great tourist experience. Upon entering, you passed a large fire pit surrounded by racks of steel skewers on which all kinds of

meat were roasting. First, the waiters brought these skewers and served you chicken beef, pork and sausage. But what the restaurant is famous for is serving the meat of game animals (I assume raised in captivity on private ranches). They served crocodile, and many different animals I did not keep track of which I called deer-like animals.

One night I learned that they were serving giraffe. I thought that I did not want to eat giraffe. I liked giraffes and was concerned that I might think of their taste in the future and it would ruin my appreciation of the beautiful animals. Then the waiter brought the skewer of giraffe. I thought of that adventure in Ghana when I refused to walk through the chicken shit to see a real African fetish. I thought this was the only time in my life when I would have this opportunity. I thought of myself as an anthropology student and wondered how I could pass up such an opportunity. I succumbed. As soon as I put a bite in my mouth, I knew I had made a terrible mistake. The meat had a kind of flowery taste that I thought was probably unforgettable. I spit it out and ate no more, sorry that I had made this mistake.



BIRTH OF THE SITUATION ANALYSIS

Our first request from the Government of Kenya related to determining equipment needs in Kenya's family planning clinics. We were told that the World Bank had offered to supply all needed equipment if the government could defend its request. We were shown the list of equipment that was supposed to be available. On that list appeared the term "dustbins." Among our staff, this study quickly became "the Dustbin Study."

No one on the team was interested in being associated with this, so I said I would do it. I thought about how to demonstrate the need for equipment, and thought we should go to

a sample of clinics and see for ourselves what is available and what is not available. I thought, if we just ask clinic staff, their answer may depend on their interpretation of the purpose of our study. If they thought they were going to be rewarded for having equipment, then many clinics would report having most everything. And if they thought they would be supplied with everything they did not have, then many clinics would report having very little. So, we had to go and take a look at a representative sample of Kenya's 700 clinics. I thought 100 clinics would be about right.

Then, I thought this was a lot of trouble and expense going to all those clinics just to find out about equipment. Why not take a systems approach and enquire about other sub-systems – staffing, in-service training, management, supplies, etc.? I prepared an observation form for equipment and an interview for managers. I particularly wanted research field staff to confirm what was available by observation. I remember an incident when Ralph Frerichs and I were studying the availability of Tetanus Toxoid for pregnant women in Indonesia. I asked the staff in one clinic whether or not they had Tetanus Toxoid vaccine. The clinic director said “of course, we always have it.” I said, “Please show it to me.” He said, “This is very embarrassing. We normally always have it. But we just ran out yesterday so there is none to show you.”

About that time, Judith Bruce, one of the Population Council's critical, expansive thinkers and a very strong woman, published a paper on Quality of Care, listing five elements of quality she developed in her model. I thought this was important, and our upcoming study was an opportunity to be the first to use her model in the field. So, we developed an instrument to be used by observers who would attend and observe the delivery of care to new family planning clients and record what took place, and we would compare that to what should take place in quality services. Thus, we had several data collection instruments: 1. An equipment, logistics and supply list that would be known as the inventory; 2. An interview for clinic staff; 3. An observation form for recording elements of service delivery to new clients; and an interview

of clients upon their departure from the clinic to gauge their satisfaction, knowledge, version of what happened etc.

The report of this study used simple graphics to present its findings— for example the proportion of clinics that had a particular supply of contraceptives and the proportion which did not. The head of the Kenyan program, Dr. Margret Gachara, explained to me how useful this knowledge was to her. She said:

“Bob, People came into my office and said they had visited a family planning clinic recently, and found that the clinic had no contraceptive supplies! How can you sit there and even take your salary when the program is failing so miserably?”

“My answer is something like, ‘You must have visited an unusual clinic because according to our research data from the Situation Analysis Study, 90% of Kenya’s clinics have contraceptive supplies.’”

Andy could see that this “dustbin study” was going to be important. He said to me:

“Bob, this is important. Finish the write-up nicely. Get it done.”

He was right. The study attracted worldwide attention. Many countries around the world wanted us to repeat the study for their program. In fact, USAID, our funder criticised us for doing too many of these studies, saying they wanted more intervention studies and less descriptive work.

“But, before you move on to that, you must do a Situation Analysis study in X country which has been begging us for it.”

Now 30 years later, the Demographic and Health Survey has a “Service Availability Module (SAM)” which is implemented with many of their Demographic and Health Surveys which uses the four same types of instruments we developed in Kenya, though greatly expanded and polished, and last year Studies in Family Planning had an article in which the author praised the “Mystery Client” method as superior to the observation in the Situation Analysis, in fact calling their work “the Gold Standard.” I liked my brother’s comment on this: “Everyone thinks their research method represents the Gold Standard.”

The head of the Kenya Program and I went to Malaysia to present our study findings at a meeting. On our way back, we spent a few days in Singapore shopping. The program head, Dr. Gachara, seemingly was interested in everything in Singapore that was for sale. I got exhausted shopping with her. On the second day of shopping she asked if she could borrow \$500 from me. This was a little difficult situation that I explained to her as follows:

“Doctor, do you have the funds to pay me back in Kenya? I ask you this because of a possible problem. If you are unable to pay me back, you will be embarrassed and avoid seeing me. But for me, you are my most important relationship in the country and I would not want to risk that outcome.”

“Don’t worry, Bob. I am rich and will have no difficulty whatsoever paying you back immediately.” I lent the \$500 and to her credit, she sent a driver with an envelope containing the funds on the first day of our return.

On my return from Singapore, I carried a sealed box about the size of a typewriter. I entered my house, greeted my wife warmly and put down the box, saying nothing about it. After dinner, I said to Faith:

“Faith, you know that I keep a little private space to follow my own interests in our marriage, and I did so in Singapore.” Faith responded: “Bob, are we talking sex or money?”

“Money,” I said and opened my box to uncover an attractive Han Dynasty, grey, ceramic horse. I had recalled seeing such horses sell for as much as \$25,000 and was surprised to find one much cheaper. Remarking on this, the dealer explained that the recent uncovering of Chinese tombs had greatly increased and that many such horses were found. Increased supply lowered the price greatly. I bought it for \$1,100. After a few months, I was no longer attached to it. I showed it to an antique store in Sarit Center, and they said they would be happy to have it on consignment in their store. Not long after that, I learned that the wife of a European Ambassador had purchased it for about \$3,500.

Demand for the Situation Analysis Study was so great that one day we said we could go anywhere in the world to

help with them. Lewis asked me where I wanted to go and I said Mongolia. He thought that would be interesting.

But to understand my next comment, you should know that one time in NY, we all went together to a Japanese restaurant. I ordered sashimi and could not get Lewis to try it. Previously, Lewis had told us about a treasured snack in Zimbabwe – fried caterpillars! Finally, we made a deal. If he tasted the raw maguro, I would try fried caterpillars. Lewis tasted but could not enjoy the raw tuna. I am embarrassed to report that I did not taste the fried caterpillars when offered.

But now back to Mongolia. I told Lewis: “I think we might have an eating problem in Mongolia. How much fermented mare’s milk, mixed with horse urine can you eat when you are really hankering for fried caterpillars?”

Finally, on this subject, I attended a meeting at Tulane University to discuss methodologies for these types of studies. The Population Council had developed Situation Analysis. But Tulane developed their simpler approach they called the Quick Investigation of Quality (QIQ Method).¹ And DHS had their very complete method called the Service Availability Module (Wang Wenjuan, et al. DHS Analytical Studies No. 26 How Family Planning Supply and the Service Environment Affect Contraceptive Use: Findings from Four East African Countries, ICF International Calverton, Maryland, USA).

Called upon to give my opinion of the three methods, I said:

“The three methods we are looking at to determine the availability and quality of services reminds me of the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. The QIQ method is too short; the Service Availability Module is too long, and Situation Analysis is just right.”

1 (Sullivan T and Bertrand J, Monitoring quality of care in family planning programs by the quick investigation of quality (QIQ): country reports, MEASURE Evaluation Technical Report, Chapel Hill, NC, USA: Carolina Population Center, 2000, No. 5.)



THE CARNEGIE DELI FOR AFRICANS

No doubt as a result of colonial rule by the British, Africans have a distorted sense of what Americans think of as a sandwich. In Africa, when ordering a sandwich, one frequently gets one thin slice of meat on white bread, with the crust cut off. I wanted my African colleagues to see sandwiches at the Carnegie Deli in New York. I took the staff there and ordered corned beef and pastrami sandwiches. As you may know, the meat can be piled as high as two to three inches. All were amazed (and full).



FISHING THE PEMBA CHANNEL

Pemba is an Island near the Kenyan-Tanzanian border. There is a Pemba Channel Fishing Club. On the wall of the club is a 1000 lb blue marlin caught on line less than 100 lb test. That is the goal of everyone who fishes there: catch a big fish on test line that is 10% or less than the weight of the fish. Their website says that 70% of record fish were caught there.

I made arrangements, and Andy, Lewis, Kivuto and I went on safari there. At the beginning, we were shown heavy rods with enormous bronze reels and explained that, with a big strike, one of us would have to sit and be belted in to the fighting chair. We went out, and each of us caught one small fish. Lewis got seasick and vomited in the head, much to the displeasure of the crew. Indeed, hearing the crew's comments, it was clear that we might have discovered the last bastion of racism in Kenya.

The captain told us we would now go after a big one, and we trolled the next six hours or so, with no results. When we got back, we saw the results of two brothers who had flown in from their banking business in Hong Kong, so competitive

with each other, they chartered two separate boats so they did not have to share anything. Their dozens of good-sized fish were strung up for the necessary photos. At that moment, it was clear to us (if not before), that the Pemba Channel Fishing Club had ensured that we, who had brought our close African brothers, would not return, just as they apparently hoped.

Andy, who likes tennis, and had not been deep sea fishing commented: "Fishing is like going to Wimbledon and waiting four hours between serves."

Kivuto was driving back toward Nairobi when he was pulled over by the police, who are famous in the country for extorting bribes. Foolishly, I asked Kivuto if he might like me to handle this and he declined. Kivuto and the policeman walked off after the policeman told Kivuto he was taking him to jail. They walked about 50 yards and then turned around and started walking back to the car. We asked Kivuto what had happened. He said:

"I explained to the policeman what a good job I thought he was doing. In fact, I said, I was going to telephone the District Commissioner, who was a student of mine, and commend you to him as a dedicated public servant. That was the end of our trip to jail."

I had had a related experience. I drove to the airport to pick someone up and was approached by a policeman, who said:

"I see that your Isuzu Trooper does not have a current registration on its plate. I think I have to take you to jail."

I said:

"The situation is not as bad as it appears" as I opened the glovebox and extracted the offending registration sticker.

The policeman said:

"Oh, I see you have it but have not put it on. So, you are wilfully breaking the law."

I said:

"I am waiting for tomorrow when my driver will be on duty and he will put it on."

Again, the policeman threatened to bring me to jail.

I said:

"Personally, I do not think this situation is serious as I

have the registration sticker. I do not think it requires jailing me. But if you do, I will certainly cooperate and accompany you to the police station. However, you might consider letting me go this time, which I would appreciate.”

The policeman, who had obviously hoped to extract a bribe from someone who feared the Kenyan police, said:

“OK, this time I am letting you off with a warning.”



MY ONE AND ONLY PAID BRIBE

In fact, in all my years in Africa, I only paid a bribe once. This is different from many American businessmen who sometimes seem to brag about how they understand and control the local situation by paying bribes, often. My one time was at the Nairobi Airport. I had gone to pick up my son, Justin, who was arriving from the U.S. I was accompanied by his friend, Fergus McCormick, who I had encouraged to come with Justin to Africa because I thought Justin would do better traveling with a friend. Fergus had arrived a few days earlier. After waiting for perhaps three hours, without seeing him, Fergus said:

“The last time I talked to Justin, he did not have a visa. I am a little concerned.”

I was quite concerned. At that time, Justin had long dreadlocks down to the middle of his back and I was not sure how that might influence the immigration officers if he did not have a visa.

I approached the guard at the gate and said:

“Sir, I have been waiting for hours for my son and he has not come out. I am concerned that he might need help and I would like to go inside. I have a 200-shilling note (about \$10) folded up in my right hand. If you are going to let me in, shake hands with me.”

“Put it there my friend,” he said, with a big smile on his

face.

What I found was that his mother had booked him to begin his trip flying from Oakland to San Francisco, and that his luggage had been lost. We filled out forms and got on our way to Thego Road (which incidentally became the title of song the two young men wrote. They had each brought their guitars and played the beer halls on the Kenya coast, never having to buy their own beers.)



A ROSE IS A ROSE

When I first arrived, I had dinner at the USAID Health Officer's house, David Oot. I was most impressed with his cook, Gladys – a hugely positive, happy and friendly woman. I said: "Gladys, do you by chance have a sister?" And that is how we met and hired Rose. She was not a cook, but straightened the house, and washed the dinner's dishes. It was such a luxury to go for a walk after dinner and we appreciated that greatly. She was also very helpful in preparing food for cooking. Faith was not as happy with her services as I was: "She didn't put the silverware in the right spaces, etc." I always said: "She fits in our house like family and that is what is important to me."

When our sea shipment arrived, Rose asked if she could have the large wooden crates in which it was packed. I gave them to her. In a few days, they had been turned into a set of furniture – table, book case, armoire. She had these in her room but no doubt hoped to have them someday in her own house.

My young kids loved her. I had brought a small black and white TV for her from a U.S. trip and my kids eagerly joined her in the servant quarters to watch cartoons and eat sukuma weeki (collard greens) and posho (grits), the Kenyan national dishes.

In the last year of our assignment Rose asked if she could

borrow \$1000 to buy a piece of land for herself, and promised to pay back \$50 per month from her salary. She did pay for a few months and then emergencies emerged for her preventing the next payments. When we were getting ready to leave, I decided that, since I had always hoped the World Bank would forgive loans to poor countries, I would forgive her loan and not let it interfere with her bonus of one month's salary for each year of service.

Since I visited Kenya several times after departing and her brother or cousin was a driver for our project, I sometimes sent envelopes with pictures of the kids and included a \$100 bill. But I was sad to hear that outlaws had made her own land uninhabitable, and the job I had lined up for her did not work out. The wife of Ian Askew, Jo, who had hired her, reported that: "If she says once more, 'That is not the way Bob Miller does it,' I swear I am going to fire her." Rose kept that up and was fired.

I also had a very smart young man hired as my gardener, Morris. I loved explaining how I gardened in Kenya. I'd walk to the planting area, hold up my hands to show the rows, and say: "peas." That was the extent of my gardening until harvest time.

I liked Morris. One day off on a holiday, my kids told me they wanted a playhouse in the backyard. Thinking inside the box, I said: "Kids we can't build a playhouse today. We need lumber and nails and the stores are closed for the holiday. Overhearing this, Morris cut some flexible branches from a tree, bound them together with inner tube pieces, and covered the walls with banana leaves. In short order, the kids had a lovely playhouse and I had a lesson in thinking outside the box.

Morris was ingenious and smart and my kids knew it. One weekend day we took the kids bikes to the International school for them to ride around. But one of the bikes had loose handlebars and could not be ridden. The kids responded to this situation by lamenting: "We should have brought Morris."

But all was not perfect with Morris. He told me he wanted me to teach him to drive. And I tried in the Mzee. But I confess I was really too nervous and decided that he should be taught by a professional. I came home one day to find the

Mzee's back bumper smashed in. I asked Morris what had happened. He said: "I was rushing around with the wheelbarrow; lost control and it smashed the back of the car." I thought more likely he had tried driving it or at least rolling it around and ran into something backwards.

I said: "Morris, do you think I am a fucking idiot? Although I love you, one more stunt like this and I will fire you." I never had to fire him. In fact, upon departure, I gave him one of my suits, a white shirt and tie and showed him how to put the clothes on. He looked in the full-length mirror and said: "I look like a big man!" I was happy to arrange for employment at the Population Council for Morris before I left. He could learn how to use the copy machines and help around the office. Sadly, shortly thereafter he was fired for stealing.



THE GARLIC PEELERS

One time, with Faith gone to the U.S., I had many house visitors. My brother Len, his wife Marie, and their three children were in the house. My old friend, Ralph Frerichs and his wife were also staying with us, with their two children, as was a cousin of mine, Debbie. We had a full house.

My brother asked me: "Broth, how many people work for you?" We had Rose and Morris and the useless night guard, but I did not know whether or not to count the numerous children who were relatives of Rose and Gladys that I brought in to peel garlic so I could pay them 10 or 20 shillings. I used a lot of garlic and I felt the only limitation was how much one could peel. So, with the kids coming once a week or so, I had plenty of garlic ready to use.

I had brought to Kenya my ceramic Komodo Pot (Green Egg) for barbeque. This is a wonderful instrument which uses only a small amount of charcoal and keeps the meat juicy. Barbequed meat (nyama choma) was Kenyan's favorite food.

I cooked undercut of beef roast (filet mignon) several times a week. It was the only beef tender enough for me to eat.

I normally marinated the roast in teriyaki sauce with lots of garlic and everyone loved it. I called my strategy “Jewish calculus.” All foreigners had in mind that someday “the shit could/would hit the fan” in this country. The question I had in mind was: “What would folks think of me and my family if that happened? Would I be the guy who cooked the delicious nyama choma and did not share it? Or would I be the guy who fed everyone in the house with the most delicious food of their lives?” I never regretted planning to be the latter.

One day, Andy and I saw a newspaper ad for a restaurant that claimed to have the best steaks in Kenya. We went. I told the waiter:

“Normally I only eat filet mignon because everything else is too tough. But as you are advertising ‘the best steaks in Kenya’ I will order the rib steak.”

What came was a rib steak so afflicted with meat tenderizer, like papaya juice, that it had literally turned to mush. I sent it back and said I would have the filet. The waiter objected saying that he would bring me what I wanted. He brought another steak with the same problem, and I gave up. I don’t send the food back twice. When the waiter came, and found the uneaten steak, he said:

“Oh, I see you were defeated.”

Andy and I discussed what happened afterwards. He was not comfortable with me sending food back. I explained that I came from a family in which my father ate steak every day and was never happy with it. Andy explained that he came from a family where his father could be served sawdust. He would put sugar on it and be happy.



**THE BIRTH OF THE
ROBERT A. AND FAITH O. MILLER FOUNDATION**

When I visited the U.S. in 1991, I bought about 200 Walking Liberty Lady one ounce “coins” of pure silver. I had thought the price of silver was low then, so it was an investment. But another idea was beginning to float in my mind. I think that is why I carried a few of the coins with me and decided that it would be more fun to give them away than to hold them as an investment.

Andy and Karel Fisher and Faith and I were visiting Sweetwater Lodge one weekend. That afternoon we drove through herds of elephants, taking pictures of each other’s 4-wheel drive vehicles surrounded by scores of elephants and us leaning out the window.

In the morning, we four were sitting on the porch having breakfast, when Karel said, to no one in particular, and in a low voice approaching a whisper:

“I wish I had some buttered toast.”

It seemed that no one had heard that quiet utterance. But a few minutes later, our waiter appeared with buttered toast and a big smile. The story of our foundation came together in that moment. We decided to give the waiter the Robert A. and Faith O. Miller Foundation Gold Metal Award for excellence in service. However, we explained that this being a small and poor foundation, our gold metal was actually in silver.

The waiter was incredibly delighted and went around telling everyone who would listen about his award.

The story of the Foundation started to grow. It was a small foundation which recognized excellence in all forms of human endeavour. It was modelled after the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation with a few important differences. With our commitment to recognizing excellence in all forms of human endeavor, we had a broader scope than MacArthur, we were poorer, and while the MacArthur’s slogan was “a catalyst for change,” ours became “change for a dollar.”

It was never entirely clear how much of our foundation was a joke and how much was serious. We actually felt that providing the award to individuals who evidenced excellence was a good thing and the act of giving the award was highly reinforcing. There was an Indian restaurant in a shopping center in Nairobi that made delicious potatoes budge. The owner received our award for excellence in making potatoes and he told us: "I will treasure this award forever."

When Placide Tapsoba and I were passing through the airport in Antananarivo, Madagascar, we saw an attractive woman with a beautiful baby. We decided on the spot to award her the "gold medal for excellence in human reproduction." (I was usually accused of doing that so that I could meet the mother, but of course that was not true!)

I was normally invited to Andy's major meetings (as he ran the Worldwide HIV/AIDS Operations Research Project) especially when a staff member was leaving. The staff member would be awarded the "Gold Metal" but had to put up with hearing the entire story of the birth and history of the foundation, which after seven or eight telling's, definitely became stale.

I think, in retrospect, that there was both a humorous and a serious side to the story of our Foundation. In fact, I once applied for a family planning job with the MacArthur Foundation. It was obvious from my Curriculum Vitae that I had all of the experience and skills that were called for in the advertisement, except one – "a well-developed sense of humor." So, in my cover letter of application, I explained that my CV clearly demonstrated that I had all the qualities mentioned in their advertisement except that it was not clear that I had a sense of humor. I went on to explain the birth and background of the Robert A. and Faith O. Miller Foundation. I never heard back from MacArthur and concluded, that although they wanted to hire someone with a sense of humor, the recruiter did not share that trait.



RALPH AND I AT THE ARK

On a consultation trip to Kenya, Ralph Frerichs and I decided to make a weekend trip to the Ark. This was an interesting resort, surrounding a natural salt lick, where at night, animals came to satisfy their need for salt. There was an underground observation area, with windows, from which one could observe whatever was happening at the salt lick. The problem was that few things seemed to happen at my visits. When sitting for hours, sometimes it seemed exciting even if a rabbit hopped across our line of sight.

On this particular visit, we overheard staff saying that they were hoping that a certain rhino, which had a wire trap digging into his leg, would come so they could attempt to dart-tranquilize him and remove the trap. When Ralph heard this, he introduced himself as a veterinarian (he actually has a DVM in addition to a PhD in epidemiology), and offered to be of any possible assistance. The other men were delighted and made a place for him on their team

Ralph had a classic Nikon camera and good lenses. He sat me down at a good vantage point, handed me his Nikon, and said something like: “Bob, if you can capture me working on the Rhino, I will treasure the photos!”

Unfortunately, the Rhino did not show up.



LEAVING KENYA SO FAITH COULD GET ON WITH HER LIFE

In truth, Faith was not at all enthusiastic about moving to Africa. We had bought a home she loved in Orinda, California, Jonas was happy at the local school only two blocks away, and all was as it should be. However, the development funds at

the Western Consortium were spent on an HIV/AIDS proposal which I thought we had no chance of winning. There were only a few months of funding left on projects paying my salary. Andy called to inform me that the Council was going to bid on a family planning project covering all of sub-Saharan Africa and asked if I would like to be on it. He called again when the Council won the project.

As I had taken major responsibility for the economic welfare of our family, I felt it is my job to convince Faith that going to Africa was the right thing to do. Perhaps “fighting dirty,” I bought her a Buddha with hands in the mudra meaning, “Don’t be afraid; I’ll show you the way.”

In fact, Faith blossomed in Nairobi. She had been somewhat shy and introverted in the U.S. In Nairobi, she took a leadership position in organizing a women’s discussion group called “The Dream Group” and made good friends. The group continued long after her departure.

I was extremely happy in Nairobi. I had a fantasy about buying a farm in the Rift Valley around Lake Naivasha, hiring a small private army for protection, and living out my retirement years there. I was kind of stunned when Faith raised the subject of leaving.

“Listen. I only signed up for two years here and it has been three and a half years. It is time for me to get on with my life.”

“What do you have to do to get on with your life?”

“I have to go back to school.”

We left. About a year later, I said to Faith:

“You said we needed to come back to the U.S. so you could get on with your life, so you could go to school, but I don’t see that you have taken any steps in that direction. What gives?”

“I told you I needed to go back to school because I thought that was the only excuse you might accept to leave Kenya.”

But I was very proud that at about age 50, Faith was accepted into Columbia University’s School of Social Work. We all went to her graduation.

I recall that, upon graduation, there was only one job

that Faith wanted and applied for – a school position as a social worker in South Norwalk, CT. I recall returning from an overseas trip to Ghana just before her employment interview. She had bought a book on how to conduct yourself in an employment interview and was studying it late into the night. In the end, she closed the book and decided she would just be herself.

I had bought her a pair of gold earrings which I had had made in Ghana. They were in a traditional Ghanaian design, the meaning of which was “Be yourself.” I had written that on the back of one of my cards and placed it in the gift-wrapped box. On return, I said:

“I know that you don’t like me to rush giving you your presents. It seems you like me to place them on your pillow for you to be surprised when we go to bed. But I think the situation calls for you to see this present now.”

She opened the box, and saw “Be yourself.” She got the job.

NEW YORK



USAID CREATES A SPECIAL JOB FOR ME IN NEW YORK

The Population Council had won the three regional contracts for operations research work in Asia, Africa and Latin America. USAID had a deep interest in promoting the broad diffusion and utilization of research results from the OR studies. Because I had developed the Situation Analysis study methodology which had diffused and was utilized around the world, USAID had decided that I had been successful at what they wanted to accomplish. They funded a special position which was specifically for me, to handle OR Dissemination and Utilization of Results from the three OR Projects around the world.

This turned out to be one of my worst jobs ever, in part because I did not really have expertise – The Situation Analysis Methodology diffused so widely because it met the needs of program administrators, not because I had designed the perfect strategy for dissemination and utilization — and because USAID regularly changed what they were asking for from the position.

Arriving in NY, I lived in a studio apartment, which was sublet, arranged in my absence by Beverly Ben Salem. It contained all the possessions of the leaser. I never cooked in that small place because there were cockroaches running around the counters. Ian Askew came to visit NY, dropped by my studio apartment, almost knocked over the freestanding bookcase on the way in, and acted as if he “could not believe the evident fall of the great Bob Miller.”

Walking to the Council office the first day, I stepped onto ice at a curb, broke through to the cold water below with my

Italian loafers, and realized I did not have the necessary survival skills or equipment.

My colleagues at the Council enjoyed my stories of daily events on my trips to work. I came with a California sensibility which was exotic in NY. I used to share my newspaper on the trains, and offer to share cabs with others who were obviously waiting, rather than fight for who could ride alone.

A few great opportunities arose from this position. I was asked to go to Mexico to meet Jim Foreit, the Director of the Latin America OR Project, and find an appropriate hotel to hold an international OR dissemination meeting. Jim was a fisherman. We met in Mexico City and travelled to Ixtapa. In Zihuatanejo we chartered a boat to go fishing for sailfish for a couple of days. Jim got one. We had planned to practice “catch and release” but the fish swallowed the hook and was not expected to survive so the fish was given to the boat crew.

Another time on this job, I went to Delhi to participate in the staff meeting of the Asia OR/TA Project. This was led by an old chum who was in my MPH and DrPH program in Berkeley – George Cernada. George had worked for the Population Council in Taichung, Taiwan prior to his graduate education, and went back after completing his MPH. Taichung was the site of considerable early family planning research.¹ I went to Taichung to visit him on my way to East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1966. A highlight of that visit was when George and I purchased a 7' long string of firecrackers, woven four at a space, and we lit it in the town at about 2 AM. We also went to a nightclub and purchased salted watermelon seeds. Ever since, I chew and swallow watermelon seeds rather than spit them out. I was always impressed that as a student of public health, George won a University of California-wide poetry contest.

The Asia OR meeting was held in Kerala and several fun days were built into the trip. We visited the mansion of a previous maharaja, and the church where the body of Saint Francis, missing a thumb, was encased in glass, and we went to a waterpark which had fountains erupting in time to music.

1 (Freedman, R. and Takeshita, 1962 Family Planning in Taiwan)

There were literally a million people in the park that night, and I had to put on hold my fear of crowds, as we walked packed shoulder to shoulder.

I was in charge of a large dissemination meeting held in Washington where all the USAID staff and personnel from USAID sponsored projects were in attendance. I made the mistake of giving George a too detailed, flowery and long introduction, mentioning his success in the UC poetry contest and our long friendship. Perhaps that introduction confused George, who seemed used to speaking off the cuff. He got up started speaking in a rambling, disorganized fashion and went way beyond his time. I got up to tell him to finish and sit down and he refused. This happened a few times before he decided he had shared enough. I received hell from my USAID contacts for having set up and not controlled that embarrassing incident. And I confess I think it has colored my relationship with George ever since.



CONVERSATIONS WITH KURT VONNEGUT

Kurt Vonnegut lived only a half a block from where I worked in New York. I saw him periodically, especially when he came into my building to buy cigarettes in the lobby shop. One afternoon, he looked bored standing on the corner, seemingly with nothing to do. I walked up to him and said:

“Mr. Vonnegut, would you sit down with me for a few minutes? I would like to tell you a story.”

He looked very hesitant and ill at ease. After twisting his head a few times and frowning, he finally said: “Ok.” And we sat down on a ceramic brick wall bordering some plantings next to a nearby building.

“I had just returned from Madagascar where I had a very exciting trip. First, I had learned that ‘Lebanese diplomats’ had been smuggling uranium out of Madagascar in diplomatic

suitcases on regular passenger flights. I had learned about this on a trip to Tamatave, a Coastal Port city. During the drive down with my close colleague and dear friend, Placide Tapsoba, I had told my Malagasy colleague that I had a financial problem. I had carried sufficient cash funds to disperse to some Malagasy physicians who were leaving the country for a training program. However, I had neglected to declare all of my funds at customs on arrival, and my physician colleagues refused to accept undeclared cash. I had to give them all the declared money I had.

“So, I said to my Malagasy colleague sitting next to me: ‘Sir, with this problem I am able to pay for anything I can charge on my credit card. But please don’t worry, as it is very rare for anyone to starve to death with a pocketful of hundred-dollar bills.’”

‘Don’t worry!’ he replied. I understand about such strange problems. For example, just recently we had a guy show up at the hospital with radiation sickness. It turned out that he was selling Uranium, which is clandestinely mined, to Lebanese diplomats. I heard they were paying \$20,000 per kilo and carrying it out of the country on regularly scheduled flights.”

“In Tamatave, the excitement continued. Our task was to see a university official who was concerned about his female students’ involvement in sex work in the port city and their vulnerability to HIV. Placide and I spent many hours each night in the bars and dance halls listening to stories from sex workers about how they got into the business, what the demand was for various sex acts, whether they had condoms, etc. It turned out that we decided to pay them for their time since, as working women, time is money. However, they seemed to feel that, if we were willing to pay quite a bit for talking, perhaps we would pay a lot more for sex, but we declined.

“On return to Antananarivo, I found myself struggling to figure out what, if anything, to do with the information I had about the uranium smuggling. It was two weeks before the first Gulf War and there were lots of news stories about heightened tensions in the Middle East. I thought that the information I had might be very important.

“I went to the U.S. Embassy and asked the Marine guard if I could speak to the security officer. I was very ill at ease in the embassy, but I finally got to see him. I told the whole story, putting in some fake clues to throw off any possible identification of my informant. All he kept asking was:

‘Are you sure they said Lebanese diplomats? Because we don’t have any Lebanese diplomats in the country.’”

‘I am sure I was told the diplomats were Lebanese.’”

“The security officer explained to me that since this involves the sale of a commodity, the commerce officer at the embassy might like to see me to follow up. I explained that I would not like to come to the embassy again so I could be reached at my hotel.

“When there was a knock on the door and I opened it, it was immediately obvious that the commerce officer was probably CIA. He wore a fancy shiny suit and seemed quite self-confident. He also kept asking whether I was sure that my informants said Lebanese diplomats. He said we have Libyan diplomats here but not Lebanese.

“When I told Placide (from West Africa) that I had been visited, and that the main question I was asked was: ‘Am I sure the informant had said Lebanese diplomats?’ Placide replied:

‘Don’t they know we Francophone people call everyone from the Middle East Lebanese? Of course, they were Libyans! They are probably the same Libyans we have been watching in the Hilton’s casino making hundred-dollar bets on every role of the roulette wheel and not even waiting to see if they had won before moving to a second wheel for a similar bet.’”

“I contemplated bringing this news to the embassy but decided that I had been firm about not wanting any further contact. I decided ‘winners quit while they are ahead,’ and this information might not do them any good anyway if they were unable to figure this out for themselves.

“There was still more excitement to mention:

“In Tamatave, Placide and I decided we would fly back to the capital. It had been an eight-hour drive to Tamatave, down a long and very winding road. Drivers went so fast, passing dangerously on corners that I decided to call it the

‘Grand Prix de Tamatave,’ which I did not want to drive again. We arrived at the airport and found a young Canadian woman waiting for the plane. A conversation started and she immediately said to us:

‘Do you believe in angels? I have been celibate for five years!’”

“I wondered if she was asking which one of us was the angel who would release her from her celibacy.

“As it turned out, she did not have a place to stay in Antananarivo. We had two rooms reserved in the Hilton Hotel and we gave one to her.

“In the morning, she departed but left each of us a present. For me, she left a copy of your book, “Palm Sunday.” This is the book in which you put forward much of your philosophy on writing. And because the experiences were so interesting on this trip, I had started writing a short story about it.

“I reconsidered my thoughts from the airport, and wrote a postcard to the woman saying:

‘When you first asked if we believed in angels, and mentioned your five years of celibacy, I wondered if you were asking which one of us was the angel who would release you from your condition. When you left me the book containing the writing philosophy of my favorite author, just when I needed it, I decided maybe you were the angel!’”

Despite the fact that Kurt Vonnegut was really the hero of the story, I got absolutely no reaction from him whatsoever.

I said:

“Mr. Vonnegut, you know it wasn’t easy to stop you in the street and ask you to allow me to tell you the story.”

Interestingly, Vonnegut could relate to this thought.

“Yes, I know. One time I was getting on a plane to London and saw James Thurber, my favorite author, with an empty seat next to him. I thought wouldn’t it be great to sit next to him. We could chat all the way to London. But then I thought: ‘He probably doesn’t want to be bothered,’ and I didn’t sit next to him.”

Our second conversation took place while standing on the corner of 47th St. and Second Avenue. I had just read a

recent book by Vonnegut, I think it was *Timequake*.

“Mr. Vonnegut, I would like to discuss an ethical issue in your most recent book.

Let me set the stage for discussing this issue. I read a book called *My Old Man and the Sea* by a father and son, David and Daniel Hayes. In it, Daniel (the son) reports that after sailing around Cape Horn or Cape of Good Hope, whatever it was, they stopped at an island in the middle of the ocean. There a young attractive woman working in a dry goods store takes pity on him for being at sea for such a long time and they spend an intimate afternoon together.

“I did not like Daniel putting that incident in the book. It seems to me that everyone duplicating that route would stop at the island. Maybe half the sailors have read the book. And probably many of them would go looking for that dry goods store and young woman, at least to have a look, and maybe hoping for more. I don’t think it was ethical to put that information in the book.”

“Similarly, I noted in your recent book that you mention having fallen in love with the woman behind the counter at the post office. First, let me say that we know where you live and we know the post office across the street on Second Avenue you would obviously frequent. So, upon reading about your secret love interest there, I immediately put your book under my arm and walked into the post office to have a look at your secret love. I didn’t see any worker who seemed like a good candidate. But still I don’t think you should have mentioned that as you may have stimulated many people to go looking for her, and who knows where that would lead?”

Vonnegut answered simply:

“It was a novel. I made the whole thing up.” (That was an interesting revelation. Today, if one Googles “Kurt Vonnegut falling in love at the post office,” there are many citations of such discussions. All seem to be assuming that it is true! Or maybe it was true, but he had devised a simple plan to get rid of a pesky fan!)

Our third conversation took place standing on the same corner. I greeted him and asked if he had written anything

lately. He answered in the negative and I believe he added that “writing is a young man’s game and I am now old.” But now, as I am older, I can’t remember if he actually said that to me at the moment or whether I am remembering it from an interview. What I do remember vividly is that he asked me if I had written anything lately.

Recall that Kurt Vonnegut is my favorite author, highly respected for fake graduation speeches and numerous best-selling novels. His question suggested that he considered me an author when I have simply sketched a few short stories which have never been well edited or published. I greatly appreciated that question, and answered:

“No, I haven’t written anything lately, but I have been thinking about a story. Consider this. An extremely religious woman feels that she has a personal relationship with God who has bestowed miracles upon her. She has been celibate for many years. However, after developing deep rapport with a colleague and spending a day with him in intimate conversation, she begins to feel a stirring in her loins. What would that be like? How sensual and responsive could she be for a messenger from God?”

The quality of the sex for the messenger from God did not seem to interest him much. He didn’t give me any suggestions for the story or criticize it. He went off on a different tack. He started discussing his brother’s cancer and how that had turned his brother toward God.

I moved to California not too long after these conversations and a year or so later Kurt Vonnegut died. I never saw him again though I have told of those conversations many times and treasure the experiences.



A LESSON THAT STUCK

Joanne Gleason is a swell woman who worked as a manager in NY on the Population Council’s OR projects. When

the Council was working on a major proposal, Joanne would handle putting together the cost component of the proposal. At the time, I first went to work for the Council, it was the agency policy that employees on long flights could fly business class. This led to some embarrassing moments when USAID staff were flying economy, and Council staff on the same flight were traveling business class. But Joanne flew economy. I talked to her about this. She said:

“It is a matter of ethics. I do not think it is right to spend so much on tickets when it is not necessary. In fact, no matter what class I am in, I curl up and go to sleep.”

After considerable thought, I concluded that Joanne was correct. On a flight on Jordanian Airlines to Sanaa, an economy ticket was \$1,000 and a Business Class seat was \$10,000. I saved \$18,000 by flying with my data processing assistant economy class (much to her disappointment). Indeed, the Council itself changed its policy some few years later, and I believe all Council staff now fly economy.

Now, I fly to Vietnam often to assist five agencies, for my pro bono work. I have a major donor for my Vietnam activities. Recently, she argued that she thought I would do a better job in Vietnam if I flew Business class. On China Airlines, economy seating is about \$680 and Business Class is \$4000. I told her that I could not spend \$4000 on a ticket when I could make the trip for only \$680. In this argument, we came to a compromise – I flew Premium economy for about \$1200. For this I got a wider seat but it did not lean back. Instead, the seat slid forward and, in my experience, this was not more comfortable.

China Airlines has something called “family couch” which is three seats together on which I expect to be able to sleep on the 10-hour flight to Taipei. China Airlines charges \$800 for this type of “seat” for each of its long segments. For my next flight in November 2017, I bought the family couch for one way to Taipei. The plane leaves San Francisco at 1AM. I hope to sleep most of the way to Taipei and to have an easier time with jet lag on this upcoming trip. I’ll fly home on a regular economy class seat as I have time to recover at home.

NIGERIA



Nigeria, in the late 80s, was few of my colleague's favorite country. Even arriving at customs and immigration was hellish. A half dozen people had their hand out for a bribe, asking:

“What have you brought for me today?”

Beverly Ben Salem had a good answer that I subsequently tried:

“I didn't know that YOU were going to be on duty today.”

But I had no answer, except a good-natured smile, when the officer's response was:

“It's not too late!”

Usually a smile or a joke was all that was needed.

Traffic in Lagos was unbelievably chaotic. Everywhere was bumper to bumper, and if you left six feet in front of your car, the person behind you would honk incessantly. People drove on the central median and the sidewalks to try and speed their journey, and they went the wrong way on one-way streets quite regularly.

At the time, my wife complained about Kenyan drivers. On return from Nigeria I told her:

“If I were to take you to Nigeria, I expect you would never complain further about Kenyan drivers. But I love you too much to expose you to that insanity.”

I heard that the government developed a draconian plan to keep people from driving the wrong way on one-way streets. Anyone caught doing that would have their car confiscated and they would be placed in an insane asylum. I do not know if that was actually true.

In Lagos, we normally stayed at the Sheraton Hotel – the only first-class hotel in the country at that time. It was pretty expensive but the restaurant was good, the rooms were nice,

and it seemed safe. I stayed at the Sheraton until one trip, when, carrying American Express Travelers Cheques instead of cash, the Hotel offered me 70 cents on the dollar for cashing the cheques, raising the cost of a room to about \$430 per night. I had a good, productive trip at the University where we trained people for a study and was feeling strong. I decided I was not going to pay that exorbitant price. I set out to find a reasonable local hotel. I ended up at a hotel evidently frequented by many international business travellers. A room was about \$70 and a suite was \$100. In view of the Sheraton prices, I decided to take the suite. The unusual feature of this hotel was the toilet. It was up above a boxed in area about a foot above the floor. My guess is that is where the plumbing was arranged. Sitting on that toilet gave new meaning to the term "throne."



VISIT TO A VILLAGE

Barbara Mensch is a demographic researcher in the Council's Research Division. One day she said to me:

"Bob, you have ruined my life! I used to have many interesting projects, but these days it seems I am stuck helping you with Situation Analysis studies."

We travelled together to a University setting where we were training workers for a study that was about a two-hour drive from Lagos. I was having trouble with my hemorrhoids on this trip and was applying Preparation H to the affected region. I think there is fish oil in this medication and it turns out that the medicine attracted a large number of huge black ants, an inch long. I woke up many times to find them crawling over me in a tortured night.

On this trip, the Dean of the University's Social Science program visited our training program and suggested that he provide Barbara and me a tour of the local town. Barbara had an interesting reaction to that invitation:

“Dean, thank you very much for your generous offer to tour the town. Please allow me to make an alternative suggestion: I have been a student of demography for many years, and have frequently utilized data from village populations. But to tell you the truth, I have never visited a rural village in Africa. Can you take us on a tour of a village instead of the town?”

The Dean drove down a main highway going out of town, turned onto a dirt road and drove a few miles until we reached the middle of a typical Nigerian village. We were surrounded by grass and mud huts, and on a large grass mat, chocolate pods were drying in the sun. I had not seen chocolate at this stage before, walked over and picked up a nut and took a bite after leaving a Nigerian bill on the pile of nuts. Barbra seemed a little concerned that I had done that without permission. I felt the money I left would be very sufficient to mollify any onlooker who might object.

A villager came out and very kindly invited us into his home. We entered and looked around. There was a wooden plank over the bedroom on which was painted the following words: “Enter this room only with love.” Barbara enjoyed our visit to the village. She said to me: “Bob, this was so much fun. You must do this all the time in Kenya.”

“No Barbara. As a matter of fact, this is the first time I have ever entered a village unannounced, and entered someone’s house just for the hell of it.”

ZIMBABWE



TRAINING IN HARARE

In those days, Harare was a beautiful, very well-organized city. As Andy said often:

“Harare is the city that Akron, Ohio would like to be.”

There were beautiful well-kept parks. Everyone seemed to follow the rules. Unfortunately, there were down sides to the rigidity. One day, during our training of nurses at Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC) to implement a Situation Analysis study, we decided we were not making as much progress as we had hoped, so we announced that we would continue to implement the training the next day, which was a Saturday. I believe that the nurses were getting a decent salary for the training component of the research project so they did not mind. When the nurses came the next day, the guard would not let them park their cars in the agency’s parking lot because he had not received a signed letter of instruction from the agency head. He absolutely would not let them in, instead directing them to park on the road. This was viewed as crazy by the trainees because parking on the road put their vehicles at risk of theft. There was no training that Saturday.



THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

In the U.S., Shona stone sculpture is fairly famous. Large pieces can be sold for \$10,000 or more and there is quite an industry in Zimbabwe producing the sculpture out of hard stone. Some of the artists develop their own style – a particular

expression in the mouth or eyes, a particularly shaped face. If the artist becomes popular, very soon, those characteristics are copied by most everyone.

Andy and I went to the National Museum and found a large exhibit of Shona Sculpture with all the pieces for sale. We each found pieces we liked. Mine was much larger than Andy's, and weighed about 60 pounds. Although it was heavy, its shape was kind of flat and I thought it would fit into my Samsonite hard shell suitcase. That afternoon, I called Kenya Airways to ask their charge for overweight from Harare to Nairobi and learned that it was about \$2/lb. Thus, with my suitcase weighing about 90 lbs, the overweight charges would be around \$100. I decide that the sculpture was priced about \$150, but that I would still be interested at \$250 so the overweight charges did not discourage me. I went back to the museum and bought the piece. The next day, I checked into my flight. The Kenya Airways check-in staff said, "Wow, this is quite a heavy suitcase." I do not know why, but I was not charged overweight.



PRESENTS FOR OUR WIVES

Andy, Lewis and I were in a gift/handicrafts shop. I bought Faith a T-shirt that said "Dream Green" since Faith was leading a women's discussion group in Nairobi called the Dream Group. I also found some interesting soap. I can't remember the qualities of this soap but I was sure that Faith would like it, and mentioned that to my friends. Lewis said his wife would like it also. When we went to the counter to pay for our selections, I noticed Lewis did not have a bar of the special soap. I said Lewis:

"Where is the bar of soap for your wife."

Lewis said: "I am not buying it."

"But Lewis, I thought you said your wife would really like it."

“Oh, she would. But I don’t care how much she would like it, I am not spending \$4 for a bar of soap.”

Andy was not interested in the soap. He was evidently interested in more practical gifts for Karel. In Africa, there is considerable unemployment and underemployment. Young men wait at traffic lights or round-abouts to walk between the stopped cars hawking all kinds of goods. Popular items were: cold water in plastic bags, toilet paper, apples, newspapers, belts, electric outlet converters, fuses, pictures, maps, etc. That afternoon Andy came across one of these guys selling a round plastic ring, about 15” in diameter, with clothespins attached, and a hook on the top. This item could be hung from the shower head over the bathtub, and clothes could be hung from the clothespins to dry. Andy thought he had found the perfect gift to demonstrate his affection for Karel. “She will love it!”

BURKINA FASO



WORKING LATE

Ian Askew and I arrived in Accra expecting that the Situation Analysis data to have been processed as promised. We were expected to analyse the data and prepare Harvard Graphics slides. In fact, no progress had been made on even entering the data into a computer. Neither Ian nor I knew what to do. But Ian took out instructions for the program Epi-Info and began inputting the data. As we were just learning, the going was a bit slow. Indeed, needing the entire job completed in only a few days, we worked until close to 3AM each night.

Our late nights made quite an impression on the local nurses and other female staff. First, let me say that I have grey hair turning entirely white and it started turning grey at age 17. Africans almost always thought I was much older than I was. In Ghana once, working at the Ghana Family Planning Association, when we were taking a break for lunch, staff said:

“Bob, we are going to cross a busy street to a restaurant. There is a lot of traffic so we have to walk fast. Are you capable of walking fast?”

I responded by saying:

“I know you think that I am about 80 years old and that I might be infirm, but I am not.”

I think I was about 47 at the time.

Thus, in Burkina the female staff said to us:

“We cannot get over your energy and ability to work hard, late into the night. In Burkina, our men are good for nothing even when much younger than you. We are very impressed!”

We completed the Burkina Faso report, and yet some small screw-up lingers in my mind. When our collection of graphs were printed, we also printed a cover for the report

and we placed three elephants on the cover. The Burkinabe staff said:

“Why the elephants?”

And I answered:

“Because we can.”

In retrospect, I am embarrassed about that. We placed the elephants thinking that they partly represented Africa, but Africans did not appreciate that gesture. Instead of listening and changing the covers to fit their desires, I answered their legitimate complaint nonsensically.

We finished all the slides for the presentation the following day at about 3AM. Everyone was dead tired. However, I did not want to leave until we found a clip to hold our print-out together. Everyone thought I was crazy. I see they were right.



A MESSAGE FOR JUDITH

I have mentioned Judith Bruce, the author of the paper on quality of care which was so instrumental in the development of the Situation Analysis research. I said that she was intelligent and powerful, but I did not mention that, although men in the Council thought she was attractive, because of her strength and intellect, many seemed to be intimidated by her.

She and I were flying together to Burkina Faso for a research planning meeting, and she mentioned to me on the flight that she was in serious pain.

“My back is killing me.”

I considered the situation and thought I would not offer this for a young staff member, because of the danger of misinterpretation, but as Judith and I were both mature, I said:

“Judith, would you like a back massage?” And she quickly said “Yes!”

I gave her my version of a back massage as well as I could while sitting next to her on the plane. What was truly

memorable for me was that this powerful and intimidating feminist leader said to me afterwards:

“Bob, you are comfortable with women, aren’t you?”

One more quote to put on my office imaginary trophy wall, just under my imaginary letter from Erik Ericson.



My brother Len and me, around 1949



My father (3rd from left) and his brothers Al and Dan.



Bob and Faith's wedding picture, in Big Sur, 1971



Jonas, Aaron, Len me, and Justin setting off on Equal-Librium my first serious sailboat before the dream disappeared.



*Tengboche Monastery, Christmas Day 1971,
with Ama Dablam in background.*



*Bob, Faith and kids in front of
Temple of 1000 Buddhas, Patan, Nepal.*



Boudhanath, Nepal, one of Bob's favorite places in the world, shot by Roger Williams about 1969.



*Faith and Bob on veranda of Iban Longhouse.
Borneo, East Malaysia.*



Ralph and Marcie Frerichs with Faith and Jonas, beneath foot of huge reclining Buddha in Burma.



Faith with Mrs Sangay Lama (visiting Burma from Nepal) with Ray Carlaw's house staff (Mimi and Ruth) and Frieda holding Aaron.



Transport in Pagan, North Burma.



Bob and Rose in Nairobi.



*Placide and Bob in front of MCH clinic
in Madagascar*



*Boats in the mud seen from the seawall,
Georgetown, Guyana.*



Raphael with my 4kg tiger.



A smaller tiger.



*Elephant and crocodile on the Chobe's edge
viewed from Ichizo.*



Houseboat at sunset.

VIETNAM



THE WAR

When people ask me where I grew up, I always answer: “I spent my childhood in Los Angeles and grew up in Berkeley.” Indeed, it is my view that the decade between the ages 17 and 27 is when an individual discovers who he is and what his values are. I spent all those years, except the two in Bangladesh, in Berkeley. The defining issue of that defining decade – 1960 to 1970 — was the War in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, I have been asked frequently if I am a veteran. I respond by telling people:

“I am a veteran of the war on the home front, as Berkeley was the center of Anti-War activities in the U.S.”

I knew I could not serve because I was against the war but also was a supporter of the National Liberation Front, which in my view was fighting a war for national liberation. I thought that both sides would want to kill me. The Vietnamese because I was there and the Americans because of my beliefs. And I certainly was not going to kill anyone.

But in 1965, a few months before I was supposed to leave for my first job in East Pakistan, I was called for my army physical examination, the first step to being drafted. I did not know what I was going to do to try to get out, but I thought I was willing to do most anything. It was that, Canada or jail. I did not develop a plan, but I smoked horrible Greek cigarettes that made me feel sick prior to entering the building. My hands were ice cold. I complained about everything – the line, the crowd, the regimentation, the stick for the blood test, and listed approximately 25 things wrong with me on the questionnaire I was given. My complaints included that I was addicted to drugs and had homosexual tendencies. Most

people went one way after filling the questionnaire; I was sent to see the psychiatrist.

“How do you feel?”

“Touch my hands and see.”

He said: “No, that is OK. I see you have a lot of complaints. Please tell me about them.”

“Well it is true that I have a lot of complaints but they do not always bother me.”

“When do they bother you?”

“When I don’t have control of my life situation.”

“What do you do?”

“I’m a student.”

“Tell me about how you have trouble with these complaints as a student.”

“Well, if I have studied and know the material, I have no problems. But if they ask me an important question that I don’t know the answer to, I shit in my pants.”

This was an exaggeration of an experience I had in a prehistory class. The main question on a final exam used a classification system for stone tools that I had not used in organizing the material. How anyone would do on the exam depended on how closely the professor’s organization of the material meshed with the terms I used. I thought over that issue and felt a contraction in my anus.

“When was the last time you were in bed with a man?”

“I’ve never been in bed with a man.”

Recall in those days, homosexuality was not thought an alternative lifestyle, but rather a symptom of serious mental problems.

“Well why did you say you have homosexual tendencies?”

I said tendencies – not behaviour. For example, when I am going to shower with a large group of men, I don’t know if I will jump on someone or not. And I have dreams.”

“Oh, the dreams are very normal. Don’t worry. That will be all.”

Upon departure from the psychiatrist’s office a public health nurse interviewed me.

“You were given a 1Y classification. That means it was

determined that you are unfit for military service for one year. Why did you receive that classification?"

"You tell me. I don't know but I suspect that it was because I have sensitivities to, for example, killing people."

"I don't know why you were rejected. The records are confidential. But it is my job to rehabilitate you if I can."

"Thank you very much, but I do not wish to be rehabilitated so that I can kill people."

"No problem. Your records are confidential and you are not required to use my services.

My oldest son, Justin, who was conceived and born in Dacca, to cement my final exclusion from the draft, frequently says:

"I am the only person in the world with perfectly clean karma since I fulfilled my mission in life at conception."



WORKING IN VIETNAM

I have made approximately 25 or 30 trips to Vietnam in the last 25 years. Initially it was to help with Situation Analysis studies. Later it was to manage two fellowship programs which required three or four trips per year to interview applicants, select applicants, and prepare accepted applicants for U.S. or other graduate programs. Later, I served as the Population Council's temporary Representative for six months. Still later, I was hired as USAID's Acting HIV/AIDS Prevention Advisor.

In managing the fellowship programs, I had plenty of good assistance. The best was from SunAe Lee. She managed all of the administrative and personal support work with fellows and I managed supervision of their academic programs. The biggest help from SunAe was assistance to me in managing my problem with face-blindness. It is embarrassing to admit, but I had great trouble recognizing who each of our

20 or so fellows were. SunAe would stand by me and whisper in my ear who was who, like in *The Devil Wears Prada*. It was also a pleasure to travel to Vietnam with SunAe. In the beginning, all was new to her and she would go out and wander around, and then run back to the hotel to tell me about the new wonderful restaurant she had discovered. She was enthusiastic!

During my experience as Temporary Council Representative, I received an invitation to have dinner with President Bill Clinton, who was visiting Vietnam. I was scheduled to depart Vietnam a few days prior to the dinner. I could have postponed my departure, but I thought that there would probably be a few hundred invitees and we would pass through a line to shake his hand. (I made an unsavoury joke about the hand, but do not feel like recounting that here.) Interestingly, the Vietnamese people were incredibly enthusiastic about Clinton's visit. I heard it said that the Government of Vietnam was a little embarrassed about local enthusiasm, so the papers held down accounts. A few years later Clinton was on a shuttle flight between Washington and NY that I was on. He and a secret service entourage of body guards occupied six seats in the front of the plane. I wanted to chat with him about his visit to Vietnam, but I thought his bodyguards would prevent my approach and I let it go.



PRESENTATION TO THE HAIPHONG PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE

In my capacity as the Acting HIV/AIDS Prevention Advisor, the USAID office asked me to join a group of staff traveling to Haiphong to make a presentation to the Haiphong People's Committee on best practices for raising orphans. I told my supervisor I did not know much about the issue. She said, "Don't worry. Our Vietnamese staff know this

issue and the People's Committee will not be happy unless we show them we think they are important enough to send an American advisor."

Enroute to Haiphong, staff showed me a PowerPoint presentation they had prepared, and they asked me to begin the presentation. As temporary hire, I was the most junior staff on the trip. But, being older, with grey hair, and American I was treated as the most senior person in the group. After my presentation which I jazzed up with many relevant comments about Vietnam's family planning and abortion program, which prevented many unwanted births, the audience clearly liked me.

After our presentation and discussion, I was invited to join the Vice Director of the Haiphong People's Committee on a visit to two orphanages. First, we visited Hoa Phuong, Red Flower Children's Village, an orphanage using the SOS model in which several houses on a campus are located, each with a "mother" and "auntie helpers" and the seven or eight kids cared for make a "family." On that visit, I had brought a box of Ghirardelli chocolate squares and opened the box to the delight of the first group of children I met. The Vice Director told me: "Next time, Bob, bring more chocolates." And that it what I did for the next 10 years, raising funds to assist agencies with their pressing needs. At first, it was only Red Flower and an orphanage for HIV+ children — Thanh Xuan.

Thanh Xuan was under construction in my first visit. The Government was constructing this orphanage inside of a women's prison. After the visits, the Vice Director asked me what I thought of the orphanage I praised Red flower and said I thought the kids were doing well. Regarding Thanh Xuan, I said that the care and concern that the Peoples Committee was showing towards the construction of this orphanage was obvious. The design was good. The materials were of very good quality. But in my view, there was no getting around the problem that this orphanage was being constructed inside a woman's prison. I thought that created the wrong environment for the kids and added to their stigma. It would make it more difficult for other children in the community to visit

them. I said that I thought the People's Committee should act to separate the orphanage from the prison as soon as possible.



PRO BONO

I had written a close friend and told her about my observations at Red Flower. I thought the kids were doing fine. They did not appear to have the side effects of institutionalization. But I noticed that there was no playground equipment, no sporting equipment, no art supplies and few books – the things that help make childhood a rich experience. My friend asked me to pass on my observations in the form of a proposal to her wealthy brother, who had a foundation oriented toward children. She advised me to request \$5,000 to remedy the problems I noticed. His foundation granted this request.

On the next trip, I invited a professional photographer, Terry Husebye, to accompany me. He took terrific pictures of all the children, forwarded them to each of the children, and prepared a very large poster that was a collage of all of the children's photos. My copy covers one wall of my home office.

The trip was not entirely easy for Terry. He would go out in the morning and come back angry at Vietnamese drivers. He could not understand, indeed he seemed personally offended that the drivers continually honked their horns. And as he walked, he was ever alert for photographic opportunities, stepping into streets for improved framing, unaware that traffic on the one-way street would come from both directions.

We had a great time shopping for the orphanages with the \$5000. Swings and a slide for a playground accompanied by animals on heavy springs that kids could bounce around on, musical instruments, sporting equipment, two ping pong tables, diapers, infant formula, soap, toothbrushes, toys, more toys, and much more.

The People's Committee seemed to take note and requested that I expand my assistance to other agencies – first HHCSC a wonderful organization assisting very poor grandparents to raise their orphaned grandchildren. We bought blankets, warm jackets, rice cookers, fans and clothes for them. Amazingly, the people who were to receive these items arrived at HHCSC, offices on the day the goods were delivered and each person got what they had requested. We made arrangements for a company selling warm jackets to allow more than 100 kids to come and pick out the jacket they wanted. Later, we sent the kids to the largest bookstore and encouraged each of them to select books they would like to read. This was a new experience for the kids, who enjoyed it greatly.

Later, I was requested to provide assistance to the School for Blind Children in Haiphong and I added the school to the list of agencies I assisted. There are 110 children in the school, about 40 of whom reside there.



RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

I obtained a tremendous amount of pleasure from all these activities. But two recent highlights stand out in my mind. A young girl passed the entrance exam to a high school from the orphanage for HIV/AIDS children, but she was not strong enough to ride a bicycle to school. The faculty asked if I could buy her an electric motorcycle. After I found that a driver's license and insurance were not needed for electric motorcycles, we took her to a motorcycle store and she picked out the electric motorcycle of her choice in her preferred color.

Since Vietnam passed a law requiring riders to wear helmets, a number of stores started carrying flimsy plastic helmets for the purpose of convincing the police that they were complying with the law while not actually receiving any protection. We stopped to buy her a good helmet in a matching

white color and she promised to wear it when riding.

A second event took place on my last trip. I had been assisting the school for blind children every year – jackets, blankets, mattresses, clothing, a washing machine and dryer, very large rice cookers, and a large capacity air conditioner for their big meeting room. On my last trip, I went to each classroom and greeted the kids, brought candy, told them I love them, and then I went to the computer room. There, the IT teacher, who is blind, told me how much he appreciated the good computers I had purchased for the school, mentioning that two of his computers were 15 years old. I immediately suggested we go to the computer store and purchase new ones to replace those two. We bought late model I5 machines, with large monitors, and good speaker systems. The IT teacher told me: “I have been working in IT for many years but I have never had a great computer to use myself. Your gift is like a dream come true.”



DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF HAIPHONG CITY

In all these activities, I have worked for some time with Ms. Dzung, the Deputy Director of the Department of Foreign Affairs of Haiphong City. She contacts the agencies to obtain information on their pressing needs, sends it to me, supplies transport and a translator for me when I am in Haiphong, and is a wonderful colleague. It seems she does the work of three or four people. Every conversation is interrupted by phone calls but she is never concerned about that. She usually invites me for a lunch during the visit. My photos of her during these lunches usually show she has her phone at her ear. We communicate frequently by Skype when I am home, but our Skype calls are interrupted by telephone calls even very early in the morning.

Ms. Dzung is absolutely scrupulous with regard to ensuring signed receipts for any expenditures, and she worries also about any possible appearance of wrong doing. When I learned that she was using her phone for our Skype calls, I offered to bring her a new portable computer from the US. I arranged for research on what would be a good choice and presented the information to her. Her response was “Please don’t bother.” I explained that it would be a joy to bring it rather than a bother but she repeated that I should not bother. By this time, I was beginning to recognize that she would be embarrassed to show up at work with a new computer during my visit because it would suggest that she was benefitting improperly from our relationship. I checked out this hypothesis and dropped the matter.

A few years ago we wrote a proposal together to the U.S. Embassy to receive funding for a program to encourage more orphan kids to be ready to apply for college and to provide them courses that would help them gain admission. That program was funded and we received \$7,000. Soon after I received word that 20 kids at Red Flower were receiving intensive training with the four computers we had purchased on a recent trip, and they could all search the internet and prepare PowerPoint presentations on their findings.



BEING ADOPTED

On my first visit, it seemed that I was adopted as an uncle by a beautiful girl of about 10 years old — Thao. I could not walk anywhere without holding her hand. And when I left, sadly she was always in tears. Every year was like this but growing even more intense. I have never had a daughter, only sons. But I was sure that I was starting to have fatherly feelings toward Thao. Perhaps that helped me to be concerned with what the children would do after they turned 18 and

were sent away from the orphanages. As I saw her mature I became worried that she could be drawn into some negative employment or lifestyle, like drugs and/or sex work. I was working to help all of the kids on such issues, but I felt the need to do something special for Thao. My best friend in Hanoi is Dr. Tan, a math Professor at Hanoi University. I gave his wife \$500 to open a bank account for Thao and to give her the money when she is 18. I did not want her leaving the orphanage with no resources.

Sadly, Thao left Red Flower before graduating high school to live with her sister and work in a beauty salon. The last I heard, she was talked into having some plastic surgery which actually ruined her good looks. The \$500 had grown to almost \$800 which I used to help other programs.



FRESH EYES ON HIV PREVENTION

On my assignment as USAID's Acting HIV/Prevention Advisor, I had the following thoughts on the situation to begin my assignment.

A newly arrived public health-oriented colleague working in HIV Prevention in Vietnam has much to learn about the myriad of ongoing prevention programs and research focusing on IDU (injecting drug users), sex workers, clients of sex workers, IDU-sex workers, Men who have sex with men (MSM), youth, women, and all the most at-risk populations (MARPs) important in a concentrated epidemic. The amount to learn is amplified by the substantial amount of resources and the large number of partnerships made available by the PEPFAR program. Yet although the arriving professional has much to learn, it may also be that he or she brings a fresh look based on a unique history of experience gathered mostly outside Vietnam. Like in the field of travel photography where they say the photographer should take photos early,

this “fresh look” can fade quickly as the new arrival becomes more fully integrated into the details of USAID’s, partners’, and the Vietnamese efforts. I thought it might be worthwhile to document some early reactions to issues of prevention, share these reactions with colleagues and to enquire whether these reactions might serve as a basis for a mutually profitable exchange of views.

Primary Prevention of Drug Use: Cassell and Cortez (2006) rightly point out that there should be more primary prevention of initiation of injecting drug use. They also recommend attention to other “gateway” drugs and other risk factors for youth. If other drugs, and other methods of imbibing in drugs – inhaling, snorting, smoking, eating, etc. – are “gateways” to ultimate injecting for many people (it is important to recognize that not all move from experimenting with these “gateways” to injecting drugs), then it would follow that the primary prevention program should expand to other drugs and other risk factors and mechanisms, rather than focusing only on injecting.

Primary Prevention especially for girls and young women: Vietnam is experiencing a number of gender-related problems. These include the relatively lower status of girls and women (compared to boys and men), greater valuation of boys leading to sex selection through selective abortion, possible limitations on female employment and professional achievement, pressure on young newly wedded women to become pregnant quickly, domestic violence, etc. Vietnam certainly has made substantial progress in improving the status of women, especially through education which does not differ between men and women (DHS, 2002). Nevertheless, it may be that there are programs aimed to strengthen girls’ self-confidence, individual power, authority over their body and life that would offer some element of prevention to the adoption of sex work and injecting drug use, as well as improve the quality of life for the vast majority of girls who are not in danger of joining the sex trade or becoming IDU. This same majority of girls and women would also benefit from such programs by learning about the rights of women, their

right to control their own sexual behaviour, improve condom negotiation skills, and how to achieve a more satisfying life. Programs which combine sports and SRH education which has seen substantial experimentation in Africa, especially on soccer (international football) may deserve exploration for possible relevancy in Vietnam. Additionally, the Tostan program in Senegal, for combating female genital cutting within human rights and intensive small group interaction and an educational perspective may deserve further investigation as to their possible relevancy in Vietnam.

It is interesting that the age of first marriage is reported to be relatively low (21.6 years), and it has not risen in Vietnam over the last 25 years. Programs meant to delay or result in the delay of first marriage may give women more time to consider issues of marriage from a more mature perspective.

Groups in need of greater attention with HIV prevention programming: It is gratifying that basic knowledge of HIV has been measured at more than 90% in the 2002 DHS survey. This same survey highlights two groups that have significantly less knowledge, and may tend to be of lesser focus (if not overlooked) in the MARPs-driven programming – those who never attended school, and the lowest wealth quintile (48.9% and 73.4% of these group members have heard of HIV/AIDS, respectively). Most likely, ethnic minorities and remote rural people have similar knowledge levels and also require additional preventative programming.

Thinking about the future of prevention as the epidemic evolves: The DHS also reports that sexual abstinence is a “less commonly acknowledged” means of HIV prevention (50% of women and 33% of men failed to report abstinence as a means of preventing HIV transmission). DHS studies in countries like Ghana indicate that a surprisingly high proportion of both males and females report not having experienced sexual intercourse in the last month and/or the last year. I have always interpreted this finding as a possible change in behaviour as a result of their knowledge of HIV transmission and the risks of acquiring the disease. If heterosexual transmission is expected to gain greater prominence as the epidemic evolves over time,

we should begin to examine further what our future prevention efforts should look like. The DHS study indicates that only 39% of women and 51% of men have comprehensive knowledge (they know two means of reducing HIV risk, and reject the two most common misperceptions about HIV transmission – risk from sharing food and mosquito bites).

There is similar room for improving knowledge of HIV transmission through breastfeeding (40%), and the use of ARV drugs to prevent MTCT (21%) and of attempting to reduce wide-scale stigma and discrimination in the wider population. During the period of large resources made available through PEPFAR, perhaps additional attention should be focused on strengthening knowledge about the epidemic with the wider population, as well as keeping the present MARPs within the crosshairs of our efforts. How these competing concerns should be balanced and decided will probably be a source of intense debate, and deserves attention from groups with specialized epidemiological knowledge.

Young men as clients of sex workers and thoughts on “Live like a real man” campaign: In my view, the problem of men drinking with their adolescent friends and work colleagues and coming under social pressure to engage in commercial sex deserves substantial attention. Certainly, mass media approaches to instilling new norms may be useful. Also of concern should be underlying issues – the nature of the marriage relationship. What do young men and women want out of this relationship? Views on marriage may be changing along with the other vast changes ongoing in Vietnamese society. Additional research will no doubt be required to gain insights on the nature of marriage. Analogously, more intensive programs in education, and changes in child-raising practices may be needed over the long-term to have a significant impact on marital norms, expectations and behaviour, especially since the DHS reports that 1/3 of women marry during their adolescence (below the age of 20). Still, in the short term, it does make substantial sense to use mass media and other forms of education to “help vaccinate” men about how to deal with social pressures to drink and engage

in commercial sex. This writer suspects that preventing the drinking or improving the management of alcohol consumption (lowering the amount of alcohol consumed) is important. Once judgement is impaired by alcohol, there is less hope for responsible behaviour, especially in the face of social pressure to engage in risky and exciting behavior.

Research on sexual behaviour: Vietnamese norms appear to be influencing responses to survey questions so completely that it is difficult to imagine that DHS findings in this area could be valid. Experimentation is required with several other means of collecting information including various qualitative and quantitative approaches to gathering such information including participant observation, in-depth interviews and interviewing techniques that do not require anyone to admit to violating the norms in the interaction.



FINDING A STEAK IN HANOI

Two months into a three-month assignment in Hanoi, after loose stools the entire time, a bad flu that left me with a lingering cough, a sore throat, and perpetual tiredness, I decided that maybe I wasn't eating right. I had grown tired of the fun Vietnamese restaurant two blocks from my hotel where I ate seafood near daily. The last time I just didn't enjoy the crispy shrimp with chilli, lemon grass and salt any more. The crab with tamarind was a bit sweet so I tried grilled crab but the texture was so soft it scared me. That was my last meal there, about a week ago.

I contemplated the fact that I had not eaten a steak in 3-4 months and immediately knew that my father, Herman, who ate steak every day of his life, was advising me from beyond the grave. I had become so much influenced by my Buddhist wife who had gone vegetarian on me, and I had kind of gone along for the ride. A few months of that, and you begin to

see the meat as gross. Lately, I had been eating lox on bread from the Metropole Hotel's delicatessen, Canadian bacon and a fried egg, or even some pate on bread all cooked or thrown together by me. It was always fine and never disappointing. There were few vegetables because I am rigidly against eating uncooked fresh vegetables in developing countries for public health reasons, and few cooked vegetables seemed to enter my diet, except through Kazanna, an Indian restaurant that would be a national treasure in any country of the world.

I decided it was time for a steak. First, I checked Jaspers in my hotel, the Somerset Grand Apartments. When I eat in Jaspers, I always feel like I have given up. There is no hope. Life is devoid of adventure, and I am willing to eat grossly overpriced mediocre food because I won't go to any trouble at all to get good food. They had US and Australian beef, but it was fried (grilled). I hadn't waited 4 months to eat fried steak. I wanted fire roasted beef. I began a search on the internet. Googling "Steak restaurants in Hanoi" there were many listed but their locations were often unclear. I looked carefully at one map for a minute before I realized that Hoan Kiem Lake did not look like the Mekong River and the restaurant was in Ho Chi Minh City. That was close to Hanoi (only 600 km away) compared to restaurants in Australia, and Colorado that also came up. There was a Brazilian restaurant and I thought they might cook with fire, but in the end, I was influenced by the reviews of a restaurant called the Green Tangerine. The first reviewer said it was the best meal of his life and I was immediately convinced it was worth a try.

In the lobby of my hotel, I had the receptionist at the desk call and announce my arrival and thought that was a civilized way to do business. In the taxi, I began to see this coming meal as a kind of ritual sacrifice. I was seeking the life force and power of the big cow by eating its flesh and I remembered how strong that power was when I saw a cow sucking in air through its cut throat on the streets of Dhaka on Eid, refusing to die easily, as the streets ran red with blood. I thought of the ex-head hunters I had met in the long houses of Borneo, who it was said often ate the heart or brains of their enemies killed

in battle to gain their power. I knew they would understand this night's quest for a steak.

The Green Tangerine was a lovely building on a busy street in old Hanoi. Although the Rough guide had recommended reservations, at 5:30 it was almost empty. I opened the menu and immediately saw that they described a steak with three kinds of pepper sauces like the meals I ate often in Madagascar. They also listed rack of lamb with goat cheese and *frutti di mar* something sauce and some polenta. I considered each. The small lamb didn't seem to have the same life force as the big cow. He was more like the goat killed with one stroke of the Ghurkha kukri knife in the forests of Gokarna, beyond Boudanath, my favourite place in Nepal, on the day of a big picnic. I asked the waitress what cut of beef was the steak. She said: "you can have it rare, medium, or well done." I said that was how you cook it. I want to know the cut of beef – T-bone, rib, or fillet?" She said "Fillet." I thought I was making progress. Then, capturing a creative approach to decision-making, I thought that she had seen people order each of these meals, and perhaps judged their satisfaction level afterwards. I asked her which she thought I should have. She went for the quick goat-like kill. I asked how it was cooked, grilled or flame broiled. She said "yes." I said: "Wrong answer" and proceeded to explain. She changed her answer to "flame." Asked how I wanted it cooked, I said, "pink." Not red or brown but pink."

The order in, I sat and worried. Was this really going to be rack of lamb or would it be lamb chops? Was it going to be cooked on flame or fried? I went through the fantasy of sending it back because they brought undercooked lamb chops instead of sliced, roasted rack of lamb. Yet even I began to see how stupid this line of thinking was. What did this experience amount to? What was the worst thing that could happen? I am served something I don't want to eat. I can't manage an explanation and it cost me \$25. That didn't seem like it was worth a \$250 psychiatric consult. I'd see what happened. Maybe I relaxed a little.

The meal arrived – three chops, sliced from a rack,

completely Frenched with none of the tasty edges on the bone. The meat was crusted, I thought from a frying pan, but the color was good – mostly pink. I didn't even see the sauce as I mistook it for the color of the plate which was just as well as it was unremarkable. I ate that lamb and silently called upon him to make me strong, to become a part of me, and to give me his life force. But all the time, I was attracted to the polenta. It was absolutely delicious, served between some very thin crispy rounds, like taco shells, but thinner. It was perhaps the best polenta I had ever tasted.

I almost never eat desert. But I saw it as part of the continuing sacrifice and a definite part of this ritual. I ordered a “Tatin stuffed with mango, with chocolate ice cream encrusted with pistachios.” I had no idea what might be coming. The half a mango was baked and sliced like some kind of gourd or squash. It was sitting on a cake which had become quite soft. There was a dish of ice cream that was delicious, and the large pistachio nuts added to the flavour and texture. There was a beautiful zen-like design on the plate done with chocolate and some pink coloring which might be fruit-based. Very artistic. I have never been to Bali, but I was reminded of flower offerings in the TV programs I had seen, a kind of softer end to the ritual.

I walked out of the quietness of the lovely restaurant, into the blaring horns of the motorbikes and hoped I would be able to digest this sacrificial offering. I walked by Huan Kim Lake, caught a small Korean taxi that was about to fall apart, and got to my hotel for only 9000 dong – exactly 50 cents – awaiting my healing ... or indigestion.



HANOI STREET DINNER

Warm beer with a greasy plastic glass containing two ice cubes was the first hint this adventure might not go as smoothly as I had hoped. I was walking down Hon Gai Street

in Hanoi when I saw a very busy street food eatery. All the small plastic tables (about 14 inches off the ground) were taken, and foreigners sat at a few. A new one was carried to the middle of the motorcycle parking area and I sat on a tiny plastic stool. The food was yakitori on wooden sticks, and fresh maize (corn) all cooked on a charcoal fire. The corn was the clincher helping me to decide to try it. They were cooking it until some kernels were darkened, and brushing it with some liquid during the long cooking process. I thought the food would come hot, straight off the fire. The dishes and silverware were suspect, but yakitori is eaten on the skewer so I didn't think I would need the fork. There was hope for survival and I felt up for adventure so I moved towards the selection table.

Customers were supposed to have a plastic tub and select all the skewers they wanted and then they would all be thrown on the fire. It was so busy this Saturday night it took me five minutes to get a tub and then I succeeded only because I would not let a latecomer take one that I had been waiting for. He smiled sheepishly when caught being aggressive.

I didn't know how they would bring the cooked food, and I hoped it would not be in the same container as the raw chicken. I also had no idea how they would keep track of which food on the fire was mine or how to charge me. I saw and passed on chicken gizzards, all the red meat and chicken. I selected a squab or some small bird, a series of three small, roughly hewn white balls that I hoped were seafood, a slice of salmon, something wrapped in bacon and a corn. The white balls came first and were delicious, with crispy blackened edges and a smoky flavor! Interestingly, the plate on which they came was covered with a thin film of plastic, perhaps to obviate the need to wash dishes at all! The bacon wrapped crunchy somethings were also delicious and I was pleased to find the bacon cooked. The salmon was good. The little bird, cut into small pieces, was very tough and the corn was well done and somewhat blackened in a style that had attracted me to begin with. It was much more tender than African roasted corn, and they had drenched it in what might have

been butter while cooking it (while African roasted corn is tough and dry).

A couple from Spain with a young son sat next to me. It was only their second day. I spoke a little Spanish but their English was better than my Spanish. They also were feeling their way through this experience.

I had no idea what the price might be but I thought 50,000 Dong might cover it (even though I had a large beer). That would be about \$3. It took me 10 minutes to pay as no one was very interested in the money or they were just too busy. When the bill finally came perhaps as a result of me waving around my 50,000 dong note, and finally getting up, it was a little more than I expected – 89,000 Dong — \$5. I handed the waitress a 10,000 dong note and awaited my change while she had a look of consternation and searched the crowd for possible help. I was embarrassed when she pointed at the bill total again and at the note and I finally saw the problem.

I stopped to buy a chocolate croissant for the morning, and cleansed my palate on return to my “pad” with a delicious, cold, perfectly ripe mango. Dinner was good and fun, but the highlight of the night was telling the taxi driver Boon Chi Hai Ba Trung in a manner he could understand – 49 Hai Ba Trung, the address of the Hanoi Tower Apartments where I reside.



THE HANOI OPERA HOUSE TEST

Awaiting the Hanoi Symphony’s presentation of an evening with Dvorak, I could not help but take notice of a stunningly beautiful woman sitting across the aisle, and two rows forward in the aisle seat. She wore a simple black dress on the short side with black nylon stockings. Her dark hair at a medium length set off her gorgeous face. High cheek bones, taut skin, almond eyes, puffed lips set in an overall perfect shape, not child-like, with a hint of maturity perhaps in the

30ish range. When she moved her hands to fit between the thighs of her crossed legs as if she were cold and needed to warm herself or preserve body heat, I began to feel symptoms I had not felt in a while – tightness in my chest not completely unlike the angina prior to my triple bypass surgery. A hint of giddiness began to spread across my brain.

I began to wonder what a man might give up for an intimate relationship with such a ravishing beauty. Would he throw over his 38-year marriage with his loving attractive wife and become persona non-grata to the children who presently love and respect him? Who might understand the depth of the visceral feelings that pushed men to make such decisions? Immediately I thought of the Blue Angel. I saw the professor who had given up everything including his dignity, because of his passion for Marlene Dietrich, crowing like a rooster and flapping his folded arms like wings on stage at the conclusion of her nightclub act. No, it was clear to me that I was not that professor, and though I hoped for a closer look at the conclusion of the Concerto for Cello, I did not see her on departure. I went to my apartment with the feeling that perhaps I had passed that test; or was it merely a quiz?

The next day a USAID driver was taking me to a meeting in town. He told me that a friend of his was having the grand opening of a café and he would like to drop by for 15 minutes on our return and asked if that would be OK. What he didn't mention was that he had invited a friend to join us. She stepped into our van and sat in the seat behind, a little like a dream, and an advertisement to visit Hanoi. With her small nose, and easy laugh, she was coquettish and charming. She perhaps had the straightest white teeth of any woman I have met in Hanoi where, at that time, such teeth were rare because of an overabundance of fluoride in the water; most were mottled and discoloured, and there were few if any of the orthodontists that were so popular in America. There was a mixture perhaps of both self-confidence from her beauty and nervousness that led her to respond to most every topic with a quick laugh. I am not a good judge of age but I figured she was perhaps 26 or 27 though she could pass for 20 or even 16. I

was surprised to learn that she worked on the third floor of the building I visit for meetings, as I thought she could be a model or a very successful tour guide, or with her reasonably good self-taught English language skills, perhaps a receptionist.

We stopped at the café opening and I was impressed with painted multi-coloured walls – blue, orange, green and brown, and hanging colored lights that complemented the modern recessed lighting and the walls of this, the new Hanoi. The seats were oval cushioned, like the head of a modern dining set. She sat next to me, wrapping an arm around her seat and looked directly at me. After a bit of chit chat – her daughter was four years old which fit my age estimate, my wife was visiting from 17 April to 6 May, I began to be overwhelmed by some of the same giddiness I had experienced the night before at the Opera House. In that state, I did not suppress my thought and I blurted out for both her and the driver:

“Please forgive me for saying this, but I find you so beautiful that it is difficult to breathe in your presence.”

She of course laughed, but then responded:

“Why don’t you call me sometime. We could take a trip to the countryside where it is so beautiful.”

Here was the true test which I did not expect so soon. Last night was just a quiz and this was more the final. I felt throbbing in my gut and thought:

“Oh no, I’m going to be overwhelmed.”

In this confused state, I simply responded:

“I don’t think your husband would approve of those plans.”

Of course, I meant I didn’t think it was smart. I had already figured the risks were too high. Even in an almost overwhelmed state, I think that somewhere I knew that I might recover in six hours or so from this encounter, but who knew how long it might take to recover from “a day in the country.”

She also invited me to drop by and see her on my next visit to her building. I went to a meeting (which was cancelled) there yesterday, looked up those stairs, knew it was unseemly to climb them, and departed.



ON THE BUS FROM HAIPHONG TO HANOI

As the ring I cherish
Is the Talisman
For our marriage,
A constant and beautiful reminder
Of our commitments,
The Red Flower Children's Village Project
Is also a talisman
Reminding me
Of my proper relationship
To the Vietnamese people.
I struggle to ensure
That my behaviour
Is worthy
Of the acceptance, trust and love
That has been granted.
One would not want to tarnish
Such a valuable gift.



THE HALONG BAY CRUISE

I am something of a story-teller but even I could tell I talk too much when I sat next to an Australian guy who visited 139 countries, cruised all the great rivers of the world, took all the major train trips and insisted on telling me about each one.

There were crocodiles on deck down the Congo River, and it was -40 degrees outside the Trans-Siberian Express, the Chinese and not the Russian one (or vice versa) because one is better than the other.

I had started to tell our cruising group how my life story

could be told in terms of my interactions with three famous people at different stages — Ike, Erik Ericson and Kurt Vonnegut. My new acquaintance asked what Ike Turner had to do with my life. After telling the story of Ike Turner propositioning a friend and his girlfriend at a party for a more intimate interaction with Tina in exchange for his date, my friend's girl demurred, much to his regret which perhaps has so far lasted 40 years. Then I explained I was talking about Dwight Eisenhower.

Then, after I talked about Kurt Vonnegut, Madagascar, the CIA, angels and celibacy, *Palm Sunday* and *My Old Man and the Sea*, people were clearly uninterested in my psychiatric assistance to Erik Ericson....

SWITZERLAND



FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF GENEVA

On arrival at the airport you get the impression that watches are very important. Huge signs announce Rolex, Patik Phillipe (or something), “*Have you ever owned a real watch,*” “*Can you ever really own a watch*” and on and on. I put watches on the back burner while catching the train to my hotel. There is only one stop on the train for Geneva and I was told I couldn’t miss my hotel because it was on the Cornavin Plaza, which is the name of the station (I finally could remember this when I thought *corn to wine*). There are many exits from the station, some of which, including mine, do not border the Plaza. I headed toward what looked like civilization, a greater density of people. I was looking for information, but not wanting to get in any language hassles. Just when I realized I could ask about my location from any hotel, I saw my hotel’s sign. Quite a difference from my last trip to Europe a couple of weeks ago when I was never tense and had no challenges to figure out.

A sweet arrangement in Geneva is that transport is free for visitors around Geneva on all busses and trolleys. I got my ticket after breakfast and jumped on the first bus I saw. I didn’t ride far because we passed the lake with boats docked and a surrounding park so I jumped off. There were the watch companies with giant signs announcing from the tops of every building. In addition, each small shop sold a collection of Swiss Army watches. I evolved from thinking: “how could watches be this important to people,” to “oh yes, my youngest son needs a new watch. Maybe I should have a look.” Then I passed by Mont Blanc pens. I recalled how in 1971 I bought a sterling silver Parker pen for \$25 thinking it was a lot of

money, but it might be easier to write my dissertation if I had such a nice pen. And there was the Mont Blanc modern equivalent but the price was \$3000. How could someone justify that? (Actually, if it were easier to write a dissertation, it would not be such a stretch to justify that expense either.)

There were also Swiss Army knives and cuckoo clocks. Stores filled with them. I saw a store called American Market so walked by to glance in the window: lots of soda, other junk food, and Betty Crocker cake mixes. Then came the shock. At a block devoted to travel agencies, airlines, and money centres, all of the Middle Eastern agencies had broken windows and some also had paint splashed on them. There was Saudi Airlines, Tunisian Travel Service and many others all with trashed windows. They have not only outlawed building minarets but have taken other steps in Switzerland to voice their displeasure at Muslims.

The people on the street remind me of NY. There are many Africans. It must be UN agencies, but I also saw younger migrants begging, drinking beer in groups and hanging on corners. One can see some people getting a bad name.

I made it to the neighbourhood of my hotel walking and discovered I had trouble finding it even in daylight and knowing where it was. The little tension I felt was finally relieved when through the tunnel I was walking, I finally saw Hotel Suisse.



TEX-MEX IN GENEVA

You would think that after 67 years I would avoid Tex-Mex in places like Geneva almost “on instinct.” That was the case on my first night. Tonight however, as I walked by and glanced at the menu, there were three people from Latin America also examining the menu. Not to lose the opportunity today for a conversation in Spanish (my second), I asked: “Es la comida verdad?” This confused my informants at first,

but in a few moments, they responded in the affirmative with the laugh of understanding my confused question. It seemed that they knew the place, thought the food was good, and even recommended a few dishes.

I was not too hungry so went with the description of the two tacos for about \$24. They were described as having beef, melted cheese, guacamole, and garnished with lettuce and tomato. You can see how it might seem appealing. I conjured up my brother Len's recent story of tacos at the baptism of his ex-ranch worker's child. The festivities were catered by a taco stand and the tacos were the best he had ever had. I thought of his tacos and added *melted* cheese and the result in my optimistic mood was one notch above his. I was only sorry that no rice and beans were listed as accompanying dishes.

When the plate came, I was happy that it contained rice and beans, but was confused by the mountain of stuff stuck together in the middle. The main ingredient was chilli con carne which did not interest me. And because of the texture of the vast quantity of chilli and the huge dollop of guacamole and the fact that the two were stuck together by the melted cheese, I was reduced to attacking it with a knife and fork. Tacos with a knife and fork! The first thing I did was move most of the chilli to the side. I used some tortilla chips to scoop the guacamole and cut the taco shell which had become moist by the fillings and the melted cheese. When I was finally able to open the second one, I found that it contained only chilli. Evidently one was supposed to reappportion the guacamole from the first one to the other.

Interestingly, the waiter was a young American. I saw him ask another table at the conclusion: "How was it?" They said: "good" and I was wondering if I would get the question and how I would answer. I considered: "Do you want the truth or would you prefer polite?" A young female came and asked in French if I were through, so my American waiter would not see that I ate about half of what was delivered. I asked for the check, paid, leaving the small change which amounted to 1.5 Swiss Franks (\$1.50) for him. I began putting on my jacket and decided that I was in danger of not getting this

experience off my mind if I did not tell him. So, I told the waiter I would like to give him some feedback for use in staff meetings, should that opportunity arise. I said that I was positively surprised by the rice and beans which were not listed on the menu, but negatively surprised to find that the beef was actually chilli. His quick response was that he had no idea what the beef was and that the menu was quite wrong and they would be making a new one. I concluded by telling him that the best thing I got out of the dinner was a brief short story which I was going back to my hotel to write.



FONDUE CHINOISE

The Swiss love fondue! At the restaurant which advertises: “Some say this is the oldest restaurant in Geneva” to which I was taken for dinner, half the clientele were eating fondue. At each table to which clients were directed, there was a great pyramid of sliced French bread awaiting and perhaps promoting orders of fondue. I wondered how the bread was kept from drying out but thought “perhaps that doesn’t matter as it will be moistened when dipped into the hot cheese.” I watched the guests dip and swirl into the cream colored thick liquid and wash down the taste with white wine.

It is my understanding that the Chinese do not care much for cheese. The Tibetans, of course, have a very hard and aged crude cheese made from yak milk, but I do not consider Tibetans (and nor do they think of themselves) as Chinese. In the high altitudes of the Himalayas, with the dry air and few resources, the yak cheese becomes rock hard and perhaps lasts forever. Yet the several Chinese restaurants I passed in Geneva all have a sign in the window featuring “Fondue Chinois.” I wondered what this might be. Soy sauce, and red pepper mixed in the Swiss cheese? Use of chopsticks instead of specialized long forks? Surely that would not be much of an

attraction for the inward oriented Swiss.

But Geneva is an international city. Besides the numerous young migrants standing on street corners with open beers and doing a poor job of hiding their negotiations and passing drugs amongst themselves, it is also the headquarters of the World Health Organization, United Nations Program on AIDS, The Red Cross and innumerable banks and other business organizations. However, none except restaurants that I could see, were Chinese.

This issue was rummaging my mind when my walk took me by one Chinese restaurant that had a picture or poster under their Fondue Chinois sign. It showed shrimp, strips of beef, fish balls, green onions and other vegetables – all of the ingredients of the dish frequently referred to in Asia as Hot Pot or Mongolian Hot Pot. Interesting!

MADAGASCAR



AN AFRICAN COUNTRY POPULATED BY FRENCH SPEAKING INDONESIANS

Placide Tapsoba is perhaps the nicest fellow I have ever met. Placide is Burkinabe (from Burkina Faso). He had wanted to be a priest and a physician. The church, which had provided him a scholarship to study for the priesthood in Italy, instructed him that he had to choose between the priesthood and medicine. He could not do both. He went to Italy and applied to medical school and was accepted. Afterwards he studied epidemiology at UCLA with Ralph Frerichs and was hired by the Population Council from UCLA.

He is so sweet, trying hard to increase happiness in the world. It was said that he stopped strangers in the street to ask their address so he could send a postcard from his next destination. Once at a bank where we were changing money, the teller looked sad to him. He pushed one of the bills towards her and said: "Take this. I hope it makes you feel better."

Madagascar is an interesting country – quoting the USAID family planning officer there:

"Madagascar is an African country populated with French speaking Indonesians."

We went to Madagascar together about six times. Placide and I were very productive, designing five or six operations research proposals on our first visit. I can recall that I used a strange word processing program on my portable computer because I had been using a Mac before coming to the Council, and I could only function with drop down menus. This was a problem for the staff because we could not exchange files and share proposals. Andy wanted me to change programs to what everyone else was using, probably some early form of

Word. I resisted, saying:

“When someone else comes back from a trip with more than six proposals, I’ll change.”



NORPLANT^R

Eventually I changed. Another project in Madagascar had to do with the introduction of NORPLANT^R, the hormonal rods that were inserted into a woman’s arm under the skin. Indeed, a few Council people had blank rods inserted, including Peggy McEvoy (the woman who hired me at the Council) and George Brown. When Peggy told me she had it, I asked to see what it felt like. She bent her elbow and invited me to touch her arm. At the same time, she said that if I wished, I could get the blanks inserted also. I told her:

“Peggy, I don’t think I am ready for NORPLANT^R blanks right now. But if you like, I will be happy to use Council condoms.”

The Council was excited about its development of NORPLANT^R and that it was being introduced in Madagascar. Placide and I wrote a proposal to test the value of husband’s involvement in NORPLANT^R Counselling. We wanted a randomized trial but of course could not easily deal with the ethical issue of some women not wanting their husband’s involvement. We decided that women interested in NORPLANT^R could be asked whether they were willing to have their husband involved or not. For those who said yes, we trained the nurses to role a dice with even numbers going to husband involvement and odd not creating our experimental and control group. In fact, women who had counselling with their husband had fewer removals and were happier with the method. But our methodology was compromised by the actual procedures for creating the two groups. Instead of rolling the dice, they asked women if they wanted their husband

involved or not. Thus, the findings were hindered because the groups were not comparable.



WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT, THINK JIRAMA

We met the head of the family planning program at JIRAMA, the Water and Power Company of Madagascar — Dr. Monique Rokotomalala. JIRAMA was running a program serviced by mobile teams that travelled around the country providing services to their employees and community members who wanted family planning services. They wanted us to expand their program. (I thought I had in mind a great slogan for JIRAMA's family planning: "When the lights go out, think JIRAMA." I was the only one who liked that idea.)

Instead of expanding the mobile program because we strongly suspected that it was inefficient, expensive, and not very effective, we proposed to compare the efficiency and effectiveness of their mobile program with two other programs: one in which we trained nurses working in health centers to deliver family planning services, and another in which we placed a nurse, whose sole job was to deliver family planning services. It turned out that both programs were more effective and efficient than the mobile program. But the workers in the mobile program were committed to it, I suspected because of the vast per diem allowances they received on their extensive road trips. They argued against our scientific findings as unfair.

When we shared our findings with higher ups in the MOH. In fact, the program with the dedicated worker was more effective in recruiting and serving more clients, but the program of training an existing staff member to deliver services was less expensive. Our MOH official said:

"I'll take the less expensive model."

Placide and I had so much fun on our trips together that at one time we jokingly thought it was immoral to accept our salaries. On one trip, when we had the weekend off, we rented a car and drove to a reserve, halfway between Antananarivo and the coast, to see lemurs. I'll not forget the instruction we heard from our government guide. He told us that lemurs found medicinal properties in many of the plants growing in the jungle. He showed us one and said that this is what lemurs ate when they had a headache. I asked how did he know that the lemurs had a headache? "Because they eat this plant!"

We passed through a town where a guide book I had described a restaurant which it considered the best restaurant in the country — Le Coq d'Orr. We went to the restaurant and could hardly believe the prices. At the best restaurant in the country, the main dishes were all about \$2. In fact, we ordered six or eight dishes just to have a sample tasting. In truth, I can't remember the food now, but I do remember our approach to sampling.



POSSIBLY SETTING A WORLD RECORD

I enjoyed shopping in Antanarrivo, under the wide umbrellas where sellers spread their wares. I bought crocodile skin leather belts and a wallet. (I had bought an expensive fine wool suit before going to Kenya and the bumps on the back of this wallet made holes on the outside of my back pocket where I kept the wallet.) I also had earrings made for Faith, including a pair with really dark amethysts, Faith's birthstone, which she liked a lot.

Walking through the market with a pocket full of local bills, one day I caught four different people trying to pick-pocket me. I thought that might be a record and considered submitting it to the Guinness Book of Records, but didn't.

UGANDA



EVOLUTION: NOT YET ARRIVED

I was surprised that among the few faculty members I met at the School of Public Health in Makerere University, not a single one believed in evolution. Like many American fundamentalists, even University faculty members thought the earth was about 5,000 years old and they were committed to creationism.

I had difficulty letting this go. I said to my close colleague, “Do you know about the H1N1 virus?”

“Yes of course. We had a question about that for students on a test last week.”

“Do you know why we are concerned about the possibility of the virus mutating from pigs to humans?”

“Yes.”

“Interestingly if you just add natural selection to the mutation process, you have the engine of evolution.”

No takers. But I did not leave it at that. At my hotel, there was an antique store. In it I found a set of first issue stamped envelopes from Kenya, each with an important hominid in the evolutionary process in East Africa. I presented it to my close colleague and said:

“You may not believe in evolution, but the Government of Kenya surely does. Please keep these as a reminder.”



SEARCH FOR THE SOURCE OF THE NILE

While working in Uganda, I had a day off on my 12-day visit. I took the classic African Adventure — searching for

the headwaters of the Nile. Now it is not as hard as it used to be as documented in those classic accounts from Richard Burton, etc. — no digging the buzzing insects out of your eardrums with a rusty knife after they drive you nearly insane for months. No malaria or other fevers, or hacking your way through the jungle with hostile natives and bearers in revolt. But amazingly, it turns out to still be a 21st century version of the classic adventure. You have to fight the Kampala traffic and potholes that are 18" deep. You have to know which way to turn at various unmarked intersections or seek local advice 3-4 times and you have to be able to find a decent restaurant for lunch.

It seemed like a long drive through rolling hills, some covered with the green tea gardens of the Uganda Tea Corporation. There was a special smell, almost fungus-like coolness in the rainforest we drove through. At other times, we saw the rape of the forest with nothing left but burned and rotting stumps. There were acres of sugar cane, and with the green warmth and the reddish soil it almost looked like Hawaii.

Each little town we passed had its army of vendors descending on travelers with a desperation we are not used to seeing (or hearing) in the west except from telephone marketers during dinner. Besides the fruit and water, I noted skewers with halves of roasted or fried chicken being shoved toward the bus windows which I had never seen at a bus stop in Ghana or Kenya. These skewered chickens made me hopeful that the Ugandans were doing better than the people in some other countries with which I am more familiar. But, at a fruit stand where we looked in vain for green coconuts or a ripe jackfruit the driver wanted to bring to friends in Kampala, the look of disappointment was almost palpable on the beautiful face of a young woman who wanted to sell me a plastic bag of carrots which I declined. It was unfortunately etched in my memory so intensely that today I wish I had bought them and given them away — or perhaps that look was practiced and was her strategy. Two ships passing briefly will not know.

We found the headwaters of the Nile by following a sign to "Drifting" (rafting). There we had to pay about \$2.50 to

drive down a path and see it. Somehow, because it is only the beginning of a great river, I expected it to be smaller. But the water flows at a substantial rate in a wide torrent, creating what looked to me like world-class rapids, with sections dropping perhaps 15 feet. Rafting parties made up mostly of African kids, a few *wazungus* (rich white men), and a professional guide were shooting these, and individual small kayaks looking like plastic soap-box derby racers or sled toys flitted about before dropping into the abyss of a cataract. I watched that rushing water and thought: "Next stop, the great pyramids of Giza."

Naturally, we wanted this adventure to be a "twofer" with Lake Victoria, which I had never seen, thrown in. I confess the lake was a disappointment. I expected it to look like an ocean. I envisioned hundreds of native fishing boats pulled up on a sandy beach brightly painted like those on the beaches of Ghana. And I even expected a restaurant on pilings over the water where I could have fresh grilled Nile perch while drinking in the view (and a cold beer) a la a Thai resort. What we found was several dirt roads which stop short of the lake and a landscape of warehouses and iron gates, and glimpses of small fingers of the lake which didn't compare to the view of the San Francisco Bay from my house. We saw two men fishing from small native canoes neither of which was painted.

Down one of those dirt roads, we did come across a restaurant which was part of a hotel. It had native grass huts, shaded tables in a garden, and lacked a view of the lake which I had hoped for. But when we enquired at the hotel desk, we found the restaurant closed that Saturday.

In Jinja, we had to choose between African and Indian chapatis. (In the interest of scientific discovery and to teach the scientific method to my taxi driver, I chose both. African chapattis are somewhat softer. I was told they would also be spicier but the empirical test was clearly necessary because I can't remember having had a spicy chapatti and was not sure what the waitress, Ms. R., with whom I took a photo "to help document the adventure," might actually be describing. In

the end, I found the difference almost entirely one of texture with no hint of spiciness.)

After lunch at the Indian restaurant in Jinja, we started the arduous trip back on what seemed like the longest 80 km drive in some years. One problem was I was wearing dark pants and the hot equator sun was shining on me the entire time. I alternated the use of my Ecuadorian "Panama" hat between shading my arm and shading my dark pants but did not stop the sun from burning my arm. When we stopped to buy more water, I was virtually swooning when I stepped out of the car, and knew that, although it was good, I should not have had that one Tusker Malt (naturally *baridi sana* — very cold) with my chicken tikka masala at lunch.

On return to the Sheraton, I invited the taxi driver to join me for some refreshment at the cool bar where he had his Bell's beer and I had an espresso. We sat in those easy chairs, snacked on the spicy cashews and cookies accompanying our refreshment, and while it was not a meeting of the Royal Geographic Society in London, damn if we did not feel like adventurers!

Post-script: The famous airport at Entebbe where I had landed in the black of night (like an Israeli rescuer) is almost entirely surrounded by Lake Victoria. The evening drive to Entebbe the next day provided beautiful views of the Lake.



THIS IS A STORY ABOUT WHAT?

There is an unusual speech pattern expressed by many Ugandans. I have noticed this for 20 years, since working with my first Ugandan colleague. Many Ugandans take simple declarative sentences and make questions out of them. Thus, instead of: "We need information." Or: "We need information!" We get: "We need what? Information!" The interesting thing is that there can be numerous such constructions in a single utterance. Thus, it would not be totally uncommon to

hear:

“The Uganda AIDS Commission conducts a what? A monitoring and evaluation program. To conduct this M&E program, the UAC needs what? Information! To gather this information, we look at what? The Health Information System....”

When one asks Ugandans about this construction and exactly how one uses it, some do not know what you are talking about. For example, while buying a book this morning called *Transcendental Spirit: Orphans in Uganda*, I asked the sales-person about this construction. I asked her the following question to clarify details and exact use:

“Would a Ugandan be more likely to say: ‘This is a what? A book.’ Or would they say: “This is a what? This is a book!”

I wanted to know if, after the question, Ugandans use a simple phrase, or a complete declarative sentence. She did not get my question and I thought of the old saying that “the fish does not recognize the water in which it swims.” However, yesterday someone explained to me the origin of this speech pattern. It starts in primary school where the Ugandan teacher, after writing the letter “A” on the chalkboard, then says:

“This is a what? A letter ‘A.’”

Repeat it 100,000 times and it may seem like natural English construction!



THE “BOB MILLER” APPROACH

Speaking of not getting it, I am reminded of an interesting incident while conducting training on the functioning of the new Program Management Monitoring Plan, or PMMP, in Mukono District, about an hour’s drive from Kampala. Before I discuss the incident of interest, please allow a few observations/confessions. I have always, or at least for a long time, worked in a kind of colourful manner. If I am famous

in a small circle, it is to a large extent because of that unique, personalized approach to my communications. Among my closest comrades, they would understand what you were talking about if you brought up “the Bob Miller approach.”

I have noticed that as I age, the colours are becoming richer, deeper and more intense. I have felt that I am giving myself greater freedom to become and express who I am and to not be afraid to do so. It is possible that it is some form of dementia but it is non-boring. For example, while visiting the Haiphong People’s Committee to discuss the needs of (AIDS) Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), I began my introduction by stating: “I am so proud to be visiting the Haiphong People’s Committee, because to men of my generation, the name Haiphong is legendary for your contribution to the War for National Liberation and development.” I admit I might not have felt free to say that in front of the high-level U.S. Government leaders, but as the Ranking American, I thought: “Why not? Go for it and say what you feel.” Amazingly, the approach seems to work. People laughed while learning in Uganda, and treated me akin to a rock star in Haiphong.

Ugandans seemed shocked that someone could look at one of the women participants and say:

“OK. You say that we can collect these Outcome Indicators. But have you looked at the content of the questions and asked whether you can collect valid answers in your surveys?”

For example, (looking directly at one of the female participants):

“Madam, ‘Did you have sex with a non-regular partner in the last 12 months?’” (The question needed to measure Outcome Indicator 6: “The percentage of sexually active people [women 15-49 years and men 15-54 years] who had sex with a non-regular partner in the last 12 months.”) I have broken a universally accepted taboo in suggesting that this particular woman may have had an extra-marital affair, but participants then burst out laughing, and seemed to have the understanding that there are content issues regarding the

survey questions that may require expertise in training interviewers. To me it is a beautiful thing to see the participant burst out laughing with recognition from the unexpected and humorous or taboo-breaking lesson, rather than being on the receiving end of an academic lecture.

Now the purpose of the training was to pre-test a manual and a training program, so we are focusing on determining a good way to conduct this training in the 80 districts of Uganda. (It is funny but I can't remember the actual subject of the main issue I wanted to convey to a colleague after the training, when we were reviewing possible lessons and changes in the program to be considered.) But I thought there was a simple point or question under discussion; should we do A or B to cover this issue? I thought the question and the alternatives under discussion were simple, but my colleague replied by giving about five complex reasons why one approach was substantially better than the other.

My "Bob Miller" kind of took over with an interesting result. I said to him:

"You remind me of a story. A guy walks into a bar and a beautiful woman says: 'Would you like to go to bed with me?' The guy responds, 'Sure, your place or mine?' The woman replies: 'Well, if you are going to make a big and complex problem out of it, you can forget the whole thing.'"

My colleague, quite reasonably in this instance, had no idea what I was talking about. Humour does not usually translate well and this one, plainly, was not obvious. (One could also say I was "walking on thin ice" by uttering a "joke" that was not women friendly. But as my friend Ralph Frerichs pointed out in Indonesia, Indonesians [or Ugandans] being in the tropics have no idea of the meaning of "walking on thin ice.")

So, we start dissecting my story.

"This was an unusual situation. People are not usually so direct on these sensitive matters, so it may be considered highly unusual that she should be so direct in immediately propositioning him for sex at the first instant."

"And what does 'Sure, your place or mine mean?'"

That means, I agree that we should have sex, and now we must decide the venue.”

“So why did the woman think that was such a big problem?”

“Well that is an interesting part of the story. You see that it was not really a big problem at all, but the fact that she saw it as such a big problem is a further clue to the highly unusual nature of the woman, which some people might find humorous. Indeed, it now appears both from her approach to this gentleman, and her response to his reply that she may be kind of unstable, or at least living in a distorted reality.”

“And such a loose person could also be infected. He is probably better off for not getting involved with her.”

Suddenly, my colleague bursts out laughing. He got the joke and understood that we were talking about whether the choice between A or B was a complex or simple issue.

ZAIRE

(NOW DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO)



ANOTHER BAD ARRIVAL

Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire, was not a place one should arrive at in the middle of the night without well laid plans. That is exactly what I did. Evidently, I had lost track of developments and thought someone would meet me but those plans were not made. I did not even know the name of the USAID Guest House where I thought I would be staying and meeting Andy Fisher.

It was perhaps 2:30 in the morning. I did not think it was a good idea to take a taxi at that time, and I didn't know where I was going. It is also a French speaking country and I do not speak French. It also crossed my mind that, taking the value of my computer, contents of my suitcase and wallet together, I was probably carrying somewhere around 10 times the taxi driver's life time earnings. That might be an incentive to drive into the jungle and leave my body. I thought I might be sitting on an airport bench until it was light.

Instead, I decided to find the best dressed person in the airport, ask if he spoke English, and if he knew if anyone from the U.S. Embassy was in the airport. It was my lucky night. I found a man, he spoke English, and said he had seen a driver from the U.S. Embassy there. We found him. He was there to pick up a consultant (not me). But of course, he knew the USAID Guest House and took me there.

I arrived and determined the room Andy was in and knocked on the door. Andy still laughs about how I looked when he opened the door – “white as a sheet with the hair of Einstein.”

We were there on this trip to review the findings of the Situation Analysis study of services at Government and private family planning clinics. I do not remember the detailed findings of that study, but I recall that the Planned Parenthood clinic was providing services to about two new family planning clients per month!

The other interesting thing was how the poverty affected work and corruption. Low level office workers were earning about \$10 per month. (A lunch at a medium quality French restaurant at that time cost about \$10.) In this situation, if you asked someone to produce a photocopy of a paper they wanted to be paid to do it.

Although the Zambezi River flows through the capital, and the rapids are quite interesting, I recall from an earlier visit that I had been warned not to take photographs. It was reported that Congolese people thought anyone taking pictures was a spy, so if you raised your camera, you might be stoned.



ART MARKET STALKER

There was an art market that we found time to visit. A guy followed me around the whole time I was there trying to sell me a fly whisk that was beautifully carved and looked old. It was entirely different from the run of the mill tourist items available throughout Africa. It was special. The fellow was asking \$1000 for the whisk. I offered him \$100 and he seemed quite offended. We were so far apart that I did not pay him further attention. When we got to our car, the seller was still there. He still wanted \$1000 and I still offered a \$100 bill. The car started and the light turned green. The guy handed me the whisk through the window and I gave him the money.

Interestingly, one of my favorite TV programs in the U.S. is Antiques Road Show. I had tried to get tickets without success. Then listening to Public Radio during pledge week, a pair

of tickets to the show being filmed near Palo Alto were offered to anyone who contributed \$360. I contributed. Faith and I went, and I was filmed for the broadcast with the fly whisk.



MY EXPERIENCE AT ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

Antiques Roadshow is my favorite public TV program. I applied for tickets in Portland and Seattle and was not selected to get them in their lottery. So, upon hearing that, if I contributed \$360 to KQED radio, I would be given a pair of tickets if I called the station after 10 AM on the following Saturday, I was excited. I thought about the offer a little. I had already contributed \$360 to get a hand-winding emergency radio and emergency backpack kit since my wife is always planning on an earthquake emergency. In the end, I decided that the \$360 for two tickets to the Santa Clara show (which is about an hour's drive from our house) was cheaper and much more convenient than flying somewhere else. I telephoned the station 10 seconds after 10AM that Saturday and pledged the money.

I was excited about the prospects. I was up. Indeed, I think I had been planning for years what I would bring if I had the chance. After much deliberation and consultation with our friend and Asian specialist, Roger Williams, we decided on four objects (each ticket allowed appraisal of two objects.) We were going to bring a Chinese agate carved ritual water pouring container that we bought in Kathmandu 40 years ago, a Chinese painting which we think is Sung Dynasty (1000 years old, in poor condition), a gift from a friend who, strangely, we had never met, a beautiful Indian carved wood temple panel which had been purchased on a trip to India in 1967 by Tom Crowley, my supervisor in my first professional job in Dhaka (then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh). It was a gift from my boss' son upon his father's death, perhaps

in appreciation for the time we spent with his father, especially in his final year. He knew that I had always loved it, and he said his father would be happy for me to have it. The fourth object was a beautiful Kongo chief's fly whisk which I purchased in Kinshasa, Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo), in about 1990.

When we arrived at the Santa Clara Convention Center, there were thousands of people. Faith dropped me off at the entrance with our treasures, while she went to park our car. We had packed our objects elaborately for protection and were moving them on a very sturdy dolly that I had borrowed from a friend for the occasion (the wooden carved Indian panel perhaps weighed 50 pounds).

We joined a long, Disneyland-like line of people waiting to move forward to the specific appraisal lines. After about an hour, we reached the dividing lines and were given three new tickets to the Asian appraisals and one ticket to Tribal Arts. We decided to bring the fly whisk first to the Tribal arts section because that line was shorter than the Asian antiques line which was estimated to be about 90 minutes wait.

After another 30 minutes, we reached the Tribal arts appraiser, John Buxton. John looked at the whisk and asked me where and how I had obtained it. He examined it carefully under his magnifying loop. I explained that I was in a car stopped at a red light on the street in Kinshasa, perhaps on my way to the Family Planning Association of Zaire, when a guy ran up to show me the fly whisk. I immediately noticed, even in a brief glance, that it was attractive and well carved and had patina of the type I had seen in Nepal on Tibetan objects that had been handled for many years (This description does not include the fact that the seller was following me around in the art market. Andy Fisher reminded me of this after seeing the broadcast.)

Buxton asked if I had shown it to anyone previously. I explained that I had shown it to three people. The first was a friend who was a big collector of African art. His reaction was that the piece was great, indeed better than anything in his collection and might be worth in excess of \$25,000.

The second person was associated with Christies or Sotheby's Auction house, and the third was an art appraiser and collector who had sometimes worked on the Roadshow. Both of them said they could not authenticate the object because there was something they felt was wrong with it, but they did not explain what it was, so I did not find their comments convincing.

After looking a while longer, and not offering any opinion, Buxton said he wanted me to come with him and let another appraiser see it. We followed him to another waiting area and sat. After a half hour, I went back and asked if perhaps we had been forgotten. He said we had not been forgotten and someone would see us soon. When he returned about 15 minutes later, he was not with another appraiser but with a producer. He introduced Faith and me. The producer was very friendly, and then John and the producer took the fly whisk and went to the other side of the room for a discussion. They returned after a short while and announced that they would like to include the piece in their filming and asked if I would agree to be on TV. I said that I would but that I did not think Faith wanted to be on TV. They said that they only filmed one person with an object, so Faith's reluctance was not a problem.

They explained the next procedures. We would go to the Green Room where we could have lunch. There, I would have to review and sign their release form. I would see their make-up person. They would take some still photos of me with the object. There was a monitor where Faith could see the filming, but she could not join on the set. We were told not to show our object to others nor discuss it with anyone else in the Green Room, and not to ask about anyone else's objects.

I have watched the program religiously and always dreamed of how I would handle discussion of one of my pieces of art. This was my dream come true, despite the long waiting. After more waiting, make-up and a sandwich, I was led to the set where three other people were ahead of me. Finally, I was called to the reviewing table, a technician came and mounted the fly whisk on a backdrop. Someone came and put a microphone on me. Finally, Buxton joined me. We talked informally

first. He said we would have a regular conversation. I should look at him and not at the camera and be natural.

Then the filming/discussion started. John asked me what I had and where I had obtained it. I told him the story of purchasing it at a spotlight on the street in Kinshasa. Then he asked if anyone had looked at it and I told him about the three prior consultations. Then he asked what I liked about it. I told him I thought it was beautifully carved. I loved the scarification on the woman's body, the hairdo, the face and the woman's pose. He said, "Yes, it is truly beautiful and was obviously carved by a master carver. I would love to have it in my collection. However, there was something that concerned me." I said, "Oh no; sounds like bad news." He said, "not necessarily" but went on to say what he thought was wrong. He said the wear pattern on the handle was just as it should be. The problem is that it also had wear on other parts where it should not be handled. Therefore, his conclusion was that it was a beautifully carved, splendidly deceptive fake. He said that if it had been carved 100 years ago, on the current art market in Paris (which is the center of commerce of African art) it would be worth \$50,000, but as a reproduction only suitable as a decorative piece, it was worth \$300-\$500. I was naturally disappointed. I asked how confident he was in his decision. He said he was very confident. I ended my part of the discussion with a statement: "Looks like the next stop is Paris."

After the filming, I was approached by a producer who said, "You have a terrific TV personality; the discussion was an interesting story. I am sure it will be included in our broadcast program." (They film about 53 segments, and after review and editing, narrow the field to about 35 to be shown on 3 different programs in January 2015.)

While disappointed in the appraiser's decision, I have not given up on this piece. I am sorry I was unable to explain the thoughts that came to me just a little later, but were not entirely formed during the discussion. It seemed to me Buxton's argument was thin. It was based on the assumption that the whisk would only be held by the handle and wear on any other section was placed there deliberately and proved

it was a reproduction and not authentic. But who knows whether or not some chiefs might have held the whisk differently? And upon sharing this experience with knowledgeable friends, the most common reaction is that it is very difficult to know whether an object is authentic or a reproduction. Perhaps John should have been less confident. Many things have been called fakes, and later proved to be authentic. It should be shown to other experts. That is the plan! While not elaborately argued, I think that is what I meant to imply in a humorous manner with: “Next stop, Paris.”

Next, Buxton took us to the head of the Asian antique line and introduced us to an appraiser. That was a good deed because we may not have had the strength for another 1.5 hour wait. The Asian Art appraiser seemed exhausted, disinterested, and not highly knowledgeable. He gave only a cursory glance at our objects and did not demonstrate any interest in us or our pieces. For example, Roger, who had lived 10 years in the mountains of Nepal studying Tibetan wood carving and Buddhist and Hindu iconography, explained that the main representation in our Indian wood carving was Kartikeya, son of Shiva and Parvati, and brother of Ganesh. He explained that this representation of Shiva was rare and was similar to one in Pashupatinath, the only representation of this figure in Nepal that he knew of. Our Asian Appraiser glanced at the large piece, and said: “19th century Indian, worth \$1000-\$1500.” Roger had wanted to know how his assessment stacked against the “expert.” There was no comparison.

But I found the experience in its entirety amazingly rewarding and exciting. I loved how they managed thousands of people visiting, all moving their many different wheeled vehicles carrying all manner of objects. Perhaps because the date was June 7, I thought the logistics reminded me of the preparations for D-Day.

I awaited my return to TV in January 2015. (I was very briefly a rider on the Mickey Mouse Club’s North Fork horse riding team in their “Spin and Marty” series when I was 13 years old in 1955.) That is another story.



CONTRAST TO POVERTY

Considering how poor the people we met were, it was odd to find out that Kinshasa had the biggest Mercedes dealer in Africa. Another thing they had was a huge supermarket that carried most everything imported from France, at an expensive price. We liked going there and bought sliced ham and cheese to eat in our room. I bought a small quantity of figs for about \$20 a kg, and we bought Dijon mustard to bring back to Nairobi where it was not available.

BOTSWANA



HOOTA

In addition to being the trainer for nurses who would conduct a Situation Analysis Study, I was the driver for a chartered bus to take the nurses for field work. I had been a bus driver for the University of California as an undergraduate and was comfortable in this role. On route to our clinics for pre-testing our instruments, we were stopped by the police. A policeman walked around the vehicle examining the bus and then came to the driver's side window and shouted:

“Hoota!”

Not knowing the local language and customs, and thinking, based on my experience in Kenya, that it was inconceivable that the policeman would not offer a greeting like “Habari”, I answered in what I assumed to be the local greeting:

“Hoota!”

It was then that my colleagues explained to me that the policeman had instructed me to test my hooter, i.e. honk my horn. After that our trainees regularly greeted each other with the new greeting I had invented: “Hoota!” accompanied by a smile or laugh.



FISHING AT 6 AND 66: A NOVICE SEEKS TIGER FISH IN THE CHOBE RIVER, NAMIBIA

At age six, in 1948, my Uncle Dan and my mother took me fishing on the Malibu Pier. Running up and down the pier with a freshly caught mackerel still on my drop line, I

swung that fish in circles above my head and screamed “I got one! I got one!” I recall clearly from that moment the pure joy of fishing. Now, 60 years later I was flying over the Kalahari Desert to Kasane, Botswana, from where I would be transferred by speedboat to Ichingo River Lodge, Namibia, my base for seeking tiger fish on the Chobe.

Ichingo is located on Impalila Island, just below where the Chobe meets the Zambezi, the water from both rivers runs another 60 km or so to careen over the edge at Victoria Falls, one of the most beautiful sights imaginable.

Flying over a sea of tan, brown, and white salt flats, I remember that first catch and contemplate how life has changed. I wonder if all the complexities of life as I now know it will diminish my upcoming experience. I have realized for some time that I do not know what joys can be counted upon and what may turn out disappointing.

Having fantasized about boats my whole life, I made sure I obtained one while I still loved them. And with my co-owner Geza, and my brother Len (Broth), and son Justin, and various nephews and nieces, we sailed the Long Island Sound to Block Island, Martha’s Vineyard and all points in between, successfully satisfying that dream in time.

Though we had few chances to horseback ride or fish – one family vacation to June Lake for trout – Broth had purchased a bamboo boat pole and rod from the store of a distant family friend. I remember the pole and green braided cotton line. On Saturday mornings, we traded off becoming each other’s fish at the end of the line, fighting through our shared bedroom where stolen signs covered the broken plaster (“Write or Wire the President for Clemency for the Rosenbergs” was a favourite I wish I had today) and down the hall, putting up some great fights. This year, for my 66th birthday, Broth reminded me of those distant mornings:

Broth,
While you roam this planet
feeling excitement and potential in its distant streams,
recall earlier dreams,

where we traded the roll of fisher and fished.
 With a birthday cake accompanying these thoughts,
 Your brother hugs you,
 with love on his mind,
 he thinks of you as the paragon of kind.
 Broth

At age 16, though horses were no longer on my mind, I still loved fishing. I planned a fishing trip to someplace – I think a friend, David Greenberg, and I were renting a boat at Paradise Cove. Uncle Dan lent me a beautiful trout rod and reel. To my everlasting shame, I slammed the car door on the end of his rod, snapping it off and never told him about this. I never returned the rod – broken, fixed or replaced. It never came up in conversation between us but lurked embarrassingly in some distant part of my mind. I wish I could tell him now and buy him a new one!

After two hours flying, the tan and white of the Kalahari changed to widely separated dots of green. Then quickly, in what seemed like only a mile or two, the dots of green in a sea of tan became a sea of green with dots of tan, and then there was the snake-like Chobe, creating a verdant green flood plain supporting untold varieties of game, 420+ species of birds, and the ferocious tiger fish. One look at those tiger's teeth and you are impressed. I had bought before leaving, with my friend Bob's advice, the proper tools for handling them because I vividly recall the feeling of being hit in the hand by a nail studded baseball bat when, while playing in the surf at Accra, Ghana, in shoulder deep water, I had been attacked by an unseen fish, probably a barracuda. I had the scars on two fingers where they met the palm of my hand to prove it.

After landing at Kasane, I waited anxiously for the luggage to arrive. I saw my suitcase, but I was awaiting the plastic home-made sewer-pipe carrying case with two trolling rods inside. I had marked my entire luggage with bright red duct tape so I could see it from afar (and take note of my belongings when departing a hotel room because I have discovered that without such bright markings, I sometimes don't see my

things). There was a flash of red and I perked up only to realize in the next half second it was merely someone's red suitcase. I was greatly relieved when, contrary to my arrival in Gaborone without my luggage, the rod carrying case finally appeared.

Now I began to look for the Chobe River Lodge meet/greet people. I looked at all of the greeters holding signs with names and lodge designations. No Chobe River Lodge. I had paid Island-Safari.com \$1800 for these four nights and five days and began to wonder about my optimism and trust. I had no phone number and wondered how this problem would be managed when I saw a desk in the Kasane Airport for "Tourist Information." My helper made some calls, waited 20 minutes for a call back and announced I would be picked up in 5 minutes. About half an hour later I was underway to the immigration office and wharf from where I would cross the river to Namibia. I noticed a seller had four fish on the dock – 1 tilapia and 3 small tigers weighing only 1-2 lbs each. I wondered if the species would survive the fishing for babies. There are such large issues in Africa. Foreigners are willing to spend several hundred dollars a day creating a large number of jobs. These fish are valuable to the four nations whose corners meet here. But people eeking out a living care not so much for the larger issues as they do their next meal.

I arrived at the Lodge where the staff greeted me with an icy drink. Unfortunately, I never take ice in developing countries, so took a small sip and avoided the topic when pressed to accept a different drink. I finally mentioned I didn't take ice and was told it had iced in the refrigerator but none was added. After a delicious gourmet lunch prepared by Mark and helpers, I opened my carrying case with a borrowed hammer, took my new ugly stick 7' rod, and new Daiwa spinning reel which, it turned out rather stupidly, was filled with 250 yards of 65 lb. test braided high tech line costing 13 cents a yard. I hadn't found a store actually knowledgeable about fishing in Africa and had been sold equipment for a strong monster fish "...that would tear apart ordinary low-quality equipment."

We prepared this line with wire leader, a swivel, and attached a long silver Rapalla lure I had brought. We headed

upstream in a 16' fiberglass boat with a new 4-stroke Mercury 60 HP engine. It was no easy navigation. The water was rushing at quite a clip, was low, and the river contained large crocodiles, poisonous water snakes (we saw one), and some surprisingly aggressive hippos generally given a wide berth. The guide was skilled, handled the trip of about 20 minutes without a hitch and announced I should drop my line. We trolled down a backwater slough about 100 feet wide with tall reeds on each side. The most impressive part of the trip was the bird life. Water birds of hundreds of varieties were everywhere – standing on the banks, in the reeds, covering trees (which will die from the guano build-up on their leaves) and in the sky. The clucking of birds and the flapping of wings created a soundtrack for this surprising bird movie.



BIRD LIFE ALONG THE CHOBE

Although I have fished many times these past 60 years, I remain a novice, still. I troll off my sailboat hoping for striped bass and have caught several bluefish instead. I've chartered in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, involving launching a catamaran through the surf, fishing for yellow fin tuna and settled for catching reef fish instead. I sought a thousand-pound marlin unsuccessfully at the Pemba Channel Fishing club, the last bastion of racism I had found in Kenya. Despite all these efforts, I remain a novice, never having studied fishing or taken a class as a friend has urged. (This friend, it seems sometimes lives vicariously through my adventures, but he has floated the Amazon with his wife, and son, catching many varieties of fish including a 12-lb piranha, which I had no idea got so large.)

There were some powerful strikes and I had reacted quickly with a sudden jerking up of my rod. But these strikes proved unproductive. The bony mouth of the tiger fish is difficult to

hook, even with new lures. My guide, Rafael, urged me to keep my rod vertical and not allow a bit of slack. I learned relatively quickly. A strong strike, a jerk, a vertical pole and there I was fighting a tiger. Though generally optimistic, it was difficult to wind in the 100 yards I had out. I had no idea who would win this battle. The line immediately screamed off the reel. Already having had triple bypass surgery a year ago, I had no idea how much strength and endurance might be required. I held that rod high, reeled with all my might, began to pant for oxygen, and wrestled a 3.5 kg tiger to Rafael's waiting net. Rafael's lifting him out of the water brought me to an excited scream. I was surprised to find that the joy of the 6-year-old had not disappeared. However, I noted that there was a difference. At six, the joy was absolutely pure, untarnished by concerns for ecology, ethics or a Buddhist wife who, at Ilwaco WA at the mouth of the Columbia River, prayed for me to finally catch a salmon, thus proving her love. (With 2000 boats across the mouth of the Columbia on an incoming tide, it turned out to be impossible not to catch two, the limit. We immediately went to a hardware store and bought a hibachi, charcoal and barbecued our catch.)

I took photos of the fish with Rafael holding and he took photos of me holding. We weighed this lovely torpedo shaped cannibal, and happily put him back into the water to swim away. Although there was only one fish that day, in my mind I sent a message to my wife, Faith, and best friend at the time, Bob: "Success on Everest." The mission was fulfilled. Returning to the lodge that evening I proudly showed the digital photos and everyone agreed it was a nice fish. I loved this fish and considered him a dream come true even if, as I later recalled, he was snagged and all the effort to reel him in was in part because I was dragging him through the water sideways with considerable resistance. This detail seems to have disappeared in the telling of the story at the lodge that night.

The next day we started again. The morning produced several strikes, but no good hook-ups and we returned to the lodge for lunch. Up the narrow straights we travelled again after lunch and trolled the same waters. After nearly 3 hours,

I experienced a really powerful strike and he was hooked. The line flew off the reel. I held the rod high and tried to wind some in. I don't know if I tightened the drag or not, but I began to get line back. I wound as hard as I could and began to breathe hard. There was a mighty strength on the other end. Rafael turned the boat to try to help me take some line back. I was sitting down, facing aft when suddenly a wall of water came up over the back of the boat inundating and shocking us both. A submerged hippo rose up like a surfacing submarine pushing this small tsunami over us both. In the next moment, the open hippo's mouth stared at us not 4 feet from where we sat, and a second later, he crushed the fibreglass on the port aft side creating two big dents from his incisors and breaking off a section of steel on the engine. The sound was like a boat hitting rocks, and though I had just seen the hippo's bite myself, the sound confused me for a moment. Had we also run aground? Rafael acted immediately to throw the accelerator forward, exiting this hippo's territory at full speed. My high-tech line screamed off the reel at dizzying speed until I pulled my knife and cut it, never knowing if I was leaving behind a monster tiger fish or whether I might have hooked the hippo. The story spread like wildfire back at the lodge. This was the third attack in the 9-year history of the lodge, not counting a young boy who had inexplicably put his hand in the water when he saw a crocodile nearby. He had his mauled arm and hand saved by quick actions by the guide.

I wondered if I would go again the next day or call it quits. I decided to fish. I had several strikes and two more fish – a small tiger of 2 kg and another good tiger of 4 kg. I was beginning to think I was fulfilled. New guests arrived at the lodge including Mr. A husband and wife travelling with their son. The husband worked for a computer company and piloted his own plane from near Joburg. His wife was a publicist writing about 5-star resorts and they planned to have tea that afternoon at a lodge on the north side of the island. Ralph, the owner of Ichingo, asked if the son could join me fishing in the afternoon. I was pleased to have the company. I had given an extra rod and reel I brought as a backup to

Rafael and had planned to fish with him. The son as far as I could tell, had fished only once before, but was eager and ready. Rafael would simply guide.

We set two trolling poles, both with neon orange Rapallas as I had had several strikes with this lure. I had made up my mind that the son would have the first fish and I instructed him on how to change places should my line hook-up first. It was only about 15 minutes until his reel sang out. The pole bent precipitously. He held it high as instructed and began to wind in his unknown prey. The fish didn't jump. We were all curious about what he had hooked and thought it might be a large catfish. He wound the reel and expressed scepticism about whether his 18-year-old arm would hold out. We were all surprised to see a 6-kg tiger snagged in the top of its head. I knew that snags are not supposed to count (not mine either!), but there was the most beautiful large tiger I had ever seen in the hands of an 18-year-old who had fished only once in his life. We both screamed for joy. I never mentioned his snag either. He had "caught" a monster tiger $\frac{3}{4}$ the size of the largest ever, and 50% larger than mine. The son showed the photos to his father and we had a Scotch together to celebrate. It was over dinner with the son telling the story when he mentioned the snag. Another guest, insensitive to the core it seemed to me, announced to the son that "snags don't count!" I doubted that was true, especially to an adolescent who has had his first taste of serious fishing on an adventure we will never forget.

The next day I was transferred by speedboat to the Ichizo, a houseboat of about 50' by 20', built in Zimbabwe, with four cabins on four decks. There was a huge lounge with a beautiful carved hardwood bar, three couches, two easy chairs, three chaise lounges and dining seating for eight. We cruised to Chobe National Park, seeing scores of elephants along the river. Buffalo, baboons, "deer like animals" and an occasional crocodile rounded the game viewing. My shipmate was a Namibian African pilot who brought a charter group, and was studying aeronautics between sightings. I described to the pilot a TV program I had seen a few weeks ago about

the superrich. The money manager kept his 100' yacht in Miami at a docking fee of \$5000 per month. He flew down in his own jet only twice a year to use it. We both concluded that he could not be having a better afternoon.

My final day I was taken by speedboat from the houseboat in Elephant Cove to the Namibian outbound customs, crossed the river to Kasani, arrived early enough to have a short look around, and caught the plane back to Gaborone, Botswana. I worked another couple of days, debriefed the representatives from the agencies who had sponsored my trip (for the couple of weeks before fishing) and then caught South African Airways for a 34-hour trip via Joburg and Frankfurt to San Francisco. I arrived adventured out, exhausted from lack of sleep, and happy to be home.

What do I make of this? The trip was good and I had fun. It was about as good a story as I get. Yet during it, I didn't feel I needed to pinch myself to see if I was dreaming like when I received my first cowboy boots at age five. Indeed, though I tried hard, it had been difficult to match the joy of catching that first mackerel. But this was probably as close as I will get in this lifetime.



GHANA



NO DICE

My first trip to Ghana was perhaps 35 years ago. Accra was so different.

An African guy had approached the Western Consortium about a possible collaboration on an upcoming World Bank Project. He said he had a close friend who was the right-hand man of Jerry Rawlings, who was the head of the country. If I went and met this guy, with our experience and credibility in public health, he thought we could get this contract, and he would supply the air ticket. We were going to go together but he met me at the San Francisco airport, gave me a ticket, but said there were some developments that prevented him from going with me.

It felt odd, but I went and met his contact. The contact's vehicle had guns laying around on different seats. We discussed how I was going to obtain the contract and how he was going to assist me. I explained that the Western Consortium did not pay bribes to obtain contacts. I added that I thought we would need someone to help our Chief of Party on arrival, arrange importation of goods and other such tasks and such a position was open for negotiation. He responded by saying he had worked with many people who had offered a lot of money, but frequently did not deliver. He kind of liked my honest, straightforward approach and would therefore work with us.

After I returned to San Francisco and had written and submitted the proposal to the World Bank, I received a message from my contact which said that a Canadian company had offered a \$25,000 bribe to a high official in the Ministry of Health and was about to be selected for the project. I was told that I could only compete by showing up with a similar offer. That was not us. Of course, we did not get the contract.



THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

My next trip to Ghana was perhaps 25 years ago to help conduct a Situation Analysis study. Accra was so different. There seemed to be only a few cars. If someone wanted to make a left turn, more than likely an oncoming car would stop and wave the turner forward. Today, traffic is a mess and gentlemanly courtesy has virtually vanished.

I have made about 20 trips to Ghana with stays as long as three months. An incident in Accra many years ago, along with Ghana's peaceful transition of power, cemented Ghana's place as my favourite African country.

In preparation for providing the results of one of Ghana's three Situation Analysis studies, I was at the Ghana Statistical Centre working to produce graphs in Harvard Graphics to use at an upcoming dissemination seminar in which we would present our research findings about the accessibility and quality of reproductive services in the country.

The day had started uneventfully. I was staying at one of the two beach hotels. To get to work, I had to pay an exorbitant taxi fare to a hotel taxi, or walk across the busy highway and catch a cab to town. I crossed the highway and waved to many cabs without one stopping. Finally, a guy in a minibus pulled up and asked me where I was going and offered a ride. I got in and off we went. He had interesting advice for me:

"It was OK for you to get in my car in daylight, but don't do such a thing at night. It could be dangerous."

I thanked him profusely for the ride when I got out and made my way to the office I was using. I was not too familiar with the graphics program and simply had to stumble my way through it. Each slide was taking a long time to produce and I needed many of them to cover the findings and recommendations from the study. I was highly focused and the time seemed to whiz by.

At around 9 PM, I suddenly realized it was dark outside and it seemed I had stayed in the office too long. No one

else was working in the Centre. I made my way outside and walked to the corner where I had always caught my taxi to the hotel.

It was pitch dark. There were no street lights, very little traffic, and no taxis. I have worked for decades and never had a problem anywhere, aside from four attempts to pick my pocket in one day in Madagascar. Nothing violent. I think I owe this to the fact that I have an inner sense of what to watch out for, and how to carry myself. I knew I was in the wrong place and I had just been warned to watch out that morning.

Suddenly a man pulled his car over to the curb and says:
“Get in!”

“Sir, I am not sure I know what context you have in mind when you say ‘Get in!’”

“The context is that I am afraid that something bad will happen to you standing in the dark in this empty place. I want to take you to where you are going so nothing bad happens.”

I opened the door, thanked him very much, and to my everlasting regret, insisted that he accept some money for gas, even after it was obvious that he just wanted to do a good deed, and did not want me to think he was trying to profit by accepting the funds.

As it turned out, he had just dropped off his wife for the night shift at the hospital, and he was pleased to have helped someone in a related field.



SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER: SOMETIMES IT WORKS; SOMETIMES IT DOESN'T

On return from Nepal in 1973, because the University of Michigan SPH did not have faculty interested in Nepal (except Tom Poffenberger, who had asthma so bad that he was virtually allergic to the country), I managed to have the contract for technical assistance transferred to the University

of California to where I had returned. The contract included a training component for sending Nepalese for graduate education in public health in the US. In those days, a modern educational system was so new in Nepal (begun in 1954) that there were few well-educated Nepalese professionals. The exaggerated story at the time was that the only question the Nepalese got correct on the GRE was “In what country is Mt. Everest located?” Thus, I had to argue creatively to get some of the students admitted to UCB, and the entire faculty had to provide substantial extra support.

At the time, the Director of USAID's Office of Population was Rei Ravenholt. “Ravenholt was a remarkable leader, full of perplexing contradictions. He dazzled people with his brilliance one moment and shocked them with his myopic ethnocentrism the next. He could be strategically wise and tactically reckless.”¹

So, when we went to see Rei in Washington, who was extremely influential in the field of family planning, I was surprised to immediately come under the gun of his blistering criticism:

“You folks at Berkeley haven’t the slightest interest in Nepal. All you are interested in is getting Nepalese students enrolled in Berkeley... [and then something like] well I’m not going to stand for your self-interested dealings any longer...”

I’m afraid I was so offended that I rebutted immediately in the undiplomatic language reconstructed from memory below:

“Rei, you are so full of shit it is unbelievable. You don’t seem to realize that the Nepalese students take five times the supervision and assistance that we provide to any other students and that is why we pull strings to have them admitted to Berkeley so that we can give them the assistance they require. And you accuse us of being ‘self-interested.’ But I have been managing the contract on the campus for the last two years, but our Chief of Party, Gus Gustafson, is returning soon and

1 (Gillespie, Duff, 2016. “Reimert T. Ravenholt, USAID's Population Program Stalwart, Population Reference Bureau.)

I have given up my management position on the contract so he can take over because he will be better prepared to manage the project. In what way does that demonstrate self-interest?

Rei truly surprised me, especially considering my lack of diplomacy, responding:

“Oh yeah, well then what are you going to do?”

“I really don’t know what I am going to do.”

“Well, how would you like to come and work for me?”

I could only think that his fearsome reputation inhibited staff from “crossing” Rei and he recognized some value in someone willing to do it (even if undiplomatic). I strongly considered this surprise offer, but when Bill Griffiths asked me to sit in for a faculty member who was taking a year’s leave, I decided I would much rather stay in Berkeley.

But I contrast this example of speaking to power with another experience with entirely different results. An agency that strives to remain anonymous because of their support for family planning and abortion programs, which had supported me in the conduct of considerable work in the U.S. and Vietnam, had reorganized and hired new staff, including a Director of International Programs. The agency asked if I would go to Ghana for them and investigate interest in expanding one of their successful U.S. programs internationally.

I quickly contacted my close friends in Ghana – Ayo Ajai and Placide Tapsoba — and asked them for advice on the two institutions the funding agency was thinking of including in their expansion. They provided valuable information: “The head of one of the institutions was considered untrustworthy, and the other was considered great.”

As the date of departure drew closer, the new supervisor of such programs called me to say:

“Bob, we only want you to talk to two people on this trip – the heads of the two institutions we are considering supporting. We don’t want anyone to know what we are thinking so don’t talk to anyone else.”

I responded by saying: “Madam, the cat is already out of the bag. Ghana is like a village and if anyone has news on an interesting/important subject, the whole country seems to

find out quickly.”

“But how could anyone find out?”

“Well you know that I have worked in Ghana for 20 years and have two colleagues working there with whom I am very close, personally and professionally. Naturally, I contacted them for their knowledgeable advice from the ground level on how to manage this assignment. Thus, I assumed that others would know.”

“Bob, you have made a terrible error by mentioning this to anyone.”

In contrast with the first story, this discussion led to a situation in which I felt like I was “*persona non-grata*” with this agency. I never had a friendly communication again and was never offered any further work.

Clearly, what seemed to be called for, in retrospect, was thanking the supervisor for her wise advice and never mentioning the actual situation in the country. That was not my customary approach, though it might have kept me out of trouble and further employed.



TWO KINDS OF CAR SALESMEN

Jim Phillips is a remarkable social scientist working in the fields of population and health. He has worked in Ghana for probably 35 years and Africa for 50 years, starting in the Peace Corps in Nigeria. He now is retired from teaching at Columbia University. We worked together on a few Ghanaian projects – the Navrongo Health Research Centre in rural Northern Ghana where he had helped implement the Community-based Health Planning and Services Project, (CHPS) a program which established the model for organizing health services on a national basis. Jim has worked extremely hard for decades in Navrongo and helps staff write perhaps a half dozen or more important papers per year. He

has written about the importance of this work in his brief bio as follows:

“Dr. Phillips collaborated with the Ghana Health Service in designing, implementing, and evaluating the Navrongo Experiment, a study that provided conclusive evidence that family planning services can lead to fertility decline in a traditional African societal setting. Improvements in maternal and child health associated with the project represent the most rapid declines in maternal and childhood mortality ever recorded for a rural African population, with service systems of the project becoming the model for a national program known as the Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) Initiative.”

We developed a small project together in Volta Region. We thought it would be interesting to conduct focus group discussions with all levels of people interacting with CHPS program, from high level government officials, to clinical staff to field workers, to male clients and female clients. The focus would be on various perspectives on how the program functions, its problems and what changes are necessary. A few of the findings can be summarized as follows: (quoted from Executive Summary of “Community-Based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) in Ghana: A Multi-Level, Qualitative, Assessment in the Volta Region” Frank Nyonator, Comfort Abgadza, Dennis Gbeddy, George Nyarku, Tanya C. Jones, Robert A. Miller, James F. Phillips, 2002)

General community support. Findings suggest that communities are enthusiastic about the program in operation (or the idea of the program where it is not yet functioning). Advanced program communities successfully mobilize traditional social structures to construct nurses’ accommodations (along with some supplementation of external funding), recruit volunteers, and provide on-going support to the resident nurse.

General concerns of clinic staff not yet assigned to village locations. Clinic nurses are seriously concerned about their possible transfer to community-based positions, but appear to be able to adjust to the rigors of community-based work once

they are assigned to a community and commence work.

The more exposure to the CHPS system, the greater the degree of support. Although CHOs face problems in comfort, survival, and social dislocation, many derive professional satisfaction from their new level of responsibilities, and the apparent impact of the program.

Where the program is nascent, managers are uncertain about their ability to implement the program owing to constrained resources for fuel, transportation equipment, training, drugs, supplies, facilities, and personnel. However, in advanced program areas, managers have successfully addressed many of these constraints by mobilizing community and external resources. The practical means of building community participation must be emphasized in less developed CHPS districts, as well as the means for creating increased motivation for leaders to take action.

In districts where CHPS is not fully implemented, moreover, confusion about the initiative is widespread and worries about its implications for worker personal welfare are pronounced. This suggests a need for confidence and consensus building activities involving exchanges between advanced and less advanced service delivery teams.

Workers at all levels view resource constraints as the main impediment to CHPS progress. When progress is delayed, capital investment in facilities, equipment, or drugs typically are used to explain difficulties encountered. This suggests that mobilizing community, district, and donor revenue for CHPS should be a priority in the future. Understanding the true incremental recurrent cost of CHPS should be a priority for research.

Technical constraints. When the need for training is discussed by workers engaged in CHPS activities, emphasis is placed on the need to visit districts where CHPS is functioning so that workers can interact with peers. CHOs stress the need for midwifery training, since delivery care is typically a priority concern of communities they serve. These comments suggest that training should focus on the technical roles that CHOs are expected by communities to perform but

are not presently trained to carry out. Inter-district exchange should be facilitated to foster peer leadership.

Dr. Frank Nyonator was the Regional Medical Officer for the Volta Region of Ghana. Jim and I went to meet him, introduce the idea of the project we had in mind, hope that he would be interested in participating and obtain permission to implement it. Jim explained the project and what we thought we would get out of it and why it would be a unique and worthwhile perspective. Frank responded to Jim's introduction by saying that it sounded interesting and he would think it over.

Jim gave an excellent presentation, but it was lacking in elements of closure. I jumped in to try to remedy the oversight:

“Frank, in my country we have two different types of car salespeople – the individual who makes the initial sales pitch and the person who closes the sale, frequently called ‘the closer.’ Jim made the opening pitch. I want to be the closer today. We did not come out to Volta today just to hear that you would think it over. Rather, we would like you to see the benefit of this project and respond by shaking our hands, and saying: ‘OK. This sounds good. Let's do it.’”

I was very heartened about our collaboration when Frank responded with something like: “OK. Let's do this!” and we shook hands on the deal.



ACTING CHIEF OF PARTY FOR CHPS-TA

The Population Council won a contract from USAID to provide technical assistance to the CHPS program in Ghana. It was called CHPS/TA. We had a great Ghanaian physician as our Chief of Party (COP). Unfortunately, he had difficulties with USAID staff after they refused to approve the project's Work Plan, even after numerous revisions. Interactions

between USAID and the COP deteriorated and the COP resigned. I was asked to replace him temporarily as Acting Chief of Party for three months while the Council recruited another COP.

In our first meeting with USAID staff, I told them that we were turning the page on the previous relationship, would be responsive to their input, but could not endure further criticisms on our well-developed work plan. The USAID staff said: “Don’t worry. Our staff has been instructed to absolutely avoid further criticism of your work plan.”



A DISASTROUS RETURN TO THE U.C. SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

I have an AB, MPH, and Dr.P.H. from UC Berkeley and have loved the University, so much that I have discussed with Faith how to surreptitiously spread some of my ashes on the beautiful UC campus. We have nostalgically walked through the campus with me commenting on possible spots for distribution: “Not on the ivy; those flowering trees look great. I would like to be a part of them.”

I loved working in NY, but hated East Coast weather. I hated the winter and the summer. So, when our youngest son graduated high school, we knew we would return to CA.

I had contacted a colleague at UC SPH and offered my services. I would help teach courses in international health on a volunteer basis. I sought no remuneration, although I learned that this arrangement was probably not allowed by the university. In my view, I had substantially more international experience than the vast majority of the academic staff, who at most, consulted on projects at Christmas or in the summer. My contact in international health told me that I should plan on making a presentation to faculty and students to reintroduce myself to the school. I prepared a PowerPoint

slide show on the CHPS program in Ghana.

The person in charge of this meeting was Malcom Potts, an internationally experienced, creative contributor to the field who is also known to be quite outspoken and sometimes outlandish, especially in public meetings. Malcolm seemed to object to every aspect of my presentation. He evidenced a grudge both against the Population Council and USAID. His first comment was: “Why didn’t USAID just give the funds for the project to the Ghanaian Government or the people of Navrongo and let them do whatever they want?” I responded by saying that was a naïve suggestion and it was not the way U.S. foreign assistance was organized, and I thought he knew that. Then, he accused the Council and USAID of planning of the project without input from the Ghanaians, which was incorrect and offensive, and does not reflect the history of the Council’s work in Ghana. When I explained the functioning of the Community Health Volunteers, he was quite angry, indicating that he thought this effort was planned without taking into consideration the experience of volunteers in China. As we headed to the door at the conclusion of this disastrous meeting, Malcolm Potts said something to me that will be hard for anyone to believe but is entirely true. “Bob, you are responsible for more deaths on this project than the Nazis.” I have not discussed anything with him further. So much for my volunteer teaching at UCSPH!



GHANAIAN REVERBERATION IN NEW YORK

Jim Phillips was in Ghana when we in NY were planning a party to celebrate the decades of work of George Brown, Vice President of the Council’s International Division. (George had applied for the vacant position of President when the position opened, was not chosen, and staff believed that he was being forced out by the new President). I was asked to

be the Master of Ceremonies for this big Council function. I wore the lavender silk suit I had made in Vietnam for special occasions. (If you ever want to feel like a visitor from another planet, walk down the streets of NY in a lavender silk suit.)

We were soliciting donations of presents from the different Council offices to give to George on this occasion. We had an antique map of Latin America, something from Asia and a group of African art pieces. Among the pieces Jim sent was a special fetish he found in the Volta Region, where traditional beliefs about magic and sorcery are strong. The background story that accompanied this fetish was that, when asked a question, if the person holding it did not answer truthfully, he would immediately drop dead.

First, Council luminaries were called upon to make speeches. George Zeidenstein, the man who was president when I was hired, started the speeches. George started reciting the alphabet and at each letter he chose a word to indicate one of Brown's sterling qualities and then elaborated on that theme. I think at around E or G, I approached Zeidenstein and put my arm around him. He said:

"Oh, Bob, am I taking too long?"

I said, "No, George, but we must leave room for others to mention some of his great qualities."

I think I could perceive a noticeable look of relief and appreciation for this intervention. Thankfully, the group thought it funny rather than insulting.

The highlight for me was when I called George up to receive the special fetish sent by Jim Phillips. I told the background that accompanied the gift, handed George the fetish, and then asked George a very tough question:

"What are your true feelings on departure from the Council after your many decades of service?"

I only let him stammer in confusion for a few seconds before I interrupted:

"George. We are going to let you sit down and put away this fetish before you have to comment on this question." A roar of appreciation erupted from the guests.

Afterwards, I received an enormous amount of positive

feedback from how I performed this role. And while it is not directly related, I will comment on the best feedback I ever received for a role I played at the Council.

The Council held a Holiday party around Christmas and invited the children of staff members to attend. Perhaps because of my white beard, I was asked to play the role of Santa Claus. The Council had a Santa outfit which I donned.

“Ho, ho, ho. Have you been good this year?”

“We don’t celebrate Christmas because we are Jewish.”

“I am too. Don’t worry. Be happy!”

It took me days to get back to being myself as I was a little stuck in Santa role playing.

The next year I was asked to play Santa again. I declined saying that I loved doing it so much that I wanted others to have the opportunity and someone else volunteered. At the end of the party that year, someone told me that they had overheard the following conversation:

“This year, we only have a fake Santa. Last year we had the real one.



9/11

I was sitting in my office in New York one morning when my old friend, Ayo Ajayi, walked in. He and I had worked together in Nairobi when he was the Population Council’s Representative to East Africa, and in Accra, Ghana, after he was made the representative for all of Africa. Ayo is a very smart and capable guy. Both his daughters went to Stanford, and one went on the Oxford University Medical School where she was first in her class. Ayo had been a big help in solving problems. I always recall that he said:

“Bob, if you have a problem and keep it to yourself, it is *your* problem. But if you share it with me, it is *our* problem.”

Ayo distinguished himself in my mind some 20 years ago. I knew that several agencies had offered him important

positions in the U.S., such as Vice President or Director of Field Programs. He did not accept such offers and I felt close enough to ask him why. He said that he would never raise his children in a racist society.

Ayo was always willing to help. For example, after my departure from living in Nairobi, I returned, expecting that our administrative staff would have arranged USAID's clearance for my visit in the normal manner. They had not and I entered Kenya without their clearance. Well, many at USAID field offices feel that this is a serious breach of procedure. This is one area in which they have clear power, and they do not like having it infringed upon. As soon as I learned about this occurrence, I shared the information with Ayo. He jumped in his car and headed to the USAID Office. On return, he reported that USAID was in the process of writing a worldwide telex explaining that the Population Council had violated this basic rule, and this telex should serve as a reminder for others not to neglect this important matter. Thankfully, Ayo is very well respected in all quarters, and he kindly asked USAID staff not to send such a message. They didn't.

When Ayo walked into my office on the morning of 9/11, he said:

"Bob, I think this business at the World Trade Center might be important. They have the TV on in the conference room. Let's go see what is going on."

We walked into the conference room just in time to see the second plane crash into the tower. The next day, I was thinking that Grand Central Station is a very soft, dense target. Hundreds of thousands of people walk through the station every day, many carrying suitcases. Any of them could be carrying a bomb. Things were so lax, I thought somebody could walk in with a dolly loaded with a 50-gallon drum filled with gasoline, which they could spill out and ignite. In the few days after the World Trade Center, it seemed anything was possible and I was concerned about walking through Grand Central.

I managed this by selecting a CD of Italian Opera arias which I thought put me in a good mood, which is the mood

I wanted if I was going to be a victim of some new attack. I listened for a few days but returned to my normal pattern kind of quickly.



A VERY FINE MAN

John Koku Awoonor Williams, who goes by “Koku” to most everyone, is a special guy. He is a physician who also served as the District Medical Officer of a rural district. He is an innovator and a doer. His interventions and data recording reduced maternal mortality in his district profoundly. He works extremely hard.

I had the pleasure of being a guest at his house when visiting his district. Both he and his daughter were quite religious. His daughter was up early the Sunday morning I was there to lead children in bible study.

John was up most every morning by 3 or 4AM because he conducted surgery in the mornings, before he saw patients at the hospital, and supervised the district health personnel in the afternoon.

A friend in Point Richmond where I live, Gregory Ghent, has a foundation that supplies donated medical equipment to developing countries. He informed me that he had an operating microscope that he did not know what to do with and asked if I knew a good recipient. He would give it to me to forward. I emailed Koku and he responded with enthusiasm. He said there was great need for the microscope at his hospital because at present, cataract removal could only take place when a surgeon came from Accra, carrying heavy and sensitive equipment. He added that surgeons were reluctant to carry their delicate machinery over the rough roads and thus there was a long waiting list for cataract removal, which he could perform if he had the microscope.

I packed it up and airfreighted it to Ghana. It was most graciously received.



FISHING GHANA

I fished Ghana with rod and reel in a chartered boat. Sadly, we had to reel in our lines every five to ten minutes or so to take plastic bags off our line. Nevertheless, we managed to catch a few fish including one large red snapper. I invited the three boatmen back to somewhere where a BBQ was available, picked up charcoal and beer, and had a nice small party with the fish and beer.

That was memorable, but not my most memorable fish story from Ghana.

Staying in a beach hotel, I went out to play in the surf. I was standing in shoulder deep water, waving my arms in the water, when I felt a strike on my left hand that was like being hit with a baseball bat studded with nails. I thought maybe I had hit some stinging coral with my hand although I did not think there was any coral near where I was standing. As I examined it getting out of the water, there were deep bite marks near the palm of my hand where the fish had attempted to take two fingers, and both fingers were raked top and bottom as I ripped the hand out of the fish's mouth. I never saw the fish, but I was guessing that it was a barracuda. Although it was my left hand, I was not wearing my marriage ring as shiny object are known to attract attacks.

The hotel had a nurse on duty. She poured alcohol on my wounds. It hurt like hell!

SOUTH AFRICA



BEING SUPER CAREFUL

Together with several colleagues, some based in Joburg and some flying in from other countries, we made our way to a coastal hotel, about 100 km from Durban, South Africa, where we were going to train about 35 nurses to conduct the world's first HIV and AIDS-oriented Situation Analysis study.

A Mitsubishi Pajero, with driver, had been organized by the office in Joburg to pick us up at the airport in Durban and drive us to the hotel. The arrangements went smoothly and we were all in high spirits, in tune with a new adventure. The only problem was that the driver could not find our hotel. He drove down one road and then another, all to no avail. I said to the driver:

“Why don't you stop at a gas station and ask if anyone knows the location and directions to the hotel? I think we may be close.”

The driver responded to this suggestion excitedly:

“Are you crazy? You can't just pull up to a gas station and ask for directions. Anyone there could see that we are carrying foreigners and that we have luggage. It is highly likely that he would call co-conspirators waiting on the road up ahead to ambush our vehicle and rob us, or worse. No, what we have to do is stop at a supermarket. There I can go in and ask for instructions without anyone seeing the car. That will be much safer.”

That is what we did. We got to the hotel. The training went well and the study was a success! I shall never forget this reminder of how super-careful one should be in South Africa ... or is it paranoia?



CHARTERING A CAT

I arranged to charter a catamaran fishing boat for myself and several colleagues working on this training program in South Africa. It was near Port Elizabeth that we found the boat on the beach. There was a tractor for moving boats around and we launched the boat from the beach into the surf. I actually don't remember the launch, but I certainly remember the return to the beach. The timing had to be perfect between waves, and the boat headed full speed with everyone holding on to something. It was a shock when we hit the sand and everyone would have gone flying if they were not holding on well.

That day we were fishing for yellow fin tuna and we had a big strike soon after placing a bait in the water. Our colleague holding the rod did not know what to do, so the captain came to take the bent heavy-duty rod. He fought the fish for only a minute or so, when the line went limp. A shark had bit the fish and line and everything was gone.

We then decided to fish for reef fish. There were some special rods that had large reels for winding a lot of line. The reefs were down approximately 200 feet. We caught many fish, took them to our hotel, barbecued them, and fed all of the guests who wanted to partake.

MOZAMBIQUE



A CRAB IN MAPUTO

The Southern Sun is a beautiful hotel on the beach in Maputo, Mozambique. The sound of the ocean is ever present, like the hint of mold in a beach hotel's wet environment. I was not going to stay here as my initial room was quite small, there was no kitchen in which I could prepare my own simple breakfast and perhaps half my dinners, and I could not even find the closet, which was behind the sliding door to the bathroom (which I had never closed).

Even though the views are spectacular, the prospect of living literally out of suitcases was not encouraging. I spoke to the Managing Director of the hotel, and he moved me to a larger room with two queen beds, brought in a refrigerator, all for the same price as the small room, and everything seemed brighter when I found the closet and could hang up the two unnecessary suits I had brought, in case I have to meet the Minister or something. The manager said:

“I only want you to be happy!”

Best of all was the hotel breakfast included in the price of the room. On my first morning, there was thin sliced prosciutto along with thin cuts of rib roast, Canadian bacon well cooked and somewhat dry the way I like it, delicious fruit and a dozen other tasty items.

It was time to recalculate. Why should I need a kitchen if a fabulous breakfast is free? I shall make breakfast a main meal of the day, take my breakfast foods I normally travel with – Trader Joe's blueberry muesli and rice dream, small plastic containers of apple sauce and Mandarin oranges, peanut butter, and small cans of tuna with pop-top lids —and

have a simple lunch at the office. No waiting! It would be better than the chicken biryani I waited 40 minutes for at the Indian restaurant across from my workplace on my first day.

But now it was dinner time on a Saturday night. I developed a draft of my work plan today, had a nap, and was now ready for my first adventure in Mozambique.

The Sergas Seafood Restaurant is only a block down the beach from the hotel. I asked at the front desk if it were safe to walk at night in this neighborhood to go to the restaurant.

“Yes, it is safe ... to the right. Always stay right, not left.” (“Siempre a la derecha,” I thought probably incorrectly.)

The restaurant was beautifully situated directly on the beach. It had outside and inside eating areas. The inside was decorated with Portuguese and Spanish sports team banners, and the only thing marring the sound of the sea were the soccer and rugby games on two different TVs, with music thrown in on a separate system. I thought it would be nice to sit outside and be farther from the TVs.

I sat at a nice table on a universally common, white plastic, comfortable chair and studied the menu. There was a moderate breeze blowing, and like sailing in the Long Island Sound at night in the summer, it was surprisingly chilly. So, I moved inside to continue studying the menu. The waiter moved my setting. I saw mosquitos flitting about, and with malaria very common in the country, and me not wearing repellent as I had barely seen a mosquito before, I went back outside to sit in the wind, mosquito free, despite the coolness of the breeze off the ocean. My waiter again moved my setting.

What to order? There were prawns of various sizes – king, tiger, large and regular (I suppose) – fried in garlic and black pepper, or deep fried or curried, and there were several crab dishes – cold boiled crab, crab curry, and crab du chef – a crab cooked in garlic and spices in a tomato-based sauce.

Among these dishes of interest, I thought that a prawn dish would be the safer bet. Crab is dicier. I recalled the several huge but ammonia-smelling crabs I had to return at the best seafood restaurant in Nairobi. But this was my night for adventure in Maputo, I was on the beach, so, swinging for the

fences, I went for the Crab du Chef!

I ordered a small bottle of water to have with it but called my waiter back to change that to a local beer – whichever one he liked best. This seemed more in keeping with an evening committed to adventure. First came an aluminum bowl with a claw cracker and a straight metal instrument reminiscent of an antique Chinese silver ear cleaner, or perhaps a coke spoon, which I had never seen before and which I imagined was for digging out the crab meat.

The excitement began to build, like the large head on the beer I poured. Finally, my crab arrived! My first impression was that it seemed a bit small. But this was my first crab in Mozambique and perhaps it was unreasonable to compare it to the size to those in San Francisco, Mombasa or Hanoi. “Never mind the size,” I thought as I reached for one of the smallish claws. I cracked it in several places, and though I am not a “whitest,” I was a little surprised to see a dark brown color in the membrane covering what was supposed to be snowy white meat. I thought of mud. “Where is the sweet succulence?” I immediately thought as I bit into the claw’s meat expecting it to be the best part. Then, picking up a leg with a quarter of the center body attached, it seemed kind of dry, and a little stringy. I did not like the sauce either. I was happy that the vegetable rice served with it was nice. I liked the texture of the rice, large dryish grains, with good separation, with peas and carrots mixed in. I decided I would not eat the crab.

Normally, I have a low tolerance for disappointment. That is why I actually do not like exploring new restaurants very much in my home environment – I’m disappointed about 80 percent of the time, so over the years I have come to return mostly to only a few restaurants I know and enjoy. Usually, when not traveling, I eat at home, and when traveling, as I mentioned, I try frequently to cook myself, or just eat simple things like granola and fruit or tuna which I don’t actually love, but in which I am never disappointed. It was obvious to me that this crab should be kept in perspective. Clearly, it

did not even make a ripple in the ocean of world tragedies in which we swim. I calculated it measured .002 on the 10-point scale of world problems, and as I calculated, I recognized that even this was a great exaggeration. One would need a very sensitive instrument to even attempt to measure this rating. “Hell, I was not actually even paying for this dinner as it was well covered by my per diem allowance!”

Yes, I admit to being a little disappointed. I am happy to report, however, that I kept my disappointment well within reasonable bounds. I thought: “I swung for the fences, and my long fly ball was caught. No big deal. I shall eat my lovely rice, finish the beer and go back to my room, still happy.”

I was not going to make an issue. Fine, no problem. But the waiter came and asked: “Is it good?” In such circumstances, much to the chagrin of two of my sons, I simply tell the truth.

“No. It was not sweet and succulent as I had hoped it would be, and the sauce was not to my taste.”

I was prepared to pay the bill and leave. This was not what my waiter had in mind.

“Let me bring you some prawns. I know you are going to enjoy them, please. How about deep-fried prawns? Delicious. No, let me bring you prawn curry. We have had trouble with that crab dish. It is not our best. The cold boiled crab is better. But let me bring you some prawn curry.”

Though I was not hungry, the waiter was obviously genuinely concerned and wished to please. I said:

“OK. Bring me a small portion of prawn curry, please.”

The plate of small shrimp (prawns was an exaggeration) and rice arrived with an attractive appearance. The veins (intestines?) of the shrimp were nicely removed, they had a lovely pink and white color, and were served hot. Indeed, they were fresh, sweet, and delicious, even if the curry was a little plain — kind of like the curry one gets in Japan, not India. But when the waiter returned, I gave him an enthusiastic two thumbs up, with a big smile and thanked him for his excellent recommendation. Indeed, his desire to please, probably more than the shrimp dish had saved the evening for me. Upon

leaving, I stopped and told the European (Portuguese) owner sitting behind the cash register how well I had been treated by her wait staff, even though I am a difficult customer. She encouraged me to return and I said I would. She was happy. I left with most of the curry and rice in a take away container and I expect to enjoy it even more tomorrow, cold for lunch.



LUNCH AT THE FISH MARKET IN MAPUTO

Marta, another consultant, suggested we have lunch at the fish market on the way back to the hotel. We were working in the same office and staying in the same hotel. Indeed, we had both heard that at the fish market, you pick the fish or other seafood you want, and then someone cooks it for you and you sit and eat. That was all we knew.

We invited Zeca, our driver, to join us. At the curb where Zeca dropped us, two people immediately introduced themselves. The woman was a cook who wanted to cook and serve us. The guy said his job was to clean what we purchased. He also carried the plastic bags.

I forgot to ask what people wanted but Marta loved all seafood and Zeca was used to eating only rice or chira for lunch. I asked a few prices. Crayfish were first reported to be 1500 Metacais/kilo, (about \$55) and I responded that it was too expensive. Later the seller came and offered them for about 400 per kilo so I took one kilo. Tiger prawns were offered at a similar price and crabs were about 350. I took one kilo of tiger prawns and one large crab, alive, in addition to the crayfish.

Upon sitting at a table in the shade of an awning, the hawkers immediately descended on us. At the conclusion of the meal, our cook and plastic bag bearer presented us with a ridiculous bill, approximately three times what seemed reasonable to me. I simply said I would not pay their inflated

price, and offered to settle the disagreement by paying just slightly more than seemed reasonable to me. They finally accepted my offer



AFTERNOON ON THE BEACH

Working in my room, I watched a small lateen rigged (single triangular sail) boat struggle against wind and sea. First the man rowed, making little progress. It reminded me of us in the Sea of Cortez in June when we did not have an outboard and had to row our dingy to shore.

When he reached shallow water, still 200 yards offshore, he started to use one of his oars as a pole. This also was a strain and he made little progress. I did not understand why he did not try to sail. I thought he had a mast and boom but perhaps no sail. Watching him for a while made me want to go down to the beach which I had not visited.

I walked over to a fishing boat on the beach and said hello to a few men cleaning up. They asked if I wanted to see their catch and opened a black plastic bag to show me two crayfish, nice sized, still alive, and perhaps half a dozen small to medium sized fish, 2 or 3 to a pound. They wanted to know how much I would pay for the catch. I explained I was a guest at the hotel and could not cook. Still I was curious as to their price for the crayfish and they said 500 MTNs (about \$19).

There was another group of men sitting around a fire and I walked over to say hello partly in response to them waving. They spoke to me in Portuguese. I responded in Spanish. They asked if I was Italian. We settled on English. They were cooking small fish on their fire, sometimes stringing them on a hanger-like wire and leaning them against the burning wood. At other times, they just lay the fish in the coals. They insisted I join them in eating one. I was not enthusiastic in part because they were not cleaned – the guts were inside and cooked. But I ate most of one and thanked them for sharing.

These guys sold art junk on the beach and naturally wanted to sell me something. Perhaps their strategy was to have me indebted to them for the fish and want to pay them back by buying something. I had so little interest in what they were selling that I went to some pains to explain that at this stage of life, I have given art away and not bought more. That was not completely understood as they felt I should buy more at their good prices.

Coming back to my hotel, to my surprise, the little boat had broken out a black sail and was sailing away from shore. I thought he might be able to sail up the beach on one tack. Looking out my window now, I don't see him. He definitely made more progress sailing than rowing or poling.



MAPUTO TO GOMBE AND MANZINI AND BACK

There was a lovely young woman working at USAID in the office where I worked named Cherry. She had invited me to have dinner with her family and indicated she would pick me up at 5PM. I waited for her in the lobby. While waiting, I received my first ever text which said she was running late and would pick me up at 5:15 and asked if that was OK. I texted back, "Yes." When she picked me up, I said:

"You may have thought my answer to your text was so brief that it might be rude. The truth is that "Yes" was the first text I ever sent in my life and it took a while for me to figure out how to do it."

The day of our trip, I was picked up at the Southern Sun hotel by Cherry, and her husband and two kids, ages 3 and 9 months, at 7:30 AM. In a car following them were an American, and her Guatemalan husband and their 3-year-old boy. The road was very good all the way to Goma, the frontier of Swaziland. The shacks in rural Mozambique were in rather poor condition and there were relatively few animals on the

road. We crossed the border and I was warned by Mozambican authorities that it would cost 2500 MTNs to get a new return visa, about \$85. Besides the adventure, that was in fact the purpose of my trip. One is allowed only 30 days, but since I am here for 62 days, I will need to make the trip twice.

I left my plans entirely up in the air just to see what the adventure would bring. I saw busses coming back on the road and it certainly looked like they were available. But Cherry mentioned she was a little ill at ease with this plan since she did not know when the last bus might leave.

I did not just go to the border. The rest of the group was going to Manzini, the second biggest city in Swaziland, about two hours further. I was impressed with both the roads and the houses in Swaziland. They were not shacks but rather cement block houses covered with stucco. Some were quite big, or had many houses in a single compound to accommodate the polygynous family. As my colleagues drove around looking for the Spa supermarket in Manzani, I just said goodbye and thanks and jumped out near a big public market. I was carrying a small backpack with a hat, shirt, two bottles of water, a camera, some Trader Joe's muesli, mosquito repellent, and an orange. I thought this could get me through most situations.

The market I stopped in had the ground floor for wholesale fruit and vegetables. There were big bags of potatoes that looked like Yukon Golds. They were cleaner than in the U.S. markets and I was impressed. Apples were by the box, and oranges were by the netted bag full. I would have liked an apple to peel with my trusty knife but I did not have any local money — only had three 50 Rand notes which I had gotten for \$20 the day before, and I did not want to end up with a pocket full of local money.

A hefty older woman asked where I was from and what I was doing here. I told her:

“I am from the U.S. and I have come to see the sweet Swazi people.”

She thought that was good. She wanted to know if I needed any help and I told her that I would like to find the bus station in order to get a bus back either to the border or

to Maputo. She suggested that I go to the second floor (roof of this market) look at the handicraft items and then return to see her. I asked her name and she marked it down — I went upstairs, but just as I have recently given up fishing, I have also given up collecting chatskis. I sometimes explain that I am too old to be buying things because I just give them away. I had given 250 pieces of art to a school and my problem was not that I should have given 251!

My woman friend wanted to organize a guide, but I suggested she only point me in the right direction, which she did, adding that I can ask police for directions. Walking along, I was impressed at how crowded the streets were and how young the population is. Swaziland had the highest HIV prevalence in the world at something like 34% of adults 15 to 49. I only saw about 6 people out of a thousand who looked over 30, and two of those were Europeans. I saw a young man and woman in an orange T shirt that said security, and they had clubs. I asked them if they were police and they said, no, security. I asked if they could point me toward the bus ring and they said they would take me there.

In 5 minutes, I could see the buses and minibuses parked and said they did not have to accompany me further, but they stayed with me until we found a direct minibus to Maputo and I had bought a ticket for 80 Rand, about \$11. We found a minibus that held 12 people and it already had 11 passengers so the bus would leave if I joined. Although I would have wanted to see a little more, the opportunity seemed too good to pass up.

My seat was in the last row between a man and his son and a young woman on my left. There is a Kiswahili term, wananchi which means “man of the people,” and I thought, after 25 years in Africa, I had finally managed to become a wananchi.

A slight problem was that it was stiflingly hot inside the minibus and everyone seemed to be taking their time. There was a woman sitting in a front seat by the driver, with a window that opened, and I seriously considered approaching her and offering her 50 Rand to change seats with me. But I was

enjoying being a Wananchi, and what I was contemplating was a non-wananchi move.

When the bus took off, the air started circulating and it looked like it would be survivable. Interestingly, the young woman next to me seemed to be pressing her leg against mine. In the swirl of dust, heat and music inside the minibus, it is sometimes difficult to make rational choices and I was confused about this one. Her dress was open and short, her leg was pressed against mine, her legs were open and I wanted to reach down and put my hand on the inside of her thigh. But I did not want an international incident, so I wondered if I could just put my arm and hand down on my leg, and that it might fly off and land on her leg over a big bump.

I began to recall a man named Norman who worked at my dad's appliance business. He had been completely shot up during WWII in the Pacific and took a job as a truck driver conveying nitro-glycerine after the war. I asked: "Isn't that dangerous?" And he said, "It's not so bad. Nine times out of ten nothing happens." Although I was only 12 or 13 years old, I knew that he had not figured that correctly.

Norman told me many things. He didn't eat veal because it tastes too much like human flesh. He also told me about a bus ride in Louisiana, I think where he was sitting in the back seat of a Greyhound bus next to an attractive young woman. They started messing around, and then he lifted her onto his lap, entering her at the same time. He told me it was the rocking of the bus and the bumps of the road that helped create the pleasure.

In the noisy wind, the steamy heat, the dust, and with the pressing leg and the music, I recalled this story. When we went over a big bump, I wondered if that might have brought a conclusion to this fantasy experience. I thought about this until we were almost in Maputo, at which time my neighbor seemed to suddenly discover that her leg was pressed against mine. She pulled it away quickly as if she had never realized it was there. I thought it was good that I had censured my behavior and avoided an international and disrespectful incident.

When I jumped out of the minibus I walked a while and stopped at a café for a cold drink, coffee and bite to eat. When I went to pay my bill, the woman behind the counter indicted that she wanted to be with me. In case I did not understand, my waitress repeated the message, made some hand gestures to ensure that I understood the communication. I just said that I thought the woman could do better than me. I gave them both a tip of 20% on my bill, in thanks for rounding off the day.



A HOT DRIVE TO THE SWAZI BORDER AT GOPA

Thursday, the 10th November was a holiday in Maputo – the celebration of the founding of the city 126 years ago. Zeca picked me up at about 8:30 in the morning. It was a damn hot day for a ride from Maputo to Gopa to renew my Mozambique visa, but it was necessary. The weather report indicated that it would be about 100 degrees, but unfortunately Zeca's Toyota Corolla, bought with help from Ali and Ricardo, the daughter and sun-in-law of a dear friend, was not air conditioned. With the windows down, a hot wind blew across my entire body. The sun shone down on my light pants and my bare arms and heated them to baking temperatures even though I had learned to wear light colored clothes on a similar drive in Uganda. I noticed that Zeca was in the shade and I looked forward to being in the shade on the return trip.

We drove on the nicely tarmacked road at around 50 MPH. As we got farther away from the city the houses turned distinctly more African – sticks and mud (bomas in Kiswahili) instead of concrete blocks covered with stucco. We passed through a dry gorge reminiscent of the Rift Valley in Kenya, which does not actually stretch this far south, and I was reminded of Hemmingway as we entered the tree covered green hills of Africa on the windy road near Gopa. Zeca had never been here before and did not know the road but I

had renewed my visa with a similar trip a few weeks ago and explained that we did not want the road to Gopa, but should follow the signs to Swaziland.

As we saw the frontier buildings in the distance, Zeca's excitement became almost palpable. I thought he would park his car in the shade on the Mozambique side, eat the ham and cheese sandwich I had brought from the breakfast buffet at my hotel, and take a nap. But he wanted to know if he could walk to the area beyond the Mozambican guards to look across into Swaziland. I could not advise except to be careful, and I entered the immigration hall.

The lady officer gave me a form to fill out, took a look at my passport and shook her head "No!" My visa was only single entry and would not work. I did not know what she was talking about because I expected to pay 2500 Meticaís for a new visa. We did not have a mutually intelligible language, but I enquired whether it was necessary for me to go across to Swaziland, as I expected, before extending my visa. I was pleasantly surprised that part of the trip did not seem necessary. After being asked for a bribe in hushed tones and answering this request by saying that I have been in Africa for 25 years without making such payments and did not wish to contribute to the destruction of the country, I was invited into a small immigration room where the more senior female officer awaited with her Dell computer, attached camera and red-lighted finger print reader. After my photo was taken and my index finger print was read, she asked me where I was coming from. It was not clear if the right answer was the U.S. or Maputo. She spoke to me in Portuguese. I answered in broken Spanish according to my estimate of what she meant. I answered, "Maputo." She was surprised! "How is it that you have come to get your visa renewed instead of exiting the country with a passport stamp, entering Swaziland, and returning here and THEN getting your visa?"

Clearly, I entered the wrong door at immigration. It was time to call Zeca to translate. My officer advised me to have my passport stamped, go to Swaziland, have my passport stamped on entry, spend at least half an hour shopping or

having a beer there, and then return to Mozambique. She had the junior officer (who asked for the bribe) stamp my passport and I was directed out the other door to exit. As I said good bye I greeted a European gentleman waiting to go through the photo and fingerprinting process. Zeca followed, intent on getting as far as he could into the international travel experience. We walked by a young official sitting in the shade who wanted to check my passport. Zeca could accompany me, he told us, as long as we came back by him, and brought him an orange Fanta.

At the next gate, we were stopped by a gruff soldier who said we couldn't pass because my passport was not in order. We explained three or four times that it was properly stamped, and we had been cleared. We were walking back towards immigration, but halfway back he decides we could pass. I guess it was another attempt to extract some funds, as payment is the usual way that such problems are solved.

In Swaziland, the immigration official wanted to know, "For how long do you plan to stay in Swaziland?" She is not at all pleased with my answer:

"Half an hour."

"What are you going to do?"

"Shopping!"

"There is no shopping."

"I will find some adventure."

In fact, there was a bottle shop and I bought a small bottle of Jonnie Walker Red Label Scotch Whiskey (200 CLs) for 207 Meticais, about \$8, which was not cheap, but I had not had a drink in nearly two months and felt it was worth it. I also bought a six-pack of orange Fanta to distribute to various staff who had assisted us and allowed Zeca to cross to "Beautiful Swaziland" where he appreciated the closed butcher shops as well as the bottle shop, and the waiting line of trucks. (In my view, if you give a small gift after the service, you are tipping rather than paying a bribe and that is acceptable to me.)

We stopped at a small kiosk-type restaurant where we found our gruff guard having stewed chicken and rice which he explained "is as good as in the U.S." Two attractive women

were running this place, one Swazi and one Mozambican. It seemed the guard wanted to engage me in a talk about how old men coming to Africa like to make it with young African girls, but I don't bite to the invitation.

"Yes, I admire them, including our two local beauties, but I only look, as I have a very good wife at home."

We walked back to Mozambique and delivered an orange Fanta to the official who let Zeca pass and he was suddenly very friendly. I quickly delivered two ice-cold orange Fantas on this blisteringly hot day, and the immigration ladies became my sisters.

In the small immigration official's office, I saw the European Gentleman still sitting. I said that it had taken him a long time and he replied:

"Too damn long! The problem is that my fingerprints have kind of worn off my hands due to my old age (70). They don't read on the machine, and they do not have a protocol for dealing with this. They cannot give me a visa without fingerprints. We have tried every finger, three or four times. I am stuck."

My European new friend asked how long I had been in Swaziland and I told him "About 15 minutes." The immigration official understood that exchange and said:

"You have given the wrong answer. Don't say only 15 minutes. Say 5 days. You were supposed to sleep there!"

I reformulated my answer: "About 5 days and 15 minutes."

The officials took a break from this guy, who it turned out was Italian, living in Greece. I told him about my brother Len's dissertation, the formulation of the first Papandreou Government in the Offices of the Center for Economic Development when Len was writing his PhD dissertation in Economics on Greek migration, and how my wife and I sailed the Greek islands on a chartered sailboat. We joked about the world situation and how he now has three problems at once: Italy, Greece and Mozambique! When I was finished, I had an idea: "How would you like to borrow my fingerprints?"

"I would love that!"

“Are you a murderer or a rapist?”

“I guess you will find out if you let me use your prints.”

The immigration officials, somewhat surprisingly, were delighted with my creative solution to their dilemma. They turned on the finger print machine and instructed me to use my index finger. Since I had just provided my index finger on my own visa, it struck me as a good idea to use a different finger for my new friend’s visa. Interestingly, it was easier for them to accept me as a substitute finger printer than it was to get them to accept a print from a different finger. Finally, they agreed. I supplied the prints, and my new friend told me:

“If you ever come to Greece (again), I will be happy to ‘lend you a hand!’”

Having paid my fees, and been given my visa, Zeca and I walked back to the car. Our gruff guard yelled as we are driving out of the parking area that we have given him nothing and he needed money to buy water. I happened to have an unopened 1.5-liter extra bottle of water. I handed it to him and was a bit surprised that he seemed satisfied as the usual request for “water” is usually a euphemistic request for money.

We decided to stop at Gopa, the town, on the way out and look for the best restaurant. Gopa turned out to be less than a one-horse town. It reminded me of a place we arrived at in Mexico in 1961 when my brother, Len, and I threw a dart at a map of Mexico and decided we would go to wherever the dart landed.

In Gopa, there was one restaurant open with two tables and a group drinking beer at one of them. We went to the refrigerator and Zeca chose an orange Fanta. I chose a small bottle of cold water. At the counter, I tried to open the water (which seemed somewhat crushed and perhaps not completely full). The top was screwed on very tightly, but I did not perceive any plastic to be breaking as it was supposed to. Rather than make an issue, I just bought a Miranda, the Fanta and the water. I used the water to pour over my head and face all the way back to Maputo. The sun had found its way to me again and it was so hot that the water seemed to evaporate and require renewed pouring every two minutes. When

empty, I used my drinking water which had turned as hot as tea, but cooled off quickly when evaporating in the hot wind.

On return to my room, I opened a large cold beer, drank it down along with eating some biltong (dried meat from South Africa) and lay down on my cool sheets for a nap.

GUYANA



MY MOST DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP (MDR)

I should have taken a hint when the only question the sub-contracting agency asked in my employment interview for a consulting job in Guyana, was: “How do you handle difficult situations?”

I should have asked: “What kind of difficulties are you suggesting exist in this assignment?”

Instead, in a self-selling mode, wanting to put myself in the best light, I said:

“Every country in which I have worked has had difficult situations – poor training of staff, corruption, infrastructure, bureaucracy, poor planning, authoritarian leadership, etc. – and I think I have handled all these challenges well. I expect I can handle the challenges in this Guyana position.”

Perhaps I have exaggerated the shortcomings or poor behavior of Carol Horning, the MDR in this snippet. I can see that my behavior offended her so I need to take considerable responsibility for developments. With that said, I’ll just say how things unfolded.

On the first day of work, I was in my office working about 6:00 PM when the MDR walked by, and seeing me, said: “You are not allowed to be here after closing time unless other Americans are in the building, so let’s go.”

I immediately got up and grabbed my briefcase and started for the door. I wanted to be responsive to her order.

MDR said: “Aren’t you going to turn off the light and air conditioner? You know we are trying to be economically and environmentally sensitive in this country so act accordingly.”

Clearly, I was off to a bad start. Still worse it seemed was when MDR invited me to a join her and another agency

colleague, Bill, at a Brazilian restaurant early in my assignment. They began the evening by describing how wonderful the mojitos were at this restaurant. I said that I would have a beer. You see, ever since my experiences in Dhaka and Kathmandu when I was regularly sick with dysentery, I live rigidly by certain rules in developing countries. I do not drink tap water. I do not eat fresh, uncooked vegetables, and I don't take ice in my drinks. I explained my philosophy. The one time I violated these rules was in South Africa, and when I got home, I was diagnosed as having an amoeba. Thus, even when pressed, I did not want to take a sip of that icy, delicious drink. I am certain they did not accept my refusal as reasonable or friendly.

But worst of all, I'm sure was the July 4th concert invitation. I asked one of my friends in the agency what this invitation was about and he said: "It's a concert." On the 4th, I got up, and got dressed in one of my favorite African shirts, a yellowish brown color with a mud-cloth design in brown. Matching straw colored trousers, completed this outfit and I headed to the concert venue. Upon arrival, I discovered that this day was considered the most important day of the year by USAID and the Embassy. Every male member of the staff was lined up in a reception line dressed in a suit and tie. I should have left immediately to return with the proper attire. I didn't. Instead, I suggested stupidly: "I am in African national dress." But I did not join the reception line.

So, you can see how badly this assignment began. Relations with MDR did not improve.

Most people do not like staff meetings, but I do. Even if the topic under discussion is of no interest to me, I have a strong interest in group dynamics and I can always pay attention to that dimension of the meeting. I guess you could say that was what I was doing when the MDR regularly went around the room and asked every person to report what progress they had made or new developments in the last week. The person on my left was asked to report, and then the person on my right. Maybe I was overly sensitive about being skipped over in the reporting process. I think that was why,

when the director asked if anyone else had anything to say, I would raise my hand and, when /if called upon, I would give my weekly report. This was a regular occurrence.

I attended a meeting with the Minister of Health, and during a coffee break, mentioned a research finding from an article that I thought had relevance to Guyana. He said to me:

“Dr. Miller, I really do not have time to review many journals, so if you come across research findings that you think would interest me, I would appreciate you calling the findings to my attention.”

I proceeded to do that, and was discussing my first communication when the MDR walked past and heard my discussion on the subject. She called me into her office to inform me that the Minister was too busy to receive my communications, and that I should never consider sending one to the minister directly, but rather it should be approved first from her office. As you can imagine, that did not enhance my communication process with the minister. I basically cut down communications drastically but did not feel that I could explain my situation to the minister.

Once, a three or four-day vacation occurred in the country. I had been working on an important agency health planning document prior to the holiday. The MDR called me in to explain that this document was crucial to the agency, she needed it ASAP and she would appreciate it greatly if I completed it over the holiday. As it was about 35 pages, it took me the entire vacation period to complete the work. After I turned in the assignment, I waited for a week to receive feedback without hearing a word about it.

MDR delivered the coup d’ grace at a meeting of all the USA Government collaborating agencies involved in budgetary planning for the following year — USAID, US Embassy, Military and CDC. My subgroup had requested that I lead a discussion on our planning subcomponent. So, I prepared a slide show to present in order to jump start discussion. However, the MDR entered the room late, took her seat at the head of the table, looked around, and announced:

“Bob, I don’t think you need to be in this meeting.”

I probably should have asked to speak to her outside before leaving. But instead, I got up and said:

“I have prepared a slide presentation to jump start the discussion, but I assume that one of our other capable members can present it.”

What was on my mind was how the MDR undermined my credibility with my colleagues and therefore made my job more difficult. Such was not the case. The MDR’s reputation was well known to all. My colleagues were only concerned that, undermined so rudely, I might decide to go to the airport and leave the country. I received several telephone calls that evening expressing such concerns and asking me not to leave. I thought about leaving, but because I had signed a contract that included a clause indicating that I would bring problems in the assignment to the subcontracting agency, and had made a commitment to stay for five months, I did not seriously consider that option.

Actually, I had excellent relations with all of the agency’s other staff, who in this situation, were always “walking on egg shells.” Indeed, we had a lovely good-bye lunch the day before my departure. I believe that everyone there was delighted that the MDR had a conflicting appointment and was unable to attend.



FINALLY SEEING THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

Driving to my hotel in my taxi along the seawall road, it finally got to me that I had been in Guyana three weeks and had not seen the Atlantic Ocean. Though I was staying at the Grand Coastal Hotel just a block from the Ocean, I had been warned about going to the Seawall at sunset or later, because of local crime. Thus, I had been hesitant to walk from my hotel. I figured that anytime you are wondering whether or not to carry your buck knife with a blade that snaps out with a sharp click and a scary flash, then you have not worked out

all of the considerations and you should wait until you do. So, I told the taxi driver I wanted to see the Ocean and was happy to have someone with me.

He turned off the road, drove a block down a severely pockmarked dirt road and pulled up to the sea wall. The Dutch built this wall a long time ago to keep the sea from flooding the land which is below sea level. Every mile or so along the wall you see perpendicular canals with steel or iron gates that can be lifted when the tide is out draining the land. It looks something like a tropical Holland because the Dutch use the same technology in Holland as they did here. I think Van Gough painted these locks.

I walked up the steep embankment and there I saw what had been hidden – a long muddy expanse, with some large boats resting on their bottoms, smaller boats in the distant mud, and the ocean itself about 200 meters away. There were 4 or 5 men sitting on the wall. They had come in their trucks to buy the catch when the tide rose and the fishermen, some of whom were waiting for the tide to rise, sat in the shallow water waiting to bring their catch to the buyers.

When I was there, at about 4:30 the buyers said, they thought it would be another couple of hours, but it did not look like this tide had made much progress when I returned at 6:30. Again, it was said that it would be a few hours before the boats could be floated up to the cement platform dock below the wall. It was a relaxing time conducive to talk with the sea breeze, fresh air and nothing to do but wait.

The buyers are wholesale distributors. They brought an insulated truck with plenty of ice, buy the fish at varying prices depending on the type. The figure of G\$60 per pound was mentioned (at G\$201= US \$1)—about 40 cents per pound. I told them the price of wild caught salmon at Tokyo Fish Market in Berkeley. They said they knew how expensive fish was in the U.S. because they sometimes exported fish. They distributed to hotels, restaurants, and the fishmongers who sold in the markets. I asked if they marked up at least 100% and they answered that they “definitely had to make a little something.” My buyers were prepared to buy the whole

catch of the first boat, expecting it to be about 1000 pounds of fish.

I took some pictures of the boats in the mud, as the sky and the reflection turned pinker and more and more attractive. Finally, I took my leave from the two Indians who probably knew nothing of how to be an Indian – a continuing fascination to me. But that is another story!



THE DHAL OF MASS DESTRUCTION

It was a good thing I was not in my office today, in Georgetown, Guyana, or I might have injected myself with the antidote to nerve gas attack. I would have used my self-propelled, gas powered injector, now attached to my escape mask box, which if I used unnecessarily, I would need to reimburse my employer \$180. Many of the symptoms of gas attack were here today – burning skin, tearing eyes, confusion, concern about what was happening. I recalled the bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad where I stayed when I visited Pakistan, loving the tandoori chicken and fresh pomegranate juice. In light of this, it was not so out of the question to imagine that the Grand Coastal Hotel in Georgetown, an obvious “soft target,” was under terrorist attack.

Perhaps I am a little oversensitive, or too suggestible on this matter, but in the previous week, we had two hours of instruction on how to manage “Weapons of Mass Destruction Attacks.” Then on Friday, we had a full-dress drill. We evacuated the building, avoiding the “contaminated area,” came outside and found our volunteer “first responders” in full “hazmat” suits. There were a few volunteer actors walking through the four decontamination stations, where their clothes were “cut off.” They were washed vigorously, then their masks were removed and their hair and face were washed. We were carefully warned that this was going to leave us all in

the nude in a crowd, but we would have to have our priorities straight. Surviving was more important than the violation of modesty. (As it was about 95 degrees, with similar percentage humidity, I was quite worried about our friends in the hazmat suits, but thankfully all survived this drill.)

Oversensitive, too suggestible or not, here is what happened today. I decided that I was going to cook *dhal* (lentil soup) to go with my leftover rice for dinner this Sunday evening. I cut up some onions and garlic and started frying those in olive oil. Then I added a little curry spices, about 1/3 of a medium sized chilli cut up, and a half cup of or so of dhal. After frying that for a while, I added water and started the simmer. Upon tasting it, I discovered that the dhal was much hotter than I expected from the only moderate amount of chilli I added. But I concluded that it must have been a very hot one, or maybe I should have been more careful about removing all the seeds. Although I had added several cut-up tomatoes making it harder to find and identify the pieces of red chilli, I had made them large enough so I was able to pull out several spoons of the mixture containing chilli, which I carefully picked out with my fingers and threw into the garbage can.

A little while later, my upper lip and nose began to burn and, rather casually, I decided to wash my face. A few minutes after that, my private parts began to burn painfully. This one takes notice of! I had been wearing only sweatpants without underwear, and I guess I scratched or fondled myself without thinking, with chilli oil contaminated fingers, but at this point I had not fully figured that out and was still considering the terrorist attack hypothesis. Faced with the immediacy of this “attack,” I decided my training would be put to good use. I turned on the shower, jumped in and vigorously washed all the affected areas with soap and water. And after drying, I was much too smart and well trained to put on those potentially contaminated sweatpants. No, I put on underwear and a different shirt.

I think I will survive this “attack” today without my injector, although we shall have to await the final disposition when I eat this “dhal of mass destruction”



EMANCIPATION DAY

When a driver is stopped by the police in Guyana, he is likely to be asked: “Right or left?” Since they drive on the left side of the road, when I first heard this I thought that perhaps they were asking foreigners: “On what side of the road is it correct to drive in Guyana?” No, the translation is: “Shall I write you a ticket or do you want to “left” me with something?” In spirit, this is quite African – the theme of the day!

Today, Sunday, August 1, is a celebrated national holiday, Emancipation Day – the slaves were freed in the British Empire in 1834. This holiday, in my mind a kind of Guyanese Passover, is naturally celebrated by the Afro-Guyanese. But, just as Xmas is celebrated by Jews in the U.S., I was told that the Indians join in some. Wikipedia states:

The Slavery Abolition Act 1833 ended slavery in the British Empire on August 1, 1834. Emancipation Day is widely observed in the British West Indies during the first week of August. In many Caribbean countries the Emancipation Day celebration is a part of Carnival, as the Caribbean Carnival takes place at this time.

So yesterday I asked my Taxi driver: “I have an Emancipation Day question: Have you ever heard of Abraham Lincoln? “No.” Neither have I met anyone who knows Bob Dylan, but they know Bob Marley, as they should because this is Caribbean culture. But nevertheless, I broke into song: “How many roads must a man walk down, before you can call him a man? Yes, and how many seas must a white dove sail before she can sleep in the sand ...” I explained that this is the anthem of my generation in the U.S. It drew a complete blank. And where were the Guyanese drawing my blanks? I wondered.

Around Emancipation Day, they celebrate a glossing over of African culture. Friday, after work at my employer

in Georgetown, we had an Emancipation Day party. At least what was said seemed a celebration of Traditional African culture which had not been seen in many decades in the places I lived or visit in Africa. There were drummers, including a 13-year-old who was fabulous. I told him he was growing up to be a national treasure, and afterwards, I explained what I call a “Kenyan handshake” with a G\$1000 (US \$5) folded in my hand during the handshake, and told him that it was a tribute both to him and to my father who was generous and wanted to help musicians. There were long limbed adolescent girl dancers in black tights, each of whom could be the next Judith Jamison, and a local employee giving a speech extolling the virtues of African culture: “Africans greatly value virtue, fidelity, and morality, and color is very significant.” I wondered what book that came from. In my own personal celebration, I ordered a beer. That is an African celebration! I recalled a sign at the Ministry of Health in Nairobi: “If we Africans read books with the same enthusiasm with which we drink beer, this country would be in better shape.” True dat! No, “ya man!”

One of my first observations in meeting Indo-Guyanese on the Seawall a few weeks ago was that I was meeting Indians who didn’t know how to be Indians. Not surprisingly, it appeared to me that we also had a lot of African’s who don’t know how to be African. Perhaps the same can be said in the U.S. The slave owners whipped it out of Kunta Kinte, we recall, and *Roots* was a powerful experience no doubt but it has waxed and waned over the years, and except for Afro-American tourists visiting the slave castles on the coast of Ghana, a few dashikis and Afro corn rows on the streets of big U.S cities, we don’t see many Afro-Americans in the U.S flirting with Africa. And it must be a big disappointment to Afro-Americans not to be accepted as brothers when they do visit Africa, never having learned that what is important in Africa is tribe, not race. But these Guyanese knew how to be Guyanese and perhaps it was only a satisfaction I sought to want greater cultural connections. Maybe that was like asking me to be more Latvian because my mother was born there.

It feels odd to be a white guy writing somewhat cynically about race. I feel like I am somehow violating many highly-valued norms and taboos. (I have just named this “a Salmon Rushdie moment!”) But having gone this far, on this Emancipation Day, I shall share the perspective of a very well educated, successful and intelligent African that comes to mind, though to his credit, he seemed embarrassed to be reminded of this quote some years later: “In my view, only the less intelligent Africans were captured by the slavers.” When I initially remembered that comment this morning, I wanted to say: “Tell that to Barak Obama.” But then I remembered that his father was Kenyan and had no history of slavery in his family. Well then, we can tell it to Maya Angelou, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Alex Haley, Langston Hughes, Jesse Jackson and B.B. and M.L. King! (And that is only a smattering in Wikipedia’s A-K listing.) Or go tell it on the mountain. OK. I have done penitence and now wish to go on with the celebration.

About 12:30 PM I left my hotel by taxi to go to the National Park to participate in the celebration for Emancipation Day. When we neared the venue we saw groups of people, mainly mothers and cute children, dressed in African clothing. I took some pictures and I think the first might be the best. One woman with many kids was carrying a large black doll, also dressed in African clothes. I asked if the doll was significant today and she answered enthusiastically, “Yes!” There was an interesting Indian woman with very short hair dyed blond and tattoos, wearing a low-on-the-hips skirt and a matching high-on-the-ribs blouse, showing a fair amount of attractive skin, holding hands with a black guy. Among all the people in attendance, even though I was told that Indians celebrate Emancipation Day, and Africans celebrate Diwali, she was one of only a very few Indians I saw – maybe five.

Aside from the 12’ high cut-outs of people representing various African countries, providing visual aids to how to look African, the dresses were perhaps the most interesting sights. But truth be told, aside from opportunities for people watching, little was happening. There was a stage set up

with a substantial welcoming sign from the African People's Cultural Organization. No doubt there would be musicians and dancers later in the day. There were covered bleachers for seating thousands around a plaza facing the stage, but I estimated there were only three or four hundred people waiting and listening to the reggae music. I was told 40 or 50 thousand would come, and that the president would probably work the crowd shaking hands, so no doubt I was early. But it was damn hot even though it rained for a little while. When it stopped, I felt a blast of hot air as if someone had pulled the lever to make the hot air balloon go higher. At close to 2:00 PM I asked when the function might start and was told "Maybe in an hour and a half or so." I took that as a cue; I was sweating profusely, called my taxi service and returned to my air-conditioned rooms.



ONE TROW AND HIM HAVE CURRY!

The day's adventure began at 8:40 when Devro, one of my taxi drivers at Prosperity Taxi service, came to the Grand Coastal Hotel to pick me up. We headed up what I believe is the highway on the left bank of the Demerara River, talking all the while. This is not easy for me because Devro has an extremely thick Caribbean accent. I usually ask him to repeat himself three times. I said: "Devro, can you understand me easily?" He said: "Yea." And I said: "That's interesting because we are speaking such different languages. Sometimes when you say a few sentences, I can't understand a single word."

We passed by many interesting dilapidated houses, mostly on stilts to protect them from the floods. But there is no protection from the other ravages of weather, age and lack of upkeep. I have been meaning to photograph some of these buildings and tried today without too much success. Interestingly, there are very large paddy fields behind some

of these dilapidated houses, and sometimes expensive looking tractors and other large harvesting machinery in what looks like varying states of disrepair. Actually, aside from the machinery and the size of the fields, I was reminded of Bangladesh, the site of my first professional job 44 years ago, where my son Justin was born. There were even many egrets in the fields!

We passed through the town of Buxton. This place is “Off Limits” to official Americans because of its crime rate. I asked Devro if we could be hijacked or something here. He said: “Oh no. Dat was tree-four year ago. Now police done kill dem.”

I asked: “No arrests? Just killed them?”

“Yea.”

Buxton is an all Afro-Guyanese town, where, as Devro said, “No Indian would want live.” This initiated a discussion on race relations. I mentioned my having to edit out the brand name of my knife, “Buck,” in a vignette I wrote recently, because of its slang meaning similar to “the ‘N word.’” Devro did not know the meaning of “the N word.” When I explained, he said. “Dat’s what we call black man.” I said: “Do they take offense at that?” and he replied “Some do, but we banter to and fro using such terms. I calls him ‘nigger,’ he calls me ‘coolie man,’ or says how we can’t expect any good from dis coolie govmen.” A further surprise came when Devro said that “buck” was a slang term referring to Amerindians, not blacks. This was evidently the background to a story circulating in Georgetown. The U.S. Navy was in town helping to construct a dormitory for Amerindian students away from home while seeking education. This building under construction was referred to as “Buckingham Palace.”

We drove off the main road for 15 or 20 minutes, as I attempted to learn the names of different bodies of water – a ditch, a drain, a creek, and a river, in increasing size. When we got to the creek, it looked more like what I would expect of a drain, only about 25 feet wide (instead of the 100’ mentioned by another Prosperity driver. I put my rod and reel together, attached a blue bass lure, with BBs inside that rattle

as the lure swims back and forth, and threw the lure parallel with the direction of the water. I do not usually catch fish so was surprised to have a hit on my second cast, but did not hook him. Later, when I walked down a slippery path toward where this "creek" or drainage ditch opened to a wide pond, I caught two piranhas – hard fighting fish that required tightening the drag even though they each weighed only about 1.5 lbs. What to do with a piranha after he is out of the water flipping around and snapping his jaws? Devro was none too happy to handle him, but used his foot and my knife to extract the hook. Just as I contemplated how I was going to throw him back, Devro said: "Don't do dat. We want eat em." I requested he dispatch him with the knife to the brain.

Unfortunately, I did not know that the sharp teeth of the second piranha had cut mostly through my steel leader, and with my next enthusiastic throw of my lure, sadly it just kept going and going, unattached to my line. That second chartreuse-collared bass lure, with BBs inside, had had a hit on nearly every cast.

Just after the loss of my lure, an African bee came buzzing around Devro. This bee alternated between 2 inches away and one foot away from his head. Devro said: "Don't swat em or he go back to nest and bring all his friends. One bite from dis bee and we go straight to ospital." This was some imposing bee, maybe 1.5" long and with a truly loud buzz. Funny I never saw one in Africa! But I decided to read the signs — the loss of my good lure and the African bee, and call it quits. Also, it was hot as hell, and I was wearing my new "Buzz Off" long sleeve shirt and pants which were now wet with sweat. (I wondered if the anti-mosquito components of the clothing had any effect on the bee chasing Devro and not me.)

On the way back to the main road, we came across a white haired, dishevelled old man, wearing a jaunty hat like an African adventurer, about to throw his net in a ditch. Devo pulled over so we could watch. To my surprise, the man had nine fish in his net when he pulled it in. No kidding, Devro exclaimed: "One trow and him have curry!"



ANOTHER FISHING TRIP

My alarm was set for 5AM and with the excitement of fishing on my mind, I was up before it rang. I showered, dressed in my buzz off clothes, had coffee and cereal, and met the owner of the hotel, and the colonel (the head of the U.S. military in Guyana) and his 6-year-old daughter for more coffee downstairs. His daughter was being eaten alive by mosquitoes from the swamp behind the hotel so I came upstairs and brought her my buzz off long sleeve tee shirt which she wore as a dress, with the arms pushed up. The hotel owner had in mind the same road I drove up when I went fishing before and I directed him to the same bend in the creek where I had many strikes on my last trip. Our goal was to see that the colonel's daughter caught her first fish! We had two poles set up, and maybe the colonel had one hit on the rattle-trap lure I had given him to use (which later was lost on one of my casts when the steel leader parted).

Some people came by in a dugout canoe with a Yamaha 5 HP outboard and told us:

“You hap go upriber to cachum plenty.”

They came back and offered to take us to where their sons caught three peacock bass yesterday. I was reluctant to get in a dugout, without lifejackets, with piranha in the water and put my concerns on the table. The colonel said he had confidence in the canoe captain, he and his daughter could both swim, and the river was narrow so he was not worried. The hotel owner said he was not worried and requested me to join. I was recalling my desire to see a certain original African fetish in a village in West Africa and how I declined the great African adventure because I did not want to walk barefoot through the chicken shit. This time I chose the adventure, and agreed.

The dugout was pretty low in the water and had water coming over the bow, but we all balanced our movement nicely and about 15 minutes later we arrived at the woman's

house where we met her brother-in-law and several assorted children. They had a parrot screaming, ducks and a vegetable patch. The grizzled man of 64 said he had had two heart attacks. I naturally opened my shirt to show the scar from my preventive behavior, and he opened his shirt to show where one night he had been shot with buckshot in a dispute with a neighbour. His scar was bigger than mine, going around his abdomen and up his side. He had had to walk hours to the main road, was operated on by a young Cuban doctor and had been hospitalized for 14 days. This was some years back and he was completely healed.

We didn't have a hit there either but there was extreme friendliness in the air, not the least of which was garnered by us playing with the local kids. Cell numbers were exchanged to arrange a future visit. The hotel owner gave each of the family's six kids G\$1000 (\$5US). I had already given the mother a big can of salmon I took with me for the day. We left in the boat to return to hearty farewells and promises to return when we would surely catch our *Lookliani* – peacock bass.

We pushed off to drive another half hour or so to another river system stopping along the way to eat delicious hot fried fish and curried deer, so spicy we could not taste the meat. I walked up to some men drinking at a table and with camera in hand asked if I could “immortalize them for the future.” After the hotel owner explained I was going to take their picture, he went and sat by them. Some were U.S. citizens of Guyanese extraction and travelled back and forth from Flatbush. We had to drop by and see them at their nearby house on our way back from our next fishing place. We did and again received invitations to return. These men were going to arrange for a fishing party in the conservancy on any day we wished.

We arrived to a place where big black mosquitoes were swarming and quickly put on a generous helping of repellent. My buzz off clothes seemed to work but I added repellent to my neck, hands and face. We stood on a large cement *koker*, which is a means of controlling water flow, and cast around the edges of swirling, fast moving current. Not a single bite, again.

Driving home to the hotel at about 3:30, I was very tired. There was the early start, the two beers which my hosts had sent to me and I did not want to decline the hospitality, the sun and fresh air. I slept in the car on the way home, arrived at my room took a shower and climbed under my mosquito net for a 2.5-hour nap.



A SMALL VICTORY IN THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE OF DECIDING WHAT TO EAT

It is Friday in Mozambique, and we only work until 11:30. Because I got 10 hours of sleep last night, today was the first day I felt like my old self, including coming back from the office hungry. What to eat? I went down to the hotel restaurant and checked out the buffet. There were salads I don't eat, and raw steak and chicken to be fried, and fried fish and roast pork – the only thing that interested me. All for \$25. No thanks. As I walked out, the *maitre de* said, "So you are not joining us for lunch today?" I said:

"I really do not want to eat a buffet, but I would join you for breakfast in the morning!" (which is free.)

He thanked me very much. So, I headed down to Serge's hoping they might have a more reasonably priced lunch menu. No, it was the same as dinner. But I felt I got creative. I ordered a seafood soup, and an order of rice and a beer. There were a number of nice shrimp in the otherwise unremarkable soup. I used the ladle to pour soup over my rice, making a kind of sauce. I even took the remainder "to go" and it might be enough for dinner. With tip, this was about \$12, not cheap, but only half of what I would have spent in the hotel and I may get a small dinner too.

During lunch, I was constantly thinking about the example of the terrible distance between the rich and poor by the African *tchotchke* sellers hanging over the rail of the restaurant,

hoping to catch the eye of the rich people eating. There were a couple of people selling carved wooden things – a boat with a fisherman, garishly carved, with a small fish hanging from a string, motorcycles, tricycles and helicopters with whirling parts, one piece of West African cloth a guy kept holding up for the wind to stretch, and a young woman selling some nuts or white beans in a plastic bag (which I later learned were cashews). I took a photo of the sellers by the fence.

Returning to the hotel with CNN I saw a nice interview with Harry Belafonte. I was surprised that I did not recognize him!



THE SMELL OF RUM

The El Dorado distillery was located between the Georgetown airport and the city. Driving by, one was enveloped by the lovely smell of sugar and rum. It was common for everyone at my hotel to celebrate with rum, especially El Dorado's 15-year-old. When leaving the country, I brought a bottle of the 3, 5, 10, 15 and 25-year-old El Dorado rum. I had a big party upon my return, and set up a tasting of all of the various rums. I think most people agreed that the 15-year-old was the best.

LEBANON



WRAPPING IT UP

My last paid assignment, in 2015, was in Lebanon. My wife and friends were a little ill at ease about me going to Lebanon but I thought it would be interesting and rewarding. In fact, I received danger pay during this work and as a result I was paid more than any other assignment in my life. The task was to evaluate a USAID scholarship program for poor students to attend the most prestigious universities in the country.

The hotel I stayed at was only 1.5 blocks from the office where I worked. My colleagues gave me explicit instruction about where I could and could not go. There was a main street with restaurants, bars and shops a block or so away and I could go there but not beyond that street because that further territory was ruled by Hezbollah. The street that was recommended looked like a street in Paris. So many young people sitting at tables drinking wine in the evening. I enjoyed the restaurants despite the fact that I could not find Lebanese food anywhere except at my hotel at breakfast.

We collected a considerable amount of data for our evaluation, using Survey Monkey and Focus Group Discussions as well as questionnaires used by USAID, and University records. Our students were the top of the Computer Science classes, and were doing well in all areas despite the stigma of coming from poor families. Thomas Friedman wrote a very positive NY Times op-ed about this program in 2012 comparing the great benefits to Lebanon and U.S. derived from this program compared to military assistance, and we quoted

Friedman in our report.¹

I was feeling so good about this evaluation that I gave myself unusual license. During focus group discussions, I played the regular role of guide or facilitator, but at the same time, I counselled students when I thought I could be helpful. This was not in keeping with standard procedures, but I thought I had helpful advice and it seemed to help build rapport.

We ordered food to be delivered each day at the office. I found a BBQ chicken, pressed flat, with the breast bone removed and I ate it most days. In fact, when I ordered a whole chicken, it would last two or three delicious meals.

The National Museum was located only a few blocks from my hotel and I went there a few times. I thought their beautiful displays of mosaics, statues, glass, coins and the rest were terrific. But when I commented on this to my Lebanese colleagues, they all compared it to the Louvre or the British Museum. I attempted to dissuade such comparisons and appreciate it at its scale.



BYBLOS

I had heard about a wonderful day trip to the ancient city of Byblos, only about an hour from Beirut on the Mediterranean Coast. This city was supposed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Indeed, it was the religious capital of Phoenicia.² Romans occupied it. Later the Ottomans. Each occupation left its mark on the

1 Friedman, Thomas, 2012. Op-ed, “Tanks, Jets or Scholarships,” New York Times, May 1.

2 I later learned that papyrus was one of its principal articles of trade, and that the Greeks took the name of this city as their word for books – biblos (and from this we got the word for bible). Mark, J. J. (2009, September 02). Byblos. Ancient History Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <http://www.ancient.eu/Byblos/>

architecture of the city. However, many of the buildings were now restaurants for tourists.

My driver joined me for lunch. It turned out to be the most expensive lunch of my life! Fish was on the menu for \$30. My driver suggested I go pick a fish. I was concerned that they might be alive, and I would enjoy it less knowing it was killed just for me, so I asked him to go pick a fish. They were not alive and he picked a small fish which was grilled on a charcoal fire. We enjoyed it, but when the bill came, I was quite shocked. The fish was \$30 per 100 grams and the restaurant claimed the fish weighed a kilogram and was thus \$300. With our other dishes, the bill as about \$380.

I needed a way to make this acceptable because I was enjoying the day so much and did not want it ruined. I decided that I was having a \$10,000 day, i.e. if I were home and wanted such a day, it might cost around \$10,000. But I had gotten the whole day for around \$400. Therefore, I should consider it a bargain and be happy.

I later cooled off by swimming in the Mediterranean and, there being no showers on the beach, I bought two bottles of drinking water, and washed in my jerry-rigged shower.

DECLINING LAST OFFERS



I never made a decision to retire, though offers for consultations became fewer as I got older. My last three offers were for work in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Pakistan. The DRC offer was easy to turn down. I had been to Kinshasa and did not enjoy it. I did not speak French and thus found it easy to just say “no thanks. I’ve been there and was not happy.” Nigeria was more difficult. At first I said I was interested and available. Although I knew Nigeria was a challenge, I had been there several times and knew I could manage it. At the time of the offer, danger pay was included, and I had already been cleared by the USAID Mission. However, I emailed my Nigerian friend, Ayo Ajayi, who at the time was in charge of African programs for the Gates Foundation, and asked his opinion. He told me that the Nigerian economy was so bad that a number of people had turned to kidnapping for ransom, and that recently two staff members of the U.S. Embassy in Abuja had been kidnapped. Gates has their own safe-house in Abuja, and have armed escorts when they travel. When I told this to Faith, she absolutely did not want me to go. I thought I had put her through a lot of difficulties with my travels in the past, often when I thought I had to do it. But now, I no longer felt it was a necessity, and much to the chagrin of the contracting agency, I turned down the opportunity.



RETIREMENT: MESSAGE TO POPULATION/SRH AND PUBLIC HEALTH COLLEAGUES

Having retired in the last year I have a few thoughts I can share with colleagues who may be considering retirement. First, you may not actually be retiring. Your services may be in demand. You merely have to get the word out that you are available for consultations and then check incoming emails. People used to ask me: "Bob are you retired?" I would answer: "I don't know. I have to check my email." But since I turned down the last three job offers in Nigeria (after talking with Ayo about kidnapping), Democratic Republic of Congo (a country I visited as Zaire and was not happy to be in), and the Pakistan/Afghan border area (I did not wish to open the possibility of decapitation), I am virtually certain I have burned my employment bridges behind me.

But if you don't need to work for economic reasons, the only challenge in retirement is to find other purposes you can feel passionate about. I have four and I think it makes a full life: 1. Faith and I watch our grandsons four days a week; 2. I do pro bono work in Vietnam once or twice a year assisting five different agencies, mostly orphanages, including an orphanage for HIV+ children, a school for blind children, regular poor schools, etc. I went again in November and this time I took my youngest son, Aaron, who is a photographer and videographer, to make a video of our work; 3. I'm working on a memoir. Mine is a combination of personal and professional experiences, around the world, short stories about experiences, etc. You will have an opportunity, if you like, to reflect on your years of population related work during an important time in the demographic history of the world, and either draw lessons, explain changes or simply document your perspectives; 4. and finally, when I broke my hip in Vietnam and realized I would not be able to work for several months, I decided to create my own job by transferring my retirement funds from TIAA-CREF to Schwab and manage them myself.

It gives reason to attend to the market, and thus, gives you the illusion that you are doing something important for spouse and kids.

Now if you think you are going to miss doing research, just keep doing research. When my brother retired from UC Berkeley, he was free from teaching and all admin business and just kept doing his research. He recently completed a book which he feels is the culmination of his life's work. He tried to answer the question, what can the field of economics contribute to the field of social welfare. (Unfortunately, since he is an econometrician, and deals with equations a page long, there are probably very few people in the world who can follow the argument.)

What I had to adjust to was missing the camaraderie at the Council – chit chatting with colleagues, the coffee machine, lunch at the noodle shop across the street with Anrudh Jain, the joy of taking in SunAe's enthusiasm for life, etc. Some of that can be duplicated through email communications, but there is no denying this element takes some adjustments.

And when I think of the sadness of missing people and the interactions, I feel at the same time very lucky to have had such a worthwhile career which also led to many satisfying relationships and wonderful memories.

Years ago, I asked Gorge Brown for his advice on retirement. He advised me never to admit I was retired. I send my apologies, George, and my very best wishes to all.

