

We continue to settle in our apartment in Addis. Logistics seem fairly calm for the moment, and I have been concentrating on what I would be teaching at the University while Danièle concentrates on substitute/volunteer work at the International Community

School in Addis (just a 25 minute walk from our apartment). As all of this unfolds, I am about to go to Beirut as part of a Middle States evaluation team visit from March 1 to March 6, after which my teaching begins. As of last week, I thought I would be teaching a graduate course in natural resource economics, but this may change as I may shift my efforts in helping the department to move forward with a proposed Ph.D. program in economics, in which case I would do occasional lectures on various topics.

As of this afternoon, I may know more clearly just what lies ahead beyond a course in political economy that I am scheduled to give as part of a new Ph.D. program in law at the Akaki campus (about 20km from Addis, where we will have lodging and accommodations for a two week period from March 23rd to April 6).

This weekend we made a visit to Emdeber, the village where I lived and taught secondary school history for three and a half years during the latter 1960s. As I posted previously, then there were few reliable road conditions connecting Emdeber from the nearby town of Wolkite, which is on the main road to and from Addis - overall about 195 km.

Although I managed to visit Emdeber briefly in 1982 and again in 1990, it is this past 19 years where the greatest changes seem to have taken place. Emdeber then had a population of around 2,000. Today it is more likely in the 8-9,000 range, with substantially more buildings extending out from the center of town. The secondary school where I taught now is an elementary school.



Sign for Emdeber Primary School, 2009

Back then the secondary school already was under construction across the river just outside of town. It now has 3,000 students, 850 of whom are female, and from which there is an Irish community funded dormitory for some 140 female students whose homes are too far for a daily walk. This is a significantly higher percentage of female students than when we taught, and is a good sign.



Emdeber Senior Secondary School, 2009

One thing that has been a focus of interest in Emdeber has been the prospect of expanding computer technology instruction. The secondary school has some 30 desktop computers that may operate on a local network, with another 10 that used to work with a satellite internet connection. 27 of the 30 computers appear to be in working order, and all of them work with electricity now provided through a central national grid system that was completely nonexistent back in our Peace Corps days.



Emdeber Secondary School Computer Lab, 2009

Students apparently spend most of their time learning Microsoft Office, with no course work in machine maintenance, or software programming offered. When I asked the local director what did graduates from the secondary school do, he indicated that many simply emigrated to larger towns where skills such as knowledge of Microsoft Office offered more employment opportunities. I do not know how many students are enrolled in the elementary school, but can note that there are some private technical schools that have sprung up, along with an Emdeber Catholic mission primary school not far from where I used to live. As a rough guess, I would venture that a much higher percentage of the school age population now attends school at least through primary school, with a much higher attending secondary school than in our previous days.

Emdeber has no discernible industry. There still is a local Tuesday-Friday market cycle where fresh meat and vegetables can be purchased, along with a growing variety of fruit. Avocados, apples, and even plums now are becoming available in the local market. But so too is Tchat, a local stimulant that is Emdeber's equivalent of the local drug trade. It is no where near the level of toxicity as the kinds of drugs one thinks about in the U.S., but nevertheless has become a growing cash crop in the community.

Apart from this, Emdeber now sports two new hotels. We stayed at the Murare hotel - complete with hot water and full bathroom facilities that are very clean and affordable (\$U.S. 10 a night for the hotel at official exchange rates, for example). So what did we do during our visit? Well, we visited, along with former Peace Corps volunteer teacher Charlie Ipcar (who came from Maine for a visit), the old secondary school (now the primary school), and shared some nostalgia about our days spent there.



Emdeber Murare Hotel, 2009

We also visited my former landlady, Woyzero Atsede, who is now widowed and living in a very clean house, complete with a light bulb for which she pays \$.45 a month. My house apparently was torn down a few years ago, and so some of the photos are in front of the pad where the house once stood.



PLB, Woyzero Atsede, Emdeber, 2009

We also went up to the mission church, now a Cathedral we understand, and looked for some people we had known, including Tamra, the cook whom David Levine had hired and I inherited during my latter days after David left. I tried twice to find her on this visit, but as in my previous efforts, could not locate her. At any rate, when I met with Woyzero Atsede, she was very

emotional, and so we talked, had coffee, and reminisced a bit about her children and the days gone by.



Site of PLB former house, Emdeber, 2009

One of the attached photos is of one of the two chairs I had built 40 years ago and which she still uses in her house. We may make another visit or two to Emdeber before we leave. In the meantime, I still have much administrative work to do on my teaching and research that I hope to accomplish during our visit. Because we were able to be in touch with some former students, we may yet have an opportunity to give a talk in Addis with the DVD I made of the slides I took some 40 years ago and which stand in comparison and contrast to conditions today.



DMD in chair made by PLB in 1965, 2009



Renaud Coulet, PLB,DMD, Yacob Hailemariam, Emdeber Primary School, 2009



PLB, DMD, in Emdeber School classroom, 2009