

Friends of Nigeria Celebrates Reunion in DC

By Jim Clark (12) 64-66

Friends of Nigeria (FON) celebrated in grand style the 50th year in existence of the Peace Corps as returned volunteers gathered in Washington, DC September 21-24, 2011 to reminisce, reflect and renew friendships first made many years ago in various Peace Corps training locations and in Nigeria. One hundred thirty-four returned volunteers, 33 spouses, three children of returned volunteers, a friend, and a Nigerian who was a former student of a volunteer some 45 years ago met at the Sheraton Crystal City Hotel in Alexandria, VA for the event.

Steve Clapp (06), Ken Sale (15) and



Gathering in the lobby for a tour of the Smithsonian Museum of African Art.

Barbara Bush (11), chairs of the reunion committee, showed early on that this reunion was destined to be one to remember. Upon arriving at the registration desk, attendees were greeted by, among others, **Barbara Bush (11)** and **Lucinda Boyd (05)** and presented with nametags listing their service location, group number and photo taken from group training directories. Although it was clear from those old photos that time had changed physical appearances, the idealism and compassion that led this group to Nigeria in the first place were still much in evidence. Conversations overheard as returned volunteers gathered in informal groups throughout the hotel included references to their post-

Peace Corps careers, their families and the lasting effect of their Peace Corps experiences on their lives.

The historic Mott House in downtown Washington was selected by the reunion committee as the site for the Friday evening dinner and informal meeting. A short ride on the METRO and a brief walk up Maryland Ave. led guests to an open-air tent and a buffet of Nigerian dishes. The warm autumn evening afforded returned volunteers yet another opportunity for picture-taking, memory-sharing and meeting former volunteers representing groups other than their own.

The FON general session was held on Saturday morning at the Marriott Crystal Gateway Hotel. Following a buffet breakfast, FON president **Mike Goodkind (16)** presided over the meeting and presented a number of speakers who addressed a variety of topics. FON treasurer **Peter Hansen (27)** gave his usual thorough accounting of the group's finances and **Greg Jones (22)** and **Andy Philpot (VSO)** gave updates on the group's Fantsuam and VSO projects. Peter, Greg and Andy all stressed the fact that the Fantsuam and VSO projects are "hands on," developed and funded in part by FON. "We aren't just sending checks to some far off organization," they stated.

The current status of the Peace Corps was addressed by former Peace Corps staffer **Randy Adams**, recently retired after serving over 20 years spanning six decades. He gave an update on new training and evaluation strategies and funding challenges and shared some of his thoughts on the ongoing success of the Peace Corps. In Adams' view, part of the success of the Peace Corps is that it is viewed as being "people-to-people" rather than "government-to-government." It is also seen by host countries as being both apolitical and independent, giving it greater acceptability and



A large and attentive audience listens as Hauwa Ibrahim discusses growing up in Nigeria and her defense of Amina Lawal.

enhancing its impact. As an interesting side note, Adams pointed out that at its inception in 1961, Sargent Shriver and others believed the Peace Corps was destined to have a life span of about five years. Fifty years later, reported Adams, the Peace Corps has a presence in 75 countries and 20 countries want the Peace Corps in or back in.

Al Hannans (24), President of the Peace Corps Nigeria Alumni Foundation (PCNAF), described the group's mission, goals and activities. Founded in 2001 by former Nigeria PCVs now living in the Washington, DC area, the PCNAF has as its mission the reduction of poverty by promoting equity and access to quality education. The group places its primary educational emphasis on educating female Nigerian students and educating Ameri-

(Continued on page 9)



Robert Scheppler (02), Harvey Flad (06) and Darma Scheppler (02) enjoy early morning coffee and conversation in the Sheraton lobby.

President's Column

By Mike Goodkind (16) 65-67

Looking at the pictures and Editor Jim Clark's article on our 50th celebration produced more than nostalgia – it got me thinking about the meaning of a truly enjoyable few days reconnecting with old — and a few new — friends. We owe a special thanks to the hard work, great ideas and innovation of our meeting committee: Steve Clapp (06), Ken Sale (15) and Barbara Bush (11).

A couple of themes emerged for me during our General Meeting:

First, the talk by Hauwa Ibrahim [see related story, p. 10 this issue] helped me continue to reset my mental clock to 2012. Hauwa's courage, leadership and skill made a difference in tempering the harshest effects of Sharia law in Nigeria. Recently she has taken her skills and passion to the United States, where she has been teaching at successive Ivy League institutions. I thought also of Simon Kirumira, a VSO volunteer from Uganda who has crossed the African continent to help Nigerian fishermen harvest their crop more efficiently, and of FON Board Member Fr. Edward Inyanwachi, who is on a mission from his home in Nigeria to serve U.S. church parishes. Do we see a pattern here? Multidirectional expertise and service is thriving. It's taking a long time, but I'm truly shedding the colonial mentality I had when I stepped off that Pan Am Boeing 707 onto the jetway at Lagos Airport so long ago.

Second, while listening to Peace Corps overview by Randy Adams and the reports on finances and projects from FON board colleagues Greg Jones (22), Andy Philpot (VSO) and Peter Hansen (27), I'm reminded of how your generosity in support of our fundraising activities has evolved in the past 5 years. We are continuing to support VSO volunteers in Nigeria but are now also taking a more direct approach by seeking out, encouraging and then funding innovative small projects that the volunteers have initiated, such as Simon's fish pond project. With most of our activities, including our longstanding partners, we are attaching names, faces and concrete

results to your generous donations.

This newsletter, our website and regular updates on our GoogleGroup provide details of FON at work.

We were committed to host our September DC meeting using only registration funds. While our all-inclusive fee was not trivial for most of us, most of you understood that we were operating in one of the world's most expensive metropolitan areas with a loyal but lean core group of volunteers of an age that makes us grateful if we don't have to unload cases of beer from the back of a truck. Hence, we had to consider hiring what once might have been considered luxuries, such as cleanup crews. Expenses included food and our well attended open bar, but we also faced inevitable hidden costs, such as a tent rental, photocopying, security at Mott House, etc. Despite challenges, I am pleased to report that our event treasurer, Barbara Bush (11) in November sent a check for \$2,450.25 to FON treasurer, Peter Hansen. The board will soon allocate this money to one of our projects. Those of us who came to the event should be pleased that along with the food and drink, your fees are helping to "keep the lorry rolling." When you make your own contributions, you have an opportunity to earmark your contributions as VSO, Fantsuam or unrestricted funds, but if you have specific suggestions within or beyond these categories, please let us know. You can contact me at mgoodkind@earthlink.net.

A slate of 11 officers was unanimously elected at our General Meeting. First, it is time to thank our departing board members Vice President Mike Malaghan, Secretary Bob Wynne and Anne Sherwood, and to welcome our new newsletter editor Jim Clark to the board as a post meeting appointment by the Board of Directors. The current board list appears on page two of this newsletter, and I think we have the strongest team we've had in a long time, a group with which I'm honored to complete my last year as your president.

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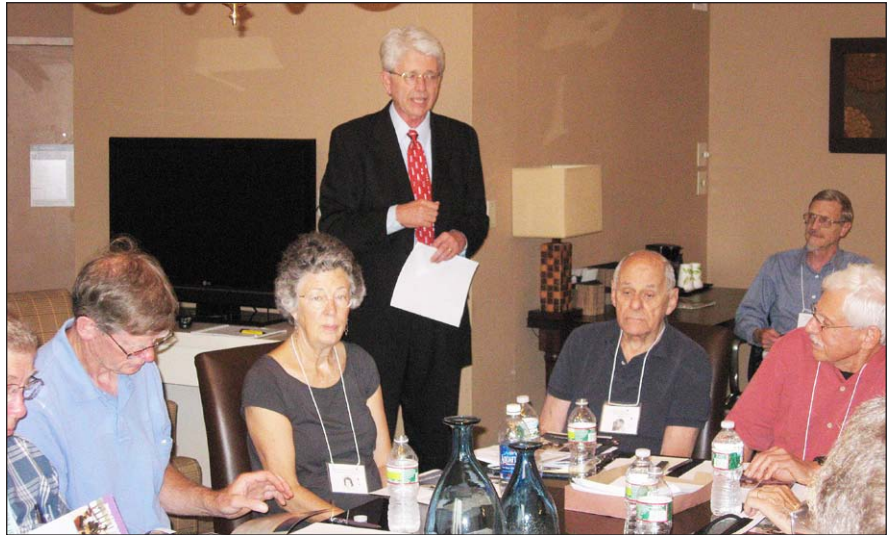
FON Board of Directors Meets in DC

The FON Board of Directors met on September 21, 2011 at 11:00 AM at the Sheraton Crystal City Hotel in Washington, DC. President Mike Goodkind called the meeting to order and welcomed board members and guests to the meeting.

The new board consisting of **Lucinda Boyd (05)**, **Barbara Bush (11)**, **Virginia DeLancey (04)**, **Murray Frank (staff)**, **Mike Goodkind (16)**, **Peter Hansen (27)**, **Fr. Edward Inyanwachi (friend)**, **Greg Jones (22)**, **Warren Keller (23)**, **Andy Philpot (VSO)** and **Greg Zell (06)** was announced. Retiring board members **Mike Malaghan (25)** and **Bob Wynne (04)** were thanked for their service to the board and received a warm round of applause.

President Goodkind indicated his desire to step down as president but agreed to serve another year. Greg Jones agreed to serve as vice president for the upcoming year with the understanding that he would become president next year. Bob Wynne nominated Murray Frank for the office of secretary. The slate of officers was approved by acclamation.

Warren Keller announced that he would be stepping down as newsletter editor after serving in that capacity for five years. He announced that Jim Clark had agreed to assume the role of editor and that he (Warren) would serve as as-



(L-R) Peter Hansen, Greg Jones, Barbara Bush, Murray Frank and President Mike Goodkind listen as Tom Broussard of Brandeis University's Heller School makes his presentation.

sistant editor. Warren was thanked by the president for his service.

Peter Hansen presented the budget for the board's consideration and it was approved.

Murray Frank then introduced Dr. Tom Broussard, Associate Dean at the Heller School at Brandeis University, to discuss a possible partnership between the Heller School and FON. Broussard described current programs at the Heller School that provided fellowships to returning Peace Corps Volunteers. He then proposed the establishment of an FON-Heller School Scholarship Program that would provide a 50% tuition remission for a limited but qualified number of Nigerian students seeking to do graduate studies in the social sciences. FON's role would perhaps be to help identify Nigerian students and/or provide additional support in the form of air fare from Nigeria, housing in the U.S. or a number of other possibilities.

Murray Frank, an alumnus of Brandeis, was asked to serve

as chair of this endeavor and organize a committee to help develop an FON-Heller proposal. Barbara Bush, Steve Clapp, Akintada Aboaba, Greg Jones and Jim Garofalo agreed to serve on the committee and to keep the board apprised of its progress.

Andy Philpot reported on the Cheta Community Classroom building project [see related article, p.12] and advised that the Board had approved a grant in the amount of \$2,812 and that the funding had already been sent. The Fish Farm Project in Kiboli [see related article, p.13] has also been approved by the board. It was recommended and approved that a cap of \$3,000 be applied to FON's individual projects.

Greg Jones reported on the Fantsuam Project and described the damage caused to the area by post-election violence. The market used by the Fantsuam women had been burned down and immediate help had been required for the women to continue their businesses.

The president thanked all for their input and attendance, and following a motion to do so, adjourned the meeting.



Steve Manning (standing, left) and FON board member Andy Philpot take a break from conversation while board members Virginia DeLancey (left), Lucinda Boyd and Warren Keller have a conversation of their own.

Letters to the Editor



FON made a \$3,000 donation to WE CARE Solar last year (see the FON Fall 2010 Newsletter for details). Since receiving this letter, we have learned that WE CARE Solar was recognized as one of 15 laureates at the Tech Awards in San Jose, an annual event celebrating individuals and organizations around the globe that leverage technology to benefit humanity. Please see the Oct. 16 San Francisco Chronicle <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2011/10/16/BUFRILHQVQ.DTL> for details. Also see <http://vimeo.com/30931013> for a short CBS News video of the event or <http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=769980321111> for Laura's short acceptance speech in San Jose.

I wanted to provide you with some further follow-up. I went to Kano and Kaduna states in July and checked on solar suitcases already being used, and scouted out health facilities for more placements. If you are not already reading our Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/WE-CARE-Solar/109441703751>), this is a good way to follow what we're doing. The midwives were so happy to have the lights and told me that it was changing life for the health workers, the patients, and even

the families who come to visit. I replaced batteries in three facilities, and ensured that new health workers understood how to use the systems.

We have improved the design of our solar suitcase and will be seeing how these are utilized in 12 test sites in the fall. We'll be bringing solar suitcases to Kano and Kaduna primary health care facilities and hospitals, and will be partnering with PATHS2 and Pathfinders International to help with logistics and ongoing support. We aim on bringing 36 solar suitcases to health facilities by next year. I met with government officials in each state and have their hearty endorsement of the project, with hopes for many more installations in the future.

Thanks again to FON for playing an important role in the genesis of this project.

Laura Stachel, MD MPH
Co-Founder, WE CARE Solar <http://WECARESolar.org/>

Dear Editor,

The fall 2011 Newsletter is very good. I kept it available until finally reading it just now. I liked the Then and Now piece by Clay Hollister and the Recollections piece by Sandra Demerly Wittenbrink and I have a question for each of them.

For Clay H.: You mention that "they joked about my horses and six-guns." Pardon me for reading things maybe too literally but surely you didn't actually have horses and six-guns while a PCV in Nigeria? Did you have them back home? Or did you mean that was what Nigerian students thought Americans had in general?

For Sandra D. W.: You write that the misunderstanding by one of your Japanese students that Thurgood Marshall was a white man "nearly upset the whole point of my lessons". I beg to differ. Thurgood Marshall could have been white — or a woman or a handicapped person or transgender — and the merits of the Brown v. Board of Ed case would still have been the same. It is interesting and even remarkable that a black lawyer argued the case successfully before the Supreme Court but it was not "the whole point."

Sorry: that was an argument rather than a question. And it wasn't even about Sandra's experience in Nigeria (where almost everyone is black).

For editors: Thanks for your good work. You have a loyal readership.

Larry Lesser (9) 63-65

Editorial Change

This edition of the FON Newsletter marks the end of Warren Keller's leadership as editor. Warren served in that capacity from the winter of 2006 until the spring 2011, and during that span of time was responsible for 17 editions of the newsletter, the most of any editor to date. Having edited the past two editions, I am aware of the time, effort and patience required to assemble the material, get it proofread, formatted and printed. So, a big "thanks and well-done" go out to you, Warren, and we're pleased

that you will be remaining on the newsletter staff as assistant editor.

Thanks, too, to the other members of our dedicated staff of volunteers you will find listed in the masthead on page two: **Virginia DeLancey**, Nigeria News Editor; **David Strain**: Book Review Editor; **Owen Hartford**, Layout Editor



Jim Clark, now.

and our team of eagle-eyed proofreaders: **Buzz Welker**, **Mary Ann Palmieri**, **Alice O'Grady** and **Steve Manning**, **Greg Jones** and **Andy Philpot** regularly supply us with updates on the Fantsuam and VSO projects, and **Mike Goodkind** provides a president's column that is always interesting and informative.

And to those of you that have written articles for the newsletter over the years, we extend our thanks to you as well.

—Jim Clark (12) 64-66

Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles

By Richard Dowden

**Public Affairs, 2009, 592 pp.,
paperback \$19.95**

Reviewed by Peter Hansen (27) 66-68

Richard Dowden first went to Africa in 1971 as a secondary school teacher in rural southwest Uganda. He left 18 months later after Idi Amin declared that all whites in his region were spies. In 1975 Dowden became a journalist and eventually rose to the level of Africa Editor at both the *Independent* and the *Economist* – working a decade at each. Currently Dowden is the executive director of the London-based Royal African Society.

Many writers may have lived in Africa longer than Dowden, but it is unlikely that many have lived and worked in as many different sub-Saharan African countries as has Dowden. In his foreword, Chinua Achebe writes, “...one could not ask for a more qualified author to explore Africa’s complexity.”

The book’s 18 chapters consist of 13 that focus principally on a single country (Burundi and Rwanda are combined) with most of the remainder focusing on a single topic, e.g., AIDS in Africa.

Nigeria RPCVs will already be familiar with some of the author’s insights as well as much of the historical information he provides, but like me I suspect that most readers will also learn a great deal. An example of the former is his contrasting European individualism with African communalism. Not, “I think therefore I am,” but, “I am because we

are and, since we are, therefore I am.” (a quote from East African theologian/philosopher John Mbiti).

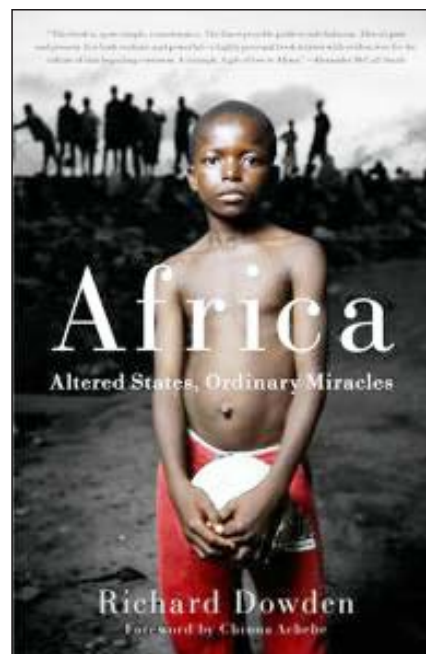
The Rwandan genocide of 1994 is known to all of us, but I did not know that neighboring Burundi experienced horrific massacres in 1965, 1969, 1972, 1988, 1991 and 1993? [Two of which have been described as genocides by the International Commission of Inquiry for Burundi.]

New to me also, for example, was the uniqueness of the mixed-race population of Angola (the *mestiços*) as compared to similar populations in other African coastal nations. Dowden writes, “...in every other African [liberation] struggle such a class would have identified with the colonists, the enemy. In Angola they became the liberationists...”

Although Dowden clearly loves Africa, he does not look at Africa through rose-colored glasses. He writes, “At independence in the 1960s Africa was portrayed as an awakening giant, casting off the chains of colonialism and exploitation and bursting with energy. At that time Asia, including China and India, was seen as a basket case... The average income in Africa was twice that of Asia. By the end of the century Asia had leapt ahead while Africa had gone backwards.”

Although definitely not encyclopedic, scattered throughout the book are informative statistics and data. “In the 1990s 35 African countries, three-quarters of the nations of mainland Africa, suffered wars or violent social upheaval.”

I have one criticism. Throughout most of Dowden’s professional life he worked as a journalist. Predictably he was drawn to the hot spots of Africa. As a consequence the countries, which are



the principal focus of the 13 chapters referred to above, are disproportionately those that have been least successful, e.g., Somalia, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Congo. The UN ranks 50 African nations according to their Human Development Index. He includes only two (South Africa and Kenya) that are in the top third of this list. To be fair, however, many of the sub-Saharan African nations receive some scrutiny. For example, the index lists nearly 20 references to Ghana.

Nonetheless, and even though the book is three years old (originally published in Great Britain in 2008), I strongly recommend this book to all FON members.

One reviewer wrote, “This is by far the most balanced analysis on the challenges faced by sub Saharan African societies.”

In Memoriam

William Waterman, Jr. (06) 62-64

Friends of Nigeria has recently learned of the death of William Waterman, Jr. who passed away on July 27, 2007. William served as a lecturer at the University of Lagos and as an attorney with the Ministry of Finance. He was stationed in various locations including Lagos, Kaduna and Zaria.

Nigeria: The Way Forward

By Ron Singer (10) 64-67

Nigeria's massive problems are common knowledge. Negative stereotypes and jokes about scams and inefficiencies reverberate around the globe. In crime-ridden Johannesburg, for instance, Nigerians are regarded as *primus inter pares*. Hand-wringing books and articles also abound. Two examples are Karl Maier's dystopian travelogue, *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000); and Eliza Griswold's *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line between Christianity and Islam* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), an alarming account of the primarily religious fault line running around the world, including through conflict-ridden Jos. When we read of the recent depredations of the militant Islamic group, Boko Haram ("Western Education is bad."), we may feel that this could be the final nail in a sick nation's coffin.

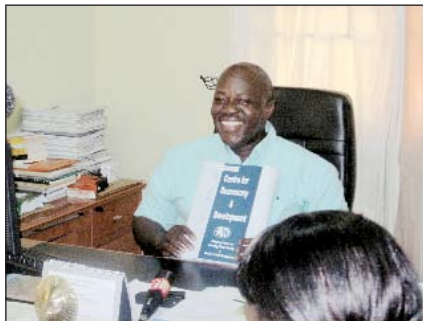
Less well known, perhaps because bad news sells newspapers, boosts TV ratings, and multiplies online clicks, are the people who are working to do something about one of Nigeria's root problems, corruption. No one, of course, has a magic bullet (unfortunate metaphor), but four pro-democratic activists with whom I spoke in Nigeria in October 2011 not only have important ideas for reform, but are working effectively to implement them. These ideas span politics, law and economics. My informants comprise three anti-corruption reformers working for NGO's and a sitting governor who started one of these NGO's. As it happens, the four activists also represent four of Nigeria's largest ethnic groups.

Before this set of interviews, I had already interviewed three major Nigerian reformers then resident in the U.S.: Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka; recently deceased elder statesman of Nigerian democracy, Chief Anthony 'Pa' Enahoro (1923-2010); and the first Head of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nuhu Ribadu. [Titles and links for these interviews may be found at the end of this article.]

Here are the topics discussed and some excerpts from my interviews with the four Nigerian reformers:

1. CHANGES IN THE LAW

Dr. Jibrin Ibrahim: Director, Centre for Democracy & Development-Nigeria.



The problem we had was that for 30 years nobody who could hire a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN, a lawyer recognized by one's peers) for the 30 years preceding when Nuhu Ribadu came to the EFCC was ever jailed for corruption. (Seasoned lawyers like Femi Falana told me this.) Nobody who had enough money to hire a SAN was jailed for corruption. This had to do with the capacity of the judiciary. One of the problems was the procedural element that allowed people with good lawyers to take continuous interlocutory injunctions that allowed a corruption case to drag on for 10, 15 or 20 years until it exhausted the judiciary. That was a systemic fault. It was not that the judges were being corrupted. When the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) was founded by Obasanjo in 2000, it had exactly the same rules as the judiciary. So, they were also unable to prosecute successfully. The EFCC was set up under a different law which enabled them to stop these endless interlocutory injunctions and address the substantive issue. So you have to be careful in assessing Ribadu. It was not just that he was a tough guy. It was a combination of the enabling law and Nuhu's own tenacity that produced results.

2. LOCAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.

Dauda Garuba, Nigeria Program Coordinator, Revenue Watch Institute



RS: What does your organization do?

DG: We work in the areas of oil, gas, and mining revenues for public use. You know, there is a relationship between natural resources and conflict. If you manage these revenues well, you free yourself from the kinds of crisis you have had over the years in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and so on. Our organization, Revenue Watch, provides technical assistance to governments, as well as addressing the demand side. We try to persuade companies to put pressure on government to use its resources in a way that is beneficial to the people.

RS: Has the Nigerian government used your services?

DG: What we've been doing in Nigeria is more at the sub-national level. We have pilot projects in four countries: Nigeria, Peru, Ghana, and Indonesia. We are studying how sub-national governments are using their resources. We also want to see how we can enhance the process. Since these are pilots, they take into consideration the particularities of each country.

RS: For instance, in Nigeria ...?

DG: In Nigeria, we are approaching our work at three levels and on two prongs. The first level is the states, like our work with Bayelsa, through what we call the Bayelsa Extractive and Income Transparency Initiative. The second is budget analysis work at the level

of selected Niger Delta states with our partner organizations, while the third is responding to natural resource management issues with policy briefs at the national level. The last level has just been expanded through our collaboration on a new consortium with the UK Department for International Development (DFID) called Facility for Oil Sector Transparency (FOSTER). The two-pronged side to our work is provision of technical assistance to governments (free of charge) on request, and to civil society organizations (with grants) to help drive the demand side of any assistance we provide.

RS: So you help the state governments manage the money from the oil, etc.?

DG: No, we try to show them how best to utilize their [natural] resources, how to involve local people in the governance of these resources.

RS: That's what Chief Enahoro was all about.

DG: Yes, of course. Chief Enahoro was much more interested in how ethnic nationalities will take charge of their destinies.

RS: He said two very interesting things to me. One is that, if you rob locally, people will catch and punish you. If you rob the Federal government and bring the booty home, you will be a hero.

DG: Of course, in those days, it was possible to steal from the national government, and nothing happened. But nobody put his hand into the local purse because everybody in the community knows him/her.

RS: The other thing he said was, put the money into local coffers directly, and let them pay the tax to the federal government, the same amount the federal government is now supposedly getting. Instead of vice-versa, the way it has been.

DG: That is tied to the entire question of resource control which has been an issue since the return to civil rule in 1999.

RS: But why is it assumed that the local people will be more honest than the federal ones? Chief Enahoro said that, if they did turn out to steal the money, at least they could no longer blame others for their problems.

DG: Well, local rulers have local affinities. They are tied to local institutions and have respect for their culture, more than the larger, formal government organizations. People know themselves (i.e. each other) much more.

RS: But a Governor in one of those states who is a big thief is not robbing from his own people?

DG: Yes, that's true, but it takes formal institutions for a big thief to survive. In a local place, if you are seen with something your income couldn't provide, society will ask where you got it from. Your parents, your community, will reject you. Of course, you can steal money in office and decide to stay in Abuja and never come home, except during festivals and holidays.

3. MAKING PUBLIC SERVANTS SERVE THE PUBLIC.

Clement Nwonkwo, Director, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre.



CN: We identify what we call "pro-poor target committees," committees that have an impact on poverty issues: agriculture, health, education.

RS: Are the members of those committees necessarily people who want progress in those areas?

CN: A mixed bag, all sorts of people. The key thing is to get them to understand their responsibilities to legislate for the

poor, the people. The tendency a lot of times is for them to get elected and see their election as an end in itself and an opportunity to make profit.

RS: How do you persuade them to change?

CN: We help them understand what their responsibilities are. We also draw attention to what they're doing by publicizing their activities to the public.

RS: Enforced transparency.

CN: Yes. If, for instance, they award themselves huge emoluments, we want to make sure the public knows this.

RS: Don't they get huge salaries?

CN: No, not really. What happens is that they get what is called a constituency allowance, which is to enable them to work in their constituencies. These run into millions of dollars. They use them as they please, without accountability.

RS: Is another part of what you do to push for new laws to control things like that?

CN: Well, by putting out this information, we have made the legislators respond by asking themselves how they can better account for the use of the money.

RS: Getting the information out pushes them to change?

CN: A lot of civil society organizations, plus the media, are raising concerns about this issue. Since the inauguration of the present legislature in June, they have reduced by more than 30% these amounts that they have paid to themselves.

4. FISCAL FEDERALISM: THE DEVOLUTION OF POWER

Dr. John Kayode Fayemi, Governor, Ekiti State; Founder, Centre for Democracy & Development, Nigeria.

KF: Some things are not going to go away. The principle of fiscal federalism is one that even governors are now drawn toward. And we are mainstream, even if we come from a history of being outsiders.

RS: How many governors agree to it?

KF: Many of us.



RS: Huh! Is that right?

KF: Oh, yes. When it comes down to it, you see that the governor has difficulty ruling. The resources you're supposed to get, you're not getting. So it's no longer a romantic notion, it's a reality, on the ground.

RS: And you see how poor so many services of the federal government are — you go on the roads ...

KF: Exactly. They have the bulk of this money, and they are not doing jack with it. And they're not even expected to. The people who see you as Governor want you to deliver the goods. They don't care about Abuja. Ninety-nine per cent of my people in Ekiti have never been to Abuja.

RS: So you can get blamed for what Abuja's not doing.

KF: Yes. Not that I can, I *do* get blamed. They're experiencing bad roads. All they know is that they have a governor. They don't know that the roads are a federal responsibility.

RS: But you're used to criticism. When you were an outsider, you got it from inside. Now you're inside, and you get it from everybody.

KF: Oh, yes, everybody criticizes me. And what I do is, I go ahead and look for money to fix the roads, which is not my job.

RS: That's an argument for fiscal federalism, isn't it?

KF: Precisely. And we're all in the same boat, which is why the majority of us are on the same page regarding fiscal federalism. ... My take on it (fiscal federalism) has always been that we need to devolve powers as much as possible, to the lower levels, particularly the

state level, and then at the zonal level, especially where there are contiguity and economies of scale to be achieved. For example, the states in Southwestern Nigeria are involved in a regional integration plan. All the states — Ekiti, Ondo, Ogun, Lagos, Oshun—we form a bloc.

RS: For economies of scale. But doesn't that go counter to idea of the devolution of power to the local level?

KF: No, because it doesn't remove the states.

RS: I see. It just means you share things where you can.

KF: So there are things that Lagos does much better than the rest of us, so we take those. We (Ekiti) have social security for the elderly, for example, which everybody wants to find out about. Ondo has something good on maternal and child mortality that has even garnered an award at the World Bank. Oshun has something good on youth employment. So we each have a comparative advantage in one thing or the other. Then, we also have so-called legacy projects. We are trying to build a railway that will cut across the entire zone I just mentioned.

RS: That's wonderful.

KF: It's a mega-expensive project. But a legacy project for all of us. We feel that we owe our people something more fundamental than fixing potholes and doing all this drudgery that they call governance because it's not good governance.

RS: And it wastes so much money. When you talk about the expense of the railroad, at least you have something. They've been fixing potholes in the zone since at least when I was here in the 60s, and, if anything, they're worse. And they seemed bad, then! ... Lagos to Lokoja?

KF: Lagos to Warri. The Delta.

Conclusions

Governor Fayemi's efforts are part of an important push for reform in Nigeria

which began in Lagos with then-Governor Bola Tinubu (1999-2007), and has been continued by his successor, Babatunde Fashola. This effort has been taken up by several state rulers, notably Governor Fayemi, who fought in the courts from 2007-10 to gain the Ekiti governorship usurped by Segun Oni of the PDP (People's Democratic Party), the party that has ruled Nigeria's federal government since 1999. Even before running for this office, Fayemi had been a lifelong reformer, active in local tenants-rights movements in London when he was a student there, and then, in the course of opposing Nigeria's military dictators, founding the Nigerian chapter of the Centre for Democracy & Development.

Since most of the reforming governors belong to the opposition ACN (Action Congress of Nigeria) party, and since they are also mostly Yorubas, the question arises as to whether the progress they achieve in their own states can create a bandwagon for cleaner, more efficient government that will extend beyond Yoruba states and governors. There is some evidence that this is already happening, and many people outside of government, such as three Globacom reps I met in Accra, Ghana (where the Nigerian telcoms giant is about to set up shop) see hope in the governors' reform movement.

According to the three Globacom reps, I met over breakfast at our hotel in Accra, another significant basis for reducing corruption in Nigeria involves those sectors of the economy, including telecoms, which are immune to political pressures, including demands for bribes. This immunity stems from the fact that these sectors fall under the purview of independent regulators. In fact, the trio expressed pride and relief that they did not have to bribe Nigerian politicians, which suggests that many other businessmen are not so fortunate. The contrast is great between independently regulated sectors and others such as the oil industry where, notoriously, regulation is politically tainted.

Seconding the views of the interviewee who currently holds public office (Fayemi), and the other three, who work for pro-democracy NGO's, the three businessmen felt that the end of the Abacha regime had



Ron Singer, left, with Mr. Allen.

definitely set Nigeria on the road to far more effective, corruption-free governance.

However, a reform governor like Kayode Fayemi wrestles with terrible problems, such as having inherited inflated, fraudulent contracts that he must let run their course because it would be too expensive to undo them and start the projects over. As he said, he also finds himself blamed for problems that should not be his to solve, such as bad roads. Many of his main ideas

for reform address this issue of federal versus state responsibility, a core issue in Nigerian governance since independence in 1960.

Although reformers like these four abound in Nigeria, no one thinks the country is even close to finding its way out of the woods. However, as Governor Fayemi puts it, “You should not allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good.”

Ron Singer visited Nigeria and Ghana in October-November 2011 to interview reformers for his book, Uhuru Revisited (Africa World Press/Red Sea Press). The promise of uhuru, or freedom, represented by independence from colonial powers, which began a half-century ago (Ghana, 1957), and from dynastic rule (Ethiopia, 1974) and minority rule (South Africa, 1994), has been realized very unevenly across the African continent. Uhuru Revisited will provide readers with a sense of the range of social and political problems in Africa today and the variety of responses among activists. In hopes of redressing negative stereotypes of Africa in the U.S.

and Europe, the book will celebrate the work of a group of very dedicated people, including the four quoted in this article.

Two sections of the book have been completed in draft. The first is based on a visit to southern Africa from February-April 2010 and focuses on remedies for economic inequality. The second is based upon January-February 2011 interviews in East Africa and the Horn (the practice of journalism). Singer has already published the following articles on the theme of Nigerian corruption:

—“An Interview with Nuhu Ribadu, Nigeria’s Corruption Fighter,” *The Faster Times*, Feb. 24, 2010: <http://www.thefastertimes.com/world/2010/02/23/an-interview-with-nuhu-ribadu-nigeria's-corruption-fighter/>.

—Interview with Wole Soyinka, http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-africa_democracy/soyinka_3854.jsp, 8/25/06.

—“Champion of Democracy: An Interview with Chief Anthony Enahoro,” *Friends of Nigeria Newsletter*, 2000 (reprinted in African Link).

Friends of Nigeria Celebrates Reunion in DC (continued from p.1)

cans about the critical need to improve equity and access to quality education for children in Nigeria.

The keynote address was given by noted Nigerian attorney and Sakarov Peace Prize winner, **Hauwa Ibrahim**. Growing



Food, fun and fellowship being enjoyed at the Mott House.

up in Northern Nigeria, Ibrahim insisted that she be allowed to work in order to attend elementary school and later rebelled against a pre-arranged marriage that nearly derailed her dreams of attending law school. Ibrahim gained international admiration and acclaim for her defense of **Amina Lawal**, a young Northern Nigerian mother who had been sentenced to death by stoning by a Sharia Law court for alleged adultery. Despite all odds, she won the case for Lawal.

Following the general session, attendees were given a tour of the Smithsonian Museum of African Art. Later in the afternoon a number of the group attended the official Peace Corps 50th Anniversary Celebration at the Kennedy Center.

The Walk of Peace Corps Flags took place on Sunday, September 25th (photo right).



Barbara Bush (L) and Lucinda Boyd man the registration table as Mike Goodkind greets guests.



A Few Minutes With...Dr. Hauwa Ibrahim

By Jim Clark (12) 64-66

At the recent FON reunion in Washington, DC, I had the opportunity to spend a few minutes with Dr. Hauwa Ibrahim both before the dinner at the Mott House and after her keynote speech to the attendees at the Sheraton Crystal Gateway on September 24, 2011. It doesn't take but a few minutes in her presence for one to realize that Ibrahim is no ordinary individual, but rather a woman of extraordinary intellect, courage and compassion. Her thoughts on a number of topics, gleaned from her remarks to the FON general meeting and from informal conversations occurring before and after the keynote address, reveal much about her compassion for her country and its people.

On America's Influence on Nigeria

Ibrahim noted that it took three hundred years for America to become the great democracy she has become, and her desire is that a young, struggling democracy like Nigeria will eventually find her way. Referencing the issues of slavery and civil rights she clearly admires how we in the United States faced these issues, worked through them, stayed united, nursed our democracy back to good health and allowed it to flourish. "You are our model," she stated, "your shoulders were made strong for us; we must follow in your footsteps every step of the way."

On Shariah Law

Of the seven billion people in the world today, over 1.2 billion are of the Muslim faith and one-sixth of them reside in Northern Nigeria where Shariah law is the supreme law of the land. As the first ever female attorney from Northern Nigeria and a specialist in Shariah law as well as being a devout Muslim herself, she has been involved in over 150 legal cases in Nigeria representing clients (predominately women) accused of everything from adultery to simple theft, crimes for which the punishment is likely to be flogging, lethal stoning or amputation. She is known world-wide for defending and gaining freedom for Amina Lawal, a young Nigerian

mother accused of adultery and sentenced to death by stoning. "When it comes to the issue of death, the moment you stone the first woman, there may be no stopping of it. And I cannot live with that. Because of that, I fight it." She went on to say that Shariah law, interpreted correctly, is not about flogging, stoning or amputation, but rather a "path to peace."

On the Peace Corps

Ibrahim's fondness for and appreciation of Nigeria Peace Corps volunteers is evident immediately upon meeting her. In a casual conversation with her during the Mott House dinner, she said that she sensed from those in attendance a great love for Nigeria so many years after being there. "It just comes at you; it's in the air," she said. She expressed her gratitude for the work the Peace Corps has done and hopes to see it return and be a part the new Nigeria. "You left a piece of you there," she said. "As you personally are remembered fondly by Nigerians," she stated, "so is the wonderful work you did there."

On the State of Education in Nigeria

At an early age, Ibrahim, a Muslim who grew up in Gombe State, was forced to run away from a pre-arranged marriage to pursue an education and fulfill her desire of entering the field of law. Today, according to Ibrahim, over 7 million children now fall outside the formal education system in Nigeria. Mostly in the North and predominately female, these children are receiving no formal education thereby putting in serious jeopardy their opportunities for personal growth and, correspondingly, the growth of Nigeria as a nation. "Schools

must be built and some rebuilt," she said so that all children have the opportunity to pursue their dreams as she did. She hopes the Peace Corps will one day return to Nigeria and play a part in rebuilding the educational system.

On Nigeria's Future and the Role of Women

"I think our people have had enough of violence," Ibrahim stated. She believes that Nigeria can learn from America and that a better future lies ahead. As an attorney, she seeks "equality above the law" for all Nigerians and an independent judiciary system.



Hauwa Ibrahim

She is an advocate for thinking globally and acting locally. Currently a fellow at both the Human Rights Program and the Islamic Legal Studies Program at Harvard University she spends much of her time here but returns frequently to Nigeria to fight for the rights of women. As a senior partner in The Aries Law Firm in Abuja, she has become one of the top defenders of women's rights in Nigeria. "We still have the man's world here in Nigeria, where the women are not in a position of decision making," Ibrahim said. "A lot of women here have been fighting for what they call affirmative action, to be relevant, so they can have a say. Gradually I think we are overcoming it."

Fantsuam Proposal

By Greg Jones (22) 66-68

In October this year, John Dada emailed a proposal to a number of donor organizations including Friends of Nigeria (FON). The purpose of the proposal was to mitigate anticipated food shortages during the “hungry season” –the period toward the end of the dry season when food runs out and new crops have not had a chance to grow. Unfortunately subsequent events have made the need for this effort even greater. [See John’s re-



port of the recent violence in Kafanchan, p.14.] According to John the uncertainty of or duration of rainfall, loss of manual farm labor, reduction in total area of land cultivated, the scarcity of money due to bank closures and the total lack of food and farm inputs in the critical month of April have all combined to create a

situation of impending critical shortages of food in Kafanchan in the next six months.

In response to John’s request, FON is mounting a holiday appeal for donations to support The Fantsuam Foundation in its efforts to deal with the disruption. Funds collected will be used specifically in the following manner in this ongoing effort to procure, store, market and distribute grains:

The purchase of metal silos.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has devised a metal silo for the storage of maize and other cereals to protect them from moisture, rats and insect pests. The silo is an airtight cylindrical metal structure constructed by locally trained welders specifically for grain storage. The silos hold up to 1,000kg and cost N6,000 (US\$40.00).

The purchase of grains.

At harvest prices of grains in Kafanchan are as follows:

- 100kg soya beans – N12,000 (US\$80)
- 100kg maize – N6,000 (US\$40)
- 100kg rice – N9,000 (US\$60)
- 100kg beans (Ife Brown) – N20,000 (US\$140)
- 100kg Acha – “Fonio” – N30,000 (US\$200)
- 100kg, guinea corn – N70,000 (US\$470)”

Again, this proposal is very specific: \$40 buys a locally constructed silo

capable of storing 1,000 kilos of grain (2,200 pounds) and \$60 buys 100 kilos of rice to store in the silo. Safe storage prevents spoilage and minimizes loss due to consumption by pests (rodents, bugs, etc.). Safe storage allows the silos to be filled during the harvest, when prices are cheap, and used when prices are high, if the food is available at all. If we were a big organization like Heifer International, we could set up a donation program where individuals could designate their money for a silo or for an amount of beans to fill it. Since we are small, such a program is beyond our scope. But rest assured that any donations will be spent responsibly. Fantsuam is directly involved in the community and responding to its needs. They could use our help now more than ever.

Corrections

Friends of Nigeria regrets that in the previous edition of the newsletter some transcription errors occurred in Sandra Demerly Wittenbrink’s article “Learning by Teaching.” In the fifth paragraph, the phrase “first-term classed I was assigned *including*...” should have read “the first-term class I was assigned *included*...” In the second to last paragraph of the article, the phrase “a *king* of literal color blindness” should have read “a *kind* of literal color blindness”. In the same paragraph, the phrase “she had been *thing* that...” should have read “she had been *thinking* that...”

Keep The Lorry Rolling!

As of October 29, 2011:

VSO Project (since 2004):

Total raised: \$41,219
Number of donations: 774
Number of donors: 366

Fantsuam Project (since 2008):

Total raised: \$16,991
Number of donations: 264
Number of donors: 187

VSO Blogs

Emily Bullock (UK) 2010-

<http://www.emily-in-nigeria.blogspot.com/>

The Kibori Community Fish Farm Project

By Simon Kirumira (VSO)

Editor's note: Simon Kirumira arrived in Nigeria in August, 2010 as a VSO volunteer to assist in reestablishing the previously abandoned Kibori Community Fish Farm. FON made a contribution of \$1,975 to aid in this effort. This is part of a new pilot FON initiative with VSO.

I was born in 1980 in Kampala, Uganda, near Makerere University where my father was a senior technician and lecturer in department of Geology and my mother was a secretary in the school of veterinary medicine. I attended primary and secondary schools around Kampala and graduated with a B.Sc. in Fisheries and Aquaculture from Makerere University in 2003. I also earned a certificate in computer applications and DOS.

Following my university training, I began working with fish farmers in central Uganda and received additional training in marine fisheries in Kenya and Tanzania. The company specialized in fish pond construction, consulting on fish farming, designing recreational lakes, advising beach management units and sharing knowledge and skills in proper fish handling techniques. In addition, we provided advice on proper hygiene at fisheries, increasing the shelf-life of fish

and making fish fit for human consumption.

Later, a former classmate and I started a company advising on fish farm management and fish breeding. I also worked on a contract to study Financing Mechanisms for Beach Management Units on Lake Victoria. More recently, I received my M.Sc. in Agribusiness Management.

After interviews and training with VSO, I obtained my Fish Farming Extension Worker Nigeria placement and arrived in Nigeria and began my volunteer activities in August, 2010.

The main project has quite a number of activities including capacity building of Premier Parks & Gardens Enterprises (PPGE) technical staff in line of hatchery management, grow-out, fish pond management, pond construction, fish pond management, water/feeds management, storage and record-keeping and post-harvest activities like marketing and planning for the next farming season. Shortly after gaining enough knowledge and skills, the technical staff was joined by a group of six fish-farming extension volunteers from different regions in southern Kaduna (Madakiya, Zonkwa, Fadiya, Kibori, Kaura and Kanufi) that we had to train begin-



Kiboli Fish Farm Pond Restoration.



Simon instructing Kiboli fish farmers.

ning with basic knowledge and skills in volunteerism/volunteering and extension activities. Later, two volunteers were attached to each member of the technical staff to gain practical skills and, eventually, passed their training in fish farming technical skills and knowledge on to farmers in their different communities.

We are experiencing the first success of our training on cat fish hatching, and, now some of the fish farmers can



Touring the Abuja Fish Market

produce fish seeds they are able to market within Kaduna, Abuja & Ibadan. Recently we have been joined hands with Friends of Nigeria who have funded this particular activity of restoring the Kibori Community Fish Farm. Final plans have been made to continue the fish-farm project which is planned to run from October 2011 to June 2012.

The Ummah Support Initiative

By Kasia Fiderkiewicz (VSO)

Editor's note: In August, 2011, the FON board approved a grant of \$2,812 to the Ummah Support Initiative to be used to reconstruct the Cheta Community Primary School. This grant was the first to be awarded in a pilot FON initiative to fund small but concrete requests from VSO volunteers in Nigeria.

Ummah Support Initiative (USI) is a faith-based organisation based at the National Mosque Office Complex in Abuja FCT working with poor and underprivileged communities in many states across Nigeria to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS and poverty especially on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), youths and women. USI has many dedicated community based volunteers who carry out vital support work such as health and nutritional support and education, income generation work with caregivers and providing access to education for OVCs who have fallen outside of the mainstream system.



Existing Cheta Community Primary School

USI is proud to be a partner organisation to VSO and currently has its second volunteer based with the organisation. Glynis Manger completed a short term placement from February — June working on Organisational Development, and it was Glynis who contacted Friends of Nigeria following a visit to the primary school at Gasaki and Cheta. Work is now underway on the renovation of the school thanks to the Friends of Nigeria grant and is being monitored by USI's new VSO volunteer Kasia Fiderkiewicz.

Kasia is a British volunteer and joined USI in August to support the organisation with fundraising activities. She will be based with them until June

2012 and, during her placement, will be working on proposal writing skills with the staff, putting in place a communications and fundraising strategy for the organisation and of course monitoring the progress of the work at Gasaki and Cheta to report progress back to Friends of Nigeria.

Work got underway at the school in an interesting fashion with a meeting held under a mango tree with representatives from USI and the local community. The funds from Friends of Nigeria are being 'matched' by the local commu-



Students study in a classroom in need of repair.

nity who are completing the work on the school themselves, many of them being labourers and builders. Kasia will continue to report on work at the school as it progresses.

Friends of Nigeria Treasurer's Report Fiscal Year 2010-11, Peter Hansen, Treasurer

<u>Income:</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>
FON dues	7,167.50	17,535.00
NPCA due	2,765.00	5,915.00
Unrestricted donations	1,487.20	8,334.62
VSO & Fantsuam Projects	10,741.00	7,785.00
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	<u>73.25</u>	<u>46.07</u>
Total Income	\$22,233.95	\$39,615.69

Total Income increased by 78%. First, dues and unrestricted donations were down in 2009-10 since the annual membership renewal solicitation that should have been mailed in May 2010 was delayed until July 2010 – resulting in a shift in revenue from 2009-10 to 2010-11. Second, a redesigned membership renewal form allowed dues payments for two or more years and many members did so. Although donations to our VSO and Fantsuam Foundation projects were down about \$3,000, total donations were up about \$3,900.

<u>Expenses:</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>
Publications (newsletters and directory)	5,741.69	7,310.72
NPCA (dues rebates, affiliation fee & donation)	3,125.00	6,275.00
Grants: VSO, Fantsuam Fdn, Ashoka, We CARE Solar	11,116.00	25,495.00
Membership Solicitation & Fundraising	1,420.74	1,616.42
USPS & website	293.78	265.97
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	<u>50.00</u>	<u>264.87</u>
Total Expenses	\$21,747.21	\$41,227.98

Total Expenses increased by 90%. The *Friends of Nigeria 2011 Directory* (published biennially) is responsible for the increase in publication expense. NPCA payments doubled since NPCA dues collected doubled. A major portion of the increase in grants awarded resulted from the board's decision to donate \$7,000 to Ashoka and \$3,000 to We CARE Solar, from our reserves, and a \$4,000 emergency donation to the Fantsuam Foundation in response to the post-election violence in Kafanchan.

Violence Continues in Kafanchan

By John Dada, Fantsuam Director

Greg Jones' note: One of FON's early donations to Fantsuam was distributed in the form of micro loans to group of women in Zonkwa, the village referenced in the following update. They repaid the loans 100%.

In Kafanchan, there has been a scale down of military presence in recent weeks, an indication that the authorities think some normalcy has been restored. But last week, Saturday, there were reports of what appeared to be reprisal killings of women and children worshippers in a village church near Zonkwa. Then, on Wednesday 09th November, a corpse was found in the stream near the Katsit suburb of Kafanchan; it was suspected to be another victim of ongoing reprisal killings. These are the immediate results of the violence that erupted again in Kafanchan on Wednesday. Before more military could be drafted into the town, businesses that were destroyed in the last crises and were just being renovated by their owners were torched again. A private primary school across the road from the central police station was also destroyed. Some homes along the Kafanchan Main Street that had escaped destruction in the April violence were finally destroyed along with two private hospitals.



New market coming alive in Kafanchan.

The mob-inspired violence took most Kafanchan residents unaware, and some of the people killed were innocent folks who were attacked by rampaging

youths. The violence was at its peak at just the time children were closing from school. Many parents temporarily lost contact with their kids as they could not reach the schools to collect the children. Some children had to make their way through long bush paths to reach home. As I write this, most displaced persons have found shelters in safe areas of the town; many have no idea when it will be safe enough to go back to their homes, nor do they have information on the security of their homes.

A heavy military patrol has reopened all the routes into Kafanchan, and the rampaging mobs have dispersed. A 24-hour curfew was imposed at 6 p.m. on Wednesday 09th November.

By 11 p.m., the Fantsuam Clinic had treated and discharged five gunshot victims and we had secured safe passage for all our staff, both Christians and Muslims. We are receiving requests for food and phone credits and our clinic remains open 24 hours a day for free treatment to all comers. All shops, market stalls and roadside businesses are shut. Kafanchan's economic recovery has been dealt a further setback, and the preliminary efforts at rebuilding community trust and promote reconciliation and forgiveness are all on hold.

The weakness of leadership at the grassroots levels was glaring in the sectarian violence that has affected Kafanchan. The readiness with which the youths go violent and the inability of local leadership to curb their excesses remain real challenges for future peace in Kafanchan. The lack of intergenerational dialogue and the loss of the traditional respect for elders are issues that need addressing even as measures to address the pervasive youth unemployment, poverty and frustration are designed. The slow pace and lack of transparency of reconciliation efforts since the April riots has not helped matters. Civil society peace-building initiatives are yet to make any significant impact.

The bulk of Kafanchan peasant farmers just want to continue their lives and



Food distribution in Kafanchan.

need an enabling environment to do so. The latest violence has only made the possibility of famine in Kafanchan in the next few months a reality.

AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Short-Term

1. Availability of phone credits
2. Food, clothes, medicines
3. Support for trauma counseling and care
4. Dedicated support for the elderly and people with disabilities affected by the violence

Medium Term

1. Training in building a civil society and developing youth leaders in NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION strategies
2. Stocking up grains for famine prevention
3. Support for irrigation farming to supplement rain-fed harvests
4. Development of community-based forums for dialogues
5. Support for a dedicated team to develop, promote, supervise, and coordinate peace-building efforts and timely identification of flashpoints
6. Documentation of all cases of violence, especially gender-specific and non-specific violation of women and children
7. Reactivation of elders forums at ward, local government levels, across religions and tribes, and empowerment of these to make them more visible and relevant in maintaining communal peace.

How Wil met Mel or the Other Way Around

By *Wilhelmina van Koningsbrugge*,
volunteer Abuja, Nigeria (VSO) 06-07

The main objection to Abuja, Marilyn and I thought, in those first few months we were there, was that it was so boring. None of the romantic notions I had had about coming to Africa had proved true. I had come to Nigeria in October 2006 as a Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) volunteer, adopted by Friends of Nigeria (FON), to work with the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) to help them develop a new curriculum for the State Colleges of Education.

The first culture shock was that I had not exactly been welcome. After the induction period organised by VSO Nigeria, Marilyn, who happened to be a FON adoptee as well, and I were left stranded in a hotel. The housing our new employers were supposed to have made available had not materialized. Nor had the work I was supposed to be doing. The colleagues I was supposed to be working with had not exactly been unfriendly, but they avoided me and kept their doors firmly locked. Marilyn at least had a job to go to and, if anything, complained about too much attention and too much work. But I was lonely and bored stiff. I stubbornly walked to the NCCE office daily, but there was nothing to do and no one to talk to. If it hadn't been for Marilyn, those first few months would have been unbearable.

Although the atmosphere slowly thawed at NCCE and people started to respond to my knocking on their doors, or walked into my office for a chat, any documentation that could give me an idea of the state of affairs in the Colleges of Education seemed to have gone missing and no one was prepared to tell me what they were working on. This was because nobody was working on anything, I found out at some stage. My presence was a huge embarrassment! Nobody wanted to socialize with me during lunch, after work or during the weekends, and when I finally got an apartment, it proved impossible to get to know the neighbours; they were

never home! And there was nothing, but nothing to do in all Abuja it seemed.

I wrote my blog in English to keep FON informed of my heroic struggles to become the useful volunteer I had pictured myself to be, and they in turn gave me access to the FON mailing list. It proved interesting reading. At some stage it dawned on me that a Mel Schnapper was contributing regularly from Abuja of all places. I immediately sent her an email and suggested meeting up. She responded with a one-liner: "This is my phone number, call me".

I was dumbfounded by so much rudeness and my first reaction was to let the matter rest. But, I was lonely as hell and bored out of my skull. Beggars can't be choosers, so I did make the call. The booming voice at the other end of the line was obviously not that of a woman, but definitely that of Mel Schnapper. Mel, it proved, was not short for Melanie, but for Melvin. Mel was equally surprised to get a woman on the phone. He had taken Wil to be short for William.

Once we had settled that we were both who we said we were, we decided to meet the following day, Friday, as Mel would be leaving for Kabul that Saturday. "Come to my office", Mel suggested, "we can have coffee together". His Peace Corps days obviously lay in a dim and forgotten past. I had to explain to him that being a lowly volunteer; I had no means of transportation. I would have to walk to his office and that would take me at least 2 hours, even though I had not yet learned to walk at an African pace. So, it was decided that Mel would pick me up in his chauffeur-driven car first thing the following morning and take me to his office. The driver would drop me off at NCCE afterwards.

Abuja doesn't get really hot until 10, so I sat outside the gate enjoying the morning sun, reading my book and waiting for things to come. To the delight of the guards a beautiful gray car drove up. Out came a bald, rotund gentleman in a traditional African outfit tie-dyed in a fiery purple. Obviously, a sugar daddy! The sugar daddy took one look at me and

confirmed the guards in their prejudice by suggesting we go to the Sheraton Hotel for coffee instead.

By then, I had been living on instant coffee for over 4 months. I wasn't going to turn down real coffee from a real cup no matter what this man's intentions were, so I happily boarded the car. The Abuja Sheraton has a beautiful inner garden where coffee and tea are served. And in these romantic surroundings we sat and ordered coffee, more coffee, and yet another cup. And we talked, and talked and talked. Mel knew of a restaurant where they had live music in the evening, so when Mel at last could no longer postpone going to his office and I felt I had to show my face at NCCE, we arranged to meet again for dinner.

Mel arrived in western garb, while I had changed into my most beautiful African dress. I had been so lucky that after-



(L-R) Mel (15, 65-67) and Wil in Ilorin with Mel's friend, Babatunde Durojaiye.

noon. I had had power and running water! I had even managed to wash my hair!

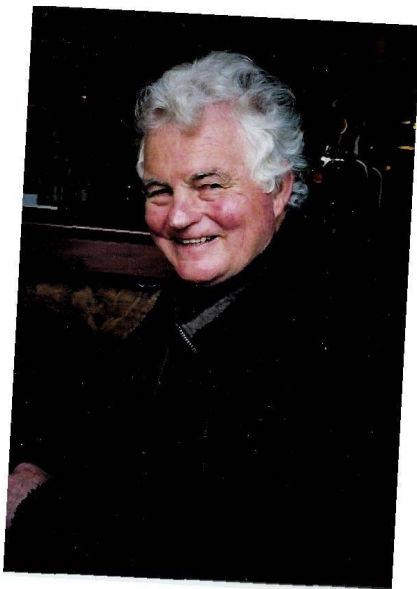
When we arrived at the restaurant everything was dark, no food was being served, no music was being played. In fact, there was nobody there, even the guards

(Continued on p.16)

The Value of Our Stories

Stephen Vincent (15) 65-67

As many of us volunteers well remember, the Nigerian Civil War was provoked by the secession of three of the Eastern provinces. The declaration of the nation of Biafra on May 30, 1967 led to the breakout of violence on July 6 when federal forces, intent on taking down the new government, entered the East from



Steve Vincent now.

the North to confront the newly formed Biafran army. In reality, particularly for those of us working in the East, the makings of the war began with the May 1966, pogroms against the Igbos living in the North. In effect we had been living in a developing war zone for over a year. Already in September of 1966, the military government in Enugu, under the leadership of Lt. Col. Ojukwu, had put out a call for all Easterners, including students, to return “home” from all other parts of Nigeria. Ojukwu, like many Igbos, had lost faith in the federation. I was a lecturer at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. With great sadness I watched former Yoruba, Hausa and minority students from those regions pack up and

leave. At the same time, I also greeted and got to know well Igbo students and professors, many from elite schools in Lagos and Ibadan, who came to either teach or study at Nsukka, often with disdain for the place. Nsukka, modeled on American land grant universities, was considered “bush,” both geographically and academically.

However, having taught creative writing, literature and humanities for one year, I received from the university one of the most generous gifts and experiences of my life. A young poet with an MA in Creative Writing, I came from San Francisco, a city where I was also very active in civil rights and the start of anti-Vietnam war protests. When I arrived, other than feeling that I might have something to give, I had no more than a few clues as to the Nigerian life I was about to enter. To be frank, all I really knew was that I was not going to be drafted to fight in Southeast Asia. It was a total irony for those of us volunteers who were against American involvement in Vietnam that, starting in June 1966, we found ourselves enveloped by the war hysteria, fear and paranoia that began to permeate life throughout the East.

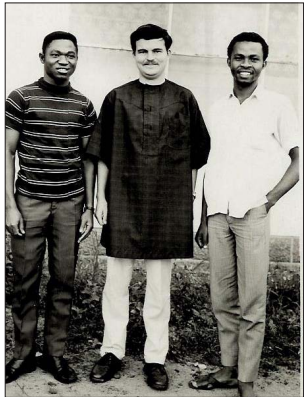
Nsukka was right on the edge of the North and the intellectual site of the movement to secede from the Federal Government. It was the first town and institution to be captured by government forces after I had already left on June 22nd. The Peace Corps had asked me to terminate early before my official August date. I was not evacuated by barge, like most volunteers in the East, but managed to cross the Niger by ferry at Onitsha. The new bridge there that was supposed to help unite the country was already closed.

For more than a year I lived among colleagues and students where, I would like to say, we held fierce, open arguments over whether or not secession was the right thing for the East to do. That was, however, not the case. The die was cast early. As political events unfolded and war became a more imminent possibility, it was dangerous to even sound questioning, let alone oppositional. Most

members of Eastern minority tribes from the Ogoja and the Rivers regions – students and teachers – were looked upon by their Igbo counterparts with suspicion. Ken Sara Wiwa, my colleague in the English Department from the Rivers, supported a federal solution of new states that would protect and serve the independent interests of minorities. In private he would confide to me that he was scared and had to keep quiet. (Ironically, years later in the Delta oil wars with Shell, he was hanged by the federal government with whom he had initially put his loyalty). In fact, students and professors from Delta and Ogoja would often confide in me about their opposition to an Igbo-led secession. On the other hand, most of my Igbo students and colleagues were distrustful, and with good reason, of any reconciliation with the North. As my colleague Dr. Michael Echeruo told me, if there was not going to be succession, “the burden of proof was on the federal government to show that it could protect all of its citizens.” Kala Uka, another colleague, wrote an article in a new Eastern-based publication of a unique Biafran identity separate from a Nigerian one. Given what I knew about the military power of the federal government and the military weaknesses of the East — the legitimacy of Igbo grievances aside — I strongly felt that secession and the inevitable war would be a suicidal venture. I, and others, held on to the vain belief that, no matter how difficult, negotiations to resolve regional differences were crucial.

From all points of view the campus was, to say the least, a complex scenario. What became clear in 1967 was that the machinery of war and its leader, no matter what anybody thought, were rapidly moving into place and unstoppable. As volunteers, no matter where in the East we were, we were helpless witnesses to an unfolding tragedy. Ironically, even though the Nsukka contingent of volunteers was frequently evacuated to Enugu, the United States government would not evacuate an Eastern volunteer. Diplomatically, the US did not want to appear to be siding with either side of the

conflict. Cynically, many of us thought the reluctance was about American big oil interests. If Biafra survived and British and Dutch-owned Shell-BP was given the boot from Port Harcourt, new drilling and refining contracts would be up for grabs. In fact, at the time I was leaving, French oil companies were already



Steve then.

exploring potential fields around Nsukka.

Looking back, now 43 years later, I still find it hard to write about being

in Nigeria and the war without getting caught up with abstractions, the arguments for and against secession. Without forgetting the value of a very particular political education, I am more likely to remember the faces and the rich variety of specific stories that surrounded my experience. As a volunteer, I remain most grateful for the way Nigerians of so many different backgrounds would confide their innermost stories, sometimes at dangerous risk, and still welcomed my active presence as an outsider.

This newsletter is probably not the forum to tell those stories in detail. However, I have often wondered why these stories are valuable. Indeed, what I found most important about my experience in Nigeria was finally not any particular contribution, though there may have been that, but the lesson I learned about the humility and power of listening, hearing the joy, grief and stories of

other peoples. I was once recording oral histories with a colleague Peter Ogbang in his home village in Ogoja. One of the local singers made his songs up in several languages: his own, Pidgin, some Italian, official English, and those of many other local tribes. We asked him why he did that. The songs, as they progressed, seemed to shoot out in several directions at once. "The more languages I know," he said, "the further my story will travel."

In looking back now, I think the fact that many of us keep telling the stories of our time in Nigeria helps make the facts of the country real rather than listening to the inventive and often dangerous stories told by those who never crossed any border. This telling can be a small individual gift a volunteer gives to the world, but cumulatively, as done by many, a very important and rewarding one.

How Wil met Mel

(Continued from p.15)

had gone. It turned out that Mel had the date wrong. To this day he maintains that it was really a mistake, and I believe him though others don't.

Fortunately, on one of my walks through my neighbourhood, I had discovered a fancy restaurant frequented by the more affluent expats. It was at walking distance from my apartment, even for Mel, who does walk at an African pace, so I suggested going there. It proved a good choice, the food was excellent. When Mel walked me home I invited him in for (instant) coffee. In the Netherlands an invitation for coffee is just that. How was I to know that to an American this is a coded message!

By the time we arrived at the apartment the blackout had started, so we continued our conversation by candle light, instant coffee and the drone of our neighbours' generators. So much romance, how could I resist! Somewhere during that evening I realised I must have known that coffee really meant something totally different all along!

Mel left for Kabul the following day and I picked up my volunteer life again thinking that that was the end of it. But thanks to Skype and email we kept in touch, especially once I had discovered that I could easily gatecrash the Sheraton business lounge, where the wifi was free. Most of the waiters knew me and pretended not to know that I wasn't a resident.

In the end I did find my feet. I got to know my neighbours, went for a drink with my colleagues occasionally, discovered Abuja's hidden bars and was invited to expat parties. I even learnt to play bridge. My flat became a meeting place for volunteers travelling through Abuja. On the weekends I ran sort of a hostel with sleeping bags all over the place. Sometimes as many as 10 people were spending the night in my apartment, and not only women, and not only white people either. I was the talk of the town the local supermarket owner told me on the day I left. Mel returned in May and we spent three weeks honeymooning in the Sheraton before he set off for Kabul again and from there to Bangladesh.

In January, VSO asked me if I could

do field and desk research for them into the situation in primary education and write a report that they could use for advocating better working conditions for teachers. It kept me busy until April. When I returned to NCCE it turned out that both the Secretary General and the Director of Programmes, my boss, had been sacked. The atmosphere had totally changed. I was welcomed as the long-lost daughter. Doors were opened. Material landed on my desk. People walked into my office to discuss their problems. In June we started on a series of workshops to hammer out the new curriculum. By the end of July the first draft was ready. By the end of July my work was finished. There was nothing more for me to do. At home my daughter was pregnant with her second child and the pregnancy was not going well. I felt that she needed me more than Nigeria did. It was time to go home.

In September, Mel, mailed that he was on his way home through Schiphol. "Could he stay with me for a couple of days?" He stayed till January, when we moved to Bangladesh together. We have been together ever since.

Nigeria, Salsa and a Missing Sax (Part I)

By Jeff Goodkind

Editor's note: Jeff is the son of Mike Goodkind (16) 65-67 and current FON president.

When I agreed to gig with a salsa band in Lagos, Nigeria over the Christmas-New Year's day stretch of 2009-10, I felt the generation gap coming around full circle. Maybe I'd have the opportunity to call on my dad's Nigerian ex-girlfriend, FooFoo, or meet some lovely, domestic-dog-eating children or run frantically for my life should I get into a car accident. See, my dad had been to the country 40 years before, serving as a Peace Corps volunteer until the outbreak of the violent civil war 1968 forced him to hastily leave the country and his saxophone behind.

During our journey there, my band mates and I discussed the possibility of visiting The Shrine, the place where Afro-Beat pioneer Fela Kuti's son Femi lives and performs. I couldn't help with this discussion but I did wonder if I'd also be able to find out who got my dad's saxophone after he left. What if it WAS my dad's sax both Fela and Femi were playing in those documentaries I viewed prior to the trip? So, I was to be on a journey to Nigeria looking for a sax and an ex. (Whew, say that a few times fast!) Anyway, if it was music that Dad left behind, I was there picking up where he left off.

Unpredictability, in a word, is perhaps the feeling Nigeria gives to an outsider. We were baptized by the blessing of that word minutes after stepping off the plane. We had already found out that less than a day before our arrival that a young man, originating from the same Lagos airport, had attempted to bomb a plane with explosives stuffed in his underwear. As you probably recall, this was when worldwide airport security was heightened and a proposal submitted for all passengers entering the US to receive full-body x-rays. In the meantime, TSA was pinching crotches.

After bribing Lagos airport employees to release our bags and instruments to us and exasperatingly convincing them that our hard-shell cases did not house nuclear missiles, we got in a van headed for our guest house located on what we figured was the relative asylum of Victoria Island. Once in the van, our driver, Samuel, informed us that it was a government-mandated sanitation day, which meant that all main streets were to be absolutely cleared out with only a few vehicles exempt. We were not exempt, a problem we really only discovered when Samuel unexpectedly pulled the van into a gravel lot behind a gas station to hide



Jeff and his band playing at a jazz festival in California.

from the state police who might humiliate him or worse. A local, unhappy of our encroachment on his territory, began pounding his fists on the van, asking for 2500 Naira (\$16) while another resident, in protest, suffered a couple of his big friend's hard shoves so that we could pass through. Once parked, Samuel stepped out, shut his door, and told us he'd be back, leaving us like six baby polar bears on a melting iceberg.

The next 30 minutes were spent envisioning our backup plan, ("Sure, I can drive stick!" "No worries! I know judo!") and me getting quietly chastised for lifting my water bottle within plain view.

But Samuel came back, started up the van, rejoined the highway, and in a move he probably negotiated during our wait, picked up two policemen, one in plainclothes and one in uniform. The

uniformed one rode in front, and we knew only then that Samuel had figured the only way we'd get across the city to our guesthouse was to escort the police themselves.

Our first gig was that night on Victoria Island, not far from where we were housed. We played for the people that sponsored our trip there. It turned out that we were one of the only live (or dare I say living?) salsa bands ever to play in Lagos.

Since we had arrived on the 26th and played that first night, we found ourselves with four entire days free until our next show on New Year's Eve. Here is my journal entry from our first morning, the 27th:

Slept really well. Went to bed around 5am, after talking to Emeka [one of our New Year's Eve event organizers and sponsors].

Breakfast this morning was a Malaria pill with some toast, wait I mean a Clif Bar, and then toast + orange juice. Then after that listened to some music upstairs, then after that lunch, which was Snail Pepper Soup made by the restaurant of the owner of this guest house, a Lebanese baker-turned-businessman named Heder. And he's been very generous with us. I mean feeding us all the time with food from his restaurant. I love food, but now although I do not wish to sound like I'm complaining I guess I am already getting quite tired of just eating, resting, and then eating some more. I want to do something. That's why I'm out here writing in my journal.

We never got to visit The Shrine, and many of our attempts to go out were subtly discouraged. We began to see that the guesthouse owner and event planner, Heder, had a lot of money invested in this New Year's Eve show and we were his assets. Thus it was his job to keep us safe and well-fed. Anyway, we still tried. Each of those four days began with us asking Heder if we could leave the compound and sightsee, and each day he half-heartedly agreed to call a driver to take us somewhere. By 10:30 AM though,

still waiting for some driver, Heder took our lunch orders to his restaurant. Lunch usually came around one or two in the afternoon, and then, weighed down by the greasy but delicious fare, we usually napped. At 5 p.m., naptime over and wondering where our driver had been the whole time, Heder arrived to tell us that it was too late to go out and we'd have to do it the following day.

During all that waiting, we made the acquaintance of the girls that tended the house. Olivia and Christy were the first two we met followed by Lydia, Esther, and Alice. They were usually stationed at the front desk and a few of us guys from the band kept them company in the lobby. I don't think they were quite used to that much attention from guests. Heder took notice and occasionally scolded the girls in front of us, I think mildly insulted that we found more interest in them than the free internet, television, and food he provided for our diversion.

Granted, we did take a few trips outside the compound. Heder, himself, took us out for a shopping run that included buying some produce in the street that became our dinner for the night. Still all we wanted to really see was The Shrine. And though he said he was really busy, most of the time I found him browsing the web or playing solitaire.

The one excursion that we wanted to take came with some effort on our third free day. A friend of mine from Los Angeles had a friend whose brother Richard lived in Lagos. I called him, and though unsure of what we'd actually end up doing, he came over to the guesthouse by mid-morning. He had taken the bus leaving us still without transportation. Graciously, Heder arranged for Samuel to take all of us to a nearby record shop/café called the Jazz Hole, a place I suggested from a travel guide recommendation. Our timbale player, Sal, (then called Cheka), was a London-educated Nigerian president of a bank, whom he met on the plane ride over. Cheka

in turn arranged a meeting at the Jazz Hole along with a percussionist friend of his named Wurasamba. Wurasamba is perhaps the only living player of the once-extinct Nigerian samba drums (he said he once looked in an old reference guide of native Nigerian instruments and their practitioners, and upon finding that there were no samba drum players, he researched them, built a set, and revived a tradition). Wurasamba told us that, for a modest price, his percussion teacher could hand-make us some talking drums (*dundun*). We put in our order.

The Jazz Hole owner, a former percussionist in Fela Kuti's band, was a horn-rimmed bespectacled man who generously answered our request for music recommendations. One of his selections was from Duro Ikujenyo, an artist signed to his own label. Ikujenyo had been a keyboardist in Fela's band and a co-founder of Fela's own political party, Movement of the People.

Back at the guesthouse, while we were finishing lunch and seeing Richard off, Christy announced that Duro Ikujenyo was at the front gate. Cheka had engineered this further meeting! Two shopkeepers from The Shrine had driven Ikujenyo over with Wurasamba. To say the least, we were thrilled. Ikujenyo brought over CDs, a Fela Kuti biography with mention of him, and plenty of stories to tell. Afterwards Cheka brought a keyboard to the house and all of us got to play music together, a definite once-in-a-lifetime experience. We were already missing them when they waved their

goodbyes from their brightly colored Afro-Beatmobile. The guesthouse felt empty afterwards with a sort of historical and reverent air.

Where politics fail, music prevails. Today, the West's fundamental misunderstanding and clumsy relationship with Nigeria has almost remained the same. From what we experienced and witnessed, it seems the multitude of tribal customs and cultural politics are very much still in place and capitalism's structures remain loosely mounted on militia-like security. The result is a slightly nagging feeling of instability, like I felt while having a drink in the vicinity of foreign oil execs and real estate moguls at an upscale Brazilian restaurant overlooking the gray and polluted lagoon separating Victoria Island from Lagos Island and guarded outside by the usual guy with an AK-47.

As in much of the "developing" world, what isn't guarded catches on fast, eight times as fast, according to Clement, a local salsa dancer/DJ, and one of the New Year's Eve event organizers. After the Brazilian place, we paid a visit to a local club called the Black Pearl, where Clement was hosting and his friend Dare was teaching and rehearsing a dance routine for the New Year's Eve event. This was our Lagos salsa scene experience—a roomful of some 20-30 highly enthusiastic young adults dancing up a storm in the familiar Los Angeles ballroom style. Well, across the club from where we took a seat was a Nigerian girl dancing by herself. Upon seeing her, the guys in the band appointed me ambassador. (Thanks, alcohol!) As I made my way over, I danced my clumsy salsa moves in front of her (and had a good time at it, too!). She smiled and the band across the room cheered like kids at a magic show. The ice broken, everybody began to mingle.

(Part II of Jeff's account of his trip to Lagos will be printed in the Spring FON newsletter.)



Jeff Goodkind (right, second row) and his band pose with Nigerian friends in front of the Afro-Beatmobile.

Edited by Virginia DeLancey (04) 62-64

Former Leader of Biafra has Died

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, the former Governor of Eastern Nigeria and leader of the secessionist Republic of Biafra from 1967 to 1970, died on November 26 at the Lynden Hill Clinic in London after a long illness. He was 78.

Former Nigerian head of state, General Yakubu Gowon, who was in power during the three-year Biafran war, expressed sadness over the death of Ojukwu. Gowon said that he and Ojukwu later became reconciled friends, committed to move Nigeria forward after the civil war. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo also expressed sadness over the death of Ojukwu, although he said that he regretted that the former Biafran leader never expressed remorse for the civil war.

In order to preserve the independence of the Eastern Region of Nigeria where he was military governor, Ojukwu declared a sovereign Republic of Biafra on May 30, 1967. On July 6, the military Head of State of Nigeria, Col. Yakubu Gowon declared war and attacked Biafra to try to stop Ojukwu's secessionist attempt. The war ended on January 15, 1970, after Lt.-Col. Phillip Effiong, leading the Biafran side, surrendered. Before the surrender, Ojukwu sought asylum in Ivory Coast. He returned to Nigeria in 1982 after he was granted a state pardon by former President Shehu Shagari.

The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, MASSOB, declared a one-week period of mourning to begin on December 1 and expects that Ndigbo throughout the world will stay at home on the day of Ojukwu's burial. Before a state burial, Ojukwu's body will be flown to Gabon, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, and Haiti, countries that supported the Biafran struggle and recognized Biafra as an independent state. His final burial will be in his Nnewi country home. (Sources: *Daily Champion*, 11/29/11; *Daily Trust* [Enugu], 11/29/11; *The Moment* [London], 11/28/11; *Vanguard*, 11/29/11; VOANews.com, 11/28/11).

Nigeria Asks for Help and Patience in Dealing with Terrorism

The Nigerian government has asked the public for more help and patience in the

fight against terrorism following the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Abuja which killed 23 and wounded another 81 on August 26. Security has been one of the biggest challenges for President Jonathan since he was elected. Intelligence services have continued to search for the mastermind of the bombing who they are linking to al-Qaida-affiliated terrorists in Somalia. The Nigerian secret police reported that they arrested six people linked to a radical Islamic sect suspected of bombing an elections office and a church earlier in the year, and authorities also said that they had discovered a bomb-making factory near the town of Suleija.

The government says that it needs time to end the threat by Muslim extremists just as it ultimately ended the threat from militants in the Niger Delta. The government's campaign to gain greater public support for its fight against terrorism includes a series of public service announcements urging Nigerians to come forward with information about the attacks. In the capital, with a limited curfew, workers are also installing hundreds of solar-powered closed-circuit television cameras to monitor public places, including Abuja's main square and its international airport.

The radical Nigerian Islamic group Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the bombing of the UN headquarters, and warned that it was just the beginning. It said that the attack was in response to the military's increased presence in northeastern Borno state where Boko Haram is active. Although Boko Haram has been blamed for many bombings in recent months, the attack on the UN headquarters marked a shift beyond domestic targets. (Sources: VOANews.com [Abuja], 8/26/11, 8/28/11, 9/6/11).

France Pledges Support to Fight Terrorism

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe pledged to help Nigeria in the fight against extremist groups during his 2-day visit to Nigeria. Boko Haram claimed credit for multiple attacks on November 4 on targets in Yobe State, killing some 150 people and wounding several others. Three persons were also injured in a bomb explosion in Bauchi on November 12. Juppe said that France is

ready to share any information, coordinate intelligence services, and help with training. He also stressed the need to curb piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

Nigeria is France's most important trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa, with current trade volume between the two countries reaching 4.5 billion Euros (\$6 billion). French oil giant Total is among the major producers of crude in Nigeria. Juppe's counterpart, Olugbenga Ashiru, urged French investors to also invest in non-oil sectors such as agriculture, mining, and manufacturing, saying "Nigeria is safe for investors to come for business." (Sources: *Leadership* [Abuja], 11/13/11; *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*, 11/12/11; *This Day* [Bauchi], 11/13/11).

UNEP Study Finds Hazardous Levels of Pollution in Ogoniland

A United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) study conducted in August 2011 has found hazardous levels of pollution in Ogoniland, resulting from 50 years of oil operations in the area. Residents have been exposed to petroleum hydrocarbons in air, water, and soil. Wells in 10 communities were contaminated, and in one community water was being drunk from wells containing 900 times the World Health Organization recommended level of benzene, a carcinogen. Other findings include destruction of fish habitats, including mangroves, and soil contamination at depths of up to five meters. It estimated that a clean-up operation will take up to 30 years to return contaminated drinking water, land, creeks and ecosystems back to full health.

Oil has not been produced in Ogoniland since 1993, but the infrastructure remains, including active oil pipelines. In addition to oil spills, sabotage and bunkering have added to the pollution, while citizens have continued to complain that they have never benefited from the oil wealth in the area.

The UNEP report, carried out at the request of the government, included emergency recommendations. The Nigerian government has formed a committee to look at the recommendations but, despite pressure from Ogoni elders, the committee is still considering its response and no decisions have been announced. Moreover, implementing the recommendations would

only assist Ogoniland, and Ogoniland covers only 1,000 of the Niger Delta's 70,000 square miles. (Source: IRIN [Port Harcourt], 9/9/11).

Shell Must Pay \$1 Billion to Begin Clean Up of Niger Delta

Shell must pay an initial \$1 billion to begin the cleanup of pollution caused by spills in the Niger Delta, according to Amnesty International and the Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development. A new report by the two groups looks at two major oil spills, caused by faults in a pipeline, which took place in Bodo, a town of 69,000 people in Ogoniland, in 2008. The spills, which resulted in thousands of barrels of oil polluting the land and creeks, continued for several weeks and have never been cleaned up. The UN recommended setting up an Environmental Restoration Fund with an initial amount of \$1 billion, with further funding to follow. (Sources: Amnesty International (press release) [London], 11/10/11; *This Day*, 11/11/11).

Lead Poisoning is Recorded in 43 Villages

Eighteen months after lead poisoning was discovered in Zamfara State, 43 villages in the state continue to record such cases according to the World Health Organization (WHO). As many as 400 children are believed to have died of lead poisoning-related illnesses since March of last year when the situation was discovered. WHO has called on the Nigerian government to increase its commitment to the resolution of the problem by strengthening its capacity, not only to diagnose, treat and manage it, but also to insure decontamination of the areas. Children have to wait for their family compounds to be cleaned before they can start treatment and some children will require long-term therapy with chelating agents, which remove heavy metals from the body.

WHO warned that lead poisoning cannot be successfully eliminated without significant changes to mining practices, including the relocation of ore processing activities and storage of ore away from villages. It also requires the adoption of processing methods, which produce less dust, and hygiene measures, such as removing contaminated

clothes and washing before returning home. In villages where such precautions have been taken, the combined effects of removing children from lead exposure and providing chelation therapy caused the child mortality rate to drop from 43 percent to one percent in one year. (Source: *Leadership* [Abuja], 11/13/11; *This Day*, 11/13/11).

Ships Face Dangers Along Nigeria's Coast

The MT Jacksonville, a Liberia-flagged cargo ship, exploded near Lagos after leaking an unknown substance into the water. The ship had 15 crew members. Three members of the crew, from India, were killed and two were still missing at the time of the report in early September. A month later, pirates seized a chemical tanker and kidnapped its crew, according to the International Maritime Bureau. The Marshall Islands-flagged vessel was under pirate control on October 11, 145 kilometers south of Lagos, but all crew members were accounted for at the time.

In June, the International Maritime Bureau issued a warning, as pirates had recently hijacked several vessels off the coast of Benin, including at least two oil tankers. Pirates have been targeting tankers carrying oil from Nigeria's southern Delta. (Source: *VOANews.com*, 10/11/11; *Washington Post*, by AP [Lagos], 9/8/11).

Nigerian Pleads Guilty to Attempt to Blow Up Plane Over Detroit

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab said he tried to bring down an international flight over Detroit in retaliation for the killing of Muslims worldwide. He carried a bomb in his underwear onto Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on Christmas in 2009 with the intention of killing the nearly 300 people on board. The bomb didn't work, and passengers jumped on Abdulmutallab when they saw smoke and fire.

Abdulmutallab, age 25, chose to represent himself with the assistance of a defense lawyer. He took a U.S. federal court by surprise as he pleaded guilty to all eight charges against him, including conspiracy to commit terrorism and attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction. He told the courtroom that the underwear bomb was a "blessed weapon to save the lives of innocent

Muslims." He also said that he intended to wreck a U.S. aircraft for the U.S. wreckage of Muslim lands and property.

Abdulmutallab is the son of a wealthy Nigerian banker. He told authorities that he trained in Yemen, home base for Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and was influenced by al-Awlaki, who was killed in a September 30 U.S. military air strike. It is believed that al-Awlaki specifically directed Abdulmutallab to detonate an explosive device in US. air space to maximize casualties. Abdulmutallab was believed to be at a gathering of al-Qaida figures in Yemen's Shabwas Mountains a day before the attack, after which Osama bin Laden appeared in a video declaring him a "hero". Abdulmutallab also has been lauded by al-Qaida's English-language web magazine *Inspire*, whose editor was killed along with al-Awlaki. (Source: *The Washington Post* [AP, Detroit], 10/12/11).

Nigeria Fines British Airways and Virgin Atlantic Over Prices

The Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority fined British Airways \$135 million and Virgin Atlantic \$100 million for allegedly overcharging passengers for tickets. Officials accused the airlines of working together since 2004 to increase fuel surcharges in order to inflate ticket prices. Both airlines have denied any wrongdoing. (Source: *VOANews.com*, 11/17/11).

Gates Foundation Names Focus Countries for New Agricultural Policy

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will focus its agriculture-related investments on fewer countries and a tighter set of priorities in line with its desire to scale-up funding in countries where investments will have the most impact and produce "spill-over benefits to other countries." In Africa, the focus countries are Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda. Bangladesh and India are the priority countries in Asia. These countries will receive assistance to help translate research and development into practices on the ground. Meanwhile, the Gates Foundation will concentrate its investments on international research, policy and advocacy. It will also support efforts to improve collection and analysis of data about

agricultural production and improvements. (Source: *devox* [Washington, DC], 11/9/11).

Nigeria Moves to Ban Same-Sex Marriage

Rights groups in Nigeria fear a same-sex marriage bill being discussed in the national assembly could increase discrimination against homosexuals. The bill bans same-sex marriage and threatens to ban the formation of groups supporting homosexuality, with imprisonment for five years for anyone who “witnesses, abets or aids” same-gender relationships. It also seeks to punish people of the same sex living as couples with a sentence of up to three years. The bill has been shelved twice in the past five years, but a version of it has now been approved by the Senate. It must still be approved by the House of Representatives and signed by President Jonathan before becoming law.

Under a colonial-era law, sodomy is punishable by a 14-year jail sentence. In the mainly Muslim northern states, where a version of Shari’a law applies, the penalty is death by stoning, although this has never officially been carried out. The version of the law passed by the Senate on November 29 would sentence anyone who enters a same-sex marriage to 14 years in prison, and it would sentence anyone who publicly displays “same-sex amorous relationships” or helps homosexuals marry to a 10-year jail term.

British Prime Minister David Cameron recently threatened to withhold aid from countries that violate the rights of gays and lesbians, but Senate President David Mark said the bill reflects Nigeria’s values and argued that no other country should interfere with its laws. Many Nigerians strongly disapprove of homosexuality, seeing it as a foreign import at odds with a deeply religious society. A 2008 survey by a Nigerian non-profit organization for sexual and reproductive rights found that only 1.4 percent of the 6,000 Nigerians surveyed felt “tolerant” towards sexual minorities. More recently, two NGOs, Action Aid and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) have condemned same sex marriage, saying it should not be allowed in Nigeria for both health consequences as well as legal and cultural reasons. (Sources: IRIN [Lagos],

11/15/11; *Leadership* [Abuja], 11/11/11; *VOANews.com*, 11/29/11).

Central Nigeria Unmasked: Arts of the Benue River Valley Exhibit

Members of Friends of Nigeria had the opportunity to view the exhibit “Central Nigeria Unmasked: Arts of the Benue River Valley” at the National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C. during the 50th Anniversary of the Peace Corps Celebrations. The exhibit, which will continue to run through March 4, 2012, introduces major artistic genres and styles associated with more than 25 ethnic groups living along the Benue River. The artworks include sculptural forms in wood, ceramic, and metal. The exhibit is organized by the Fowler Museum at UCLA in association with the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. (Sources: *This Day*, 11/11/11; National Museum of African Art, <http://africa.si.edu/exhibits/benue/index.html>).

CAF Announces Nominees for 2011 Players of the Year

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) announced the nominees for the 2011 Player of the Year and the Player of the Year 2011 (Based in Africa). Ten nominees were named for each of the two categories, based on the performance and contribution of the players to their clubs and national teams during the year under review. The winners will be decided by votes of the Head Coaches or the Technical Directors of the National Associations affiliated to CAF, and the awards will be made on December 22 in Accra.

For the second year in a row, no Nigerian made the list for the African footballer of the year. Nigeria’s West African rival Ghana had three on the list, although it is predicted that they will have tough competition from Cameroon’s Samuel Eto’o who won the award for the fourth time last year. For the award of African Player of the Year (based in Africa), Nigeria made the list with Enyimba’s Kalu Uche. Super Eagles captain Joseph Yobo has suggested that the ouster of the Super Eagles from the 2012 Nations Cup may have affected the ratings for the African Player of the Year award, as he believes that Nigeria has players with enough talent to be in contention for the award, such as Osaze

Odemwingie who finished as the top African goal scorer in the English Premier League with 15 goals last season. (Sources: Confederation of African Football (Giza), 11/11/11; *Leadership* [Abuja], 11/10/11; *Vanguard*, 11/10/11).

Stephen Keshi is New Coach of Super Eagles

Stephen Keshi has taken over as the new coach of the Super Eagles, the national football team, after the sacking of Samson Siasia. Keshi announced that he is anxious to begin building the team and will not condone indiscipline from any member of the team. He will be remembered for his ten years as a Super Eagles defender and for serving as captain of the team. (Sources: *Daily Trust*, 11/11/11; *Leadership* [Abuja], 11/10/11; *Vanguard* [Abuja], 11/11/11).

Samson Siasia Withdraws Suit Against Nigerian Football Federation

Former Super Eagles coach Samson Siasia filed suit against the Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) for wrongful dismissal after he was sacked when the team failed to qualify for the 2012 African Nations Cup slated to take place in Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. He maintained that he should have been notified at least 30 days before the sack and that the NFF was an illegal body. He also claimed to have signed a contract that required him to qualify for the Nations Cup, without being allowed legal consultation, but never believing that the team would not qualify. He later withdrew the one billion Naira (\$6.2 million) suit, after listening to his supporters who urged him to drop the case. He said that he wants the best for Nigerian football, as well as for his own coaching career.

Siasia later made a surprise appearance at the inaugural ceremony for his successor, Stephen Keshi. He entered the National Stadium, Abuja, walked up to the podium and embraced Keshi. Then, in a dramatic manner, he handed Keshi a green Super Eagles jersey with a number four inscribed on it. It was remembered by all that Keshi had worn the number four jersey during his more than ten-year reign as a defender and later captain of the Nigerian men’s national

team. The gesture drew applause from the audience. (Sources: *Daily Champion* [Abuja], 11/11/11; *Daily Trust*, 11/11/11; *Vanguard* [Abuja], 11/11/11).

Nnamdi Asomugha--Philadelphia Eagles Cornerback and Leading Philanthropist

Nnamdi Asomugha, former Oakland Raider, signed a five-year, \$60 million contract with the Philadelphia Eagles this year. Asomugha also leads the NFL in philanthropy. The son of Nigerian immigrants, he grew up in Los Angeles. His father, who died in 1994, was a petroleum engineer, and his mother is a pharmacist. He says that his parents maintained a strict household where he was required to read rather than allowed to watch TV. He graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and he has three siblings, who all have earned graduate degrees.

As he grew up, the Asomugha family regularly visited homeless shelters and led food drives. So, even before 2009, when he signed for \$28 million with the Raiders, he was used to giving back. He now chairs two philanthropic programs. One of them supports vocational skills training, business loans, and health care for orphans and widows in Nigeria. The other takes a group of inner-city students on spring tours of colleges like Harvard, Howard, Georgetown, and NYU. In 2010 he won the Jefferson Award for Public Service, which is often called the Nobel Prize of Community Service. Currently, the Obama Administration is considering him for a spot on the President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability. And, since 2009, he has spoken at three of Bill Clinton's Global Initiative meetings. (Source: *Time* [New York], 10/3/11).

Nigerian is Wealthiest Person in Africa

Forbes Magazine reported that Aliko Dangote, with a stake in Dangote Cement and interests in flour milling and sugar refining, is the richest person in Africa with a fortune of \$10.1 billion. The magazine's inaugural list of the 40 richest people in Africa put South Africa's Nicky Oppenheimer, of DeBeers at number two with \$6.5 billion. The total wealth of the list, which includes

16 billionaires, is \$64.9 billion. No women made the list.

Forbes calculated the values by using stock prices for publicly-traded companies and estimates of revenues or profits for the many privately-held businesses. However, the magazine ignored dispersed family fortunes, such as the Chandaria family of Kenya. (Source: BBC News, Business, 11/17/11).

More than 200,000 Face Eviction in Port Harcourt

Amnesty International and local activists report that more than 200,000 people living in shantytowns on the waterfront in Port Harcourt could be forcibly evicted if local authorities carry out their threat to demolish the settlements. The Rivers State Governor said that the residents are considered "temporary occupants" and that the government is only legally required to give seven days' notice to vacate. He said that demolitions are needed to reduce crime in the area and make way for new developments. However, a waterfront community of 17,000 was demolished in August 2009, but only some of the residents received advance notice. Amnesty International reported that despite promises of alternative accommodation, none was offered. Many children were left homeless and still live under a flyover. Many families also broke up, as parents returned to villages while the youths stayed in Port Harcourt where young girls who used to live with their families are now earning a living in prostitution. The area that was to be developed is still vacant after two years and is now a rubbish dump. (Source: IRIN [Port Harcourt], 11/23/11).

Plastic Water Bottles May Solve Nigeria's Housing Problem

The plastic water bottles that litter Nigeria's roads, canals, and gutters may be used to build homes, providing an environmentally smart strategy of dealing with the housing shortage in Nigeria as well as with the badly polluted environment. A prototype structure has been built in the village of Sabon Yelwa. The project was initiated by the Kaduna-based NGO Development Association for Renewable Energies (DARE), with the help of foreign experts from Africa Community Trust, a London-based NGO.

The 624 square foot, two-bedroom bungalow looks like an ordinary home, but it differs in several ways. It is made from capped, sand-filled bottles, each weighing almost two pounds. The bottles are stacked into layers and bonded together by mud and cement, with an intricate network of strings holding each bottle by its neck, providing extra support. Bottle caps of various colors protrude from the cement-plastered walls, giving each structure a unique look. The developers of the project claim that the sand-filled bottles are stronger than ordinary cinder blocks. The structures are also fire-proof, bullet-proof, and earthquake resistant, with the interior maintaining a constant temperature of 64° F, which is good for tropical climates. After completion, the prototype house will be used to train masons to build similar homes. (Source: AFP, Yahoo! News, 11/6/11).

Nigeria has Highest Number of Mobile Phone Subscriptions in Africa

Africa is the fastest growing mobile phone market in the world according to the Groupe Speciale Mobile Association (GSMA). The continent is also the world's second largest mobile phone market by number of connections, after Asia, with 649 million connections. The number of mobile phone users in Africa has increased by nearly 20 percent every year for the last five years, and it is predicted that the growth will continue. The organization called on countries to invest in infrastructure to help expand the service, especially to rural areas where there is none at all.

The GSMA reported that Nigeria has the highest number of mobile phone subscriptions in Africa, with more than 93 million users. It also reported that South Africa, which has a more developed infrastructure, topped the continent in terms of mobile broadband penetration. It noted that Kenya is the leader of mobile money transfers and "m-banking"; 8.5 million Kenyans use mobile devices to help manage their finances. (Source: VOANews.com, 11/9/11).

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