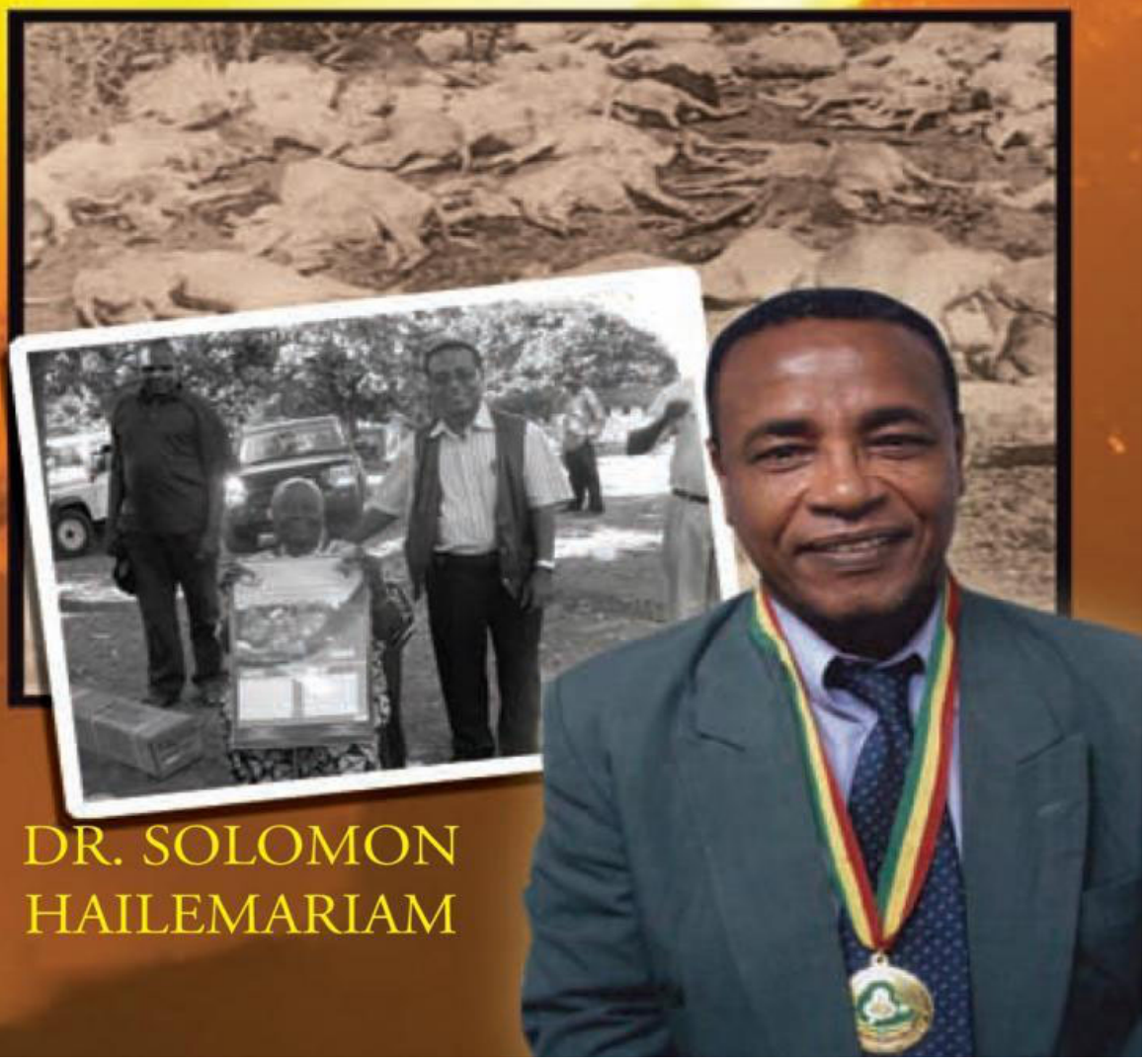


The Diary of The African Veterinary Doctor

I Love my Profession



DR. SOLOMON HAILEMARIAM

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Dr. Solomon Hailemariam

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Foreword

The idea of writing my lifetime memory during my childhood time and adulthood period goes back to the last twenty years. Unfortunately, I did not have the courage and the willpower to embark on this task. I was always hindered by a silent feeling that I did not have the potential and capacity to write a book on my own life history. However, my other side of my conscience was also advising me that I don't have to be a gifted author to write my own biography and share my personal experience to interested readers. So I picked my pen and started to put down what came straight into my mind. Everything in this book is based on true life experience. We all have the potential and capacity to write what has happened in the course of our lives. Sharing them with others, in whatever way and language, will be a very useful contribution for the future generation.

I am a veterinarian by profession and built my long carrier along this line for more than forty years. Being a veterinarian is a wonderful carrier choice. One is dealing with animal patients who do not communicate easily with their doctors. These circumstances even make the profession more challenging and interesting.

I have been privileged to work as a field veterinarian, as a director of the Ethiopian Veterinary Services, international coordinator for a Pan African Transboundary Livestock Disease Control and Eradication Programs.

I have spent quite a good part of my professional life in perusing the eradication of two deadliest livestock diseases from Africa.

The first one is rinderpest, a viral disease which was been introduced into Africa by the Italian Army in 1887. Since that time, the disease has spread to all over Africa and killed millions of cattle. After 120 years of suffering and three rounds of concerted eradication campaigns for fifty solid years, the disease has finally been eradicated by and large from Africa.

The second disease is African trypanosomiasis, a parasitic disease of man and livestock transmitted by a vector known as tsetse flies. The disease has spread in thirty-seven African countries, and makes life difficult for human habitation on more than ten million square kilometers of tropical land. Taking the severity of the problem into their special consideration, the heads of African states, during their summit in Lome Togo in the year 2000, passed a resolution to eradicate tsetse flies from the African continent. The program for the eradication of African trypanosomiasis is still ongoing in many African countries.

I was very much privileged to work during the last forty years with the national and continental programs for the control and eradication of the two important trans boundary diseases in Africa.

I hope that the readers of this book will benefit by expanding their knowledge on the importance of controlling and eradicating livestock diseases from Africa.

Acknowledgment

This book is dedicated to my family, my special friends, and close working mates, all of whom have played very important role in my life.

I am very much indebted to my dear wife, Mrs. Etaferahou Tamerat Mekonnen, who is the mother of my four children (Mahlet Abiyu, Bilen, and Rahel). During the last thirty-six years of our marital life she was the source of consistent inspiration, patience, support, and love. I am also very thankful to my wife Etaaferahu and daughter Mahlet Solomon, who has contributed a lot for the publishing of this Book. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank Mr. and Mrs. Payne for their valuable assistance in proofreading this book. In recognition of their valuable support and contribution, I have requested them to write a short view on the back cover of this book. Special thanks to my dear Sister Mrs.Amsale Work Haile Mariam for her constructive contribution by reading the first part of the Book.

I am also very grateful to my grandfather, Negardras Haile Mariam Manaruteh and all members of his family for having molded me in a typical Ethiopian culture during my childhood. I have dedicated the first part of this book to our childhood days in Kabana.

I have very humbly included in this book all the wonderful people, whom I have worked with and have come across during my school days and during my tenure in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. I have worked for almost twenty years in various capacities including as meat inspector, in Kombolca Wollo Soporal Export Abattoir; as rinderpest vaccination campaign coordinator in Sidamo province; as lecturer at the Animal Health Junior College in Debre Zeit; as Director of Meat Inspection and Quarantine within the Ministry of Agriculture; and later as Director of National Veterinary Services and much more lately before I left Ethiopia as the Head of The National Artificial Insemination Center in Kaliti, Addis Ababa. This has given me tremendous opportunity to interact with so many professionals, government officials, the public sector and the community.

In 1987, I had the opportunity to join the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) at its Nairobi office as the Coordinator of the Pan African Rinderpest Eradication Campaign (PARC). This special opportunity gave me the chance to visit more than forty-six African countries. It was during this challenging part of my life that I met another group of professionals from all over the world, who were so much dedicated to the noble mission we had launched in 1987. The eradication of rinderpest from the African continent through the PARC project.

This book is also very much dedicated to all my colleagues, who have been working with me from 1987 to 2006 at the African Union/Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR) offices in Nairobi, Kenya. Special recognition goes to Dr. Walter Masiga (IBAR Director), Dr. Joetherm Musiime (Uganda), and all the other members of the PARC coordination team in IBAR, who worked very closely with me.

I also wish to acknowledge the support and cooperation I have continuously received from my colleagues, who are working within the African Union, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (AU-DREA). Especially the team, who is working within the Pan African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Campaign Coordination Offices (PATTEC) and my colleagues, who are at present working at the Foundation for the Innovation of New Diagnostics (FIND) in Geneva, Switzerland, for their indispensable support. Specially I wish to acknowledge the support of Dr. John Kabayo, PATTEC Coordinator, (Ugandan); Dr. Joseph Ndungu, (Kenyan) FIND HAT Project Manager; Dr. Giorgio Rocigno FIND CEO, (Ethiopian). I also wish to acknowledge the support we have been getting from The European Union, FAO, WHO, IAEA.

And all the other donors community, stakeholders, and partners whose list is very long. These organizations have availed their financial and technical backstopping to the African people through The African Union Commission to eradicate the rinderpest scourges and tsetse flies from The African Union. I certainly wish to take this opportunity to thank them all for this effort and initiative they have accorded to the African people.

This book is the collective product of all those beautiful people, whom I have met from childhood to adulthood. Because of their support and

contribution I have been very much privileged in enjoying very high and respectful professional life.

In conclusion, this book is dedicated to all the people, who have participated in the rinderpest eradication campaign in Africa. Today, this deadliest viral disease has been by and large successfully eradicated from the African continent after hundred and twenty years of suffering.

I was particularly very proud when Ethiopia celebrated the National Rinderpest Eradication Day on July 25, 2009, at the National Veterinary Institute (NVI) Debre Zeit. On this special occasion I was among several professionals who were awarded gold medal from HE the deputy prime minister of Ethiopia for extraordinary contribution in this historic campaign. I was very honored for the privilege and also I am very happy that rinderpest is finally eradicated from Ethiopia and the rest of Africa.

The Paradox of Our

Times by Dalai Lama

Today we have bigger houses yet smaller families; more convenience, but less time.

We have more degrees, but less commonsense; more knowledge, but less judgment.

We have more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less good health.

We spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast

Get too angry too quickly

Stay up too late

Read too little

Watch TV too much

And are less considerate.

We have multiplied our possessions, but have reduced our values.

- We talk too much, love too little, and lie too often

- We have learned how to make a living, but not life

- We have added years to life, but not life to years

- We have taller buildings, but shorter tempers

- Wider roads, but narrower view points

- We spend more, but have less

- We buy more, but enjoy less

- We have been all the ways to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the road to meet our neighbors

- We have conquered our outer space, but not our inner space

- We have split the atoms, but not our prejudice

- We write more, but learn less

- Plan more, but accomplish less

- We have learned to rush, but not to wait

- We have higher incomes, but lower morals

- These are times of fast food and slow digestions

- More leisure, but less fun

- Two incomes, but more divorces

- Nicer houses, but broken homes

This is why I propose, that as of today you do not keep anything for special occasions because every day you live is a special occasion.

1 Mother Teresa's Quotation

This was written by mother Teresa and is engraved on the wall of her home for children in Calcutta.

Anyway

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered:

Forgive them anyway

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish,

ulterior motives,

Be kind anyway

If you are successful, you will win some

false friends and some true enemies:

Succeed anyway

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you:

Be honest and frank anyway

What you spend years building someone

could destroy overnight:

Build anyway

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous:

Be happy anyway

If you do good today, people will often forget tomorrow:

Do well anyway

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.

Give the world the best you've got anyway

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God:

It was never between you and them anyway

We should always be ready to accept "changes in life"

A letter from the chairperson of the African Union Commission on his announcement for the need of change

Dear Dr. Solomon H. Mariam

It is my pleasure, at this beginning of the year, to extend my most sincere wishes for your personal happiness and professional success. It is a period, which also marks the launching of the institutional transformation process in the African Union Commission.

I wish to reaffirm my conviction that the process of change is not an option that may be accepted or rejected, rather it is an unavoidable step that we must take if we want African Union Commission (AUC) to be hat it is designed to be, namely a structure well equipped to wage and win the struggle for regional integration and the continent's renaissance.

I am also fully convinced that the motivation for the needed transformation should reside primarily in each one of us. It is our responsibility to think out the change, like the architect, and add our individual blocks, as the mason does, in constructing an African Union Commission that should serve as model and reference.

The experts of the Performance Management Consulting whom we have asked to assist us in this transformation process, will remain open to your views and opinion as a matter of priority, because it is only after they are

appraised of your hopes and aspirations for our commission that they will be in a position to assist us in formulating and implementing satisfactory solutions. I, therefore, urge you, once again, to accord them the best possible cooperation and to be open and have confidence in them.

I thank you in advance and I will for my part, remain available for any suggestions you may wish to make, to enable us work together to improve the performance of our institution in order to successfully fulfill our mandate.

I am aware that your dedication and commitment have been instrumental to the tremendous progress accomplished over the last many years by the African Union Commission. I am convinced that I can always count on your continued commitment to the institutional transformation we must carry out in a spirit of solidarity, justice, and transparency.

Please accept, dear Dr. Solomon, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Alpha Oumar Konare

Chairperson of The African Union Commission

CHAPTER 1

2 Introduction

This is the true story of my life covering my, dreams, faith, hope, and achievements in the long war against the killer virus and fly in sub-Saharan Africa.



Shaking hands with Emperor Haile—Selassie,

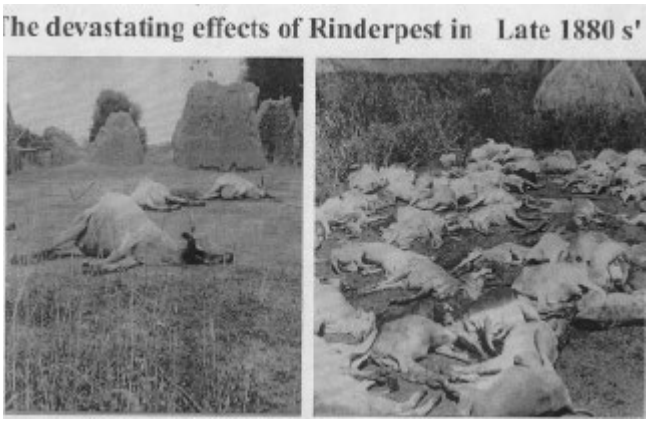
July 1972, Debre Zeit, Ethiopia

I was born on July 11, 1944, in Addis Ababa, Kabana. My father, Mengistu Amete, and my mother, Mulumebet, were blessed with eight children. I was the third born in the family; I was raised by my grandfather, Negadras Haile Mariam Manaruteh. I have mentioned Negadras as my hero and mentor in my biography in many places in this book. Negadras educated me and passed a lot of values and wisdom to me as a growing child in my formative years. He was always proud to tell us that the most meaningful challenge in our life must be to serve our country.

He reminded me very often that our country needed me very much; I have to serve this nation so that their livelihood and welfare will be improved through my effort and contribution. I followed the advice of my grandfather and served the Ethiopian governments of the day for twenty years. Later, I thought that once I have fulfilled to serve my beloved country for twenty years I also have to serve the other half of my professional life, our mother

continent Africa. I had the noble opportunity of joining the African Union as a senior expert in charge of coordinating two important transcontinental livestock disease control and eradication projects. The first one was the Pan African Rinderpest Campaign (PARC), which was implemented from 1987 to 1997. I was privileged to be the coordinator of this Pan African project which covered thirty-five AU member countries affected by the rinderpest virus. This project became very successful by eradicating rinderpest from all over Africa. Unfortunately, a mild strain of the virus remained in some isolated areas in Somalia.

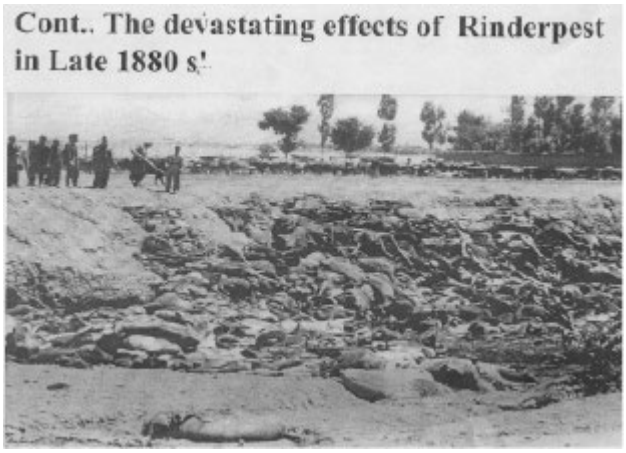
Since the central government of Somalia collapsed in 1990, it was not possible to operate in full scale in Somalia.



That is why the last foci of the rinderpest virus is still suspected to hide somewhere in Somalia. The rest of the African countries have not reported any incidence of rinderpest during the last eight (ten) years. PARC project was a concerted vaccination and surveillance campaign covering the thirty-five sub-Saharan African countries. Most of these countries have now declared their countries as provisionally free from rinderpest and have joined the second and third stage of the campaign to declare freedom from the virus and freedom from infection following the World Animal Health Organizations (OIE) pathway, which was the global eradication standard for a country which is free from rinderpest.

Rinderpest or cattle plague is caused by a minute virus that has the ability to spread and multiply in the circulatory system of bovine animals. The virus has a special ability to kill its host in a very short time by raising the

temperature above 104 degrees Fahrenheit, causing a profuse diarrhea, followed by serious lacrimation and death. The virus sometimes kills up to 90 percent of the population of the herd in any given community. It was first introduced by Italians in 1886-1887.



Prof. T. Yilma of the University of California, Davies; in his research paper published in a reputable science journal argues that it was used as a biological warfare to decimate African cattle population in a very short time. This modern warfare was chosen by the Italian colonialists to impoverish the people of Africa and enhance their colonialization agenda. The disease very quickly spread through Ethiopia and crossed several countries to cover the whole of Africa. Only Ethiopia lost at that time 90 percent of the cattle population. That incredible time was known in the Ethiopian history as Yekebt Elkit Zemen, which means the era of inhalation of cattle. The same thing happened in other African countries as well. Efforts to control the disease were not fruitful as there was no effective vaccine at that time. Scientists tried to develop various kinds of vaccines, which gave short-term immunity. However, it was only in the early 1960s that a new generation of vaccine was made available by a team of British scientists, who were working in Kenya (Scot and AI).

The first internationally coordinated vaccination campaign was introduced in Africa in 1962, and continued up to 1976 under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity. Ethiopia joined this joint campaign known as the JP 15 campaign in 1969. That was the time when I was assigned to be the Deputy Coordinator of the JP 15 project in the southern region of Ethiopia. During those great days we spent the whole day vaccinating the

Boran Pastoralists cattle. During some days we used to vaccinate up to seven thousand cattle per day. During the whole operation we vaccinated in Ethiopia about forty-five million cattle. Some of these cattle were vaccinated with the lyophilized or freeze-dried rinderpest vaccine for three rounds. A special clover leaf shaped cutting was made on the vaccinated animal ears. In five years time the vaccination campaign reached to the whole country except in some remote parts in Tigray and Eritrea region. It was not possible to reach those places as they were no-go areas and partly controlled by rebel movements during that time. Anyway after this vast vaccination campaign the incidence of the disease was reduced to a very small area in Ethiopia and The African Union, and the participating countries celebrated the successful completion of this campaign at that time. But ten years down, the disease appeared again and cattle were dying everywhere in sub-Saharan Africa. Nineteen countries declared the presence of the virus in their countries. During that period, especially Nigeria lost over five hundred thousand cattle in 1983-1984.

The International Donor Community started to raise resources for the new anti-rinderpest campaign.

The European Union immediately mobilized the largest amount of financial support to the tune of fifty million euros, and a new campaign was put in place to fight the disease with a new strategy.

I was nominated by the African Union to be the coordinator and the team leader of the program known as the Pan African Campaign for the Eradication of Rinderpest (PARC).

By this time, I was very much convinced that Africa will succeed with the new campaign, so I took my new responsibility and task in April 1987 and moved to Kenya, Nairobi, with renewed faith and hope to succeed. I coordinated the program from 1987 to 1996.

Later on, after completing the PARC program, I was promoted to be the chief livestock project officer of the Intera-frican Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR). This position gave me more opportunity to think about the control and eradication of other trans boundary diseases which are responsible for the suffering of the African population. The most

challenging candidate was the disease known as Trypanosomiasis. This disease kills human beings by causing sleeping sickness and kills hundreds of thousands of livestock annually in Africa. Trypanosomiasis is a minute protozoon, which is transmitted by tsetse flies into the blood system of both man and animal. Over ten million square kilometers of fertile land in Africa is covered by tsetse flies. No animal can be raised in areas affected by the tsetse fly. The disease is equivalent to malaria in human.

In addition to my present post as chief livestock project officer of IBAR, I was also appointed as the secretary for the International Scientific Council for Tsetse Research and Control (ISCTRC). I had the opportunity, in collaboration with FAO, WHO, IAEA, and other international organizations, to organize a biannual scientific conference to discuss on how to control Trypanosomiasis in Africa. Over 350 scientists from all over the world, working on various research and control activities on tsetse and Trypanosomiasis, attended this conference on a biannual basis. The ISCTRC was established by the colonial authorities in 1948 to oversee the problem of Trypanosomiasis in Africa and later was absorbed into the OAU in 1965. In 1999, as the secretary for ISCTRC, I was the focal person for the organization of the Twenty-fifth ISCTRC Conference in Mombasa, Kenya. This conference was officially opened by HE the vice president of the Republic of Kenya. As a result of the manifesto of this conference, which was later known as the historic Mombasa Declaration, the conference recommended to the heads of states and governments of the African Union that since the disease has been responsible for the death of thousands of humans and animals, the OAU should take the responsibility for establishing of a Pan African campaign for the eradication of tsetse flies from the continent of Africa. In a very short time, I was given the responsibility by the OAU to organize a Pan African workshop to draft the strategic framework of the new program for the approval by the OAU heads of states and governments. Immediately, I invited twenty-two African experts for a special workshop for the formulation of a new Pan African Initiative. The purpose was to present the new program for approval by the OAU heads of states and governments during their next summit.



With HE George Saitoti, vice president of Kenya. During the ISCTRC conference in Mombassa,

Kenya, September 1999

The strategy document was presented to the heads of states of OAU member countries during their summit in Lome, Togo in July 2000. Following the decisions of the summit The secretary general of the OAU immediately took the necessary political and financial decision and the PATTEC coordination office was established in 2001 to implement PATTEC. Today the African Development Bank (ADB) has made available over US$70 million for this program in several African countries. The office of the PATTEC coordination has become fully operational at the headquarters of the African Union within the Department of the Agriculture and Rural Economy (DREA). The Campaign for the eradication of tsetse flies might take a long time, but at least the program has started. For the last ten years I am a member of the PATTEC Policy and Fund Raising Committee and a roaming preacher and advocate on PATTEC.I was appointed again in January 2008 as the Advocacy officer for Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis eradication Intiative (PATTEC) by The Foundation for The Innovation of New Diagnostics(FIND) an NGO supported by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. My job is to create awareness on continental level and advocate the Importance of Tsetse Eradication from the African Continent.

I consider myself as one of the happiest person, since I contributed toward the noble goal for the initiation and eradication of the two most important

livestock diseases in Africa. That is why the story of my life is very much involved with the control and eradication of these two diseases in Africa who are instrumental for the suffering of the majority of the rural community in Africa.

I am very confident that my dreams, faith, hope, and victory against the war on the two killer diseases of livestock in Africa will succeed in the near future.

I decided to write this memoir to stimulate and sensitize the future generation to achieve victory on the war on livestock diseases in Africa. The people in Africa by and large depend a lot on livestock for their livelihood. These diseases are controllable if we are committed and are ready to fight them. It is indeed so sad that Africa is suffering from ninetieth century disease in the present twenty-first century.

I hope this book will pass this appropriate message to the present and future generations in Africa.

3 A Brief History of Ethiopia

Ethiopia is one of the ancient Country in Africa with a history of over 3000 years. This Country has remained independent for thousands of years and had a very rich history which will be difficult to summarize in few pages. For introductory purposes the following recent historical summery during the last 150 years are presented. Warlords loosely governed Ethiopia before 1850. There was a very loose central government at that time. Emperor Tewodros took power in 1850 in Gondar and tried to unite Ethiopia and ruled for about fifteen years. He committed suicide when he lost the war with the British Army, who almost marched into Wollo region to rescue their subjects who were detained by Emperor Twedros. The British invading army lead by Gen. Napier fought with Emperor Tewodros and defeated him easily and they passed the power to Emperor Yohanns of Tigray region before they left. Later that year Emperor Yohannes was crowned as the new Emperor of Ethiopia. His capital was Mekele. He was a very religious man and focused on expanding the orthodox religion and churches. The Sudanese Mahdists who were trying to expand Islamic religion came and invaded Gondar. He went to the border to expel the invaders, but he was killed on the war front. The Mahdist Islamic army was very happy for killing the Ethiopian emperor and they left in a short time. Emperor Yohannes reigned for about twenty years. After him Emperor Menelik came to power. He strengthened the unity of Ethiopia and established a very strong central government, and for the first time in history Ethiopia became a united country. The Italians, who were waiting for an opportunity to colonialize Ethiopia invaded Ethiopia by crossing the border from Eritrea to Tigrai province. After losing hope for all sorts of negotiation and political solutions Emperor Menelik was forced to fight the Italian colonial invaders.

The gallant Meneliks army defeated the Italians at the famous battle of Adwa and repelled them back to Eritrea, which was their colony at that time. The famous victory at the battle of Adwa considered as a victory on the imperial colonial forces.

Menelik ruled Ethiopia peacefully for about twenty-five years. Then after a lot of power struggle his grandson, Eyasu ruled Ethiopia for three years and later his daughter Empress Zewditu ruled Ethipia for another thirteen years. Later Emperor Haile Selassie was crowned in 1930 as the new emperor. Haile Selassie consolidated a United Ethiopia and ruled for over forty years. Ethiopia had the best opportunity for development during Haile Selassie's time. Unfortunately Haile Selassie ruled with feudal system with absolute constitutional monarchy. There was a big gap between rich and poor, so this dissatisfaction invited a radical change whereby a popular revolution erupted in 1974, and the military government with Mengistu Haile Mariam as the new leader emerged. After a short time Mengistu declared socialism in Ethiopia. It was very difficult to change from a feudal system to a socialist system in a short time, so they brought a radical leftist revolution which turned Ethiopia upside down.

Our family was categorized within the past feudal ruling class, so we suffered a lot and lost all the family property, which was nationalized by the military government. As a result almost everybody became poor and miserable. One generation was completely dissipated and Ethiopia went from crisis to crisis and ended up in being the poorest nation in Africa with literally a regular draught and famine. We reached a stage where we could not feed ourselves, so we became very famous among donors and the international community for begging food. It was also during this time that young people started to migrate to other countries e.g., U.S., Canada, and Australia. It was in the light of this situation that the present regime marched from the bush in Tigray to take over the regime by force from Mengistu Haile Mariam. They succeeded in taking over power and as a result established a new regime in 1991.

4 The Young Man from Menze, Northern Shewa

My grandfather, Negadras Haile Mariam, came from a peasant family from Central Ethiopia, Northern Shewa region, from the Menze tribe. These are special Amhara tribes, whose guiding principle in life was pride, honor, integrity, courage, honesty, and loyalty. A Menzee is a very proud man and loved his country. They are very stubborn people who live in a very mountainous part of Northern Shewa. That area is the coldest part in Ethiopia. The altitude is over three thousand meters and is mostly rainy and foggy. The soil in Menze is of very poor quality and produces little. The people in that area are predominantly poor, and as a result some of them migrate for a greener pasture. Most of them from Yifat and Menze followed Emperor Menelik together with other tribes who came from various region including Oromos, Southern Peoples Region, etc., and joined his army and militia and faithfully served Meneliks regime, and participated in almost all the battles of Emperor Menelik during their war of expansion between 1880 and 1900. My wife's grandfather was also one of them, who followed Meneliks army and settled in Harar after the war. They are now called Neftgnas.

Until now the people in Menze had no accessible roads. Their land got so much deteriorated and population increased, and they remained the poorest and most underprivileged people of Ethiopia. Negadras came from a very poor family and suffered a lot during his youth. However, he learned how to read and write in the church and also served the church as a deacon, and tried his best to survive up to the age of sixteen. At the age of sixteen he decided to migrate to a greener pasture on his own as Yekolo Tamari. At that time it was traditional for young people to beg for food and travel around to some famous orthodox churches, and get free education from the orthodox church followers.

He was a very tall, handsome, and slim young man with brighter complexion, and as result he commanded immediate attention and respect. After reaching Addis Ababa and visiting various churches for more education he ended up very close to Meneliks court. At that time Entoto

Mariam was one of the most popular church, where Emperor Menelik had his palace and resided in the vicinity of St. Marry church. The administrator of the church was Melake Tsehai Afework. One of his daughters was divorced and had a small baby at that time. So Negadras started to think about marriage of convenience by dating Fekremariam, who was the daughter of a powerful priest and church administrator. He thought that this marriage will bring him close to power base and immediately succeeded in marrying our grandmother. Her father was a very rich man and a close advisor to Menelik, and his daughter Empress Zewditu who would become later the Queen of Ethiopia. Very soon he was given a clerical job around that church, and started to assist people in writing application for various people to be given to the king's court. As he was very polite and humble he was very shortly noticed and recognized by the Imperial Court, and he was now given position in the ruling class to be administrator and later was appointed as Negadras. Yengade Eras (Negadras) means the chief commercial affair government official in a region or locality giving license for business and controlling business on behalf of the government.

Since Melake Tsehai Afework was also a very rich man, he was happy to have a young in-law who would help with the administration of his wealth. This had brought problem to Negadras, The story will be mentioned later. Negadras continued to make wealth and gain fame and popularity. After a short time he was appointed as governor of various districts representing the government on very high level.

When the Italians invaded Ethiopia in 1935, Negadras was told to remain behind and take care of the administration and security in Addis Ababa. Very soon the Italians arrested him and confiscated most of his wealth and wanted even to kill him. But his life was spared by a miracle. After suffering a lot during the invasion, when Haile Selassie came back he was appointed as the governor of Gojjam and later Wellega and Arssi. He continued to serve the government, and also acquired tremendous wealth in a form of farmland and town plot.

He had four children; Zenbework, Mulumebet, Aklilu, and Beletshachew. Aklilu died at the young age of sixteen of pneumonia. During his peak time he acquired lifetime servants in hundreds. He established a very interesting

system of keeping those hundreds of servants. He gave them a small plot of land and a mall capital to buy oxen and assist them to settle, and they were required to pay one-third of their product. His servants remained with him until they died. They both benefited at that time. Later on he was accused as feudal and exploiter by their children of those people, and all his property was confiscated after the revolution and we were also branded as the exploiting class. Negadras had a very long vision and very important position in the public and government offices. He was elected two times into parliament at that time and his advisers were always taken seriously by the community. Being the grandson of a feudal family, I decided to study agriculture to expand and assist in building the family wealth. He was very happy when I told him that I was going to study agriculture. At one time he told me that I would assist him in developing this land with modern farming system.

Negadras loved planting trees. He used to spend most of his time during the rainy season planting eucalyptus tree. He said trees were like cash in the bank. Every year they grew and appreciated in value. When you sell them and cut them they grow even faster and bring more money. Negadras had thousands of trees, which he sold for electricity and telecommunication posts in Addis Ababa. Negadras very much depended on his own farm for food, meat, milk, and vegetables. The only thing he was spending on was modern medicine. In fact he compiled at one time a very big document for herbal medicine, and mostly that was used in the family.

Negadras was a very religious man. He spent most of his time around churches. His free time was fully occupied in counseling marriages, handling divorce matters, and helping the community in various ways. He constructed about five churches, two of them in Menze and Yifat and two of them in Arsi. Especially Adega Kidane Meheret was very popular in our family as that was the place where he was born and raised. After so many years in 2009, we tried to drive by car to Adega Kidane Meheret which was only about two hundred kilometers from Addis Ababa on The Addis-Dessie Road. After branching left from Robit which was around two hundred kilometers, it was only thirty kilometers located on top of the mountain.

His favorite preaching to the family was as follows: mans life and reputation is always attached to his pride, honesty, dignity, and integrity. Never break promises. Once you promise you must fulfill by all means. Negadras lived a simple life and died like a poor man. For example, in the middle of all his wealth, Negadras slept on a very simple bed. He used a dry toilet and reaching that toilet situated fifty meters from his bedroom was very difficult as it was mostly raining and muddy. Negadras did not take regular shower, as there was no showering facility in the house, so he went once in a month to town to pay and shower. He also ate very simple food as there was no special cook for him. He had a chronic (hemophilia) disease, whereby blood oozed from his mouth nonstop and suffered anemia most of the time. He died without getting proper treatment although he was assisted at the Menelik Hospital for several months. It was very interesting to remember that he was so influential in the system that when he slept in the hospital an average of fifty people would visit him there. So the hospital gave permission to put a big tent in the compound, so that the relatives could stay overnight and cook in the tent and stay very close to him. The Ministry of Health at that time gave this permission.

5 Negadras My Hero

I was inspired for the love of my country by our grandfather Negadras Haile Mariam. I was so proud to use his name, because I learned so much wisdom from him and the family he was taking care. His house was open to everybody, who claimed his or his wives' relatives. In that house there was no ownership for anything, beds, blankets, bed sheets even personal clothes were always made available for common use. Children were disciplined in collective manner. Whoever was older in age had the right to implement discipline. The worst crime was lying, stealing, gossiping, and cheating. Whoever did that was collectively disciplined and the whole family was informed instantly. There was no forgiveness for those crimes. The supreme authority was Negadras, and if he was informed about it there would be serious problem. That was the way we were brought up in Negadras Family. Negadras was a very rich man, but nobody knew the extent of his wealth. Even he did not know that he was as rich as he was supporting so many people and everyone wanted something from him. But Negadras made sure that everybody in the family ate and his health maintained and young people educated. Every member of our family came for consultation to him and he had a very sharp memory and assisted everyone.

Negadras used to say never lend money to relatives and kins, and close friends, because they may not be able to return and as a result you may lose the friendship and good relationship. He believed in dishing out money to avoid problem instead of lending. Negadras used to tell us very often that it was always good to be a giver than receiver. He always said that happiness should come from giving not from receiving. He was a natural leader to the community, so he was elected two times to the then parliament. When we were in the elementary school, we used to prepare his campaign posters and post it in our kebelle. We were so proud at that time to be his children. He was the first person to introduce into Kabana; our kebelle: a radio apparatus, water through a pipe, electricity, telephone and he even built three kilometer road to bring his first car to our house a 1940 Model Chevrolet. The minister of commerce and industry, Ato. Mekonen Hapte Wolde used to be his very close friend, and seek high-level advice very

often from Negadras. He respected from a distance Haile Selassie, but he never liked him. He adored Emperor Menelik and up to his death if he said Menelik Yimut it means it's final. He always thought that Haile Selassie had created an empire of bureaucrats and crooks, so he avoided any association with him. Until his age of seventy-five he served the Ethiopian government as a parliamentarian and high court judge. He was earning Br500 at that time which was equivalent to US$300. This was a very high salary paid for a civil servant at that time. He always constantly reminded us that we should go to school, achieve high education, and serve the government. For him serving the government was the only choice, as he believed that Ethiopia needed educated people at that time. He never wanted to hear about private business. He believed that business people could'nt live a respectable and honest life, and money was always a source of evil for him and consistently preached to the family members never cheat other people on money, etc. So as you see we were very much influenced by his philosophy at that time. I thought I was still following his track.

6 Cousin Abebe, My Childhood Role Model

I will now write something about one of my cousin, who was brought up by Negadras in Kabana, whom I always considered as a senior brother and the primary role model in the family. His name is Abebe Kebede. I like mentioning his name very often even though he was killed by Mengistu regime in 1974. I like telling friends about his background history, because he inspired me so much in my childhood, and I was very closely attached to him. Abebe's father was a patriot, who died fighting the Italians in the region of Arssi. At that time Abebe was about six years old. His father was the cousin of my grandmother (Negadras's wife). So Negadras presented him to Emperor Haile Selassie as the son of a Patriot, who died fighting Italians and as a result he was enrolled into a boarding school in Addis Ababa, at Teferi Makonen School. That was one of the oldest schools, where most of the Ethiopian postwar intellectuals were enrolled since it was the second oldest school in Addis Ababa after Meneliks Elementary School. Most of the teachers were Canadian Jesuits and the school was very famous for its academic standard.

When young Abebe graduated from eighth grade he was enrolled in teacher training schools and graduated with diploma after two years. Then he was posted as an arts and crafts teacher in our school. So he also became my teacher at school. My cousin Abebe was a very well-behaved young student in the family and gained a lot of respect from Negadras and the rest of the family. Abebe was given a special bedroom in the main building of the compound, and he allowed me to sleep in his bedroom. Obviously not free of charge. We had an agreement that I clean the bedroom and also make his bed. This incentive was so good that I felt very happy, as I never had my own bedroom before. Very soon Abebe bought a small kerosene cooker and he was making his own tea in the morning. I also very proudly started to assist in this cooking and I was enjoying a cup of tea and white bread for breakfast. I enjoyed this special treatment so well that I continued to adore the kindness of my senior brother. Then there was this special surprise which he brought one day as a new project which he would like to start with me. He told me that he was going to buy five chickens *Rohode Island

imported breeds and I would be the manager of that chicken farm. He very soon gave the contract to a carpenter to construct the chicken house with a room for sleeping and laying eggs, and a courtyard with wire mesh for eating and resting during daytime. I looked at the construction for the whole week and was so fascinated with the design and architecture.

For me that was one of the most beautiful buildings in my area. The house was ready and the chickens were brought over the weekend and I was the manager then. Imagine how proud I was to be a manager at the age of twelve. Those were red and golden colored chicken with one cock and five females. That week I slept very little giving all my attention to the chickens. My worst enemies were those wild cats and dogs, who were scaring the chicken and I made sure that they would not have access to my precious chickens. I made sure that chicken feed was served with clean water. I cleaned the chicken house two times a day. For me that was one of the most important projects in the family. And I made sure that nobody interfered with the chicken without the boss's permission. Abebe was very happy with my loyalty and interest on the chicken, so he only expected a report once a day how they ate and drank and we were now waiting for them to lay eggs. In less than a month time they started to lay eggs, big and reddish egg, I was collecting two to three eggs every day. We planned to give two eggs for Negadras and the two eggs were always cooked with our small stove for breakfast. My life was tremendously improved by having a small piece of fried egg and a loaf with tea for breakfast. This made me special as compared with the other kids in the family. Abebe decided to give me a salary of fifty cents per month for managing the chicken and I became very happy, because we never had access to cash by any cost at that time. This was a big salary by any standard, as other kids never had any. Life became very interesting with the chickens. I studied very hard and worked also very hard. And this beautiful life continued for about six months gradually problems started at the chicken farm. One day one of the chickens had a swollen eye and looked very weak. I did not know what to do as there was no veterinarian to advise and later on the poor chicken died and became the first victim on the farm. I felt so sad and helpless that I could not do anything. Then after about a month the other one started to have a bloody stool and had very rough feathers and stopped to eat and drink. Nobody could tell me what to do and this one also died. Then third one also started

to have loose neck and could not stand up, and when my grandmother was informed about it and she decided to slaughter her without my knowledge. I was at school and they told me that the chicken died and they threw her away. Finally, the boss decided that even this remaining chicken will die, so the best thing is to give them to grandmother, so that she could slaughter them for a certain occasion in the family.

This was such a tragedy in my life that I refused to talk to my grandmother and others for few days. That was the story of the famous chicken farm and the end of my enjoyment as a manager. After becoming a qualified veterinarian I now knew why they died. They were affected by a very common and simple poultry disease, which could be cured easily with antibiotic powder in their feed. However, this experience left a very interesting scar in my life, thereafter, and I started to think about helping sick animals and I believed that it had contributed to a certain extent for me going to a veterinary profession later. However, after sometimes Abebe got a scholarship and went to USA, New Mexico for a two-year training. I lost my chicken farm and my closest mentor, both at the same time, and I thought life had come to an end for me. Later Abebe came from USA and was appointed as the Director of Haile Selassie Theatre (Ambassador Theatre). Gradually, he became very successful in his workplace, and in a short time, he was appointed as the third secretary at the Ethiopian Embassy in London. There he was faithfully serving members of the royal family, who were flying to London for weekend shopping. As he was always very helpful, very soon he became very popular among the royal family members.

One day The daughter of the minister of palace lost her mother while she was studying in London. As per Ethiopian tradition, when someones close kin dies, a very close friend will take responsibility and he will inform other members of the family and friends, and the person who has lost a close kin will be told on a Sunday very early in the morning. That Sunday, Abebe prepared the house and made everything required to receive guests in the house and informed Truwork (Terry) that her beloved mother had passed away. So Terry had to sit for the whole week mourning and grieving the death of her mother. Abebe stayed around to assist her in handling the guests, who came to pass their condolence. After few weeks, Terry

proposed to Abebe that he should marry her, and if he would not she would commit suicide. He was well mannered, a regular church visitor, a very humble and patient type. So he came to Addis to consult with Negadras about this important issue. Negadras asked him, “Tell me son, is this woman beautiful? Do you love her? What is your feeling for her?” Abebe answered in a very innocent manner that she was not beautiful, but she was nice and acceptable; then Negadras agreed to the proposal. The wedding was prepared at the palace with members of the royal family attending. It was one of the best wedding ceremonies at that time. From there on our brother Abebe joined the royal club. He was appointed as the director general of Emperor Haile Selassie Foundation. He was one of the very few people who had access to Haile Selassie’s bedroom at any time for private consultation, and gradually he got involved so much in the royal politics, which would be the cause of his death in the near future. He also used his enormous power to defend and protect the family wealth after the death of Negadras. Unfortunately, our family was split into two warring groups. One was headed by our grandmother and assisted very much by Abebe and the other headed by my mother, Woz. Zenebework, The fight for the control of the wealth of Negadras continued for a long time. That ugly aspect of the conflict of the Neagadras family was properly documented in a new book written by our aunt Mrs. Zenebework, the eldest daughter of Negadras.

Gashe Abebe, as I used to call him in respect to an elder brother, was not a very happy man both in his official responsibility and also because of the problems in the family. This way I lost one of the most important people in my life that I loved to associate with. It was very difficult to have access to him because of the ugly court case of our families. Finally, when the military regime came to power, our brother Abebe was arrested, together with other members of Haile Selassie Government. One day Abebe was interviewed on the Ethiopian TV, and they asked him about his views about this new change and his feeling toward Emperor Haile Selassie. Abebe very courageously told the Ethiopian people that Haile Selassie was the best leader Ethiopia ever had and the present change was not required, since the government of Haile Selassie was doing very well in all areas of development. The military people were very angry with Abebe’s comment, and they continued to torture him to give them information about Haile Selassie’s account in Europe. He was accused of having deposited millions

of dollars privately into the private account of Haile Selassie. When they failed to get any information they killed him one day together with the EthiopianOrthodox Church Patriarch, His Holiness Abune Tewoflos in 1977. That was the end of our beloved brother Abebe. He was a very kind and honest man. His kindness brought him a very bad and miserable life. His honesty brought him premature death. He could have survived if he would not have advocated kindness and honesty. He could have avoided the collapse of Negadras family if he would have been neutral and played a reconciliatory role in the family. Because he had a very strong love for our grandmother he wanted her to be happy and followed exactly what her relatives and she herself wanted him to do, but unfortunately in the process he hearted so many of us contributing toward the destruction of Negadras family. The case of Negadras wealth were brought to the attention of Emperor Haile Selassie on several occasion through Abebe, and a special committee was established by Emperor Haile Selassie himself to find amicable solution between the two warring function. Sometime so it life in this world that you don't know which line to follow. Let God and the Holy Spirit guide us. I just wrote down my inner feeling about Gashe Abebe, whom we all adored and loved. I always love to talk about him and our early days in Kabana. Those were great days of our childhood.

7 The Memory of Childhood in Kabana



Young Solomon at the age of 18

Life in Kabana as a child was divided in several categories. Life within the family in Negadras house, school life, and the life with the community in our residential area. Our grandmother always insisted that we should help the family in some way. We should not spend time playing around, so in order to fulfill her wish I used to go to the small mountain above our house to collect firewood. I also spent sometime with other kids collecting a special herb used as tea locally known as "Toseghn." Our grandmother enjoyed drinking the herb boiled in a form of herbal tea. During spring time we had also gone to the mountains to collect special wild fruits known as: agam, kega, awoit, shola, and koshim. We also looked for the special tree, which was used as "Mefakia" to clean or brush the teeth. At that time in the absence of toothbrush those herbal trees were used very often. Whatever we collected in the mountain was always shared with other kids in the family, and also we gave some portion to our grandmother. Most of the time I was also very fond of taking the few cows, sheep, and goats for grazing in the hills. Those mountains used to attract lots of rain, and we normally returned back socked and wet in the evening. The tops of those hills were very chilly and windy, but I always enjoyed going back to those mountains. From the top of the hill above our house the whole Addis Ababa was seen very nicely.

While in the elementary schools I joined the youth boy scouts club. For the first time at the tender age of nine, we were having a very nice scouts uniform and we were trained in various disciplines such as: athletics, football, and first aid. Through the Cub Scouts Club I participated for the first time in a National Jemahuri Camp celebration, where scouts from all over Ethiopia came and camped and celebrated for three days at the International Scouts Festival. This opened my eyes to commitment of young scouts to the nation and community. We also played football in our area and continuously competed with other kids.

The Ethiopian tradition of raising children brings lots of hardship for the growing child. The children and family, the community, and even the schools wanted to see a child grow as a direct duplication of a Holly Man. You had to be handsome/beautiful. You had to be tall and slim, you had to be as humble as a saint, you had to be intelligent, smart, and you would have to have a very high score in every way.

You would be criticized by your schoolmates, members of the community, and even members of your family for your appearance, behavior, clothing, schooling, etc. These negative comments would be made literally on a daily basis by everybody. You would have to be tolerant by all means to all this comments. If you had big nose, your nickname would be Mr. Big Nose, if your lips were big, you would also get a nickname, if you had a big ear, big forehead, small chick, round face, big teeth, if you were dark, if you were short, tall, slim, if you talked fast, etc. Everything would gain one or more ugly nickname.

This unfortunate habit destroyed the growing child character. You would start to be abusive, defensive, and protective of your personal character and integrity. Those merciless, unfriendly comments on your personality affected your childhood development. Most Ethiopian youths were victims of those merciless culture and the majority of them behaved unusual, modest, and shy in a very unacceptable manner. On the other hand this sort of environment made the child tough and would make you

prepared to be aggressive and defend yourself. Most of us were victims of such upbringings and sometimes this attitude grew with the child and reflected in our adulthood. I had observed late in my adulthood that many

Ethiopians were scared to talk and express themselves in public as a result of irreversible damage incurred on them by the environment they had grown up and treated by the family and community. All in all this way of childhood upbringing forged our typical character and behavior as Ethiopians.



In the family of Negadras we were brought up to behave as Ethiopian Nationals, there was no time when we were given special orientation about our ethnic background. In fact it was a big offence if we tried to demonstrate any type of ethnic heritage. The spirit and philosophy at school was also following this line. Our generation was continuously taught how to love our country Ethiopia, that all ethnic groups should be treated equal in the eyes of the government and the constitution. We used to mix at school with children of all ethnic groups. My best childhood friend was Ketema Musa, whose parents were Aderes from Harar. They were also followers of the Moslem religion and that never affected our friendship. I was really so proud with the way we were brought up as a child. Those values had consolidated our present day behavior for the love of our country and identifying ourselves as Ethiopians. You would observe that Ethiopians stick so much to each other when they leave out of their country, they celebrate their holidays together, they enjoy their cultural values together, etc.

This was because of how they were brought up. Ethiopian cultural inheritances are broadly practiced, and this cultural backgrounds as a very strong bond among themselves.

8 Good-bye Kebena

After finishing elementary school in August 1957, I had the opportunity to join the secondary school at the same school at Haile Selassie first day school in Kabana, Addis Ababa. That school was very popular at that time. The director of the school was a very famous American educationalist, who commanded a lot of respect from the Ministry of Education at that time. His name was Mr. Perry Chermichel. His wife Mrs. Chermichel was also our English Teacher. This school had started with two years teachers training diploma course at that time. Those who joined this course were given Br20 per month as pocket money, so many students were attracted with this small incentive and joined the teachers training course from grade 8. Later on most of them regretted for having not continued their studies. I had a secure place to pursue the academic line and started in grade 9 in September that year. That was the wish of my mentor Negadras. He always reminded us that we should continue our studies until we finish university. He was really foresighted and visionary for his age at that time. So nobody in our family thought of about looking for a job after finishing grade 8. I was fourteen years old at that time and had just started my teenage life. I was very ambitious to continue my further studies. My role model was Ato Abebe, who went for his further training in America. Everybody in the family was talking about the success of Abebe, and how he got a scholarship in return to his hard work.

One rainy day in the month of August 1957, I was walking in town around Kazanchis with my friend Ketema Mousa. We saw students lining up in a queue at the gate of the Ministry of Agriculture. We were attracted with the crowd and decided to stop and inquire. We were informed that they were registering students who would like to join the Ambo Agriculture School. We both immediately decided to join the queue. After about two hours we reached the table and we were given a form to fill. After filling the forms we were told to come for the exam the following week. My friend and I again reluctantly went for the exam. The exam was not so difficult, but as there were more than a thousand students the chances of getting pass mark was very doubtful. After about a week, we went back to the Ministry of

Agriculture to check the result of our exam. Surprisingly my name appeared as number seventeen on the list of students, who had passed the exam. It was also announced on the notice board that students who had passed the exam should report at the ministry on Monday, the following week. I went back on that Monday as instructed. The director of the school, who was German National received us and gave us orientation on the school and also gave us admission card at the new school with a bus ticket to Ambo town.

Until this moment I did not tell to anybody about my exam to join the school. I started to get scared about the reality now. First of all I had to convince my grandfather about this new development. Secondly, I was very young to leave Kabana and start life in a boarding school. I had never been on my own before, so I was not sure about myself. Anyway this was the fact which I had to face and later I decided to announce this important news to my grandparents. I had to choose the right time not to upset my grandfather and also chose the right place, so that he could give me enough attention. The best time was after supper before they go to sleep. At that time there was very little intervention with other members of the family. That evening after supper we were in the dining room. I stated with a very weak voice that I have an important issue to discuss with them. My grandmother as usual was very fast to interfere and block serious discussion with children, and told me with a very loud and angry voice what the issue is all about. I was so young to ask for their attention to listen to me at that time. I said politely again that I had an opportunity to join the agricultural school at Ambo. I had been admitted by the Ministry of Agriculture and I was supposed to leave the following day. All what I needed was their approval and endorsement.

This announcement was like a time bomb at that room. My grandmother immediately abused me why I kept this secret. When was I mature and started to keep such important information from them. This was unforgivable mistake and I should also forget to go to that school as I was too young to decide on my own. She also said, “School is meant for low-class families. You are not allowed to go there.” All that time Negadras was quiet. Grandmother was the one who was talking on his behalf. I knew also very well that her decision was not important in the house and preferred to keep quiet and wait for the reply from the patron of the house. After

listening to our arguments Negadras said if I was sure that I wanted to study agriculture. He told me that in Ethiopia everybody was a farmer and he said that why I needed to go to school to be a farmer. He could buy me a pair of oxen and I could go and farm in one of his land, and he started to laugh and tried to convince me that I should consider my decision. He said the best option was to finish the university as a medical doctor or an engineer and do better things than becoming a farmer. I tried to explain in my youthful way that agriculture was not just simply farming I could go to research, teaching, etc. I could even join agricultural university to be a professor. So I stood firmly with my decision and told them that I had decided and I would be leaving the following day. My grandmother still continued to confront me by force that I would not go anywhere. But Negadras finally said, "Okay, if you have decided you can go. But if you change your mind you can still come back and continue in academic field." Grandma kept on grumbling that I should not be allowed to leave, that Negadras as usual was supporting the wrong decision. Anyway she also said that I would never make it. She was quite sure that she would see me back in the next few weeks.

I was very sure that the time had come for me to leave Kabana. My cousin Tilahun left a year earlier to Jimma Agriculture School and he liked it very much. I took the small traveling bag and left early in the morning to the bus station. I left Kabana with a mixed feeling. I thought that I had disappointed my parents by deciding on this important matter by myself. Nobody said good-bye to me as I was considered traitor, who ran away without consulting with anybody. I did not mind either as I did not expect anything from anybody. The bus took about two hours to reach Ambo, which was 120 km from Addis Ababa.

Ambo town was a small and beautiful city, where Emperor Haile Selassie and the royal family used to visit very often. It was a tourist town with a hot spring, which was famous for curing various diseases. There was an Olympic-size swimming pool frequented by people from Addis Ababa before the establishment of Sodere and Langano. There was a very big government hotel very often busy with guests from Addis Ababa. The climate of Ambo was very friendly with its warm temperature. So as soon as I arrived into the town of Ambo, I felt so good and relieved and I thanked

God for coming to this beautiful town. I walked about three kilometers together with other students to our new school compound. I was even happier when I reached the school. There were nice and clean buildings with lots of big trees and flower gardens. We met with the administrator, who immediately allocated our bedrooms. I was also given two blankets, two sets of the school uniform with T-shirts, underwears, socks, etc. I could not believe that those were all mine as it was my first time to own such beautiful things at that tender age. I prepared my bed and locked all my belongings in my cupboard. I took a shower and put on my new uniform, which fitted me very well. Later I went for lunch. The dining room was very big. I was given a permanent seat in one corner. We were served very good food with lots of meat and bread. In the afternoon, we were introduced to the classrooms, library, sports facilities, etc. I thought that I was brought to a paradise, which was very difficult to compare with our life in Kabana.

I immediately observed that everybody was thinking like me. We were introduced to each other very quickly and started to talk and play together. Supper and breakfast were marvelous. For breakfast, we were served with fried eggs, butter, and jams. Everything was more than our expectation. Classes started the following week. All our teachers were German citizens. They were very practical people, who were very fond of each one of us. I was immediately requested by the workshop manager Mr. Stitch to be his personal assistant. My job was to prepare workshop tools for students and assist the manager with all maintenance work in the compound. We were looking after the electricity system, water supply, and repair of buildings. I enjoyed this assignment as it kept me very busy outside my class. Academic lessons were given during morning hours from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. each day of the week. In the afternoon we had practical work. Evening we were studying in the library. We were taken every Wednesday afternoon to the swimming pool. I learned how to swim in a very short time and enjoyed swimming so much until I left the school. As part of practical training, we were given a small plot to grow vegetables of our choice. I started to work very hard like the other students on my small plot, which was one hundred square meters. Irrigation water was supplied in turns to all the plots, so it was very important not to miss my turn. Most of the time my turn was after midnight, so I used to miss sleep at least three times a week. That season

which started in September 1957 I planted red onion and worked until December to grow and harvest onion.

I managed to harvest (three and half quintals) three fifty kilogram of first-class red onion, I decided to sell the three quintals to the school food committee, who bought it for Br35 per quintal. I had Br115 in my pocket, which was a lot of money at that time. That encouraged me so much so I immediately started to work on my plot every morning waking at 5:00 a.m. and I planted potatoes using irrigation again. Christmas vacation came and everybody was planning to go home. So I also decided to visit my parents in Kabana. I also decided to take with me the half quintal of onion, which I had harvested. I knew that my grandmother would be surprised to see what I had produced on my own. For me that was the highest achievement at that time. The day I arrived in Kabana I was welcomed like a VIP by everybody. There was a lot of physical change in my personality. I was neatly dressed with the school outfit. I had put on weight and looked very well-groomed, so all the kids were surprised to see me like that. I was immediately taken to see Negadras and Grandmother. They were so happy and proud with me to see me in that way. Especially Grandmother was excited for having received the onions for which she was always short. I was bombarded with questions on how my life was at the school. I thought I had influenced many age-mates to go away from home and be themselves on their own. My grandfather treated me with lots of respect and started to discuss problems of farming, etc., but I was still far away from having enough knowledge on farming. One afternoon he was interested in planting grapes in our backyard and asked me to show the other worker on how to plant the cuttings of grapes. I had to tell him that I had not still reached that level. I was still learning the theory and the science. He was very disappointed that they had not taught me yet how to plant grapes. I promised him that this would come in the third year in the school program. That year I had a very good time with my friends and relatives. I also had some money, so I could buy few things for my friends, etc. I started to value the use of money earned through my own sweat. Ever since that time I completely relied on myself for generating money and managing it in the most possible economical way. My effort in working on my plot for four years continued without disruption, and I was never short of cash when I was at Ambo

School. I also started to learn about management of backyard vegetable gardens.

Life at the agricultural school in Ambo taught me so many good things. Most of all it taught me how to live with other people with respect and harmony. It taught me how to compete and win. We used to study very hard as there was evaluation every year in the school. I was always second or third in the class. My friend Ayalew Ketsela was unbeatable as he was studying very hard. So I was most of the time competing with him. When we finally finished the fourth year at Ambo Agricultural School we graduated with good grades. I was number two in my class, so the first six students were given a scholarship to go and study abroad. Most of our teachers were very hard-working types. Especially, our biology teacher, Mr. Mittlesrasse was supervising the school dairy farm. One time he decided to spray the animals against external parasites. He brought a certain disinfectant from Addis Ababa and mixed it with water and started to spray the pedigree cows of the school. Unfortunately, he made a terrible mistake in establishing the right solution, so after finishing spraying all the cattle died the following day. He made another big mistake by throwing the dead bodies of those cows to wild animal that came to feast on the carcasses of the cows. All the wild animals that ate the dead poisoned cows also died the following day. That was considered as the biggest blunder at that time and Mr. Mittletsrasse was thrown out of the country. After fifty years Mr. Mittlestrasse came back to visit Ethiopia in November 2008 and went to Ambo to visit the Ambo School. He was given a warm welcome and the usual Ethiopian hospitality by the members of the staff in Ambo. The School had been converted into a university, and many new buildings had now cropped up. He was eighty-one years old. I invited him to my house and had very interesting chats. He told me that his wish was to return to Ethiopia and visit the country before he died.

Anyway at the time Ato Tadesse Yakob was the minister of agriculture, and he was very disappointed with what he saw at the school. The minister who came to study this problem addressed us in the school and said that Ethiopia should have its own veterinary doctors. He said that at present there were no Ethiopian veterinary doctors. He put this challenge on us and invited us to start to think of becoming veterinarians.

That speech of the minister was the turning point in my life. Immediately I started to dream about becoming a veterinary doctor. I also thought about the chicken farm in Negadras place, which failed because of lack of veterinary assistance.

There were lots of adventures for which I had very fond memory at the school in Ambo. At one time we had a problem with students from the secondary school in town. We used to fight after competing in different sports like football and volleyball. Our school used to win in both sports. The students from the Maerege Hiwot Secondary School were not happy about this. Some students from our school were also dating girls from the other school. So most of the time if a member of our school was found in town they would beat him. Sometimes they threw stones on us while returning back from swimming pool. So we decided to take revenge. We started to identify and study the residence of those students, who were involved in this plot of throwing stones and harassing our students. We prepared a special war strategy to go and attack those students from the other school after midnight. The operation was prepared for about a week and we sent about fifty strong fellow commandos from our school, armed with sticks and knives to the resident of these students. The war began after midnight and the operation was supposed to take only two hours. They were all beaten so badly and most of them were taken to hospital. In the mean time after 2:00 a.m. everybody had to return back and sleep in his bedroom at the school dorm. The good thing was nobody was caught during this operation. Generally, it was suspected that our students were the one who did that. This information was passed to Emperor Haile Selassie who loved our school.

One Sunday morning when he visited Ambo Palace, we were invited early in the morning to come to the palace. We thought that we were going to be given some kind of reward. When Emperor Haile Selassie came out with a very angry gesture and started to abuse us. He said that he did not want to feed a bunch of thugs. He would make sure that we shall be dismissed if we ever repeat this type of crime. He gave us an ultimatum of six months and during this time if he heard anything bad about our school, we shall all be dismissed. After this incidence we were not allowed to leave the school compound for over a year without special permission. I graduated from

Ambo School in July 1961. Since I was second in my class I was given a scholarship to study veterinary medicine abroad. I left for Czechoslovakia in September 1961 to be enrolled at The University of Brno, Moravia.

I was so proud that I made the decision of joining the Ambo Agricultural School at the age of fourteen. By the time I graduated I was only eighteen. Ambo School helped me to mature early. I enjoyed every bit of my life at that school. Also I made life-time friends in the school. Since I left Ambo I went to visit the school several times. The school had been upgraded to the level of a university college providing postgraduate courses also for MSc and PhD programs now. I was very happy to see my old school develop to this level after fifty years of my graduation. But the town of Ambo had shrieked and deteriorated a lot.

9 The Pioneer for the struggle of womens right in Ethiopia

I was very proud with our aunt for having written her biography in a very interesting way. The book was entitled Hiwot Ende Endlish. That was a true story of Zenebework. She started writing that book in 1980 and finished the book in 1985. She took her time to review her biography. It was one of the most interesting memories written by a family member. She courageously came forward by uncovering the complex traditional problems women face in our society. She also demonstrated how courageous she was to face this problem at a very young tender age.

Her first marriage was at the age of nine to a very young man of sixteen years. Both of them were forced to get married by the decisions of their parents. She rebelled against this family arranged marriage and she was going in and out from this marriage for eight years until she finally got divorced from the young man. The reason for the divorce was her husband got frustrated with her frequent running away, and finally decided to revenge by infecting her with sexually transmitted disease, which he had acquired from his loose behavior. Her father discovered this plot and made sure that she divorces him immediately. She wrote quite a lot how she lacked a mother's love from her real mother. Her mother was the type who was more interested in getting fame by feeding and favoring distant relatives and friends instead of giving the proper attention to her own kids. She wrote a very interesting story about how her mother had to divorce her first husband and run to join her wealthy father in Addis Ababa. At that time young men were fond of marriages with children from rich and privileged families. As mentioned in the earlier chapter her father Negadras Haile Mariam originally comes from a very poor family. He had to struggle to migrate from the impoverished rural area of Menz to come to Addis Ababa and look for a decent job. He was fortunate enough to get married to his second wife in Addis Ababa when he got the idea of looking for a marriage of convenience with members of the ruling class of that time.

The mother of Negadras was a persuasive character and convinced him that he should divorce his present wife Abebech, because she did not give him

any children and also had no family background. She came from a poor family, and would not help him improve his life in future. She put a lot of pressure to divorce her and look for a wife from a renowned family. She even brought information that she has identified a potential fiancée for him, who recently got divorced but had two children. She informed him that a young divorcee had arrived from her village in Yifat. Her father was a very prominent member of the rich society of the time. She said that she would look for appropriate elders who would assist in negotiating for the new marriage arrangement. Negadras immediately noticed the relevance of his mother's advice, and told his beloved wife about his new idea and plan. In a very simple discussion he convinced his wife and divorced her immediately and started to plan for the new marriage and request the father of the new bridegroom for her hand. This was done in a very short time and Negadras got married to Woz. Fikre Mariam, our future grandmother.

Negadras had to divorce Mrs. Abebech, who was known for her beauty and good conducts and most of all for her love to Negadras. Abebech who loved him dearly was divorced as a result of greed and ambition in search of wealth and security. During those days divorce for men was very easy in Ethiopia. The husband could tell the wife that he was no more interested in continuing with the marriage, and the poor wife had no choice except to accept the wish of her husband. The existing community tradition of those days was very much dominated by male chauvinism. The daughter of Negadras, Zenebework was now divorced from her husband of childhood, who she never knew properly and most of all she never loved him either. She was very much relieved when that loveless marriage came to an end.

Later she met a young man who grew up with her in the same area and started to fall in love with him. Unfortunately, her parents' strict control did not give her a chance to know more about her new lover. However, they met several times in private and discussed about their love to each other. She was dreaming to get married to this man. Unfortunately, the young man was drafted as a soldier and joined the army to go to the war front to fight the Italian invaders. The young man was not lucky, so he died in the war front after few months. Zenebework was very much saddened with what had happened to her new fiancé and became depressed for a long time. The death of her beloved young fiancé brought a big shock to her life, and

started to grieve about her bad omen. While grieving in this manner for a long time, she was also very much mistreated at home by her mother. She was abused and criticized for everything what she was doing in the house, so poor Zenebework was thinking of running away from home and staying away in a far place, where she would not be badly treated by her mother.

On the other hand, a man, who was very close to Negadras and a distant relative, was also eying the young divorcee. Mr. Wolde was in his thirties at that time, and in his earlier life had got married and divorced several times. He was assisted by Negadras in finding small jobs on several occasions. One day he had the dream of getting married to the daughter of Negadras for job security and wealth building. He started eying on young Zenebework. He thought that this was a wonderful opportunity to capture if he wanted to say good-bye to poverty. Wolde at that time was big and mature man compared to Zenebework. He looked for convenient elders to negotiate the marriage on his behalf. At that time it was necessary for a woman to get married instead of idling as single in a family, so Negadras immediately approved the proposal, and Wolde and Zenebework got married quickly. The problem was that Wolde had no job and there was no income for the young couple to live together. Anyway, with the assistance of Negadras and the odd jobs which were found in different places, they managed to establish the family in a rented house. Soon he found a job with government and he was sent to Wollega region to serve in one of the small districts as a government clerk. At that time it was traditional that any government official at all levels was very much involved in petty corruption. Most of the income was generated through small bribes from the people. Wolde started to enjoy a good life based on friendly and amicable acceptance from the local community. He was also very famous for being generous to his close friends and allies. Zenebework had to live with these realities, and although she was not happy she had to accept the style of life and also behavior of her husband, who was much older than herself.

After few years of comfortable life in the remote village in Wollegaa, the bad news arrived about the invasion and occupation of Ethiopia by the Italian colonialists in 1936. When the central government collapsed and the country was taken over by the Italians for sometime, the rural areas were

controlled by local war lords. The security in the rural area collapsed. Wolde and Zenbework had now to think of how they could return back to Addis. Local outlaws blocked all the roads. Especially, those people were very hostile to people coming from the central Highlands, and who served Emperor Haile Selassie's Government as officials. The Italian occupants also promoted ethnic hatred and banditry was widely spread. After passing lots of difficulties Wolde and Zenbwork managed to reach Addis Ababa.

Addis Ababa was at that time under the iron rule of the Italian colonialists. It was very easy to be arrested and executed as an Ethiopian. The family had a lot of difficulty to survive. Those who opted and had the strength went to the bush to join the Gorilla Forces. Wolde decided to remain in Addis and looked for a job under the Italian Government. This did not work and he decided to open small businesses and even this one did not work either. One day, The military Governor of the Italian colonialists Government, Gen. Grazianne invited the residents in Addis Abba to join him on a special celebration of the birthday of Emperor Victor Emanuel in February 1929 (Ethiopian calendar.). The celebration ceremony was organized at the Grand Palace in sedist Kilo. The ceremony was supposed to be accompanied by distribution of relief materials and money. The residents of Addis Ababa responded to this invitation by attending in large number. The ceremony started by the propaganda speeches from the general.

In the middle of the speech two Ethiopian young compatriots started to throw hand grenades on the high tables, where the dignitaries were seated. Quite a number of high officials including the Governor, Grazianne were injured by the blast. Immediately the Italian commandos started a retaliatory offense by shooting point-blank into the crowd. The shooting and burning continued for three days. During the three days massacre over thirty thousand Addis Ababa residents were killed or even burned alive in their grass houses all over the city. That was one of the worst memories of our parents during the Italian occupation. On that unfortunate day my grandfather Negadras was there, but he miraculously escaped on time before the Italian Gestapo's closed the gate of the palace. The less-unfortunate one was Wolde, who was caught up in the crowd and could not

manage to escape. He was taken prisoner with thousands of other Ethiopians.

Poor Zenebework was waiting in her house for her husband. He did not return back for more than three days. She thought that he was killed during the rampage. After few days she got information that he was spotted in one of the big prisons. She went to the prison and by a miraculous luck she requested to see the commander of the prison. He received her politely and after explaining about her husband she succeeded in getting him out from prison. Life continued with its ugly face for years until the Italians were thrown out by the British and Allied Liberation Army in 1941. Emperor Haile Selassie returned back from exile in Britain. The government of Ethiopia was reestablished for the first time. The first few years were difficult for the government to operate because of shortages of trained and educated people. Wolde got a new opportunity of becoming a government officer in one of the region. Wolde was very much encouraged by the new government and tried his best to serve the new regime with lots of commitment. Zenebework was very active in helping her husband in office matters. In a very short time Woldes' services were recognized on very high level, and he got a very big promotion and became a governor of a big province. He also got a big title known as Dechazmach. This was a title, which empowered him to rule in a relaxed way within Emperor Haile Selassies' feudal government. He started to accumulate wealth and fame. He said good-bye to poverty and enjoyed his tenure as a very high government official for sometimes.

His problem started with his wife, after getting everything he wanted in his position as senior government official. He was complaining that his wife did not give him a child. He started to flirt with other women who claimed that they had children with him. This news reached his wife, who became very upset and angry with her husband. The problem continued to get complicated. Dechazmach started to misbehave and abuse his wife continuously. His relatives continued to provide him with false information about his wife and the wealth she was accumulating without his knowledge. Finally, Wolde decided to get a divorce. They could not resolve the problem on their own. He was confronting her on all occasions that she was childless, and the cause for not having children in the family. After a lot of

hostility Wolde even started to beat his wife and was threatening her to leave his house. Zenebework after a lot of patience decided to divorce him. She told her father about their problem which could not be solved, and finally even her father agreed with the divorce provided it was done on a fair way. They had to split their wealth into two and finally got separated. Wolde immediately got married to an elderly woman, who was closer to the feudal governing class. Before the divorce a bad news came from the government central administration that Wolde had been demoted to be administrator of a small district.

This was a very bad thing to happen in that difficult time for Wolde. He had to leave his big palace as a governor, the many fleets of vehicle, and drivers and had to move into a small house in a very small district. He got frustrated so much that he lost his wife of thirty years and his very high position as governor of a province at the same time. However, since he got married to a woman who could be very close to the emperor's court, he was hoping that he will very soon be compensated and return back to his original position. Unfortunately, life did not continue as planned. Everybody has his destinies and opportunities. Once you lose them it is difficult to recover them. The frustration of Wolde continued. He never recovered back his position and happiness. Misfortune continued to haunt him at every level. He was not happy with his new marriage. Finally, he developed very serious heart problem and also became diabetic. He seriously got sick and became bedridden for a very long time, and died a lonely death in the following few years.

The lessons we learnt from the book of Aunt Zenebework were so important for the future generation. She wanted to pass her experience how she had suffered a lot because of the evil local tradition, which looked down on women rights. She also denounces early marriage. In Ethiopia mostly girls are married at the tender age of ten at that time. She was also protesting in her book that most loveless marriages are established by marriages arranged by families. The bride should not know and see her fiancé and future husband until the wedding day. This tradition must be discouraged. Zenebework also advises that marriage of convenience in search of security, wealth, and other privileges should not continue. There were so many couples who had fallen victims to these types of marriages,

and both of them will continue to suffer for the rest of their lives. Also in the Ethiopian tradition it is only the woman, who will be condemned for not bearing a child. The fault could be both on the wife and the husband. Many marriages end in divorce because it is believed traditionally that the woman is the major culprit for not giving birth. This traditional belief can certainly be changed through education.

Our dear aunt Zenebework was a good author. Her book, Hiwot Endedelish, became very famous in the market. She also wrote about three more books which are not yet published. One day all her books will certainly be published by her daughters. Zenebework passed away in year 2006 at the age of ninety. During her final days, she became very ill and remained in bed for over two years. Our family grieved her departure for a long time. Let God rest her soul in peace . . .

10 The Distingeration of Negadras Family

Negadras used to say very often that money and wealth were the source of evil. That was a very interesting prediction. The relationship of Negadras and his wife, Fikre Mariam, gradually deteriorated during old ages. He had not given her proper treatment in the past and especially now as she was getting older, she deserved to have upper hand in the control of the family wealth. Her relatives kept on grumbling that Negadras would definitely have a secret will. The motive behind this will was how to manage the wealth of Negadras after his death. This motive was very well-known in the family. Especially, Woz Zenebework and my mother, Mulumebet, were very much aware and started to confront their mother Fikremariam with the way how she and her close relatives were treating Negadras, who was very ill.

At one time, it was proposed to him that she would like to go to Jerusalem for Easter, and she needed money for her trip. But Negadras protested in a very weak voice that his long-time wife should be patient for few days, and then she could do whatever she liked later after his death. He pleaded that his days were numbered and she should bury him with their tradition and then travel to a foreign country. Her advisors responded with arrogance that he (Negadras) had been sick in bed for a long time and she could not wait indefinitely until he died. She also needed treatment abroad and whether he liked it or not she would travel the following week. Negadras simply pleaded to be left alone. He regretted so much that God had kept him alive to this end to be treated in this way. From that moment onward Negadras wanted to die and he refused to take medicine and food. He also refused to talk. Few days after the return of his wife from a trip to Jerusalem, Negadras died at the age of seventy-nine without forgiving his wife of fifty-five years. Soon after the death of Negadras, his bedroom was looted and the entire valuables removed from his house bu unknown people. During the week of mourning there was lots of tension between the party supporting Negadras, and the party supporting Woz. Fikremariam.

After the third day of his burial the family priest read his will. In his will Negadras wished that all his property remains in the hands of his wife, and

after she passes she would hand over the remaining part of the wealth to his children and grandchildren. This automatically gave full power to our grandmother to patron on Negadras's wealth. But unfortunately, she immediately announced that she disagrees with the will of Negadras. She said that he had no right to make his own will alone without her consent. She would prefer to take half of the property and distribute it to her close relatives. This ill advice was given to her by relatives, who had interest in sharing the wealth. Unfortunately, this was also endorsed by my dear brother Abebe, who had a senior government position to influence any court case. Soon after this drama in the residence of Negadras the case was taken to court. Within a very short time the case was brought to the attention of Emperor Haile Selassie.

Emperor Haile Selassie was ill-advised that the children of Negdras were mistreating their mother, and they wanted to throw her out of her matrimonial house without sharing the wealth. Emperor Haile Selassie and his close advisors took the case seriously and appointed a special committee to examine the case and in the mean time he appointed an administrator to manage the wealth. This new management frustrated our families from having access to the property. The case became even more complicated as the two parties continued to endlessly argue over Negadras's imaginable wealth, which was no more accessible to anyone. Other people in Addis Ababa started to gossip and condemn members of our family for fighting openly for the family wealth. The situation continued to be complicated and the family kept on living on a day to day level with a very nasty polarization. Insults and fighting continued at all levels. I was lucky that I was in Czechoslovakia from 1961 to 1968. I did not see the details of this ugly war, but I used to get information through mails about the pathetic situation our family faced.

In August 1968, I returned to Ethiopia after seven years of absence. I was met at the Addis Ababa Bole international airport with members of Negadras's family including my mother , sisters, brothers and cousins. I was very happy to be back to my beloved country and my intention was to go straight to Kabana to spend my first night in Ethiopia. However, my sister Amsale prepared for me a room in their new resident on Debre Zeit road. They built a very beautiful villa, which was quite comfortable and

close to the city center. That day there was a special welcome party in Amsalies' place, and we enjoyed ourselves up to late evening. I was very eager to see my grandmother after seven years. I loved Fikiremairam too much, because she was the one who brought us up together with my sister Amsale and my junior brother Girma. She loved all of us dearly and would do anything for us.

Fikiremariam as a person was wonderful, but she had little weakness like all of us. She was very emotional and used to lose her temper very easily. She needed a lot of attention from all of us and wanted to know our small secretes, and in this interest she would ask other members of the family about each one of us. The most important recognition she wanted to have was for us to repeatedly assure her that we were her children. She would not tolerate to hear that our real mother was her 2nd.born daughter ,Mulumebet. We had to declare frequently that our real mother was Fikremairam. This faithfulness and loyalty had to be repeated very often. Sometimes some relatives, in the family, in the interest of gaining favoritism would tell her that Solomon or Amsale were saying that they wished to visit their real mother. Those were unforgivable incidences. So we knew about the consequences, so we had to denounce or distant ourselves from our real father and mother. Secretly we loved our real mother and father. We also knew that our father had a very small income and could not manage to keep all of us, as we were eight children. Woz Zenebework raised Alem Tsehai, my junior sister. Our mother Mulumebet had to accept this arrangement. But whenever she could she would tell all of us how much she loved us, and we were very happy secretly to be told about this fact. Sometimes would feel secretly jealous about our other sisters Ketsela, Elisabet, and Elleni and our brother Sirak for being so close to our real father and mother. We also loved to see them for holidays. But this was not allowed very often.

That was why I always had a special feeling for my grandmother. So when I wanted to visit her on the second day of my return from abroad, she was not happy at all with what I had done. Immediately, I was received with a very cold shoulder and she expressed anger for not visiting her immediately upon my return. I apologized and tried to explain why I had to spend the night in Amsale's residence. Grandmother did not want to hear my apologies, and instead she told me that my mother and the other members

of the family negatively influenced me. She also told me that she would not allow me to stay in Kabana; she insisted that Kabana would not be good for me anymore as there was a family dispute. She later reluctantly invited me for food, which was brought to the sitting room. But before I started to eat she said that she would test the food before so that I would be sure that it was not poisoned. I was extremely shocked with that statement of my beloved grandmother, and protested that I would not even think that anybody could do this to me.

She said that my other kins would certainly believe that she would try to poison me. At that moment I started to cry. I could not believe what my grandmother was talking about. And she told me to leave immediately as there would not be a place for me to sleep. At that moment I also got very upset and disappointed for having been treated like that with the person I loved most. Fikiremariam was one of the very few people I loved in my life as a mother. She was completely changed during the last seven years. So I got up and gave her a quick kiss on the cheeks and I left Kabana for good. That was the last time I saw my beloved grandmother. I left on official government business to Wollo region, and from there I left the country for further studies to Vienna, Austria. That was when I learned that our grandmother died while being operated for gallbladder problem. Her hospitalization was arranged by our cousin Abebe, and when she died they buried her in Debre Libanos, 112 kilometers from Addis Ababa.

CHAPTER 2

11 My Journey to Europe to Become a Veterinary Doctor

I was greatly inspired by the wish of Negadras to pursue higher education. I was very happy to be nominated by the Ethiopian government as one of the students for a scholarship in a socialist country. We were given a letter by the Ministry of Agriculture for the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided us with all the necessary documents and passport. We went to the Czechoslovakia Embassy for our visa and orientation. I never had any idea about that country before, except the usual information on the elementary school atlas. I learned that this country was in the communist block, and that they spoke a different Slavish language. Ten of us were ready at the old airport to fly to Czechoslovakia on September 16, 1961. All members of my family, including my grandmother, came to say good-bye to me at the airport. Unfortunately, my sick grandfather couldn't make it. My father, Mengistu Amete, came to say good-bye to me. I loved him secretly as my real father. He was working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at that time as an office clerk and was earning a small salary to support the family. He was very happy to learn that I was on my way to Czechoslovakia, so he processed my passport in a short time. Finally I said good-bye to everyone and boarded the plane. The Ethiopian Airline took us to Frankfurt. We had to spend the night in a small town called Wiesbaden, about fifty kilometers from Frankfurt. We had the whole day in Wiesbaden, so we went for shopping that morning. I remember that I had some U.S. dollars given to us by the government of Ethiopia as pocket money. I bought a camera of German brand Docora and a silver ring, which I kept for a long time with me as a souvenir from Germany.

The following day, we boarded a smaller aircraft and arrived late in the afternoon in Prague, which is the capital city of Czechoslovakia. We were taken to a students' hostel and were given our stipend. We were told that we would remain in Prague for a few more days before we left for Mariánské Lázně, where we were supposed to be enrolled in a language school. Among the Ethiopian students who were studying in Prague, our friend Alemayehu Melaku came to visit us. We were very eager to meet him and get some information from him as he had already been there for two years.

Melaku encouraged us a lot, and he said life is very good, provided we follow the rules of the country. The stipend of seven hundred korunas given by the Czech government should also be enough if we managed it properly. He said that he was paying 150 korunas for food and fifty korunas for hostel rent. The balance of five hundred korunas should be enough if managed properly. This advice from Alemayehu Melaku was very helpful. Alemayehu Melaku graduated as a mathematician and returned to his country in 1966 and became a very popular mathematician and statistician within the Addis Ababa University. Unfortunately, he became sick and died of hernia after operation in the 1990s.

After a few days, we left for Mariánské Lázně for our one-year language course. There were more than three hundred students from Africa and Latin America. There were many Cuban students at that time since the Cuban Revolution had started in 1959. In a very short time, we had so many foreign students in that school. The ten of us from Ethiopia, who had come together, were kept in the same class. My roommates in the dorm were Ato Woldu and Mr. Maxi Musa, who remain to be my very close friends even now. My other close friend was Mr. Shiferaw Demisse, who came to study Geology. Another very close friend of mine was Mr. Hassan Ali from British Guiana. Life in the language school was very simple. We spent hours studying the Czech language, which was completely different from English. The school had a very special system of teaching the language using various audio visual systems. Gradually, we made very fast progress in communicating in the new language. It was strictly forbidden to talk in English or in our mother language while we were in classrooms. Since students from Latin America and Asia didn't speak English we would somehow communicate in the Czech language. Our teachers at school were very polite and helpful. They tried their best to make us feel at home, especially when the winter season started in December and the climate would be completely changed and become cold and freezing. We preferred most of the time to remain in our rooms as it was heated with central heating system. Some of us were homesick and used to complain a lot about the difficulties of life in that small town, about the local food, and the monotony of that place. But for me since I came straight from a boarding school at Ambo I was enjoying my life at the language center.

After one year of intensive study we took our final exams and were given a pass mark and recommendation to continue our university education in Bruno, Veterinary Faculty. Me and my friend Ketema Mussa who has changed his name now to Maxi Musa were always together starting from our Ambo Agriculture School time. We were like brothers and shared everything at the language school. In July 1962 we traveled together to Bruno to start our six years of life at the university. The registrar of the university received us and we were given a dorm at the Babachkova students' hostel. This was the biggest university hostel with a total accommodation for five thousand university students. My friend and I were given a decent room on the first floor. The cafeteria and dining hall were also in the same building. We started our long journey to finish veterinary school in Bruno. Bruno was the second largest city in the republic at that time with over three hundred thousand inhabitants. Our faculty was within walking distance from our hostel. All the professors and lecturers of the university were very fond of the foreign students at that time, so everybody tried to assist us. The laboratories and the libraries were all opened to us for use without limitation.

During the first year we really had to struggle to follow lectures in the class in Czech language. Sometimes I really wonder what one can achieve when put under pressure. We used to study twice as more than the local students but we only used to get just a pass mark as we couldn't grasp so fast the way the Czechs did. Very soon we were preparing for exams for anatomy and physiology. A student who could not pass these two exams would be dropped after two rounds of examinations. So these two subjects were the determining factors to continue our studies. As we were struggling in the second year my close friend Maxi got involved in a social problem and had to face the community court. The court decided to deport my close friend from Czechoslovakia. We raised some funds and accompanied him to the railway station so that he could enter Austria, which was a non-communist country. My friend Maxi went to the American Embassy in Vienna and reported that the communist authorities had forced him to denounce imperialism and the Americans. He was also frequently forced to come out for a street demonstration in support of Fidel Castor and the Cuban Revolution. This was a big lie, which was regularly used by foreign students who ran away from the communist countries for various reasons to

western countries at that time. You may recall that the world was divided into two camps: the communist and the capitalist blocks.

Because he denounced the communist party of Czechoslovakia on radio on the Voice of America program, Maxi Musa was given a full scholarship in West Germany and was enrolled in a language school near the city Kolin in the western part of Germany.

Maxi Musa was repeatedly interviewed on Voice of America and this angered the Czech authorities. They invited some of us to the District Communist Party Office and we were given a strict warning not to behave like capitalist agents. They also told us the truth why Maxi was expelled from the country. He was found guilty in the court on some social misbehaviors. They said they could have deported him back to Ethiopia. It was only on humanitarian grounds that he was left alone to leave the country without serving jail sentences. We were all scared of this warning and started to concentrate more on our studies. I passed my second year with good grades and was enrolled into the third year.

That year I decided with a few of my friends to go to West Germany for the summer vacation and buy a car and continue to the city of Kaolin and to the village of Wickrat to visit our friend Maxi who had been deported a year earlier. Three of my friends including Woldu, Shiferaw, and Hassan Ali immediately accepted this proposal by me. We left in early July 1964 for Nurneberg by train. My plan was to buy a secondhand car at Nurenberg. To make a long story short, after a lot of hustle, luckily we bought a Renault 1962 model which had only done twenty eight thousand kilometers. I paid two thousand eight hundred Deutschmarks for that car at that time. It was a lot of money but we were conned by a shrewd Yugoslav salesman who confused and cheated us very smartly and finally sold us his own car. I had just received my driving license a month earlier but I did not have enough experience in driving a car on the autobahn, the German freeway. The only other person who could drive with little experience was Mr. Hassan Ali from British Guiana. We bought a tourist map of Germany and one of us read the map to look for the directions of our route. Hassan and I would drive alternately. Since I had very little driving experience I was not able to control the car properly. As soon as I would engage into the third gear I

would lose control and I would have to return back to the first and second gears. So most of my driving was in the second gear. Gradually I managed to drive in the thirrd gear and finally I even started to drive in the fourth gear. Somehow with the help of God we got more courage and confidence. We crossed the whole of Germany through Frankfurt, Munich, Bonn, Düsseldorf and finally Kolin and then to Wickrat. Our main intention was to surprise our friend Maxi. We followed the map and managed to enter into the compound of the hostel where Maxi was living. We took permission from the porter and went straight into his bedroom. He was not there and we were told that he was in the kitchen. We went there and found him cooking spaghetti. Our friend was so surprised that he could not believe his eyes. It was too good to be true for all of us to be together at last. After relaxing for two days in Wickrat we were ready to leave. But our friend Maxi decided to join us back on this trip to Czechoslovakia.

We told him that since he was deported it was risky to take him back. He insisted that he would return if they would not allow him. So he came with us back to Czechoslovakia. We had a lot of fun on our way back; I must admit that we took a big risk to cross Germany with our little knowledge of driving. At that time, because of our young age and thinking we never bothered about our safety. All that we were concerned with was about our achievement. We arrived safely at the border of Czechoslovakia. At that time, all that they needed at the immigration post was to see our university identity card and passports. So nobody asked Maxi about his deportation. He remained with us till September 1964 and when school started he returned back to Germany. Unfortunately Maxi was no more interested in studying hard at the German University so he changed his line of career several times and school and finally got a job and started a family. He is still living in Germany. He came to visit Ethiopia several times. In June 2009 he came back to Ethiopia again. We traveled together to our old Alma Mater and spent some good quality time together. Maxi has a son who is living in Florida, USA, and has become a famous musician with considerable fame and popularity. Since childhood Maxo had wanted to become an actor and a singer. Unfortunately those dreams did not materialize for him. But his son took over his father’s dream and became a very famous singer. So is life. What we cannot achieve is achieved by our children. I am very lucky to have a friend in Maxi for the last sixty years

which means since we joined Grade one at the Haile Selassie First Day School in 1950.

Back in Bruno I continued to study very hard in the third and fourth years. I passed all the exams properly and also mastered the language. I also made quite a lot of friends. I used to visit the parents of my schoolmates very often in my Renault car. I was one of the very few students who owned a car at that time. I earned a lot of respect from my fellow students. It was next to impossible to own a car if you were not a member of the communist party and did not hold a very high position in the government. In the communist system one had to pay the price for a new car to the government company and then wait for five to six years before they would tell you about your chances of getting a new car. The communist system was very harsh on the citizens. In Czechoslovakia out of a population of thirteen million only around five hundred thousand people were members of the communist party. All privileges were open for party members. The rest just followed passively what they were told to do. Almost everybody seemed to have lost hope on everything. After graduation everybody were given a position in the system with a very low salary. There was no incentive or any type of encouragement unless one joined the communist party. Party members were also recruited with a very intensive screening system. One had to demonstrate loyalty and commitment to the party starting from their youth time at school. We were not allowed to join the party at any time whenever we wished.

Traveling to foreign countries was severely restricted. There was a lot of spying and security follow-ups on everybody. So in that society nobody trusted anybody. The only alternative for the majority of the people was to drink and forget their problems. Bars and eating places were full of people and mostly filled with drunkards. Beer in Czechoslovakia is the most favorable drink. Everybody enjoyed drinking beer, which was reasonably cheap at that time. The national food is called Kinedliky with vegetables and pork. The political oppression by the Soviets was very prominent at that time. During our student days the Soviets were fully controlling the communist block.

During that time many students were sent from Ethiopia to the Eastern Bloc countries. There was an Ethiopian student association established in all the European countries. This association was also a member of the European Student Association. Once in a year they would meet for a general European Student's Association Conference. I had the opportunity to participate in 1965 at the association conference in Bologna, Italy, and in 1966 in Austria, Vienna. Those were the times when the Ethiopian student's movement got involved in Ethiopian politics. In particular, the Meason party in Europe and the EPRP party in the United States were born at that time. They would actively criticize the feudal government system of Haile Selassie.

At one time the students in Eastern Europe briefed Lijj Michael Emeru who was the Ethiopian Ambassador in Moscow that they are unable to pursue their studies in the socialist blocks because of the high expense of living. They kept on complaining that they were unable to continue their studies. The ambassador visited Ethiopian students studying in socialist countries and confirmed the economic difficulties and managed to convince the Ethiopian government to increase the stipend for students in the socialist block so that they could receive an additional stipend of thirty-five dollars per month. In a very short time students in the socialist block started to get additional stipend and became very happy and comfortable. At that time, the black market exchange rate was very high for the U.S. dollar, so de facto we became very rich as students.

My stay in Czechoslovakia as a foreign student was quite comfortable as I did not have any financial constraints. I passed my exams after six years in the Bruno University and started to prepare for my dissertation on food hygiene and safety in the Department of Food Hygiene and Preventive Medicine.

Prof. Matiash was my advisor who was a world-renowned scientist and advisor to WHO on food safety. I successfully defended my thesis and was ready for my graduation with a degree in Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM). My graduation was on March 21, 1968. That day I received my degree from the Rector of the Agricultural University. It was a special day for me since I had achieved the most important goal of my life. I was

twenty-five years old then. I started to dream about going back to my beloved country. I was offered six months' postgraduation practice at various veterinary laboratories in the country before I returned to Ethiopia. I decided to use this opportunity to gain more experience, so I started to make a tour around the country and get some practical experience. Later I was advised by the Ethiopian Embassy in Moscow that my return ticket had been sent from Ethiopia and I should be ready to fly back to Ethiopia. I was waiting with much pleasure for this important moment, so I packed and left Czechoslovakia.



Dr. Solomon Haile Mariam on Graduation Day. March 1968, Burno. Czechoslovakia.

I must say I owe the Czech people and government quite a lot for they have given me free education and most of all a profession of which I am very proud. The University of Bruno is a worldwide recognized teaching center for the veterinary profession. That university has educated and trained many African professionals in the past years. I wish to thank them a lot for everything that they have done for us. At that time, no Ethiopian was interested to remain in Europe or anywhere else in the world. We were so proud of our country and our government. Emperor Haile Selassie was very popular all over the world. As soon as we would tell anyone that we were from Ethiopia everybody would express interest in that country because of several reasons. The most important reasons were that Ethiopia was the only independent African country for thousands of years. Haile Selassie was recognized as a very powerful Emperor and statesman who assisted many other African countries to gain their independence. Abebe Bikila and

Mammo Wolde won the marathon three times between 1960 and 1968. All this had a positive image on the country. Moreover those were the years when Ethiopia was following a very healthy economic pathway with many commercial farms cropping up and big industries like the sugar factories coming up.

12 The Great Memories I had of Czechoslovakia

I had many interesting memories of my time in Czechoslovakia. During my fifth year at the university, I had a roommate from Greece called Arkis Viadis Saras. He was a member of the Greek communist party and considered himself as a very important man. He started to be jealous of me as I owned a car as a student and had also some extra money from my government as compared to the Greek refugee students. He frequently tried to make me feel inferior by bringing up color issues and poverty problems in Africa. He also started to complain whenever I listened to my country's music. He would say that he was fed up with the sound of the primitive Ethiopian songs. I tried to respect his interest and stopped listening to Ethiopian music in his presence. Then he started to complain that I used to stay up very late studying and he could not sleep. He continuously insisted that I should turn off the light after 11:00 p.m. I tried to explain to him that I needed to study but he would not listen. Sometimes he would come drunk and make a lot of noise and expressed his anger at me. I really tried to be patient and tolerant, as I did not want to spoil my good record at school.

My intention was to finish my education from the university and leave the country in peace but this was not possible. His bad behavior and arrogance forced me to think about the worst method of solving the problem. I tried to work out how to manage this arrogant Greek and finally I came to the conclusion that the only way was to fight and either win and get liberated from this situation or accept and suffer quietly. I had to choose the right time to begin the fight and make sure that I should win. I also planned not to use any harmful weapon like knives for fighting except my fist because I did not want to hurt him seriously.

My Ethiopian blood forced me to fight and win against this arrogant Greek who behaved like a colonial era master. The memories of my grandfathers, Basha Amete and Negadras, came to refresh my stamina and fight for freedom. My father Mengistu traveled on foot from Addis Ababa to Maitchew (1000 Km)with his father Basha Amete and his brother young Lemma at the tender age of nineteen to fight against the Italian invaders and

suffered serious wounds for a very long time. My paternal grandfather fought the Italians and died on the warfront, so I had to defend my Ethiopian pride and integrity against this bad Greek refugee who was trying to look down at Africans. I decided that the fight should begin after midnight when everybody was asleep. I locked our bedroom from inside so that nobody could come to help. Once everything was ready I got up and pinned him in a lying position under his bedsheet. I bounced on him and in an angry voice told him that I was going to kill him and drink his blood that night and then without waiting for any reply I started to beat him with heavy blows on his face. He tried to get up but in vain. When he was sure that my intention was to beat him until he lost consciousness he started to apologize and ask for forgiveness and kept shouting and crying for help. Our neighbors who heard his cries kept on banging at the door. I told them to go away. He kept on pleading for help, saying that I was killing him. When I was satisfied with the beating and we were both exhausted I left him and opened the door. About six of our friends came in and could not believe what I had done to the Greek guy. They quickly took him to their room. Some of them remained behind and asked me what had gone wrong. I explained to them all the reasons why I had decided to kill him. I told them that my intention was to kill this bad Greek refugee.

Some of my African friends told me that I should have finished him if he was so anti-African and that I should have even called for their assistance to beat him together. They even promised that they would be on my side if the other Greek students ganged up to help him. The others tried to cool me down. I told them that I had demonstrated seriously how I could not accept nonsense of this sort. I was assured by some of my close friends that they would advise him not to come back to my room again. That was the end of the story regarding Arkis Saras Viads. He left that hostel for good and after that he avoided seeing me until I left Czechoslovakia. His fellow communist members also advised him that he should not be involved in this sort of politics of discrimination and white arrogance and supremacy.

My childhood experience at Negadras's residence was to remain patient and tolerant and avoid a direct clash with anybody. But also the rule in Kabana among children was that if you are cornered and if you have no choice you must fight with all your might to win. That was exactly what I did at that

time. I never fought again in my life physically. I tried to avoid a direct clash and also tried to stretch my level of patience. Thank God I had that gift.

13 The Bride who disappeared on her wedding Day

Another interesting memory of Czechoslovakia was in 1965 when my late friend Negussie Roba requested me to be his best man as he was going to get married. I accepted with great honor this request and started to prepare myself for the wedding day. His fiancée, Mimi, was a short, fat, but beautiful young lady. He had been courting her for over two years and her family had accepted the proposal; the wedding date was fixed for July 1965.

We made a reservation at the Grand Hotel in Prague and over hundred people were invited for the wedding. So at about 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon we went to the bride's home to bring her for the wedding ceremony, which was supposed to take place in a certain church in Prague. I was the best man and the driver. Three more people were with me. We went to her parents' house and knocked on the door. Nobody opened the door; we kept on knocking the door for over twenty minutes. An elderly woman came out with an angry face and shouted at us as to why were we knocking at the door. We told her that we were looking for Mimi. She replied that Mimi did not live there anymore and if we were to knock again she would call the police. We were confused and called the bridegroom to report the problem. Negussie could not believe us and insisted on knocking on the door again. We told him that if we knocked again the old lady would call the police. Negussie could not believe what we told him so he instructed us to wait for him there. He came after an hour and also tried, but nobody opened the door. We finally got the message that Mimi had changed her mind and was hiding in another place. We went back to the hotel and immediately started to discuss this crisis. We agreed to cancel the wedding party on that day. We hung a notice on the hotel's notice board that the wedding had been postponed indefinitely. People came with gifts and were confused when they saw the notice board that the wedding was canceled. We had not found a convincing reason to explain and apologize on his behalf that the bride did not want to marry our friend Negussie. We agreed to report to everyone that she had fallen sick at the last minute.

Our friend Negussie was determined to get married to a Czech woman. He finally got a beautiful fiancée called Yana who was an Olympic champion in ballet dance. She went to the same sports institute with him and was a very popular young lady. Somehow Negussie convinced her, so the wedding was fixed for the following year in July 1967. I was again nominated to be the best man. This time everything went on very well and the wedding took place successfully in one of the hotels. They both graduated in a short time from the university with a master's degree in physical education and returned to Ethiopia at the end of 1967. Negussie Roba was immediately appointed as the Ethiopian National Coach for Athletics. Under his supervision and training Mamo Wolde won a gold medal in marathon in Tokyo in 1968. Negussie and Yana were later blessed with two beautiful daughters. Unfortunately Negussie did not treat Yana the way she deserved to be treated. She got a position as a sports teacher at an American school in a very short time. Later they separated and Yana left the country with their two children and remarried in Germany. Negussie also got married to a very young Ethiopian lady and was blessed again with two children. Unfortunately he died about eight years ago of natural cause. Negussie was a champion in hundred meters and represented Ethiopia by participating in the 1956 Olympics for the first time. He also trained many athletes like Merutse Yifter and the famous marathoner Haile Gebre Selassie. He contributed a lot to the development and success of Ethiopian athletic sports.

May God rest his soul in peace. He will remain in our memories forever.

14 Promotion with the support of UN SG

One of the few lifetime friends I had was Hassan Ali from British Guiana. We finished the language course in Mariánské Lázně together and went to Bruno University to study veterinary medicine. We were classmates for two years in Bruno; he met our close friend Mary Woldeselassie at the language school. They started to have a very serious relationship. Mary went on to Prague to pursue physical education and Hassan stayed back in Bruno with me studying veterinary medicine. At the end of the second year Hassan decided to quit veterinary medicine and moved to the Prague University to study Economy. His main reason was to be close to Mary and also marry her officially and start a family. We gave him all the support. Hassan and Mary went to London where his mum and other sisters and cousins were living and they got married there sometime in 1965. Very soon they had a beautiful baby girl who was named Genet. Hassan finished his university in 1968 and decided to return to Ethiopia while Mary remained behind to finish her university education.

I was preparing to return to Ethiopia in 1968 September. He called me one day and said that he would be coming to Ethiopia with me. I asked him how could he do that. Ethiopia was not his country and moreover he did not know anybody there. He said as long as we are there for him he would try his luck. So Hassan packed and came to Ethiopia a few weeks after I returned to Ethiopia. We received him in Addis. Hassan, being a very social man and a good communicator, managed to get a job in two weeks' time in Addis Ababa. He got a job as an English teacher at Menelik Secondary School. Hassan managed to rent a house and furnished it in a very short time and started to live a normal life in Addis. After two years, Mary came and joined him in a fully furnished rented house. Hassan worked his way upward, and in six years' time became the deputy director of Menelik Sercondary School. He was very popular among the students and the teachers. In 1977, he got an international job with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and became the senior purchasing officer for ECA. When the UN Secretary General Havez Perez D. Kuia came to visit Addis Ababa in 1983, Hassan was appointed as the personal assistant to the

secretary general during his short stay in Ethiopia. The UN secretary general was very happy with the way Hassan had handled his assignment, and before he left he told him that if there was anything he could do for him, he should come at any time to his office in New York. After about three months Hassan went to New York and visited the secretary general and requested him for a transfer to UNIDO in Vienna. His request was immediately implemented and Hassan moved to Austria, Vienna, that year as a senior UN officer. In a very short time, Hassan was promoted to the position of a director at the UN-UNIDO office, and he was transferred to Ethiopia as the UN country representative in Ethiopia with the position of UN D2 before his retirement in 2001. Hassan decided to retire in July 2003. He is now living in the Dominican Republic. His wife, Mary Woldeselassie, joined the Ambo Agricultural School in 1957 but could not continue until the end. That was the time when I first came to know Mary. Later on, I met her in Czechoslovakia in 1962 when she came to study sports. I was a very close advisor to Mary and Hassan. We remained family friends for a long time. On several occasions, I visited them in their beautiful house in Vienna. They were blessed with three children. Our dear friend Mary died in 2008 of pancreatic cancer and was buried in Vienna. May God rest her soul in peace. We loved her so much.

What I had learnt about my good friend Hassan is that he has a special ability to make friends. He was very simple and communicated easily with everybody. He never demonstrated any feeling of being a foreigner and managed to keep his integrity as a gentleman where ever he worked. His good character helped him to go up the ladder in a very short time.

15 The Man I Trusted

While studying in Bruno, I had a visitor who came to my hostel with his small child. He told me that he wanted to know more about the Ethiopian history and language. So using this topic as an entry point he came several times to see me with his three-year-old boy. One day, the man told me that his child was sick and he had an appointment with a doctor. He asked me if I could give him my car for an hour so that he could see the doctor which was a little bit out of town. I did not want to refuse as he was with his kid and it was raining outside. The man took my car and disappeared for a week. I reported to the police and the police started looking for my car for almost another two weeks. Finally I was told that they had traced my car about fifty kilometers from Bruno. But most of the spare parts and engine had beenre removed and the car had also been damaged in an accident. I took a taxi and saw that my car was in a terrible shape. I had to tow the car with the assistance of the police to a garage for major repairs. The man had several criminal records and he was arrested and would be appearing in court in the coming few weeks.

The garage people gave me a list of spare parts to be imported from outside the country. So I left for Vienna which was 125 kilometers from Bruno and bought all the spare parts as listed but the Renault garage and the repairs cost me at that time more than one thousand dollars. I was called to the courthouse to pursue the case and I was advised that since the man had done a similar thing to five more people in the past, there was no way that he could pay me for the damages to my car. He would serve prison for many years and whatever he earned would be paid back to the various people as compensation. When I asked them how long would it take him to pay me back, they told me in fifteen years. So I lost hope and forgot the whole thing. The big lesson I learnt from this was not to trust anybody when it came to borrowing money and vehicles, moreover not to trust a man who came with children and tried to befriend you.

16 My First Renault Car

I have mentioned earlier that I bought a Renault 8 Major manufactured in 1962 from Nurenberg, Germany, in July 1964 and used this car to travel all over Germany and Austria. I also used this car to travel all over Czechoslovakia. After using the car for four years I decided to sell the car before I left the country. The car was brought to Czechoslovakia without paying duty. The law of the communist block at that time was to take back the car out of the country if duty was not paid. It was not possible to sell the car in the country. A few days before I left the country I went to the custom office to get more information about what I should do with my car in case I left the country. So I made an appointment with the director of customs in the Moravia region. He received me with a lot of politeness and asked me about my problem. I told him that I needed to sell my car as I would be leaving the country in a very short time. The director was very interested in my problem, especially when he learned that I would be leaving the country very soon. He told me with confidence that he would solve the problem if I followed his advice. As I had no choice I said I would certainly follow his advice. Corruption and bribery were a very common routine in the socialist system so I was prepared to follow his instructions. The director said that he was interested in buying my car but I should follow exactly what he told me to do. He said that I should immediately fill a form and request the custom office to exchange my car with a motor bicycle without claiming the balance of the difference in the price of my vehicle. I was very surprised and asked him how I could exchange a car for a motor bicycle.

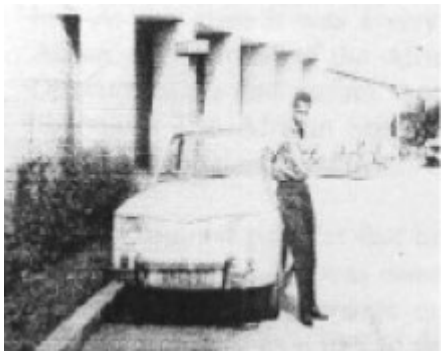


Photo of Dr.Solomon with his first Car. Renault, model. major 8. 1966,

Burno.Czechoslovakia.

He said that he would pay me the price I wanted for the car and also once I transferred the motor bicycle in my name he would take the motor bicycle for his son. I contemplated on the offer and was convinced that I would not lose anything if I exchanged the car for the motor bicycle. I confirmed that I would accept the offer. He paid me twenty-eight thousand korunas for the deal and he took the car and bicycle for himself. I became a very rich man overnight. That amount of money could buy me a two-bedroom apartment at that time. Unfortunately I could not convert that currency into U.S. dollars because the black market value of Czech koruna was very low.

I was advised to take my money to East Berlin and exchange it, but I also found out that the value would be very low. The only alternative remaining was to buy a few important things which I would need for my future professional life. So I decided to buy a complete veterinary surgical kit for my future practice, one extraordinary camera for professional use, manufactured in East Germany of the famous Exacta brand, which I am still using after forty years, and a wristwatch of top quality during that time. I used that watch for about ten years until it could not be repaired for lack of spare parts. I also bought a pistol with hundred bullets. I kept the pistol with me for about ten years until it was confiscated by kebelles in 1976. I also bought a movie camera manufactured in Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately this camera could not be used properly as the technology was still very crude at that time and there was a problem in developing the film. With the remaining money I bought nice gifts for all members of the family.

17 Mrs. Leukova

During my stay in Czechoslovakia there were a lot of interesting experiences during student life. The following is of interest to share.

I was staying at the biggest hostel in Bruno where more than five thousand students were living. I lived in that hostel for almost six years and I was very much respected by everybody as I followed the hostel regulations very seriously. The manager of that hostel was Mrs. Leukova. She was in her mid-fifties at that time. She was a very serious member of the communist party and enjoyed a lot of authority at that time. Because of our good manners and behavior she respected me very much and used to give me a special room. When I was in my final year she even allocated a single room to me. As I was enjoying this extra privilege from the boss life was quiet okay for me during my final year. Mrs. Leukova was also known to flirt with some foreign students who used to give her dollars. A Nigerian friend called Ike Asakwe was dating her officially and everybody knew about their relationship. Later another Iraqi, son of a tycoon, started to have a relationship with her and as a result our friend Ike was dumped. This angered him so much that he started to plot against Mrs. Leukova. One day during a meeting of the African Students' Association he complained about Mrs. Leukova that she was a racist and she had been spreading rumors that African students were spreading some mysterious disease in this country. So he convinced all the students to pass a petition to the provincial communist party against her. All the students agreed to sign on the petition which was drafted by Ike Asakwe. I was requested to sign on that letter but after resisting for some time I was literally forced by the African Students' Association to sign that letter. It was indeed important to maintain good relations with other African international students so I decided to sign for the sake of African solidarity. But deep in my heart I regretted signing because I was accusing a person who was so good for me.

At that time, it was a very popular fashion to cooperate on any matter concerning Africa. Since most of the African countries were fighting for independence the words discrimination, racism, and colonialism were used

to unite Africans and also use these expressions for the liberation of Africa in any argument for justice and struggle against colonialism. The African students easily managed to bring the case to the communist authorities against Comrade Leukova.

The communist party at that time tried to demonstrate its commitment in assisting Africa to be liberated from colonialization. The communist party took this accusation very seriously and wanted to punish Mrs. Leukova for her indecent behavior and also spoiling the communist block politics of solidarity with African countries. She was demoted and even fired from her present position as the directress of the Babachkova Student Dorm. Our Nigerian friend Ike Asakwe did this to avenge on her for betraying him but unfortunately he used the African students' solidarity as a tool to destroy his ex-girlfriend. Since I knew the secret I was quite upset with the decision taken against Mrs. Leukova. The following day she came to see me and she cried like a child as to how we Africans had plotted to destroy her career. I felt so ashamed and guilty about this case. I consider it as a black spot in my life where I failed to defend justice in the right way.

I still have no answer for such a situation in life. The wisdom of Negadras did not even help me in this particular case. Many unnecessary sacrifices are made in the name of democracy and justice for the majority in life. May God help us find the right road map for decisions in such situations.

18 The Journey Back Home to Pursue My Dreams

The spirit of Negadras had been haunting me to return to my beloved country and serve its people and the nation. I was now equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge as a veterinary doctor. I felt proud for having achieved this level of education. I arrived at the New Bole International Airport on July 21, 1968. I was met at the airport by all members of my beloved family. It was a special day with a special feeling to be back home after seven years of absence. I left the country from the old airport, which was very small, and arrived back at the New Addis Ababa Bole International Airport. This in itself was a very big change for me. I observed that all members of my family had grown older and changed physically, but I also met new members of my family, who were born after I left. I also missed the most important people in my life who had died while I was in Czechoslovakia. In particular, the deaths of Negadras and my real father, Mengistu Amete, were very hurting. I wished I could meet them on my return, but that is the reality of life and life should move on. After being hosted by various members of my family for several weeks life returned to normal. One thing which was difficult to accept was when people started addressing me as Dr. Solomon. This title by itself means a lot in Ethiopia. There were very few people who finished high school at that time in the country.

To have a university graduate in a family was a matter of big pride at that time. My mother was especially very proud to call me by my new title and this made me very uncomfortable. I pleaded to her on several occasions that she should call me by my first name, but she refused to do so as she insisted that I have earned it and I should be addressed by that title in the family. Two weeks after arriving in Addis, I went to visit my potential employer, the Ministry of Agriculture, Veterinary Department. Our senior colleague, Dr. Assefa Wolde Giorgis, was the general director of the Ethiopian veterinary services. At that time, the veterinary department was the strongest technical department with over two thousand five hundred employees. There were only ten Ethiopian veterinarians as that time in the country. There were also about twenty foreign veterinarians. The rest were

animal health assistants, field and laboratory technicians and vaccinators. These were the veterinary personnel who were running the Ethiopian veterinary services. Dr. Assefa received me in his big office with a very broad smile and cordial manner. He welcomed me to the Ethiopian Veterinary Fraternity and gave a very interesting and useful orientation. Once he finished his briefing he gave me some documents to go through. One of the documents had the organizational structure of the Ministry and the Veterinary Department. There was a list of vacancies, which were needed to be filled immediately. He advised me to go through the list of vacant positions and get back with my documents and application if I was interested to be employed by the government. I thanked him for his kindness and warm welcome and promised to return after a week.

I started to look around for other opportunities; there were so many places which were looking for veterinarians at that time. My other option was to join the Agricultural College at Alemaya. They were also looking desperately for a young veterinarian. I approached the Dean of the Agricultural College. Dr. Makonen Kibret was the Dean at that time. He used to be the Director of the Ambo Agricultural School also when I left for Czechoslovakia. Dr. Mekonnen did not encourage me to join the Alemaya College because he thought that my education in the socialist system might not be at the same level as graduates from the United States. So I did not push further. I took my time to think about the various opportunities and I finally decided to join the Ministry of Agriculture, which was the biggest employer of all professionals in the field of agriculture. I also had an interest to serve in the rural areas as I had very little experience about the life of the ordinary Ethiopian.

At that time, the Ethiopian government used to give special care for professionals who were coming from abroad. I was given Br2000 loan to buy household items. I was also taken for a three-week orientation tour to visit the Ethiopian countryside. I visited the north-eastern, southern, western, and central parts of the country including Wollo, Tigray, Eriteriea, Gondar Gojjam, Shewa, Harar Sidamo, and Djimma. Everywhere I went I was met with the head of the animal health services in the respective provinces. The orientation gave me much opportunity to know about my new colleagues and also to understand the framework of the organizational

structure I was going to work within. Most of all, I was very much impressed with the diversity of the Ethiopian climate, landscape, culture, and people. This visit opened my eyes regarding what environment I was going to work in at that time. Everybody I met was so happy with what they were doing. They were also very eager to show me what they were doing and were also happy to extend a piece of advice as to how I should carry on with my work in future. I saw a lot of patriotic feeling and dedication to veterinary work. Nobody complained about personal problems and everybody was busy building up their careers. That was a wonderful impression at that time and this helped me to wind up my tour and go back quickly to my place of assignment.

Soon after my return to Addis I wrote my application and submitted it to the administration office of the Ministry. The office processed my application and I became the official employee of the Ministry of Agriculture on September 1, 1968. My first choice was to apply for a vacant position in the province of Wollo as a meat inspector and laboratory head. There was a big regional veterinary laboratory, which was staffed by veterinarians from communist China. There was a team of six veterinarians in the laboratory. There was also an export abattoir, which was slaughtering an average of 150 cattle per day. My responsibility was to be in charge of the overall hygiene and inspection of the slaughterhouse and also work as a counterpart of the Chinese veterinary doctors. My application was immediately accepted. I was registered as the eleventh Ethiopian veterinarian in the Ministry of Agriculture. I was given a salary of Br835 as a beginner, which was equivalent to four hundred dollars. I was given a furnished two-bedroom house in the compound of the veterinary laboratory. I was also given a service car, short chaise model Land Rover. I was introduced to the HE, the vice minister in charge of livestock development at that time. He was Dr. Haile Selassei Belay who was a very senior professional. He encouraged me to go to Wollo immediately and replace the British veterinarian who was working at the Export Slaughter House in Kombolcha. The vice minister told me that there were five big export slaughterhouses in the country at that time. They were Chandris, Dire-Dawa, Melgue Wondo, Shashemene, Sopral, Gondar, Sopral Eritera, and Sopral Kombolcha.

Ethiopia was exporting processed meat to the European market at that time. It was one of the few African countries that meets the hygiene standard of the European market. Every year, a team of European veterinarians would come to inspect the slaughterhouse premises and they provided a certificate of approval. The vice minister stressed to me that our intention was to maintain the high standard of inspection in the country, and that I was one of the first Ethiopian veterinarians who was replacing a British veterinarian in the Kombolcha slaughterhouse. He also told me that I should work very hard to maintain the good name of the country. I took this message of the vice minister of agriculture very seriously and started to think again about the wisdom of Negadras, who always reminded us that we should go for our higher education and come back and serve our beloved country. For me this was a mission where by my dreams had come true, and I left Addis Abba with a lot of eagerness and moral to fulfill the dreams of my first mission as a government official. Especially, serve my country by replacing a foreign veterinary doctor for the first time had a big message for me. Kombolcha is a small town which was 325 kilometers from Addis Ababa in the northeastern part of the country. It was only twenty-five kilometers away from Dessie, the capital of Wollow. At that time, the governor of Wollow Province was the crown prince of Ethiopia, A. H. Asfaw Wesen.

The province remained poor under that feudal administration, and the people were leading a miserable life from their subsistent farming and frequent droughts. 99 percent of the population was peasant farmers growing once-in-a-year crops like maize, wheat, teff, and other grains. Rain was unreliable. Some years the farmers could not harvest anything. In this scenario, most of the young people migrated to other parts of Ethiopia to work as laborers in farms or at construction sites. The province of Wollo is always famous for its beautiful people, love songs, and the harmonious life between the muslim community and the Christians. The climate in Kombolcha was very nice and comfortable, as compared to Dessie, which was most of the time very cold, rainy, and foggy.

I arrived in the first week of September 1968 to occupy my new position in the laboratory and export slaughterhouse. I was met by the administrator of the laboratory and the Chinese veterinary team leader in the compound. They gave me a warm welcome and took me on a tour of the facilities. I

was very impressed for having such an operational disease investigation laboratory in this remote province of Ethiopia. I was also taken by the driver to the export slaughterhouse. I was met in a ceremonial manner by the manager of the slaughterhouse. I was warmly welcomed by the slaughterhouse workers. I was impressed with the standard of the slaughterhouse; it was highly mechanized and well equipped. I thanked God for being posted in such a place. That day I also received the key to my new residence. It had been kept ready for a foreign veterinarian with all the necessary facilities in place. I did not take anything with me. The housemaid allocated for the premises prepared the beds and cleaned the room, and instantly I found myself in a comfortable place to live. That was a really good feeling.

My daily work routine started at 6:00 a.m. I would drive to the slaughterhouse and pursue the inspection of the 150 cows which were slaughtered on a daily basis. I had six qualified animal health assistants, who were graduates from the Animal Health School in Debre Zeit. They were also given an additional course in meat inspection in Kenya at Kabete, Haiti Meat Inspection International School. The meat inspectors were so experienced that they did most of the work for me. My job was to supervise my assistants and sign the certificate each day for the slaughtered animals. The slaughtering operation ended at around 11:00 a.m. every day. By then, the whole slaughterhouse would be washed, disinfected, and ready for the following day. I had to make sure that this was done regularly. Then from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. I wrote my daily report. I was very surprised at the result of our inspection at that time. I looked into the compiled slaughterhouse report and confirmed that up to 33 percent of the animals slaughtered were infested with Taenia saginata (human tapeworm) cysts. These cysts would normally affect the tongue muscles, the heart muscles and the bicep muscle on the front leg of the cattle. This high rate of infection was observed to be a result of not using properly prepared pit latrines (toilets). The infection would go on in a cycle between humans and animals. The disease did not show any symptoms in the animal. It could only be diagnosed after slaughtering.

The Ethiopian culture of eating raw meat exposed people to widespread infection of the tapeworm parasite. During slaughterhouse inspection we

would throw away or condemn only those generalized cases when the cysts were found all over the carcass. If it was a matter of a few cysts we retained the carcass in a chilling room for forty-eight hours or more, and in most cases the tapeworm cyst would be very sensitive to low temperatures and would die. Carcasses found with several cysts were retained in the cold room under the inspection of the veterinarian. Other diseases which were prevalent in the slaughterhouse were parasites like hydatid cysts on the lung, bovine tuberculosis on the lung, and peritoneal cavity. All these diseases could affect human beings, so caution was taken to make sure that the part affected was thrown away. Our record from the slaughterhouse was systematically compiled and regularly sent to the National Veterinary Department.

After finishing my job at the slaughterhouse I would work in the afternoon at the regional veterinary laboratory. The Chinese veterinary doctors at that time brought in some new interesting skills and technologies. They used to organize a mobile veterinary clinic, which would visit all marketplaces in the region. The Chinese vets with Ethiopian counterparts used to camp one day before the market day and give orientation at the marketplace to the public and start treating animals on the spot. This method attracted quite a lot of people on market days. They also collected blood, feces, tissue, etc., samples for a laboratory disease investigation. Through this system, they managed to draw an epidemiological map for the spread of diseases in the Wollo province.

The Chinese also introduced the use of combining herbal medicines together with modern pharmaceuticals for treatment of sick animals. They planted various herbal plants in the compound. They carefully cultivated them, extracted the generic material, mixed it in the laboratory with appropriate mixing standards, and made the medicine ready for treatment. This new knowledge brought a lot of interest and excitement among the Ethiopians. The Chinese even went further and started to produce in the small laboratory autovaccines on eggs and managed to vaccinate poultry and other livestock with the locally manufactured vaccines. They also introduced acupuncture technology to treat animals in our clinic. The approach was more complex but was found to be very helpful, especially for horses and donkeys. Unfortunately, the Chinese veterinary team was

very critically accused by the promoters of western technologies and the defenders of veterinary ethics. The new skill brought by the Chinese was seriously condemned by the French and British veterinarians at that time. The production of poor quality vaccines in a small laboratory without any vaccine quality/control standard was considered as a crime of the highest nature, which broke all the rules of the veterinary standard established to safeguard the standard of veterinary vaccines.

This accusation came from the French veterinary team that was very much involved at that time in the development of the National Veterinary Institute in Debre Zeit. The NVI in Debre Zeit was producing more than twenty different types of animal vaccines in a very well-established premises. The Chinese were also criticized for providing animal health services in the marketplace. They were also accused of using substandard herbal medicines to undermine the veterinary profession. This accusation had a political motive and it was difficult for me to defend the Chinese veterinary doctors. Especially as I had graduated from communist block countries, I was looked on with a lot of suspicion at that time. A group of trained western intellectuals at that time recommended to the government that we had brought back to the country substandard professional degree which cannot be compared with the qualifications in the western world like UK, France, the United States, Germany, etc. The government was advised to employ all students coming from the Eastern Block as second class professionals with a lower salary scale. This led to a lot of moral dissatisfaction among most of us and we refused to accept this decision. We wrote a letter of complaint to the ministers of education and agriculture. The ministers after studying this situation and taking into consideration its political implication appointed a special committee to investigate all matters concerning the recognition of higher degrees in the Ethiopian education system.

After a lot of discussion the government officially announced that since Ethiopia needed trained manpower at all levels they would not accept different recognition methods in the country. After winning the war on the recognition of our qualifications we started to concentrate on our duty. This was my first `experience in the conspiracy against African intellectuals perpetuated by foreign advisors. I also started to experience the

international politics on animal health. This aspect will be mentioned very often in my future career.

The Kombolcha experience opened my eyes as a fresh professional who had just started his long journey of professional services in his own country. My education in Czechoslovakia was focused on diseases that were important to the temperate climate, whose national economic priority was much more different than ours in Africa. In socialist Czechoslovakia, the most important animals of economic significance are pigs followed by dairy cattle and poultry for the supply of white meat. Czechoslovakia, like other European countries, by and large is free from most contagious diseases and is focused on a few irrelevant diseases. At that time, eradication of tuberculosis and brucellosis was occupying a very high place and priority in their disease prevention programs. In Africa, the animal population is affected by completely different types of problems. Rinderpest, which was a highly contagious disease of bovine, was the most important problem at that time, followed by contagious bovine pleuro pneumonia (CBPP), foot and mouth disease, anthrax, pasteurellosis, trypanosomiasis, Newcastle in poultry, and African swine fever. These diseases of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and poultry were eradicated from Europe a long time ago. At schools in Bruno, we spent more time on surgery of pets, on gynecological problems of highly productive dairy animals, on equine orthopedics and on pig and fish disease, etc. These diseases, which were important in European conditions, were not so important for tropical countries. I started to realize that we needed to study and learn more about the relevant diseases in the African situation.

I recognized our shortcomings in this area and started to read books on problems of tropical animal health diseases. I was also learning quite a lot from the animal health assistants who were trained in the Debre Zeit Veterinary School. Their two years' training course was focused on the much relevant diseases in Ethiopia and they were also highly experienced in livestock diseases in Ethiopia. Very soon I started to get very discouraged with my skills and knowledge in the Ethiopian animal health situation. I also started to be convinced that Kombolcha was not the right place for me to achieve what I wanted. The Chinese veterinary doctors could not communicate in English, as they did not speak English. They had learned a

few words in Amarigna and Oromigna to communicate with the peasant farmers. They could hardly write technical reports. I also started to become frustrated with the management of the slaughterhouse who did not want to follow hygiene standards the way I wanted it to be. So with the problems that I encountered I decided to leave Kombolcha in search of more professional challenges. In my personal life I was very satisfied and comfortable. I had twenty-four hours electricity, secretarial support, hot water and a very good maid who prepared good quality food. I was getting five kilograms of fillet meat from the slaughterhouse every week just like the manager as a small incentive for my position as chief inspector.

If somebody is not satisfied in his career and day-to-day achievement his personal comfort does not stop him from leaving that place. That is exactly what happened to me at that time. After working in Kombolcha for one year I went to see the same vice minister and explained to him about my problems in Kombolcha. Unfortunately he did not understand me properly. He thought that I was not serious, complaining about minor problems, and he tried to persuade me to remain there since they were satisfied with my job at Kombolcha. When he found out that I was serious about my request he was upset with me and told me that he would send me to places which would teach me a proper lesson for future life. He told me angrily that I had been provided with a comfortable house, a service car, and was given enough authority to discharge my duties. He also said that if I was not happy with this I would see in a short time where I would end up. This unfortunate discussion with my boss was like a threat to me, so I waited with much curiosity as to where they would post me next. I was very courageous at that time to go and work anywhere in Ethiopia as I strongly believed that I should contribute my service to all regions and people without ethnic bias.

When I came to see the director general of the veterinary service, he looked at me sadly and gave me the letter of appointment for the new post. I was posted to be the deputy coordinator for the pre-JP 15 anti-rinderpest campaign in the southern border district of Borana. This was a duty posting in a very harsh and dangerous area where the security was not good—nobody wanted to go and work in that area, as there was no accessible road and the workplace was in the bushes with the nomadic people of Borana.

We were going to live for ten months in a tent as there was no housing in that area.

Sometimes when I look back I really wonder how we pave our future destiny in life. I was literally running away from so much comfort in the Wollo province. But today I think that my decision was right. If one is not happy with what he is doing material gains and temporary comforts should not be so important.

19 My Life among the Boran Pastoralists

I was given a letter of transfer as a member of the Joint Project 15 team in the southern region of Ethiopia. I accepted the transfer with great pleasure and was immediately ready to go to my new post. My immediate boss was Dr. Almazneh Fetene, who was appointed as the coordinator for the JP 15 rinderpest eradication project in Ethiopia.

The strategy of the rinderpest vaccination was drafted by Dr. John Hobday from UK, who was the adviser to the director of veterinary services of Ethiopia. The strategy was approved by the Ethiopian government and endorsed by the general coordination office for the program in Nairobi. The international coordinator of the campaign was Dr. Macfarlen of UK and the deputy international coordinator was Dr. Dhab of Sudan; the headquarters of coordination was in Nairobi, Kenya, within the Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR). The JP 15 project was financed by the international donor community including the European Union, FAO, the USAID, the French government, the UK, Overseas Development Agency (ODA), the Canadian government, etc. The joint project was started in 1962 in West Africa and continued to operate through Central Africa and ended up in Eastern Africa. The project in Ethiopia started in 1969. The Ethiopian national vaccination program strategy was to start from the southern provinces bordering Kenya and Somalia and proceed to the central and western provinces and wind up in the northern provinces of Tigray and Eritrea.

The campaign was organized to be implemented in phases. Phase I was supposed to begin in 1970 from the southern border. The French veterinary mission was given the responsibility to implement the so-called pre-JP campaign in the southern province of Sidamo and Gamu Gofa. The objective of the pre-JP 15 campaign was to gain practical experience and improve the national capacity to enter into a more coordinated campaign in the following year. The best field technicians were chosen for this mission, and I was the team leader for the new team. I was assisted by a Danish veterinarian employed by the FAO whose name was Dr. Overvee. Dr.

Overvee was already in the field organizing vaccination campaigns in Borana when I joined him later.

At that time, the senior disease control strategist and the overall supervisor of the pre-JP 15 campaign was Dr. Robert Blanc from the French veterinary mission. Dr. Blanc was an elderly veterinarian who was close to his retirement at that time. He was also from the generation of French colonialist mentality who always strongly believed in absolute bureaucracy and French supremacy. I started to observe the behavior in him during the first week of our working relationship that he was the commander and that all the rest should follow his instructions. He never gave room for any type of dialogue with his colleagues. He also had a dominating character and strongly believed in field experience. He also strongly believed that anybody who had been trained outside the French education system and who did not speak French was not good for the job.

I was first introduced to him by Director General Dr. Assefa Wolde Giorgis as the new veterinarian who was going to work with him in the pre-JP 15 campaign project. Dr. Blanc invited me into his office and bluntly told me that we were going to start our trip the following morning at 3:00 a.m. He instructed me in his rough French English that we must cover eight hundred kilometers the same day no matter how long it would take. He also told me that I would be given a very old Land Rover whose starter was not working, so I had to be prepared to drive that car for eight hundred kilometers without a break and most of all without the engine switching off while I was driving. Since the car had no starter I would have a problem in restarting again once the engine goes off. He lectured me for an hour about how tough the veterinary job was and that I would have been more comfortable if I had not have taken this responsibility. He kept on frightening me about the various risks attached to my new assignment. I listened to him very carefully and decided to face the hardships waiting for me. So I assured him that I was prepared for all the challenges. Taking into consideration his poor health and age and the fact that Dr. Blanc had also one of his lungs removed at that time, I thought I should perform better than him, but of course, I did not tell him this.

Again I started to think about my childhood hero Negadras, the source of my wisdom, and was immediately assured that I would have to try and make sure that I succeeded. Never give up a new challenge without first trying properly.

We started the trip as planned; I was driving the old short base Land Rover without a starter and he was driving a brand-new Land Rover, which had just been delivered for fieldwork. Since there was a shortage of vehicles, the vaccination team in the field was pleading to get whatever vehicle was available at the headquarters, so that was why I was given the old Land Rover for fieldwork. It was also to examine my willingness and moral stance in working under a harsh environment. I knew the purpose behind this incredible assignment. If I refused or failed to comply, then my record in the department would be spoilt forever and I would never be recommended for a serious job thereafter. For me, this assignment was a testing ground for building my future career. I also immediately discovered that my boss, Robert Blanc, used to talk very often about Ethiopian fellow veterinarians trying to amplify their weakness and to capitalize on their weakness, instead of encouraging themselves to build up their careers. I was not particularly his favorite, as I did not speak French.

That morning I reached Dr. Blanc's residence at 2:30 a.m. and reported to him that I was ready. He came out at 3:00 a.m. and we started the long trip to Moyale, which was eight hundred kilometers from Addis Ababa. I was leading the way and Blanc followed behind and we kept on driving down south following the big highway en route to Moyale. We drove for about 320 kilometers and then we stopped for tea in Awasa. In another thirty minutes we started again and continued nonstop to Hagere Mariam, which was around 450 kilometers. We stopped again and refueled and got prepared for the rough road. There was only a rough and bushy road without bridges after Hagere Mariam. I decided to give a lift to a Kenyan Somali nomad who was traveling to Moyale, Kenya. I did not trust this Somali man because he was armed with a Somali sword and did not speak English either. But I needed to give him a lift so that he could help me if the car stopped on the way. I told the Somali man to sit behind in the car, and I kept my pistol, which was bought in Czechoslovakia, at a reachable distance so that I could quickly access it to defend myself. We started the

long and tiring trip, and after 6:00 p.m. we had still another 350 kilometers to cover. I never understood why Dr. Blanc took the decision to travel at night on a very difficult road. At that time, since there was war between Somalia and Ethiopia, there was also a very serious problem of insurgence, so the road was not safe. We were advised by the administration police that we needed to be careful not to travel at night. We were also advised by the people who fueled our car that we were taking a big risk in driving at night on that road. Especially, when you drive at night the vehicle lights can be seen from a very long distance and this could attract the insurgents, but it was not possible to discuss this with Dr. Blanc, so I decided to keep quiet and follow instructions since he had told me that we should reach Moyale before midnight.

The distance between Hagere Mariam and Yavelo was close to two hundred kilometers on a very rough road. We had to struggle for hours in the darkness to make sure that we would not be interrupted. My most serious determination was to make sure that the engine should not switch off. I had to maneuver between the accelerator, the clutch, and the brakes continuously. My legs were tired and my brain was dull. I was simply struggling mechanically to make sure that the car would not stop. The distance seemed endless. After a lot of struggle we reached Yavelo before midnight but we were still about two hundred kilometers away from Moyale. We stopped for a while and Blanc suggested that we continue. I almost wanted to tell him that I couldn't make it, but my sixth sense told me that I would be committing suicide by challenging this "colonial" man who wanted to spoil my future career. If this old man could do it, I could also do it. I encouraged myself to face this so-called "mission impossible" and went very quickly into my car and continued to drive. The good thing was that the road from Yavelo to Moyale was on flat terrain so I only pressed the accelerator and did not manipulate the clutch and the brake so much. After a lot of struggle I started to see the small electric lights of Moyale town from a distance. When I saw the lights, all of a sudden some extra energy got released from nowhere and I started to regain back my strength and looked at the blinking lights, which encouraged me to move on.

We reached Moyale exactly after 3:00 a.m. in the morning. Everybody was asleep, but we managed to wake up the hotel attendant and were given a

shabby room to sleep. I had slept for over six hours that morning when I heard a big bang on the door and “the monster” Blanc was there again to remind me that I had overslept. He had been waiting for two hours for me. I apologized and told him that I was tired. We started our trip for another fifty kilometers to look for our vaccination teams who were already in the field vaccinating cattle. The team, headed by Dr. Overvee, was busy vaccinating animals at around noon when we reached their site. They received us with a lot of welcoming gestures. We had brought them a new supply of vaccines and food ration and they were very happy. They gave us an orientation about their jobs. Blanc collected all the information he needed. He introduced me as the new team leader and left me with the team and continued his journey back to Moyale and Addis. I was very happy to be left along with the team. I was also happy that I was not with Dr. Blanc because we had very little to discuss. He was not the type who was interested in assisting young veterinarians like me as he was so obsessed with his achievements. He was also a special friend of the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Akililu Hapte Wolde, through his French network in Ethiopia. The wife of our prime minister was from France. Blanc and Akililu were family friends. He always mentioned how he would report all the progress and difficulties we were facing in the field to the Prime Minister. In between the line I understood the message from Dr. Blanc.

The veterinary department used to get special attention and support when it came to finance. Blanc was always presenting the department’s problem to the Ministry of Finance. He was very much respected by the minister and the vice minister at that time; it was very clear to all of us that Blanc was a very influential person in the system. If he did not like you he had all the authority to destroy you also. That was the reason why I wanted to keep my distance from Dr. Blanc. My new team colleague, Dr. Overvee, was a very simple man. By nature he was fond of everybody and his intention was to work in good harmony with everybody. I liked him immediately and started to work very closely with him. All the other team members were very mature animal health assistants. They accepted me as their team leader immediately and they started to immediately seek advices and directions. Unfortunately I was the least experienced man in the team and I had to admit this officially. I informed them that I would continue to learn from their experience so I encouraged collective leadership and responsibility.

We had a meeting every evening to revise the day's program. Our major work in Borana was to vaccinate the entire animal in three months' time.

The population of cattle in the Boran pasteuralist area at that time was close to two million. We didn't vaccinate young calves less than six months old. We were using bivalent-freeze-dried tissue culture rinderpest vaccine combined with CBPP vaccine. The rinderpest vaccine gave lifetime immunity while the CBPP vaccine gave six months' immunity. Cattle were brought to the temporary crush by the pastoralist every morning and vaccination continued up to 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon. The job required a lot of energy and patience throughout the day. All cattle, which were vaccinated, had to be identified by clover-shaped ear clipping. A team of three people were required to execute this job: one would reconstitute the vaccine and keep the record, the second would vaccinate, and the third person would cut the ear. Two people would restrain the cattle. We had about eight teams working at different sites; each team was expected to vaccinate up to two hundred cattle per day.

My job was to move from one site to the other and supervise that the job was done properly and the records was kept clearly. We also collected blood samples and fecal samples and examined all the cattle for various other epidemic and parasitic diseases on our field microscope. We also carried some medicines and treated sick animals. We also gave orientation to the pastoralists about the various livestock diseases.

The pastoralist used to call us "Aba Holi" which means the father of their sheeps. They used to bring water, firewood, sheep, goat, and milk continuously. They would guard our camps in turn and take full care of us; sometimes we had a long discussion with the elders about various issues in life. I started to develop a very strong loving bond with the Boranas. They are among the most humble people with a lot of interesting cultures in our country. They love their animals more than anything else. The young kids look after the young calves, sheep, and goats. The teenagers are in charge of fetching water from the Ella. The Ella is a very deep water well, where a human ladder is used to bring water from the deeper part of the water well. Through this concerted effort all the animals of the community regularly drank water once in three days. The milking cows and heifers were kept

separate near the villages where the cows could be milked regularly. The steers were kept hidden in a very far place, away from the sight of strangers. It is prohibited to count animals in Borana tradition.

We also very smartly avoided counting the number of vaccinated animals. We used an automatic counter and the number of empty vaccine bottles to know the number. The pastoralists suspected that if they gave the cattle head counts the government tax would be increased on them. They also thought that counting animals would bring bad luck. The most serious problem in Borana was shortage of water and pasture for grazing. The pastoralists normally predicted this problem and started to move as soon as they saw shortage of any one of the two (water/pasture). We had also to prepare our programs around watering points. We also strictly respected their cultural practices. The Borana pasteauralists have a culture of soaking their clothes in butter. This helped to disinfect the skin and chase away lice and other parasites. The opposite of this was that the smell of the cloth would attract houseflies, which were harmless. However, you could see hundreds of flies covering the faces of a Boran children and they would not be bothered with them because they are very much used to it. The Boranas are very intelligent people in that they can learn anything in a short time. Some of them were trained to restrain animals and cut their ears after vaccination. They enjoyed this work and started to be involved in our team's work during vaccination. In three months' time we covered the whole of Borana district and vaccinated over 2,000,000 cattle. The result of our work was very much impressive in that area.

The whole idea of blanket rinderpest vaccination covering the whole population in that area was to reach the level of 80 percent of immunization of the herd so that the whole population could be protected from being infected by the virus. In the case of Borana we even reached up to 90 percent as the pastoralists were very cooperative and receptive of our services.

After finishing the Borana district, we started to move toward the other pastoralist community in the northern area, which included Gujis and Gelab along the south-eastern borders of Ethiopia and Kenya following the Omo river valley system. The team continued to work in the southern highlands

in the interior of the country. These areas were mostly covering Darassa, Sidama, and Arssi. These were sedentary areas with people focusing mostly on crop and animal farming. They were also one of the highest populated areas in the region. There was a lot of rain in that area. Mostly people depended on coffee and root crops for their livelihoods and did not care and cooperate so much with our program. We had to go on a door-to-door basis to convince the farmers to bring their animals for vaccination. The problem was also that since there was no incident of rinderpest and CBPP at that time farmers were not particularly keen in our services. Anyway, we did a lot of sensitization work and asked the administration to force people for compulsory vaccination.

During one time around the lake Awasa area when Dr. Overvee and I were out for inspection visits, we found over five thousand animals who were not vaccinated. We looked for the Balabat and the chief of the village and invited him for a meeting. He reluctantly came out with a few colleagues. I asked him if he was aware of the program for vaccination on that day at a camp established two kilometers from his village. He said that he was aware but he was not interested in bringing the animals for vaccination. I told him that it was a compulsory program of the government and he should cooperate. He told me again that he would not cooperate. My colleague, Dr. Overvee, was very angry when he saw the behavior of this man, so he told me that we should take him in our Land Rover to the police station. I advised Dr. Overvee that we couldn't do that because we had no authorization to do that. Moreover these people can even attack us and instigate mob justice on us if we force their village chief to come with us forcefully. I told him that the best way was to go back and report this to the governor and get some more policemen to help us. Dr. Overvee did not want to listen to me. As a European, he thought that he could arrest anybody and take him to court or to the police station.

We had two policemen who were accompanying us everywhere as body guards, so he asked the policemen to help him arrest the man and put him in the car. The policemen smelled a problem and they refused to do that. Then Dr. Overvee jumped at the village chief and started dragging him toward our car. The village chief started to scream and people started to flock from various directions with their spears and pagans. I panicked and started to

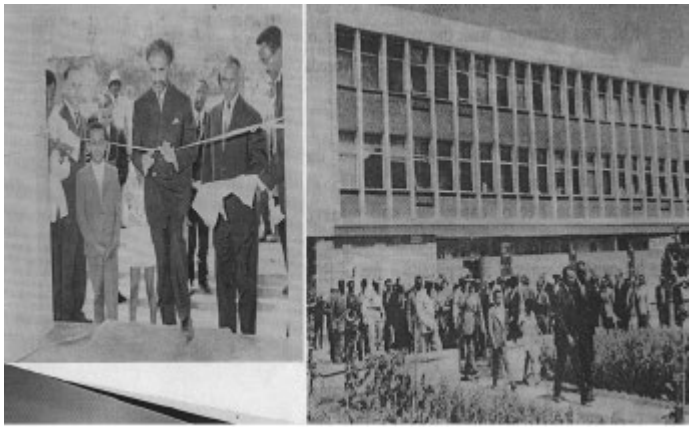
push Overvee into our car and instructed the driver to start and move. By then about fifty people had started throwing stones and were almost running full speed to block our car. The police started to shoot in the air to scare some of them. We managed to escape very narrowly from this dangerous situation. We rushed back to the office of the governor who was General Ysaysas at that time. I reported to him about the incident and requested him to assist us in this matter. The general immediately ordered two trucks full of soldiers in their combat outfits. We immediately returned to that village in the afternoon. The residents of the village were stunned and tried to hide their chief. I persuaded them to bring out their chief, and finally when they saw that we would not leave without the chief they brought him out.

I now looked with confidence at their leader and told him that since he had interrupted the Pan African vaccination campaign he was considered as a criminal and the government would take him to court. He was arrested and the commander of the army told him to lie on the ground and give his hands willingly to be tied up as he was a prisoner until he proved himself not guilty. By then more than three hundred people came out and started to cry and plead with us that it was because of ignorance that they had not cooperated. From now of if they were given the chance they would bring all the village animals for vaccination. Their chief would personally be responsible for the vaccination. I thought that this was a good deal. I drafted a short memo and asked him to sign. He signed that he would be responsible for the vaccination program in his village. The following day I brought my vaccination team and we vaccinated over five thousand cattle in that area. We finally departed from that area satisfied and the chief was also set free.

On another occasion, while we were running our vaccination campaign in another village, a police constable came on horseback carrying the Ethiopian flag. He came right into my tent and saluted me and said he needed special assistance from me and my team. I replied that I would assist if he could tell me exactly what he wanted. He told me that he was on a mission chasing a very famous serial killer and robber. He saw this robber entering a house five kilometers from here near the mountain. Since he was alone he could not arrest him. They were two of them and were both armed. The area was also very dangerous in terms of security as there are Shifas as

fighting the government, so he wanted us to give him assistance to especially arrest this man. I was very surprised about the nature of assistance that the policeman was asking. On the other hand, as we were all government civil servants we had the obligation to assist, so I called my staff members and asked them for their advice. They all agreed that they should go and assist in arresting the thug. We immediately dismantled our tents and loaded them on one Land Rover and used the other Land Rover to chase the bandit.

We came very close by foot to the small village house where the man was drinking illicit brew (Tella) with his friend. We approached the house from behind and we were almost in the compound when the dog started to bark furiously. The policeman without wasting time ran at full speed to the house and opened the door by force and fell on the criminal. It all happened in a split of a second so that the criminal had very little time to react and grab his gun. His friend immediately reacted and managed to escape. But we managed to arrest the killer. We tied him with handcuffs and put him in the back of the Land Rover. We took his gun and rushed toward the Awasa town. We were scared that his friend could return with more assistance. This didn't happen so we brought him safely to the provincial police headquarters. The commander of the police force for the southern region, General Lemesa, was very appreciative of what we had done and I received a letter of appreciation from the governor of Sidamo. Although we were happy with what we had done, normally in veterinary work we don't mix our duties with other government businesses, except focusing on our professional jobs. The cattle owners always have a lot of respect and confidence in us; they even think that we are always on their side, defending their interest against the government's corrupt bureaucrats. People have a lot of confidence in us. That is why we avoid associating ourselves with the administration, police, and other politics of the government of the day.



Inauguration ceremony of National Veterinary Institute NVI in 1963 by Emperor Haile Selassie

My ten months' assignment in the pre-JP 15 campaign taught me a number of lessons. The times I had spent with Borana pastoralists opened my eyes to the real social and economic problems of my country. I considered the ten months as the most productive years of my professional life. During these months we did not need any cash money in the bushes. We were fed very well by the people; we gained their love and confidence. Most of all we controlled rinderpest in that region. Although I left that area my heart remained with Borana pastoralists forever. In Borana we had lived in tents facing all types of hardships but we were very happy with the result of our work. The vaccination season ended that year in August when the rainy season started and roads were not accessible. Mostly the field vaccination campaigns were discontinued at least for three months in a year. This was the time to develop new programs for the following years and service and repair the equipment for a new round of vaccination campaign. In my heart I was always prepared to go back and work with the people in Borana. I did not realize at that time that I would be spending the rest of my professional life fighting the rinderpest virus not only in Ethiopia, but also in Africa. The experience I got from Borana helped me to enrich my CV to get the job as the PARC international coordinator. I really love the people of Borana for what they are. They are very proud and humble people with a lot of love for livestock. I think they are the best livestock keepers in the region because they know how to manage and keep animals under an adverse and hostile situation.

20 My Trip to Austria

When I returned to Addis Ababa I felt quite lonely and bored. My life in Borana was quite organized and my day used to start with the noise and crying of cows and bulls that were brought early for vaccination. When I would come out from my tent I used to see thousands of animals ready to receive vaccination. Anyway, I had to try and forget this beautiful dream and I went back to see my bosses at the Ministry of Agriculture. Then I wrote my report and submitted to the national coordinator. He was very happy with my work and promised to work with me in other regions when the real campaign started the following year. In the meantime I was given a scholarship to go to Austria to pursue a postgraduate course in veterinary preventive medicine and hygiene. I accepted the offer and was ready to go in two weeks' time to Vienna University. I arrived in Vienna sometime in September 1970 and was enrolled in the their Art Lichen Hoch School in Vienna.

This was the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Vienna. I was registered in the Department of Food Hygiene and Preventive Medicine with some ten other international students from different countries. My new patron, Prof. Brandle, spoke very good English and he gave me the direction of my course and the programs. In the morning we attended lectures and in the afternoon we would be in the library and laboratory. I started to focus on the most important diseases which were of significance to my country because I knew very well now what I needed most. I would also very intelligently discuss animal health issues with faculty members. Sometimes I was also requested to give lectures to first and second year students on tropical animal health problems. I was treated with a lot of respect by the faculty. I decided to move out from the students' hostel and rent my own condominium in the vicinity of the faculty. The first term of my stay was very pleasant. During the second term the winter started to be very severe so I had to buy special charcoal to warm up my rooms. But this was never enough and I started to suffer a lot outside the faculty. I tried to return to the students' hostel but since my place was occupied there was no place at the hostel.

My only choice was to remain at the university library until midnight and then go back to my cold room. It is very difficult to explain in words how cold that place was after midnight. Even the handles of the bedroom doors got stuck and refused to open because of the cold. Then once you got into the bed, the bedsheets would turn into iron sheets and become so uncomfortable that you didn't wish like having them at all. There was no removing of clothes at night. I had to sleep in whatever I had put on during the daytime. Life continued to be difficult that winter and I blamed myself for having come to Vienna for this course. I used to meet Mr. Shiferaw Ayele very often, who went before me to Czechoslovakia but left Czechoslovakia and migrated to Austria and ended up as a student of food technology. He was very happy and satisfied as a university student and remained in that faculty for thirty-three years. He had a university stipend which was just enough for him to survive without much effort, so he decided to remain in the school for thirty-three years until they discovered one day and stopped his stipend and refused to renew his visa. As a result he returned back to Ethiopia in the year 2000 at the age of fifty-eight. He is now working in Ethiopia and since then has a family. The lesson we learn here is east or west home is best and it is never too late to return home.

21 My Career as a Lecturer at the Animal Health School in Debre Zeit

I finished my postgraduate course in August 1971 and returned the same month to Ethiopia. I was very eager to go back and join the rinderpest campaign program, but unfortunately destiny guided me completely to a different duty. That year when I returned from Austria I reported again to my ministry to inform them of my return. I was warmly welcomed by the DG of the veterinary department and I was told that since most of the foreign lecturers were going back to their countries at the Debre Zeit Veterinary School, there was an urgent need to replace them with Ethiopian veterinarians. They flattered me that in view of my good record in Kombolcha and the rinderpest vaccination campaign in the southern region, I was strongly recommended to teach at the Animal Health School. They also said that my postgraduate training experience would also help me to teach in the school. I had no choice except to accept the offer, and the following week I went to Debre Zeit to occupy my new position.

The director of the Animal Health School was Dr. Hues Harding; he was a very hardworking man, who was also teaching pathology at that school. The co-director was Dr. Samuel Atnafu, who was teaching parasitology. I was warmly welcomed by the management and other fellow lecturers. The Animal Health School was established in 1965 with the assistance of the FAO. It was a two-year diploma course, and students were recruited by the Ministry of Agriculture after completion of secondary school. About thirty students were enrolled each year. The school had boarding facilities, classrooms, laboratory, library, and demonstration farm. I was advised by the director to spend the first term going around to the various classes and acquainting myself with the teaching profession. I was also made in charge of the school farm. Gradually, I also became in charge of the modern school abattoir, which was built with the assistance of FAO. I started to enjoy my new assignment and began to organize myself and prepare my teaching materials for the following term.

I replaced the lecturer for food hygiene and meat inspection, and later on I also took over to lecture on clinical medicine. I found teaching to be a very

challenging occupation. I spent an average of four hours to prepare for a lecture of one hour. This helped me to revise the theory and practice of the whole veterinary medicine. It also gave me a good chance to improve my teaching knowledge by producing handouts for the students. I enjoyed spending time with students in the field treating sick animals. The most challenging job we had was assisting animals to give birth, spaying of pets, castration of male animals, etc. I became quite interested in the clinical ambulatory work. We used to travel up to thirty kilometers to assist a donkey giving birth. Such an operation was not economical in real life but we did it for teaching purposes. The Animal Health School was also the favorite institution of Emperor Haile Selassie. He was the one who initiated the establishment of the school. Every year he came as the patron to preside over the graduation of the students.

Our social life in Debre Zeit was also very good. At that time housing and living conditions were much cheaper than in Addis Ababa. Addis Ababa was also very close to Debre Zeit. It was only forty-five kilometers away. In the afternoon hours we used to play ground tennis with fellow British colleagues. The only problem at that time was the relationship between the Animal Health Institution and the Animal Health School. The two institutes were built next to each other in one compound divided by a small fence; the NVI was manufacturing animal vaccines and was also the disease investigation center for the Ministry of Agriculture. The French veterinary mission was very much involved in the management of the institute. The Animal Health School was established with the assistance of FAO but most of the teachers were British. French and British experts had their own historical differences and were rivals competing with each other everywhere in the world. This war between French and British elsewhere in other parts of the world also came into our compound. As a result of this problem, the two institutions were never ready to cooperate and work together. There were always polarization and antagonizing issues instigated by either one of them. These problems followed me almost everywhere. I would always wonder why we should suffer when the two big elephants fight. I must say that these affected my work and professional life in almost every place I worked. I started to understand this problem during the early days of my professional life. I started to understand these classical and

historical differences after working for a long time with French and English veterinarians.

The teaching method and curriculum of the Animal Health School was very good. Students in the first year focused by and large on preclinical subjects and concentrated on clinical and epidemiological subjects in the second year. Teaching was mostly focused on indigenous problems. Many animals were brought to the school clinic during the weekdays and students had the opportunity to learn practical subjects. I was very much involved in the construction of a new abattoir at Debre Zeit. The design and architectural work of the slaughterhouse was prepared by a Danish company, which also provided the equipment for the slaughterhouse. The construction work was done by the Berta construction company in 1973. The Debre Zeit teaching slaughterhouse was one of the best slaughterhouses constructed at that time for teaching purposes. The slaughterhouse used to slaughter about ten animals for the Ethiopian Air Force and about ten animals for the American Army in the MAG commission at that time. We were given full authority to apply international inspection standards on these animals. This gave us a good opportunity to teach proper meat inspection at that time. Dr. Joseph Sevar, who was employed by the FAO as a lecturer in meat hygiene, was also assisting in the construction of the slaughterhouse. He did a very good job in supervising the construction of the slaughterhouse.

During the years 1972-1974 Ethiopian national development strategy was to focus on agro-industrial development. During those years, many commercial irrigation farms were established within the Awasa valley. The Ethiopian government was encouraging young Ethiopians to go and establish cotton and soybean farms by irrigation. Commercial dairy and poultry farms were established everywhere in the country. It was a special time for Ethiopia where this kind of opportunity was opened for all professionals. Everybody was interested in abandoning government work and join the new venture in the valley. People who went for irrigation farming in the valley became very rich in a short time. I and my colleagues at the school were very much motivated with this objective and were ready to apply and become commercial cotton farmers. I registered a company with two other friends. We were looking for initial capital while the rest would be taken as a loan from the government. Unfortunately, this dream

was cut short after the outbreak of the Ethiopian socialist revolution in 1974.

The revolution started with the university students who kept on preaching "land for the tillers" slogan. The Ministry of Agriculture extension workers in the region of Arsi, Chilalo District, played a very important role by sensitizing the farmers to revolt against the landowners and the feudal ruling class. Later taxi drivers protested against the increment in the fuel price. The teachers, university lecturers, and students were against the sector review, which was going to reform the education system in Ethiopia. The government could not control the wave of large scale demonstration and resistance against the feudal government. Later the cabinet of Ato Akilu Habte Wolde resigned and he was immediately replaced by the new prime minister, Endalkatchew Makonnen. New ministers were appointed. Even this could not satisfy the people of Ethiopia, as they wanted a fundamental change by throwing out the feudal system and replacing it with a socialist system. Later, Haile Selassie was deposed and all his family members and close associates were put in jail. A military junta took power. The structure of Haile Selassie's government was systematically disintegrated. The people of Ethiopia did not understand what was going around, but everybody supported the change.

It was under these circumstances that the changes also came to the Animal Health School. The students boycotted classes and rebelled against the management of the school. They were accusing the director and some members of the school management of corruption and embezzlement. Very soon a team of investigators came from the Ministry of Agriculture and made a recommendation to the minister that the management of the school should be dismantled. After sometime a new director was appointed. In this major change of structure and management, I was also appointed as the deputy director of meat inspection and quarantine within the office of the director general of the national veterinary service. I was extremely surprised to get this appointment when so many people were dismissed from their jobs. I consider myself as very lucky to pass safely through this big wave of change in our county. I accepted the new appointment with great pleasure and moved in a very short time to Addis Ababa, to the Ministry of Agriculture headquarters to resume my new job.

22 The Prime Plot I Inherited from Negadras



Negadras with his traditional war out fit

I have mentioned earlier that Negadras had a lot of wealth but because of tricks, greed, and politics Negadras lost all his wealth; nobody in the family benefited from his wealth except our aunt Mrs. Beletshachew.

Negadras gave us the two plots next to each other in the center of the town in the vicinity of the admin post office at the kebelle known as Aroge kera or old slaughterhouse. I learned later that the first slaughterhouse in Addis Ababa was built in that area. Some people also call it as Etege Mesk (queen's playground) as Queen Menen, wife of Haile Selassie, by and large owned that area. Negadras got one thousand square meters of a plot as a replacement plot taken by the government at six kilo. He built a small residential house on five hundred square meters of the land and was given to our aunt Beletshachew. The other half of five hundred square meters was given to me. There was a small watchman house on it rented for Br10 per month. I was told later that he was planning to build a residential house for me upon my return from abroad. But because of ill health and old age he could not make it. His will was approved and endorsed by the High Court and I became the owner of that prime plot. At that time, since I did not have

money I was not able to do anything on that plot so it was just kept lying vacant for several years. I was teaching at the Junior Animal Health College.

At that time, I was almost thirty and was ready to start a family. My parents were looking for finance from the feudal family. Proposals and recommendations were coming from different directions. But my intention was to find a partner whom I loved and had feelings for, so one day I was introduced to Taffy by her very close friend Mrs. Salome Gerima, who was married to a very close friend of mine, Dr. Taye Bezuneh. They were living in Debre Zeit and I used to visit them frequently. Salome recommended to me that Taffy was the best candidate for a serious relationship, so I started to court Taffy for a short time and made up my mind that she was the woman I wanted to marry. Within a short time we started to talk about our wedding program. We decided on the date and I announced this important information to my parents, especially my mother Mulumbet who was quite ambitious to get me married into a family of very high prominence. Therefore, I had to make sure that I would not disappoint her. We agreed with some members of my family that Taffy was the daughter of Fitawerary Tamerat from Harar. My mother became very fond of Taffy and when she met her she immediately liked her manners, personality, and her beauty.



Dr. Solomons wedding Day. October 28, 1972

After getting the endorsement from the family, we started to prepare the wedding program; I was traveling to Yugoslavia for one month before the wedding for a short training course organized by UNDP at that time. My

stay in Yugoslavia was very important but I was always thinking about the wedding while I was there. After finishing my training, I took a train from Yugoslavia to Czechoslovakia to buy a wedding gown for my future wife. I bought some of the wedding clothes but I could not find all. So I continued in a train to Vienna and bought the remaining outfits for my fiancée and me and I came back to Ethiopia. When I arrived at the airport the customs people asked me to pay a very high duty. I was very angry and left the airport without collecting the wedding clothes. I returned the following day and went to see the director of customs and complained to him that it was unfair to charge duty on wedding clothes which were meant for purposes of marriage. I said that the government should encourage young people to get married and if they were going to harass them like they were doing to me then the young people would never be able to start their own family. I told him that I had traveled to three countries to get what I wanted for my bride. I also told him that it cost me a lot of money for transport and accommodation and to please understand that I was a poor man who had just started to work and that I could not afford to pay taxes on these wedding clothes. I also added that you may nationalize them if you want.

At least what could be expected from the government was to give them duty-free privileges for wedding clothes. I also told him that I had saved money from my allowance while I was on training in Yugoslavia and I bought these items on my own to save more money for my wedding ceremony. Now if they were to charge me duty the whole thing would be so expensive if I included my travel costs to Czechoslovakia and Austria. The director listened to my complaint very seriously and he told me that I had convinced him in my reasoning, so I should not pay anything. I was very happy with his decision.

The wedding was organized at the Military Club in JannMedda; all members of our relatives participated in the organization of the wedding ceremony. My mother took charge on behalf of the family and the whole ceremony was a success. Our expense for the wedding was so high that we were not planning to do anything after the wedding at least for a year. We thought that we should save some money first for our unborn child.

We were just starting a family. Taffy was pregnant with Mahlet. We were very excited to have our new baby and we were praying that everything would be okay. We were very sure that our future would be bright and we were also planning to raise our firstborn child. We had very little money in our account as we had used all our earnings for the wedding, which took place in Addis Ababa on October 28, 1972.

It was during this time that one my cousin came and raised a very interesting issue. He told me that he desperately needed Br3,000 urgently, so he needed my help. I explained to him that I had no money as we had finished all our savings for the wedding. He persuaded me that as a lawyer he had a plan, which would work to get this money if I was willing to help. I said that I was always ready to help my relatives but I would not be involved in any illegal matters. He assured me that what he was going to propose was very legal. He had a ten thousand square meters plot in Debre Zeit which he would sell to me for Br3,000. But the actual price of the plot was Br15,000. If he returned the Br3000 I would have to return the plot. If not I could keep the plot until he returned the money.

The manager of Debre Zeit Commercial Bank was our friend. I went to discuss this opportunity with him. The manager encouraged me to hurry and take a loan for the plot, so I took a Br15,000 loan from the bank and gave the Br3,000 to my cousin. He promised to return the Br3000 in less than six months. I waited for him for a year but he never returned the money. I was paying Br500 every month to Commercial Bank against my loan. Then I discovered that my cousin had cheated me. I did not know what to do as I could not do anything on the plot in Debre Zeit. When I discussed this with my mum she advised me to build a small house on the plot given to me by Negadras. I thought about this new idea and in a very short time we prepared a plan and got a permit from the municipality and started to build the house in the form of a shop. There was about Br12,000 in our account which was not enough to complete the house. We had to raise some more funding from elsewhere and the shop was ready in six months' time. The shop was immediately rented and we started to pay the bank loan from the house rent. Ato Getachew disappeared for a long time. In the meantime the military government came and nationalized land and plots. As a result of this socialist proclamation for repossessing the property of wealthy people,

the plot which I had bought from my cousin in Debre Zeit was nationalized and in return my bank loan to the tune of Br13,000 was canceled.

This was a miraculous thing, which had happened to us because we went into this agreement innocently to help a close relative. Our cousin conned us but in return God rewarded us by guiding us to build our house at Aroge Kera. Again I always thank God for this small miracle by Negadras. I think he gave me that property with a full heart. We lived and raised our children in that house for twelve years. After I left Ethiopia for Kenya, I gave the house temporarily to my brother-in-law, Dr. Getachew Taddesse, to open a new clinic. We furnished the clinic and laboratory and modified the house and converted it into a clinic and named it “Mulu Clinic” after my dear mother Mulumebet. The clinic operated for three years but the location was not good enough to attract clients so my brother-in-law, Dr. Getachew, had to move to another location but thankfully retained the name as “Mulu Clinic.” Once again my good luck with Negadras had worked very well. We still own the house and also get a small income from renting. I think Negadras has blessed me in this regard and I thank him again for all that he did for me.

23 The Gun of Pride and Honour



Dr. Solomon and family in 1997.

Los Angeles, USA.

As I have mentioned earlier, Negadras passed on to me some wisdom and had provided me with education, which remained as the foundation of my life. I owe him a lot for that, but I also inherited his most precious automatic machine gun, which was always kept in his private cupboard covered with a special red cloth cover. None of us had seen that special gun when Negadras was alive because he kept it locked and made sure that nobody touched it. We knew that there was a special gun in that cupboard. After his death, the special gun ended up in the possession of my mother, Mulumebet. One day she called me and said to me that there was a special gift for me.

She said, “I would like you to have this gun, which belonged to your grandfather. He respected this machine more than anything else, so please keep it with you. In our Ethiopian tradition, guns are always inherited by sons. Negadras loved you, and I am sure he would have loved to give it to you.” I was so happy with that gift at that time. I felt that this was the will of God for me to have that gun. So I started to take care of the gun the way Negadras had. The gun was manufactured by the Italians in 1939 and it was a semiautomatic gun that could fire thirty-nine bullets in one round. It was

one of the best machine guns ever produced by the Italians at that time. It was widely used by the Italian army during the World War II.

I was very proud of being the owner of the machine gun as it was a symbol of honor at that time. I took the machine gun to the district administration office and registered it officially under my name. Everybody who saw it immediately loved it and they wanted to see how it operated. Then I took it to a gun maintenance technician for testing and precision, adjustment and lubrication, etc. The German technicians, whose workshop was near the railway station in Addis, looked at the gun and told me that it was the best gun one could ever have. I could shoot singularly, or if I wanted, convert the automatic button to release the thirty-nine bullets at a time. I became even more proud after the technician assured me about the gun. Once I understood how it operated, I took it back and locked it in our cupboard. I had 150 bullets for the gun. I have never used it practically but I was quite confident of myself that I have a reliable weapon to defend my family.

When the Ethiopian revolution started, I had a problem in keeping that gun because the military regime declared that all guns had to be handed over to the government with immediate effect. Anybody found with a gun would be locked for a minimum of ten years. At that time, there was no fooling around with the military government's instruction. Everybody was keen on providing secret information to the kebelle militias and cadres. My wife, Taffy, got worried and started to put pressure on me to hand over the gun to the kebelle authorities. I thought about it again and again but I could not take the decision of handing it over to the government. My conscience was telling me that I should face all the consequences instead of handing over the gun. The most dangerous threat was from our housemaids who could betray us any time if there was any disagreement. They could also blackmail the family for various interests. Anyway, I remained stubborn and kept the gun with me for over a year. Then a second round declaration came from the government that if anybody was found with a gun the result could be a penalty of death. This warning came as a result of a large number politically motivated murders. When the situation became worse, I went to seek advice from one of my colleagues who was a foreigner. I trusted him because he was my very close friend. My friend advised me to keep it at the

embassy. I immediately agreed with this solution so the gun was taken to the embassy and kept in the office of the ambassador for four years.

After sometime a very unfortunate thing happened. Our aunt War Zenbwork refused to give my mum the sixty bullets which belonged to the machine gun. She kept those bullets in the ceiling of her house at Arada Giorgis and forgot about them for a long time. When she vacated her old house to move into her new house she forgot the bullets in the ceiling. People who were renovating the house found these bullets and reported it to the kebelle cadres. So the kebelle cadres came to look for War Zenbwork. She was arrested and kept in the kebelle prison for three months. They tortured her continuously to tell them where the gun was. But Zenbwork did not tell them where the gun was; she denied any knowledge of the bullets. They tried again and again to get information on the whereabouts of the gun but she courageously refused to admit any knowledge of the bullets. After three months of suffering we managed to persuade the kebelle people to release her. After she got her freedom, she told me that she had to keep this information to defend me from the consequences. I really appreciated what she had done although by then I had already handed over the gun to the government. You will read this later.

After several years the ambassador told me that he was leaving Ethiopia for good, so I should now take back the gun. The problem started again as the rules on arms control became very strict. I also started to realize the danger of keeping that gun further in my possession. I saw people being killed and imprisoned for keeping any authorized gun. So I decided to hand over the gun to the military government, but it was too late to hand over by now because I could go to prison and also for further investigation for keeping an authorized gun. So I came up with a strategy for an honorable way of handing it to the officials. A very close professional colleague of mine was appointed as the Governor of Shewa province at that time; his name was Dr. Makonen Jote. He was the secretary of the Meason party at that time and a very powerful politician. I went to his house and told him the whole story and he really sympathized about my attachment to the gun. He was even surprised that I could take such a risk to keep this gun for over five years after the declaration. Anyway, he told me that he was going to explain the case to a senior Derg member, Comrade Tekka Tulu, who was in charge of

security and he would get back to me in a few days. I started to get worried because nobody trusted the Derg members as they used to take independent action.

Dr. Makonen Jote kept his promise and called me in his office and told me that he had discussed this matter with the most senior members of the military council (Derg) and he told me that they had investigated my history in the office and the residential area and they were convinced that I was not working for any contra-revolution party at that time. So he told me that a police colonel would accompany me to the Derg headquarters at the old Menelik's palace. I was accompanied by two police officers and took the gun to the office of Comrade Tekka Tulu. At that time Tekka Tulu had all the authority on the security of the nation. He received me very politely and asked me as to why I had not obeyed the order of the government and kept the gun for so many years. I explained to him again the attachment and the wish of my family about this gun. I think he also understood my problem and he said that I should go and see Colonel Daniel Asfaw, who was in charge of emergency operation, and convince him about what had happened. I thought that things were going in the wrong direction and that I had invited serious problems for myself and my family.

So I want to see Colonel Daniel Asfaw and explained to him about the gun. He looked at it and admired it a lot. Very surprisingly he told me that his wish was that I should keep the gun but the law did not allow it. He also said that if I wanted then he would give me a pistol as a replacement. I declined to accept his offer and politely told him that I would rather hand over the gun to the government. He asked me for coffee and assured me that at any time I needed a small weapon I could get it through Dr. Makonen Jote. I thanked him very much and I left his office. The reason that I had not accepted his offer to take a pistol was that they would have forced me to join one of their parties which I did not like to do at that time. My dear friend Dr. Makonen Jote was murdered by the military government after six months. Two people shot him with a Kalashnikov rifle as he left his house in the morning together with his brother. Colonel Daniel, who took the gun from me, was killed by another colleague in a shootout at the palace together with Comrade Seani Leke. Comrade Tekka Tulu died in prison

after the overthrow of the military government. That is the brief story of Negadras's gun of honor. I still see that gun sometimes in my dreams.

I don't even know why I was so fond of that gun that put me into trouble for almost seven years and risked my life so much. I am not a violent person by nature; I would never be able to shoot at anyone. But I think it was the love for Negadras which made me take so much risk. I knew that Negadras had a lot of respect for that gun and he kept it with special care up to the end of his life and that was what I was trying to do subconsciously. I always regret that I never shot even one bullet with that machine gun. I wish I had done it just to try out how the sound and the might of that graceful machine were like.

24 My Appointment as Director of

Meat Inspection and Quarantine

I left Debre Zeit in July 1974 to start my new job as the director of the Meat Inspection and Quarantine Division. On top of this appointment I was also assisting the general director of the veterinary services department as his deputy. In his absence I was also acting as the head of the department. My immediate responsibilities were to supervise the major export slaughterhouses who were slaughtering cattle for export purposes. The most important ones at that time were the Chandris Diredawa, which was exporting processed meat to UK and other European markets, Sopral Asmara, Kombolcha, Mekele, and Gondar, which were exporting processed meat to Italy and other European markets, and Melgue Wondo and Shashemene, which were exporting to the Middle East and other European markets. Each one of these slaughterhouses had to have a team of veterinary inspectors headed by a veterinary doctor. I was also responsible for the local municipal meat inspection services in the country. There were more than two hundred small municipal slaughterhouses all over the country. I was the accounting officer for the supply of inspected meat to all citizens in the country. By law it was the constitutional right of every citizen to have access to healthy and inspected foodstuff of animal origin. My department was also responsible for the inspection and certification of all skins and hides geared for export purposes. At that time, Ethiopia used to export over eleven million pieces of hides and skins.

The biggest challenge I faced in discharging these responsibilities was shortage of manpower. I immediately prepared a manpower projection chart for the unit and got the budget to train locally more qualified meat inspectors, assistant meat inspectors, and quarantine officers. The other big challenge, which I faced, was the strength of the existing proclamation and its rules and regulations. Our authority and empowerment to implement proper inspection on a national level emanates from the government

bylaws, proclamations, and meat inspection acts. The first one was published in 1948 and was not strong enough to exercise our authority. I got permission from the minister to amend the existing bylaw and immediately embarked on this mission. I established a special committee who would work on the amended version and chair the committee. I was very much assisted by both Ethiopian and British veterinary experts. We managed to introduce a new proclamation approved by the parliament and the Ministry of Justice and it was put in place.

The Ethiopian revolution started that year and there was a lot of change in the political, economic, and social structures. Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed and the government was replaced by a military junta known as the "Derg." The chairman of the Derg was first Gen. Aman Andom. After a year, Gen. Aman was assassinated by the military council, and he was replaced by Gen. Teferi Benti. After a year, Gen. Teferi Benti was also assassinated and replaced by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. The new land proclamation which nationalized all lands was introduced at the national level. Most private farms and industries were also nationalized. A lot of structural and personnel changes were introduced, and this made execution of our job very difficult at that time.

Ethiopia was exporting a lot of live animals and processed meat at that time, thanks to the proper functioning of all the slaughterhouses. The Addis Ababa slaughterhouse was slaughtering an average of five hundred to eight hundred cattle every day and close to one thousand sheep and goats a day. My meat inspectors were working day and night to cope up with this heavy load of work. We were working overtime and sometimes even on weekends to cope up with the work pressure. After a year, I started to complain about joining this office, which was full of problems and sensitive responsibilities, but the spirit of Negadras was behind me and I decided to persevere by all means. I also felt that I was doing a very important job for my country. I also noted that our job contributed a lot in protecting the lives of our population who were used to eating fresh uncooked meat. I kept on strengthening the rules to get rid of infected animals, which were a threat to human health; for example, the cyst of Taenia saginata was very common in urban cattle. Sometimes the rate of infection was more than 30 percent.

The incidents of tuberculosis were also very common, so removing a part of the infected part of the carcass from the slaughtered cattle was certainly reducing the risk and also saving the lives of thousands of our population. This made me proud and more responsible. I continued to give sensitization and popularization speeches in public places and interviews on the mass media about the danger of consuming raw meat in our country. Unfortunately, this was such a deeply rooted culture that it could not be stopped in a short time.

Another very important challenge for me was to sustain the official slaughterhouse approval certificate, which was renewed every year. A team of European veterinarians were sent by the European commission to go around all the five major export slaughterhouses in the country and inspect the general hygiene and sanitary situation of the slaughterhouses. They continuously checked whether these slaughterhouses met the European standards. I normally joined the team of foreign inspectors and inspected the slaughterhouses jointly with the European mission. They would then submit their report to me and request me to make sure that all the necessary items which needed improvement be followed up through my department. The following year when they would come, whatever had been recommended for improvement and repair had to be done if the official certificate of approval had to be renewed. This took most of our time arguing with all the management of the slaughterhouses to fulfill the requirements for renewal of the certificates.

I had a British technical assistant who was assigned as my advisor in pursuing this matter. His name was Dr. Jan Robertson. He was an elderly man in his sixties at that time. He mostly assisted me in following the details of the recommendation by the European inspection team. One time, Dr. Robertson went for a similar mission to Eritrea and remained in Asmara for about four months. In spite of repeated reminders to him to return and proceed to other places, he preferred to stay there at his own will. I sent another inspector to go to Asmara and find out the problem. The inspector who went to Asmara wrote a very nasty report that Dr. Robertson was in love with a local lady and he had decided to stay there. I reported this to his boss, Dr. Hart, who very jokingly tried to cool me down by telling me that he would return when he was ready. He proposed that we should leave him

to enjoy himself as he was terrible in love. I felt so let down and insulted by the British colleague and I decided to work toward the termination of his contract. I explained the problem to the vice minister who supported me to take proper action. As a result his contract was terminated. Dr. Robertson was transferred to Zimbabwe with promotion and later he took his young wife with him to Zimbabwe. I learnt a big lesson from the case of Dr. Robertson. When an expatriate fails to perform his duty he always gets a smooth transfer to other African countries. I think the only way that this could be improved is when Africa has its own experts and stops relying on foreign assistance.

25 Face to Face with Colonel Mengistu

Our department was very busy trying to meet the various demands. Each morning when I entered my office I would receive many telegrams and radio messages. At that time, our veterinary department had long-range radio communication with thirty-two different stations in the country. One morning, I received a very alarming radio message from our quarantine station in Shashemene. The manager reported to me that the people in that area had invaded and taken the quarantine station by force. This particular quarantine station was under the management of my division. It was an area covering 4000 hectares and it was serving three regions in the southern part of the country. Animals, which were brought to the Melgue Wondo slaughterhouse, were kept for twenty-one days or more in the quarantine station. They were inspected, sprayed, and treated against various diseases. They were also given special feeding ration to recover from the shock of the long trip and then they were taken to the slaughterhouse, which was not far from the quarantine.

The European inspection team approved the certification of the slaughterhouse because of the type of health care the animals were receiving at the quarantine station. If the premises was taken over by the local peasants it meant that the slaughterhouse could not operate. I had to take this message very seriously and immediately rushed to the office of the minister, who was Dr. Asrat Feleke at that time. I explained to him in a panicking voice about the consequences of this action by the people. Dr. Asrat was very worried because everything was working against the interests of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ethiopian revolution had brought a lot of confusion and misunderstanding between the people and the government. The land proclamation said that the land belonged to the people, so the people misinterpreted this proclamation and started to occupy government holdings. The situation was like a tsunami wave, which affected everybody. That was why the minister was very unhappy and did not know how to handle this situation. So after listening to my report, he asked me in a very tired voice as to what he could do. Nobody listened to him anymore. There was confusion and anarchy everywhere. I asked

whether we could report this to the highest authority in the country. Once they were made aware it would be up to them to save these infrastructures. The minister didn't want to disappoint me, so he said okay. He said that he was going to call Colonel Mengistu, the deputy chairman of the ruling military council, and that I would have to explain the problem. I was surprised as to why I should be the one to explain when my boss was there. At that time, it was very dangerous to challenge any step taken by the broad mass, especially when it concerned land. Everybody was angry with what was going on but preferred to keep quiet.

We went with the minister to the Menelik palace, which Mengistu and other military council members were using as their headquarters. Mengistu received the three of us, and in a very calm and friendly voice asked the minister to explain the problems. The minister said that the best thing would be if the professionals themselves could explain. I was requested to start. I composed myself very confidently and started to brief Mengistu about the international rules and regulations for meat export. I explained to him about our achievements and came to the issue of quarantine at Melgue Wondo slaughterhouse and the general effect it would have on all our export slaughterhouses, etc. Mengistu was very interested in the topic; I think that was the first time he had ever heard about livestock export issues and the country's interest in this area. As I finished explaining the problem, Mengistu's temper also flared and he started to shout that this should be stopped. He said that the innocent peasants should not use this revolution to undermine the economy of the country. He told us that he was going to call the members of the defense subcommittee immediately and that I should explain to them also about what this problem would bring to the country. After an hour we were called for another meeting. This time it was with about thirty members of the Derg, and I repeated in the same tone all that I had explained to Mengistu. All the members of the committee were surprised as though it was for the first time they were listening to such adverse activities in the country. Such things were happening on a daily basis all over Ethiopia. This time, when it was included in their agenda for serious discussion, they all gave their full support to Mengistu to evict these people immediately and also to take similar actions in all other government lands taken by the people. I was now very happy that Mengistu and his colleagues were on our side.

This thing could have easily cost my life and I would not have been able to defend myself, because at that time some university intellectuals, especially those supporting the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party (EPRP), were very much advocating the nationalization of the government lands. As a result wildlife reserves, parks, and commercial farms were lawlessly affected through invasions by local people. Whoever tried to stop this had to face mob justice and would either be speared on the spot or be thrown into jail by the local authorities, as the main motive of the revolution was just to go along together with the broad mass. The slogan at that time was that if the local community wanted destruction, then we should go ahead and destroy. Mengistu, after the meeting, assigned three members of the Derg to go with me and a few more colleagues to the quarantine and liberate the slaughterhouse. The following day we left very early for the quarantine. Along the way, we met other representatives of the district authorities and also representatives of the people. The chairman of the Derg commission was a very smart man. He very tactfully started a discussion to gather opinions from everybody without telling them the decision of the government. It was during this discussion that it became very clear that even the local government authorities and the police force were in support of the people. They said that the land belonged to the ancestors of these people. It was the feudal government who had taken that land forty years ago without any compensation. Now the new proclamation had given the people their rights, so there was no question of discussion on this matter. The colonel, after listening very carefully, asked me to explain as to why the government should keep this land and slaughterhouse. This was a very dangerous situation for me to explain about those things, but since the Derg officer wanted, I explained the reason why the government should keep the land. I was booed from every direction and told to sit down. But I kept on shouting on the microphone until I finished my explanation.

Many people were surprised with my stubborn attitude and I was branded as a Derg agent. But I was very sure of myself that I was doing the right thing, so I pushed on. Finally, after listening from all directions, the Derg man officially announced about the decision of the military government to protect the quarantine. He gave very convincing reasons from the government's point of view and gave instructions to everybody, especially the local authorities and the police, to implement the decisions and give a

feedback after forty-eight hours. We waited for two days and visited the slaughterhouse and once and for all I saved the Shallo quarantine and slaughterhouse from being destroyed. I am very proud for having stood very firmly by this position up to the end.

26 The Day I Almost Lost My Life

The Ethiopian socialist revolution continued to bring in a lot of complications. The military government was seriously punishing subversive elements in the country who wanted to undermine the revolution. Everything was seen with great suspicion. The government office was full of secret agents. It was a time when nobody trusted anybody. Everybody was miserable and unhappy. Government political cadres were haunting residents in their residential areas and also at their workplaces. Women were harassed through the progressive women organizations established in the residential areas and also at workplaces. My wife would come in the evening and complain how she had been persuaded to join the movements for women and the Urban Dwellers' Association, which were more or less grassroot level extensions of the communist government. The youth were also harassed through the same organization and were persuaded to join the Ethiopian National Youth Movement. The harassment was from all directions; day and night socialist propaganda on the mass media was calling out for more class struggle. Junior staff was agitating against the senior staff. It was a continuous torture for people who were in managerial positions. The papers were full of government propaganda sensitizing the broad mass and the working class to struggle against the bureaucracy. We were targeted as bureaucrats. Everybody became fault finders and was ready to accuse or report secretly to the political bureaus established in each government premises. We were working under terrible pressure and tension.

One day, there was a meeting organized by the political office in the ministry to discuss about the low pace of political progress made in the ministry in terms of rooting out bureaucrats. More than one thousand staff members were gathered at the ministry's conference hall in Kazanchis. The Minister of Agriculture Dr. Asrat Feleke was invited to give orientation on the mandates and responsibilities of the ministry staff. Our minister was a very humble and moderate man who was not so much involved in politics. He was trying to give fatherly advice to the staff members to concentrate on other technical duties and continue to help the over eight million subsistent farmers in Ethiopia. He gave a briefing about how the ministry had

organized all the farmers into peasant associations. He also said that over twenty-five thousand associations with about ten million members had been now formed all over the country and that this unit was very conducive to work within, in terms of providing our services. While he was giving this important orientation some youngsters who were agents of the contra-revolutionary party at that time started to throw some very funny and strange questions at the minister. The minister tried to explain but they kept on provoking the minister in a very hostile manner. The minister finally lost his temper and started to shout at those individuals. When they observed that the minister had lost control over the meeting, they heavily criticized him and said that he was not the right person to introduce class struggle in the ministry and advised him to resign. The minister immediately called on the security officers and four of those radical individuals were arrested. The meeting was adjourned in a disorderly manner.

The following day the same group of radicals called for another meeting and again everybody went to attend the meeting. At that time, all staff members were fond of spending their time in such meetings as they were the right places to harass their bosses and managers. In that meeting, the chairman of the general discussion groups reported that four colleagues had been arrested as a result of the previous day's meeting. He called upon the ministry staff to use whatever force they had to fight the military regime and make sure that their colleagues were released from prison. The strategy for fighting with the government, which the chairman suggested, was to write an ultimatum letter to the military government on behalf of all the staff members of the ministry. The letter would state that if the government did not release the four staff members in three days' time, all staff members would stop coming to the office and would also take some other steps to fight the government. Finally he suggested that there was no need for everybody to sign on the letter; he proposed that the chairperson of the department's discussion groups should sign on their behalf. He asked them whether this was acceptable. Without discussing on this very important matter, all the staff members approved the proposal by clapping their hands. I was not sure if they had understood the consequences, but they just simply supported this dangerous proposal. I was very disappointed with this decision and left for my house pained at what was happening in our country. Unfortunately, I was a member of the discussion group in my

department and I knew that the problem would come back to me. The following day, I left for a two days' field trip; when I returned back on the third day, the general secretary of the ministry's discussion group came to my office early in the morning and told me that everybody had signed that letter except for me and other colleagues. He complained that the deadline had passed and I was responsible for the delay in not sending the letter. He asked me to sign the letter quickly so that he could post it before 9:00 a.m. I politely replied that I had to read the letter first and understand the content. He said out of fourteen people twelve had signed in that letter, that is, only me and the other guy. He said with confidence that this was simple democracy. I had to sign the letter otherwise the sword of the people would cut my neck. I was very shocked with his rude behavior and I stubbornly told him that I had to read the paper first.

The spirit and wisdom of Negadras immediately reminded me that I should never sign a letter which I had not read, no matter what happens. Comrade Tesfaye said okay and that I could read the letter while he smoked his cigarette. I took the letter and started to read. The letter simply told the military government that if their colleagues were not released in three days, all the staff members of the ministry would quit working and go underground to fight the military government. It also said that they would close political discussion forums willingly and they would boycott all sort of communications with the government. When I read the letter, every sentence made my hairs stand and I became quite emotional. I asked Comrade Tesfaye whether he had read out this letter to the staff members. He said no. There was no need. Then I challenged him as to why he was doing this to these innocent people when they had no idea of what the letter contained. I told him that I will not sign this letter under any circumstances unless he read it out to the people and everybody signed on this letter.

He was very upset with me and told me that I had succeeded in obstructing and aborting the decision and struggle of the broad mass. He said that he would go back and report my behavior to the people and they would have to take revolutionary action against me. In the language of a revolution, revolutionary action means eliminating the person who is against the revolution. I said that it was fine and to go ahead. I was convinced that I would face the consequences and make sure that I don't put others into

trouble. During the day, the news went round that some pro-military government bureaucrats had undermined the decision of the ministry staff and everyone was invited again to come and listen to the actions which would be taken on these individuals. On that day, the conference hall was full starting from 4:00 p.m.; everybody had come to see the strong muscle of the people against the bureaucrats. I decided to attend the meeting and defend myself. I communicated with a few colleagues and explained to them the problem. I asked them to suggest that I should explain to the people why I had refused to sign the letter.

In the beginning, Comrade Tesfaye gave a very convincing introductory speech about democracy and unity in a situation like in our ministry and later on explained how a few people had managed to undermine the decision of the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, etc., and then he opened the house for discussion. Several radical individuals shouted that we should deal with these traitors immediately. They even started to abuse me and the bureaucrats in the ministry who had no feeling for the impoverished community, as we would continue to undermine their struggle in future, if we were not immediately stopped. The shouting continued from different directions and they called for immediate shedding of our blood. One of the colleagues got up and he said in a very convincing manner that we had indeed made a grave mistake and we should pay for our mistakes, but before that we should be given a chance to explain as to why on earth had we betrayed them. After a short discussion, the suggestion from the colleague was accepted and we were allowed to talk. My colleague became very emotional and lost his voice. He just simply grumbled that he did not believe in what had been decided and so he had refused to sign. His reasoning was not easily accepted and it attracted even more condemnation. I was later called to the floor to explain why I had refused to sign. I knew that this was my opportunity to save my life and I was supposed to compose myself and deliver a convincing argument supported by facts. As soon as I took the floor, some radicals kept on booing me and shouting. I pleaded to the house that all I needed was five minutes of attention to convey my reasons and begged them to be patient for five minutes and listen to me.

Once I got them silent, I started by explaining to them that I had spent seven years in a socialist country and I knew how the system worked more

than anybody else in this room. I told them that the letter which was written by Comrade Tesfaye would destroy each one of us in this room and members of our families. The letter had given an ultimatum to the military government that we would voluntarily resign from our government posts and join the underground movement to fight the government. I asked them as to how many of us in this room were prepared to do this. I also said that I knew that most of us were struggling to earn small subsistent monthly salaries to support our families. I asked them as to how many of us in the room were prepared to lose their jobs and give up their employment. I continued to say that I had completed university education and knew more about the government setup. The government could replace in a month's time most of us if we resigned but I said that I wasn't sure if that was everybody's wish. I assured them that I would gladly sign on this letter if it could be read now. Then we could all agree on it and also sign it. I had the right to sign for myself but I had no right to sign on their behalf regarding such a very important decision. I told them to request for the reading of the letter, which could have gone without their knowledge in the morning, and thanked them for their patience and left the floor. The participants started to clap their hands for my stance of courage and truth and they insisted that the letter should be read.

The chairman very disappointingly requested his secretary to read the letter. Before the secretary had finished reading the letter people started to rush and leave the conference room, so that they would not be involved in this matter. Those who remained behind started to scream that the letter be immediately destroyed. They expressed their anger at the team of the comrade for having brought such a disaster in their life by trying to send the letter to the military government. The file on this issue was closed on that day. I won a big battle on that day. The lesson I wish to share here is that one should always stand firm for the truth. We should never be afraid of prosecution by covering up the truth; in fact, during the Ethiopian revolution many people lost their lives or spent most of their time trying to defend the truth. I was very lucky on that occasion that I was not lynched by the foolish mob, which was led by a few submissive individuals. I thank God for having survived that crisis.

27 My Appointment as the Director of the National Veterinary Services

Discharging my responsibilities as the director of meat inspection and quarantine was not easy, especially in the transition from a feudal government to a socialist government, politics was involved in every activity in our ministry. The so-called class struggle between the privileged and the less privileged continued at full scale. There were accusations and counteraccusations in the offices. The demand for improved services from the rural community was growing while capacity was limited to fulfill the national requirements. We were working under a terrific environment.

Dr. Alemu Abebe was head of the veterinary department at that time. He was a very bright man who graduated from the University of Moscow; he was interested in pursuing his career as tsetse and Trypanosomiasis expert. He spent a year at Edinburgh University in UK and returned sometime in 1973. After working for a year he was appointed as the director general of the veterinary department. There was a restructuring exercise made by the government at that time, and they introduced a policy to abandon the titles of director general, vice minister, etc., from the government structure because they said that it was too capitalistic and didn't sound revolutionary. From that time on word, the titles were changed to heads of departments or division. Dr. Alemu Abebe was a committed socialist and was very much involved in the political movements. At that time, he was a key operative for the MEASON Party. MEASON was a movement of revolutionary Ethiopian students who were studying in Europe. They established an underground movement with a communist ideology. This party played a crucial role in bringing fundamental revolutionary changes in Ethiopia. We shall read more about its involvement in future.

Dr. Alemu was a very hardworking and committed young veterinarian. We immediately started to understand each other and started to work in close harmony. He had a special capacity to analyze problems and introduce constructive discussions. We used to remain in the office after working hours and discuss on strategies for disease control. I was very proud to have a colleague of this caliber, as we were working harmoniously. One day I

had a telephone call from the office of the military council. The person who telephoned was the special aid to Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. His name was also Mengistu Gemetchu but he was a sergeant. In a very authoritative voice, he inquired where Dr. Alemu was. I told him that Dr. Alemu had traveled to the province of Harare and that he would not be back before the next week. The officer instructed me with a very harsh voice that I should link, by all means, with Dr. Alemu immediately and inform him that the chairman Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam wanted to see him by the next day. I told the officer that I would try my best through a radio communication. After about one hour I got Dr. Alemu on our long-range radio while he was visiting a veterinary vaccination campaign in Gode, Ogaden Region, and gave him the message.

Dr. Alemu was somehow disturbed and asked me if I had any idea for what purpose they were looking for him. It was normal at that time that if the military council people were looking for you it was most probably to lock you up or take some other action. I said to him that I didn't know and wished him the best luck. He returned the following day and went to see Chairman Mengistu, the leader of the military ruling council. From what I learned later, he was appointed to join the group of twelve revolutionary individuals who were the special political advisors to Mengistu regime. He came the following day to our office and told me that he was leaving for good. He was given an office at the military council headquarter at the palace of Emperor Menelik. He wrote me a letter of official delegation and wished me good luck. He became a very close ideological advisor to Mengistu Haile Mariam.

Later on Dr. Alemu was nominated as the Mayor of Addis Ababa. After some years he was also appointed as the deputy prime minister in charge of economic affairs. His portfolio covered the Ministry of Agriculture. We maintained a very good relationship with the military junta until the fall of Mengistu's regime. Dr. Alemu is now serving lifetime jail as a political prisoner. He was accused of engineering the red terror mass murdering campaign in 1977-1979. I have visited him at the Addis Ababa main prison sometime back. I have seen the rise and fall of so many of my colleagues during the Ethiopian Revolution. A very funny slogan was popular at that time which says: "Revolution eats (consumes) its own children." Under this

pretext, people who had been loyal and very useful for the country and the revolution had been eliminated mercilessly.

I then became the head of the National Veterinary Service by accident and, later on, the minister confirmed my appointment. This gave me more confidence to execute my new job. For a veterinarian reaching the level of director of veterinary services is the highest position in his career. I was only thirty-four years old at that time. Fortunately I had a nine-year experience which covered the field work and teaching. I was very articulate in my communication ability as a result of lecturing at the Animal Health School. The two-year experience as the director of meat inspection and quarantine also helped me. So I was equipped with the knowledge and administrative experience to lead this very important department in the ministry. At that time there were close to seventy Ethiopian veterinary doctors, five hundred animal health assistants, and over two thousand other staff members. We had a total fleet of three hundred and fifty vehicles and thirty-one long-range radio communication equipments. We also had the French Veterinary Mission, the British Veterinary Mission, the Chinese Veterinary Mission, the Russian Veterinary Mission, the Cuban Veterinary Mission, the FAO Advisor and many other collaborators.

There were also five technical divisions under my directions: the field services division, the laboratory services division, the meat inspection and quarantine division, the veterinary institute in Debre Zeit, and the Veterinary Animal Health Training School. Later on I established two more divisions: the disease investigation division, and tsetse and trypanosomiasis control division. Under the field services division we had fourteen provincial veterinary offices, 108 Awraja (district) veterinary services, and five hundred Woreda veterinary services. We were targeting out programs on twenty-three thousand peasant associations, as a unit in the field. There was a very clear operational structure for disease control and other veterinary extension work.

The Ethiopian veterinary service was more or less established as a very small department during the Italian occupation. The Italians brought veterinarians with their army, established a small unit, started to produce vaccines against rinderpest, and carried out small-scale vaccination

campaigns. After the Italians left there was no Ethiopian veterinarian, so the job was done by technicians. The first Ethiopian veterinarians was Dr. Engeda Yohanns, who graduated from Maryland University in USA returned from abroad a few years before the Italian invasion. Later they joined the Ethiopian Patriotic Movement and tried to fight the Italians but were advised to go abroad and raise funds in support for the war. Dr. Engeda left for UK and later on went to America, and established an organization known as the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) for the support of the Ethiopian war against the Italian Invading Force. Dr. Engeda later fell sick and died; Dr. Engedas organization is still alive and the secretary for the organization has established recently a museum of Rastafarians in Shashemene known as the Black Lion Museum. A monument in commemoration of the first Ethiopian veterinary doctor and a recognized freedom fighter is built at the Teferi Makonen School in Addis Ababa. Emperor Haile Selassie recognized the services of these great Ethiopians and allowed the establishment of this monument.

The other Senior Veterinary Doctor who should be recognized in the historic establishment of the Ethiopian veterinary Services is Dr.Amelework Deferes Byene who graduated from London University,Uk. He also participated in running of the animal health services in the early days.

After the war the veterinary services were not given so much attention in Ethiopia until a young man named Pascal Woldemariam, an agronomist in France, was appointed as the first head of the veterinary services. Mr. Pascal did a lot of good work. He later joined the FAO as an expert and left the country. In 2007, I invited Mr. Pascal to visit the National Veterinary Institute in Debre Zeit. He was the one who negotiated with Emperor Haile Selassie for the allocation of this land for animal health activities including the establishment of a vaccine production laboratory. Mr. Pascal now lives in Ethiopia and is involved in the antidesertification and green movement campaigns.

Sometime in 1963 Dr. Assefa Wolde Giorgis was appointed as the Codirector of the Ethiopian National Veterinary Institute in Debre Zeit which was established in 1964. Later on he was appointed as the new director general of the National Ethiopian Veterinary Services. He also

played a crucial role in the establishment of the new The Animal Health Training School in Debre Zeit. Ethiopia joined the Jp. 15 joint project for the eradication of rinderpest between 1970 and 1976 under the leadership of Dr. Asefa. Regional veterinary laboratories and the provincial veterinary laboratory were also established during his time. Dr. Assefa Wolde Giorgis played a crucial role in strengthening the Ethiopian veterinary services.

Later that year Dr. Assefa was nominated as the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture staff to the parliament to be a member of The National Shengo. In 1975 Dr. Girma Tadege took over as the director general. After a short time Dr. Girma was appointed as assistant minister and left the department. Dr. Alemu Abebe was later appointed in the same year. I took over from Dr. Alemu Abebe in 1976.

My first priority was to choose the people who were going to work with me as the heads of the various divisions. I strongly believed in participatory leadership, so I had to recommend the names of renowned team members for this position. I managed to get confirmation for the appointments of the following colleagues, the leadership qualities of whom I had confidence in. I nominated Dr. Ayalew Ketsela (deceased) as the Head of the Meat Inspection and Quarantine, Dr. Tamerat Haile Yesus (deceased) in charge of Field Services, Dr. Fikre Yosef in charge of National Veterinary Institute, Dr. Ephrem Mamo as director of the Animal Health School, Dr. Fsiha Gebgreab in charge of Disease Investigation and Regional Laboratories and Dr. Mulugetta Habte Selassie in charge of Testes and Trypanosomiasis Control. I was very lucky that the appointments of these colleagues were endorsed and confirmed by the ministry. Once my team was in place, we established a technical committee, which comprised of the heads of divisions, to meet once in a week and update on the progress of the work in the line of their responsibilities. In six months' time our technical committee functioned so well and smooth that our department was rated as the best performing department in the ministry.

I also established a team of mobile inspectors who would roam around the country to see if the veterinary ethics, field, and laboratory work are performed with the internationally recognized standards. The four mobile inspection teams comprised of senior animal health assistants. I was heavily

criticized for assigning animal health assistants as inspectors. My problem was that there was not enough veterinary personnel at that time. But the mobile inspection team brought a lot of important information from the field to my office. I also established a standing committee to oversee regularly the issues of recruitment, assignments, transfer, scholarships, disciplines, etc. The committee's members included the heads of divisions. I also established a special task force to revise the various positions and titles in the department. We introduced during that time the following positions: senior and junior positions for veterinarians, animal health assistants, and animal health technicians. The position of the head of the department and the national veterinary institute was established to be professional (6). This was the highest category of classifications in the country for professionals; I was the first to get the professional (6) category in the history of positioning Ethiopians within the Government System with Professional (P6). We managed to lobby for these positions through our veterinary association for which I was the vice president. Everybody was happy with the new change in our department and almost everybody was placed in the new revised positions and got some kind of salary increment. The issue of transfers, appointments, scholarships, etc., was handled in a professional manner.

The operational budget allocated to the department was very low, so we started to develop convincing programs with capital budget requirements. The following year my department got more money for building new clinics, etc. The most important responsibility of our department was the purchase of pharmaceuticals and equipments. The tender procedure for this took more than eight months every year. This was as a result of dalliance and lack of meeting deadlines. The department budget for the purchase of drugs and equipment was repeatedly expiring. I established at the beginning of the fiscal year a task force to start these job immediately. I also established a priority for various activities. My new directive was to spend 50 percent of our budget for drugs and laboratory reagents for the production of vaccine in NIV. I wanted the Debre Zeit laboratory to manufacture all the required vaccines locally. We made an inventory of the requirement and that year we purchased all the raw materials needed for the vaccine-manufacturing laboratory. My next priority was trypanocidal drugs which were in high demand in the Southwestern provinces. With this change of priorities we managed to cover the most important area.

I found it very important to take regular inventory of stores so that we avoid purchasing items which are not needed. One important lesson I learned here was the Gimsa reagent and microscopic immersion oil. We found out that in the course of the five years the NVI was buying this stuff every year without taking the needs into consideration. We found out that we had a stock which was enough for over 40 years. On the field level rinderpest, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, anthrax, blackleg, and pasteurellosis were our priority diseases. In very specific cases we bought vaccines from outside for foot and mouth disease (FMD). We also vaccinated against Newcastle disease in poultry and rabies in dogs. We encouraged, as much as possible, cost recovery for vaccination against FMD, rabies, etc., and treatment against diseases in the clinic. The other vaccinations are given free of charge.

Clinical services were given on cost-recovery basis. The biggest problems I encountered at that time were controlling cattle movement, certifications, adulteration, and smuggling of veterinary drugs. I decided to establish cooperation with the Ministry of Health and established basic drug list for animal health use. We identified around two hundred basic drug lists which are very commonly used in the country. We requested the Ministry of Health to provide block permit permission for these drugs to enter into the country. We gave full authority to the Ministry of Health to take care of these responsibilities since they had better drug control laboratories and facilities. The joint committee for control of imported pharmaceuticals from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health worked in close cooperation. I also recommended to the minister to have a veterinary desk under the main pharmaceutical corporation of the Ministry of Health. I created a position for a veterinary doctor for that desk who was in charge for the purchase and control of veterinary drugs. I did this because we did not have the capacity to control quality of drugs in our department.

28 Joining the World Animal Health Organization (OIE)

I was invited to attend the Annual Veterinary Conference at OIE in May 1976 in Paris. At that time OIE had membership of about 120 countries. Ethiopia was not a member but I was invited as an observer. The OIE is similar to the World Health Organization (WHO). Its headquarters are in Paris. At that time the director general of the OIE was Dr. Vitoz, who was a Frenchman; I was given the seat allocated for the Ethiopian delegation at the OIE conference hall. I was very proud to see my country's flag among the other flags in the beautiful conference room. More so I was also very proud to sit on the reserved seat for permanent delegates. On the first day I was introduced as the delegate from Ethiopia who is attending the OIE conference for the first time. I was invited to give a short presentation on the disease situation in my country. I read the report, which I had prepared and got lots of appreciation for bringing a written report on my country's livestock disease situation. Each country is obliged to provide a monthly disease occurrence report to the OIE. Ethiopia's space in the annual booklet was empty as was the case of many other African countries. I was terribly ashamed of this and immediately promised myself that Ethiopia should join the OIE and also provide regular report on disease status to OIE.

We are part of the global family. We have to be open and accessible to information. I was also shocked during the meeting of the administrative committee that Ethiopia cannot vote as we were not members of OIE. This also put me to shame. I thought that Ethiopia was a very important country with so many livestock population. I inquired about the terms for regular membership and I was told that there are five categories and the lowest is the fifth category where member countries are required to pay around US$10,000 per year. As soon as I returned to my country I drafted a letter to my minister and briefed him on the problem. Our minister at that time was Ato Zegeye Asfaw. He immediately supported me and wrote a letter to the Central Planning Ministry, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Ethiopia to join the OIE. I personally pursued this letter and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote an official letter to OIE that Ethiopia would be a member immediately and they would also be transferring the

membership fee. I am proud today that Ethiopia became a member of OIE in 1977. Since that time I have participated on the annual OIE conference twenty-two times. Ethiopia is now a very important member of OIE submitting regular monthly reports and also receiving regularly publication from OIE. The OIE is the only mandated organization to inform other countries about outbreaks of various livestock diseases. Ethiopia is now receiving all this information from other countries through the OIE.

I am also proud today that the OIE gave official recognition for Ethiopia on rinderpest eradication. The Official Freedom from Rinderpest Disease certificate was awarded by The director general of OIE to the director of the Ethiopian National Veterinary Services Dr. Berhe Gebre Egziabeher in May 2008 in an official ceremony in Paris. This makes Ethiopia among the very few African countries that have been officially recognized as rinderpest free.

29 Arrival of 115 Cuban Veterinarians

Socialist Ethiopia was consolidating relationship with Eastern Block countries. One of the revolutionary countries who had a lot of political and socioeconomic relationship was Cuba. During the last quarter of 1977 the elder brother of Comrade Fidel Castro came to visit Ethiopia. He was in charge of dairy development programs in Cuba. Under his leadership Cuba became very successful in its national milk production schemes. Dairy product was the only source of animal protein which was not rationed in Cuba at that time because there was a lot of milk and milk products produced with the state-owned diary production system. The strategy which was used to achieve this goal was to import an average of five thousand dairy cows of Holstein Friesian type from Canada. They continued to import at a rate of five thousand for twenty years and managed to establish their foundation stocks from the off springs. There was this special dairy cow whose name was Urba Blanca. This cow was producing hundred liters of milk a day. This cow became the National Symbol of Communist Cuba. There were video films and a lot of reports written about this famous cow. This cow also had a presidential protection. There was one veterinary doctor assigned to this cow throughout her lifetime and enjoyed twenty-four hours medical attention by the state. Their objective was to get similar offspring from this cow. Unfortunately, the daughters and granddaughters of this golden cow did not perform on the same level. Finally, the cow got sick and died. I was told that her remains was fixed with a taxidermist and is exhibited in one of the national museums in Cuba.

The Cubans were also very successful in establishing a grandparent genetic line (stock) for poultry production. These were special genetic lines that could only be established through a lot of research. There are very few countries who are owners of poultry grandparent stocks, and Cuba is one of them. Cuba can produce parent stock locally and distribute high breeds to local farmers. With this system, Cuba is also producing enough eggs and poultry to meet local demands. The brother of Comrade Castro is a very proud and prominent communist party member who has helped his country achieve its level. At one time in 1978, when the brother of Fidel Castro

arrived in Ethiopia, he was met with a red-carpet reception. I was attached to the Ethiopian delegations who were accompanying him during his tour in Ethiopia. We had a lot of discussions with him during his stay in the country. Before he left, we had a big meeting involving many senior government officials. Mr. Castro was winding up his visit by meeting senior people at the Ministry of Agriculture expressing his impressions and his future wishes. He was using interpreter during that meeting when he became very emotional and removed his shoes, wallet, and belt and told us that every man must have these three things on him on a daily basis. These items are made from leather and Ethiopia is the richest country in her animal resources and can invade the world market with quality leather products. In this noble goal Cuba would help Ethiopia. Cuba should also see that Ethiopia receive the best genetic material for diary production and poultry production.

Mr. Castro said that these two strategic genetic materials for poultry and dairy breed are protected by the capitalist as equivalent to sources of nuclear power. They are kept in top secret so that no poor country can have access to them. Cuba would donate these special genetic materials to Ethiopia free of charge. Ethiopia would have to follow the Cuban system to be self-sufficient in dairy and poultry production. He also said that the biggest problem in Ethiopia is shortage of trained manpower. Cuba would assist Ethiopia by training hundreds of these badly required professionals. In the meantime Cuba would bring to Ethiopia any number of veterinarians to assist in the disease-control programs. He told us that he has already signed a memorandum of agreement with the Ethiopian government on this issue and we shall see the result in a very short time. He was very much applauded by the audience for this commitment and dedication. The minister thanked him very much and Comrade Castro returned back home.

Two months after his return we were informed that 115 Cuban veterinarians are on their way and we should be prepared to meet them and assign them to various places. I started to get worried because we did not have the capacity to receive and assign so many Cuban veterinarians in such as short time. As this responsibility was given to me and I was instructed from the minister’s office to handle this issue, I had to quickly call my advisors to work out a strategy to immediately receive these Cuban veterinarians and

assign them without wasting time. I knew that this was a political issue and failing to meet this requirement would mean a lot of trouble. I prepared the following strategy for receiving and assigning the veterinarians.

It was important to give them one-week orientation in Addis Ababa. We divided them into fifteen groups. Each group has to have a team leader as epidemiologist, one laboratory expert, one clinician, one meat inspector and one vaccination coordinator. We decided to give them a salary of Ethiopian Br350, which was equivalent to US$150. We immediately bought household equipments including stoves and fridges. We hired a watchman and a cook for each team. We gave them general instruction to divide assignments in accordance to our proposal. As soon as they arrived we gave them the orientation and immediately, dispatched them to the various provinces. The provincial veterinary officer was taking care of each group. The Cuban government provided seven Wazi Jeeps, which are made in USSR, for each team, while we provided the fuel. In a very short time the Cubans left to the various parts of the country and managed to integrate themselves to the adverse situation in the rural community. Cubans were not allowed to complain about their problems. They always greet you with a smile, followed by saying “no problem.”

I started to observe that these people were so seriously oppressed with the strict communist regime that they were scared to challenge their bosses on any issue. The problem with the Cuban veterinarians was that they did not speak English and tried to quickly learn the local language. They had very limited knowledge abut tropical diseases and they didn’t contribute the way they were expected to as they were completely in a different environment. Anyway they seemed to be very happy and quickly adopted their life to the Ethiopian culture, the farmers, and the rural community. People in the rural community loved them as foreigners because they were very sociable and loved eating and drinking the local drinks.

30 The Unbelievable Experience of the Poultry and Dairy Genetic Farms

Following the agreement and direction of Commander Fidel Castro for the supply of the poultry genetic stocks I received a communication from the vice minister of Cuban Affairs in Ethiopia, Commander Curvello. He was a personal representative of Fidel Castro in Ethiopia and was fully empowered on military and civilian matters to Ethiopia. The communication revealed that 30,000 eggs from the grandparent genetic stock would be sent to Ethiopia in a short time and seven senior veterinarians and poultry specialists would arrive earlier to prepare the genetic farm. I prepared the Ethiopian counterparts for the Cuban team. President Mengistu was very much aware of this program and he gave strict instruction to the minister of agriculture to make sure that this project does not fail and also be kept confidential so that it would not be undermined by external enemies.

We selected a farm in Debre Zeit which suits this purpose. When the Cuban experts arrived we started to prepare the site in accordance to their requirements. The genetic farm has to be completely refurbished with all the necessary requirements put in place. It was double fenced and the whole premise was disinfected repeatedly for about a month. Then the plane which brought the thirty thousand diamond eggs arrived at the military airport in Debre Zeit. They were quickly moved to our site in Debre Zeit. We left most of the job to be handled by the Cuban comrades until our people are trained. I was visiting that place once a week and compiled my report for my minister regularly who was continuously informed about everything. The thirty thousand eggs were incubated in a special incubator brought from Cuba. Even the feed for the chicken was also brought from Cuba. Out of the thirty thousand eggs about twenty thousand were successfully hatched. This was not a bad result at all. In three weeks' time we separated the males and females and started to give special care for the female chickens. During the second month, the chickens performed very well and the growth rate was normal. There was no sign of disease and everything looked encouraging. By the beginning of the third month they started to

report a few death cases. Then progressively we started to lose up to twenty chickens per day. We were not able to establish the diagnosis at first. We brought our best poultry pathologists and they did postmortem in hundreds on the dead chickens. We also brought two experts on poultry diseases from Cuba and France with emergency and the two specialists agreed with the diagnosis. I was given the official report. The diseases were known as leucosis and were caused by a rare virus. It was very difficult to establish how the virus got access to the genetic farm. The theory which was acceptable to all of us was that the virus could be transmitted from wild birds by wind or air.

We should have introduced a special closed ventilator system so that air would not enter directly without being screened and purified. As such things are only installed in high-risk vaccine producing laboratories, etc., this did not come to our mind. My problem was how to bring this report to the Ethiopian authorities. Our soldiers may believe again that it was a political sabotage. Comerade Curvello, who came to visit the premises, was given firsthand information by the Cuban counterparts. A genetic farm must be disease free; once an infectious disease of this type occurs the only option is to destroy the farm by slaughtering and incinerating the carcases of all the Chicken. No chicken must come alive from that farm, as they are potential dangers for the spread of the disease. I called my colleagues and the Cuban veterinarians to make the joint plan on the fate of the Debre Zeit poultry farm.

We signed the report and implemented the destruction of the remaining poultry farm. That was the end of one of the most important genetic farm project in Ethiopia. It is true that we don’t have the capacity to manage and sustain such a farm with the present knowledge in Ethiopia. I am not even sure if we needed that poultry genetic farm at that time because we did not manufacture the feed in Ethiopia, which was suitable for the genetic farm. We had very serious shortages of poultry feed in the country that commercial poultry farms were not profitable. The income of the average people is so low that they prefer to buy local chickens with traditional prices. Because of various reasons it was not the right time to push for this type of program. Most African countries prefer to import parent stocks or high breeds and feed them in the country and sale them to the local market.

The poultry genetic farm was simply a drama in the political cooperation between socialist countries so the outcome is not so important. As that time a lot of publicity was made to satisfy the leaders.

So many projects of this type were initiated and collapsed in a very short time. In the case of the dairy farm, again, the motive was very positive but the project did not succeed. Fidel Castro decided to give for Ethiopia hundred top class pure Holstein Friesian heifers to be used as foundation stock to produce young calves through insemination. They also gave us about ten pedigree Holstein and fifteen Brahman breed bulls which were supposed to be used for semen collection and later to be used for crossbreeding with local cows. The 115 pregnant Heifers were brought to Ethiopia by ship and on landing they were taken to a farm in Holeta. The initial preparation of the new dairy farm followed all the required standards for the management of pedigree animals. Ethiopian and Cuban veterinarians were placed to manage these special animals which are sensitive to hostile environmental conditions. Their parents record while in Cuba indicated that these are very good milkers and produce over forty liters per day, but they need high standard quality feed and top sanitary management. Gradually calves born on that farm started to show symptoms of poor hygiene related to management diseases and the morality rate was very high. They started to have complications during birth, most of all they started to be affected with mastitis which is a very good indicator for poor udder management. Very soon they also demonstrated fertility problems which are associated with poor quality feed etc., gradually the management of the farm deteriorated and most of the cows that gave birth were giving less than fifteen liters of milk per day instead of forty liters per day.

The bulls were kept by the Ministry of Agriculture at the Kaliti Artificial Insemination Center. Adequate semen was collected from these bulls but the national crossbreeding program was not established properly. The Ethiopian land use policy doesn’t allow individuals to own enough land to keep dairy animal which is always associated with good capital and skills. The poor subsistence farmer has no capacity to keep grade animals as it is expensive to feed them and manage them. So, in general, the Ethiopian government’s dairy and poultry development scheme remained crippled during the last forty years because of very bad land use policy. Dairy and poultry farms

need land and water. Especially land is required to produce animal feed and pasture. It also requires high level of capital and skill to make a dairy farm and a poultry farm profitable. Because of this there is a very little chance in Ethiopia for these two sectors to grow on a large commercial scale in the near future. The present land use policy must be revised.

31 The Killer Vaccine

As the head of the national veterinary service, I took full charge of all the divisions. Teamwork beared good fruit and we started to get positive feedback from the staff members from the field. Every morning I got radio messages from all the thirty-one field radio stations about the livestock disease situation in the country. We had also a standby emergency disease investigation team, headed by Dr. Fsiha Gebreab, which could be mobilized in a very short time from the Shola Regional Veterinary Laboratory in Addis Ababa. We produced monthly reports for our bosses and they were happy with our performances.

I knew very well that human relationship is the most important engine in creating a harmonized team. At that time I was receiving everybody in my office and listened to their complaints. When somebody came to see me in my office I normally received him with a broad smile and asked first about his family and personal life before starting discussion on business. I found out that this relaxed my visitors a lot and they became friendlier in their effort to communicate with my colleagues and staff members. I always started my request with the word “please”; I always used the word “thank you” after getting any service and after finishing discussions. It is also important in leadership to appreciate everybody who had done a good job. This means a lot for the other people who are visiting their bosses. I also made it a habit to apologize by saying “I am sorry,” if I had made mistakes. These small tricks made wonders in my leadership quality in the department. As a result of this approach, I established confidence and a more conducive atmosphere in my work. Everybody was happy to come and talk to me on any problem, and I always tried to help solve their problems. I believe that this is the wisdom I inherited from Negadras and his regime in Kabana. I also applied patience and tolerance in solving problems. I tried to consult a lot with my friends and colleagues. It always worked in the right direction if proper consultations were made before decision. By using basic principles of wisdom, which says you have to respect others if you want to be respected, I continued to work with full confidence.

One day in April 1977 I received very alarming radio messages from different stations in the southern region. The messages were saying that animals recently vaccinated with the CBPP vaccine were dying. The reports said that over three thousand animals had died and over twenty-five thousand were sick. The reports also indicated the symptoms of the death. They said that the vaccinated animals developed a huge swelling around the vaccination site. They suffered from a lot of pain. They stopped feeding and died in three days. I was very shocked with this news, and immediately called the technical committee for discussion on this important crisis. In the meantime, I was getting telephone calls from various officials including the military council to explain what was going on. I decided to dispatch a disease investigation team to rush to several locations where the incidences had occurred to investigate and report to me. The following day, I started to get feedback from the disease investigation team that this problem was caused by the CBPP vaccine. I immediately instructed the provincial veterinarians to stop vaccinating against CBPP. I also passed instruction to collect all CBPP vaccines which were sent to various regions during that month. I requested the laboratory head to supply me with the details of the vaccine-manufacturing protocols for the specific batch.

One of the most important priorities in this emergency situation was to treat and save the animals, which were vaccinated and had the symptoms of the disease. We knew that the drug tylosine could miraculously save the sick animals if treated on time. The other drug, which was also very useful for treatment, was spiromicin, which was a product of a French company. Unfortunately, we did not have these drugs in our stock, so they had to be ordered from Europe. I called the head of the French Veterinary Mission, Dr. Deretour, and the head of the British Veterinary Mission, Dr. Heart, and explained to them the nature of importance attached to these two drugs and requested them for assistance. Both promised that they would make sure that the drugs could be airlifted the following day from Nairobi and Paris. I was promised two hundred thousand doses of these drugs. I then telephoned my previous boss and present high-level politician, Dr. Alemu Abebe, and explained to him what had happened. He immediately understood the problem and assured me that he would explain to Colonel Mengistu that the Ministry of Agriculture was taking care of the problem. I also requested him to give instruction to the airport custom office to release our drugs as soon

as they arrived the following day. I started to mobilize the veterinary school students to be ready to go and assist in a door-to-door treatment operation in more than sixty different sites. I also mobilized from the rinderpest campaign project about twenty Land Rovers to wait as a standby for this massive treatment operation.

The following day the two drugs arrived at Bole Airport in the evening and they were immediately collected from the airport and were taken to Debre Zeit veterinary institute where our operational office was located for this purposes. All the teams were immediately dispatched in all directions and started on a door-to-door treatment operation. I personally decided to supervise this operation and covered a total of one thousand kilometers in three days. The live saving operation was very successful. We treated in a weeks' time around twenty-nine thousand animals and almost all the treated animals were saved. The total death was around three thousand five hundred. We also involved the mass media people to assist us in reporting the success of our operation.

In the meantime the people who lost their animals were furious and they were accusing our staff members for killing their animals. About ten members of our staff were imprisoned in various locations. We had to plead with the administration officials for their release. Dr. Alemu Abebe helped us again in this regard.

Once we were through with the treatment of the animals we came back to Addis and started to investigate the cause of the problem. After checking all the stages two possibilities were suspected.

Possibility one was using the wrong strain of virulent virus for vaccine production. If this was the case then it was a human error and this could always happen by mistake. The 2nd possibility was a deliberate sabotage by some Technicians who were against the military Regime at that time. This was repeatedly demonstrated in many places.

32 The Cuban Doctor Who Saved the Life of My Child

During the first part of the Ethiopian revolution there were more or less drastic changes in all public services. The highest affected was the medical services. There were shortages of hospital beds and most of the drugs and pharmaceuticals were not available in the country. The socialist government was announcing on the mass media that they were not giving attention for those people who are expecting comfortable hospital attention. The priorities were to cater for the masses in all aspects of services. As a result the big hospitals were lacking budgets and staffs. Most of the Ethiopian medical doctors were also called to assist in the war front. Each medical personnel had to give a certain kind of services at the warfront to the soldiers who were wounded at the warfront. All this problems created fast deterioration of the medical services. It was during this unfortunate time that my third daughter fell sick and she needed a very specialized medical assistance, which did not exist during that time in Ethiopia. My daughter, Bilen Solomon, was only five years at that time and she was a very happy and healthy child until that unfortunate year of 1983.

One day I found her two eyelids and lips swollen in the morning. I asked her babysitter Kebebush what went wrong. Kebebush told me that it might be as a result of the lotion she is using. I did not give so much attention at that time. The following morning I noticed the same symptoms: swollen eyes and lips. I became suspicious. As a veterinarian I also understood how the human body system works as it is the same in animals, so I immediately suspected that my small daughter has a problem with her kidneys. I immediately asked her to give me the sample of the urine with a small bottle and told my daughter to stay at home on that day and I rushed to the private laboratory for a urine analysis test. I was told to come and collect the result at lunchtime. The laboratory belonged to Mr. Arsho, a Greek immigrant, who succeeded in establishing a very well-operating private laboratory in Piazza area in Addis Ababa. He himself was present on that day giving out the results. When my turn came he asked me whose urine sample was that. I told him that it belonged to my daughter. He told me that she is seriously ill according to the result. She should be admitted to a

hospital and see a specialist immediately. He told me that if she did not reach the hospital this afternoon she would be in a very critical situation. I was shocked with the result and I rushed to the hospital with her. I admitted her to the Yekatit 12 Hospital near the university campus at Sidist Kilo. I was lucky to get a ward in a very short time as it is could be impossible under normal circumstances. My personal friend Dr. Leon Wolde was working as a general practitioner at that time in the hospital. He assisted me in admitting her in a short time. Unfortunately the doctor who was in charge of the children's ward did not have enough experience in this area. He ordered an injection, which would force her to urinate. This was completely wrong diagnosis and treatment. My daughter's condition was quickly deteriorating and she started to lose consciousness as a result of the wrong medication. When I went to see her in the evening I found out that she was weaker than she was in the daytime. I rushed to the Black Lion Hospital with the medical report. The urologist there saw the laboratory result and he instructed me to transfer from the Yekatit 12 Hospital to Black Lion Hospital. As instructed I did this the same evening.

I went to the Yekatit 12 Hospital and picked my daughter without authorization for release and rushed to my car and to the next hospital. They tried to stop me but I was determined not to stop so I drove past the gate. At the Black Lion Hospital there is a special ward funded by the Swedish government for children. Unfortunately there was no vacant bed. I pleaded with the doctors and they agreed with me that she could sleep on the corridor. They immediately started to check on her blood status. They found out that both her kidneys had failed. At that time poison was gradually building up in her system and unless she gets specialized treatment she had no hope. It would be a matter of few days before she passes away. She was already under coma when she arrived at the hospital and this situation was enhanced because of wrong medication at the Yekatit 12 Hospital. I was in a very difficult situation whereby I could not help my daughter. The idea of losing her panicked me and I kept on shading tears since I was completely helpless to save her. Her mother, Taffy, was crying nonstop and whenever I saw her eyes, they were red from continuous crying. All member of my family were now permanently at the hospital trying to support and encourage us.

In her case the diagnosis was very clear. Both kidneys had failed to function and there was only one dialysis machine in the hospital which was supposed to be a university training hospital. This machine cannot be used on small children who are less than eleven years as they can die from shock. The only alternative was to send her aboard. At that time we did not have the capacity to organize this type of treatment as we did not have that kind of money and also government authority to take the patient outside the country. Usually one must get a recommendation from the medical board and the minister of health must approve the travel for treatment outside Ethiopia. The immigration office would have to agree if they get convincing reasons, but then at that time you have to be very closely connected to the power base so that you can have this facility. To get permission to export foreign currency you would also require all these documents for the national bank, then you have to exchange into foreign currency at least Br50,000. We neither had the political connections nor the money to help our daughter. It was simply a very sad and frustrating situation. I missed work for several days and this was not possible as the director of the veterinary services. There were lots of day-to-day activities; I could not concentrate on my job. I kept on worrying about the end of my daughter's life.

While I was in this situation, one morning the Cuban comrade who was in charge of the Cuban mission approached me and said, "I am sorry that you are facing this problem." He said that the Cuban government is ready to help me solve this problem. He asked me to tell him the details of my daughter's situation. At first I did not believe him. But I also started to think that God is now showing me that there is a miracle. I opened my heart to this Cuban and sought his assistance. He suggested that there is a new specialist in kidney who is lecturing at the Medical Faculty of The University of Addis Ababa. He is a renowned urologist. He asked me if he could bring this doctor to come and see my daughter. I immediately said, "Yes." The Cuban Professor came to examine my daughter the same evening. After examining her he told me that there could be a chance to save her. He had only three days to save her life. He said he is going to use the most archaic and primitive way of saving the lives of people who are under this serious kidney condition. He said he needed forty liters of hypotonic salt solutions. He would inject half a liter of this solution with a

big syringe in one go through her abdomen and peritoneal cavity and wait for thirty minutes and drain back the thirty liters of the solution from the peritoneal cavity.

This exercise had to be repeated eighty times without interruption and each time it takes half an hour. The scientific explanation is that the hypotonic solution would absorb all the dirty blood or poisonous blood and after thirty minutes it changes to hypertonic solution saturated with poison and he would drain it out. In other words this is a very old system of dialysis which was used at the end of the eighteenth century before the invention of the dialysis machine. The problem was to get the simple hypotonic salt solution as it was not available in the pharmacies or in any of the hospitals. Again God made the miracle in his own way. My brother-in-law Dr. Getachew Tadesse was the vice minister of health at that time, so he tried his best to get this solution on my behalf. These forty liters of hypotonic salt solution was available at the Military Hospital; it was locked in a special store, which can be opened with the permission of the minister of defense. At that time the minister of defense was General Tesfaye Gebrekidane. The vice minister got in touch with him and convinced him that this solution would save the life of his cousin. Permission was granted immediately with his agreement that we would replace the solution from Nairobi in the next one week as it is kept for emergency as a strategic drug requirement for high military officials. We brought very quickly the solution to the Black Lion Hospital. The Cuban urologist was already there waiting.

He started that archaic dialysis treatment by injecting half a litter with a big syringe. He looks at his watch and after half hour he drains it out. I was sitting with him for the rest of the hours and saw with my eyes the solution which entered the peritoneal cavity as a clean solution was drained out as a dirty reddish fluid. The Cuban doctor remained there for the next three days, repeating the same boring treatment every half hour. I have never seen a doctor so committed to save human life. We were praying seriously to see the miracle. Many of my friends and members of my family did not believe in what this Cuban doctor was doing. But I strongly believed in miracle and wanted to see the end.

The miracle moment came when my daughter started to wake up and open her eyes a little. It was just like a person waking up from death. Then she woke up completely and started to search with her eyes for her loved ones. Then she started to smile when she saw us but was not able to talk. The treatment succeeded by removing all the toxic matter created as a result of the failure of both kidneys; the brain was affected as result of blocked and poisoned blood circulation, which was not purified by the kidneys.

This Cuban doctor patiently and with commitment spent seventy-two hours working on this therapy. My daughter fully woke up and started to play again with smile and pleasure. She immediately requested for something to eat as she was hungry. The Cuban doctor was later explaining to me that the kidneys of some children could fail like this. This happens one in fifty thousand cases. If they get the right treatment they would recover easily. In other countries, they have dialysis machines for kids. He said that it was just like starting a car without starter by pushing on the second gear. My daughter's both kidneys started to work at the same time. Her life was saved by miracle at that time. We are indebted to the Cuban doctor who sat next to my sick daughter for three days without complaining. We were very happy with the outcome and I certainly owe my Cuban colleagues and all the others who assisted in the recovery of my daughter.

Bilen Solomon has now grown up and she lives in Los Angeles, USA. Sometimes we discuss this miracle with her; God is great that this problem never returned back. I used to communicate with few of my Cuban colleagues until recently. They are great people who really tried to help Ethiopia within the limits of their ability. I think their initiative and good will came in the wrong time.

33 Tell Cubans to go Home

Many Ethiopians associated Cubans with the failure of socialism in Ethiopia. The Cuban did their best by assisting in war front in the fight against the Somali invaders at that time (1978-1979). The Cubans also tried to assist in other fields of economic importance. Especially the Cuban medical doctors' team were brought in large numbers from Cuba and they were literally put in every provincial hospital. Cuban doctors were blamed for poor medical experience and also for deaths associated with bad surgery and misdiagnosis. The same tendency was reflected in our veterinary department also, but it was not reported officially. I will give a brief account of the story associated with this problem. The late Dr. Melaku Tegene was one of the senior-most veterinarians who completed his studies in Italy at the famous School of Bologna. When Dr. Melaku returned home in 1968, he was assigned as lecturer at the Animal Health School, and later he decided to go to the Arsi region and work with the Swedish veterinary team. Dr. Melaku was a dedicated fieldman, so in a very short time he was recognized by everybody as a very good field veterinarian. He later decided to leave Arsi and got transfer to work in Gondar Province. He did his job very well in Gondar also. The only problem with Dr. Melaku was his habit of drinking illicit brews while working in the field. He needed a few cups of alcohol to get drunk and then he involved himself in so many problems. When Dr. Melaku did not drink, he was an angel. Once while working in Gondar, I sent the Cuban vice minister to visit the Cuban teams at Gondar. After visiting the teams at work during daytime they were all invited to have a small drink in the company of the vice minister in the Cuban residence. After drinking several shots of the Cuban Bacardi or Havana Club, Dr. Melaku lost his control and started to shout at the Cubans and their viceminister. He told them, "What the hell you Cubans are doing in my country? Anyway we don't need you. You should go back to your country now."

Everybody in the party was shocked with this remark. Especially the presence of the Cuban vice minister made it very difficult to handle this situation. So the vice minister who spoke English tried to explain to Dr.

Melaku that they has come to Ethiopia as a result of the joint socioeconomic cooperation agreement between Comrade Mengistu and Comrade Castro. He said politely that he had a personal letter in his pocket which was given to him by Comrade Castro about this cooperation. Dr. Melaku shouted with a very arrogant gesture that Mengistu and Castro were big enemies of the Ethiopian people and that they could both go to hell. He did not give a damn about both of them. He told the vice minister to throw that letter from Comrade Castro to the toilet. When Melaku said this, the Cubans became very angry and two of them produced a pistol to shoot Melaku. They said they would not allow anybody in their presence to insult Comrade Castro And that the reply for this was death. They dragged Melaku outside the house to shoot him. Most of the other Ethiopians present there started to plead with the Cubans not to shoot Melaku. They also pleaded to the vice minister to be patient and restrain his bodyguards from shooting Melaku. After a lot of pleading they changed their minds from shooting Melaku but beat him until he lost his consciousness and was taken away by his colleagues.

The following day the vice minister flew back to Addis Ababa and reported to me the whole story about Melaku. He said that he would wait until I took action on him. If I didn't take proper action on him, he would report the situation to Comrade Mengistu. This would mean that Mengistu would not forgive Melaku. He would definitely kill Melaku to impress the Cuban comrades. I assured the vice minister that I would take a very serious measure against Melaku. The following week, I called Dr. Melaku to Addis Ababa. He confessed that he did not remember what he had said, and that he had been under the influence of alcohol so he might have said it, and anyway he repeated that he did not like the Cubans. "What are they doing in this country? Why are we hosting them? We don't need to host so many of them in this poor country," he said. I tried to cool him down and explain the politics behind it, and pleaded to him to shut his mouth if he wanted me to defend him. The following day I explained in a polite manner to my minister to help me handle this situation because I did not want Melaku to be punished, but also I did not want the Cubans to feel that we were not taking any action against a person who had insulted their leader. The minister supported my goodwill and gave me full privilege to handle the case myself and report to him. Because of this I decided to transfer Dr.

Melaku from Gondar, and in return gave him a scholarship to Denmark to go and rest for a while. Dr. Melaku left for Demark, but I reported that he was administratively punished and also removed from his position. This satisfied the Cubans and the issue cooled down.

After a year Dr. Melaku returned back and went to Gondar again. Unfortunately he continued to drink in the evening hours and he started to have a problem with his eyes. The iris of his both eyes started to bulge out as a result of the methanol effect of the cheap local brew. One day Dr. Melaku, assisted by another colleague, came to my office. When I saw him he was almost blind. He told me that he had lost his vision while working in difficult places. Also the local administration and politicians were frustrating him so much that he had no choice except to drink. He cannot drink good quality drinks because they are expensive. I tried to listen very patiently to his complaints and I sent him to Menelik Hospital to see Dr. Paulos who was the best eye surgeon at that time. Dr. Paulos examined him and recommended him for treatment abroad. I went and explained his situation to the minister of health, who at that time was Dr. Tefera Wounde. Immediately the minister of health agreed to authorize Dr. Melaku's treatment in East Germany his treatment cost was covered by the government. We also raised some money through our Veterinary Association and also the people of Gondar raised money for his medication. He was sent to East Germany for treatment where he was treated very successfully. He was given a very heavy spectacle and was also advised not to drink again. He returned back from East Germany with his vision. I assigned him to be a project veterinarian under the third Livestock Range Land Development Project located in Jijiga. His salary was doubled from nine hundred to sixteen hundred. He also got a project house and a vehicle. His life improved to a certain extent. He got married again to a young wife and started to live a normal life. Once he was accompanying the local political authorities to visit some rural political rallies. While the district administrator was making a speech somebody from the crowd shot to kill him. The bullet missed the administrator and unfortunately killed our beloved colleague. Dr. Melaku.

I was very saddened with his demise in this fashion. He would always be remembered as a very committed veterinarian who was very much loved by

the peasant farmer. I wrote this short story of our late friend and colleague Dr. Melaku to make note that there was a need to protect and defend colleagues by all means. Whenever it was necessary I always tried to take responsibilities on their behalf and protect them.

I also advised my colleagues in the right way. I never took any harsh measure on anybody during my tenure in the veterinary department.

34 The Presidents wish to settle Pasteauralist

During the Ethiopian Revolution it was very interesting to note that most government programs were implemented through specialized campaigns without planning. When Colonel Mengistu is in the mood of deciding to instantly achieve something in the name of the Revolution he would just give instruction to the appropriate ministry to mount a short-term campaign (Zemeccha) and achieve the target. The following case is a very typical system which Colonel Mengistu and the military rulers were regularly following.

On one occasion, sometime in May 1981, Colonel Mengistu was returning from a visit to Agarfa which is about four hundred kilometers south of Addis Ababa in Bale Province. On his way back to Addis Ababa by road from Agarfa he saw something, which was impossible to see during his regime. There were about five thousand Arsi Pastoralists who blocked the road and were sitting for hours until Colonel Mengistu returned on that road from Agarfa. When he reached Dodola those farmers were on a sit-down strike. It was drizzling and all of them looked wet and miserable but kept on waiting for hours for the chairman of the military council. When he arrived on the sight he immediately inquired what did those people wanted. The representative of the people said that they have something special to inform the chairman. Mengistu was very surprised, as this cannot happen in the socialist system. Whoever wants to complain must follow the communist hierarchy and first get permission from the very local authorities. These people were supposed to communicate first with the district administrators. Anyway this was late now, so Mengistu decided to listen to what this people had to say.

The Arsi Pastoralists are normally great orators. They can make a terrific speech off the cuff without any preparation. The elderly man who was representing the people got up with lots of dignity and looked straight into Mengistu's eye and said, "Mr. President, today we decided to surprise you like this because it is impossible to reach you by all means. The Almighty God has brought you as a miracle to us today so please listen to our humble

request. We are not going to ask you for food or shelter anymore because we have been repeatedly denied in getting these important things in the past. You told us through the mass media that the land belongs to the people, but what you did was the contrary. You took all our land to establish State Farms in this area. We tried to tell you in the past how much we have suffered by these established State Farms in this area. We also repeatedly tried to tell you in the past how much we have suffered through your administration. We were told that the famine and relief organization would build us a house and would provide us with a farming land. Unfortunately the house which was built by these Parastatal Institutions could not even protect us from the rain and chilly climate. As a result our children had died in thousands. Those of us who are remaining behind would also die very soon as we have no food and house to rely on. Colonel Mengistu, please listen to us very carefully. Today we are begging you to give us one bullet each and finish us for good as you have already killed our family. We are already half dead. So, please, in the name of the revolution we are begging you to kill us right now. We believe that you are carrying with you enough bullets for each one of us."

Mengistu was shocked to hear such a very disappointing speech from the community, which he thought were supporting him and the revolution—the community which the mass media symbolized as the primary beneficiary from the Ethiopian Revolution. Mengistu was just simply lost for words and could not say anything for the time being. After a few minutes of consulting his immediate colleagues he composed himself and started to apologize to them for what had happened to them. He said that he was not aware, but from this moment onward he is aware. He would now go back to Addis Ababa and they would hear from him in the next two days the action which he is going to take. Without talking to anybody he returned to his car and they drove off the remaining two hundred kilometers to Addis Ababa. The same evening Colonel Mengistu called his ministers and accused them of the great lies which they were feeding him and yet the actual situation was that the revolution was bringing so much suffering to the poor people in Arsi and elsewhere. He gave a government policy decision on the same night that these people must be paid compensation immediately. He said that as a special reward from the revolution each family in that area must get from the government a three-roomed new house with a service quarter

covered with corrugated iron. They must also receive a one and half hectare plot each. The plot must be farmed that year by the government. It must be immediately planted before the rain starts. The government must assist them in harvesting. There must be a school, a clinic facility, and inner roads for communication. He said that he wanted this project to be started the next morning. He also said that he did not care how much it would cost and how big the human and material mobilization would be. All that he wanted was to see this project ready in three months' time. He would supervise this project in person and he would like to demonstrate to the people of Arsi how the strong muscle of the revolution can solve their problem.

The senior deputy commander of this special operation would be the Comrade Fsiha Desta, the third strong man in the Military Council. He also appointed the various ministers who are going to be involved in this grand and historic operation. The following day I arrived in my office at eight thirty in the morning. My secretary had a gloomy face and greeted me with lots of worries in her face. I knew that something was wrong and inquired what the problem was. She told me that His Excellency the Honorable Minister of Agriculture was desperately looking for me and she has instruction to inform me that I should report to the chairman of the ministerial council office immediately. I was surprised with this information, as I had nothing to do with the office of the chairman of the Council of Ministers. So I immediately rushed to my car and continued to the Sidist Kilo area where the pervious Prime Minister Aklilu Hapte Wolde's office was. I was ordered to rush in as the meeting was already on. I was given a place to sit around the big table. Orientation was undergoing by the Chairman from the Military Council about the new Wabe project which was launched yesterday evening in the Palace by comrade Mengistu. Colonel Fsiha Desta was using the same gesture like his immediate boss President Mengistu and told us that this project is a matter of life and death to this group. You would achieve the target on the deadline which is three months from today or we shall not remain alive. The Ethiopian revolution would demonstrate that we would succeed. After finishing the orientation we were told that we could mobilize any resource in the country and any expert from any ministry to participate in this grand campaign which is going to be supervised by Chairman Mengistu himself.

I was appointed to be the expert and manager in charge of the agricultural operation. I was stunned because I did not have any idea for managing a big operation of this sort before. Anyway we were all stunned and could not talk to each other during the coffee break. I woke up after taking refreshment and my brain started to think how I should organize myself.

I immediately started to write down the team members who I was going to involve in this campaign from the different ministries. I called these individuals the same afternoon for a meeting and told them that I had nominated them to be my team members and that we were going to draft a plan for the next three months. We sat down in the evening and worked up to midnight. We agreed to travel to the site the following day and also establish a field team who would assist in implementing this program. After visiting the site we all agreed that we were taking a very wild risk because rains started in Arsi in June and the land must be prepared earlier. I did not want to listen to any advice; I just went straight into calculating the logistics. I desperately wanted to know how many hectares we were supposed to plough, and in which areas were those farmlands. We found out that these localities were spread in five different areas and we were talking about a total of two thousand five hundred hectares. I immediately instructed the experts to let me know how many tractors, drivers, and mechanics, and how much fuel was needed. I got the rough estimate the same evening. The following day I informed Colonel Fsiha that I needed about sixty tractors, 150 drivers, and twenty mechanics to start the job. He gave instruction to the minister of state farms and the relief and rehabilitation commissions to avail these tractors in three days' time. As it was a presidential directive nobody wanted to take responsibility if our program failed. All the tractors and the drivers with the necessary gears were in place during the following three days. They immediately started ploughing the virgin land which used to be a pasture for the surrounding cattle keepers. The tractors moved nonstop for twenty-four hours. It was only the drivers who were rotating. Ploughing the land continued overnight nonstop. We had to rush so that we could catch up with the rain, which was expected in the middle of June in that part of the country. I spent weeks of sleepless nights in pursuing these terrific responsibilities. I started to have nightmares every evening; I saw Mengistu throwing us into jails for not meeting the deadlines.

The team which was constructing the twenty thousand family houses was the one which was also very much pressurized. These houses were built with stems and branches of Eucalyptus trees. We had to cut down all trees belonging to the government around Addis Ababa and Arsi. These were the biggest joint destruction I had ever seen in my life. The corrugated irons and the other accessories needed for building the houses were all bought from the existing shops in Addis. There was a severe shortage of cement and building materials in the country as a result of this unplanned project, which was going to build semi permanent houses for twenty thousand families and a total of eighty thousand people in more than thirty villages. Everybody was working day and night to meet the deadline. I and my fellow colleagues were working hard to save our lives as the chairman very clearly indicated that the bureaucracy would definitely undermine this grand effort, so they would see on a daily basis how to protect this project from the rotten bureaucracy. We knew what this message meant to us. If there is any fault which is found, we had to be responsible. We were documenting every thing and step carefully what was done on daily basis and updated the political cadres who were attached to our offices.

After months of nightmares and collective madness the two thousand five hundred hectares of land were properly planted with wheat , the weeding done with the assistance of the local community, and it was ready for harvesting. The soil in Arsi is thin and sandy, so that particular area was meant for only keeping livestock. That land was suitable for community pastureland. Unfortunately the presidential directive had to be fulfilled, so it had to be converted into a farmland. Moreover, the people in that community were pastoralists and they were not interested in a sedentary farming style of life but President Mengistu's order had to be fulfilled. So we put pressure on them through the political cadres. These people were forced to live in that new community. We also did not realize the there would be a lot of other social problems when you create a village without planning and bring people together. In a very short time we started to observe very strange problems which affected the community, e.g., the epidemics of malaria and rabies in people and animals as a result of spontaneous settlement of people in a crowded village. Rabies in dogs was spreading rapidly. Poultry and cattle diseases started to be rampant and we did not have the system in place to protect the people from these problems.

On the day of the official launching President Mengistu came in his military uniform and made a victorious speech about the strength of the revolution in achieving this extraordinary objective in three months. He promised that the historic Wabe Settlement project would be a good example for the national villagization campaign, which he is having in mind to implement in a short time. Mengistu congratulated us for the good job done. The semipastoralist members of the community were forced to be squeezed into these twenty villages. There was no provision for their livestock as there was no enough grazing space for their animals. Their animals remained in faraway places and the people had to move in without their livestock. This situation made them remain without food, as their daily food was milk. Later I learned that one by one the Pastoralists disappeared from that village, and the houses remained abandoned and were later looted. That project was a total failure. Nobody looked back into the continuity of the scheme. President Mengistu's regime would always look for something new to thrill and surprise the people. Wabe project was ignored and after some years even its existence was forgotten.

Such were the ventures of Mengistu's grand projects. I am very proud to be part of the team which implemented the Wabe project. We have learned a lot from this project that national projects of this level must be studied thoroughly. Especially their implication on the social and economic life of the people must be taken primarily into consideration. Mengistu's communist regime had no time and long-term interest to look into this reality.

35 Supporting a Family of ten for less than a Dollar a day

I am very proud to be an Ethiopian in many ways. Ethiopians are very special people in many ways and for various reasons. I had the privilege of meeting thousands of them during my life. They stay together everywhere. They understand each other easily and developed bonds, which brings them very close to each other. I have visited many countries and also lived in Kenya, Czechoslovakia, and Austria. The relationship of people in those counties is quite different. People are more eccentric in nature. They demonstrate quite a lot of selfishness and little care for the welfare of others. I have learned quite a lot from the poorest members of the Ethiopian community during my lifetime. They have lots of values, which I appreciate. Ethiopians are very proud people. They live a life of pretensions in most cases. They try their level best for their private life and poverty to remain their personal secrets. They want to be seen in public places like the others who have no problem. Most of all, they want to overcome their personal and family problems by themselves.

One of the typical Ethiopian whom I can refer to as an example is Shimelis who was a watchman in the Ministry of Agriculture headquarters at Kazanchis, Addis Ababa. I came to know him very closely when he was a watchman at the ministry headquarters between 1979-1987. He was very proud for being the watchman at that time and he pursued his duty with lots of pride and dignity. Shimelis was always neatly dressed with his uniform, which was provided by the government for all watchmen. His trousers were always properly ironed and clean. His shoes were always shining. He was always alert and greeted everyone with confidence. When you saw Shimelis you would see a very lively and active man with full energy and dedication for his work. He had lost one eye when he was a child but this did not affect him from discharging his duty. As the watchman at that time he was allowed to carry a small pistol. He showed in public the hanging pistol from the leather holder around his waist. Being impressed with how he respected his duty, I used to crack jokes with him now and then. He was also very fond of me since I was a senior official. I have mentioned earlier that I was the director of the veterinary services department.

One day I asked Shimelis how he managed to keep neat and fit everytime. It must be costly for him to maintain this standard as he was earning Br125 (US$30) every month. He was the lowest paid staff member at that time. Shimelis was very happy to react to my question and he told me the following true story of how he managed to make his ends meet. He said that he had eight children from his wife. One thing which he wanted to makes sure in his family was that everybody ate properly and dressed cleanly, and that all the children went to school. He tried to maintain the family pride through various ways. Since his small salary was not enough to provide the basic things to his family he did some extra money-generating business. Normally he and his three elder children, who were thirteen, eleven, nine at that time, would get up at four in the morning and they would take public transport to go to Sendafa village market, eighty kilometers north of Addis Ababa four times a week. They would buy fresh Ketema grass, which was required for church services and for coffee ceremonies in most Ethiopian families. They would return by eight o'clock to Addis. The younger children would sit in front of three churches and would sale the green grass to clients. Through this means they made money which was close to his monthly salary. He also bought shoes and uniforms given free for all other watchmen's families and sold them with profit. Through this he covered the school fees of his kids.

He told me that he was now planning to buy electric pan for making Injera, the Habesha national food. The cost of that electric pan was Br500 (US$200). He had been saving for the last six months. He was doing this to save his wife from suffering when she prepared the Injera with firewood. The smoke and the fire had spoiled the beautiful face of his wife and he was determined to save her from this endless suffering. After sometime Shimelis came to report to me that finally he had succeeded in buying the electric pan but he found out that he needed a special electricity line transformer to use it in his small house. The transformer would cost about Br400. So he had to save, again for another six months, to buy the transformer.

Later he came to report to me that something very unfortunate had happened to him. The day he was going to buy the transformer he used the minibus which was a very common public transport. His money was stolen by pickpockets in the bus. He almost cried about this terrible incident and

assured me that he would continue to work hard to achieve this noble goal to save his wife from suffering the smoke and fire heat. Finally, after a year, one day Shimelis came to report to me: “Sir, I have now achieved my objective. The electric pan is now operating in my house and the whole family is enjoying Injera prepared by the new electric pan.”

Shimelis was very proudly lecturing how important it is in life to be patient and to work hard to get what one wants. He told me that his next agenda was saving for television set. It would take him two to three years but he wanted his children to watch television from their own house. For this he was planning to expand his business. His wife was preparing sweetbreads, local cookies, and roasted wheat (Kolo). These would be packed in small plastic cellophane paper. Each child would be given a certain amount of these homemade breads and sweets to take and sell at school. His new family business started to involve all members of the family and generated good money.

Every evening each child would hand over the sales, and it would be deposited in a special account. Shimelis not only managed to buy the television set in less than two years’ time, but also taught his children how to make business from childhood. He came once again to tell me that he had succeeded. His next project was to buy a fridge. One day his youngest son, who was two years old, fell sick of serious pneumonia and was taken to Black Lion Hospital. It was already a very severe case. Doctors tried their level best but, unfortunately, they couldn’t save his child and the child died. Shimelis considered himself as progressive and was very much interested to join the Ethiopian Workers’ Party. One of the party commissariats asked him that the University of Addis Ababa’s Medical Faculty would like to use his dead son’s body for teaching medical faculty students. They asked him to sign a form so that they would be allowed to dissect his child for a postmortem demonstration to the medical students. Shimelis was shocked with this very unusual request from the communist party representative and he told him that he couldn’t refuse this humble request from him as their party representative. He also told him that his child had also a mother who had equal right on this decision and that they should call his wife and also get her permission. The party commissariat knew very well that the mother

of the child would never agree, so they handed over the remains of their child for burial.

Since I was very impressed with the conduct and effort of Shimelis, I offered him to be trained as radio communication technician in my department. He completed the training with very good result and took over the management of our radio communication unit. At that time we were communicating with more than thirty-two different stations all over the country. Shimelis became very popular among everybody who was using our long-range radios. He used to collect information on livestock disease situation from our receiver every day and report them to me. We were working in close harmony for many years. His salary was also doubled as a trained technician. Later I saw a lot of improvement in Shimelis's life. He improved his house and furniture. He educated all his kids. Shimelis was a typical role model of the Ethiopian community. He was very much involved in community affairs, in church issue, and in many other activities. He was very much respected in his community.

No matter how the income of many Ethiopians is low, they are always ready to face the challenge and support their families in the most honorable way. It is very rare that you will see Ethiopians trying to mug others or do things like robbery with violence taking into consideration the level of poverty in that country as we see it in many African countries. The incidences of mugging and robbery are one of the lowest in Africa. Unfortunately begging has become an occupation for many citizens in that country. I believe that this is very much influenced by the Orthodox Church Teaching whereby the followers are very much encouraged to assist the poor sections of the community. Ethiopians have also very interesting community-oriented social associations which will cater during death, funerals, or any other difficulties. They establish in their community a local community-oriented group (NGO) which is known as Edir. Every member of that community is registered as a member and contributes a small amount every month. In return when there is a disaster or death the Edir will provide all the necessary assistance from this organization and from other neighbors. The Edir is literally in every part of the community throughout the country. As an Ethiopian if you move to any neighborhood you have to join the local Edir.

The other interesting community organization is the Ekub. A group of people will agree to save a certain amount of money every month and the collected money will be given on a rotation basis until everybody has received what he has contributed. This Ekub is replacing the job of banking services in the local community. It is a forced means of saving money. It also helps build friendship among the participants. The poorest member of the community will join the small Ekub. It is amazing how this system works. Nobody will cheat or defy the Edir and the Ekub since these traditional structures are very well established in Ethiopia and are working very smoothly without the intervention of the government. These are the types of values seen in the Ethiopian societies which must be nurtured for the future. They are also the building materials for future banking and insurance services. The lesson we learn here is how the family of Shimelis is a very good role model. Especially young people should learn how to save money little by little and try to get the basic needs for themselves and for their families.

36 No Condition is permanent

Everything changes through time. Time heals everything; patience pays. The following is a very interesting story of Yeshi who was working as a secretary when I was working as the director of veterinary services. Yeshi was assigned to be the secretary for an expatriate staff who was coordinating a project funded by a donor. One day he came to my office and asked me to assign for him a very capable secretary. Since he had a lot of technical reports to be written every month he would be interested in someone who could provide quality service. For this extra effort he had a small budget line to frame incentive in terms of a salary top up.

In my position as the head of the veterinary services I always tried to be fair in my judgment. I looked into the list of the secretaries in our department and consulted my technical and administrative staff for advice on who could quality for this special post. Everybody in the team supported Yeshi. Yeshi's husband was a minister at that time, so she was very much respected in the department. She was always very elegantly dressed and was driving a very nice car. Everybody in the ministry knew her background and as a result she commanded a lot of respect. During the first few months Yeshi was doing her job very well. After sometime I started to receive negative reports about her poor performance. She started coming late to the office, lost her temper when given work, sometimes she did not come to the office and did not give any explanation as to why she did not come. I kept on getting such reports on a weekly basis. One day I called her to my office and tried to find out why she was behaving like that. She was very upset with my inquiry. My intention was to give her brotherly advice and solve the problem if she accepted it. Since she was angry I cooled down and said with a very gentle voice, "Please help us to come out of this problem. If you do not agree I will have to direct this issue to the ministry's disciplinary committee." She did not like the way I have talked to her, so she walked out from my office with anger.

The problem reached to such an extent that it was not possible for her to work with the expatriate. So I called her after about three months to my

office and tried to talk to her again in the usual polite manner. Yeshi started to talk loud and with a very angry gesture said that we were always favoring her boss who was a very bad man. He shouted on her, abused her, called her names, and she could not tolerate this behavior any more. She also said that I am also his supporter, so there was no use in coming to me to complain about him. Then I said, “Perhaps it will be good if I give you transfer from that office. Is that what you want?” Yeshi said that I was always blindfolded and defending my friends, so there was no point for her to work with me either. Then I said, “Please cool down and let us talk about how we could solve your problem.” She became hysteric. She kept on crying and abused all of us that we were not doing our job in the right way and she could not see how this problem could be solved. Then I said, “If you are not ready to work and also accept where you have gone wrong I will be obliged to advise the administration that you are no more interested to work in my department. In this case you may have to resign.” Yeshi exploded in her usual militant way and said that she has the capacity in this ministry to forcefully make me resign. She said that she would make sure that I would be thrown out of this office in a very short time. I had to control myself and requested Yeshi to leave my office. She had left banging my door.

Then I was very disappointed with the way how things were with Yeshi. I thought that she had been very obsessed for being a wife of a very high official. She thought that she had the whole government system behind her as she relied a lot on her husband’s position. Anyway I decided to write a letter to the administration that she should be transferred immediately from my office as we cannot work together anymore. The administration took very fast action by transferring her to another department. Yeshi was not so popular among her own friends either, so everybody welcomed her transfer. Later Yeshi left our ministry and I did not see her for about five years.

After about five years one day my Secretary told me that Yeshi was waiting to talk to me. This surprisedme as I had not seen her for a long time. I was wandering what had brought her to my office this time. Anyway she came in, greeted me, and started to apologize. I was surprised again and asked her why she was apologizingafter five years. She said that ever since she left my office five years ago she kept on having night dreams that she had

disappointed me by saying that she would make sure that I would be sacked from my office. She now knew that that was not right and came back after so many years just to apologize. I accepted the apology and comforted her that there was nothing wrong to come back and apologize. I said that I had forgiven her completely. She was very happy with my acceptance of her apology and left my office.

After another five years, I was on a mission to Addis Ababa on April 10, 1991. I got a phone call in my hotel room from Yeshi's husband. He told me that his family has decided to leave Addis Ababa the same week before the Rebel Army was taking over Addis Ababa. He requested me if I could assist his family since they didn't know anybody in Nairobi. I willingly accepted to assist his wife Yeshi and their three children. We left on the same plane to Nairobi the following day. I looked for a small hotel in Westland Nairobi. After a few days, we looked for a small house near my residence. She was in a very sad mood for most of the time since her husband was in prison, her house was abandoned in Addis and the children were suffering in a neighboring country. I, my wife Taffy, and my children, in as much as possible, tried to assist in many ways. I assisted in enrolling the three children at the French school in Nairobi. I was the guardian for the family. Yeshi stayed in Kenya for about four years and finally got settled in England. She now lives in London, and all her children are doing fine. You will agree with me that it always pays to be kind and respectful to anyone who comes across your life under any circumstance. Yeshi, the militant, was very abusive at first, then became apologetic, and finally, we met again in Kenya when she most needed our family's help. The good thing is my children and her children are great friends today and they look at each other as close kins.

37 Suicide motivated by guilt

I have tried to explain in the previous chapters who these Ethiopians are. It is important to be born and raised in Ethiopia to understand what it means to be an Ethiopian. While I was working with the government, I came across so many individuals who taught me what pride and honor means in their society. These were people who had not gone to high schools and had very little background education. These were people who had not come from a high feudal class. I am just talking about the ordinary Ethiopians who did not get the privilege to be educated and were working on a different level.

The following is an interesting experience I have learned from our driver who was a retired sergeant from the Ethiopian army. Sergeant Gebre was assigned to be the driver of a very high official. He was very honest and serious on his job. Once we were on a mission to accomplish a very urgent job in the area of Arsi. On our way back it was very late, so we decided to spend the night in Nazreth. On the following day a very high official who was with us had to start his trip to meet President Mengistu Haile Mariam at the Awash National Park. Before he went to bed that evening he alerted us that he should start his trip at six in the morning. He would have to cover the 150 kilometers in two hours so that by 8:00 a.m. he would be at the Awash Wildlife Park to meet President Mengistu who had a programme to visit the Awash Park. The president was expected to arrive at 8:30 a.m. by helicopter from Addis Abba. So the plan was confirmed and driver Gebre was told to be there before six o'clock, warm the car, and wait for the boss.

We all decided to wake up before six that morning and say good-bye to the official. Surprisingly the boss was there on time and the rest of us also woke up on time to say good-bye to him. Unfortunately the driver did not come at 6:00 a.m. The big boss was very nervous and angry when he found out that the driver was not there even at 6:30 a.m. There was tension and panic building up. Nobody could say anything as the minister was now completely mad. There was no other alternative but to go and search the lost driver in the nearby hotels. Then at seven o'clock the driver arrived. He was

scared to face the boss and we did not know how to handle the situation. Then the minister shouted with a very loud voice to give him the key of the car and told Gebre that he is fired. The boss jumped into the car and started the engine wanting to drive himself. We all ganged up and begged him to take at least the driver. Even if he is fired he must accompany him to Awash Park. He very reluctantly allowed the driver to seat in the back seat. The official started the car with tremendous noise and drove at a very high speed toward Metahara. The way he started the journey with such a terrific speed worried all of us. We thought that if he is going to speed like that with the Toyota four-wheel Land Cruiser he could certainly run into an accident.

Anyway, according to what we have learned later, the driver observed that the boss was driving at a fantastic speed and most probably they may kill themselves in an accident. He decided to do something before anything bad could happen. After covering about twenty kilometers he suddenly told the boss that he has seen smoke coming out from the engine. They should stop and check the problem. The boss had no choice but to stop and see the problem. The driver opened the engine cover and pretended as though he was inspecting the car. Then he came very slowly to the window from the side and he told his boss, “Sir, with all due respect to you, you are a minister and I am a driver. You have taken my job by force. I am the one who checked out this vehicle from the Central Garage. I am responsible for whatever will happen to this car and to you. You cannot abduct my duty by force. You can fire me when we reach Addis Ababa. But you have no right to do it in this way while I am on duty. Please come out and sit where you normally sit as a minister. If you don’t obey to what I am telling you, I have no choice but to force you to sit on the next seat. Please take into consideration that I am also a disciplined ex-army sergeant and I hope you have noticed that I am also armed with a pistol.” And he showed him his small revolver. The boss was shocked with what this sergeant was proposing and realized that he had no choice except to do exactly what he was told to do. So he came out from the driver’s seat and sat next to Gebre and the journey started with lots of tension on both sides.

Luckily they arrived at Matahara Awash Park twenty minutes before the arrival of President Mengistu. President Mengistu arrived late that day which rarely happened. The visit of the president at the Awash National

Park went on very well. The president was very happy with his visit. They had a very good lunch and they started to return back to Addis Ababa. The Government Official said he would not drive back with this mad driver who might even try to kill him on the way back to Addis Ababa. So he joined other people's car. Sergeant Gebre regretted so much with what he had done. He thought that there was no forgiveness for what he had done. Even God would not forgive him for defying obedience and arrogant misbehavior he demonstrated to his boss. Moreover, he had never been late in his life on duty. That day it was the devil that brought this problem to him. He resented by talking to himself that on that night he remained awake the whole night because of the poor facility in the cheap hotel and bed parasites, which were biting him throughout the night. Then at around 4:00 a.m. he suddenly fell asleep and woke up at 7:00 a.m. Even then he came back and rushed to fall down on the Government Officials knee to seek forgiveness. He started to get worried about his life and his family. If he lost his job, where was he going to get another job to support his family? How can he even look for another job when he was not so sure what action the boss would take against him? All these problems were simply too much for him to handle.

When he reached Addis Ababa he returned the car and handed everything to the transport office. He came back to his house and he decided to punish himself for the unforgivable crime he had committed. He wrote a small note as to why he made this decision. He said that he had betrayed his boss who was always fair and good to him. He did not deserve to live in this world anymore with this shame attached to his name. He had decided to honorably finish his life in defense of his pride and integrity. He shot himself with his gun on the head and died instantly. I attended his burial at St. Michael's church in Shola, Addis Ababa. I cried a lot that day when I remembered why Gebre made this decision. The boss for sure would have forgiven him. But this is how a good cultured Ethiopian will behave. They will rather punish themselves for their wrong doings. They cannot face their own conscience. The biggest challenge is to face their own conscience, why they have done it.

This was the sad story of Sergeant Gebre. He was a great man. He did not want to hurt anybody or take revenge on anybody. He blamed himself for what had happened and the penalty for this self-imposed mistake was

capital punishment. These are some of the common behaviors of the true Ethiopians I have known while working in the Ministry of Agriculture. These ordinary Ethiopians have defended their country for thousands of years and managed to pass those important values to their children.

38 The Cow Palace

Socialist countries were trying to get upper hand in all areas of development and government affairs during the Military Council's regime. The Russians were very much involved in military support. The East Germans were involved in strengthening the intelligence and security of the country. Cubans were by and large assisting in the areas of military and health services, etc. The Bulgarians also came with a big proposal to support the agriculture sector. A blanket agreement was made with the military government to provide a soft loan in support for several projects for poultry and dairy development. A Technical Committee was established to examine the draft proposal. I was the chairman of the joint committee between the Bulgarians and the Ethiopians. After negotiating on the proposal we disagreed on a number of issues. Out of the ninety million U.S. dollars loan the Bulgarians wanted five million U.S. dollars to be paid for consultancy and preparation of the final document. The technology which they wanted to transfer from Bulgaria to Ethiopia especially for dairy processing and production was complicated and was also very difficult to sustain. Almost 75 percent of the loan was for importing different machineries manufactured in Bulgaria. The cost for maintaining these equipments in terms of spare parts was also very high. Members of the Ethiopian Technical Committee thought that accepting the terms tabled by the Bulgarians would be a big crime on our country. The viability of this project was not so attractive and reliable as well. Equally the amount requested as a fee for consultancy was very high. Because of these reasons they decided to quit. We wrote our report to the minister of state farm. It was Mr. Hailu Shawl at that time. The minister very amicably valued our proposal and decided to establish another Technical Committee who would continue to negotiate on this matter with the Bulgarian government. I was very happy to be relieved from this responsibility because our Bulgarian counterparts were behaving so arrogantly. At one time they told us that our intervention on this issue had no relevance since the two communist parties have agreed to implement this proposal. Their arrogance was so bad that we all lost our confidence and felt so helpless since they had their ambassador with them who was providing false information about the intention our committee to

block the agreement on the loan to the advisors of President Mengistu. We were very relieved with the decisions of our committee. Final agreement was reached through the New Ethiopian Technical Committee and the agreement to implement the project was signed.

After three months we received the Technical Document on some of the projects for comments on individual basis. The document weighed about three hundred kilograms, had a very nice leather cover, and was written in minute fonts which were very difficult to read. Also it was full of complicated graphic illustrations and figures which were not possible to understand by anybody. No Ethiopian could make any sensible comment on this project. The Bulgarian Embassy kept on asking for comments but nobody was competent enough to comment on that beautifully bound document which was prepared in bad English. Anyway, after I left to Kenya I was informed that one of the dairy project was finalized near Awash River by the Koka dam about one hundred kilometers from Addis Ababa. The dairy plant and the dairy farm more or less looked so special and fancy that it was called The Cow Palace. That farm was officially launched by President Mengistu for political reasons but it never became operational. It was simply a technical fiasco where a lot of government resources were spent for nothing. During the regime of Mengistu there were many other projects which were considered as political animals and a special care was given to them to impress the political authorities.

39 The Young lady who shot a Cheetah

Killing a furious and angry cheetah is a very risky and a dangerous task. But it was done by my cousin Kebedech, who was only fifteen years old at that time. Kebedech was just married to a school teacher at a very young age of fourteen and traveled to the remote village of Mizan Teferi in Western Ethiopia in mid forties. One day, she was busy in her household work, when all of a sudden she heard, outside their compound, screaming voices and commotion by an excited crowd from the village. They were chasing a cheetah, which came to attack their goats. Armed with spears, they were trying to kill the cheetah. The angry and furious cheetah jumped over the fence into the compound of Kebedech and immediately climbed on to the window of her sitting room. Suddenly, she came eye-to-eye with the red-eyed, furious cheetah, which was ready to attack her. The wild beast was carefully studying her movement to enable him jump and immediately attack her.

Kebedech in that instant walked carefully into the bedroom and took her husband's gun and came out slowly from the bedroom. She aimed very precisely at the cheetah's head from a close distance and shot him with one bullet on the head. The cheetah died instantly.

The news of shooting the cheetah with one bullet spread immediately to Addis Ababa. We heard about this fantastic news in the family. We were all very excited and surprised with her courage and triumph. It was unheard of before in Ethiopia that a young girl could shoot a dangerous animal. We were very proud of her, and as a young man, I always kept asking myself how she managed to do it. Most of us at that age were even scared of snakes and hyenas, which were always roaming around in our residential areas. To kill a cheetah is unthinkable. We were always very proud of Kebedech's courage in many ways. Kebedech later divorced her first husband and got married to Lt. Jarra Mesfin, who was the son of Ras Mesfin. Ras Mesfin Sileshi was one of the richest men in the country owning lots of properties including large-scale coffee farms in Western Ethiopia. He was also the governor of Shewa Province for a long time. Her husband, Jara, was a

graduate from Sandhrust Military Academy in United Kingdom. After his graduation, he returned back to Ethiopia and was later appointed as a military attaché in Egypt. He died later from an accident. My cousin Kebedech joined the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and was promoted to the level of a senior expert for organizing National Trade Exhibitions locally and outside Ethiopia. She is still participating actively in so many activities involving women organizations and International Trade Exhibitions. She has represented Ethiopia in foreign countries on so many occasions.

Since she is my favorite cousin, I always enjoy sharing her experience in so many areas. Her residential house around Meskal Square in Addis Ababa is like a mini museum. She has so many collections from all over the world. It is so fascinating to have a cousin of her caliber in our family.

Kebedech comes from a very interesting family background. Her father, Ato Eradatchew Mamuyie, was our cousin who was very close to our grandfather, Negadras. They were also close neighbors by sharing fences in our residential area in Kabana, Yeka Hills. We used to play with our cousin's children during our childhood time. Her eldest brother, Teklemariam, was an artist. He used to paint human internal organs including muscles, arteries, veins, and nerves. His hobby was human anatomy. Teklemariam was of the same age group like my father, Mengistu Amete. They were also very close friends. The other elder brother of Kebedech was Ato Seife Erdatchew. He was a natural genius. Seife ended up in becoming a self-trained scientist on his own right. Although he did not have adequate background education at that time, he educated himself by reading regularly Science Digest magazine. Seife was interested in three areas of research:

The first area of his interest was to make a cheap source of energy to supply continuously warm water in his house. The idea was to produce environment friendly, cheap energy from a small quantity of cotton by-product (cottonseed) as raw material. And also conserve nature by minimizing the use of fuelwood. He designed a special heat conservation system, which could supply adequate heat, enclosed in a vacuum to warm the water supply in his domestic pipeline system. In simple language,

Seife's research was focusing on burning the cottonseed and the heat generated was captured into special iron tubes and warmed up the watering system continuously in his house. He was enjoying the constant supply of warm water in the house. Unfortunately, this interesting technology innovated by Seife was only limited to his household.

His second area of interest was focusing on homemade wine production. Again, by reading about the art and technology of wine production from Science Digest magazine, Seife perfected his skill and knowledge on wine production. He grew grape plants in his own compound and used to harvest enough grapefruit to produce about twenty to thirty bottles of homemade wine.

These bottles of wines were stored for years in his wine store, and whenever he had a visitor, he used to invite his homemade wines. Especially, his father, Erdatchew, enjoyed drinking the homemade wine by his son.

His other area of interest was the small laboratory that he had established in his house to test his blood sugar. He was diabetic and used to test his own blood regularly. Whenever we visited him, we used to be amazed how busy he was in his own homemade laboratory.

Seife was employed as a junior clerk at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. During his long years of services at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, he rose from the position of an ordinary bank counter clerk to the position of deputy general manager of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia in charge of Administration and Personnel Department. He was a dynamic person who trained himself to a level of a distinguished scientist. My cousin Seife died of diabetes at the age of fifty-two in early seventies. We miss him a lot. He could have innovated many other new technological initiatives.

40 Curious to see the Palace

Aunt Kuri was only sixteen years old and happily married to an elderly foreigner, who happened to be a Greek citizen. He was living in the city of Harar in the early forties. Her husband owned the only photo shop in the city at that time. It was immediately after the war with the Italians, and there were few business men in town. Ethiopia just emerged out of the war, and peace and stability were gradually returning back to the country. Kuri's husband was very popular at that time in making good quality photos. He earned enough money to support the family. Young Kuri was very much interested in the photographic shop and used to assist her husband in developing photos. She was considered at that age as highly knowledgeable by her neighbors and gained lots of respect. She used to enjoy dressing in the latest fashion at that time. During those days, very few Ethiopian knew how to dress elegantly according to European fashion.

Aunt Kuri also became very popular not only for her beauty, but also for her elegant lifestyle in that small town. One time, she was walking with her friend on the streets of Dire Dawa, when all of a sudden two officers stopped their car and informed her politely that she was invited for a short visit by the prince to the palace. As a young lady, she was excited and curious to see what the palace looked like, so she entered into the car, leaving her friend behind. The palace driver took her to the palace's private wing. She was immediately guided to a guest room. After a while, the young prince came to see her. He politely apologized for having given instructions to his officers to bring her to the palace without her knowledge. He told her that he was attracted to her beauty and gentle manner. He asked her for her name and the job she was involved in and kept reminding her that she should feel relaxed and comfortable. Kuri was instantly attracted to his manners and treatment. She was offered a drink and palace meal, which she enjoyed very much. Later on, she was fascinated with everything inside the palace and did not resist much to remain for a while as the palace guest. She stayed for over three months in the palace as a special guest of the prince. At the same time, her husband learned about the story and decided to run away from the country, since he had no chance to challenge the

people who had taken away his wife. He sold all his property in haste and left Ethiopia for good.

After about six months, Kuri was sick with stomach problem (appendicitis). She was urgently operated at Menelik Hospital in Addis Ababa. When she recovered, a very high military official was sent to talk to her politely. She was advised to forget what had happened in the palace. She should now start to look after herself. She was extremely shocked with the advice from the palace, which was a reality. The high government official handed to her an envelope which she was advised to open it later. After reading the note in the envelope and seeing the money in it, she was somehow grateful for what they had done. Since it was not possible for her to go back to Harar, she started to think about what to do next. She was given about five thousand birr, as a reward and was told good-bye by the palace management. She was now very confused and ashamed about the whole incident. The story went around very quickly about what had happened to her in the palace. Her close friends and relatives were avoiding her. She was made persona non grata by the community in Harar for having deserted her husband in this way. After a lot of regrets and depression, she recovered from the shock and made decisions to start a small business. She managed to buy a small plot to build a small house in Debrezeit town, which is about forty-five kilometers from Addis Ababa. At that time, five thousand birr was a good capital to start any business. She later opened a small guest house with traditional restaurant and made her living from the small business. She lived alone for over fifty years in Debrezeit. She never tried to establish a family and raise children after that incident. She indeed had a lonely lifestyle until the end of her life. She died in 2008 after a long illness at the age of eighty-four. I used to visit her very often, and she used to regret a lot for betraying her husband under that circumstances. That event took place when she was very young at her tender age. She was not sure whether it was kidnapping or instant love that made her remain in the palace for over three months. Anyway, that was her destiny. God bless her soul.

41 The Ogaden Settlement Project

After completion of the Wabe Project we were hoping to return back to our offices and continue with our profession. Unfortunately the socialist system does not operate in the normal way. Once you have resolved a project with difficulty you would be sent to another difficult project to solve other problems. If you fail to deliver what the government wants you would be the primary victim. You must make sure that you would not fail. Our next assignment was to go the eastern part of Ethiopia, the Gode Region where three thousand settlers were thrown in the desert and were completely forgotten for three years. They were settled as militias who would defend the surrounding districts from the Somali insurgents. They were given a small ration of maize flour on a monthly basis and nobody cared for their welfare. The sufferings of these people from the Highlands of Wollo Province were so much that they were forced to rebel. It is only through rebelling that the socialist government would listen and discuss with people to solve their problems. Sometime, at the end of 1981, a group of the Military Council members went for official visit to Gode, which is one thousand three hundred kilometers from Addis Ababa in the middle of the Ogaden Region bordering Somalia. The Ogaden districts are predominantly inhabited by the Somali Pasteauralist. The climate is very harsh and annual rainfall is less than five hundred millimeters. It is a marginal and arid land, which can only be used by pastoralists. The Wabe Shebelle River crosses through Ogaden Desert and enters into southern part of Somalia. There was an irrigation farm that was established by some American investors. Later on during the war with Somalia the farm was abandoned for over ten years. This farm was situated a few kilometers from the town of Gode.

The Military Council Officials from the ruling class at that time was led by the third strong man of the Ruling Military Derg. He was Colonel Fsiha Desta. The 3,000 Wollo settlers faced the high class military team by presenting their complaints in a harsh manner. They told the military rulers that they had no choice except to keep them as hostages until their problems were resolved by the government. They treated the officials as prisoners until they committed themselves to do something to improve their

livelihoods. They also informed their hostages that if the worst comes they would have to desert their country. They would join the Somali rebels across the border in Somalia if food and health situation and their bad living conditions were not improved in a short time. The military commanders had to beg and convince their captors by promising that a team would arrive on the following week to start solving their problems. That is how the whole team of the Wabe project was shifted to Gode Region. Our General Term of References (TORs), given to us by the Military Council, was to improve urgently the livelihood of these people through the building of new houses, schools, clinics, etc., and to rehabilitate one thousand five hundred hectares of irrigation land. We started our work in the same fashion as in the Wabe project.

My job was to take care of the irrigation farm. I immediately took my team from Wabe project and started to work on planning and rehabilitating the abandoned farm. We found out that over one thousand kilometers of major and minor canals had to be cleared from the heavy bushes and water pumped into the canals to make them ready for irrigation. The three thousand militia settlers were all involved in this work with us. Their moral was immediately uplifted and they were literally working day and night to convert that area into a farming community.

We were also rehabilitating the thirty-six heavy motor pumps, which were used to pump water from the Wabe Shebelle River. The most difficult problem was the supply of fuel and spare parts. We made a contract with the Ethiopian Airlines to deliver twenty-two barrels of fuel for the pumps and tractors on a daily basis. We airlifted about twenty tractors and the necessary accessories and the rehabilitation of the farm went at full gear to develop the one thousand five hundred hectares. Our plan was to grow maize by irrigation. This was going to be the most expensive method of producing maize. At that time the farmers used to produce in the rain-fed non irrigated part of the country, a sack of maize for Br22. In our case as we were transporting fuel by air, the cost of production was Br75 per sack. You can buy a sack of maize at a cost of Br30 from the market. But the instruction from the government was to go ahead and produce the maize for the purpose of making these people work and create jobs. We also trained

the settlers in various fields and life started to be normal in Gode. Everybody was happy to work hard on the farm.

As I was in charge of the agricultural program I started to feel guilty in spending government resources in a scheme which cannot be sustained. I came up with a new idea that should have longer benefit for the people and the surrounding area. As I was given full authority, I decided to bring to Gode about fifty thousand Special Trees which could adopt easily. I made a choice to plant fifty thousand trees (desert trees) by the side of the canals and around the villages. I also brought the Somali Black Headed (local name of the breed is Wankee) Sheep. Over a thousand of them were bought from other markets and were distributed to the militia who were interested sheep farming. In a matter of six months the whole thing changed in that area. We also assisted the settlers to bring their wives and kins from Wolo. Many settlers managed to get married when they were given their new houses and farmland. The most satisfying aspect was the tree, which started to grow very fast and produced the red Flemish Flower, which made Gode look one of the most attractive places in the middle of the desert. President Mengistu came to visit the farm and he was very impressed with what we had done. But we did not realize what agenda he had for us. I was very proud to have been involved in the life-saving programs in Wabe and Gode regions. I saw the poor settlers from Wollo when their livelihood was improved in a short time because of the attention given to them by the government. Later I was very saddened that these people were mostly killed as a result of the Ethnic clashes with the Somali nomads. During the collapse of the Derg government the region lacked peace for some time, and the Somali militias and insurgents killed most of them. The most serious problem which many African countries are facing is ethnic clashes. The problems of ethnic and tribal clashes are still very serious problems in many parts of africa. A friend of mine who visited Gode recently told me that the trees which I had planted has grown and has changed the environment to a certain extent in Gode. The one thousand five hundred hectares of the irrigation farm has been destroyed again.

42 The Red Star Campaign

After completing my assignment in Gode, I was planning to return back to the veterinary department and continue my duty as the head of the veterinary department. Unfortunately, the reward for sacrifice and hard work in a communist system is to be given more challenging assignment until you die or give up. If you give up, you will be considered as a traitor and what is waiting for you is the long arm of the revolution. If you succeed, you will continue to be given tough jobs endlessly. The reward for the team, which made a miracle in the development of The Wabe and Gode project, was to be given a more complicated assignment in the war front in Eritrea. The war for independence in Eritrea has been ongoing since the late 1960s and the Ethiopian Army was fully engaged fighting the sessionist rebels in the province of Eritrea. During the early 1980s the rebels were controlling most of the lowland areas of the Eritrean region. Over hundred and fifty thousand government soldiers were engaged in a fierce fight with the Shabia rebels, which were about sixty thousand strong. The region of Eritrea was very convenient for a Guerrilla warfare. The rebels managed to cut most of the roads and transportation, and supply of food and ammunition was only possible by sea from Assab to Massawa port, and from Massawa port and other places by road in an army convoy. The war with the rebels brought a lot of misery and suffering to the people and poverty for the whole country. The military regime was fed up with the endless war, and it started to think about a new strategy to wipe out rebels with all its forces once and for all and finish with the problem of Eritrea.

The military junta firmly believed that all windows of peaceful negotiations had failed, and the only way is to crush the rebels by armed forces. The Soviet Union advisors were very much in support of using military forces to solve the problem in Eritrea, because they were also interested parties in enhancing trade with arms. Ethiopia took billions of dollars worth of military hardware from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The Soviet debt was so high that there was no way of paying back that amount of loan in a short time. Long-term agreement was considered to repay loans

in bartering form, such as payment in raw hides and skins, coffee, and other agricultural products.

The Mengistu regime was finally very hopeful in resolving the conflict in Eritrea as it got a boosting arm shots from recent victory in Ogaden from Somalia. It also had additional moral boosting successes in the anti-literacy eradication campaigns, whereby the national literacy level was reduced to less than 40 percent in six years of intensive anti-literacy campaigns. The military government also introduced a huge villagization program to move people from scattered rural mode of life into village-oriented lifestyle. This terrible national program was implemented with political motives to bring people under an iron feast type of control by government communist operators and political cadres. This unplanned national scheme destabilized the whole country, and a lot of resentment and anti-military government position was consolidated. With this bad omen in the hearts of the majority of the people, the Red Star campaign was pushed in a rush for implementation. The campaign started sometime at the end of 1981.

The Red Star campaign's major objective was two thrusts. Thrust one was to use a special full scale war strategy and crush the rebels once and for all. Second thrust was to introduce an all-sided rehabilitation and economic recovery scheme in the province of Eritrea by mobilizing human and material resources from the other part of the country. The organizational structure of the Red Star campaign was secretly developed, and a lot of awareness and propaganda campaign was mounted for three months, while the detail of implementation was made. The chairman of the red star campaign was Colonel Mengistu with twelve members of the secretariat, which includes the army, the intelligence, the economy sector, the political sector, the provincial administration, and the farmers and peasant association/cooperative section. It was a tradition in the communist system to keep everything secret, so all the preparation and appointment of individuals were kept a top secret all the way through. One morning in August 1981, I received a letter from the prime minister's office that I have to report the following day in Asmara. I have been appointed in a bureau, which was in charge of the farmers' affair for Eritrea region. My transfer was of permanent nature.

At that time, Eritrea was declared as a war zone and the military governor was using a special emergency declaration for governing the province. Once you are posted in Eritrea, all the military emergency rules will be applied on everybody. You have no right to complain. Your commanders are army officers, and you have to follow instructions. I was extremely shocked for being appointed to this duty. It was extremely dangerous. The whole region was in war and I had to work completely with new people, and I had no idea of their background. Most of the operators in that region were either military or intelligence. Whatever you say and you do was very much followed up. That night, I prayed to get courage and decided not to withdraw. I searched for the spirit and wisdom of my mentor Negadras, who subconsciously advised me to remain calm and solid. My wife and other members of my family started to cry knowing that I was assigned to the war front with a very little chance to return back in a short time to Addis Ababa. A government official transferred to Eritrea will not be released without the permission of the military governor. It was clear for me that this is what had happened and I have to remain firm and move forward. The following day I packed and left to the airport. I said good-bye to my loved ones specially my children, my wife, my mother, brothers, and sisters, who all needed my attention and love.

When I arrived in Asmara, I met some staff members from my future office. I was taken straight to my new office and introduced to other members of the bureau. I observed that everybody was confused and uncertain with what was happening to them, so they were waiting for the arrival of the newly appointed boss. I was the most confused person, because I did not know why I was appointed to this place. I was a veterinarian by profession and had very little experience in my assignment. Anyway during the first few days, I gathered the momentum and promised myself that I should stand on my own and give leadership. My proper leadership was required more than anything else at that time. There was a problem of finance, work plan, staff office, transport, and name it what. The new boss had to immediately find a solution for all these problems in this war-torn region. The following week I was invited to attend the Red Star Executive Committee meeting, which was chaired by President Mengistu himself. Each person in charge of a program had to present his work plan and cost estimate to the executive committee, and defend the program and get the

necessary support from the secretariat of the Red Star campaign. The first meeting was crucial for me, as I had to introduce the executive committee my work plan and strategy.

The most important strategy given to my department was to organize the farmers of Eritrea into a peasant association on regional level. Each farmers' association member had to undergo a military training organized by the army commissariat. Once they finish their three-month training, they will be given an automatic KLashnikov machine gun with 140 bullets and they will work very closely with the army in the area. As an incentive they will all be given a sack of wheat flour per month as a salary. This distribution of food in a form of food for work style arrangement will be managed by my department. Our target was to train about thirty thousand farmers in a year, and the commissariat from the military will take care of the rest. Over six hundred Ministry of Agriculture staff was mobilized from all over the country through my office to be engaged in this mass peasant organizing campaign. The other part of our duty was to mobilize women and other sector of the community in land and water conservation, pond construction, village irrigation, and tree-planting campaigns. Apart from this, in addition, the routine Ministry of Agriculture extension work will be carried out. This includes fertilizer distribution, selected seeds distribution, animal health services, etc. I was given top class young professionals to work with me. I was very much encouraged with the moral and energy of the young team assembled in my department. As a team, we started to work very hard to develop the program and prepare the budget. We managed to define the types of intervention and targets for the year.

Equipped with this very important information, I was ready to face Colonel Mengistu, on the second executive committee meeting of the Red Star campaign. The secretariat was placed at the Asmara Palace. The meeting started at 9:00 a.m. Colonel Mengistu arrived that morning from Addis Ababa and came straight to that meeting. The secretary of the Red Star campaign was Ato Amanuel Amde Michael, who was the deputy prime minister at that time. Later he became the vice president. The secretary introduced the agenda, and we started to present our plans for the campaign. Mine was very well prepared, so I did not have any problem in convincing the secretariat to approve the plan. Mingistu appreciated the approach we

proposed and expressed his satisfaction. The others also presented their program. When the time came to discuss the war strategy we were excused and we left the meeting, and the military people continued with the meeting. That day I had a good sleep, because my work plan was approved by the head of state and the entire budget I requested was approved, and what was remaining was to implement. I started to get a lot of confidence in the coming week, because I established very important contact with key people in the country.

My first priority was to train the six hundred staffs of the Ministry of Agriculture by introducing them to the strategy and detailed work plan on how to organize and establish farmers' associations. They were also receiving basic training in handling guns and military skills. This disturbed most of the people who came from peaceful areas. They started to panic when training on military skills started. After completing two months of training, the news came from the palace that in two week's time President Mingistu would come for the graduation of these trainees. This event also disturbed the staff members, and they started to plot and refuse to finish their training. I was called to their hostel to see them. When I went there, they started to tell me about their problems and uncertainties. They said that there are two issues, which must be sorted out before they are moving out of their training centers. If these issues are not sorted out they will not go to the place where they are going to be assigned.

The first point was that they should be told clearly how long they are going to remain in this campaign. They said that they left their families in far away regions, and they have to inform their families exactly when they are retuning back. If it is forever they will not go anywhere. They will rather be executed by the military.

The second point was how they are going to survive in the new place where they are going. Are they going to receive any extra allowance or they should depend on their meager salary. They said that their salary is not enough to be split into two places, as they have already committed it to their families. They requested me first to solve these two problems before Colonel Mengistu comes to attend their graduation. I tried to explain them that this is a military zone where strikes by civilians are not allowed. The

military people will be very suspicious that some of you are agents for the rebel group, and that is why you are undermining the government program. These motives are very dangerous for all us as. They are punishable by death. I don't want them to be falsely charged with these allegations. I tried to talk to them politely, but they stayed firm with their decisions.

This was the first challenge I had during my assignment and I did not know how to handle it, as this was a very sensitive issue to raise with the military people.

I was confused and was thinking the whole night how to resolve these problems without any bloodshed and upsetting President Mengistu. My first attempt was to approach my immediate minister of agriculture. I called him at his house in Addis Ababa and explained to him the problem. He was very upset with the motive of the staff members and said, "This is going to bring a lot of problem." He said, "I must handle this thing there in Asmara and find a peaceful solution." He does not want to be involved in this matter. I went to see further the secretary general of the Red Star campaign, Ato Amanuel Amdemichael. The SG was very angry and said, "There is nothing like this in Eritrea." This is a military zone. They will follow instruction, and whoever refuses will be considered as a ring leader and will be dealt with immediately. He wanted to take quick action. I cooled him down and promised that we will try again. I immediately calculated the direction he was heading at, he wanted to victimize few of them, and the rest will see the punishment and they will follow.

After failing with my minister and the secretary general, I counted very much to save this terrible situation on the secretary of the Workers Party, Comrade Dawit Wolde Goiorgis. Comrade Dawit was a defector, the person who was in charge of civil and political affairs of the province.

He was a very polite and helpful man in many ways. Especially, he was very close to our group, and we used to share our problems with him without any reservation. We also established a small tennis club, where I was elected as a secretary, so he was practicing tennis with us. I went to his house early in the morning and told him the problem. Dawit immediately understood the implication of this, and started to look for solution. He told me that we should cool down these people. The military in this province has

no mercy for people who are plotting against government. The punishment is death. Certainly, Mingistu, if he is informed will take this action. So this problem must be resolved quickly. He said he can immediately decide on how long this people will stay in Eritrea. We agreed that two years would be okay. Then a new group will come to take over. The only thing which he cannot decide about is the allowances, as it has financial implications. He advised me that this can only be sorted out by Colonel Mengistu himself. He is going to assist me to include this issue on the agenda of the Red Star campaign meeting, which will take place in two week's time. I drafted a small proposal for the allowance and waited for the meeting. I also alerted the staffs that are on training to be patient for two weeks. On that material day the meeting started as usual at 9:00 a.m. in the morning. President Mengistu was in a very bad mood on that day. He started the meeting with his solid and aggressive voice. My item was the fourth on the agenda, under the title "Affairs of the Peasant Association Mobilizers." Mengistu suddenly shouted with authoritative gesture and mumbled with anger, "What is this issue now? Who is presenting this item?" I think he was earlier informed through his intelligence network about the problem. He looked at me and told me to go ahead and explain what it was all about. I gathered my courage and started to explain by choosing the right word not to upset Mengistu, who is capable of taking any action if he loses his temper. I started with the positive remark on how the program is doing well. Trainees will be ready in two weeks. We intend to rotate them on two yearly basis, but the only problem is how we should support them when they go out to the field. We need to fit in a small ration and allowance to boost their morale, and make them ready to start this difficult and challenging duty. Before I concluded my idea, Mengistu shouted with a terrific and aggressive voice by asking, "What did I recommend? Special incentive for these bureaucrats? What extra thing are they doing to deserve extra incentive? Are they mercenaries. Have I brought mercenaries to war front, who are requesting special payments?" He condemned the idea and started to warn me that I should not even come with such ideas in this meeting. He said the army in this war front has been engaged in a life and death struggle for the last fifteen years. They did not get one day leave. They are ready to sacrifice their life for their beloved motherland. Here you are with your mercenaries, who are to be rotated every two years and on top of that they want special incentive. This is unacceptable in revolutionary Ethiopia. He

lost control completely and got up and started to leave the conference room for coffee break and on his way said, “We are not going to discuss on this matter, full stop.”

When Mengistu shouted on me like that everybody was looking at me as a criminal. They started to stare at me as a traitor, who has been officially condemned by the chairman of the military council. Even my closest friend preferred to stay away from me and avoided eye contact. I decided to remain in the conference room until the coffee break was over. I was thinking of many things during that moment. I was cursing the day I had come to this region. Now I came into direct confrontation with President Mengistu and the next step could be prison. After half an hour, the meeting started and they were discussing about other things. I was lost in my own world thinking what will happen after that meeting. I was definitely expecting the worst. At around 20:00 p.m. in the evening the meeting ended. We started to leave the conference room. As I had said everybody stayed away from me. As I was walking toward my car a captain came running toward me, saluted me and said, I need to report at Colonel Mengistus’ Office immediately. I was expecting this, so I gave the telephone number of my wife to call her and inform her what had happened that day to my friend. Anyway I told him to wait and if I don’t call her by this evening he can call her. I went slowly to Colonel Mengistus’ office.



African Union Meeting, July 2000

I was told to wait for a while by his aid. After thirty minutes I was told to go in. When I entered into Mengistu’s office, what I saw there was completely surprising. Colonel Mengistu stood up from his chair and came to greet me

with a very polite and apologetic manner. He told me that he apologized for treating me in this way on that meeting. He said he had to behave that way, because the entire military leaders were expecting to hear something about incentives on the war front. He said he couldn't give incentive for three hundred thousand army members, as the country's economy does not allow. He said he was always very careful not to mention about any extra incentive in the presence of military leaders. He told me that my staffs are only about six hundred, so we can do something for them without announcing this in meeting of this sort. He instructed me to come up with a proposal by tomorrow morning and he would decide for me. I was extremely happy the way President Mengistu behaved. It was just like dealing at the same time with aggressive leopard and change it to a domestic cat. We chatted about my work and general social problems, and he told me to go back and prepare my proposal. The following day I came to the palace early in the morning to see Mengistus' special aid, and I gave him the documents. Mengistu approved the proposal. Our proposal was to give every staff member a military dry ration and a pocket money of about Br120 per month. The following day I went to announce the trainees about the good news I had from the palace, and told them about the decision of the military government. The trainees were very happy and were now ready to go to their places of assignment.

Our work on the field level went on very well that year. We trained fourteen hundred peasants, who qualified to receive guns. But unfortunately, as soon as they received the gun the Shabia rebels would come at night and force them to desert and join the rebels, so this exercise never worked out. Indeed later on the military was accusing us that we are officially training future rebels and arm them. There were lots of discussions on this matter on very high level. Later this exercise was discontinued. On the war front the government army did not succeed as most of their strategies secretly licked even before taking off the ground and reached the rebels, who always prepared a surprising ambush and destroyed the army. Small by small the objective of the Red Star campaign did not achieve its target. A lot of money and other resources were spent on this campaign. It was one of the most highly publicized campaigns of the military regime at that time. I was very proud to have participated in that campaign. I came to meet very renowned Ethiopians, who came there to contribute for peace and development in that

region. I was very proud to have stayed in the same house with the famous Ethiopian author, Mr. Balu Girma. Mr. Balu was writing a new book called Oromai at that time, which means everything is over! He was a very simple man who was friendly to everybody. At that time he was posted in Eritrea as an officer in charge of Political and Information Affairs. That was when he used to sit late at night and work on his novel. Unfortunately, that book was the cause for his death. The book was focusing on the military rulers personal conduct, and was also mentioning here and there some information on the Red Star campaign. Some individuals wrongly advised President Mengistu, and he was later murdered by the military intelligence. I left Eritrea at the end of 1982 when I got invitation from the OAU Secretary General HE Mr. Ideo Omaru to travel for mission to Europe, and raise funds for the new Pan African rinderpest campaign project.

I was given permission by Comrade Dawit, who was the first secretary of the workers party for Eritrea region to go for two months to Europe. During that mission I visited six European countries including France, UK, Denmark, Germany, Italy, and Sweden. This mission was coordinated by FAO and OIE. Our mission was to explain about the situation of rinderpest to European Commission member countries, and try to raise funding for the new program. I left very quietly from Eritrea to Europe. While I was away the staff members of the Regional Ministry of Agriculture Office were very angry that I left them behind on the war front and ran away from the war region. They decided to write a special letter to Colonel Mengistu to bring me back to Eritrea. Later on Mengistu enquired about my mission, and he was briefed by Comrade Dawit that I have been sent temporarily for a more urgent mission, which was of great importance for the country. He also assured Mengistu that he had appointed another competent person, who is a party member at that time. Mengistu did not bother to pursue this matter. I had a very good memory of the Red Star campaign. I learned big lessons from that campaign.

I managed to visit the six European counties with my Malian colleague Dr. Samba Sidibe. He was from a Francophone country and I was from an Anglophone country. We were representing the two parts of Africa, who were colonalized but France and Britain. We met ministers of agriculture and other high officials in the six countries, and managed to convince them

about the importance of eradicating rinderpest from Africa. This mission helped to raise the first fifty million Euro for supporting the program. This mission also helped me to establish contact with the decision makers at the level of OAU. I was going to be appointed as the future coordinator of the Pan African Rinderpest Eradication Campaign (PARC). This was a very exciting mission, so I looked forward to start this job. Unfortunately, the decision for the implementation of the PARC project was delayed by almost four years, so I had to wait from 1983 to 1987 to start the job.

43 Defend and Protect this National Flag

During my one-year stay in Eritrea for the Red Star campaign, I met many people who were committed for the Ethiopian Unity. I have also learned how serious was conflicts between neighbors, ethnic groups, the highlanders, lowlanders, and the various religious groups, etc. When I was appointed as the head of the Agriculture bureau, one time I received a letter of complaint for a small village not far from Asmara, The capital of Eriterea called Adi Gebru and Adi Teklai. The two neighbors had a problem of conflict about a small piece of land. The letter of application by the elders of Adi Gebru summarizes the history of that land as follows. The history goes back six hundred years when Kentiba Bula, who was the father of the two brothers, inherited the small piece of land to them. Later, the son, Telklay sold the piece of land for small amount, which he promised to return as soon as he got money. His brother, Gebru, agreed to return the land as soon as his brother returned the money. Since the last ten generations the dispute between the descendants of the great-great-Grandfather continued endlessly. A group of elders came to my office to assist them in giving decisions to take back this land, and return it to their legal owners. When I saw their application, I thought that I should study further and consult with those people who were there before me. So when I studied their files from the ministry's archives' story accumulated documents from the last one hundred years. Every time a new regime came, the issue was raised and a decision was given. I was advised by my technicians that I should not touch this matter as it would be very difficult to resolve. The area of the land was so much and the conflict serious among the Eritrean ordinary people. That story gave me good lesson about Eritrea at that time.

In our term of reference, we were supposed to organize the Eritrean farmers and peasant associations, which was not easy at all. Whatever the government extension officers do in the daytime will be reversed at night by the rebels. Near a small town called Debarwa, which was only forty-five kilometers, lived an eighty-year-old man on his family farm with his wife. The government extension workers nominated him as one of the village

elders to assist in establishing the Peasant Farmers Union in that village. The old man accepted this mission and started to assist by advising the farmers about the benefits of becoming a member of the Peasant Association. One evening, after midnight, the rebel militia came to talk to him in his house, and ordered him to open the door. He refused to open the door, and told them to come during the daytime, since only thieves are active at night. When the rebel militia confirmed that the old man was not ready to open the door for them, they just simply used a rocket launcher to heat his mud house, and the house got demolished. The smart old man knew what the militia would do to him, so immediately after telling them to go away, he slept under the bed with his wife. When the house was demolished, the bed saved him and his wife from death. When the neighbors came to know what had happened, they immediately came for his rescue and brought him out from the ruin. Luckily, he survived. The following day, I was informed about this incident and went to see him in Debarwa. The man had recovered from the shock when I arrived. They told him that I was the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture. The old man very proudly shook my hand and said he had something to hand over to me. He asked one of his relatives to look for an old wooden box from the ruins of his house. The old wooden box was brought to him. He removed a key to open the padlock. I was wondering what he was going to get from the box. After searching for a while, the old man managed to get a small package bonded with old newspaper. He unpacked it and produced a very old Ethiopian Flag. He said in a very weak voice that he had fought for this flag for almost the most part of his life. Now he was old and could not defend it anymore. He would like to hand it over to the government official, who would continue to defend the flag. He also said that defending the flag meant defending the unity of Ethiopia. He concluded by saying that the future of Ethiopian unity should be in the hands of the new generation.

The message of the old man was so meaningful and timely that he was given special protection, and was given a small house in a military camp with his wife by the provincial administration. The old man loved drinking White Arekke, so he was given a one-year ration of maize flour and White Arekke and I left him there. Later, I heard that he had died a natural death, but the message he passed to the future generation was very serious and interesting.

CHAPTER 3

44 My Appointment as the Coordinator and Team Leader for the Pan African Rinderpest Campaign Programme

After returning from a two months consultancy mission for the promotion and appraisal of the new proposed project for PARC, I returned back from Europe to Ethiopia. Before I arrived to Addis I went to the FAO Headquarters in Rome for a debriefing of our mission report. While I was in Rome, I met the Ethiopian representative at FAO and he gave me a very interesting update of what was happening at the Ministry of Agriculture in Ethiopia. I was informed that Mr. Tekola Dejene had replaced Dr. Geremew Debele, who was the minister of agriculture. A new restructuring process was going on in that ministry. All the senior staff that had been working closely with the previous minister was now getting replaced and I was advised that the same may be store for me.

I returned back home after two months and reported to my office. I was met with a very cold shoulder and there were rumors that I would soon be replaced from my position of the director of veterinary services. Within a very short time, this news became true and I received a letter that as I had been replaced and that I would be informed about my new assignment shortly. In the meantime, I was given various short-term assignments as coordinator of the national exhibition for the tenth year celebration of the Ethiopian Revolution. At that time Mengistus regime was preparing a big national ceremony to celebrate its achievements of the ten golden years of the socialist revolution. The vice president of the Democratic Socialist Republic of North Korea was the guest of honor. The exhibition was meant to impress the “Comrades from the Communist Blocks,” especially those from North Korea, a Communist country, that was gradually becoming a very close ally of the Mengistus regime.

The achievements of the Ministry of Agriculture through the revolutionary in ten years in Ethiopia were highlighted and documented in the form of posters, and also photographic, graphic, and video clip presentations. The peasant association’s achievement and the extension work of the Ministry of Agriculture were very much advertized during the exhibitions.

Hundredths of experts were deployed on the preparation of this special exhibition. I was among the senior staffs allocated to represent the Ministry of Agriculture on this special exhibition. President Mengistu and his ministers supervised the organization of the exhibition. Finally, Mengistu was very impressed with the outcome of the tenth anniversary exhibitions. All government staff, school children, and the rural community were forced to come and see the real picture of the success of Mengistus regime.



With Dr. Walter Masiga former director of

AU – IBAR in Nairobi

After having successfully completed the national exhibition, I received an official letter written by President Mengistu himself, requesting me to be a member of the commission for drafting the new constitution for Socialist Ethiopia. I was representing the Ethiopian Veterinary Association as I was the association's president at that time. Consequently, I had a unique experience of meeting most of the 165 members of the national committee for drafting the new constitution. We were spending most of our time at the parliament, discussing about the proposed constitution. It was a rubber stamp exercise and the central committee of the worker's party of Socialist Ethiopia already approved of the draft.

At the end of this exercise, we were all given a special certificate from President Mengistu himself for being members of the drafting committee of the new Ethiopian Constitution.

Later that year, I was appointed as the head of the Ethiopian Artificial Insemination Institute. The headquarters of the AI Services were at Kaliti, which was only fifteen kilometres south of Addis Ababa. I was very much committed to bring changes at the national AI Service. I managed to raise funds from local donors and organized a number of training programs for AI technicians. We also managed to install a liquid nitrogen-producing plant to expand the services. At that time, I also participated in the preparation of a national dairy development project that was going to be assisted by the Finnish government. Later, the project was implemented at full scale and brought a lot of changes in the Ethiopian National Breed Improvement Programme.

In the meantime, one day I saw an advertisement for a position of a coordinator for the new Pan African project for the eradication of rinderpest. I completed the form and mailed reluctantly to the AU Headquarter. I was interested in that position to pursue my dreams in the eradication of rinderpest from the continent of Africa. Before I was replaced from the Ministry of Agriculture, as the head of the veterinary department, I had had an opportunity to go to Sudan for a mission with Dr. Brenadan Halpin, who was the British Oversees Advisor at AU/IBAR, Nairobi. We had a joint successful mission in convincing the Sudanese government to join the new AU coordinated programme. I was also very much involved in implementing a number of FAO TCP projects, which were granted to run small vaccination campaigns in Ethiopia. We achieved quite a lot in this regard. I was also sent by FAO to Uganda in June 1985 for a month to evaluate the rinderpest emergency project in that country. I arrived in Kampala during the wartime, where the army of president of Musevini was fighting to take power. During that very dangerous time, I toured all over Uganda and assessed the rinderpest campaign, financed by FAO. My report attracted the attention of several donors who also assisted in the drafting of the rinderpest eradication program under the new PARC programme for Uganda.

Later that year, I was also sent by FAO to Gambia to assess and report about the Rinderpest TCP Project implemented with the help of FAO in Gambia. Gambia is a very small country with a population of about six hundred thousand cattle of N’Dama origin. At that time, Gambia was free

of rinderpest as a result of the good vaccination campaign being supported by FAO and the president of Gambia Sir Dawda Jawara, who himself was a veterinarian. My report was also greatly appreciated at the FAO Headquarter. My participation in the two months' tour to six European countries to promote the new proposed Pan African Rinderpest Campaign (PARC), was also admired by the then director of IBAR. My application for the coordinator's post was accepted well. The AU-IBAR office was screening the CVs of more than a hundred applicants from all fifty-three member countries of the OAU for the position of a PARC coordinator.

Six months after my having applied to the OAU, an official letter was written to the office of the prime minister of Socialist Ethiopia that I had been nominated to be the coordinator of the new programme of PARC. When I received a copy of this letter, I was very excited and surprised for having been nominated to this very position of a coordinator under the office of the Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR). Fortunately by then, Dr. Geermew Debele was reappointed as the minister of agriculture, for the second time in early 1986. Dr. Geremew, taking into consideration my earlier contribution to the development of the new PARC project, and also my contribution to the various projects within the Ministry of Agriculture, wrote a very convincing letter to the office of the prime minister in support of accepting the new appointment. His justification was that Ethiopia would be a primary beneficiary if this project could be headed by an Ethiopian. Within a very short time, Comrade Fikre Selassie Wogderes, the Ethiopian prime minister, wrote a letter of acceptance to the then secretary general of the organization of the African Union, Mr. Ideo Omaro. I was given an official letter of release to join the organization of African Union in April 1987.

I left Ethiopia on April 8, to take my new position as the coordinator and team leader of the new PARC project at the headquarters of IBAR in Nairobi. I was warmly welcomed by Dr. Walter Masiga, who was the director of IBAR at that time. My colleague, Dr. Samba Sidibe of Mali also arrived to take his new position as the coordinator of PARC for West and Central Africa. The few PARC technical advisors who were already working at IBAR for the new PARC project were Dr. B. Halpin of UK, and Dr. Ive Cheneau of France.

In addition, Dr. Bill Taylor of UK and Dr. Kadohira from Japan were also employed by FAO to provide assistance to our coordination team. Later, Mr. J.Villet, an American colleague, also joined our team as a PARC communication expert. Immediately after my arrival, we organized the firstworkshop on the launching of PARC, at the New Stanley Hotel. National coordinators of the rinderpest eradication programmes from all over Sub-Saharan African countries and representatives of donor countries were also present. More than seventy experts attended the PARC inauguration workshop. It was a very successful workshop for me as I performed very well in providing orientation on the new program to all the coordinators and donors. This platform gave me a lot of confidence in demonstrating my capacity in leadership on an international level.

Earlier in June 1986, a ministerial conference was organized in Addis Ababa whereby a fifty million euro grant from the European Union was signed with a special ceremony between the secretary general of OAU, HE Idio Omaru, and the commissioner for development of European Union, Mr. Pissani. I wish to take this special opportunity to thank Mr. Jan Moulder, a member of parliament from Holland. He was the principal administrator of livestock development programmes at the European Commission in Brussels who played a key role in getting this fund for the PARC programme. Mr. Jan Moulder was a committed man of development who wanted to see Africa free from the rinderpest scourge. He is a member of the European Parliament today.



Talking to the minister of livestock of Mali during a ministerial conference at the AU Conference Center

My immediate responsibility as a PARC coordinator was to pursue the day-to-day affairs of the PARC coordination office in Nairobi and also take charge of the technical activities of the PARC programme in the various countries. The members of the PARC coordination team were very few in Nairobi and this gave us the opportunity to work as a small group with very healthy collegial relationships. All the members of the coordination team had been attending coffee break time each day to discuss the progress of the PARC implementation. Dr. Walter Masiga, the director of IBAR, was also very happy with the combination of the team and was giving us a lot of support for the smooth operation of the work at the political level.

The members of the coordination team were undertaking a lot of missions both to West and Central Africa. My immediate counterpart for East Africa was Dr. Brendan Halpin who was a very helpful elderly colleague. He was extremelycommitted in his desire to see the PARC project succeed. The counterpart for West and Central Africa was Dr. Cheneau, a very hard-working French man, who spent most of his time working in the laboratory for disease-control programs through the French cooperation's assistance. Dr. S. Sidibe, who was the new coordinator for West African region was director of veterinary services in Mali before he joined the project. He was also a very important figure at the OIE as the president of the African Commission for OIE. The combined team of Dr. Cheneau and Dr. S. Sidibe was very much accepted in West Africa. In general, our coordination team worked in full harmony along with the implementing countries in West, Central, and Eastern Africa. During my time as a coordinator, I also had a chance to meet President Barre of Somalia who shook hands with me when he came to the launch ofthe PARC Somalia programme in 1989. I also had the opportunity to meet the prime minister of Sudan, El Mahadi when he attended one of our PARC meetings in Khartum Friendship hotel. Later, I also met President El Beshir in 1990 when he came to launch the PARC project for Sudan. As the international coordinator of PARC, I met so many dignitaries and high government officials all over the country.

As a coordinator, one should also be a good diplomat in order to succeed. To a great extent, I used the wisdom from Negadras for all these official missions. The routine trick to get acceptance whereever you go is to be polite and appreciative of almost every good thing you come across.

45 How I Almost Lost My Job because of Politics in Southern Sudan

The OAU is mostly involved in political issues. Very little is known about OAU involvement in other significant areas of socioeconomic development during the last thirty years. We were dealing with the Pan African Rinderpest Campaign project in thirty-five countries. Some of these countries had long and very complicated political problems either within their country or with their neighbors. Countries like Sera Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan had problems of conflicts and insecurity. There were also conflicts in the same region between rival pastoralists and ethnic-oriented clashes. Since disease does not respect boundaries, our vaccination and surveillance activities had to even go to some no-go areas. We, therefore, had to involve local and international NGOs to operate in these difficult areas on our behalf.

The most difficult areas to operate were in Sudan and Somalia. These two countries, because of long-term conflicts and political instability, were found to be potentially dangerous areas where livestock disease surveillance teams could not visit. Then, there was a problem of covering the majority of the cattle population with blanket vaccination or to introduce systematic disease surveillance programs in these countries. Especially in the southern part of Sudan, we were working with more than sixteen non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The most powerful NGOs working with us in disease-control programs were ICRC and UNICEF. UNICEF had special vaccination campaigns, especially for children, against six major human diseases. They found out that their vaccination programs did not attract the population in spite of very intensive campaigns. The political wing of the Sudan's People Liberation Army (SPLA) informed the NGOs that they should assist saving lives of the community's livestock. The people of Southern Sudan were more interested in the lives of their livestock as these were the source of their livelihoods. Since they requested for assistance from UNICEF and Red Cross, we accepted to work with UNICEF and the NGOs to implement a comprehensive animal health intervention in Southern Sudan. Vaccination programs were organized around the cattle

camps, where all the cattle of the nomadic pastoralists would spend the night. People from the surrounding villages would come with their children first to the cattle camp, and while the veterinarians vaccinated and treated their animals, the medical teams would vaccinate the children and treatthem against various human diseases.

The two programs went on side by side and became very effective and that was how our mass vaccination program in Southern Sudan became fully operative. This operation had started in early 1990. Gradually, the program was extended to a very large area. We were also lucky at that time to get a new generation of a heat-stable anti-rinderpest vaccine which could not be affected by the high and humid temperatures in that area. We also trained community-based animal health assistantto vaccinate cattle. These assistants worked unflinchingly in the difficult areas of Southern Sudan and did not even demand for a special transport or for any other comfort. In a very short time more assistants were trained by our teams. They were provided with the heat-stable vaccine and were left on their own to carry out the vaccination in remote parts of Southern Sudan. They were especially found to be very effective in areas where emergency assistance was required.

Using this approach we managed to reduce the incidence of rinderpest in Southern Sudan. Both Red Cross and UNICEF together with more than sixteen NGOs were working with us on these disease control activities in Southern Sudan. Every year I normally organized a regional coordination meeting wherein all the coordinators of the East African PARC countries would meet and discuss about the progress of the campaign and also develop joint regional programs. That year, in 1994, we had an East African coordination meeting in Cairo, Egypt. We distributed the agenda of the regional coordination meeting. Each coordinator was to present his country's national report. We were expecting the coordinator of Sudan to present activities carried out in the northern part of Sudan where peace prevailed. Since the central government of Sudan did not control the southern part of the country at that time, we thought as technical people it was obvious that the UNICEF veterinarians would present the report of the people who were operating in Southern Sudan.

When the Sudanese delegates looked at the agenda and found out that a UNICEF veterinarian from UK would be presenting a report on Southern Sudan, they got very angry. Immediately after the opening ceremony they announced that the Sudanese government was very disappointed by this meeting organized by OAU. They accused OAU for undermining the interest of the Sudanese government by involving foreigners to present a report on a souvenir country. They even said that OAU had become the agent of the enemies of Sudan, so they had no choice but to walk out of this regional meeting in protest of this arrangement. We tried to talk to them but it was useless. They left the meeting. Only a few of them attended some sessions unofficially. There was nothing we could do at that time, so the meeting was finished without the involvement of the Sudanese delegations. That meeting in Cairo was a disaster in terms of OAU policies. Even if one member state disagreed, it could become a very serious political matter, so we were expecting the worst outcome through the political channel.



Addressing the Twenty-eighth ISCTRC Conference Participation Priforia, South Africa. Sept.2003.

Three weeks after that meeting we heard from the office of the secretary general of the OAU that the Sudanese Government had filed a very serious complaint about two OAU officials, who were involved in this terrible conspiracy of "de-recognizing the independence" of Southern Sudan by having allowed the presentation of a separate country report in an official OAU meeting. The vice president of the Republic of Sudan wrote the letter to the secretary general of OAU saying that the least the Sudanese government could accept was the dismissal of the OAU PARC coordination

officers who had committed this “crime” against the Sudanese people. They also said that the OAU must apologize for this offense. We were immediately communicated from the cabinet of the OAU’s secretary general to present a full report in defense of this accusation within forty-eight hours. Since this was a very serious accusation, we had to involve several colleagues to draft a reply to the then secretary general of the OAU, Mr. Ahmed Salim.

We had to sit down with our colleagues and put down facts on how we intended to eradicate rinderpest from Africa. We explained to the secretary general of the OAU that politics and disease control did not go together. In implementing disease-control measures, there should not be any barrier between countries and that the operation should go on a cross-border level, if we wanted to be effective to be able to reach the virus on time. The disease eradication operation could in no way wait until disputes between two rival countries were resolved. All OAU member countries had agreed to participate in these continental campaigns and were signatories to this principle. The OAU had agreed to accept over fifty million euros from the European Union during the past years by pledging to use all its political and administrative influences in all AU member states. It was not possible to entertain the complaints from the Sudanese government, as they too were beneficiaries from this program. In fact, the OAU/PARC project had bought about sixty-five heavy duty Trucks and over thirty Land Rovers and a lot of laboratory and field equipments which costed close to two and a half million euros at that time to support the ongoing PARC program in the northern part of the country. There was also an understanding between the scientists of many African countries that we should all cooperate to fight the rinderpest virus in whatever situation and political environment; which meant that if necessary, at times we would have to go out of the normal procedures and use the private sector or foreign veterinary teams to come and assist in fighting the disease in any part of Africa in congruence with the spirit of African unity and solidarity. Therefore, the complaint of the Sudanese government was baseless and should not be accepted by the OAU Secretariat.

We sent our letter which was full of scientific arguments to our bosses in Addis Ababa. When the secretary general of OAU read our letter he was

very much convinced that he could not take any action against his own staff. Somehow, the OAU found a way to explain verbally to the Sudanese ambassador representing Sudan at the OAU, and the matter was left to cool down. The issue which was of interest for the future was as to which policy we should follow when it came to issues such as disease control. I think we should all have a common understanding in a situation like that, i.e., to give priority to transboundary disease problems for the benefit of all living beings: humans, animals, and plants.

Unfortunately, the issue also needed further discussion when it came to donor funding. We came across several incidences whereby the EU financial agreement did not allow spending EU funds where some countries had been blocked from accessing development funds originating from EU or its member countries for purposes created to political misunderstandings. I came across this problem later in Burundi and Sudan. There were policy decisions blocking project funding from EU sources in spite of the fact that we were dealing with control of livestock and wildlife diseases. I believe that these policies would have to be reviewed at one stage, and priority must be given for the control of human, livestock, and plant disease instead of sticking to inflexible political decisions.

46 We Saved IBAR from being Closed

The Organization of African Union (OAU) was established in 1963. Ever since its establishment it was by and large focusing on the political affairs of the African continent. Most African countries were still under the colonial rule in the 1960s and 1970s. The African Union indeed has played a significant role in the liberation of many African countries. However, there were several technical institutions which were absorbed into the OAU structure. This included the Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR). The others were the Phito-Sanitary Center in Cameroon, the STRC in Lagos, the African Language Institute in Niamey, Niger, and SAFGRAD in Bobodilaso, Burkina Faso.

These scientific and technical offices of OAU were statuary entities within the OAU structure. They were allocated a small budgetary provision to cover the skeleton staff and very little funding for operation. As a result, most of the centers were understaffed and were not able to perform as they should. The only regional office, which was fully operational, was the IBAR office in Nairobi. Ever since I joined IBAR in April 1987, we worked very hard to develop and appraise new livestock-oriented projects, and we managed to get adequate funding from donors. Our major donor was the European Union who granted close to one hundred and fifty million Euros between the years 1986-1999. The fund was allocated for the control and eradication of various trans boundary livestock diseases. Mostly, our projects focused on the eradication of rinderpest and control of tsetse and Trypanosomiasis.

Because of this enormous funding we were operating in more than forty African countries. IBAR became very popular in many OAU member states. The office recruited highly respected African and Europeans expatriates and also through by lateral agreements received foreign experts from UK, France, and other countries. The officials at the OAU headquarter were wondering how we managed to get so much funds and as to how did we manage these funds without even adequate political backups from the OAU headquarters. They also inquired as to why the other regional

technical offices were not attracting funds like IBAR. The love and hate support from AU Headquarters kept on coming in various forms. In 1999, the OAU was also planning to restructure and reduce the number of staff so they could strengthen the political arm of the organization. For this special task, the OAU employed a Canadian consultancy firm. The firm was given a term of reference to recommend a new structure for OAU. The consultants started their very challenging duty and sat at the headquarters of the OAU. They interviewed various stakeholders and carried out an elaborated desk study, and finally came up with a new structure.



With the honorable minister of livestock

development of Tanzania during a meeting

in Arusha, Tanzania

The new proposal was to close all the scientific and technical offices of the OAU, and strengthen the general secretariat, and also open new political offices in Southern Africa and in New York, USA. The news of the new structure which was circulating, reached our offices in Nairobi and we were informed about the closure of IBAR after the approval of the new recommendation by the Council of Ministers in March 1999, which would later be endorsed by the heads of state summit in July 1999. No sooner than we learned about this unfortunate decision, that the Director of IBAR, Dr. Masiga, the Chief Animal Production Officer, Dr. Musiime, and myself as the chief livestock project officer, started to counteract against this unfortunate recommendation by the Canadian consultants. Our first step

was to meet the Kenyan minister of foreign affairs, the late HE Bonaya Godana. We explained to him what the IBAR office was doing and we convinced him that the technical and scientific offices of the OAU must be rescued from being closed. The minister requested us to give him a summary of IBAR's mandates and achievements. From there, Dr. Musiime left to Uganda to explain to the minister of foreign affairs of the Uganda government. I also went to Ethiopia and Djibouti to explain the situation to the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The four countries namely, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Djibouti, coordinated their strategies on how to defend the closure of the OAU technical and scientific offices.

At the Council of Ministers' meeting, this agenda about the restructuring of the OAU was raised deliberately at very late hours when most of the delegates were tired or had left to sleep by about 2:00 a.m. However, the delegates from the four countries remained alert for the restructuring agenda to be presented. The OAU's assistant secretary for finance and administration presented the newly proposed organogram. He told the delegates that OAU would save a lot of money if they closed the technical and scientific offices andthat they were planning to reduce the number of staff by one-third. They also said that they would improve the salary scale of the headquarter staff and also with their savings, they would open two more new offices in Southern Africa and New York. After the assistant secretary general's presentation, the floor was opened for discussion. On this occasion, the minister of foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya took the floor and expressed his regrets at the OAU's recommendation for the closure of its technical and scientific offices in Africa. He said that the whole world was depending on their scientific and technical offices to fight poverty, diseases, and also to improve the livelihood of their citizens.

How could Africa lose its foresight and recommend the closure of scientific offices? The recommendation should have been the opposite, i.e., to strengthen scientific offices. He said that his government was very much against this recommendation and he would like to see technical and scientific offices to be strengthened in future. His proposal was supported by the delegates from Uganda and Ethiopia, who spoke in support of strengthening the scientific offices in future.

The Council of Ministers decided not to close the regional offices but to undertake a new study on how OAU could accommodate the technical and scientific offices in future. The officials at the OAU headquarter obviously were not happy to see their recommendation at not having been accepted. Especially, they were even more furious when they came to know how the defense of technical offices was organized. Being upset with what came out from the Council of Ministers' meeting, they established another committee at the OAU level. Again the same group came with another formula to kill all the regional offices of the OAU.



With the Priest from Nairobi Medhanialem Church

The new proposal was for OAU to establish a board of directors, and only the director of IBAR would be appointed by the OAU, and all the other staff including the operational funds must be raised from various donors. The new proposal was circulated to all the stakeholders and again we strongly opposed the new proposal. We tried to justify that OAU must be responsible for the regional offices and should cover the core budgetary provision so that other donors could come in and OAU could allocate counterparts. The only way was for regional offices to remain as part of the OAU's permanent structure. We tried to convince most of our counterparts that this was the only way in which regional offices could survive. We brought an example of more than forty different institutions, which had collapsed during the last two decades as a result of shortages of donor

funding. We also argued as to why we should rely on donors to pay salaries of regional staff when the OAU was trying to disown its own institutions. This argument brought in a lot of discussions from amongst the donor community and most of them wrote a letter to the secretary general of the OAU that their decision had to be reviewed. When the news started coming from various directions, the people at the headquarters of the OAU who were very much supporting the new proposal had to withdraw and leave IBAR and all the other regional organizations the way they were for at least two years before a new restructuring was initiated by the newly established African Union. However, after the collapse of the two different attempts to close IBAR, the idea of closing the regional technical offices started to fade away gradually at the OAU headquarters. Anyway, to minimize their activities, the annual budget was slashed. Retired staff was not replaced under the pretext that a new structure would be introduced in the near future.

I am very happy to see finally a new structure of IBAR being put in place under the African Union. The present structure will give a lot of opportunity to IBAR to implement its mandate in all the regions in Africa. The introduction of AU-NEPAD and other global initiatives like the Millennium Development Goal of UN are going to prepare a fertile ground for the new IBAR. The recent initiative of the Comprehensive Agricultural Development Programmes for Africa (CADDP) under NEPAD will certainly spearhead a very important livestock development strategy for Africa. After five years, the African government has accepted to raise its national budget allocated for enhancing agricultural activities to up to 10 percent of their total budget. This policy was adopted with the support of the African Union in 2004. Several countries have ratified this policy. This is a very good indication that Africa is taking steps toward becoming self-sufficient at least in the area of food production. I am also very happy to note that the traditional partners of IBAR including the European Union, FAO, WHO, IAEA, ILRI, ICIPE, USAID CIRAD-EMVT, DFID, etc., are still supporting IBAR. Particularly, the support of the fifty-three AU member states of the African Union would be very much needed for the implementation of regional and continental disease control initiatives in Africa.



At the Nile Fall in Bahr Dar with Taffy,

my wife, and my late sister Ketesla in 1999

During my twenty-two years of service with AU, I have observed that the AU is a very strong political organization, which has a lot of influence in all African countries. The programmes and projects of AU are very seriously taken by the implementing countries. It is possible to address livestock development programmes through the African Union office in confidence. The AU has spent over forty years of its time focusing on political issues. It is high time that the new AU focuses on development issues. I am sure that the spirit and philosophy of improving the livelihood of African people can be achieved through the newly-structured African Union. The other very important development on the level of AU is the establishment of the Committee on Rural Economy, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Environment. All activities covering agriculture and rural economy are now under one commission. This will even strengthen the future impact of IBAR, PATTEC, and PANVAC on livestock development in Africa.

47 Ethiopian Refugees in Kenya

Kenya hosts a large number of Ethiopian refugees since the time of the Italian occupation. During the forty year regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, there was relative peace and tranquility in Ethiopia. As a result, there were only a few refugees running away to Kenya. The largest number of refugees was during the regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam. Especially the youth were leaving the country in large numbers as a result of prosecution of a different kind by the military government. The most popular reason to leave the country was that of confrontation with the military regime because of politics. Also, a large number of youngsters left the country in search of greener pastures. During my stay in Kenya, I saw thousands of Ethiopians opting to live in the neighboring Kenya under difficult situations. But before arriving to Kenya, most of these refugees did not realize how difficult life could be as a refugee in Kenya. Life in Kenya was at least three times more expensive than in Ethiopia. Moreover, house rental was so expensive that an ordinary refugee who came without any income had to face very serious difficulties. The most common abuse on refugees came from the Police Force in Kenya. The police was a very common abuser of refugees, who became their soft targets for extortion of money. Especially our sisters were very much exposed to being mishandled and sexually abused by the police and by other law-enforcing agents. There are instances where young girls had been forcefully violated in prison, which thereby led them to commit suicide. There were hundreds of such tragic incidences that we observed during our stay in Kenya.

The following is a story of the housemaid, Alemitu. She came as a housemaid, employed by some Eritrean family, in the mid-1980s. The family had left the Eritrean province quietly through Sudan to Kenya. At that time the Eritreases were continuously being prosecuted by the military government, as a result of which, so many of them were leaving their country for political reasons. Alemitu arrived in Kenya through a long and tiring journey crossing the whole of Southern Sudan. Alemitu originated from the Province of Wollo, from the Amhara tribe. As soon as the family arrived in Kenya, they rented a small house in Westlands. After about three

months, the couple told Alemitu that they were intending to travel for three months. During this time she would remain behind by herself in the house And that she should not communicate with anybody and wait until they returned back. In reality, the family was leaving Kenya for good. Alemitu waited faithfully for the couple for over three months in the empty house. Later, when there came no news of her employers, she realized that they had cheated her. She then began getting worried and terrified as she did not know anybody in Kenya.

She did not speak the local language or even English. She had no other means of communication except Amharic, her native language. Anyway, she could not stay in the empty house anymore, so she decided to leave the compound and look for the Ethiopian Embassy so that they could help her get back to her country. One morning, she left the compound on foot without money or any other information. As she was walking, the first person she met was a watchman in a security uniform, guarding a residential house. She went to talk to him and asked in Amharic . . . "Ethiopian Embassy." The watchman looked at her and did not understand what she was talking about at first. Later, when she repeated several times, he understood what she wanted. But he found her attractive and also guessed that she was innocent and thought that he could take advantage of her. He invited her to come into the house. He changed his clothes and told her to follow him. Then he took her to the bus station and entered into a minibus, which was going upcountry. Poor Alemitu did not suspect where this stranger was taking her. In her understanding, the embassy would be far, and they would have to take a bus. However, the trip took the whole day. The man kept on comforting her that they were on their way to the embassy, and she trusted him and waited with curiosity. Finally, they reached the watchman's village and Alemitu quietly followed the man until they arrived at his parents' house. Once she was there, there was no chance for her to complain. His relatives received her politely and starting from that day onward, Alemitu became a second wife to that Luo man. She was treated like a slave in the village, given all types of odd jobs. After staying there for two years and after having two kids, Alemitu started to think about what had happened to her. She also started to learn the local language and gradually started to communicate with some other people in the area. One day, she accidentally met a journalist to whom she narrated her story. At

the end of the interview, she said that she would like to communicate with the Ethiopian Embassy. Her story at that time appeared on the monthly Drum Magazine in Kenya. The staff from the Ethiopian Embassy read her story and tried to communicate with her through the journalist, who had written her biography. She was advised to go to Nairobi and communicate with the Ethiopian Embassy.

When she arrived in Nairobi, the embassy gave her all the necessary information, and also gave her a temporary identity card. They also assisted her in getting a job with an Ethiopian family. That was when we came to know her closely. She told us her stories how she was conned by the Kenyan watchman and how she was forcefully married to him. When the Ethiopian family that had employed her, left for America, Alemitu decided to open her own small restaurant near ngong road in Nairobi. She rented a service quarter and started a restaurant by the name of Habesha. In a very short time, Alemitu became very successful. Her restaurant used to be full of clients from Habesha and Kenya. Her business kept on flourishing and her income also started to grow fast. As in all growing businesses, success is also accompanied with problems and challenges. Young and smart Ethiopian friends started to offer her special support and assistance. They started to confuse her with all sorts of advice. Finally one of them became more intimate and took over the restaurant as her husband. He persuaded her to buy a car and improve her lifestyle. He started to take her out to interesting night spots in the evening. In a very short time, Alemitu, the mother of two kids, started frequenting famous discos and night clubs with her boyfriends. She even expanded her restaurant by building a small Habesha Tukul where guests were given better space and treatment.

While Alemitus's business was flourishing on one side another Ethiopian entrepreneur, Beyene Chekol, who had arrived from America, was planning to jointly invest with some Kenyan tycoons to buy the plot where Alemitus's restaurant was established. He managed to hook himself with highly placed politicians, and in a very short time the plot was taken over and the houses demolished to prepare the plot for development. Alemitu was shocked with what had happened. While still suffering from this shock she had a car accident and her vehicle was damaged beyond recognition. She had to be treated in a hospital for a serious fracture. After she recovered

from the accident, she tried to follow up her restaurant business on another site. After a short while, she fell sick and had to be admitted to the Egyptian Coptic Hospital. There she was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. The doctors tried to assist but it was not possible and after a short time our dear Alemitu passed away. This was the sad story of Alemitu. She was brought into the country which she never knew before. Everyone who met her wanted to take advantage of her, and finally she died without having achieved much. These are glimpses into some of the ugly experiences in the lives of some of the Ethiopian refugees in Kenya.

48 The Nightmares of Aga-Kahan Hospital

My mother, Mulumebet, had given birth to her first child at the age of fifteen. In those times, it was a tradition to get married at a very young age. She gave birth to eight children in her life. She had to struggle a lot to bring up her children. Some of us were brought up by our grandfather. Life in general was not easy for my father and mother to bring up the four children who remained with them. My father was working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was earning a small amount of money. My mother was a housewife and was taking care of the children. In 1963, my father got sick because of kidney problems and passed away that very year. My mother continued to struggle to educate the children. However, around 1984, she fell sick too with several complications. She had high blood pressure and was also diabetic. But the most difficult problem was when she developed cancer of the uterus. The problem was diagnosed at its late stage and the disease had gradually spread into her digestive system. Continuous bleeding was observed in her abdominal cavity and the doctors recommended regular blood transfusion to replace the lost blood.

This blood transfusion continued for many years at various hospitals in Addis Ababa. At times, she received even up to three units of blood per week. Finally, the cancer started to strangulate her intestines. The food passage was blocked by carcinogen nodules along the various parts of the intestine. As a result, my mother suffered a lot for most of that part of her life. One time during the year 1988, she asked me if I could organize for her a religious trip to Jerusalem for the annual Christian pilgrimage tour. I was very happy to have had this request from her, so I immediately organized the trip for her through the Ethiopian Jerusalem Organization. My sister, Amsale, accompanied her for this three-week-long journey. My mother joined the group for the trip and managed to complete the three week's tour to the various tourist sites in Israel. Unfortunately, she fell sick again while she was in Jerusalem. She had to be assisted to visit a local doctor. The local Jewish doctor recommended her to visit a specialist in cancer treatment. The Jewish specialist examined my mother and gave her a false

hope that he could remove all the carcinogenic tissues from her body and that she could be completely cured of the disease.

It is sad that the medical services have become purely commercialized in the modern world. Unscrupulous medical practitioners give false hopes to unsuspecting patients in order to lure them for money. This is exactly what had happened with my mother. When the Jewish doctor told her about how he would operate and remove the cancerous tissue, she became very hopeful and decided to be operated upon in the hospital in Jerusalem. The Jewish doctor proposed that we should deposit US$10,000 in advance. He also estimated that the total cost of the operation would be around US$20,000. I consulted several professional colleagues regarding this matter and all of them were of the same opinion that the Jewish surgeon was promising something geared toward making quick money. My colleagues advised me that if at all the operation had to be done, it should be carried out by a prominent professional with a renowned track record in the relevant field. The best option was for the patient to come to Nairobi, and if necessary, the operation could take place in one of the big hospitals in Nairobi. I thought that to be a good advice. I persuaded my mother to come to Nairobi for her operation. She accepted the proposal and came to Nairobi in March 1988.

I received her at the airport in Nairobi. She was very happy and jovial on her arrival to Nairobi. We started to plan her treatment. I got all her medical reports from the hospital at Addis Ababa. The doctors in Addis Ababa seriously recommended that she should not be operated as she had high blood pressure and as she was also diabetic. Her operation wound after the surgery may not be able to heal as in case of a normal person. My mother, however, insisted that she must be operated upon and the outcome should be left to God. I assembled the best surgeon, gynecologists, and anesthesiologist in Kenya. Dr. Patel and Mrs. Kapila were the best professionals in Kenya who had years of experience with such patients. Both of them assured that they would do the job professionally and the operation could succeed but they would not be in a position to guarantee her full recovery, as they could not predict in advance regarding this particular situation. Their best advice, however, was that any kind of surgery should be avoided on the patient since her situation was very fragile. We tried to

explain this to our mother, but she wouldn't listen to us. She said she needed to be operated upon and that she did not want to live in pain anymore as she was suffering a lot. She pleaded with me that I should help her get the surgeons to operate upon her. I consulted my sisters, and we all decided to fulfill our mother's wish, no matter what the consequences would be.

I had to think a lot and pray a lot to have the courage to sign on her admission certificate to the Agha Khan Hospital in Nairobi. Finally, after a lot of consultation, I decided to fulfill her wish and took her to the hospital on May 1, 1988. She was admitted that day, and certainly I saw a lot of happiness on her face. But I was feeling completely the opposite. I knew that my mother would not survive the major operation, which was going to be carried out in a few days. Anyway, this was a situation, I could not prevent. As she was admitted, I could not stop my tears that day. With all those uncertainties, the doctors were preparing the patient for a major operation.

The operation took place on May 5, 1988. The team of three doctors operated for seven hours. They did their job very well and after seven long hours, the patient came out of the operation theatre. She was still under anesthesia when she came out. The doctors showed me what they had removed from her uterus and digestive system. The removed part was almost weighing around five kilograms. We waited with patience until my mother woke up. Finally, she opened her eyes and started to talk to us. She told me that she was feeling very light around the abdomen. During the first ten days, the progress of her recovery was very fast and encouraging. She was even passing normal stools and was walking on her own a little bit. Then after two weeks, her blood pressure and sugar level began fluctuating on an hourly basis. The doctors tried to stabilize her blood pressure and sugar level, but in vain.

Then the doctors called me for a special consultation and told me that my mother's condition was getting worse. The best advice was that we should take her back home to Ethiopia as she had only three more days to live. This was the biggest shock of my life. I couldn't bear with this advice. I could not also blame the doctors because they had not fully committed about her

recovery. So, I decided to take her back to Addis while she was alive. I managed to reserve three back seats with a nurse who was to accompany her to Addis Ababa. She was semi-conscious when she arrived at the Addis Ababa airport. She was immediately admitted to the Black Lion Hospital. My mother passed away very peacefully on the following day. I immediately flew to Addis Ababa for the burial. The burial ceremony took place at the Abo family burial place where my beloved Grandfather Negadras, had been laid. That was the wish of my mother: to be allowed to rest next to her father and close to her husband.

My Grandfather, Negadras, had built his burial dome at Abo Orthodox Church, in Addis Ababa, many years before he died. There was space in the dome for three more people at that time. So, in 2006, I decided with my sisters to renovate the family burial place and added fourteen more pockets to the dome, which would be enough to accommodate more members of the Negadras family including myself when the time came. We negotiated for permission with the Abo church's administration, and started on the construction and modification of the family burial place.

In 2006, the construction was ready and my popular Aunt Zenebe work, who died at the age of eighty-nine at the end of 2006, became the fifth occupant of the family burial dome. Today Negadras, his three children and my father, Mengistus's, remains are lying in the family grave.

As for the assistance of the team of doctors at the Aga Khan hospital, I was very grateful for the cooperation we had received from the doctors and also the management of the hospital in Nairobi. Although the patient had died, the operation was successful. The hospital fee was about US$14,000. Even though I still regret the loss of my beloved mother, I believe that we fulfilled her last wish.

49 The Drama for the Use of the

New Recombinant Vaccine

To eradicate a disease, it is obvious that a good quality vaccine should always be made available. The vaccine which we used for rinderpest eradication needed a cold chain including field refrigerators to maintain its vitality on the field level. To provide refrigerators to the field staff was a very expensive and cumbersome task to implement. Therefore, the need to develop a new generation of anti-rinderpest vaccines, which did not require cold chain became imperative. Professor Tilahoun Yilma from the University of California was a very committed scientist in developing a new generation of rinderpest vaccine. He attended several of our meetings and committed himself to face the challenge. We were so happy and proud that an Ethiopian veterinarian had taken charge of this important task. Professor Tilahoun Yilma was teaching virology at the University of California, Davis and was the head of the molecular laboratory. He was the only black Afro American who had reached to that level in Davis. He commanded a lot of respect from everybody engaged in research on genetic engineering, and molecular biology. We were constantly liaisoning this issue with him, and convinced him about the need to develop a new generation of vaccines based on genetic engineering. The professor started to work day and night in order to develop a new vaccine using new technology. He used the vaccinia virus to load the rinderpest gene inside. This technique was moderately new, just fifteen years old in the veterinary field. It was known as the recombinant vaccine. Tilahoun successfully produced the new vaccine and tried to introduce it to the field so that it could be used in the official eradication campaign. During the same time, French and British scientists tried to use the same technology to produce a similar vaccine. Their system was to load the rinderpest virus on vaccinia virus which was specific to goat, known as the capripox virus. In the meantime, a lot of negative campaigns started against Professor Tilahoun's vaccinia-

recombinant vaccine. Some European scientists tried to establish arguments that the vaccinia virus (poxvirus) could easily be affiliated with the AIDS virus, and so it could be very dangerous to release a new vaccine loaded on vaccinia virus. These arguments went so far that the biosafety committee of many countries supported the negative assumption and the release of Professor Yilmas's vaccine became impossible. The trial of the European scientists to produce the promised recombinant vaccine loaded on capripox vaccine did not materialize either. We tried to demystify these politics of war between the European and American scientists, but it was in vain. The recombinant vaccine of Professor Yilma never took off the ground in spite of the fact that we needed a new vaccine so badly.

Later, Professor Yilma was elected as a member of the American Academy of Science. He was the only Black Afro American there. He had received many honorary awards for his achievements on disease research. We were very proud to be associated with him. In 1971, we used to teach together at the Animal Health School in Debrezeit, and ever since then, we had been consulting each other on scientific matters especially on the development of new diagnostic kits and vaccines for rinderpest. I hope this kind of nasty politics would be avoided among scientists in future. Our eradication campaign would have benefited a lot and saved quite a lot of money if Professor Tilahun Yilmas's vaccine was used. Obviously, it would have been cheaper and simpler to use by field technicians, and most of all it was heat-stable and did not require a cold chain. We missed the opportunity as rinderpest is now eradicated for good.

50 What a Coincidence! One in a Million

We all may have some experiences in our lives that come across as rare incidences to surprise us. I want to share a story with the readers of this memoir. This was certainly one of the most extraordinary incidences in my life, and I will love to share two such separate incidences.

I was once on a mission to Zimbabwe and after successfully finishing my mission, I was returning back to Nairobi. I arrived at the Harare Airport to fly by the Ethiopian Airlines. Since I arrived at the airport a little bit early, I decided to send Christmas cards as it was Christmas time. I bought the Christmas cards and looked for a place to sit and write messages on them. I immediately remembered that I had the business cards of my friends in my wallet and so began searching for their addresses and copying them. After taking out the business cards from my wallet, I forgot to return the wallet back to my pocket and instead kept it carelessly on the next seat while continuing to write the cards. When I finished writing, I went straight to the post office, which was about fifty meters from where I was sitting and spent some twenty minutes trying to buy the stamps and throwing the Christmas postcards into the collection box. Then when I checked my watch, it was time to go and join the queue for checking in. There were many passengers that day flying on Ethiopian Airlines, so I had to wait in the line for about thirty minutes.

I was far away from the checking counter.

All of a sudden I saw an elegantly dressed white man approaching me. He asked me if I was Dr. Solomon Haile Mariam. I was very surprised since I did not recognize his face and politely responded in the affirmative. Then he asked me if I had lost anything. I answered in the negative saying that I had my carry-on luggage with me. He looked at me again and insisted that I should check my pocket. Then when I checked my hind trousers' pocket, it was empty. I immediately realized then that I had lost my wallet. Everybody standing close to me in the line began laughing at me. I was extremely surprised as to how this humble European managed to follow me

about hundred meters from where I had left my wallet about forty-five minutes back. The man smiled and said with a very gentle voice that I was lucky that he had found it for me. He had seen what I had in that purse and that I would have been in great trouble. He was absolutely right. I had my debit card and over US$1,200 in cash, and about the same amount in travelers' check. My first problem could have started at the airport since I was supposed to pay US$20 as airport tax. I could not have raised that amount of money in Zimbabwe. My ticket could be cancelled. I really did not know how to react and thank this gentleman. Instantly I was very happy and tried to thank him by hugging him. The "good Samaritan" started to talk in Amharic and in beautiful words told me that I should always remember that day. That was a very special coincidence. Imagine what had happened! After I had left that seat, another Ethiopian took the same seat and found my wallet. Such a coincidence could rarely happen. The gentleman was a half cast with an Ethiopian mother and a British father and had settled a long time ago in Australia and he was on a business trip to Zimbabwe. I did not have enough words to thank this great Ethiopian boy. I bought a perfume and some wild game videos from the duty-free shop, and presented to him. We exchanged e-mails for many years. To me, that was a miracle. By and large only a few people are honest enough to return to the owner his lost property, especially in Zimbabwe, where the economy had really gone bad in the last twenty years. Again, I remembered the wisdom of my wise grandfather who always said that one must be honest and loyal to oneself so as to be rewarded in the eyes of God.

While we are still on the story from Zimbabwe, perhaps I should also write that I had the opportunity to visit Zimbabwe several times during the last two decades because of the nature of my work at the African Union. I also have several Zimbawean friends whom I, sometimes, like to visit when I go to Harare. I also frequently drove through the area where former strongman Mingestu Haile Maiam was residing in the suburbs of Harare. He lived in a beautiful villa. That area was also heavily guarded by military people so one was not allowed to stop and take photographs. During one of my missions, I was trying to visit the famous ecologist, Dr. Glynn Vale, a very close professional colleague who was mostly working on tsetse ecology. I always promised him that one day I would visit him in his house. In 2005, he had also stayed in my house in Addis Ababa when he came to attend the

twenty-eighth ISCTRC conference in Addis Ababa. I made sure that he received the usual Ethiopian hospitality and he had appreciated it so much. Dr. Glynn Vale was a mathematician and had developed special modules for tsetse ecology. He was a gold medalist from the ISCTRC council. During the celebration of the fiftieth ISCTRC council in 1999 in Mombasa, Kenya, HE vice president of Kenya, honorable George Saitoti was our guest of honor. As the secretary general of the ISCTRC for ten years, I was the one who had recommended Dr. Glyn Vale for the gold medal award. He was a very popular person within the tsetse and trypanosomiasis fraternity. Glyn had also visited Ethiopia on several occasions and had a special love for Ethiopia and for our culture. He always remembered how he had enjoyed eating ambasha bread and drinking a cup of tea by the side of the Gibe River. He thought that the Ethiopian Ambasha bread was one of the tastiest breads he'd ever eaten. A piece of ambasha and a cup of tea costed less than two birrs. I think Glyn liked it so much because it was certainly very cheap and affordable. Anyway, when I went to visit Dr. Glyn Vale in his house in Harare, it was not easy to find him. He was living in a big compound in a huge mansion. After we had honked for a while, several big watchdogs came barking and Glyn appeared very curiously to find out as to who was visiting him at that time of the day in a government Land Rover. He was very suspicious that we might be some intruders who wanted to rob the white folk's residence, so he reluctantly opened the door on seeing me. I apologized for not having called him in advance as I was on my way to Angola that evening. I only decided to visit him after my colleagues told me that he was living in this area not far from where Mengistu Haile Mariam was staying. He told me that he was very happy to see me in Harare and in his house but advised me not to get out of the car as the dogs were very dangerously furious. He also said that his wife had gone out looking for fuel and sugar in the black market, so there was no sugar to make us tea. Anyway, I realized that he was not amused on having visitors in his house, especially strange Zimbabweans. I tried to understand his situation. During the colonial days, white Zimbabweans had very high living standards as they occupied most of the key positions in governmental posts.

I said good-bye to him and left. On our way back, my Zimbawean friends told me that European white settlers did not feel comfortable on being visited by Africans since there were racial and political tensions for many

years in that country. Also, the economy of Zimbabwe had been run down so much that everybody literally faced a lot of hardships. The exchange rate of Zim dollar (ZWD) in 1987 when I had visited Zimbabwe for the first time was: one U.S. dollar to one Zim dollar, but in 2007, when I visited Zimbabwe, the black market rate for one U.S. dollar had become one hundred and twenty thousand Zim dollars. The economy of Zimbabwe had deteriorated extremely in twenty years' time. As an African, I really feel sad on seeing such deterioration in some African countries that were once prosperous and had a healthy economy. For example, I had the humble opportunity to visit Somalia during the late President Siad Barres's time. Somalia, in 1988, looked like a very prosperous country. However, after the collapse of Siad Barres's regime in 1990, the socioeconomic situation of that country has been completely destroyed. To mention a few other countries: Côte d′ Ivoire, Liberia, Siera Leone, Sudan, DRC Congo, Burundi, have also suffered from political and civil unrest in the past two decades. I have seen the same mess many times in Africa: coup d′ état, civil unrest, bad elections, tribal conflicts, etc., have brought disaster to these countries. So, what we build today can easily be destroyed in the future for various reasons. Insecurity and political destabilization bring disaster to almost all the good achievements of that country. Especially, its effect in the control and eradication of livestock diseases is incredible. What we built yesterday can easily vanish today. The disease which we had effectively controlled the previous year could return back due to lack of proper follow-up. Our work as a Pan African in the area of livestock disease control has been terribly affected due to this phenomena.

51 Problem from a Man Who Had the Same Name Like Me

Another very interesting coincidence which I have faced in my life is with another person who had the same name like me and was also a doctor. Since the time of Mengistus's regime, I have been forced to carry an official letter from the immigration office to justify that I have a Mokshe, with the same name. I was once traveling to Djibouti through Addis Ababa from Nairobi. On the same day, another person was also traveling and we had to change flights at Addis Airport. He was traveling from UK to West Africa and I was traveling from Nairobi to Djibouti, changing flight in Addis. So, when I wanted to reconfirm my flight, I shockingly found out that my name had been cancelled without any explanation. I went to the Ethiopian Airlines office to enquire as to why my name had been cancelled. So, the counter clerks started to look into the detailed information in their computers. They discovered that that the computer had blocked one of us assuming there was a mistake. Finally, when I explained them about my trip from Nairobi to Addis and exchange at the Addis Airport to a flight to Djibouti, they checked again and found out that two similar names had confused the computer. Therefore, the computer had simply cancelled my name from the list. Such coincidence does not happen very often. I often think as to how that coincidence happened. Till today, even though I still use the African Union diplomatic passport to travel, the Ethiopian immigration office demands that I carry the clearance letter from immigration. I was informed that the other gentleman had evaded taxes from the Ethiopian government and thus has a court case to answer. His name was inserted in the computers as blacklisted by the government; every time I traveled, the computer showed red color and I was then requested to provide the clearance letter from immigration. I wish such special coincidence had been for winning lottery tickets!

52 The Magic Electric Pan

The difficult lifestyle of Ethiopian refugees in Kenya was mentioned several times. During the last days before Mengistus's regime collapsed, many refugees arrived to Kenya from all over Ethiopia. The members of the Revolutionary Red Army Command Division posted in South Western Ethiopia had crossed the border and surrendered to the Kenyan government. Many Ethiopian high ranking officials and senior army officers including some generals were also among the refugees who ended up at the refugee camp in Thika, a small town about fifty kilometers from Nairobi. Among these refugees, there were two high ranking officials, who at one time had been ministers and governors of certain regions in Ethiopia. These two officials were my very close friends from our time when we had worked with the Government in Ethiopia. So, when I learned that they were at the refugee camps in Thika, I went to visit them so as to give them some moral and financial support. Most of these high ranking officials were staying in the camp at Thika, but were not being given any special treatment. They were suffering along with all the other refugees. After about six months in the camp, I went again to visit the two friends. They were of course, very happy to see me and told me that they had a project which they would like to implement and that they needed my assistance for the same. They said that they were not very comfortable in receiving small support from me whenever I visited them. They would like to be self-supporting. Their new project was to make the Habesha Enjera by themselves and generate money through the sales of the enjera (pancake). I was shocked and asked them that why two former ministers like them would resort to becoming enjera vendors. How does it go with your former status? What will other people think of you? I bombarded them with many queries. Both of them responded in a very humble manner that they wanted to forget the past and try to survive for today. There was shortage of food at the camp and so a high demand for Habesha enjera. They had studied the viability of this project and what they wanted from me was to assist them in getting an electric pan for baking the enjera. I was so sad at their plight and could not believe that they were suffering so much. I simply agreed to bring them an electric pan from Addis. After about a month, I succeeded in getting them

the electric pan and about hundred kilograms of teff flour. Teff is a small grain which is grown in the highlands of Ethiopia. It belongs to the grass family and is specific to Ethiopia. It is known as Ergostris Abysinica in Latin. This grain is very difficult to cultivate and needs less water than other grain crops. The average Ethiopian farmer produces around six to seven quintals per hectare. It is very difficult to harvest also. Anyway, the majority of Ethiopians are culturally used to eating enjera made out of teff.

These two former ministers from Mengistu's regime immediately started their project by making sixty pieces of enjera every day. Ten enjeras were paid as salary for the young woman refugee who baked the enjera for them. They consumed five enjeras per day as food and the balance of forty-five enjeras was sold at a cost of fifteen Kenya shillings. For one enjera, their gross income would approximately be seven thousand and five hundred shillings. This amount was quite enough to support a family at that time. The exchange rate of one birr to the Kenya shilling at that time was about eight birrs, so one enjera was sold roughly for about two Ethiopian birrs. They had a stable income for about three years through their small enjera business. They rented a two-room service at Adam's Arcade in Nairobi and became completely independent financially. Gradually, the lives of both colleagues of mine got stable and normalized. They brought their families and children from Ethiopia and enrolled them in good schools in Nairobi. The children got scholarships through some NGOs. Looking back on what happened in the lives of my two colleagues: Now after fifteen years, one of them is dead after having suffered from a prolonged illness. However, his two daughters are now in America and Canada. The other one's youngest daughter is still in Kenya at the university and his firstborn has returned back with her mother to Ethiopia and is now living a decent life in Addis Ababa. The other friend had got a good job in Southern Sudan and contributed tremendously toward the development of elementary education in Southern Sudan. He was employed as an International staff with one of the NGOs operating in the education field. He has now retired and is back in Addis Ababa. I have learnt a lot from these two Ethiopians who never chose their destiny. They were forced to migrate to Kenya when a new regime replaced the Mengistu military government. They maintained their pride and dignity by supporting themselves during the difficult time. I also think that they had spiritual strength which gave them extra courage during

that time of hardship because they used to read the Bible a lot and had also become members of a protestant church. Anyway, I always admire my two colleagues for their perseverance and continuous efforts to make ends meet as refugees in Kenya.

53 The Man Who Forgot His Mother's Name

Again Assefa Adnew is one of the legendary Ethiopians who succeeded as a refugee in Kenya. I met Mr. Assefa for the first time in late 1988 in Kenya as a refugee. He used to attend the Ethiopian MedahniAlem Orthodox Church in Nairobi, a very popular church, located around Yaya Center in the Hurlingham area of Nairobi. Many Ethiopian immigrants spent nearly all their time at the church praying for their future.

The church was built through the contribution of the Ethiopian community. Assefa and his wife Tsehai used to serve the church full time, cleaning the compound and the interior of the church, and taking care of the church garden, assisting in almost everything. They were always happy in serving the church. Assefa had been a soldier during the early days of the military government. After his retirement from the church, he got a job at the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's Central Administration Office as a driver and mechanic. He got a scholarship by the Greek Orthodox Church to study to be an automechanic in Kenya. That is how he came to Nairobi. After completing the six months course in automechanics, he decided to remain in Kenya and try his luck. However, Assefa had very limited elementary school education, so his ability to communicate in English language was also limited. His main interest was also to hang around the Ethiopian Church and associate in as much as possible with other Ethiopians living in Nairobi.

He rented a small service quarter for two thousand ksh. a month, but was not able to pay the rent regularly. He, therefore, had problems of survival due to lack of a consistent income. Whenever I meet Assefa and asked him how he was fairing, he would always tell me that it was only God who catered for him and enabled him to meet his needs. As far as he was concerned, he was fine and hoped for the best in future even though he had no job or any future plans. Several miracles happened in Assefa's Family. The owner of Assefa's house was divorcing his wife, as a result of which he got entangled in a court case. So, Assefa was not asked to pay the house rent by anybody. Assefa stayed in the same house for over five years

without being charged the house rent. The other good thing that happened to Assefa was the assistance that he was getting from one of the occupants of the house in the same compound. This person was a special bodyguard of President Moi. He used to bring food from the State House for Assefa and his children and in return Assefa would wash, and repair, and service his car. Another blessing came in the form of scholarships for his four children at the St. Mary's School in Nairobi by a certain NGO. They were all performing very well at school. Moreover, I gave a small Saloon Mazda car to him to use it as a taxi to support his family. This 1980 Mazda was a reserve car in our family and we did not use it very often. It was in good condition. So, Assefa converted this car into a taxi and parked it at the Ethiopian Orthodox Church compound. Any time, anybody needing him would call the Church and he would go and assist them.

One day the most important miracle happened for him and his family. An Ethiopian family had come for a visit to Kenya from Australia. They were staying a little bit further from the Church. Assefa was approached to assist them by transport. The couple greatly appreciated the assistance he gave them and offered him sponsorship to resettle in Australia. They promised to send him the final form from Australia. This was a special gift of God to Assefa. He received the official invitation from Australia after four months. He was invited at the Australian Embassy for an interview. So he came to meet me in my house and requested that I should accompany him to the Embassy in Nairobi. I agreed and we went together to see the person who was interviewing him. All his four children and his wife were there. The interview started with Assefa. I was sitting next to him during the interview. The woman asked him if he could tell her the name of his mother. Surprisingly, Assefa could not remember the name of his mother. He started to look up and down and started crying. We were all very surprised at what had happened. I took this chance to explain to the woman who was interviewing him that Assefa was simply overwhelmed with the rush of excitement and sudden happiness. He had not been sleeping well for the last one month ever since he had received the invitation from the Embassy. The interviewer, then, did not ask him another question. She was satisfied with my explanation and told them to go and process their medical status. After about two months Assefa and his family left and settled in Australia. When they arrived in Australia, they were given a four-bedroom villa. The

children were sent to good schools. Assefa and his wife were also sent to school. Life all of a sudden became different and very good.

I met Assefa and all his kids in Addis Ababa in May 2009 when they had come for the wedding of their firstborn daughter. The first son, Yohannes is now a financial consultant. The second-born daughter, Misrtak is an economist. The third-born daughter is a human resource specialist, and the last one is a communication expert. We attended Misraks's wedding in Addis and I also invited the family for a party in a restaurant in honor of their daughter's wedding. Assefa's family was blessed and was now very successful. Assefa and his wife used to travel back and forth from Australia to visit the Ethiopian Orthodox Church monasteries. When I had last seen him, he used to always praise the Lord for what he had done for his family. I am sure Assefa will live long to see more happy days in his Life. I have learned from Assefa that prayer and faith brings a lot of hope in our lives. Assefa is a good role model for many Ethiopians. He always praised God for everything he had. Assefas small service quarter had only one small room. The six of them used to sleep on one bed with three stages. Assefa and his wife used to sleep on the bottom, the three daughters would sleep above, and the son slept on the top-most bed. The room was divided by curtains into a sitting room, toilet, and kitchen.

However, the family was always happy to receive guests and offer them whatever they had. Today, Assefa is blessed in many ways and has been provided with a four-bedroom house in Australia and lives a comfortable life. May God bless him and his family.

54 Faith, Hope, and Success

From 1999 to 2005, I was coordinating a regional project named Farming in Tsetse Controlled Area (FITCA) in Eastern Africa. The regional project was financed by the European Union to the tune of twenty million euros. Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Burundi were covered through this project. The main objective of the project was to control tsetse flies in some areas in the six countries and also build a capacity and introduce new technologies.

We succeeded in controlling tsetse flies in Busia and Teso districts in Western Kenya. Some farmers started a zero grazing scheme in the area as a result of tsetse flies being effectively controlled in that area. In Budalangi sub-district, a retired woman was trying to plan her future retirement life and was considering many options and finally decided to establish a small dairy farm. This woman received as a government gold handshake about KES 60000, which was roughly about US$1,000. For a retiring elementary school teacher, this amount was a big capital to start some kind of business venture. The woman said she had a very strong faith in God so he would not let her down. With full confidence in her faith, she bought a cross-bred Holstein Frisian Heifer for 60000 KES. Imagine that was all what she has saved throughout her lifetime and she invested it on this crossbred Heifer. Her driving force was her strong faith. After nine months, the heifer gave birth to a female calf, and this was indeed a very blessed gift from God as a result of her Faith. So, she decided to name her calf, Hope. She said that her Faith had given birth to Hope. Her life started to improve tremendously as a result of collecting fifteen litres of milk from Faith that she used to sell. Then after about a year and a half, Hope gave birth to another female calf. This was again a big success to have another female cow in the herd. So, she decided to name the daughter of Hope, Success. The old retired woman became very popular in that village for having three milking cows. Everybody started coming to her for consultation and advice. Many people also came to buy milk from her homestead, and life certainly became very good for her. During that time in April 2004, I went to visit that village and saw the impact of our project in the community. I was taken by the

extension officer to visit this famous lady in the village. I was invited to her house, and a cup of hot milk was served proudly. She was told that I was an official of the African Union and that I had come to visit her in her village. The woman very proudly told me the story. She said that she had strong faith in God and so she invested all of what she had on the first cow whom she named Faith. Faith gave birth to Hope and brought more wealth to the family. Hope had then given birth to Success. She told me that she believed in our FITCA project that controlled tsetse flies in her village and that is why she had considered establishing a dairy farm in that remote village. I was very happy with what I saw in Budalangi.

55 Heinz, My German Colleague

Heinz Politzar was working with me as a technical advisor in the FITCA project, and we were very close friends. I was very lucky to have a real good friend and colleague who had a lot of experience on tsetse fly control. He had worked in Africa for more than thirty years and loved the African way of life so much. His hobby was to collect butterflies, so in the course of thirty years, he had collected over J.Villet from all over Africa. He had even discovered a new fly which was named after him in the Guinness Book of Records. The value of his collection was close to US$1 million. However, he made a will to give it to the national museum of Munich when he died. Dr. Politzar was a very simple man in his lifestyle and communicated very easily with everyone. Sometimes his German character brought him problems but we tried to understand him and help him a lot. Dr. Politzar never had children. I even asked him once as to why he did not have children. He told me that the German social affair offices had advised him not to have children because of his hot temperament and lack of patience in managing children. It was true. Heinz was always short-tempered and easily became angry. Whenever we traveled for missions, Heinz would be cautious about hotel tariffs and food prizes and would order the less expensive food. I noticed this several times and I asked him as to why was he so concerned about food prizes. He had earned enough money in the past, so why worry about small money Heinz gave me an extraordinary explanation to this. He explained that he was born and raised during the World War II time. Immediately after the war, Germany was completely destroyed. Their father was killed in the war. His mother had to struggle to raise them. So they were raised in a family with extreme poverty. There were times when the whole family had to share a piece of bread for supper, since there were no breads in shops. As he grew up, he realized that life was difficult and nothing came easily. His mother continuously used to tell him that they were extremely poor, so they could not have enough of everything. They used to miss meals. They did not have enough clothing as compared to other kids in his home-town of Munich. He finished high school and university under these conditions. Only in the mid-1950s and 1960s did the economy of Germany begin improving and people started to become rich

again. He also got a good job and came to Africa to work as an international staff. But he still had a poverty-mentality. He was parsimonious and so had difficulty in spending much. He would look for cheaper options even in food and clothing.

Heinz always dreamed of a comfortable life after his retirement. He kept telling me the way in which he had renovated his “castle” in Northern Italy which he had bought for two million German Marks many years ago. His castle had twenty-two bedrooms. It was located on sixty-five acres of land. He introduced reindeers in his farm and they were breeding very well. Every year he killed a number of them and sold them off to a special restaurant at a good price. He also had a dairy farm which was managed by an Italian farmer who also took care of his castle in his absence. Heinz always looked forward to go on summer leave to Northern Italy and take care of the castle. He used to show us video films of his castle, which was very beautiful indeed!

Politzar’s wife, a diabetic, had died after suffering with a prolonged illness. Both of them had been taking anti-malarial tablets on a daily basis while staying in Africa because of which she developed a very rare side-effect. She developed a permanent trembling effect in her muscles and could not do much work on her own. She required the assistance of her husband. Later on she was admitted at the Nairobi Hospital and passed away peacefully. Her body was taken to North Italy in their castle and was buried in a small church. Heinz retired in 2002 and returned to live in his castle. For the first few years he was happy but then he also fell sick and was admitted to the local hospital. He had no one by his side to take care of him. He died peacefully in 2007 in the hospital. One of his elder sisters had to be communicated at Germany to come and take care of his property.

Heinz Politzar never had the chance to live the dream life in his castle. Sometimes, I really wonder as to why we get so worried about the future. The future is certainly not in our control. We need to enjoy the present as much as possible. Anyway, I really miss my good friend Heinz, especially in his rare livelier moments while drinking his cold beer.

There was another colleague of mine who had come to Ethiopia for six months, just before his retirement. He was originally from Czechoslovakia

and had settled in UK after the Velvet Revolution. He was an agronomist by profession and worked with UN for more than twenty-five years. He became the country's representative for FAO and was working very closely with us. This friend of ours also used to talk a lot about his special retirement plan in Canada. He said that he had bought some land in Northern Canada and he is keeping on the thirty acres of land some wild games and he is fond of taking care of them. After his retirement he went to Canada and settled. He organized his retirement home with all the necessary backups for the heavy winter. He even had arrangement for special rescue insurance which would cater for any emergency needs in that remote part of the country in Canada. During his first winter there, his house got buried under a meter of snow. He managed to call the emergency assistance, but before they arrived, he was freezing in the cold for over three hours while all backup systems also failed to operate. He was evacuated to Germany and died later in the hospital.

Most of my European friends indeed got too concerned about leading a comfortable life postretirement. Their problem was that they were atheists and did not believe in God. For them there was no life after death. All what they wanted to enjoy to the maximum was the last part of their lives, and that by being able to save enough money for the future! However, I have seen an unfortunate end to the lives of my two close friends. I think one should be ready to enjoy life today when you are healthy and able to do it, with family and close friends.

56 Our Goodwill Ambassadors for the Eradication of African Trypanosomiasis

There are many types of livestock diseases which are neglected and there is very little research both on national and international levels to control and eradicate these diseases. African Trypanosomiasis is one of them. It was important to advocate and popularize the menace of African Trypanosomiasis to the public and the governments of the various African countries. I was appointed as the Advocacy Officer to the Pan African Programme for the eradication of African Trypanosomiasis, in January 2008. I was recruited through the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND), financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. I was also seconded by FIND to the African Union PATTEC coordination offices at the African Union Headquarter in Addis Ababa. My job was to promote advocacy activities in favor of eradicating tsetse flies from Africa. With the assistance of my collaborators, we developed a strategic plan for advocacy for three years and started to implement it in all tsetse affected countries. Our ultimate objective was to increase the budget allocated for tsetse eradication in each of the affected countries and also to have a policy for African Trypanosomiasis and strengthen information exchange on these diseases. To make the above strategies a reality, it was important to identify powerful public figures so that they would accept African Union Missions as goodwill ambassadors.



World marathon recordholder, Haile. Feb.2009.

The famous Ethiopian marathon record holder athlete Haile Gebreselassie was approached for this honorary fellowship. I took an appointment with Haile and went to see him in his office on Bole Road in Addis Ababa in February 2009. I was accompanied with Dr. John Kabayo, the PATTEC coordinator, who was also my immediate boss. Haile received us very warmly and in a very relaxed manner and in good English language started to crack jokes and he made us feel very easy and comfortable. He had an executive presidential office furnished with special office furniture which suits the world record holder. We were both very happy and proud in the way Haile received us. He enquired in a very friendly language what had brought us, the African Union officials to his office. Dr. Kabayo explained to him why we came to visit him and briefed him about the African Union initiative for the eradication of tsetse flies from Africa. I was extremely surprised about the knowledge and information Haile had on the impact of tsetse flies and the diseases that it transmits. He immediately said that it is called Gendi in Amharic language. He said that he knew about the disease right from his childhood and that the horrible disease used to kill all his family's as well as the neighbors' cattle and equine in the Arssi region. As a small child, he used to cry every time his family lost its livestock due to trypanosomiasis. He also said that he had often wondered about a solution for this disease. When he learned now that African Union had a continental program, he immediately decided to extend all the necessary political and moral support for the eradication of this disease. He also concluded by saying that he was proud to be requested to become a goodwill ambassador in support of the cause. Later, Haile attended a special meeting on tsetse advocacy and made a special remark during the opening ceremony at the African Union Headquarter. Haile also appeared in a special documentary film on PATTEC entitled Death from the Fly. He repeated his vow on his commitment regarding supporting the cause.

By the end of February, I was on my way to Western Kenya, in Siaya District where Mama Sara Obama, President Obama's grandmother, was residing. I was accompanied by officials from Nairobi and also representatives of the district administration of Bondo. I had the official clearance from the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs to visit Mama Sara as an African Union delegation leader. A big convoy arrived at the homestead of Mama Sara, a place very much guarded by

government security officers. After we showed our credentials, we were allowed to go in and meet Mama Sara. She was living in a very nice compound recently renovated by the government. Since she became a public figure she was frequented by a lot of visitors on a daily basis, mostly foreign tourists. We were given special priority to meet her. We were seated outside the house and had to wait for a while. When we arrived, Mama Sara was in a meeting with the local women's group. They were discussing on development issues concerning the women's group and she was appointed as the focal person for women.



President Obama's grandmother, Sara Obama. March 2009

Mama Sara came out and met us. I was introduced by the administrator as the head of the African Union mission. She was very happy to meet me and my colleagues. We also briefed her about the purpose of our mission. She immediately responded by saying that she was very much aware of the tsetse and trypanosomiasis problem in the area. She told us that she herself and her family, and all the community members had suffered from these diseases in this area. She also said that at one time there was a big outbreak of sleeping sickness in that area and all the people and the livestock had to be relocated to other sites. She said that she welcomed the PATTEC mission with great pleasure and she would like to support our program. We informed her that she was recommended to be a goodwill ambassador for

PATTEC for these areas and if she could accept our invitation. She very happily accepted her nomination as a goodwill ambassador. I presented to her insecticides against tsetse flies which could be sprayed on animals with the help of a foot pump. The insecticide that we gave her would be enough for three thousand animals. We also presented to her the PATTEC uniform and calendars. This was very much publicized in the local and international media. She was also in the PATTEC documentary film when she vowed her support for the PATTEC initiative. The news also appeared in the famous Paris Match journal in its March 2009 issue, and attracted a lot of comments about her support.

Mama Sara Obama is now eighty-four years old and is very active in her community. Ever since the PATTEC Kenya team visited Mama Sara, she extended her full support whenever they needed. In Kenya, the PATTEC Initiative Programme started four years ago. The Kenyan government together with Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali took from the African Development Bank about US$75 million to control and eradicate the disease. This soft loan was approved with the support of the African Union. Kenya took about US$9 million for this program and since then they have been operating on a large scale tsetse eradication campaign. It was for the first time in history that African Countries had taken soft loan from development banks for a disease-control program. African countries by and large depended on donors for money to control and eradicate livestock diseases. This was not right and such practice would only continue to make Africa dependent on grants and donors' money. Africa should be self-reliant. We are very proud to be the pioneers in convincing African governments to use loan money for diseases control.

57 My Meeting with Sultan Ali Miraha

Sultan Ali Miraha was the spiritual and traditional leader of the Afar people. His direct involvement in the eradication of rinderpest from Ethiopia was very important. We wanted to record his voice on a tape recorder to be transmitted in Afar language on the Ethiopian radio. So we fixed an official appointment through his protocol office and went to see him in his temporary office at the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa on the sixth floor. We were received politely by his assistants and were guided to his office. I was accompanied by my colleague Dr. Ibrahim Hussein, who was the coordinator of the PARC Programme in Ethiopia.

As we entered into the Sultan's office, he greeted us warmly and we were told to sit down. The Sultan asked our names. I introduced myself as Solomon Haile Mariam, a representative of the African Union. I also introduced my colleague as Dr. Ibrahim Hussein from the Ministry of Agriculture. The Sultan looked at both of us and he requested that he should be briefed by Dr. Ibrahim who was of course, a Muslim. Dr. Ibrahim explained to him about the rinderpest campaign in Africa and the need for all Afar cattle to be vaccinated by the special vaccine. We wanted him to pass a traditional instruction to his people to cooperate with our program.

The Sultan very kindly agreed and we recorded his speech of guidance and instruction to the people of Afar to support the program and bring all their cattle for vaccination.

Since the Afar area was a very difficult place to operate for highlanders, we decided to train young people from Afar to master the vaccination campaign and equip them with vaccination equipments for rinderpest and the treatment of other diseases. The Afar youngsters very quickly captured the art of vaccination and started to carry vaccination equipment on foot to the farthest and most difficult terrains to undertake vaccination exercises. They were also equipped with a special variety of heat-stable vaccine. The special program for Afar became very successful and as a result rinderpest was

eradicated from the Afar region with the support of these community-based animal health workers (CBAHWs)

The Afar pastoralist thought that all the cattle in the region were the property of the spiritual leader and that they needed his blessings and guidance pertaining to livestock raising.

The following month the Sultan's speech was on Ethiopian radio in Afar language. Our program got a tremendous response as a result of his speech. We wrote him a letter of thanks for his cooperation.

58 The Mother of Dennis Gerhard was Treated as a Queen in Afar Land

Dennis Gerhard was a young French man who had come to work in Ethiopia during the 1974-75 drought as a manager of a small NGO called NOMADEP. He was an agronomist by profession, but the work that he was trying to do in Afar land was not so productive. For the Afars, the welfare of their livestock was the most important means of their livelihoods. He had to use animal health services as an entry point so he came to see me at the Ministry of Agriculture to seek my advice. Since I was the director of veterinary services at that time, I immediately supported him and decided that we would organize training for the young Afars for them to learn the methods of treating at least ten important livestock diseases. He was very happy with my support. We developed a training program and began training about thirty Afars from the Kesem Kebena area. They were graduated with a special ceremony and were also provided with a briefcase with all the equipment they needed and the medicines for treating the animals. The young men felt extremely proud to be recognized as medicine men for treating livestock. They sang a song for us in their Afar language which said that they were putting down their guns and from then on they would be carrying syringes like their guns to treat their animals. Very soon the Afar community-based workers started to treat the animals of their community. Later, Dennis trained them on how to use a pair of camels to till the land. Soon, they began producing groundnuts and maize crops through irrigation. Later, he also taught them how to use local technology to search for water in the desert. They succeeded in digging several deep wells by using their hands and pumping the water with small generators. He also assisted them in establishing a small back-yard cottage to produce mineral licks for their animals. Dennis in a short time managed to learn the Afar language and started to communicate with them directly. All this gave him so much confidence that he almost became the natural leader of the Afars around Kesem Kebena, about two hundred kilometers from Addis on the way to Assaita by the bank of the River Awash. Dennis got so involved with the livelihoods of the Afar people that he even began living in a small house he built, amongst the Afars. He brought a special trainer from Libya, to

train them on using camels for ploughing. He also trained the Afars on how to use irrigation systems for their farms. Finally, his mother came to visit him in Afar. He told all the Afars pastoralists about the news of his mother's arrival. The Afars prepared a special traditional welcome ceremony for the mother of Dennis Gerhard. She was met by about ten thousand Afars, twenty kilometers before the homestead of Dennis in the Afar land. She was carried shoulder high as a sign of respect by Afars and marched the ten kilometers to the home of Dennis. I attended the ceremony and Dennis's mother cried with happiness. She never thought that the Afar's would love her son so much. She told him that she now understood the purpose of his mission and that she very much appreciated the value of his work and his contribution toward the improvement of the livelihood of the Afar people. Unfortunately, two years later, the military government of the Derg accused Dennis as a French spy who had a mission in Ethiopia and he was then forced to leave the Afar land immediately. Later, I learned that Dennis remained in Ethiopia and became a historian and wrote several books on Ethiopian history.

59 Meeting with the Officials of the Kingdom of Busoga

I visited Uganda in March 2009 and my mission was to involve the officials from the Kingdom of Busoga in support of the PATTEC Initiative. In Uganda twelve different traditional kings are recognized by the government. The kings are the traditional leaders of the people. They have their own incomes and shadow governments. People listen to them very often. During this mission, I was supposed to meet the prime minister of the Busoga Kingdom. Unfortunately, he had another engagement, so an appointment was arranged for me to meet the minister of information of the Busoga Kingdom. We went to meet him at the Senior High School in Jinja. He was a teacher of biology in that school. He was in his early forties, and a highly educated man. We briefed him about tsetse flies and the disease transmitted by these flies in that area of Uganda. I was very surprised about the amount of information the minister already had on tsetse flies. He gave us an interview for the PATTEC documentary film and promised to put it on the air within the coming week through their short-wave radio programs. The Busoga area was heavily infected with tsetse flies and sleeping sickness, so everybody in the area was conversant on these diseases. I was very happy to learn later that the interview was on radio for the Busoga people, and a lot of awareness regarding the diseases and their eradication measures was being spread.

60 Carjacked in Kampala

I had visited Uganda many times since 1985. At that time I was on a mission as a consultant, to evaluate the rinderpest eradication campaign for FAO. During my stay for one month I had the opportunity to travel to many parts of Uganda. The civil war had not ended then, so everywhere there was a security problem. I saw the skulls of so many dead people displayed along the roadside in protest against killing innocent civilians in that country.

When I visited Uganda in 1988 as the coordinator for the rinderpest campaign, we were officially handed over twenty-two Land Rovers for the project at the National Conference Center in Kampala. After the handing over ceremony, I was given for few days one of the new Land Rovers to use it for transport while I was staying in Kampala. The same night after supper I was driven by that car toward the Fairway Hotel where I stayed. Before we reached the hotel, we were intercepted by a small car. Two people came out with machine guns and hissed something to the driver in the local language. The driver just jumped out of the car without informing anything to me. My sixth sense informed me about the impending danger as the other man pointed his machine gun at me shouting something in the local language which I did not understand. The driver then requested me to quickly get out without taking anything out of the car. I did as I was told and the two men drove off with our new Land Rover. I was confused and did not know what to do. I had left all my belongings in the car including a camera, documents, and some Ugandan shillings. The driver gave me the telephone number of the commissioner. I later informed the commissioner about the incident. He said that those people could be from the army, who were busy highjacking field cars from Kampala. The following day, I reported the problem to the minister of agriculture, who assured me that he would provide another car for the project and that we should not blow this story, since it would affect the image of the government. Anyway, I could not have done much except reporting the matter.



Meeting with Vice President of Southern Sudan,

Juba April 2009

61 The Beautiful American Girl who was offered a Thousand Cows

In the year 2003, we were sent to Karamoja area in Northern Uganda with a young American University student to work with the pastoralists in that area. The elegant young student from the University of California, Davis, worked very hard in that adverse situation in Karamoja to collect blood samples for purposes of disease surveys. She was assisted by the Karamojong pastoralists to restrain their animals when she collected blood and fecal samples. The Karamojong in Tororo District liked the white lady. She was very active in handling and examining the animals. Normally, the lives of the Karamojongs were very much tied to the well-being of their animals and they would always be ready to make all kinds of sacrifices for protecting their livestock. The most serious problem in those areas, however, was animal health and drought. Anyone who came to assist them with their animals was considered as a special person. The most common incident in that area was that of cattle raiding. Young armed people would go to the neighboring tribes to raid their cattle by force. Most young people were heavily armed and always ready to kill. A Karamojong warrior who had killed a man would have a dash scar permanently branded on his chest. One could frequently see people with several dash scars on their chests indicating the number of people they had killed during cattle raiding. Such unfortunate practice should be stopped. In our project, we established a special women's group whose husbands had been murdered by cattle raiders. Their widows were suffering with their children. We organized them in a special team and went around with our staff in vehicles preaching to the other fellow pastoralists about their suffering, trying to mediate peace between two conflicting neighbors. This program was extended from Karamoja to Turkana and was successfully reducing the incidents of conflicts. Conflicts were also arising due to watering spots and pasture land for their animals. A young Karamojong would go to a far off place with his close friends to raid cattle which would then be paid as a dowry for his fiancée. This was a very important adventure in the lives of Karamojongs.

Coming back to the story of the young lady from Davis, California, she did not take seriously the culture of Karamojongs and used to talk to them

kindly and also try to joke about some of their cultural practices. Then one of them asked her a very interesting question. He said that he liked the way she took care of the animals and he wanted to know if she was interested in looking for a husband. The young lady jokingly said that if her parents could find somebody who would be ready to pay a very high dowry, then she would definitely marry. Those people took her reply seriously and started to discuss among themselves about raising the highest amount of dowry for payment. In the culture of Karamojong, it is the tribe that contributes toward the payment of the dowry. The following week three people appeared ready to pay up to five hundred cattle for this American lady. She answered saying that since they were three, she would be made available to the one who pays the highest dowry of a thousand cattle. Then these people discussed again with the tribesmen and agreed to contribute one thousand cattle for her dowry. The winner came and told the lady that he would make available a thousand cattle if she confirmed her acceptance then. The young lady then realized the danger of joking with these people and very shamefully confessed that she was joking. She was not intending to marry anybody since she was a student and had an objective of her own for the future. The guy got very upset and went back home frustrated and ashamed for his people for having failed to get this woman.

The following day, at around midnight, the man came to shoot this young lady and missed her with two bullets while she was sleeping in her bedroom. The watchmen came and rescued her, and the following day early in the morning, she had to pack and leave Karamojong. She came and reported to me about what had happened. I told her that it was a grave mistake to lie to those innocent people. They are very serious and they could have killed her there and then. The young lady left the following week for California. It is very useful to respect the culture and tradition of the people whom you are visiting. This American lady made a terrible mistake and could have lost her life easily.

62 Jack Muberuka: A victim of the Rwandeses Genoside

I visited Rwandas on several occasions to pursue the implementation of the Rinderpest Eradication Programme and the FITCA Project. Rwanda is a very beautiful country that is developing very fast. Rwandeses are by nature very quiet and polite people who are very friendly to outsiders, especially to Ethiopians, since they believe that they had migrated from Ethiopia from the Oromo tribe about two hundred years ago. Their physical features are very beautiful and attractive. However, the civil war between the Hutus and Tutsies, which took place in April 1994, is something which cannot be forgotten. My friend Jack Muberuka was a Tutsi and was the director of the disease research laboratory in the outskirts of Kigali. He was also the coordinator for the rinderpest eradication programme in Rwanda. I used to visit him in Kigali very often to monitor the implementation of the project in that country. Whenever I visited Kigali, he would invite me to his house, which was located in the vicinity of the laboratory. I enjoyed staying with his family and eating good food prepared by his elegant wife. I used to take some sweets for the kids as they would be happy to see me in their house. Unfortunately, during the genocide, Jack Muberuka, and all his kids were massacred by his Hutu neighbors, and we were informed about this sad incident immediately. I was very sad and mourned the death of Jack and his family.

Ethnic conflict in Africa is a terrible thing which should be avoided. In Africa it causes so much pain, frustration, and suffering among the unfortunate victims of such conflict. Recently, I visited the big mosolium which was built in commemoration of the 1994 incident. Thousands of human remains were collected in the underground graves and are openly visited by tourists. Since peace has returned to Rwanda, so many good things have happened in that country in the last fifteen years. The economy is booming and people are prospering in every field of development. If peace prevails for a longer time, Rwanda could be a good role model country in enhancing rapid development.

Chapter 4

63 Conclusion

I would like to conclude my autobiography by thanking all of you for having the patience to read all these small but important issues that have affected my life. As I am reaching close to seventy in a few years, I wish to thank God for having given me such a blessed life. I am a member of the Rotary Club. The driving force for a Rotarian is to be committed to his family, to build a prosperous career, and to be of service to others. These commitments are known as three in one. It means family, career, and service to others. I have been very lucky to have accomplished in all these three areas of my life during my lifetime. Again, all this achievement in my life was possible because of all the assistance and support that I got from those who were very close to me. I should mention a few words about each of these three major achievements.

64 My Family

I got married to Etaferahou Tamrat on October 28, 1972. Our wedding took place in Addis. My mother Mulumebet took full charge of the ceremony. We were blessed with four children whom we raised with a lot of love. Today as I write my autobiography, all my children have grown up and live in the USA. They love their country. They have inherited this love for their country from their parents and grandparents. In September 1961, on my way to Czechoslovakia, when I had gone to see my grandfather on his death bed, he had in his very fragile voice imparted a few words of wisdom to me which I remember till today. He said, "This may be the last time that I am seeing you. As I am ill and also old, please keep in mind that young people who go to Europe and America for further studies pick more bad manners than good habits from the foreign country. They think of smoking and drinking to be signs of civilization, and return back to their country with these bad habits. They also think that marrying a European or an American would guarantee them a better lifestyle. But they are all so wrong. I would like you to keep the promises and tradition of my family. Do not get addicted to anything such as cigarettes or alcohol. Moreover, make sure that you don't mix my race with strangers. Remember what the Italians have done to our country and the suffering we have gone through because of them." Those were the last words from my mentor, Negadras. I have never seen him alive since then. I tried to pass these family values and the wisdom of my grandfather to all my kids. We are also blessed with one grandson, Gabriel, from our firstborn daughter, Mahlet. She was married to Mr. Edwin Turuka of Kenya, in April 2005, in a beautiful wedding ceremony in Atlanta, Georgia. Since I have lived in Kenya for over twenty years, all my children were brought up in Nairobi and finished their secondary schooling in Kenya. In 1995, our family won the DV Lottery in America and we moved and settled in Los Angeles. All my children went to school in California except the last born Rahel, who remained with us in Kenya and went to a good school for her elementary and secondary education. We love Kenya since we all had a great life in that great country. Kenyans are very nice people on individual level and have a very simple culture with which anybody can cope up. I was transferred as the director of AU-PANVAC in

Debrezeit in 2005, and since then we have settled in Addis Ababa. We are living in our own house in Ayat Estate.

65 Professional Successes that achieved me the Medal of Honor

I have explained earlier that I had a very successful professional life. I worked with the Ethiopian government for twenty years and with the African Union for another twenty-one years. Before I left Ethiopia, I had worked in nine different positions (see the biodata at the end of this book). With African Union, I enjoyed full freedom in executing my duty. The most important achievement while working with the African Union was the position I occupied as the coordinator of the Pan African Rinderpest Campaign, and the result we had collectively registered by eradicating rinderpest from the African continent.

In this connection, July 25, 2009, was a very important day in my life. On that day, the Ethiopian government was celebrating the eradication of rinderpest from Ethiopia. This special ceremony was being attended by more than a thousand people from all over Ethiopia and outside Ethiopia. The deputy prime minister, H.E. Ato. Addis Legese, was the guest of honor, and he awarded some of us with gold medals for our professional achievements. This was indeed a climax in my professional life. I was also very much flattered and motivated when a council of about thirty senior veterinarians who constituted the Medal Award Committee on behalf of the government, recommended me for honoris causa from the Addis Ababa University for the extraordinary achievements. I am happy to have been honored in my own country by the highest government official and also by my own colleagues. Such recognition and rewards always motivate a person to do and achieve more in life.

66 Participation in Various Social Matters

I am not a very active person in social matters but I respect friendship and collegial loyalties. There are a few Mahbers and associations with whom I am very much attached. Those of us who returned from our studies in Czechoslovakia earlier established a Mahber called Abo Friendship Mahber. We are about twelve families. This Mahber was established thirty-seven years back. We meet every month and enjoy ourselves in our houses on a rotation base. I stick a lot to members of this Mahber as they are of my age group and we have a lot of values to share. I am the founding member. I also got involved in the establishment of the Ethiopian Veterinary Medical Association (EVA) in 1973. I was the first vice president and president for seven years for these associations. During the establishment of the EVA there were less than fifty members. There are now over 800 members. The association has been strengthened many folds and I am very proud that I was also honored to chair on the first day of the scientific session on the annual meeting.

Very often we organize get-togethers with our immediate family members through the Mahber. We even organize a Mahber to consolidate our bonds. The Mahber is today over thirty years old and plays a very crucial role in bringing family members together.

I also attend other professional and sports club to maintain good relationship with friends. My family also helps the underprivileged groups through the Orthodox Church. We try to raise funds and assist in several directions. Whatever is covered in this autobiography is a small peace of what has happened in my life. I hope you have enjoyed reading it.

67 My Message for the Future Generation

Dear All,

Life is very interesting if you live your dreams and aspirations. Life is full of challenges if you are ready to face it. Never get bored in life. Try to engage your brain in some sort of activity. Never fear to be criticized on making mistakes. You can always try again and again. Move your neck according to the music. When you see clouds gathering, prepare to catch rainwater. Remember that everything has its beauty but not everyone sees it . . . You cannot have beautiful flowers without dealing with some thorns along the way. Consistency and persistence is the key to manifestation. Be certainly always motivated and productive Have a positive spirit. Thomas Alva Edison made around a hundred trials before inventing the electric bulb, and Albert Einstein who could not even read or write until the age of nine became one of the top scientists of our times. These people never stopped trying since they were determined to achieve their objectives.

For as much as possible, try to learn lessons from the past and aim with a strategic plan to capture the future. These were the engines that drove my aspiration to this level. In my lifetime, I have seen the eradication of rinderpest from Africa. I have been involved in one of the largest African Trypanosomiasis Eradication Programmes in Africa and the project was a success. I am very lucky and blessed to be part and parcel of these two Pan African Initiatives. I am sure you can all achieve what you want in life if you work hard.

The Author

68 Biodata of the Author

1957-1961: Ambo Agricultural School, Diploma

1961-1968: Brno University, Czechoslovakia. DVM.

1970-1971: University of Vienna, Austria. P.G. in Preventive Medicine. Dip.

Work Experience

1968-1969: Meat Inspector. Ming. of Agri. Wollo, Ethiopia.

1969-1970: Coordinator for JP15 Project, Sidamo Province.

1970-1971: Postgraduate course in Austria.

1972-1974: Lecturer at the Animal Health School, Debre-

Zeit.

1974-1975: Director, Meat Inspection and Quarantine, Min. Agri., Addis Ababa.

1976-1979: Head of the Veterinary Services, Ethiopia

1979-1980: Deputy Director General, Animal and Fisheries Authority

1981-1984: Director of Animal Health Services, Ethiopia.

1985-1987: Head of the National Artificial Insemination center, Ethiopia.

1987-1996: International Coordinator (PARC), African Union, Nairobi.

1996-2002: Chief Livestock Project Officer for AU-IBAR, Nairobi.

2002-2005: International Coordinator for Farming in Tsetse Controlled Areas (FITCA), African Union, Nairobi, Regional Office.

2006-2007: Acting Director of AU-PANVAC, Debrezeit, Ethiopia.

2008-date: Advocacy Officer and Advisor for the PAN African Campaign against Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis, PATTEC.

Current Position

Advocacy Officer and Advisor in the Pan African Tsetse Eradication Programme (PATTEC), African Union Headquarter, Addis Ababa

Publication

- Book. Meat Inspection and Quarantine in Ethiopia. 1976. Hard Copy.

- Book. Animal Health Review in Ethiopia. 1970-1980. Hard Copy.

- Book Pan African Rinderpest Eradication Campaign. 1986-1999. Under edition.

- Indigenous Cattle Breeds of Ethiopia. FAO Journal of Agriculture. 1982.

Membership

- Member of the Ethiopian Veterinary Association.

- Member of Kenyan Veterinary Association.

- Member of the California Medical Association.

- Member of the Ethiopian Agricultural Professional Association.

- Rotary Club Member.

- Addis Ababa Tennis Club Member.

- Executive Committee Member of the AU-International Scientific Council for Tsetse Research and Control (ISCTRC)

- Steering Committee Member for Drafting Global Convention for the Livestock Emergency Guidelines(LEG)

- Chairman,Veterinary Science Task Force under The Proffessional Advisory Groups(PAG) for the Ministry of Education.



With my wife Taffi in July 2008 USA, Atlanta



During the wedding of our daughter Mahlet in

April 2005, Atlanta, Georgia



PARC coordination meeting in Kampala 1990



Commemoration postage stamps for

renderpest eradication in 1976



The PATTEC commemorative postage stamps

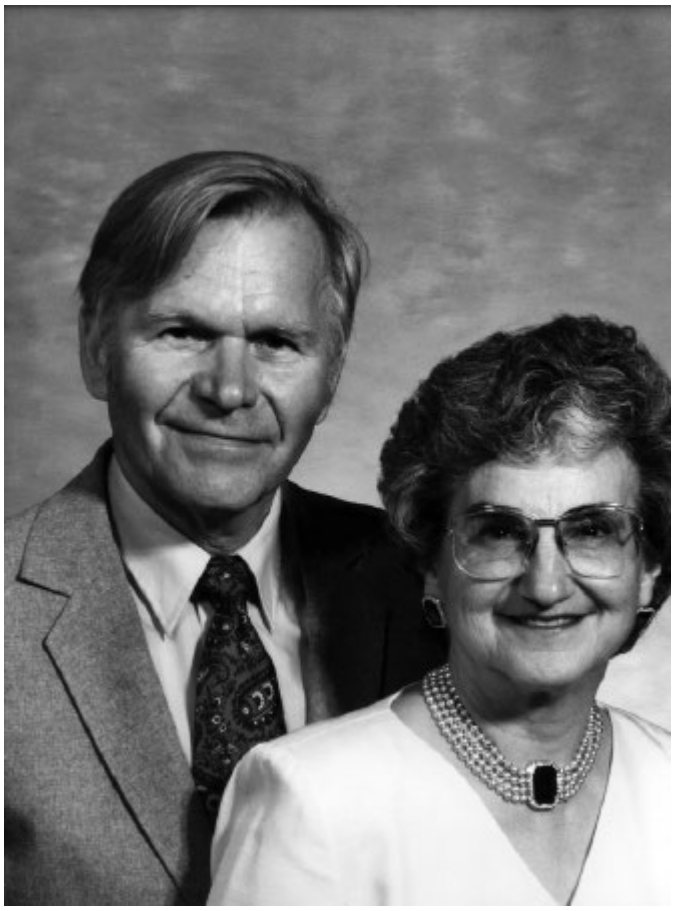
July 21, 2009



My wife Taffi in 2009 in Atlanta, Georgia

Thanks

End



Mr.Payne & Mrs.Payne. Pelssinvennia. USA. 2004

Dr. Solomon Haile Mariam is one of the few extra-ordinary individuals with whom it has been our privilege to become acquainted. His fascinating story, while of great interest to all who know him, is also of interest to all Ethiopians, to those interested in learning more about Ethiopia and its recent history, and also to anyone interested in animal health and it impact on human development. The author's compassionate and wholesome life philosophy is demonstrated in his concern for and assistance to others in need. Dr. Solomon's deep commitment to his beloved Ethiopia as well as his dedication to enhance the welfare of all of Africa's animals as they benefit the people of Africa is exemplary. The book is far more than a story of Dr. Solomon's life, although that is outstanding. The book chronicles Ethiopia's economic and political saga from the time of Emperor Haile Selasse through the turbulent communist regime of Mengistu until the present time.

While Dr. Solomon is an extra-ordinary individual, how we got to know him is equally extra-ordinary. As a young volunteer mission builder in the Harer Province of Ethiopia in 1952, James met a young girl whom he, with another lady, helped to send to school at a time when girls outside the city did not attend school. She was one of four girls among a sea of boys. Noting her sweet disposition and strength of character, it was not surprising that after completing her elementary training, as was the custom among rural Ethiopian girls, she had an offer of marriage. As she had communicated faithfully with her benefactor following his return to the U.S., Taffy wrote asking what she should do. The reply was, “Get your education. You can always get married.” Losing her shared support, James managed to raise the needed funds for her to complete high school.

When Taffy wrote to James telling him of Solomon’s proposal of marriage, he replied, “If you love him and he is a good man, marry him.” This is how Solomon and Taffy became kindred spirits and parents of an outstanding family, and we became Father and Mother Payne as well as grandparents to their children. We are proud and privileged to have them as part of our Payne Family. James and Marian Payne

Negadras during his last day of life in 1960.

The Diary of The African