



Spiritans in Ethiopia



Forty Years - Days of Remembering

It was a great day.

Firstly, on the 17th of January, we had a get-together with the Spiritans and Sisters in Dhad-diim. It was a great celebration, being thankful for my forty years in Ethiopia and remembering all the good and not-so-good moments in those years, and remembering all those who touched my life: Vince Stegman for one and Ned Marchessault. Then Ed Kelly and Bill Jackson, Eef Nass, Stephen Odour and Ton Leus, all of whom have passed on. Josaphat Kilawila, Casti Mushi and Peter Mulyanga, Peter Ndegwa and Mike Mayo, Peter Osuji, Jerome Onwughalu, Patrick Ugbaje and



Iede de Lange

Joanne Bierl and JoAnn Mullin, Mairead Gorman, Colette Ryan, Theresia Sampti, Teresia Ladislaus and Dina Grossman. We celebrated and it was good. Among all those of course we remembered especially Ton Leus and all his achievements. It was a great day, but very much a celebration of expatriates.

I was told that the Borana wanted to have their own celebration, so... Well, you can't imagine!

What an outpouring! You should have been there to share in this outpouring of gratitude towards us on March 30th, 2013.

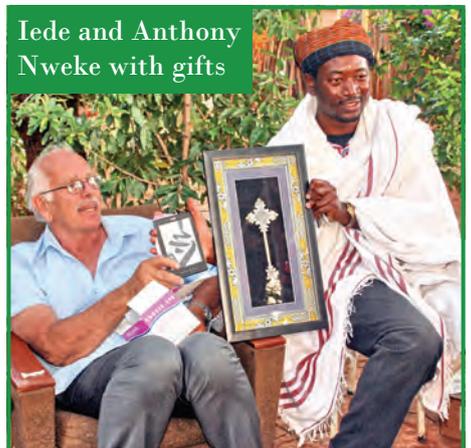
Dima Wario, Caala Dabasso, Dido Boru, Mamo Beyenne and others had formed a committee. Everything was arranged. They invited former students from the Gabra, the Guji and the Borana, and all those now working in offices or schools and universities. People in government: Malicha Loje came all the way from Addis Ababa from the headquarters of Oromia, people from Dhoqqolle, Dubluq, Yabello, Hageremariam, students from the hostels. No end.

They had arranged cars to bring the visitors from Yabello. The University of Hageremariam sent their car with eleven of our former students, now in a



Sr Annie and Iede examine a gift

Charles Ebelebe, Novatus Kimaro, Nolasco Mushi, Robert Wafula, Emmanuel Okello, Vincent Mutebi, Denis Mugalula and Jude Kiggala, Stan Nwaigwe, Martin Chepsat, Kenneth Okoli, Petersixtus Emenike, Renuat Karamuna and the few that I forgot, with all the ones still present here. Plus the MMM Sisters:



Iede and Anthony Nweke with gifts

teaching positions. Unbelievable! They killed two cows and the Dhaddiim staff did all the cooking.

Tume Ana was brought in with her sound system to accompany the liturgy. Wonderful! For the Mass they had taken the railings off the veranda like at the time of Dida Wario's ordination.

I arrived with Sebastian Samikannu, our postulant from India, and some staff members of Yabello Spiritan Hostel, Boru Bonaya, Bezunesh and Tegist. They put us in the sitting room, and I was to stay there till the whole thing started. There was a reason: when finally we started and went to the school to prepare for Mass, I saw all around me people in purple T-shirts with my picture on the front and on the back. How they arranged all that God knows, but it was a sight to behold. All along the path to the school I met myself on the backs of people's shirts.



Boniface Muema preaching on January 17th.

The Mass was beautiful. The singing well prepared. During Mass we remembered Ed Kelly and Bill Jackson, Eef Nass, and of course Ton Leus, who is buried in Dhaddiim. There were hundreds of people, people who had gotten a start in life through our schools. The photographer of Borana Zone was engaged to record the whole thing. After Mass they sat me down, put on the 'rufò' (Borana turban) and the cloth and the 'kalacha' (the head-dress worn by the elders at the Gadamoji ceremony, when officially retiring from social engagement). A hint? I must have been a sight. Then they brought the coffee to be blessed. There I was sitting with Jaldesa Oda from Dhaddiim and Arballe from Dhoqqolle, as elders called upon to bless the coffee. I used the opportunity to bless all who had shaped the Borana mission. It was great. I named every single Spiritan who'd passed through and all the MMMs and all those present, including the Sisters of Charity

now working in Dhaddiim, and the people kept repeating: *Nagaa! Nagaa! Peace! Peace!*

When it came to the gifts, they had an interesting way of collecting money to cover the whole

event. Fr Dida Wario stood up and said that they wanted to present me with the purple T-shirt that so many were wearing but that I had refused to receive it till it was paid for! I hadn't a clue at first what was going on, but when asked who'd pay for it, everybody came forward with hundred or fifty or ten birr. Within no time they collected six thousand eight hundred Birr. It was unbelievable.

Then there was the inevitable photo session. People from near and far whom I had not seen for many years came to shake my hand, thanking me for the chance they had been given by the Catholic Church. It was great.

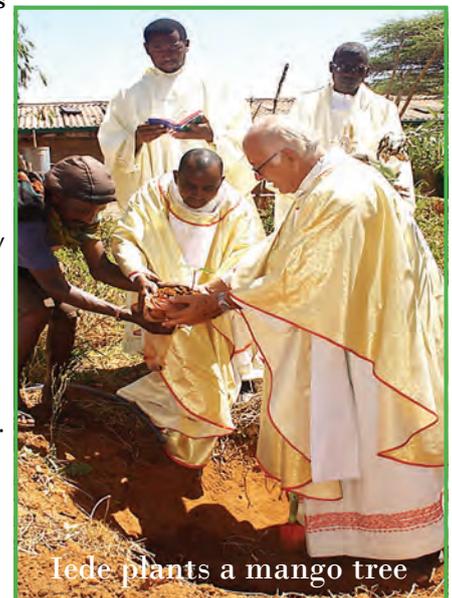
And then there was food for all: rice and beef, and soft drinks. Delicious. When the day wore on guests began to leave, afraid for the late afternoon rain. That was another point of joy. We had rain for a week and people were so happy.

Of course the next day there were many asking me: why didn't you tell me? What to say? A Borana feast is a by word of mouth affair. You don't wait for an invitation. You just come and bring your gift.

A most wonderful day.



Sr Ancia chats with guest



Iede plants a mango tree

Iede de Lange CSSp

Exploration and Farewell—and what can go wrong

In November 1977 a group of missionaries, expatriates and locals journeyed around remoter areas of Gamo Gofa in south west Ethiopia. There was an Irish Spiritan, Brendan Duggan, a Dutch Vincentian, Jan Ermers; two Americans, one with CRS, Mike Franks, and a Franciscan Missionary of Africa, Mary Fisher; a Swiss agronomist, Hans Meier, with his South African wife, Priscilla, their three children Leon, Martin and Vinson; a French Veterinary Surgeon, Philippe, an Orthodox priest, Tesfaye Dogiso and a few others. It was meant to be an exploratory trip for the newcomers and a farewell trip for those leaving.



Three kilometres in one day!

From the beginning what could go wrong went wrong.

The first day one of the vehicles capsized. Then the second leg of the journey took ten days instead of three. On one particular day they travelled only three kilometres. Two and a half days into the third leg of the journey

they found the Woyto River they were to ford was in full flood. The only options were to go back – no takers on that one! – or go around by circling the lake the river flows into, known variously as Chew Bahir, Lake Stephanie, or Chelby.

Two days later they found that the lake too was full. There was no way around it. Running low on drinking water they decided to drive through the lake to an island they knew had a spring. After a few hours the petrol car stopped, water interfering with its electrical system. The two diesels sol-

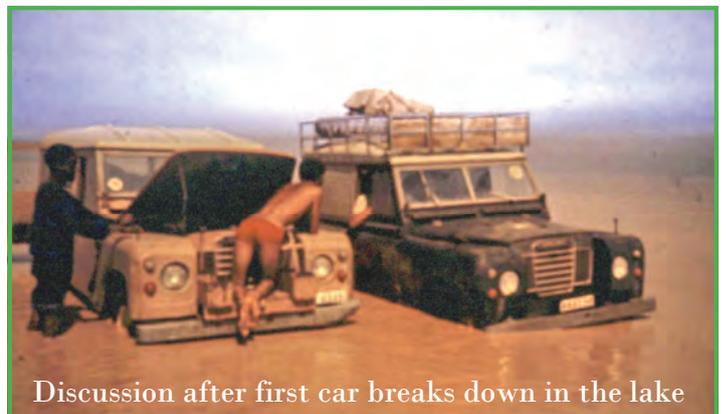
diered on, and on, and on, until they too gave up, one, its engine gone, the second, its clutch worn out too. So at nightfall they took the children and all they could carry and waded to the nearest island, almost an hour away – the wrong island! The island with the spring was two hours away.



A portent of things to come—no wonder Jan has taken to walking!

Early next morning Jan, Hans and Mike, set out on foot, pulling a battery on a makeshift raft, to get back to Philippe in his broken-down car, now their only hope. After four hours they reached it. Hans stayed with Philippe to repair the car while Jan and Mike set out on foot, maybe in 50°C heat, for the nearest police station, up to 100 kms away. Six hours later, still in the water, they were picked up by Hans and Philippe in the repaired car. They reached the police station around midnight.

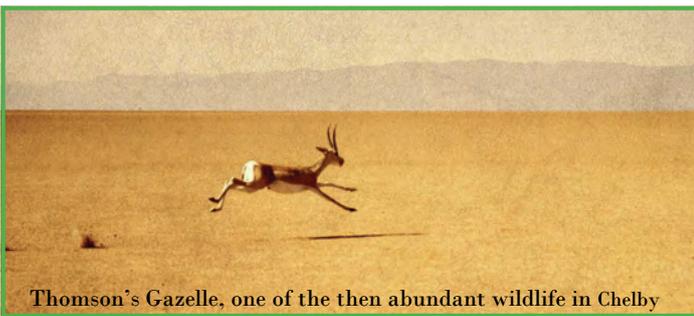
Meanwhile, back on the island, Brendan was water-carrier, making four-hour round-trips between the two islands, dragging a jerry can through the water after him. They all had no idea where the others were or how they were doing.



Discussion after first car breaks down in the lake

The following morning a message was transmitted from the police station, by Morse Code, raising the alarm and asking for rescue vehicles. The police, with their intimate knowledge of the area, were able to advise them on how to get around the lake – driving up into the hills and from there seeing the way. Following these directions they got around to the eastern side of the lake by nightfall. Now, which island were the others on? Not sure, they slept on it.

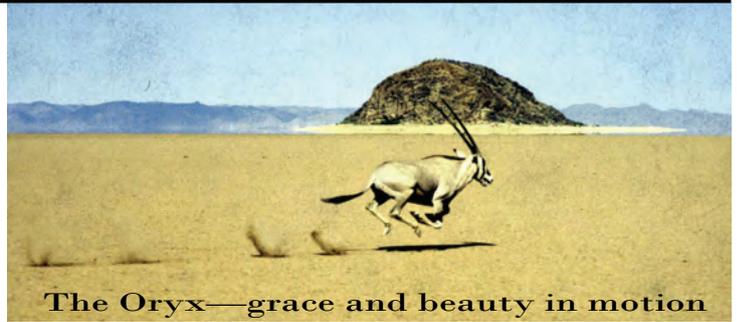
Leaving shortly after daybreak they reached the island after 2½ hours walking. After feasting on the goat they had brought with them they packed all they could carry and returned to the eastern shore. The lake was rather shallow, up to their shins, though towards the shore it reached waist high. Putting the women and children in Philippe’s car, they sent them home, over a day away.



Thomson’s Gazelle, one of the then abundant wildlife in Chelby

Where, you must be thinking, were the rescue vehicles? A CRS car from Addis and our car from Arba Minch set out for the lake with two policemen as guides. At one checkpoint it was noticed by a sharp-eyed policeman that in the travel permit one of the cars had two of its number plate’s digits reversed. So that car was impounded, along with the two policemen! The other continued on and met the women and children just as they were leaving the lake area. Continuing to the lake it brought the rest home the next day. So safely ended a three-week nightmare.

On the first of three trips made to retrieve the two cars remaining in the lake it took Jan, Morishu and I a day and a half to get to the lake and three hours to prepare the roof-



The Oryx—grace and beauty in motion

rack as a raft, for carrying food supplies and spare parts. Leaving the shore at 4.00 pm to make the 2½ hour journey, we abandoned the raft after 9.00 pm and reached the island at 10.00, and after a quick bite, crawled into the left-over flattened tents and slept the night, paying little heed to its being New Year’s Eve.

Waking up the next morning, looking out into the dazzling sun reflected on the water, we eventually picked out the raft far out, next Hans’ car and then Jan’s, more to the north. Even knowing there was a working car on the shore, with Hans and Philippe on there way a few days later, it was still a frightening place to be. It made me wonder what those two days must have been like waiting for Jan, Hans, Mike and Philippe to return, not knowing if they ever would. I wasn’t sorry I missed that first trip. (*to be continued*).

Martin Kelly

We wish you all a very happy Pentecost, with a 1,900-year-old prayer from the *Didache*

Lord, as the grain which once on upland acres scattered abroad, was gathered into one in this one loaf whereof we are partakers in the blest fellowship of thy dear Son:
 So may thy Church, dispersed through all Creation, seed of the living Bread, thy holy Son, broken for us and for mankind’s salvation, from the world’s ends be gathered into one.
 (Translation: George Seaver, 1890-1976)

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