

A Trip to Jimma University, Ethiopia

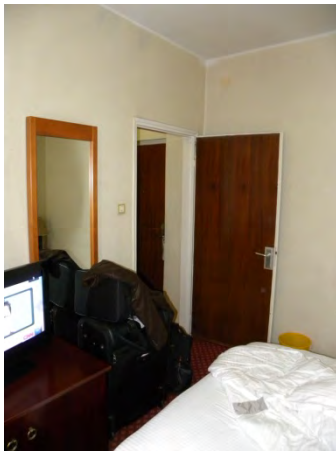
Day 1 and 2, Friday/Saturday, April 27-28, 2012

The trip to Addis Ababa was smooth. There was a slight hiccup in Amsterdam as we evidently lost nine people who had been scheduled on the flight. Seemed like a lot to lose, but what is what is. It put us about an hour and a half behind for the rest of the trip. I was a little surprised that we stopped in Khartoum on the way in. I kind of expected to have some kind of special treatment in getting through immigration and customs. I was curious to learn what it meant that I would have an expediter from the embassy. As it turns out, it was a man who helped me with my bag – waiting at the carousel with me after immigration. In reality, obtaining a visa was both easy and a bonus. There were a hundred or so people wending their way through the queue at immigration. A separate queue with about four people in it was waiting to obtain visas. There were two sets of people in a small room. One wrote up the visa, the other took the app fee and wrote up a receipt. After a brief wait, I had the visa and exited to find myself in a very short line to go through

immigration. I think it took less time to get a visa and get through immigration than to just go through immigration. My expediter did seem to get me through the luggage scanning faster, but as best I could tell there was no customs as we know it – kind of like Norway, but more confusing. We walked about a half mile to a car; the night air was pleasant and the air smelled clean and fresh. I'm guessing the temperature range is 65 at night to 75 during the day. As we approached the car, it was clear that someone else was involved – a driver. I had asked my expediter if I was staying at the



Jupiter hotel – which was advertised on one of the luggage carts. He said yes. At the car, the answer seemed to be no, but nobody knew for sure. The answer was known to the young woman the men were waiting for. My “expediter” disappeared, and the driver – an embassy driver I would later learn – was to do what the embassy assistant said. The assistant, whose Ethiopian name was beyond me after 24 hours of travel was a variation of Gerry – but with some twists on sound I couldn't quite get. I was not to stay at the Jupiter, but at an older hotel “The Ethiopia Hotel” where evidently the host university had some relationship. On the way in Gerry apologized that Johannes was not there but indicated he was checking in and asking about my arrival and wanted to talk to me. We talked by phone and he indicated he would pick me up the next day at 8:45 for meetings with the cultural affairs attaché and others from the embassy. I got settled in the hotel with little trouble. The hotel is in the old part of the city and I would guess dates to the Italian occupation. It is well worn and shows its age, but comfortable. A few of the surprises for this day and age – there was a mini refrigerator, but no bottle water, and I think the refrigerator was off.



Two bars of soap – none of the special treats one expects. The bed and sheets were comfortable and clean as were the big towels in the bath. The shower hose was loosely connected – a poor

repair job – and flew like a wild snake soaking most of the bathroom if one didn't take care in adjusting it and the pressure – it took me three showers to learn how to take one in semi-normal form.

Day 2-3, Saturday/Sunday, April 28-29, 2012

The first day in country began with a fractured video call home. It was a brief conversation as I had just finally gotten to sleep. I woke at 7:00 and proceeded to shower, shave, and head for breakfast in prep for meeting Johannes and the crew from the embassy. Breakfast was a buffet with some scrambled eggs, various pastries and vegetables and juice. The coffee was excellent, the juice good, and the eggs and bread filling. While there are always differences, Ethiopia to this point seems much more like the US than many other places I have visited. It is hard to say what it is, but many things seem more the same than they should be. I'll come back to this after I think some more, but surely one piece of it is that the English that is spoken is spoken almost without accent. It is very easy to understand any of the people who speak any English. One of the things I am always reminded of when traveling in developing and underdeveloped countries is the cost of human labor. Everything seems to be done by groups of people – like my pickup the night before – not one person but four were involved. At breakfast there are three or four people involved – one to serve the coffee, one to provide the bill, one to take the order, etc.



Johannes picked me up at 8:45 and we headed to a meeting at a coffee bar. After some confusion about which one and where, we arrived at the correct place to meet with various officers from the embassy who gave me some background on the project and their efforts. I must admit to some confusion as to who had what role and title and as breakfast went along people left and others arrived. Ultimately, there were five people beyond Johannes who briefed me on various possibilities and goals. The group was enthusiastic, informative, encouraging, competent, and helpful. I must admit that meeting these wonderful people reminds me of my age and the fact that the future of the world is in the hands of the next generation. One of the most interesting learnings from the meeting with embassy folks was the extent of commitment and the awareness these folks have of the situation in Ethiopia and the commitment they have to working with the local folks to make things better. The folks concerned with this particular project have a strong commitment to helping to encourage and grow the professional class concerned with the organization and dissemination of information. They are equally concerned with the education system and the development of individual skills overall.

After our meetings, we went back to the Ethiopia Hotel and checked out to go to the airport. About half way there the phone rang and we were informed that my flight had been canceled. Back to the hotel and a check in to the room I had just vacated. Not quite sure why, but the process of redoing the room seemed to be put on hold by the fact that I had not actually left – but maybe that was just my imagination. In any case, the hotel was busy with various weddings and other events. I slept fitfully through the night and awoke to my fourth day in Ethiopia somewhat refreshed.

Day 4, Monday, April 30, 2012

The Embassy

I was picked up at the Hotel Ethiopia in the morning and taken to the US embassy. I am not sure what the actual height of the land is where the embassy is located, but it had to be at least 1000 feet higher than where I had stayed. It is on a mountain above the royal palace. It appeared huge to me, even though I only saw a few parts. I created enough trouble in that I had checked out of the hotel and had my bags with me. Their contents violated all the rules and regulations – cameras, cell phones, etc. They did get me in and my bags were taken care of but it was not easy. The embassy in Addis Ababa is only about a year and a half old and it is very impressive. It employs more than a thousand people and provides significant presence in Ethiopia and I gather other parts of Africa as well. I spent about three hours at the Information Resource Center and had a wonderful and wide ranging conversation with the staff that was encouraging, wonderfully open, and just all around delightful. Their view of Jimma was more personal than professional. In the wide ranging conversation they observed that Jimma is more conservative and lags behind other parts of the country in development. The Muslims are a majority around Jimma – for the country as a whole it is something like 30% Muslim, 60% Orthodox Christian. They observed that there had been some religious tensions in Jimma a few years back – hairs went up about being careful what I might say. They also painted a picture of Jimma being kind of like the rural south where people don't want to see things change – this is the region that makes huge money growing coffee and some substance chewed for a buzz. In any case, at one point I had a feeling that I was going into the rural south to teach about evolution.

The Trip to Jimma

I left them about 11:30 and we proceeded to the airport. They dropped me off at the parking lot and I worked my way without much problem to the desk where I showed them what amounted to a copy of a faxed e-ticket. The attendant informed me that the ticket was no good because it was for yesterday. I mentioned that I would have liked to have gone yesterday, but the flight was cancelled. Didn't take long to get checked in and obtain a new boarding pass. I had to be screened three times before getting on the plane – TSA is doing OK! The flight was short and uneventful, but the airport has to be the best yet. They are building a new terminal, and the airport is small to start with – something like the Bahamas outer islands. In any case, we simply stopped on the tarmac. I got out of the plane and there was nothing to be seen for a mile, except a land rover that can seat about 8. The 30 of us that got off in Jimma got bone wrenching high speed trips to the outside of the old terminal. After four truckloads or so, our luggage showed up and there was a mad scramble to take what each person owned – points to Jimma, baggage claim was about 3 minutes!!!! We then walked to a parking lot where the military had kept the people waiting to greet us. You know if I don't lose my luggage, I get lost or stranded – well, the parking lot was empty and there were just two of us. About ten minutes later both our rides arrived in a cloud of dust. We packed up and headed off. About a half mile down the dirt exit road, a frail elderly woman flagged us down and collected the 4 or 5 Bir toll for the airport. It was surreal! We talked as we approached the University and were actually driving



past the University and about a mile from the hotel I would stay at when traffic stopped. The barricade was ten 10-20 pound rocks dumped in the road and a child telling drivers the road was closed because of construction ahead – which was visible. The truck could have easily taken the rocks, but we detoured 4 miles anyway. The lady toll taker and the child construction guard were two ends of a half hour trip full of tuk-tuks, donkey drawn carts, cows and goats crossing the road, crazy but controlled driving moves and hundreds of people and vehicles crowding the streets.

The Hotel and the University

The Honeyland Hotel was a surprise to say the least. Driving on unpaved roads from the airport, asphalt was sparse and where it existed mixed with rutted roads. At a major commercial intersection surrounded by one story huts selling many different things, on one corner there was a pretty brick and glass structure with a parking lot. Exiting the parking lot, we came upon green neatly rimmed grass, beautiful flowers including two story high hibiscus bushes and small tables and chairs as well as a series of party huts. From the garden area we walked into an immaculate marble reception area. A quick check in and we went off to the room which was clean and spacious – apparently selected to give me as much space as possible. It was perfect and quite attractive, from nice lounge chairs and a big bed to beautiful comforters and mosquito netting. The restaurant is on the second floor and they had arranged to cover all my costs while I am here. After moving the bags to the room, we took off to walk up to the campus so I could see where I would teach. We walked much of the campus and met many people. I must admit I can't recall many of them nor what was where, but I began to get a sense of how active the building and growth of the University is. I was struck by the simple beauty of many of the buildings and some of the spaces. Some of the structures are crude and some of the aesthetics questionable, but the energy and the enthusiasm are everywhere.



I got settled back at the hotel about 7:00 and tried unsuccessfully to connect to the internet. I tried to get a little better organized and then sat down for a little dinner. I will begin tomorrow to begin to look at a few of the local dishes that are on the menu. I finally managed to get through to Cindy to let her know I had arrived. I went back to the room about eleven, futzed around a little and got some fitful sleep starting about 12:30.

Day 5, Tuesday, May 1, 2012

I woke at 5:30, polished off and sent some email, showered and shaved and went down for a little breakfast about 7:30 before walking up to Jimma to teach my first class. I arrived early and watched a little bit of soccer practice in the field that is below the hill the classroom building is on. The enthusiasm for soccer is the same that is seen worldwide, I think especially at a time of year when important games are being played. I went to the classroom and



found the door locked, so I waited for someone to open it. After about ten minutes I hear a whistle and saw five students standing by the railing one floor up. I of course had missed one important detail – it was the second not the first floor! It was 8:30 and the classroom was full – for a 9:00 class! So we got started. First revelation, my machine would not recognize the projector which had been jury rigged to make the cable long enough to connect to the projector. Thank God I had brought everything on a thumb drive as well. I switched to their equipment and we were off. As I was working through introducing myself, Getachew Bayissa arrived to introduce me. Suggested we have already accomplished that, welcomed me, said he would see me later tonight and disappeared.

We went from 8:30 until about 12:30 with some introduction and general observations coupled with my stories about the history of the revolutions in document processing – from the library at Alexandria, to the Gutenberg Press, to Hypertext and Structured documents. Despite the long lecture, the class stayed awake and paid attention. A comment later by one of the students who walked me back to the hotel suggested that they, or at least he, were very impressed with the command of number and calculations, and facts and history. I was impressed with their command of some of the technical details. I have some sense that the class is somewhat uneven in their skill sets. The next couple of days will confirm if that is true. If they are all as knowledgeable and skilled as a few who have spoken up, it will be truly spectacular, but I suspect that it is more like our normal student where there are varying skill sets and some basic common skills. To be a little more specific, one student was clearly not only familiar with protocols and Unix but knew specific well known ports. I think he must have had a CE or Telecom background. At the same time when I talked about tree representations of structured documents and manipulations of trees, everyone kind of drew a



blank. When we broke for lunch, I asked them to be back by 2:00 and said we would go to 4:00 or 4:30. They arrived back just at 2:00, not early, and some were late, but I gather we had lunch later than we should and that is a problem, so we will break by 12:00 for the rest of the classes.

The afternoon lecture finished out a few of the general principle themes and moved on to the technical details of the web – as I have already alluded to. We continued to have a few problems with the internet connection – primarily because of a firewall issue. I was further hampered by not

having any dry erase markers that were functional in the classroom. I know they couldn't see what I was drawing on the board. They stayed pretty strong between 2:00 and 3:00 but were beginning to fade. We were closing in on about six hours of lecture of a relatively high pace in a foreign language – which is exceptionally tough. About 3:45, the power went out in a down pour that made the classroom more humid and the sound of the rain was loud. About 4:00, despite the fact that I had another hour or so to go in this lecture, I surrendered to the markers, electricity, humidity, and general tiredness. I thanked them for working so hard, asked them to think about making a brief PowerPoint to introduce themselves tomorrow and wished them a good night.

As I packed up, they asked about notes and software and I told them I would get Professor Bayissa to have them uploaded to a server somewhere. One of the students, who had admin password to the server asked me to download them there which I did and I suspect my notes are now on lots of machines across campus.

I returned from class about 4:30 and spent a little time trying to recount the day. I sat outside for a while and decided to come up to the room and lie down for a bit before Getachew arrived. I was more tired than I thought and fell asleep for an hour or so. I woke about 6:30 put on a shirt and walked out to get some dinner. They list about a dozen “national” dinners on their menu. I decided I would work down the list from top to bottom and see what I liked. First off was Kitfo. My first choice is likely not be my favorite. One of the staff said there was some meat in it, but I had a hard time getting past the chili. It was served with some kind of goat cheese and some boiled greens. It was served with injera, the spongy Ethiopian flatbread and kocho, a thick bread, which I gather is made from the ensete plant, whatever that is. It seemed like a tomato and vegetable mixture with goat cheese and some cooked green vegetables.

There was another power interruption tonight – just a minute or two – and internet access seems to be out at the hotel again. There are several things I will need to get done tomorrow as we get started. I had hoped to see Getachew tonight, but whether he forgot or got side tracked or showed up while I was in my dead sleep between 5:30 and 6:30 I don't know.

Day 6, Wednesday, May 2, 2012

The days are already beginning to blur a little. I need to make sure that I structure lectures and labs so that the afternoons are easier and more fun. Finally managed to get some pictures today of the road back and forth. I also took a picture of the old man that serves as a security guard. The hotel has three or four men that serve as guards to the hotel. They are older men in semi military uniforms that seem sometimes to be more social ambassadors than security guards. Like the guards at the Ethiopia Hotel, they wear ill-fitting suits and have a tendency to provide a regular salute, especially to foreigners. I suspect that it is in part a learned behavior in which tips are exchanged for snappy salutes and photographs. I was out this morning walking to the university and snapping a few photographs when he stood up ramrod straight and gave me a big salute. I thanked him for keeping us safe.



I had notes this afternoon from Cindy and the Choir. I responded briefly to both between classes this morning and afternoon. It is beginning to get a little frustrating in terms of connections. The hotel has good Wi-Fi and there are no firewalls, but while the Wi-Fi works generally without a hitch – even if the coverage is spotty, the big problem is that the connection to the internet is absolutely unpredictable. It has been absent for the last two days. When it is up, everyone seems to pile on. That means the portion of the assigned bandwidth is small and basically unusable for video conferencing. The hardwired network at Jimma has good speed, but everything is firewalled, so I

can get at my web mail but I can't use my normal mail client. Similarly, I can't use any of the special programs I have set up for port they block, which is virtually everything. I am hoping that something will change soon. All the systems are in place to make it easier. Unfortunately, some are too restricted and some are too fragile.

Teaching today was a little fragmented. I was trying to clean up the pieces from yesterday and keep it light at the same time. We covered some of XML and protocols. We got into a number of things I hadn't anticipated and those took time. They got fascinated with regular expressions and we spent a fair amount of time on that. It will be interesting when we come back to it. I am trying to prepare them for smart pages – JavaScript and the DOM – we will make it work, but it is going to be hard. The real task is going to be keeping them all together. Some are interested, some are not. I keep trying to draw it back to what we want to look at in the long run, but it is hard. I think they are still with me, but the knowledge gaps are large.

Tibs for dinner tonight, little pieces of meat with some sauce and vegetables. Not too spicy, but the meat is from somewhere on the animal that is a little tough.

Day 7, Thursday May 3, 2012

Last night was a real delight. I have tried to be careful about what I have been eating and drinking, but obviously not careful enough. I spent the night in the bathroom, half of it in the pitch black with a flashlight! While I had some connectivity, it was sporadic. The power went out a couple times, and about 1:00 they turned off the generator and the power slowly went out to pitch black. No telling what the power situation is in the various nodes that link the hotel's Wi-Fi to the internet – too many chances for an outage somewhere in the chain.

Class was to begin at 8:30 this morning, per agreement with the students. I was a little rushed getting up at 7:00 and getting there by 8:00 so as to be ready for class. I was looking for my friend the security guard, but he was not at the same post he has been the last two days. Missing him I walked on to class and was there in plenty of time to get started. I feel better now as I am writing this at 6:30 after class, but the beginning of the day was somewhat of a challenge. I still felt pasty and weak from the night before, but things got better as the day went on. I only had to use the bathroom once, and I did take advantage of the "staff bathroom" to which I had a key, and the experience was notable and makes a good story, but discretion keeps me from retelling it in writing. Ask me next time we meet!

Class today is almost outside of my memory. I know that after lunch, we did their introductions which were kind and quite good. I followed that by an hour and a half on interactive design principles, which was as weak a presentation on the topic as I have ever made, but they seemed to be OK with it. In the morning, I discussed the origins of HTML and its various versions, concluding with a full hour and a half on the upcoming features of HTML 5.0. The evolutionary discussion was peppered with some discussions of the semantic web and the ups and downs of progress toward a more semantic web. After their presentations and before the break, we also spent some time on information retrieval and ranking algorithms including TD/IDF and Page Rank.

Day 8, Friday, May 4th

Today ended the first week. 24 hours of lecture in a week. I hope I am feeling more like a lecture machine next week, because it will be 30+ hours of lecture. Apart from the residual impact of the intestinal tract infection, I felt as good today as I have all week. Apart from some very strange dreams, I got a very good night's sleep and that is putting me back on track. I was tired walking back today, but my lecturing was as animated and brisk today as it normally is, and the students seemed

to really enjoy it. There was real laughter in the class as I jumped up and down and yelled about points I wanted to make. The students knew when to laugh and they knew what was funny and what the point was. I feel that we are now going to be able to make some real progress. We got to the point in the morning of describing and demonstrating coding in JavaScript and we introduced a set of objects – SVG (Scalable Vector Graphics) elements. I showed a few simple examples of SVG and then we broke for lunch. When we returned to code they were all on time for the first time and we coded at the same. I interrupted them twice to show what I was doing and to describe mistakes I had made. I walked around and looked at what they had done – mostly copy and paste and where there were variations, they were mostly simple and static. But that is not bad for a first program. In the end, I reviewed and explained, my code, especially those components that were algorithmic. I then described how I could have made my code better and what I would need to do to do that. I took another 20 minutes and walked them through the conceptualization and implementation of improvements using about 7 more lines of code. I swear half of their eyes popped when the code functioned perfectly and as predicted. Half the class asked for my code. As I type, we have been out of class about two hours. I am willing to bet that half of them are now looking at the code trying to understand what I did. It won't be hard, but I have a funny suspicion that they have never seen that kind of problem solving implemented in real time. The last hour of class was to be 15 slides on the JavaScript API to the DOM. I was on slide 5 when the power went out at 4:00 for the second time this week. On Wednesday, I tried to carry on and watched their brain grind to a halt without the added support of the key word and ideas on the board. I bid them good night, thanked them for their attention and good will and told them to work on SVG for the weekend.

Day 9, Saturday, May 5th, 2012

I got up this morning at 7:00 and took the computer out to the garden. I managed to get to Cindy and we went over progress on the kitchen and talked about all the kids and her parents. The “video call” was about as good as we have managed, but it was again weak over the many connections that are being used. There is no dedicated assured bandwidth of the kind we have come to expect in the U.S. I had to turn the video on and off and reconnected several times to maximize the quality of the connection.

After talking to Cindy, I went up and showered, laid down and slept another couple of hours. I felt great after that little sleep. I went out and had a little lunch – fish sandwiches are not the height of Ethiopian cuisine, but it was light and easy. I took a walk into downtown Jimma which is about a 20-25 minute hike. Google maps on the iPod was very useful in confirming the route which is a little windy but without the need to remember specific turns. I was impressed with the small manufacturing establishments along the way – furniture and metal works. Like Thailand this is the place to buy ornate welded iron and steel work. The carved wood furniture was also interesting. The most recognizable storefronts were beauty salons – recognizable anywhere in the world I think. The roads were crowded with the small three wheeled vehicles, the VW mini buses which serve as just that, 2nd and 1st class buses, and trucks of all sorts intermixed with horse drawn carriages and of course people walking from place to place. I made it to a main square, looked at the bus depot and the hotels and shops surrounding it and headed back. The dust was incredible.

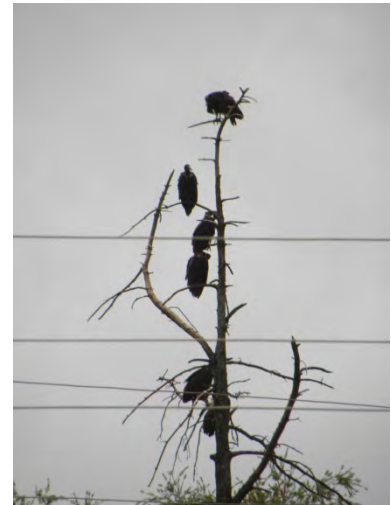
A few unrelated and personal observations on this first week. The climate in Jimma is actually quite refreshing with a little morning dew and overnight temperature that goes down to what I would guess is about 60. If I felt comfortable leaving the windows open, the sleeping would be near perfect. During the day the temperature goes up to 75 – 85 and is still quite refreshing if one is in the shade – given the lack of humidity – I think they call it dry heat. But get in the sun and exert yourself and one can feel the heat and the sweat pours off you until you are back in the shade.

There is water leaching off mountain streams and falling into culverts by the roadside. I don't think it is wastewater or sewage, but it might be. In many places the culverts are dry – even a few minutes after a rain. In general, the ground is dry – bone dry. The “soil” in most places is a reddish and I guess it is clay like. I keep looking at my shoes which are caked with a red-orange dust from the road. There are people that sweep and wash the sidewalks, but to little avail, the clay dust is everywhere. It is in the carpets, on ones shoes, etc. When walking the roads, it is more the dust than the fumes of the trucks that one must deal with.

Second, the people. With the exception of the fact that the people of Ethiopia are black, they feel more like Americans than do the people in most countries I have visited. I have spent more time other places, but it is already clear that the people of Ethiopia are special. There are so many attributes, but first would have to be that they are both shy and outgoing. I don't quite know how to easily describe it, but like us, they tend to leave you your private space. They don't intrude. At the same time, given the opportunity, they are very interested in learning more about you and talking to you. They are curious and they are open. They listen and they share. They have a great sense of humor and like stories. They want to know new things. They appear to be a very multicultural people. The color range is great with many light skinned peoples with very fine – long straight nose – features. I suspect that these are Arab features and are probably the same across much of West versus East Africa. We sometimes talk about the fact that it is hard to tell people from a given culture apart – at least to the casual inexperienced eye. Such is not the case here. The colors, sizes, shapes, and personalities are very diverse and very clear.

Third, the flies. I am conscious of the mosquitoes, and I think I have seen one or two, but I am guessing that the weather is not quite mosquito friendly most of the year. We are approaching the rainy season, but it is not yet here from what I understand – it begins in May and is most severe in June and July. In any case, while there are a lot of gnats and maybe a few mosquitoes, the flies are everywhere and they are aggressive. I haven't found any in my room at night, but they eat with me in the restaurant and sit with me in the garden. A few are sitting with me now as I sit in the lobby to finish the journal for this first week. They actually seem to get quite aggressive as you sit in one place for a period of time – kind of like they are swarming.

One final observation on a university town in rural Ethiopia. Jimma University, I think, is a major and dominant force in Jimma. It is one of two the second being the farmers who crop coffee and other crops. So, in the little walks I have taken from the hotel to the University, one sees cattle in the streets and large cranes building a new structure (a bridge) over the main road to link two parts of the Jimma campus. There are trucks and busses and tuk-tuks – I still haven't gotten the Ethiopian name for the three wheelers. But mostly, there are people on foot, in colorful garb, in well worn garb, walking to the University, walking to work, walking with horses or cattle. There are vultures circling something that has died. It is a marvelous mixture of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first century. Smart phone meets the tuk-tuk and the horse.



A Trip to Jimma University, Ethiopia

Day 10, Sunday, May 6th, 2012

Last night was very windy with thunder storms downwind of where we were. The power was on and off as were internet connections – impossible. I could not get out to the internet. The temperature dropped 15 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit. There is a generator for the hotel, but it only comes on if the power truly fails. In most cases, it appears to be a five minute interruption. Last night after half the dinner in the dark, they switched over to the generator for the rest of the evening. I am not sure when the power came back on, but it was on in the morning.

I had a pretty good internet connection for a couple hours this morning, at least enough to get through most of my email. I have lost it now and if I get it back, I will try to make some progress on making arrangement for Jono. I need to figure out when I can get flights into and out of Jimma. They seem to be more frequent than I thought, but they are still sporadic and not more than daily. He comes in early Tuesday morning, so, if there is a flight to Jimma, he will be able to get it that afternoon. The timing won't be too bad. I will see what I can arrange with the embassy folks, but I don't want to impose. I am just hoping they would like to expose Jono to what embassy life is like, so, as he thinks about his future, he can have some sense of what that option might be like.

There was a wedding reception at the hotel Sunday night. I did a rough count of the chairs and I estimate more than 500 guests. People have been wandering around all day setting things up. The



big fire pits – or not really pits but raised metal fireboxes – have been loaded with wood. I saw them carry at least 4 sides of something out behind the hotel – whether it was lamb, veal, or beef was hard to tell. Out of courtesy I will stay up on the second floor so there are no close-ups. (In general I have avoided taking direct pictures of people out of concern for violating cultural norms. I am led to believe that taking pictures is OK with 7/10 people, but I don't know who the three



are that I might offend. In any case, the wedding reception was long loud and beautiful. There was a live video feed of the room where the bridal party sat fed to a makeshift screen on the side of the building. The party was to terminate around 11:00 and the guests pretty much had no choice as there was a significant downpour around 10:30 which I think also killed the power.

Day 11, Monday, May 7th, 2012

Class is becoming more of a chore. Today we completed the XML DOM and some of the key methods in JavaScript. We also went over the basics of XML in overview. It was pretty clear as we did this that I was beginning to lose them. It was just too much abstraction. We went through cascading style sheets and talked about the ways they cascaded – there are at least four. They got one, but can't seem to get the other three. About 3:00 we set out to develop a smart page that made use of the DOM

and JavaScript. They were clueless, even with the examples. They struggled but with little progress. We worked until about 5:00 but made little progress. They are like cats that need to be herded – each of them keeps moving off in their own direction. We'll see what tomorrow brings.

The evening was good and bad. First the good. I managed to make a sound connection to Cindy and we were able to talk for about 30 minutes without loss of signal. It was good to get some details of things cleared up. The hotel staff enjoyed more than I would have imagined being on line with her and waving at her and seeing themselves on video. Even one of the older wait staff melted into childhood and had great fun waving. Tesfaye, who is an outgoing waiter with a smile as broad as his shoulders, put on the earphones and chatted with Cindy. It was wonderful. I also managed to get most of my mail answered including sending a note to Getachew.

I still haven't figured out quite how the shower works. It seems that there is some kind of pedal under the shower floor that turns the hot water on. Without quite knowing how, I managed to make it work the first week. Last night I was unable to do so and suffered through a cold shower. My intestinal issues continue and while it is not the kind of thing that has me racing for the bathroom, it is very uncomfortable and keeps me back and forth when the need arises. I am not quite sure how I suppress it for 9 hours while teaching. I think it is fear of using the "staff bathroom". Hopefully it will come under control soon. In one of my ventures to the john late at night, I hit the wet marble floor onto which the shower sprays and sprained my foot a little. Could have been a lot worse. Finally, my sinuses are draining and the mucous is yellow and my throat is sore. I hope it is just a cold, because I don't need something worse at this point. It is a little frustrating.

Day 12, Tuesday, May 8th, 2012

This morning began early with some coding to make sure I could keep my promises about making changes to one of my own documents. I got into take a shower and brush my teeth. For the life of me, I couldn't activate the hot water. My throat is a little better, but still sore.

It was pretty clear this morning that the students will need more direction if they are to proceed. XML in detail will have to be put off for another day. I am not sure how hard they tried last night, if at all, but they are going to need a lot more help. It was pretty clear that they are interested in making it work. There are just too many pieces for them. I walked through some coding modifications with explanation. A few of them seemed to be following, but they can't seem to initiate. One or two of the more technical students began to get a sense of program structure once a clear task was identified. But still there is a gap. A couple students indicated they needed to be able to visualize the tree for a particular document when they were looking at a particular piece of code, so we spent the rest of the morning looking at that. With 15 minutes to go before lunch I asked them all to take the code I had working on and make one more change – change a count of correct answers to a percentage. Only one out of 20 completed the task on their own. I required only 8 characters and no functions, so I am not optimistic. We will see what the afternoon brings.

We got a little bit of a slow start this afternoon as we went long in the morning and Prof. Getachew arrived right at 2:00. I spent 15 minutes going over some of the choices and options with him. He was very agreeable and accommodating. So, that means that after the break with Jono we will look at two courses, one on "Automation and Resource Management" and another "Digital Information." I think it will be rather exciting with the first being an overview with a potential application to local needs. The second will be a kind of seminar in which they can talk about their perspectives.

The afternoon from 2:30 until 5:00 and for some of them beyond that will be to make four or more modifications to my Smart Page. For a couple, it should be easy. For the rest it will likely be difficult to impossible. We will see. No internet connection as yet tonight. I'll check again when I finish this part of

my journal. I also have to go back and see if they have resolved the issue with the shower. I'll also be curious to see if my laundry which I put in yesterday as returned. My sinuses are draining and I'm sneezing so I think that is good. My bowels continue to rumble, but nothing seems out of control. The picture to the right is taken just outside the classroom building I am teaching in. It is a telephoto shot that shows my hotel, about 1 mile away.



For completeness, I guess I should mention that the exquisite polishing of my shoes yesterday has turned my brown shoes white! We'll see where they end up after 5 weeks! Also, when I got back to the hotel, I discovered that the lack of hot water had been fixed – there was no water. I discovered the lack of water about six with an indication that a tanker was on the way. It was supposed to be there by 8:00. It wasn't there at 8:00 although some water seemed to get into the system for a while. I could only hope that it would return before morning. It is hard to imagine just how dependent we have become on a hot shower, morning or night to feel better! For now, I'm glad that at least there is electricity. I also gather that some water is in reserve for the kitchen, but that's it.

Day 13, Wednesday, May 9th, 2012

It rained again last night, not hard but enough to leave some puddles on the ground. It is cool. I would say about 60-65 degrees Fahrenheit. There was water delivered last night, so I was able to take a short warm shower before it turned cold. It felt great after two days. Evidently I caught a cold on Saturday and Sunday when I was trying to call Cindy at 6:00 in the morning local time. I must have caught a chill. Monday night I had a wicked sore throat and sinus blockage which continued through Tuesday. Today, the sore throat is pretty much gone, but my sinuses are draining like a faucet. I am thankful for the extra toilet paper as my handkerchief is soaking wet. I am running a little bit of a fever and have a little headache, but that may simply be from blowing my nose and sneezing. The mucus has turned from yellow to clear so I'm less worried about something that would require medical attention.

When I stepped outside the hotel today, there were dozens of little birds – brown with yellow breasts gathered in the bushes outside the hotel. They swarmed on the driveway and then away and then back. I can't tell for sure, but some of the larger birds circling were not vultures or crows. I suspect they may have been predators of some sort. Not sure.



Class today was rather a blur. We cleaned up a few questions on smart pages and I talked to them about grading for the course – based on a portfolio of assignments. I will use a very small final exam to conform with University regulations, but Getachew approved a basic portfolio plan. After the review I went through XML Schema, the rules and the process. I covered the basic components and structure. We didn't quite make it to datatypes before lunch. After lunch, we went through the datatypes and then downloaded XMLPad as a tool. Not making the same mistake I made with Firebug, we did it step by step and I made sure everyone was on the same page. Together, we created a simple Schema and save it. I demonstrated how to structure, add elements, sequence them and add attributes. That took us to the break. Back from break I started a lecture on design principles and got about five minutes in when the power went out. I revised and suggest a group activity to start the element selection process. They seemed to enjoy it. After the power came back on, I showed them tree and railroad diagrams and how they were used and set them off working on their own schema. I called an end to class about 4:30 and stuck around until about 5:00. I think all but one was still there and still working.

When I got back, I saw the hotel manager – Mr. Kalile – leaning over the balcony. I gave him a pat on the back and told him I felt for him, no power, no water, unhappy customers, and two huge parties behind him. Evidently he got more grief from the loudness of the parties than the lack of water, but all were issues. I told him how much I admired his ability to cope with so much, and asked him what kind of time off he got. He indicated he got none, couldn't sleep at night, was suffering from deep vein thrombosis and had been hospitalized. We talked for about twenty minutes. Like most managers, I think he appreciated the opportunity to talk about his problems. I like the man very much. At one point, he said he couldn't face his customers at breakfast because he was so embarrassed. I think he left feeling that at least one customer wasn't upset with the inevitable and appreciated his efforts to keep things under control!

Day 14, Thursday, May 10th, 2012

I slept poorly again last night. Not sure which end of me is leaking more fluids! I was tired this morning more from this slight illness and my inability to get a long hot shower than from anything else. It is really quite frustrating, not to be sick and to take cold showers, but because I am bothered by them more than I would in the past. Can't remember when I was afraid to sneeze because my bowels were so loose. I can't recall when I had either malady last and never both at the same time. Getting old!

Today was not much of a teaching day. I intended to finish up XPath and XSL in the first morning session. It ended up taking every bit of the morning. For the last 45 minutes, I turned the class over to them and told them to make changes. They all understood that they didn't know what to do, but with a little coaxing they got into it. They were excited and they argued, but they still couldn't quite figure out what to do. They suggested that I tell them what to do, and I told them that was the point – for them to decide what to do with the technology and carry it out. They understood but were still stymied. One of the CS students suggested that I draw the Dom on the board for the document in question. I suggested he knew enough to do it. Of course he didn't – I was a little disappointed, but this stuff is hard and they need to practice. (BTW, one of the problems with a crash course like this is that there are 30+ hours of lecture per week versus 3/week in a normal course. They just don't have time to assimilate and think. I helped with the DOM and that made a little difference. They began to see some things, but they are still at a very early stage.

I walked back to the hotel at lunch time to make sure I could make it through the afternoon without an



accident! The picture was taken just outside the hotel and shows a main road junction going into Jimma Central. There are always a few horses around, but usually they are pulling carts! There is text on the other side of the “monument” identifying Jimma as the birthplace of coffee. It is also known for honey and I hope to bring back some of both.

The afternoon was uneventful. I decided we would spend 30-40 minutes loading Netbeans and then spend the rest of the afternoon working on SVG and Smart pages to help those without a clue to catch up. Bad assumption. First, none of the machines had the Java JRE installed. I am really confused as so much software depends on it. In any case, we went out to get that loaded it and then proceeded to load the JDK, the JDK docs, and Netbeans. They were very excited about having Netbeans and most of them were still working on it at 5:30 when I finally called it quit. It took us three hours to get all the machines installed because they failed to listen to the rather simple instructions about how to proceed. Once it was installed they had to use it and ran into all sorts of problems because they were simply pushing buttons without thinking. I really don't blame them for being excited. I am really concerned that they get themselves in trouble because they don't listen. We'll see what tomorrow brings. I am looking forward to a break after tomorrow. I may spend all weekend in bed trying to shake this cold.

Day 15, Friday, May 11th, 2012



Last night, I felt the fever and my cold break. I think the longest hot shower I have had since arriving helped! I am not 100% today, but I feel near perfect. I need to take care not to get a chill again. This morning as I was walking up to class, I walked by a tree that I assume is either a banana tree or plantain? I stopped to take a couple photos. I think the



students are quite amused that I would photograph what they see as normal parts of the landscape – kind of like us watching someone photograph a bus stop or a stop sign. As I went to close the door to the classroom to start the lecture, I noted monkeys lying on the roof of the building across the courtyard. As I understand it, they are cohabitants of the campus and the mango and avocado trees all over campus provide food for them. Evidently they are also regular denizens of the staff lounges where people eat their lunch. I think I will need to eat lunch so I have some sense of that.

Class today was Java servlets. I preceded the servlet lecture with a brief intro to Java and where it came from and what it is all about. Then I did a demo of what could be done and then the power went out at 10:30. I needed to go with Prof Getachew at 11:00 so there was an awkward half hour to fill so as not to completely disrupt the schedule for the day. I decided this might be the appropriate time for a digression on research in information science. I gave a little bit of a philosophy of science introduction and then made some distinctions between the physical sciences, the social sciences and what Simon called the sciences of the artificial – the design sciences. I then talked about the different kind of research questions that might be asked in each of the three areas. I went a little over a half hour, but I think that it made sense to the people struggling with the research seminar in information science that was being taught by a psychologist.

Getachew stopped by the hotel this evening and we had a long talk about the department and the University. He is quite an interesting man. He was educated in Belorussia. He came from Addis Ababa University and was hired at Jimma as a librarian – I think “the” librarian. He was sent to study for 5

years in Belorussia – using the first year to learn the language and the next four to get his degree. He is a very positive and optimistic individual and thinks a lot about what might be and what is needed. He spearheaded the development of the department based on the need being expressed in job openings. He then led the effort to rename the department based on the desires and complaints of the students. The University and the schools are currently undergoing a transition, much like Pitt, to a management system which demands greater accountability up and down the line. Indeed part of the reason he has been absent these first two weeks is that he has been undergoing training in this new management system. He talked some about his wife who owns a shop in Jimma. She hated her job as a secretary at the University and is now thriving as a business woman.

Day 16, Saturday, May 12th, 2012

I was up early this morning to try to contact Cindy before she went to bed. I couldn't get through via a video call, so I purchased some time on ooVoo to call cell phones in the US. It ends up being a very good deal. I was able to get through to her and the connection was quite good. The time difference remains a problem, but at least I can get to her when she is away from the computer. She seemed to be very surprised when she picked up the phone!

I tried to cash a traveler's check at the hotel today and they very politely checked and told me "no." – I would have to go to a bank. Long and short, I walked into downtown Jimma and visited about 10 banks. They all said "no" except for one – the main branch of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, and even they said no initially. Fortunately, the teller thought it was a personal check and was corrected by a colleague. I did get a few hundred dollars cashed and got an experience in Ethiopian Banking that was instructive, but I get ahead of myself. Let's talk about the road to Jimma.



From the pictures you have seen already, the garden of the hotel I am staying at is quite lush and there always seems to be a cool breeze flowing through the garden. This morning I am sitting outside in sunny weather with a slight breeze and a temperature of about 70 degrees – quite pleasant. Once you leave the shade and breeze of the hotel garden, it gets a lot warmer – about 80 degrees in a sun that beats down on the broken asphalt road. This first picture looks down the road from the hotel parking lot exit toward Jimma. (Actually, this picture is off the road before it turns toward Jimma and is in a little better shape than the main road, but you will see more of that.

About a quarter mile down the road is a business that manufactures furniture and iron work. Last week as I went by there were some very ornate beds displayed. I would guess that they weighed a couple hundred pounds and are very much like the beds in the hotel – very solid. The sound of welding, cutting and painting the metal can be heard constantly as one walks along the road.



Just beyond the metal fabricating shop, is the one storefront seen regularly in Ethiopia that could be transplanted to the US without change. Pharmacies – which I think are more for aspirin than drugs are also pretty easy to identify as are hotels

and banks. Most of the other stores appear pretty ad hoc and are identified mostly by their goods. I discovered when I got back from my trip that I had been very close, after walking several miles to a store that sells honey and is well known enough to be identified on Google Maps.

As you come into the Central district of Jimma, the road splits with one branch by passing the “downtown” section and the other going directly into it.

There is a marker, in this case with its lawn being mowed at the intersection. I have seen an actual lawn mower at the University. But most of the time, including the lush grass just outside the University walls is left to grazing animals – goats, cows, and horses. In the hotel, the batches of grass are all cut by hand with shears. Similarly, but not as unusually, all the bushes are trimmed regularly by hand.

The main boulevard into Jimma is usually crowded and occupied by animal drawn carts, trucks of all sizes and shapes, and the Ethiopian equivalent of tuk-tuks. There are also wall to wall people. Again, you don’t get a fair sense of how many people from these photographs because I made every effort not to take photos of people who might be offended and I often erred on the side of being conservative by only taking them at a distance of from behind. So this photo was purposefully taken during a lull in the activity. Evidently, and I am only beginning to piece the story together, Jimma seems to be moving slowly, or even backwards, while the rest of the country moves forwards. I have heard a number of different stories and have my own speculations. I have been told that the heavily Muslim and agricultural community has resisted change. I have also been told that when the military regime took over twenty years ago, the relatively wealthy Jimmans had land and property confiscated and that started a decline. My own sense from reading is that Jimma used to be “the” trading center for this region. I guess like many US rail centers, new transportation modes reduced its importance. The reality is likely some complex combination of these and other factors. While there is development in and around Jimma, I suspect it is true that other areas are doing better.

I went to the first bank I found downtown and tried to cash my traveler’s check and was told no. They further told me that it was unlikely I could get them cashed at any bank in Jimma. I was quite fascinated by the fact that I was patted down and my knapsack checked at this first and every one of the dozen or so banks I visited. Each was less than thorough, and I have no doubt that the trust of foreigners was one of the reasons it was less thorough. Some of the guards seemed apologetic. One asked me, pointing at the knapsack, “Gun?” I said no and was waved in. The banks had no sense of a queue and no assistance for a puzzled looking foreigner. When I did get attention and asked my question I was pointed forward to another bank. Finally, the second branch of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia I visited confidently point me down the road to the main branch and said they would. I walked about another three quarters of a mile looking for the main branch. I was walking through the “mercado” or shop area of Jimma. Most of the goods for sale here are foreign, or knock offs as one might find in any country. As I approached the end of the road, I could see a very impressive building occupying about a third of a traffic circle. Initially, I thought it was a government building given its rather large size, compared to everything else. It was of course the main branch of the Bank. I was searched and as I entered the guard said line 10. This was the first assistance I had been given and while



it took a while – it was marked differently than other lines, I found number 10 and waited while the person before my was served, but that was better than the other lines which had 5-6 people queued up. I got to the window, took out two traveler’s checks and gave them to the teller saying I wanted to cash them. She asked my how long I had been in Ethiopia and how long I planned to stay. I told her and she said it would take 5 months to cash a check. She was assisted by a manger who told her something, but it wasn’t cash it. After an awkward 2-3 minutes, the next teller interceded, explained that it was OK and told her what to do. It took about ten minutes to get what she needed, and in the meantime, two different customers elbowed in front of me, thrust documents in the window and asked for service. Never looked at me or what she was doing. They were insistent, she was busy. Through the last ten minutes of my transaction, there were two women in front of me insistent on doing what they wanted! It was kind of humorous as they couldn’t seem to understand why they weren’t being served and I was. I got my money and headed back toward the hotel. The walk down was punctuated by a number of stops at banks and some picture taking. The walk back was long and hot with the sun high in the sky. It is also slightly more uphill. I arrived back to the hotel, hot sweaty, and more tired than was justified, but then again, it was a six mile hike in 80 degree heat at 5000 feet!

I did take one picture as I was coming back. I couldn’t resist a picture of a herd of goats being moved through downtown Jimma. This picture gives you a pretty good idea of the quality of Jimma’s broad sidewalks!



A Trip to Jimma University, Ethiopia

Day 17, Sunday, May 13th, 2012

I woke early this morning and got to Cindy. The lawn tractor was fixed today so that was good, but evidently the main water line into the house has sprung a leak at the main valve and that has to be fixed. I walked her through the process of tightening the packing around the valve stem, but she was unable to achieve any traction on the retaining nut, so she will call Tim in the morning and see if he will come to take a look at it. Hopefully he will respond.

While I was working on my journal, the receptionist came out with a cell phone and Getachew indicated that he would pick me up about 4:00 for a coffee ceremony at his house. His wife is in Jimma and she is going to prepare it. I got a little bit of sleep in the early afternoon and took a few pictures from the roof of the traffic around the hotel. With regrets, I can't seem to transfer the iPod movie file to my PC so that will have to stay on the iPod till I get back.

At 4:00, Getachew arrived and we took a tuk-tuk back to his house which in some way is provided by the University. It is in a nice little community past the far side of the campus and way up on a hill. His wife Ceba, is very nice and very shy. The house was quite nice and tastefully decorated. I only saw part of the downstairs, but it is very comfortably furnished and the TV was on in the background as we talked. Ceba and a relative were preparing the coffee for the ceremony. They brought a kind of bucket with hot coals into the dining room and placed a flat pan on the top of the coals. We sat at the dining room table and



had some food – fish, fresh vegetables, rice, potatoes and carrots, fresh bread and other things. The ever present St Georges beer was served with the meal and while Getachew and I sat and ate, Ceba wandered in and out to the kitchen. Her relative poured green coffee beans onto the pan and began to roast them over the hot coals, stirring them constantly with a utensil I am guessing is specifically designed for the purpose. A tray, with cups and spoons and, and granular sugar was off to the side. The process of roasting the beans took about a half hour and when they were done, they were placed on the table. They had a pleasant aroma. As we finished eating a “coffee pot” was placed onto the hot coals – I am assuming with water in it. The pot is of a unique design like the statue outside the hotel. Getachew and I fell into a discussion of potential collaborations between our two universities. After a few minutes, the coffee was brought out and small cups of strong coffee prepared and served. I would have been curious as to how the beans were ground and how the coffee was filtered. We talked a while longer and about 8:00 they called a driver, who of course got lost trying to find them.

The ride back indicated that the distance was a little greater than I had anticipated. As I was leaving, there was a rather significant lightning storm in the air. No rain but very very active cloud to cloud lightning. There was some rain that began to fall on the way back to the hotel and it was beginning to get a little heavy – tuk-tuks have no windshield wipers – I had not realized that before. As I got to the hotel, the rain was coming down pretty well, but not severely. I walked back into the garden and was considering trying to make an internet connection when the sky opened up in a torrential downpour and the winds picked up to 30-40 miles per hour – in random directions. I was standing under complete

cover and still got soaked head to toe. The rain moved horizontally through the various structures. All the people, and there were 25-30 in the area were huddled in the spaces furthest from the open sides of the buildings. The power went out and after about 30 minutes the rain diminished from torrential to heavy and then light. One of the staff saw me and came out with a large umbrella to walk me back to the main building. So much for an internet connection. Maybe tonight.

Day 18, Monday, May 14th, 2012

I woke a little early this morning to find we again have no water and the fog outside is as thick as pea soup. Right now, I can barely see across the street which is only 25 yards! I think I have figured out the water situation. It impacts the city as a whole or at very least this area of the city – it is not the hotel. The water tanks on the roof are the reserve that keeps the kitchen and the bars functioning. The guests rely on the normal city supply of water which I gather is brought in by truck and does not provide a significant reservoir. The water came back on just before I gave up on it and I was able to get a quick shower.

I spent the day working on what is normally about two hours of lecture on developing servlets and a couple demos. Today it took the full day. About 5 of the students got it and were able to write code that worked at some minimal level of functionality. The rest couldn't even get an html page written on their own without dozens of errors flagged by Netbeans. Despite the fact that Netbeans gives pretty good diagnostics about what is wrong, they were unable to correct the errors on their own. I sat with several students and helped them to see what Netbeans was telling them. Some minor progress, but it was indeed minor. Midway through the afternoon I showed them how the servlet could be extended by using a database as a persistent store. It really only adds about ten lines to the code, but I am afraid it was horribly abstract. As we begin to get into the complex automation code for integrated library systems and digital repositories, I fear it is going to be very difficult. I am beginning to worry about making the next course both abstract and concrete. I am not sure they are going to be able to manage it.

I left class about 5:00 after a brief afternoon rain shower that cooled things down significantly. It was a pleasant walk back to the hotel, but I found as I walked into the hotel it was a chore to walk up the steps. I am very tired. Not quite sure what it is about today, maybe the fact that everything I have been building toward at a theoretical level remains unconnected in their minds with the practice of actual coding. What should make the doing easier is not as easy for them to see as has been my experience. I am not getting "Yes, it makes sense..."

I spoke briefly with Cindy. I also, I think, resolved an issue that was raised by the use of my Visa card to charge airline tickets. Despite my notice that I would be in Ethiopia for this period, my charging of two Ethiopian Airline tickets had been flagged as suspicious and my card had been flagged and restricted. I was unable to get through using the collect calling number on the card, but I did manage to get through with the ooVoo call mechanism. The connection was fuzzy and the folks tried to be helpful, but the system seems to be protective to the point of non-functionality. I hope not to have a nightmare during the trip to Addis this weekend!

Day 19, Tuesday, May 15, 2012

The recent rainstorms seemed to have unleashed the mosquitoes which I haven't seen up until now. They seem very different from the mosquitoes I remember who used to buzz around while you were trying to sleep as a child before air conditioning. I can't recollect being bothered by mosquitoes with the exception of a major attack while hiking through the jungle in Mexico a couple years ago. Here they are virtually silent unless they land near your ear. Last night, there were at least two in my room, and I think I got both of them. The first was just over my bed and left a big red splotch on the wall which I suspect

means he had had his fill of me. I think I got the second, but have no evidence to prove so. I dropped the mosquito netting hanging over the bed and that seemed to fix the situation. I don't feel any bites, and I will have to check whether all mosquitoes carry malaria, or only selected. (It is only selected and it is not all of those. In any case, I gather that the antimalarial medication I have taken also plays a significant role. There is also a strong suggestion that we use nets when sleeping as the mosquitoes are active dusk to dawn. I guess I sleep under the netting as we are entering the rainy season and that is when they appear.)

There was no water again this morning. Unlike yesterday, it did not come back on before breakfast so I still haven't had a shower today. I came back about noon, but it still wasn't on. It is now at 6:00 and after I talk to Cindy, if she is around, I will take a long hot shower. I got word from Jono this morning that he is safely in his hotel in Addis. I will look forward to seeing him tomorrow.

Class today was uneventful. We worked some more on servlets in the morning. The level of mistakes was truly discouraging. It wasn't their logic. It was the inability to use the IDE and make sense of simple, but not "do this", warnings and messages. I moved in the afternoon to cover "Model-View-Controller" architecture and the various objects involved in a server transaction and the idea of request dispatching. If they had been with me over the basic model, the objects and the methods involved in MVC were totally mind boggling to them – too many objects, methods and levels of abstraction. They can't tell a bean from a request from a session. I know it is not easy, but they are totally clueless – I think. We will see what tomorrow brings. I keep encouraging them. But the fact is, the complexity combined with the compressed learning makes it very difficult for them to grasp the concepts.

Day 20, Wednesday, May 16, 2012

I got up this morning at 5:00 to make sure there were no last minute messages from Jono – there were none, so I suspect all is OK. I figured I would call Cindy as well as it was before 11:00 on Tuesday night in the US. I was unable to make contact with her, the Kitchen camera was disconnected, and there was no image on the hall phone. I tried to reach her by phone, but the phone was off. Hope all is OK with her and the house.

Class was pretty much a blur today. We reviewed the MVC architecture and went through it more slowly. I think they got it better than they had before, but it is still a little shaky. I wasn't sure whether I would be teaching in the afternoon and whether Getachew would stop and say let's go to the airport. As it ends up he did not so I moved on to talk about AJAX and how we could extend the MVC architecture using AJAX to make for more seamless pages. I used some of the e-business slides to provide a clearer picture of how AJAX works. About 3:30 I asked one of the students to call Getachew to see if we could figure out where Jono was and what we were going to do. He indicated that Jono had arrived, had been picked up, and was on his way to the Hotel. Jono showed up about a half hour later and sat through the last hour of the AJAX lecture.

We walked back to the hotel and checked out his room – opposite mine on the other end of the second floor. Tesfaye requested time to introduce Jonathan to the staff. They all worked on his name and greeted him warmly. We went out to have a couple beers and then as it got cold went back in for dinner. I told Jono to shower if there was water and not take a chance on the morning – indeed he did shower and indeed the water was off in the morning.

Day 21, Thursday, May 17, 2012

Thursday was an easy day for me. I was able to sit in the back of the classroom and listen to Jono's lecture while I worked a little on my journal and the final exam. I am getting a little bit behind on the journal as the days go by. Not much to say today other than that Jono gave two good lectures and then

we worked a little bit together to try to discuss how his research fits the mold of information science research.

I finished off the day with some details on how this course would end – with a final exam tomorrow and with a series of projects they could turn in as they were completed. I also reviewed what I expected them to do to get ready for the next course, which reminds me that I need to begin to start reading those myself.

After class we went for a tour of the IT facility on the other side of campus. It was, as one would expect a small operation in a very small space held together by rubber bands and chewing gum. While we were waiting we spent couple minutes in the lounge where there was a statue of Kalid, who discovered coffee.



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Day 22, Friday, May 18, 2012

I got to class about 8:30 leaving Jono to explore the area around the hotel. I spent about twenty minutes going over the exam and answering any questions the students had. As the y commenced work on the exam, I turned to my email and other matters – bank accounts and such. I anticipated that the exam would take a half hour or so. One student finished in a little over an hour, but all the others took between 2.5 and 3.5 hours to complete the exam. I got back to the hotel a little past 12:30 and had lunch with Jono. Getachew picked us up about 2:15 and took us to the airport. We flew to Addis via Arba Minch which is further south and a little east of Jimma. From there we flew back to Addis and managed, after some futile efforts to find our way to the Jupiter Hotel via the hotel shuttle.

The Jupiter is a very nice hotel with large and comfortable rooms. We had a couple beers and while we were having a beer, we managed to get in touch with a travel agent who agreed to try to book flights for us in the morning. We walked upstairs to the dining room for a filling dinner. We were both pretty beat as it approached 9:00 and retired early.



Day 23, Saturday, May 19, 2012

We managed on Saturday to negotiate a trip with the travel agent. We went through about six phone calls back and forth and finally settled on a trip that would take us up to on Saturday evening. That would allow us to tour Lake Tana on Sunday morning and then have some lunch before traveling by private van to Gondar on Sunday afternoon. In Gondar we would do some touring before turning in for

the night. Early Monday we would head for Lalibella to tour the stone churches. One night in Lalibella and we would return to Addis on Tuesday afternoon to get Jono to his flight back to the US.

After booking the travel plans and having some breakfast, we were picked up at the hotel and taken to the Hilton compound where we paid for the tour. It was expensive, but we weren't in any position to negotiate at the last minute and it appears that we made the best of a tough situation, but we'll have to wait and see how it works out in the final analysis.

Given six hours to kill, we decided to do a little touring of Addis. We grabbed a cab, for which we overpaid to take us to the market place. The cabbie was a little bit miffed that we just didn't retain him for the day, but seemed to accept the fact that we wanted to be on our own. Like all the people we met he was very helpful in terms of giving us advice about what to do and not do. He warned us about people who would try various strategies to steer us to various vendors and despite Jono's best efforts I continued to get sucked in. Jono has gotten quite accomplished at this. I fear that I am just too gullible and my travels have generally been protected by people who served as a buffer. In any case, after about an hour and a half, we ended up in a shop where we spent half of what had been offered at the first shop, even though Jono said we still paid 50% more than we should of! By the way, our first "steerer" took us through the spice market, where we were told not to go. We got through with a little trepidation on Jono's part, but it was interesting. Our "guide" told us we could buy some kind of saffron very cheaply, but in the last analysis, that was the one thing we didn't see – I would have liked to have purchased some. Having made some gift purchases, we headed out of the "mercado" and grabbed a cab back into the center of town. We wanted to walk into the post office, but discovered it was as secured as the banks. Rather than leave cameras and back packs with the guard, we started to walk back toward the hotel.



With three hours still to kill, we decided to walk up the hill past the royal palace to see what was at the national museum. I got about 15% of the way up the hill before I called it quits and called for a taxi to take us up. It cost us 10 birr to get in and while the museum was rather sparse by US standards, we did get a chance to see the "Lucy" section and we got our first glimpse into the history of Ethiopia. We spend about two hours there before walking back to the hotel for a beer and a late lunch.



Our tour company picked us up about 5:30 and took us to the airport where we caught an 8:15 flight to Barhar Dar. We got in way after dark. The airport at Barhar Dar was almost as good as the airport at Jimma. In this case I think the plane was close enough that we walked rather than rode to the terminal, which was a little larger than the one at Jimma. The baggage claim appeared to be fully functional. You can see Jono below outside baggage claim – with the belt on the outside, but as you might guess, the belt wasn't used. The cart was pulled up and it was a free for all as people grabbed their bags and headed out into the dark parking lot.



As promised, Ento, the tour company, was waiting for us and took us the 20 minutes from the airport to the hotel. The hotel was no great shakes, but it was functional. Some championship soccer game was on and the lobby was crowded with people who were watching. After our day of trekking through Addis, and given that we were to be ready at 7:00 the next morning, we called it quit pretty early and headed for bed. It was hot and muggy near Lake Tana and while we slept, it was hotter than I have been used to.

A Trip to Jimma University, Ethiopia

Day 24, Sunday, May 20th, 2012

We were up and at breakfast by 6:30 and ready to go. Last night has already faded into the mists and we begin our adventure. The guide arrived at 7:00 sharp and we are off to Lake Tana. We started across the street and I thought that it was strange that he had not parked the van in the hotel space. Ends up we were only about a half mile walk from Lake Tana and our boat for the tour.



we went by – and I think we came close to provide a photo opportunity for us. The skipper was very keen on observing when we were trying to take a picture, and would adjust the boat to maximize our opportunity. Lake Tana is a very large lake, I'm guessing about 150 kilometers long and as wide as 50 kilometers, and although where we were we were almost always in sight of the shore on either side. The sun was brilliant on the water. We traveled past more Pelican nesting sights in the distance where there appeared to be dozens of white pelicans – maybe even a hundred.

The boat was a sturdy little cruiser made of metal. It was about 20 feet long, with a blue tarp stretched over the benches. It could have comfortably sat 10 or maybe 12 people, but for this trip it was the two of us, the guide, and our boat driver. The boat was powered by a 9.5 horsepower outboard motor. Not over powered, not under powered, but very comfortable and reasonably quiet. Within 20 minutes of leaving the dock, which happened to be on the grounds of a very fancy restaurant, we were passing a half dozen white pelicans. They would take flight as





We motored past islands in the lake where there appeared to be structures that were clearly manmade, but a little hard to see. About 9:00, we arrived at our first destination, a monastery on a peninsula hard to reach except by water. I am not sure what the name was, but I think it was "Ura Kidane Mihret." (If not, it was "Kibran Gebrael.") The monastery is famous for its paintings which surround the inner sanctum of the church. The church itself is a huge circular structure with a natural thatched roof. The inner walls are covered with



what we would come to know as very traditional Ethiopian depictions of religious history. It is difficult to remember all the details, but my recollection two days later is that the interior walls – all four of them were about twenty feet wide by twenty feet tall. The pictures that I will insert may help to tell the tale better.

Without trying to be factual at this point, I will simply try to recount some of the messages that came through during the visit to this church and the many others over the three day whirlwind tour. First, historically, there was significant separation in religious worship. Women were segregated from men and clergy further separated from laity. Many churches had three doors – one for the priest and deacons, one for men, and one for women. The churches were also divided into zones. The outer most was for chanting, the second was for attending mass and receiving communion, and the third, the holy of holies was only for the priest to say mass. Not very different then the sanctuary, the main church, and the outer hall, but the barriers were significant. We were never allowed to see the "holy of holies" at any of the churches we visited. A second thing that struck me was the devotion to Mary and her role



as a saint and miracle worker. Third, there was significant attention paid to the angels and to the archangels. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are regularly depicted in paintings. Finally, at least for now, everything is symbolic. Whenever there are three, it is the trinity. Whenever there are four, it is the evangelists – Mathew, Mark, Luke and John, even though there seems to be a reference to other gospels in the Ethiopian Christian Church. Whenever there are twelve, it is the apostles. I can't quite



recollect seven, but it may be the days to create the earth.

Leaving the church, we went about an hour by boat to the point where Lake Tana forms the head of the Blue Nile. One of the scenes we were looking forward to was the falls where the lake meets the Nile. I gather it was invisible for all practical purposes given that this is the end of the dry season and the rainy season, at least for Bahar Dar – it is starting early in Jimma. We did see more wildlife – hippos and iguana as well as more birds, but nothing like one expects to see in Africa. There are nature reserves in Ethiopia, but we opted for the history and ancient culture tour. We got back to the hotel in Bahar Dar about noon, had a little lunch, checked out of the hotel and settled into a van for a three plus hour drive cross country to Gondar, the capital of Ethiopia during the 17th-19th centuries.

The trip across the countryside was very special, and both Jono and I agreed that it was one of the better parts of the trip. Our particular journey began with a crossing of the Blue Nile where we were able to see more hippos from the bridge. Unfortunately, cars are not allowed to stop and take photos from this vantage point – it is more than a



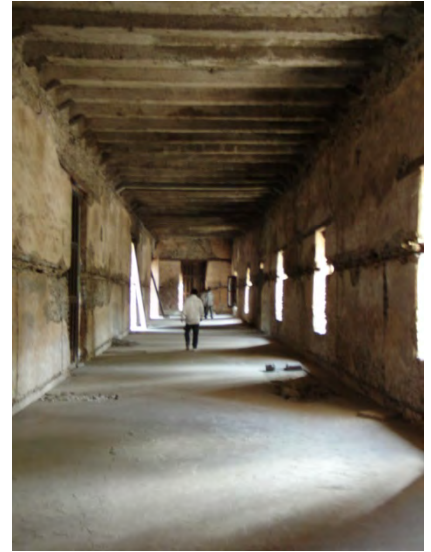
polite request for traffic control, there are armed soldiers on the bridge! The drive, basically around Lake Tana and then some to Gondar, was a mélange of mountains, dry stream beds, little villages, and vast expanses. The road built about ten years ago is generally in superb shape and allows for speeds of 60-70km/per hour. The difficulty is that it is just about two cars wide and subject to occupancy by slow cattle

and slower donkeys. Plus people are all over it and there are places where the road is damaged or under repair. So it is a matter of constant vigilance for the driver. The pictures here are only a few of the hundreds snapped on the journey. Again, from villages to dry stream beds to tilled fields it was all interesting. About two thirds of the way through, we had to cross a mountain. I would guess it was 2000-3000 feet of additional elevation and continuous switchbacks and steep climbs. No guardrails and a 1000 foot drop in the narrow road were not uncommon. Coming down the far side, we found a truck overturned with bales of cotton spread all over the road. And the day was not yet done....

As we arrived in Gondar, the driver stopped to pick up our guide for Gondar. Gondar is a city of about 300,000 – if I recollect correctly. As always, we took back roads and allies to get to where we were going. We drove to a gate surrounded by some markets and a church. As we were arriving, so was a wedding party that was going to have pictures taken inside the compound. Our guide, Yohannes I believe, was articulate with a great sense of humor. Before we were done, he would make reference to one of the Kings rewarding local singers as predating American Idol. He also referred to the blue and white mini-buses that park anywhere to pick up and discharge passengers as “blue donkeys” because of their habit of blocking the road. Isuzu trucks were referred to as Al Qaeda because of their suicidal driving style! He took us through the castles of Gondar where the kingdom of Ethiopia was revived in the 17th century. There were I believe 7 Kings who built castles one after another and each had a different flavor. The people’s king – Yohannes – was the 5th and built a palace for entertaining the people and rewarding them. You might imagine that each of them had personalities that have grown with time and legend. Some were very secretive and vain. Others were more oriented to laws and



expansion and people. There was a queen who had an affair with the Scot James Bruce who visited and ended up staying for some years. There was a regent queen who ruled through her young child after the king was assassinated. We visited the one building that was not a palace which was the archive of the first king – Fasil. The palaces were on one of the main hills of Gondar, and our hotel was on another – overlooking the palaces.



After visiting the palaces, we made two more stops. The first was the pool of King Fasil. He had learned to swim in the Tana Lake region and wanted to do so in Gondar, so he had a pool built at a lower point in the town so it could be naturally fed by streams. When we entered the pool compound, which was huge, we were stunned by the size of the pool structure. In this case the pictures don't do it justice. It is an incredible structure more than the size of an Olympic pool. It is still functional and is filled for a major celebration by the priests each January (the 17th I think). Evidently it is a week long celebration and it requires two weeks to fill the pool! I have pictures of the celebration which I will scan and add later.



The final stop was Debre Brihan Selassie Church. The compound has a large wall around it with 12 turrets (the twelve apostles) and another 10 symbolic numbers of things before we got into the church. I am not ignoring all the



symbolic meanings so much as being unable to recall what reflected the Trinity, what represented the martyrs, etc. Inside the church are many beautiful paintings, but the highlight is the ceiling which is adorned with a multitude of faces – of angels. The angels are looking north, south, east and west – symbolic of angels watching over us wherever we are. There were other paintings in the church. Some are modern additions, others date back to the founding of the church. It is said that when Gondar was attacked at one point all of the churches were burned with the exception of this one which was protected by bees. It is also said that the Archangel Michael appeared at the gate with flaming sword to protect the church.



After the church, we headed for our nights lodging – Hotel Goya. We were told to be ready for pick up at 6:30 for our trip to the airport to pick up our flight to Lalibella. The Hotel Goya was a delightful surprise. It was on a mount overlooking Gondar. It was possible to see the entire city and the castles. The view itself was spectacular, but the hotel itself was also a gem. It was built as a huge sprawling lodge with covered walkways open on one side and with a view on the other – via the windows in the rooms. But the best view was from the lodge which was a big open air hall that captured the lounge, the bar, and the dining room under one two story vaulted roof. I have never been to the National Park lodges, but from the pictures of have seen, the Hotel Goha would give them a run for their money. The lodge opened onto a huge patio that ran about 100 yards out onto the promontory with a wonderful view of the city. That night there was a wedding reception on the patio, which we had a chance to walk around after dinner. Tired after a long day, we retired early anticipating another long day on Monday.

Day 25, Monday, May 21st, 2012

We left Gondar about 6:45 for our trip to Lalibella. It was about a half hour from the hotel to the airport, again up and down the mountains and through several small villages. The airport was built in a fashion that mimicked the castles of Gondar. The flight to Lalibella was direct – a couple of the flights we have taken are part of triangles where you go some city 25 minutes away and then to your destination. I think this was the flight that was a Boeing 737 as opposed to the Canadian Bombardier we had been flying, but I must admit that two days later as I am writing this, I just can't separate the flights and cities anymore. The Lalibella airport is in a valley unlike most of the others we have used which are on high ground. As with the other cities, the tour people were on time and waiting for us. Our guide for the next day would be Joseph who was as articulate as all the previous guides. He informed us that we would first go to the hotel after a half hour trip up the mountain to Lalibella, which was a city of 30,000 – the smallest on the tour and a city rapidly growing – it had been 15,000 five years ago. About 10 years ago, the churches of Lalibella had been defined as a UNESCO protected site and been endowed with funds to work to preserve the churches.



As a footnote, which applies equally to all the travels we had north of Addis, this part of Ethiopia is much more of what I had imagined Ethiopia would be like. It was very arid and the people

were very thin, appearing to live much more on the edge than the people we had met in Jimma and even in Addis. There were far more people moving by donkey cart, and animals were present on all the roads, and seemed to have right of way. There were very small villages that apparently had some water from a nearby stream that looked bone dry to us. We saw many women carrying loads of branches up the hills on their backs. The drive up the mountain to Lalibella was a steep and treacherous as the drive the day before from Barhar Dar to Gandar.

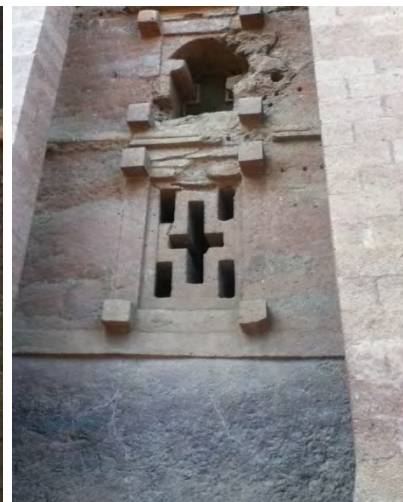


Arriving in the small village of Lalibella I was prepared for our most sparse accommodations of the trip. There appeared to be little more than wood and corrugated steel shacks. We came though rutted dirt roads onto what we would later realize was a very short – maybe a kilometer – cobblestone road that had been built about five years ago. Toward one end of the road was the hill out of which the churches of Lalibella had been carved. Toward the other end was the Tikul Village hotel. Joseph said we would have 45 minutes to rest before beginning the tour of the churches. He offered to do some on Monday and others early Tuesday or to do them all Monday. We opted for rest on Tuesday morning – all the way to 9:30. I think both of us were pretty spent and wanted to continue somewhat delirious for another eight hours and then collapse. The Tikul Village Hotel was a most amazing surprise. The hotel was a series of traditionally styled two story buildings that were native to Lalibella. As homes, the first story was used as storage and the second for living. In our case, each floor was an apartment. The buildings were all circular and the facility was still being constructed. Each apartment was beautifully and traditionally designed. Large doors opened into an entry way with ornate wood chests, luggage racks, and small leather couches. The bedrooms were about half of the structure with a wall of floor to ceiling windows with a door opening onto a patio or a balcony. The bathroom was easily twice as large as any I have seen in Ethiopia. They were clean and vented with an open window – the only ones I have seen anywhere in Ethiopia with a screen to keep out insects. All the furnishings were done in a traditional style but obviously of a high quality. We used a half hour to get our bags into the rooms – actually, Jono's wasn't ready when we arrived so we camped in mine. His was ready shortly later, but we left the bags until we returned for lunch.

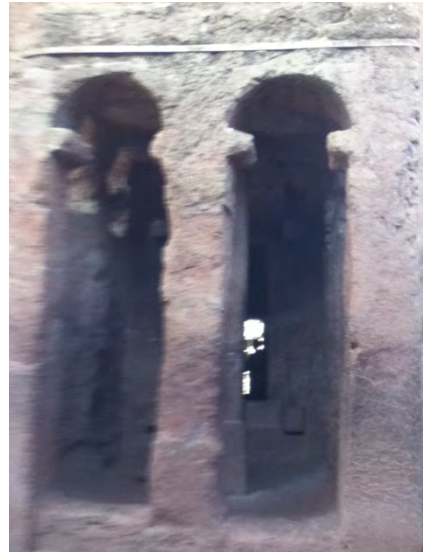
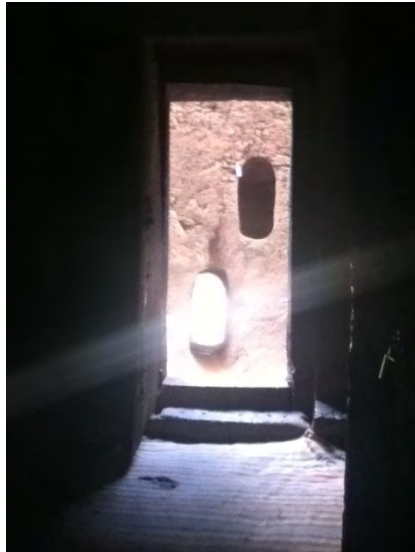
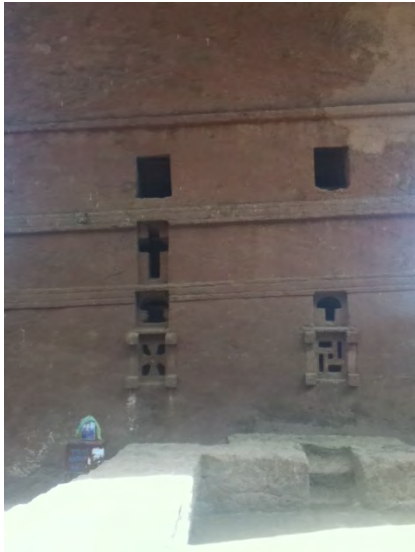




We got back in the van and took a short ride to the churches. We had to check in at an opening where there were police and we were very carefully searched and had to sign in. I suspect it is part of the UNESCO accountability. I would be dishonest if I could tell you the order in which we visited the churches. Some of them stuck in memory for one reason or another. A couple general things are worth mentioning. First, they were all built from basalt – a rather soft volcanic rock. We visited them in order from the oldest to the newest. Second, they were all built by King Lalibella over a period of twenty three years at the end of the 12th century and into the 13th. More than 40,000 people were involved in their construction. Third, each of them has something unique about them. They are classed in three categories, which I must admit I don't fully get. Basically, some are free standing and out of one piece of rock. Others are built into the rock with only two or three sides carved out. The third category escapes me right now. Forth, while the walls were clear and sharp and "smooth" the floors of all but the most recent were very uneven. They are all active churches with more than 10 priests assigned to each church. The churches have been placed under cover by UNESCO to help in the process of preserving them. With just a few additional comments, below are a few of the pictures I took in the order they were taken. We visited six or seven in the morning, walked back to the hotel for lunch, and then back in the afternoon for the remaining, finishing up at about 4:30 at the most frequently photographed – the Church of St George. I must admit that while I have had little trouble with the altitude, the afternoon session which involved a lot of walking up and down hills just about did me in. Between the very rough terrain, the very steep stairs and narrow corridors, I was within about 5 minutes of calling uncle and sking for ten minutes to rest. But I did make it. Below, our guide and the first church in the sequence

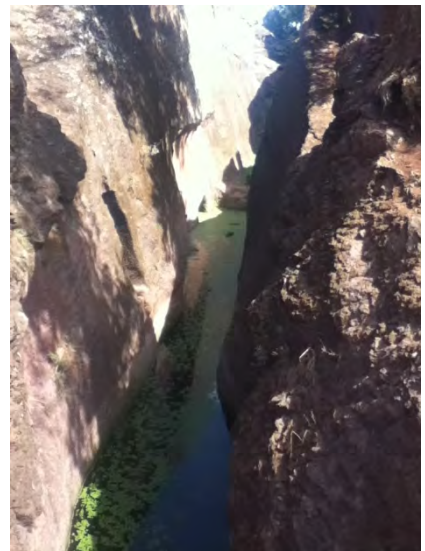
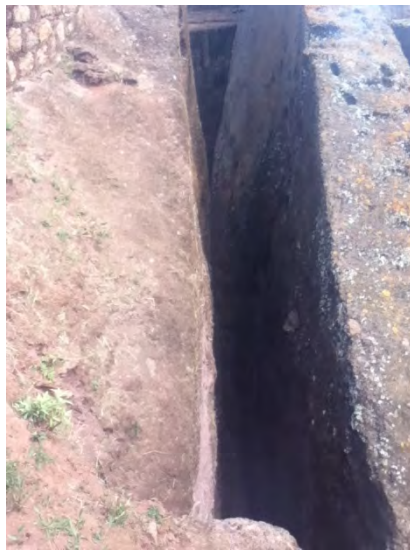


A baptismal pond and some crypts in the surrounding rock



More details of the churches and a view from inside

Still more details – the door is made from the spikes used to cut the stone



And finally, a couple pictures of Saint George Church – the last to be built



Day 26, Tuesday, May 22nd, 2012

There will not be much to say about Tuesday. We woke leisurely for the first time in our trip and had breakfast before heading to the airport. After breakfast, we walked down to one of the souvenir shops to see what we might pick up. Jono was to be in charge and to the negotiation so I wouldn't screw it up again by being too easy. One of the shops was open, but no one seemed to be in charge so we walked back to the hotel. While I packed up and did some email, Jono went back down and ended up finding some wonderful little things for us!

I stopped at reception, which is just a little room off the parking lot and thanked the receptionist asking for the name of the owner. He asked if there had been something wrong and I said no, I just wanted to thank him for a wonderful stay and to tell him I would write a review of the hotel as a must stop. As I was leaving, he brought the owner out of another room. I repeated my congratulations on his investment and thanked him for a wonderful stay. I promised him I would send a chime for him to hang in the little seating area. As I turned to grab my knapsack to get on the van, I found it missing. It was not in my van, and nobody had taken it. I wasn't concerned with it being stolen – not that kind of place. After about ten minutes of searching we found it well packed into another of the vans heading to the airport!

The half hour ride to the airport was notable only in more pictures of the rugged and beautiful landscape. We went through the normal double airport search that I haven't mentioned as yet, but there are two identical searches. In a couple cases there were actually three separate X-ray scans and



metal detectors! The flight to Addis was uneventful except that it was through Gondar. When we arrived in Addis, the Jupiter van was waiting for us. We stayed at the Airport hotel – not the one downtown. They upgraded me to a bigger room and schedule a van for Jono back to the airport at 8:00. We settle in, mailed some postcards, charged some equipment, got some drink and food and general hung out until I said good bye to Jono at 8:00 PM.

I talked to about 1:30 and we talked for a while about all the things she is trying to manage. The AC is not working upstairs and we tried to figure out why – my guess is that somewhere along the line the power to the upstairs AC unit had its power cut unintentionally. In the process of our conversation, I happened to look at my credit card account and noted that my account was restricted again. It took us about a half hour to 45 minutes to get through to a supervisor at Capital One. After much wailing and gnashing of teeth, we managed to convince someone that the account restriction should be lifted. I'm glad I checked before checking out tomorrow. It would be embarrassed to have the card declined.

Day 27, Wednesday, May 23rd, 2012

Today is a day to start to catch up on my journal entries. I got up about 7:00 showered and did some writing over a cup of coffee. I went downstairs and had some breakfast and confirmed with the front desk that I would want a shuttle to the airport at 12:00. I went back to the room and worked on various pieces of this journal trying to bring it up to date. I have some kind of virus on my computer which Symantec seems to be doing a good job of containing, but I think this machine is going to have to be wiped when I get back. I am not sure what is safe to use anymore.

I went to check out only to discover that my Visa card was declined. Needless to say, I am fuming. I don't know what the next problem is going to be! I will call the folks at Capital One as soon as I am settled in Jimma for the night. I had a long talk with Cindy tonight and got my first look at the progress on the kitchen which is significant. The drywall is in and the plasterers will put on a hard coat tomorrow. The flooring has been delivered and is holding to get acclimated to the temperature in the room. Cindy will work her last day of work for about a week tomorrow and she is close to having the bedroom painted such that she can move her furniture in and have a real bed and bedroom again.

Day 28, Thursday, May 24th, 2012

The first day back teaching was easier than I anticipated. It will be good to have the weekend to prepare for next week. Today I laid out the goals for the two new courses – Library Automation and Digital Information Architecture. For the first, the final product will be a proposal on a particular aspect of library automation for the future of Ethiopia. I began the lecture with a picture of King Fasil's Archive in Gondar. I asked why it was the second building he constructed after his castle. I was trying to get them to realize that he thought it important that information be used to further the goals of his administration – information was as important as an army. I am not sure I got the message across, but I will continue to work at it. They need to understand that the form the institution of libraries and archives will take in the future will need to be determined by the needs of those who will use them. Again, I thought I gave cogent arguments about the process – suggesting projects focused on agriculture, education, health, etc. The problem is that they want to think in terms of historic institutions. Also, it is pretty clear that while they were left alone to work on what I had assigned – i.e. Getachew did not give them additional work – they did not do the readings. I seem to have that impact on students.

The afternoon was equally disappointing, but there were some signs of hope. I think they were scanning the book as class proceeded and they were getting some ideas from what they were seeing and asked a couple good questions. It allowed me to feed off them to some extent, but some of them will get lost unless they catch up on the reading and begin to formulate their own questions. Their

assignment for the night was to read the next two chapters of my book – on information and digital information.

Two brief personal notes. While on one of the class breaks, I noticed the yellow birds that seem to be the Ethiopian Robin gathering nesting material from a local palm tree. There were 6-12 birds in the tree at a time stripping off the strands of palm. I also saw a bird with a long tail eating fruit in the tree closest to me. It was a leisurely feeding and I had a great chance to watch things. Second, I stopped across the street from the hotel as I have before to have my shoes polished. The young man that is there was very busy with a variety of tasks, and was under some pressure from a woman he was doing a job for. She had some words for him, so instead of 5 minutes, it took me about 30 to get my shoes polished. It was fascinating to watch the young man do shoe repairs as well as polish them. More fascinating yet was the micro economy unfolding as various actors visited his little stage.

Day 29, Friday, May 25th, 2012

I woke to discover that my shower, which had been supposedly fixed the day before was still providing only ice cold water. I cleaned up and shaved as best I could and headed out for breakfast. I saw the manager there and he asked if my shower was OK. I said I must be doing something wrong because it was still only cold water. He assured me he had had it fixed the day before. I said I understood. As I was sitting down to breakfast he came over and asked for my key. I remember thinking that I was glad he wasn't back in a minute telling me it was OK – I would have felt like an idiot. It got to the point where I had to leave to teach, so I walked back to the room where he was working with two repair men, but he had the monkey wrench in his hand and had the valves apart. He asked me if the water was now hot enough, apologized again and continued working. I was somewhat relieved it was not my stupidity.

Class was OK today. We began to get into the specifics of automation and what needs to change in the way in which Libraries function. Honestly, the lectures began to make more sense to me as we moved forward. I can see more clearly what my goal is in teaching the course here. It is not so much about changing the OPAC or how the core library functions, but trying to make the interface to searching both local and global. It is also about trying to improve the quality and responsiveness of the interface.

The afternoon was interesting. I had hoped to get into a discussion of information in all its various aspects and to discuss some of the differences between information generally and digital information in particular. As it ends up, we spent more of our time in the mechanics of compression and encryption which seemed to be of great interest to many of them. They wanted to understand the difference between lossy and lossless compression. For one of the students, it was simply incomprehensible that you could take an image that was 3 million bytes and compress it to 1 million bytes and not lose any information. I gave technically correct answers, but I fear they were too complex. I should have started with a very simple example. (I.e., consider a line with 100 a's in it. I could store the hundred a's or I could store the number 100 and one "a" resulting in lossless compression – I should have started at that level.)

Day 30, Saturday, May 26th, 2012

I took a long hot shower this morning, and am working now on completing this week's journal which has involved going back and trying to flesh out some of the details as well as picking the photos to include. I may walk into town later today, but for the most part I will be happy to just get some things cleared up. I asked Ato Kalile about where I should buy honey and he said to just let him know how much I wanted and he would order it from his wholesaler for me. As to coffee, he indicated that I could simply pick up the green coffee anywhere – there was no difference.

A Trip to Jimma University, Ethiopia

Day 31, Sunday, May 27th, 2012

I woke to a nice note from Cindy this morning. I actually like to be somewhere other than home during my birthday. I am not quite sure why, but I really don't like to fuss about my own birthday. At the same time it is always nice to get birthday greetings and Cindy's note was very very touching. She is such a beautiful spirit.

This is another day of rest for me. I polished off all the journal entries I was behind on and spent the day relaxing. I have said most of what I will say in the journal and am pretty much coasting at this point. There is a week of teaching left and I have enough materials to cover that – I think.

Sunday saw the arrival of two new groups of at the Honeyland Hotel. The first consisted of an older woman, pretty clearly an American, and a younger Ethiopian partner -- more on them later. The second group consisted of about 20 people who were loud, and clearly ready for a good time. This latter group was hard to figure. They ranged in age from teenagers to middle aged adults. I couldn't figure out anything which would account for their diversity and style. It would become clear later that they were a group of faculty and students from Tulane University who were a part of a joint project monitoring health care. I suspect the teenagers were likely the children of one of the faculty members.

As I was sitting outside Sunday evening, the sky turned a pretty rose. Here is a picture of the eagle on the water fountain, against the evening sky. There was no water Sunday night – an outage that will last through Wednesday!



Day 32, Monday, May 28th, 2012

The morning focused on the basic structure of Open Source ILS and the component systems – cataloging, acquisitions, serials management, circulation, etc. In the afternoon we looked at the various aspects of digital information. There was some confusion in a couple people's minds about the relationship between compression and encryption. I just can't seem to get them over the difference. There was also a question about lossy and loseless compression algorithms. It wasn't until the class was over that it finally hit home what had stumped at least one student. It was really simple – as they saw it. If a file starts out at 1,000,000 bytes, and compression reduces the file to 500,000 bytes, how can it possible be lossless. At a theory level, the answer is easy – one uses an alternative representation that can be translated without loss. For the student, the issue was much simpler. If you "lost" 500,000 bytes, how could there not be a loss!!!

Monday was a holiday in Ethiopia – celebration of the end of the last regime about 20 years ago and the emergence of the current regime, which is somewhat more open. While much of the University was closed, our class went on, but with a reduced number of students in the afternoon. I told them that they were not the only ones missing a holiday – today was Memorial Day.

Day 33, Tuesday, May 29th, 2012

Tuesday continued both the automation lectures and the digital information discussion. We are slowly making progress on both fronts, but the going is slow and the level of abstraction without concrete activities is difficult.

A dog was hit on the road in front of the hotel during the night and it stayed where it was hit, growing bloated in the heat. Cars drove around it, but there was no effort to remove the carcass. By

late afternoon when I returned, some small branches had been laid over the head of the dog, but it otherwise lay where it had died.

My intestines are still rumbling and it is a challenge each day to make it through class each morning and back to the hotel to use the facilities. Same thing in the afternoon. I'm not quite sure what it is and why I can't get acclimated. It seems that every time I make some progress, I slide back to ground zero. It is very uncomfortable and not something I have experienced in previous travels.

Day 34, Wednesday, May 30th, 2012

We continued today to explore the facets of library automation, focusing on the backend functionality and the proposal for new front end functionality that can compete with the web in terms of convenience and functionality. We looked at the various standards that play a role in systems and talked about how they make the design of ILS's easier and more modular. We looked at AquaBrowser as a plugin that makes the OPAC more like a web interface.

I went back to the hotel for lunch and ate, as has been my habit, at the "garden bar". I had my standard lunch – a coke and a bowl of chicken soup. While I was eating, the elderly woman and her companion were sitting at the next table. The woman excused herself and asked about my always seeming to be typing. She asked if I was a writer. I laughed, said no, just keeping up with email. We went back to our respective business. My last note over lunch was one to Getachew reminding him that I would be leaving on Sunday.

Having not assigned a reading for the day from my book, I lectured in the afternoon on the impacts of digital information on individuals. At the break, Getchew showed up to talk to me. He informed me that I was invited to tour the campus and have dinner with a visiting faculty member named "Karen". He also informed me that there would be something on Thursday and yet another dinner on Friday. Something else was going to happen on Saturday. The notion of going to dinner tonight was not exactly what I wanted as I was getting a little ripe – not having shaved or showered in three days, but I was scheduled! He came to get me about 4:45 and we walked across campus where we met up with "Karen". She was the woman from the hotel with the young Ethiopian companion – a rather striking young woman. The young Ethiopian woman was chattering some kind of apology to me saying she was very sorry she hadn't recognized me. Why she should have was beyond me. Finally, I understood. She was the staff member from the embassy who met me at the airport.

We had dinner at the College of Agriculture, which is the oldest of the colleges at Jimma. All of the senior staff were present from the President on down. The pictures to the right show the president speaking and Professor Getachew sitting next to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. I had a delightful conversation with the VP for administration, who is considered the most powerful person after the President. There were a number of ears tuned in on our conversation as we chatted about leadership style and management. The meal was delightful and included a lot of beer and wine mixed with a variety of traditional foods. They lit a big fire near the dinner table and you could feel the warmth as it burned.



Dinner ended with popcorn and coffee and more beer. (Having popcorn of something like it before having coffee is a tradition of some sort.)

Day 35, Thursday, May 31st, 2012

Class today was a little bit of a stretch. For the automation lecture, I was well beyond my comfort zone and struggled to present the content. There were few digressions or stories to make the content more fun. We trudged through the criteria and the various systems. In the afternoon, I talked for a while about the impacts of digital information on groups and organizations. I wanted to get it back to the students and I finally did. They managed to get some things out, but mostly their perspective was that the technology would not have a significant impact on the traditional culture of Ethiopia.



I was waiting outside the hotel waiting for a rain shower to pass when the receptionist came out with a call from Getachew. He indicated that our meeting was not scheduled for campus, but was to take place at the hotel, so I didn't need to walk back up. He came down about 5:30 and we spent 3 hours or so talking about our Universities and how they operated and what we liked and disliked about them. We finished about 9:00 and I headed out to the courtyard to see if I could catch Cindy before she started work.

Day 36, Friday, June 1st, 2012

Today was the last day of class. I prepared a little poem for the class, which I showed them after the final lecture, which was a reprise of the important aspects and dimensions of Information Science.

An Easy Smile

*In my post jet lag haze,
I had the classroom on the wrong floor
And you called me to the right room
You welcomed me with an easy smile
A hand shake and a shoulder bump.*

*You made me feel at home,
Not as an American,
Not as a white man,
But as a teacher and a friend.*

*We shared many things together,
From Fasil's Archive to a theory of entropy.
You stayed awake when others would have slept.
You struggled with the abstract theory,*

*You tolerated my stupid jokes.
And today we part company,
But I feel the warmth of your friendship.
As I travel back to my home
I will know that we share a deep love of family,
A great sense of tradition, and a love of learning.*

*But what I will remember most was your smile
As subtle as the start of the Blue Nile at Lake Tana
And as broad as the continent of Africa
And it warmed me when I felt far from home.*

For the Information Science students
at Jimma University
June 1, 2012

After class, which we ended shortly after 10:00 we headed for a bus and a trip to the College of Agriculture. There we took photographs, a few of which I have included here. After a bit, the students all gathered and Mesay Samuel made a very touching speech about their reaction to me and to the class. It was, needless to say very difficult to listen to. If there was a message in the speech it was that the combination of humor and work and thinking was something new to them and they very much enjoyed it. I don't think I could have asked for more. They gave me two gifts – one was a poster of the places I had been to in Ethiopia, and the other a ceremonial coffee pot and cup set made out of wood. I assured them that they would be prominently displayed on my dining room table – in the center.



After lunch, I went back to the classroom where half a dozen students were still working. I put the pictures on a slide show and I answered a few more questions before saying a final goodbye around 3:30.

Around 6:00 I met Professor Getachew, and we headed off for one final dinner. We ate in a room off the garden where we had taken photos with the statue of Kalid. The dinner was traditional with a number of the faculty from across the college of Natural Sciences. It was another traditional Ethiopian buffet. The Dean of Natural Sciences and the Vice President were in attendance. I told most of the stories and asked most of the questions. Of all the stories, their favorite, without a doubt, was the story of the three letters given to a new dean



to help him get out of trouble with the faculty. The first said to blame the old dean, the second said to reorganize, and the third said “write three letters”. The story was referenced with good humor throughout the rest of dinner. They were still chattering about it as I got into my car to go back to the hotel. We exchanged gifts in good humor at the end of the evening. They got University key chains, clock and tee shirts. They gave me a wooden coffee pot set and a traditional Ethiopian outfit, which I will wear with great pride.



Day 37, Saturday, June 2nd, 2012

Getachew picked me up at about 11:00 and we traveled to the palace of Jifar who ruled this area of Ethiopia for about 40 years – during the latter part of the 19th century. His palace is on a hill overlooking the city of Jimma. We also toured the museum at Jimma. One of the photographs from the trip is below.



I had lunch with Getachew at his home. This time I managed to get a picture of his wife’s cousin roasting the beans on hot coals for the coffee. After lunch, I returned to the hotel to pack up my bags for my trip back to Addis, which was to start at 7:00 am the next morning.

Day 39, Sunday, June 3rd, 2012

We started before seven am for our five hour trip to Addis over the mountains. The scenery started green and lush and turned gray and desolate about half way to Addis. One of the more spectacular sights was the herds of wild baboons in the mountains. Unfortunately, my camera ran out before we



ran into them. They were quite spectacular.

I must admit that I am growing tired of writing, so I am going to just shut down for a while. I guess I should mention that given the fact that Getachew did not tell me until Friday that I would be driving back Addis rather than flying, I miscommunicated with Johannes at the embassy who had a driver waiting for me at the airport!

Day 40, Monday, June 4th, 2012

I spent the morning at the embassy debriefing them on the visit. Evidently, the word from Jimma is that the trip was a success, so I gather that everyone is pretty happy.

The afternoon was spent at the Business School of Addis Ababa University. It was a little awkward to start, but it got to some very warm exchanges. I suspect some visitors from the US can be pretty arrogant. Our conversation was very upbeat and focused more on creating successful businesses, which means making use of available technology to increase efficiency.

Day 41, Tuesday, June 5th, 2012

The presentation at the National Archive and Library went well. There were about 30 people in attendance and I think the talk went over well. The feedback that I got from the embassy staff all seems to be positive.

Today is my last day in Ethiopia. I must have miscounted somewhere, because I think my tickets said that my trip would span 40 days. At this point it looks like it will be 42. I am getting ready to give a talk at the national library and archive. I will complete these last few notes when I get back after lunch. I am tired. I checked out of my room at 2:00 to wait for a 6:30 ride to the airport where I will have another four hour wait.