

Peace Corps and the Old Expat World

The Peace Corps "pre-stage" was in Philadelphia at the Bellevue-Stratford (or 'Legionnaires') Hotel, interesting they would put people about to go to a third-world country into a place where there had been a disease whose origin had just been solved. I hadn't been to Philadelphia since 1974, my freshman year at UVa, when I rowed in the Dad Vail regatta. Revisiting Boathouse Row on Kelly Drive along the Schuylkill River was a top priority. (The only other places where one feels the history of rowing are the Harvard boathouse on the Charles River and the Rowing Museum in Henley, England.)

But I barely managed to get there as we attended classes most of the day and went on chaperoned tours at night. While our group was together a lot, I honestly didn't really associate the faces of volunteers with names until we were in Dakar and I met people one-on-one. However, one name and face stuck while in Philadelphia when I was entering an elevator and there was already another volunteer. When she asked, "where are you going?" I replied, "on what level is that question?" She gave me a "what are you on" look, but it seemed the right response for such an open-ended question. I then said "Hi, I'm Keith Kollmann," and she replied, "Hi, I'm Sue Lutz," and her German looks matched her German name. (People assume my last name is Coleman, which would be easier since that is the camping gear brand.)

I guess she remembered this conversation; six months later, when we were sitting on the floor against the wall of the US ambassador's house and quite drunk, she slurred, "When I first talked to you, I thought you were totally insane, but you're OK." She had liked some of the lectures I gave at the Stage (explained later), and she had talked about how her father worked in the State Department and was taking part in a program to find former Nazis, a program whose true intent is only now coming to light.

On reflection, the main purpose of this pre-stage was more than physical and mental preparation, which there was plenty of. They also wanted you to do a real self-assessment of why you were volunteering and what you hoped to accomplish; if you were going to quit, better now than months down the road when they had invested in you both time and resources.

The first aspect of physical preparation was to ensure you understood the conditions and possible resulting sickness you could experience, and if your post was "en brousse" (in the bush), you would know what to do if you or another volunteer became truly ill. One of the staff mentioned the book *Where There is No Doctor*, and 40 years later it is still a great book to understand diseases and their causes, symptoms, and treatments. Ideally you can prevent illness, and if not, you know how to provide (self) treatment. You don't want to panic when you have alarming symptoms, and twice I put that knowledge to work, but more on that later.

The second aspect was to understand and receive the various immunization shots you were to get. I don't know about now but anyone who went to a third-world country had to have a World Health Organization (WHO) card. It was an accordion leaflet that would be half-full by the time you arrived at your post, and full by the time you left. Certain shots did hurt, which you expected, but the one I do remember was the gamma globulin shot that went into the hip with a horse needle. Back then you needed that shot every six months, which meant you had to travel to Dakar at least every six months, no matter how far away you were posted.

We also learned about the drug regimen we would start, and while I don't think we were guinea pigs, I'm sure some drugs were not yet available to the general public. The most important drug was Aralen, a 500mg anti-malarial tablet you had to take without fail once a week, since even with mosquito nets and skin repellent, malaria was the number one health problem, especially near lakes and rivers. I had read people used to take quinine, but it had side effects such as ringing in the ears (tinnitus). But Aralen certainly had side effects on me; the first time I took Aralen before we left the States I dreamt in color, and up until then my dreams were in black and white (1960's television?). Moreover, there were many separate dreams in a row, some with long meandering plots. I subsequently called Sunday night, when I took Aralen, my "go out to the movies" night. Also, you were strictly warned not to take more than the one pill per week dosage. I thought this a bit overdramatic, but I later learned a volunteer, after being dumped by her boyfriend, killed herself by swallowing a bottle.

The psychological training was a balancing act, they wanted you to be excited (some of the older staff and guests had worked with Sergeant Shriver or met JFK), but also aware that you would be operating in a different (what I would call old-world) culture. To try to change or even speak out against what were obviously intolerable or unjust conditions would only get you into trouble. One senior staff person had been in Nigeria during the Biafran rebellion, so she obviously knew how to walk that tightrope. To have Robert Kennedy energy and passion without RFK resources would only lead to expulsion. This became evident when a very good volunteer wrote a letter in perfect French to the local prefect (government official) that articulated how corruption was affecting a project; within a week he was on a plane back to the States.

All of the presentations were really variations on a theme; while each one covered a specific topic, the secondary topic was that you had to have a certain mental toughness as you were usually alone and had to present the Peace Corps favorably. So each topic could create a certain "wall" that you would run into at a certain point in time, and that point was when you were most likely to quit. The hardest wall was six months in, since many topics came together at that point; you had (or had not) settled in, had dealt with illness, and you were most prone to home-sickness, since while you could fly home the following summer, it was still six months away. Looking back, I could tell those on the staff who were professional expats had gone through those walls, and most had been in a country for at least five years. They also knew the local languages. This matched my

view of people and politics, since only through competence and time can you build up a layer of trust.

A strange way to end the stateside training was watching a 16mm movie entitled *Mandabi*, the local language (Wolof) word for *mandat*, the French word for a money order sent through the post office (still called in former French colonies the PTT). A relative is sending the *mandat* to another family member, a cousin, who needs the money to help the extended family with food, clothes, school supplies, etc. The film follows the cousin's increasing frustration as the *mandat* is always one step ahead of the cousin, and when he finally goes to the regional PTT and asks the official where it is, he is told there are no records of it. The final scene is the cousin shouting in despair and anger as he realizes not only has the money disappeared, but there is no single thief on which to exact revenge. There was silence as the room lights came back on, but I'm sure it sobered up anyone who was still doe-eyed before getting on the plane to Dakar.

When getting off the plane in Dakar, you were first hit by the heat and humidity. It was like getting out of an air-conditioned car in Memphis in the summer at noon, but here it was midnight. Unlike some volunteers who carried duffle bags full of clothes, I carried only one duffle bag with two outfits (although plenty of underwear), since Western clothing would only work in the "winter" months. (The two pairs of pants were dark Levi jeans that had taken two years just to break in. If I could go back in time I would probably buy ten pairs of these jeans instead of change history.)

After customs (a breeze since our greeters knew the customs officials), we divided up into two small buses and went down a long stretch of lit highway (beyond which was darkness) until we went into a compound. It looked like a lycée (high school), and as we got off and walked to our beds, I noticed the asphalt basketball court, dirt volleyball court, and separate clusters of buildings.

The next day we met in the largest building, which had the assembly and meal halls. We were all woken up to be told to relax and take the day off, so as most volunteers went back to their cots, trying to sleep in the heat, I immediately greeted the stage director, Andy, and asked him where to go shopping for clothes like his. He was wearing exactly what I wanted; loose cotton pants, a loose cotton long-sleeve shirt, Bata sandals (I remember the Bata billboards on the way in), and a panama hat but not quite. He got a map, gave me instructions how to get around, and pointed out where the clothes markets were.

I came back later with my overpriced clothes (I hadn't yet learned to haggle), and while the others slept I got to talking with Andy. He was interesting but disconcerting to talk with, as he was extremely knowledgeable but seemed to be talking to someone behind you. But we got to know each other and our hobbies and interests, and when I

mentioned I was the audio-visual person in high school he said great, we need someone to run the Bell and Howell 16mm projectors for all the films we would be watching for training and entertainment.

He gave me the key to the supply room so I could see the projectors, but what I noticed first was a small electric fan, which I immediately “borrowed.” Only those who have lived (or fought) in hot climates know how oppressive heat is and how it feels to wake up from a nap in a pool of sweat. But the small fan did the job, with one result that for the rest of my life I always sleep with a fan.

The next day was our first real day, and we started to learn the French words for this type of training; we were at “le Stage” and the volunteers were “les Stagaires.” One of the staff (I remember her because for the first time I saw a woman with henna-tinted hair) handed out a syllabus, fresh from an old mimeograph machine with the blue ink still slightly wet. I was back in elementary school where the ink smell made you put your nose up to the paper and sniff deeply, which I did.

The Stage leader Andy introduced himself and gave an overview of the Stage training schedule. The next speaker was the Peace Corps Director for Senegal, Jack. After the college classes where the professor was trying to help you truly understand a topic, and the frank conversations in Philadelphia, it was strange listening to someone talk re-assuringly for 20 minutes but say very little, I was still new to hearing from those in political positions.

The next speaker was Chuck, who was a staff member who did not help with the actual training but had the job title of Logistics Coordinator, a title that needs to be in capital letters. In a developed country it sounds like some Gilbert and Sullivan role, here the job was vital to the success of Le Stage. Think of Radar in M.A.S.H., but where you had to put up with whining Americans as well as locals whose sense of time and schedule was entirely different. I got to know him quite well both at Le Stage and where I ended up being posted, since he worked out of the same post. He definitely had the right temperament for the job, as one day I spent what was an afternoon off driving with him all over Dakar procuring toilet paper, taking six hours to do what in the States would take ten minutes.

After Chuck was Nancy, who headed the teaching staff that would ideally have us leave Le Stage ready to teach TEFL to classrooms at all levels. This would be the hardest (but most interesting) part of training, since this was a real summer school for Senegalese students wanting to learn English, and we would be teaching in live classrooms from 9 to 12 every day. We would be critiqued by the staff, especially Nancy, to see if we had not only the ability to teach but also the stamina to be in the classroom, since at your post you might be walking back and forth in the classroom for up to five classes a day.

After a brief introduction by the other training staff members, the Senegalese trainers introduced themselves and what subject area they would cover, usually in the various cultures and languages spoken in Senegal as well as French. They were all very relaxed and easy-going, and had obviously done this many times.

We were put in groups of three, and placed in a class at a specific level for a week. The first two days the staff member taught the three hours, after which he or she would explain the pedagogical techniques that were used. The next three days we had to study the material the night before, and then take turns teaching. We were then critiqued by the staff member, especially to point out our weaknesses. By the end of the week, you were supposed to be pretty proficient for that level, and the next week you would be in another class with different volunteers and another staff member.

For the first class my other volunteers were (of course) Sue Lutz and Geoff, with the staff member Nancy herself. I could tell Sue was wondering how she ended up with such a flake. I learned later that volunteers who seemed to inhabit only their private world were called space cadets, or by the Senegalese trainers *les hommes d'espace*. Luckily Sue came to realize I wasn't one, as I and Nancy immediately clicked since my French was good and I had no problem understanding the pedagogical theory (which I disagreed with, but Signora Boriosi from my Italian class had spoiled me). So I was seen as sane and competent. And Geoff, while not a *l'homme d'espace*, was from California and I had never been around a true West Coast person, hearing phrases like he was "mellow" with the class, or he wouldn't "flip out" if he made a mistake. And at six-foot-nine and 210, he walked with the gait of Mr. Natural, so you wouldn't notice his height. But he was an elite athlete, as we would find out later.

After the first week of classes I got to talking with Nancy. She wondered how any time we talked, I always ended up referring to a Roman emperor, Plato, or various economists to help explain a point. I said I went to UVa where for two years most students had to take a core set of classes regardless of what you ended up majoring in. Nancy said she never took a true Western Civilization two-semester course. When I said I could give her a list of books to read (a bad-manners habit I still have), she countered, how about a lecture at least once a week like a class, and if you follow through I will try to get you a gift once I figure out what you like to do? The material was still fresh in my head, so I agreed to at least one 50-minute lecture a week.

I usually gave these "lectures" after the morning training and before lunch (lunch was always 50 minutes late, no matter what the staff tried; it was a cultural thing). I ended up giving about twenty 50-minute lectures, from Egypt to now; all I needed to do was write down the key concepts on a card and then talk from those. Her favorite lecture was "From Luther to Hitler", and when I told her that was actually a book title she didn't believe me.

As I continued to do my lectures, we continued to cycle through the grade levels, with each level requiring a different skill set and energy level. You could tell that the staff would hope to see where a volunteer was most comfortable and confident, and use that as one criterion for where to place a volunteer. Volunteers with the best teaching skills and highest energy levels would probably go to a government school where the students needed a forceful teacher who would not tolerate misbehavior. Those who were less confident and not as high energy might end up in a private Catholic school or the university, where good student behavior was a given.

There were two shortened weeks (3-day) for the students, and during those 4-day breaks, small groups of volunteers would travel to existing posts to stay at a Peace Corps house, talk to the veteran volunteers (both TEFL and village), and tour the local area. Looking back, I can see this as a continuation of the winnowing process in Philadelphia, since life outside urban Dakar was completely different.

For the first visit I was going with one volunteer to Tombacunda, the post farthest east from Dakar. This meant a day-long trip, much of it over non-asphalt (i.e. washboard) road. The other volunteer was one of two blacks among us, and he seemed to have an almost Buddhist calm, so I felt lucky to have a travel companion of his temperament.

The trip began at six a.m. at the main taxi center of Dakar, where cars and buses of every imaginable type and size were gathered into groups, with each group going to towns in a certain direction, like the train stations (*Gares*) in Paris. Our group was the *Gare de l'Est*, and almost all the vehicles were Peugeot 504 station wagons. I had ridden in one a few times before, and it was obvious why it was the vehicle that conquered French West Africa; like the Mercedes 200 it was simple, well-built, and would last forever if you took care of it. There was no set departure time. Once enough people had gathered around a vehicle with the same destination, the driver would negotiate a price for the ride and the separate fee for each person's baggage. Then you put your bag(s) in the back, got in, and took off.

The first part of the trip was great. I had the front passenger seat, and like a dog in a pick-up I watched everything go by, as the land got drier and palms gave way to the national tree, the Baobab, which could survive in the brutally hot savannah because of its deep roots. At Kaolack, the main central city in Senegal, we turned straight east and went for several hours over washboard. The driver had to slow to 60 kilometers (40 miles) per hour, but the Peugeot suspension seemed to match the rhythm of the washboard, so while it was bumpy it was tolerable.

We arrived at Tombacunda late afternoon, and were met at the taxi-gare by the TEFL volunteer, Tom. Tom was actually finishing up his tour, and he would be replaced by one or two volunteers from our group.

While walking to the TEFL Peace Corps house, you could see why a place like this would excite or depress you. It was a large but still rural town, so if you enjoyed quiet, seclusion, and were semi-athletic it was great. Tom mentioned that he ran every morning, and on his front porch there was a barbell made out of a water pipe with a Nestle powdered milk can filled with cement stuck at each end. It was obvious that Tom was extremely fit.

For dinner we had chicken and rice with tomatoes, and it was not like in the States, as Tom bought a live chicken at the market on the way back to the house. He laid the chicken's head toward the southeast, said "Besimi lai" and slit the chicken's throat. He held it there until all the blood had drained, and then plucked, gutted, and cut the chicken into pieces. He then placed these on an iron grill over a dirt trench filled with char-wood that he had previously lit. (I honestly don't know how using wood for cooking is still possible; I'll have to read up on the use of solar ovens.)

We didn't eat until 9, but most of the dinner conversation was during the preparation and cooking. (The chicken tasted much different than any store-bought chicken. It had little fat but with the spices tasted almost like a tender steak.) Tom said that while some called his post "hell's half acre," its remoteness appealed to him, and he felt he had truly helped in his teaching of students. He taught all day and thought it was a good idea to have two people. But he mentioned the post had a troubled past; a couple arrived a few years back, and the remoteness had destroyed rather than strengthened their relationship. The village volunteers would R&R at the USAID house instead of the TEFL house, since the couple had stopped talking to each other while still forced to live together.

Before retiring, Tom asked if we would like to join him on a morning run, from 6 to 7. I accepted, since I had both running shoes and leather hiking boots, and I didn't know if we were going to run laps in town or go out in the bush.

I got up at 5:45 and was ready at 6 (I miss youth when you just get out of bed, get dressed, and are ready for intense exercise.) I asked Tom where we were going, and he said through the bush, so I put on my boots, which amused Tom since he was wearing Bata sandals.

But buying the leather hiking boots was a life saver, since I have always had weak feet (and am now in full therapy mode to deal with them). Before leaving for Philadelphia, I was with my older sister at the local Army & Navy store. A basic desert boot was \$40, but my sister insisted I buy the \$60 pair with a full steel tongue, heavier leather, and higher quality stitching. Having that second pair put a lot less strain on my feet, and it did follow my German habit of consumption; be frugal except where you must have the right equipment, and then money is irrelevant. I still spend like this, which has led to some interesting purchases.

But running in the Savannah would have been fine in running shoes, because of the revelation about running surfaces *en brousse*. The paths (*les pistes*) between villages were so well worn that there was a fine layer of sand above packed dirt, a perfect surface for running. Also, we would run about a mile and come to a village, where we had to stop and greet villagers with the obligatory “assalum’alehkum”, as they were starting the morning chores or the women were going off with a bucket on their head to get the day’s supply of water. By running on such a surface and stopping every mile, the four-mile run wasn’t hard and you didn’t feel that sore. (I’ll have more to say on this when I began running at my post.)

After a quick cold shower the three of us walked to the school to take an early morning tour. School was out for the summer, and so going through the classrooms was not a problem. The school was primitive (all classes had a metal roof, three walls with windows and a half-height fourth wall), but Tom said the weather and mosquitos in the fall and winter were tolerable. The other volunteer was cheerful but only asked a few questions, while I asked a lot of questions since I was skeptical how well one could teach when comparing this to what we had in Dakar.

In the afternoon we visited the house used by USAID, and a lot of the village volunteers would R&R here. It really was a nicer house than the TEFL house, with a courtyard that had grass (which seemed exotic by this point), and an air-conditioned room, something most volunteers could only dream of. There we met an USAID worker, an older American who was obviously a lifetime expat, and he mentioned he was going to Dakar the next day and we could come along if we liked.

We got up early and went to the USAID house with our bags, and the American expat was already loading up his vehicle, an old Land Rover. It certainly looked like the car that conquered British West (and East) Africa. It was simple, rugged, and had a large winch attached to the front. As we loaded our bags and got in, I asked about the winch, and he said it was the greatest feature of the vehicle. The winch was powered by the engine, not the battery, and so it was called a power take-off winch. With this winch you could almost pull the vehicle vertically out of a ditch. He said electric winches “couldn’t pull a whore off a teapot,” and to this day I have no idea what that phrase meant.

We took off and it looked like an enjoyable ride until we hit the washboard. I don’t know if it was the long wheelbase or the speed, but the jarring was terrible. Maybe he had a special driver seat, but I quickly began to panic, as did the other volunteer. We climbed in back and lay on top of the baggage, which made it tolerable. It was two hours less than the 504’s time on the washboard road, and we were glad to get to Kaolack and sit up again.

After this first visit we were supposed to be interviewed by the staff to see what we liked and didn’t like, but apparently the other volunteer went right to the Peace Corps

office and said I quit, and on Monday he was flying home. I still wonder about his outwardly calm demeanor and whether I did something wrong.

I didn't know if it was something I ate on the visit or back at Le Stage, but I soon came down with dysentery. I suppose it needs to happen sooner or later, so you might as well get it over with (such as the sea sickness I had on the fishing boat). For three days I felt like I was dying, but the doctor said keep drinking water and add a UN electrolyte package now and then. While not as bad as cholera, the principle of treatment is the same; stay hydrated even though you are having diarrhea to the point where it is clear, and your body will recover. I spent a lot of time on a squat toilet, but I had good knees back then. I remember lying on a bench at 3 a.m. next to the volleyball court, the morning sea breeze was starting and I was near a toilet. It wasn't as bad as my 3rd day on the first fishing trip, but I still felt like a piece of ash just spit out of a volcano.

But the doctor was right; I did recover, and after that I never had an intestinal problem. Yet it did make me think later about the role of medicine in the modern and third world. Ever since Senegal, I never had as much as a cold until my 40's (my own stupidity is what destroyed my health), and some volunteers were constantly sick, so you wondered how long they would have lasted without modern medicine.

By the fourth week we had settled into a routine for classes, training, recreation, and entertainment.

For meals, we had at lunch almost every day *Ceebu Jen*, a fish, rice, and vegetable dish, and I never tired of it since it was freshly made and, depending on what the cooks bought that morning, there were different types of seafood. (I never minded lunch being late because that allowed me to give a lecture and I knew what it took to make a meal from scratch for a large group.) Back then I had no problem eating foods that were highly spiced, and to add heat to the dish there was a small pepper the size and look of a cherry tomato. I don't know how high it is on the scale of heat, but if you cut the pepper in half and rubbed the exposed surface over your dish, it became like highly spiced chili. One day Sue went into space cadette mode and popped one into her mouth, and the scene became one of panic. Luckily the Peace Corps doctor was visiting and he made Sue chew and spit out bananas and then had her drink water. I had never seen someone's face so red in my life.

For dinner we usually had *yassa* (a chicken dish), but sometimes we would have *mafe*, a rice with meat and peanut sauce, which I could eat forever. Once at my post I would get to know the cooks at local restaurants and ask them to make *yassa* that included *mafe* on the side; it was unconventional but it became my favorite dish.

For viewing films, I was back in high school, there was an American cultural center and my job was to pick up the films we would show in the mess hall Friday and Saturday night. These were movie nights so those not “going out” wouldn’t feel like betas. I asked for input since I definitely knew the films I wanted to watch. But the people at the Stage at this day and hour were nerds like me, so we watched classic films up through the 50s, such as *The Gold Rush* with Chaplin (for the snow), and *The African Queen*. I was even thinking back to the Radio Shack in Hampton; before showing a film I always threaded it and showed about 10 minutes to see if the film would break, which it sometimes did. I used a device similar to the one I had bought from Radio Shack to cut, splice, and glue the film segment, usually resulting in only a small blip and pop when it went through the projector during the show.

On Saturday afternoon I would usually spend the afternoon at the *Isle de Gorée*; Tim, a staff member, had been to a lecture and thought it might be interesting to take me along. He also knew the Peace Corps doctor who rented an apartment on the inhabited part of the island. The afternoons I spent there would probably cost \$1000/day now. The apartment was like a small Mediterranean villa, and it was a perfect home base for clothing, snorkeling gear, picnic food, etc. We would go to the back of the island and jump off a rock with our snorkeling gear. The water was crystal clear and about 15 feet deep, never thinking there was nobody watching us (or me alone) between that rock and the open ocean. I later learned to scuba dive, but nothing has compared to the simplicity of snorkeling in a reef with no other humans (The only similar experience was on the Saudi Arabia side of the Red Sea, but that is another story.)

Other times we would go up to a cliff and eat a simple meal, such as the morning baguette with cheese and fruit. I could never figure out why people either got off the ferry and walked ten yards to lie all day on the pebble beach, or visited only the slave embarkation point (at the end of a tunnel, whose exit was a boat ramp). But that was fine by me. The *Isle de Gorée* was also the place where the longtime president Léopold Senghor had a house, and I still have a picture of the house with the backdrop of the ferry returning to the mainland.

I also got to know the Peace Corps doctor while visiting *Gorée*. He was still in his 30’s and athletic. He was sharing his apartment with his Senegalese girlfriend. Being curious, I asked about his background, since he had the jaded cynicism of a combat or emergency medic. He did his residency at a hospital in South Chicago (Mercy?) and he actually enjoyed working in the ER Friday and Saturday nights, where he got plenty of experience with knife and gunshot wounds. It may have been his training or personality, but if you were in agony and screamed you were dying, and he knew you were not actually dying, he might pay attention to you. I found out later he did get in trouble when to a volunteer seeking birth control pills he quipped “Does your mom know you’re taking these?” I enjoyed seeing him whenever I came back to Dakar. But he decided

after a while to move on. Someone told me later it was a sad scene at the airport, as he left his crying girlfriend behind as he got on the plane.

For recreation, we usually played basketball or volleyball. I noticed that Geoff, at 6'9", never played basketball with us, and by mistake I cajoled him to play. He walked like he was never in a hurry, like a deliberate hiker, but once on the court he was unstoppable. The larger players would double-team him, but once within five feet of the basket he scored at will, playing almost in slow motion as the defenders circled around him and flailed their arms. After 10 minutes he left the court, since it was obvious the team that included him would win every game.

He was too good never to have played on an elite college basketball team, and as he left the court and I asked him where he played. He played at Duke, but mainly as a reserve, so he appeared in games only when the outcome was no longer in doubt and fans were leaving. Although he probably didn't play many minutes, he must have played in practice with or against Mike Giminsky, one of college basketball's great centers. (I went to UVA before Ralph Sampson arrived.) It was sobering to think someone of his caliber played only in the waning moments in Cameron Indoor Stadium, and then simply stopped playing.

As we went through the next few weeks of training up until our next post visit, I began to figure out the personalities of the other volunteers and could guess what type of posting they might get. (You could request a post but the staff had the final say.) Joan and Peggy were extroverts with high energy, so it made sense they would end up in Kaolack since it required a lot of energy but wasn't overwhelming. I also enjoyed talking politics with them, as they were very sharp but never obnoxious. I envied Lisa who seemed just to glide through everything, never showing stress. She ended up in Djoula, a beautiful small town on the coast south of Dakar, at a small Catholic school where teaching was a breeze. Sue and Will ended up at the University of Dakar; they were probably seen as cerebral. I wasn't sure about Celeste or Kathy, since I hadn't been in a classroom with them yet. But for our second post visit, they and I would tour the southern region of Senegal, the Casamance (named after the main river there). Tim would be our chaperone.

I could see that Tim would have his hands full with three volunteers, especially the women. Kathy still acted like she had just arrived, and on the way down she rolled down the window of the 504 at high speed, stuck out her camera and yelled, "I'm gonna take me a picture of a hut!" But the real problem was Celeste; she was actually a very nice person and I always enjoyed being with her, but like Joan she was slightly overweight, and for some reason Senegalese men find women with this build and a pretty face highly attractive. I let Tim deal with Celeste and the pop-up suitors while I tried to get Kathy to stop acting like she was on speed. We did manage to visit the main town of the Casamance, Zichinchor, the small town Sedhiou farther up the Casamance River, and the mid-size town Kolda, where the Casamance ends. I knew Celeste would be constantly

wooded in any public school, and luckily she did end up in Dakar. But Kathy, like the volunteer I went with to Tombacunda, quit after this trip, and I honestly didn't understand how she had gotten this far.

After this second and final post tour, I was finishing up my lectures to Nancy, with various members dropping in to listen.

Towards the end of these ad hoc lectures I saw more of Leslie, a dark-haired woman who was beautiful but not in a classic sense. She had wide eyes and slightly freckled skin that was perfect for her face. My main focus was Nancy, since she was constantly asking questions and wanting me to list the appropriate books to read for each lecture. Eventually we got to the Age of Enlightenment Revolution, and how the socio-economic structure of France was on the verge of collapse. Leslie jumped in and not only asked questions but added to any point I made. At lunch following this lecture, we got to talking; she had majored in French and French history, with her specialty 18th century France and the *Philosophes*. My knowledge of French and French history was perhaps better, but I know when not to show off my knowledge to a woman; Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook was arrogant with his girlfriend at Harvard, but I guess he didn't care that she left him.

One of the treats for Peace Corps volunteers was being invited to the ambassador's house, as it had a nice pool and recreation rooms for various games like ping pong, foosball, etc. Volunteers were the lowest on the totem pole of expats (up the chain were USAID workers and at the top were lead engineers on large corporate or government projects),

One time after a long tiring day of training, the volunteers were invited to an evening pool party there. Since this was the beginning my expatriate lifestyle, I noticed the bar, where I discovered how much I enjoyed gin and tonics. (By the end of the evening I had six.) Towards the end of the party, one of the staff leaders asked who wanted to go for a "moonlight" swim at Mystery Beach, named because it was just north of Dakar but had few tourists. (Back then many third-world beaches were empty because the flies and mosquitoes were so bad during the day and on windless nights.) So I grabbed my swimsuit and joined others in the back of an open pickup truck to go down the seaside highway. It is amazing all of us over 50 are not dead from all the things we did and thought of as normal.

Once again I was being naïve. In this subculture a "moonlight" swim meant taking all of your clothes off, as I watched staff members disrobe and jump into the pounding surf. There was moonlight, but a strong undertow and no lifeguards; back then you just did these things. I then saw Leslie with her swimsuit on, which I actually found relieving, and we ran down to the beach. Being a "water boy" meant we had a good time, as I showed her how to be grabbed by the undertow, taken out 100 yards, and then to swim parallel to the beach and come back in. We walked back up the beach to relax, but the

salt and the gin and tonics made themselves known as I had to lie down because of the oncoming nausea. Leslie was like an ER nurse and took it all in stride, as she sat down beside me and put my head in her lap. When I started to convulse, she calmly grabbed my hair, put my head off to the side, let me throw up, covered it over with sand, and returned my head to her lap. All I remember of the return trip in the back of the pickup truck was that my head was still in her lap. I was in heaven and hell.

And with the end of the lectures, Nancy gave me a great gift. I had mentioned I was an avid cyclist and she knew a French doctor who was leaving Senegal and she had bought from him a Peugeot 10-speed, almost the same model I had when I grew up and cycled through Phoebus and around Fort Monroe. This was a true gift, since bicycles could not be imported and you had no choice but to buy the locally-made Peugeot copy. The copy had low-quality components, only 5 gears, and wide tires and therefore not a real touring bike. It was mainly for transporting produce over the hard sand roads.

I received the bicycle a week before we were to travel to our posts, and I loved cycling around Dakar early in the morning, as any seemingly large and clogged city is actually not so large and even navigable at 5:30 AM. One thing Nancy warned me about was the leather saddle, and it was awful at first. But like a pair of real Levi jeans, it began to mold to my body. Soon nobody else could ride it, saying it was a torture machine. I however could ride for hours and not be sore. I see in bike shops today that leather saddles are available again, and with a little better spring technology they would be the superior custom saddle.

On my last Sunday I cycled up to where the highway curved around a hill, and from there I got a good view of the Dakar airport. In retrospect this experience was a box checked off my bucket list, seeing the Concorde takeoff. There was a once-a-week round-trip flight from Paris to Dakar to Paris. The takeoff was a sight and sound for both good and ill, as I watched the plane accelerate much faster than a normal passenger jet, and then heard the roar of the engines. It then lifted off and disappeared over the horizon in less than a minute, leaving behind a black plume that started on the runway and continued well into the flight.

Towards the end of training Tim would meet an old friend who was now a Foreign Service Officer (FSO) at the embassy. They would take me to the French restaurant *la Paix*, and we had some of the best food and raucous conversation I've ever had.

After graduation we were "released" to our specific locations on different dates. The day before my turn to fly to my site, Kolda, I asked Leslie out to *la Paix* and she accepted. I didn't pack that afternoon, since I thought I would get back around nine, giving me time to pack for the 6 a.m. flight the next morning.

We went off to the restaurant and I let Leslie do most of the ordering, sometimes adding a bit of French if the waiter looked confused. After a wonderful meal, Leslie wanted to know if we could take a walk before going back to Le Stage.

About two blocks north from the restaurant was the Palais de Justice, with its perfect glass front and broken glass back that faced the ocean. Tim had shown me a path that went down to some large rocks on the shore just above the surf.

We walked until we got to one of the larger rocks and sat down, guided only by the moonlight. Just then a breeze came up, and it actually became quite cool, since we had acclimatized and now wore only cotton clothes. So I placed her back against my side and my arm around her waist, and there we talked. I let her do most of the talking, since I was content not talking. Despite her easygoing bravado (she would get up early and run four miles and would go into any area of Dakar day or night), she admitted she was scared about what she was doing here, how she had broken up with a boyfriend who did not want her to go into the Peace Corps, etc. Now and then a large wave would crash against the rock and she would flinch, but I had wedged my left leg in one of the rock cracks, and I could hold her tight, so she felt safe, not worrying about being swept off the rock.

We took a taxi back to the training camp, where to my surprise another taxi was letting out another trainee with a staff member. I later learned that trainees were a particular target of both the Western and Senegalese staff, and while a few affairs ended well, most ended very badly.

By now it was 4 a.m., so I asked the taxi to wait. Leslie helped me pack and take my duffel bag and bike down to the entrance, where I put my bike into the trunk, got into the taxi, and said goodbye. I arrived at the airport and boarded for the first of many times a DC-3, the workhorse for short flights in Africa at that time. To say I was both exhausted and elated was putting it mildly.

Two hours later the plane landed in Kolda, where the school master greeted me and took me to the Lycee to meet the other teachers.

After touring the school, I put my duffel bag on the rear carrier that was included with my bike (thank you, Nancy), and cycled to the Peace Corps house. I was new to cycling on dirt and packed sand, and I would have to master this skill if I were to do any traveling by bike. The house was empty, but I knew Chuck would be arriving before long and there was plenty to do. The house was almost a duplex, which is what you want, since you are having volunteers coming in from en brousse and wanting to crash a few days. You don't want to get in each other's way. I staked out what I felt was my "turf" since this was mainly my house and hoped Chuck and the other volunteer who worked out in a village would agree. In the backyard was a large pile of discarded "stuff" (which I would see a lot more decades later in rural southern homes), but it included the first

things I wanted: a water pipe and at least two large empty cans of Nestlé powdered milk. (People put Nestlé powder in their coffee, or they used sweetened condensed milk, which at first is vile, but soon you're eating it straight out the can with a tablespoon.)

I immediately went to the hardware store and got a small bag of cement. I poured in half the bag in one Nestlé can, mixed in water to form cement, and stuck the pipe vertically in. After 24 hours, I flipped the pipe and did the other end. Also at the hardware store I asked the owner (a Lebanese), where I could find a carpenter who would build me a simple weight bench. He was happy to be the middleman, quoted me a price, which wasn't bad, and the next week I picked up my bench and took it home. I know this sounds trite, but in remote places the simplest things (such as the right tool or object) can make all the difference.

Chuck arrived the next day to spend a few days, and he was the perfect person to introduce me to people in town, being very good in French and Fulani, the local language. (Fulani is actually spoken throughout Western Africa, as they are descended from cow herders and were nomadic.) We met the town *prefet* (prefect) and had dinners with the patriarchs of the major families, each one having a cluster of huts around a central courtyard. Since I was a guest, we would usually have freshly prepared chicken or lamb. Afterwards we would talk during a tea ceremony, which I came to know in exact detail later on.

The only other ex-pats was a Danish couple who had a Western house on the other side of town, which was like entering another world, with its climate control, a full set of appliances, and (what I actually enjoyed most when visiting them) a big yellow lab. The husband was there to do a long-range study on the feasibility of paving the road from Kolda northeast to Velingara, then north to Tombacunda. The ultimate goal would be a paved circuit in the middle section of Senegal, which would in some ways be an economic game changer. But I'm glad I left before anything was implemented. I did meet with them about every other week, and we had a good time, but it was definitely an old-world relation; to have any sort of real friendship would take many years and this was not the place for that.

As I began using the barbell and bench to come up with a routine to keep me sane, I was taken aback by the number of books in the house. Other volunteers over the years must've brought them in. Many were the standard Peace Corps paperbacks, such as *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, but others were the old classics of literature and history. Chuck told me that a previous volunteer was fighting the Cold War in his head, and the books he left reflected that, such as *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?*, which seemed absurd but is now obvious, or *None Dare Call it Treason*, where someone had blacked out the "T". I resolved to read intensely for two hours a day, and was able to fill in a lot of gaps in my knowledge of world history. Only in looking back do I realize what a luxury it was to read in a non-pressure environment, where you retain more. In adult

life, all my reading has been done for a goal, and once attained I was too tired to read anything else.

The school was a public school and I had the middle levels, which was fine since the lower and upper levels were basically translating the English lessons to French and doing very little speaking. They therefore could speak very little coherent English, although they could pass the written exam. This was definitely teaching to the test. I tried the oral method I was trained in and immediately inspired a rebellion, with students standing up and shouting "On n'a rien compris!" ("We understand nothing!") I came up with a compromise; at the American Cultural Center they had for English language learners a set of posters from a British company. Each large poster is a set of four drawings that tell a story, and this is more in line with my theory of learning a language, it was oral yet structural. I had made many copies of the smaller set of drawings of the posters and gave one to each table of two students. We might start by translating all the possible vocabulary in the story, and only then I could ask questions and ask for answers, since the students were comfortable with the vocabulary, and they knew the correct pronunciation because they had heard me speak the words many times. Not quite as good as Boriosi in Perugia in my Italian days, but the classes turned around since they were learning a lot from a native English speaker who spoke French. The students who became my allies taught me the French idioms some would make up and quietly murmur, so I could have the appropriate zinger response.

Soon a group of students began dropping by the house at the end of the week. Although I had been warned that inviting students over meant a chance of theft (my beautiful Mali blanket had disappeared), I wasn't going to let one student mean students couldn't come over. Like most students, they basically wanted a place to hang out, talk, and get food or drink for little or no money. I therefore provided my porch as well as the gunpowder tea, sugar cubes, and wood charcoal for the tea ceremony.

The tea ceremony is basically a backyard barbecue; it takes a few hours, there is a lot of conversation, and there is a protocol to the preparation. The wood charcoal is lit, and then the tea and water is placed in the teapot and placed over the charcoal. As the water begins to boil, a set number of sugar cubes is slowly added, and once the sugar is dissolved the tea is poured in small glasses. The first glass is very bitter and overwhelms the sugar's sweetness. The process is repeated, and this time the taste is less bitter and you can taste the sweetness of the sugar. The third and last time the tea is mild and tastes very sweet, with the sweetness enhanced because of the previous two glasses. It would take from 2 to 3 hours, but there is no sense of schedule; the ceremony is over when it is over.

Another activity that I did with the students outside of school was to form a running club. Tom on that first sample trip had shown me how much fun it is to run in the savannah, and the students wanted a club as they would get running shoes and Tiger Balm. (For some reason they thought Tiger Balm, a Chinese BenGay, had almost magical

properties.) Starting the club was easy; I just went to Zichinchor and came back with shoes in their sizes and a case of Tiger Balm.

We set up a course, a piste that went out to a village and back. I convinced a teacher to ride the course on his moped to get the distance, a little over 4 miles. I thought I was a pretty good runner, but the students, who never ran in any organization or had a coach, were natural runners already. I remember one student, Thiamy Baldé, age 13, ran a 6:30 mile in sandals that were more like flip-flops, and once he got running shoes it dropped to a 5:30 mile. I couldn't figure out where they ran enough to be in such shape, but my theory was they ran between villages when they were growing up.

But the real reason they were in such shape became obvious when I started another activity, or really project, of growing food. I knew most of the students weren't starving but were usually hungry, and I remembered how much food my mom produced from a 15 ft.² garden back in Hampton. A family of one of the students had a 10 m² area of fallow land not far from my house, and we could use it if I supplied what was needed. I was going up to Dakar for a weekend in two weeks to see people and dropped by the US Embassy to talk with an attaché who worked with USAID projects.

When I gave him my idea of having students grow food on the land if they were given supplies, he responded that small projects like this had been coordinated with the local prefect and had not worked out, and so the villagers now had to come up with the resources so they would "have a stake," which sounded like the latest buzz phrase. When I heard that I forgot my training and went into New-World mode; rather than make it a "project" with the government, why not loan the money directly to a village, and see what worked and what didn't? Otherwise it was the old cliché of only getting a loan approved if you could prove you didn't need the money, and money was the one thing a village would never have. The look on his face told me this was not his usual bureaucrat-to-bureaucrat conversation, and he said that was an interesting perspective and I could leave.

So I ended up simply buying the supplies, which included seeds, tools, some rich earth soil, and, most importantly, water from my sink that was poured into two large watering cans and taken to the plot by wheelbarrow.

Working with the students was fun and sobering, as they put my work on the fishing boat during college summers to shame. I simply could not keep pace with them as they broke the ground in rows. The critical tool was a hoe that had a diamond shaped piece of metal on the end. It was expensive for a village to buy but it really did make breaking the ground easy. I now saw how Thiamy Baldé got in such shape, as he could break soil with this hoe for 20 minutes straight. I tried to use the hoe and after five minutes my muscles were aching and I was almost panting.

The project was instructive in that it showed the paradox of rural life. Many of the students wanted to leave Kolda and attend Dakar University so they could get a "real" job. But the garden project showed what having supplies can do with the planting and growing of food; we ended up with a ton of vegetables (almost as good in ratio what my mom's garden produced). Half the produce went to families of the students and half we sold in the city market, where we made about 10% of what I provided, so if this were a true loan it would be paid back in ten years. Chuck found out about the garden when he saw the monthly water billing and went crazy, assuming there was a hole in the intake pipe, but I assured him there was no hole and I would pay. I also took a picture of the garden when it was full of vegetables. I showed it to an USAID worker later when I was in Dakar, and he couldn't believe kids could do this. But it was an exercise in capitalism, since there was plenty of labor available, but capital has to be risked if a project is to move forward.

When I saw the kids working in the garden or went by villages on my morning run, I was reminded, like on the fishing boat, of the incredible shape everybody was in, yet they would overwork themselves and have in later years pain-wracked bodies. When running on the pistes, I would run around the women and girls who every morning would walk miles with a bucket to get the family's daily water supply, and then walk back with an eight liter (2 gallon) weight on their head, keeping the bucket level at all times. If I ran on a non-school day I would start my run later, and by then the women were back at the village, with two or three women each holding a large pestle and in rhythm pounding the mortar which contained millet.

Once I ran with a student on a weekend morning, and as we went by a group of women pounding millet I asked the student if I could try it. He said that was not a good idea since that was woman's work, but I asked him to make up something about me working on a project for school. The women were confused but consented, and just like with the hoe, after five minutes my shoulders and legs were almost shaking with fatigue. My student thanked them and we went on. I quickly made up a reason we had to go back, since running was agony after using the pestle. Experiences like this do highlight the paradox (really insanity) of physical exercise in the world, especially in the last 30 years. I can see wealthy people paying \$1000 a day for a special Zen "carry water, chop wood" retreat, where they would walk 1 mile with a small pail of water on their head, and then show teamwork by beating millet in rhythm together. It would then finish with a Buddhist colored sand particles exercise, but instead of constructing a beautiful picture of particles and then blowing them away, you would dig a hole and fill it back in again several times.

Because I was so busy with school and these activities, I put in the back of my mind to write Leslie; she had flown the day after me to Tombacunda, the town I had visited as part of a training exercise. Since I did not want to be pushy, I did not write any letters to

her, since I hoped she would want to write me. But for two months no letters came, so I decided to see her and some of the volunteers who were working on projects with the USAID.

I tried to bicycle there, but I had a flat tire which was for the better since the road was really impassable, with no hard ridge of sand next to the washboard. I flagged down a water truck, strapped my bike to the back of the truck, and got into town earlier than I originally expected, noon on a brutally hot day. I went to the USAID house first, where I had a warm welcome from a staff member I met at Le Stage. There was also a good-looking guy in immaculate tropical clothes, who was implementing his village irrigation project, which had USAID backing. My friend said this person always got his plans approved and funded; I later learned he was one of Bush Sr.'s nephews.

When I asked about Leslie and the other woman volunteer who went with her, they said the two of them kept to themselves and tended not to interact with the others. That was strange, but I knew something was amiss when I remembered the other woman volunteer, Jan Luis Haupt-li, at the Stage. She had strong opinions and not much else, so I worried how she might have influenced Leslie. I decided the next day to go to the other side of town to see Leslie and say hi. I knocked and there was Leslie, and instead of a sun dress, she now wore a large robe type dress. I asked if I could visit, but she said no and that I was to leave.

Disconcerted, I went back to Kolda, and during a school break returned to Dakar to visit Will, the friend I made at training who really was the smartest person in the room. He was teaching at the University. (He never said much when he attended my lectures, but he commented later it was like watching a peacock show off his black and white feathers.) But he knew Jan and since in Peace Corps there were no secrets (except to me), he had learned that her husband had committed suicide before she decided to volunteer. Will wasn't sure what type of influence Jan could be having on Leslie, but we laughed when I mentioned Sylvia Plath. I have read Plath and can see why scholars vary wildly on their opinion of her (from genius to amateur), but one thing is for sure; if a woman has a copy of *The Bell Jar* by Plath on her coffee table, any relationship with that woman is doomed.

I would see Leslie at various get-togethers and say hi, but she was a different person, and mine was not to reason why.

But on the bright side I returned to commiserate with Bombay, a dog I ended up adopting after only about two weeks in Kolda. While I know all the socioeconomic, historical, and the religious reasons cats and dogs are treated poorly (or eaten), I refuse to accept such behavior. As a child of Western civilization, I believe, like the historian Alfred North Whitehead, that after the Greeks everything is a footnote. The Greek myth about the behavior of dogs is that as the gods created animals, they decided to make humans have a higher level of intelligence (as long as they didn't get too uppity and

discover fire). The land parted, with all the animals on one side and humans on the other. All the animals agreed with this, since they knew humans could not be trusted. But at the last possible moment, the dogs decided to jump over to the side with the humans; despite the human's capacity for gratuitous cruelty, they took the risk that loyalty would be rewarded with a lifelong bond and so threw in their lot. (Of course I could simply say my mom was English and so I understand and communicate with all animals better than with humans.)

Dogs here were seen as nuisances, but their population was not controlled in any humane fashion. There was a large field outside of most small towns where the dogs collected every night to fight over turf, and on some nights when the wind was right you could hear the low background noise of barking. One of my students took me to the one in Kolda one morning. From the landscape of dogs they all looked exhausted from the night, except a few who were still barking and posturing over a female or small dead animal. To prevent overpopulation, in the spring a large truckload of bones that had some meat attached was delivered there, and it was laced with rat poison. After a day or two the barking at night stopped and the vultures had a feast.

I could understand the reality that when food is scarce you can't spare anything for an animal that does not help you hunt for more food, but as with the Greek myth there was a gratuitous cruelty that was something deeper, such as when I was going to Zichinchor in a Peugeot pickup truck with benches in the trunk bed. We were going about 100 km (62 miles) per hour on an asphalt highway when a dog ran across the road in front of us. The driver could have swerved just a bit and avoided the dog, but kept going straight and hit the dog in the back hip. As we went on, we could hear the dog screaming in pain and then watch as it slid down the highway and then off to the side, obviously starting a long agonizing death. I'm grateful I don't have dreams about that scene, especially since everyone else in the truck laughed, probably thinking good, one less dog. I try not to be judgmental, but to me that is a sign of a still primitive culture.

My adoption happened as I was reading on my front porch when a group of street kids (*les gosses*) came to my gate shouting "Toubabi jouli nyanka tonk" or the foreigner (Toubab) always eats white rice. I saw they were holding something so I let them in and they walked up to the porch and let me see what they were gathered around holding. One of the kids who already spoke French showed me a very malnourished puppy, and since I was a Toubab I could have it for Fr.100. They had already chosen a name for the puppy, Bombay. Since this came out of nowhere I didn't have time to reflect, so I simply said no thanks, you could try some other houses that might be willing to adopt. (I had really just arrived in Kolda and I didn't yet understand how dogs were treated.) The *gosse* said okay and off they went.

About two hours later I was walking into town to eat at a restaurant (really some tables in a backyard). By pure chance I looked to the right along a wall and wondered why there was a small mound in the sand; it wasn't irregular like a rock would be. I went

over and it was the puppy and it was barely alive, *les gosses* had simply tossed it when they realized they would get no money. I picked it up and it looked at me and that was it; I hear so many people who go to the SPCA and go on and on about making the right "choice." The very word choice is irrelevant, which is why so many people end up with the wrong cat or dog, for in the end you don't choose a pet, it chooses you. Once the animal comes to you and essentially says "you're my human," the choice has been made. If the human is decent and is not looking for a "designer" or "pretty" animal, the feeling is mutual.

I now have a mild form of PTSD, and I love watching the TV series *Dogs of War*, where the host veteran chooses dogs for other veterans at an SPCA, and not through the military which has a long waiting list of vets wanting dogs that cost 60K to train. The host vet looks over the dogs available and narrows it down to three or four that should be a good match for the vet with PTSD. Sometimes all the selected dogs have to spend time with the person, but usually right after spending time with one dog, the vet with PTSD says "This is the one." When the host vet says "Are you sure? We have some more," the vet responds "No doubt," and it usually is the right choice. And finally, after the bureaucratic barbarity in its handling (i.e. abandoning) of service dogs in Vietnam, the U.S. military finally gets the Greek myth. In Afghanistan, local dogs that were shown kindness and given food by U.S. soldiers would bark right before a Taliban ambush. It is heartening that soldiers (at first with civilian political pressure) have been succeeding in sending home local dogs that kept their spirits up and/or saved their lives. It is certainly now part of our culture; when I was getting money from a Wells Fargo ATM, with my receipt was the story of a U.S. soldier and her adopted dog, Poptart.

So I took Bombay home and could see how bad he was, with very little muscle and a distended belly from worms. I went to the Danish couple and asked them for any medicines or food they had for their Labrador, and they did have some worm medicine and some canned food that was moist enough for him to eat. I crushed the worm medicine and put it in clean water and then gave it to him with an eyedropper, and he managed to eat some of the food, so he survived the night.

The next morning I had a neighbor go to the school and say I wasn't feeling well, then put Bombay in a small duffel bag and went off to Zichinchor. I asked at the main Peace Corps house where a veterinarian for ex-pats was, and luckily someone there had seen a sign with an address. I found the place and pleaded with the front nurse, who managed to fit me in. I told the veterinarian money was no object, and he was okay with that. The vet said Bombay was in bad shape, and gave him some shots, medicines, and a high calorie paste that I guess was for diabetic animals who needed a sugar fix.

It was touch and go for about a week back at Kolda, but I could trust Seny (explained next) to check up on him and give him his medicine while I was at school. After a week he seemed better and finally he developed an appetite. He then began to grow quite rapidly into what one calls a "world-mutt," fairly thin but muscular, with all the breeds

mixed in. But while he physically survived, the lack of protein (especially from his mother's milk) did mean that he was "special", and it took quite a while to teach him the basic commands. At times he was like the dog in the Looney Tunes cartoon, the one who just careens around, happy to be alive. But the Greek myth held; when I was reading on the porch or having students over for tea, he would stretch out on "his" mat, content that he was with humans and that one was his owner who would always care for him.

While the Danish couple had no problem feeding their Labrador, I did start to feel guilty feeding Bombay. When I visited a neighbor as the family was preparing the evening meal, I noticed that when the rice was washed and checked for small stones, not a grain was lost, even when done by an eight-year-old. Yet here I was giving Bombay not only *yasah*, but also adding an egg and a piece of meat for the evening meal. I let people at the market assume I had children, since I couldn't tell them the extra food was for a dog. But with the eggs and meat he developed a thin but durable and glossy coat, as well as strong teeth.

Also, just before I adopted Bombay I "adopted" a house helper, Seny, who announced himself at the gate with a three note whistle. He said he was the designated housekeeper for the Kolda Peace Corps house. I was skeptical, but remembered during training we were told that although the government condemned having household help since it smacked of neocolonialism, they actually promoted it since it provided someone a steady income. Seny was polite and his French was very good, so I let him in as he listed the standard set of chores he did and the weekly rate. I agreed and said while I would check with Charles to be sure, he could start now, which he did.

When Charles returned from en brousse a few days later, he confirmed Seny had been the house help for the TEFL teacher going back a while. I didn't like the idea of a volunteer having "staff", but Seny did make life a lot easier so I could focus on teaching preparation. One chore I really liked was that when a guest was arriving from out of town, he would take money from me to buy all the food and then prepare the meal for free, as long as he ate with us and could take with him leftovers. For me his most important chore was taking care of Bombay whenever I was away, since I knew Seny would take the money I gave him for food and actually spend it on Bombay. He was neutral about caring for a dog, but he did enjoy watching Bombay leap in the air to catch a piece of food.

Once Bombay settled in and Seny basically dropped by for house chores, things went well for about two months, except for the trip to Tombacunda. While I usually ran in the morning and timed the running club in the evening, one day I missed my morning run and decided to run during the last hour of sunlight. I hadn't been feeling well, thinking I had a cold or the flu, but being young and stupid I thought I could "sweat it out" with this run. I drank some water before taking off, but it was actually much hotter than the morning as the sun made all the walls give off heat. I managed to slog my way through,

and when I got back I drank a liter of Evian; once I stopped running and drank water, I would normally feel a heat wave go through my body and break out in a profuse sweat. But this time I stopped sweating and felt my skin getting dry and hot. I didn't panic, realizing it was heatstroke, so I drank another liter of water while standing in a cold shower. Once my body seemed to have settled down, I drank some more water and finally had to pee, and I noticed my urine was a dull red. Nowadays if this happened I would panic and think I was dying, but being young I thought, "That's interesting," and kept drinking water until by the next day I seemed to be okay. When I returned to Dakar I told the story to the Peace Corps doctor, and while he was not happy I had heatstroke (since if you don't get your temperature down it cooks your brain), he was glad I immediately took the cold shower and kept drinking water.

Once I recovered, my routine settled down again, with the main breaks hosting visitors or being a guest at another post. Some people just dropped by and said they heard there was a Peace Corps house in Kolda and asked if they could stay. (A type of AirBnB has always existed for ex-pats.) The various guests covered the whole spectrum of personalities.

One visitor was a volunteer who worked in a village just east of Zichinchor and was taking a break by traveling further east. He introduced himself and asked if he could stay for a few days, and although he was a little older (mid-30s), he looked fit and so I asked if he minded a morning run. His fitness level was obvious as I was breathing hard and he was talking in an almost conversational voice. At the evening meal prepared by Seny, he seemed to go into Andy (the Stage leader) mode by looking past me. (I hadn't heard the phrase "thousand-yard stare" yet.) I asked him what he did before Peace Corps he said he had been in Vietnam as a LURP, sort of like Special Forces in that a small unit would go off in the jungle, live off the land, and gather intel on enemy movements.

I couldn't help but ask about the scar on his neck, He said somehow everyone in the unit was asleep at the same time and as he was waking up a VC was about to slit his throat. He snapped the VC's neck just as the VC was starting to slip the knife in, so although it was a deep cut it hadn't severed the carotid artery. He was still trying to figure out how they could have all been asleep, but he had heard there were special potions and "spells" that would put you to sleep.

I was suspicious about the voodoo part, but about two months later the main Peace Corps house in Zichinchor was robbed during the night, and yet nobody woke up. The next morning the first person to awake saw a dead cat with *gris-gris* (amulets used by witch doctors) stuck in its ears and eyes, so although there had to be a science to it, it definitely spooked the volunteers. When I went to Dakar and talked to the director about the LURP, he said he was a great volunteer, but "don't surprise him from behind." That would've been nice to know earlier.

Another guest was a woman from New York City, she simply showed up one late afternoon and asked if she could stay for a few nights on the recommendation of Leslie, where she had just been. I thought this odd because of our last (non)conversation, but maybe in her world all men were now useful idiots. She was working her way across Western Africa, and I thought it was unwise to be a woman traveling alone. But I did have to admire (or shake my head at) a single woman traveling like this, although in the late 70's Western Africa, while harsh, was nothing like today, where many countries are in crisis. Also, a city like Lagos is a bit more tolerable with 10 million fewer people. She did like to talk, and in a way it was the book *Eat, Pray, Love* but 30 years ago; she had just gotten divorced and saw this as her one chance to do some real travel, so in a way I envied her because she could plug into the Peace Corps network. She still sounded a little naïve but she was very nice and seemed to have the necessary energy, which sadly reminded me of Leslie.

The one place where I was a guest a number of times was at Sedhiou to meet Tim, and even though it was not expensive to travel there, I figured this would be the time to really use my bike. It was 60 miles by taking the road north of the Casamance and 40 miles going south, but the south road was unpaved. Moreover, on the south road you had to turn off the road at Tanaf and take a primitive road that led to the river, where a large pirogue with a small outboard crossed over to Sedhiou about once every two hours. Sometimes I had to almost sprint down the primitive road when I saw a pickup truck turn down there, which meant the pirogue might fill up and leave without me. This route also had no small towns where you could get an Evian bottle. I tried both and eventually I would go in the early morning to Sedhiou using the southern road and return to Kolda on the northern route, since I would return to Kolda the afternoon of the day before school began, and the paved road had less risk of a delay.

Since I grew up a water boy, Sedhiou's rural location was offset by being on the water and so suited my temperament. I enjoyed going down to the fish market and talking with the local fishermen and looking over what they used in their pirogues to catch fish or shrimp. I also picked out my fish cleaning lady, who for the equivalent of a dime would scale, gut, and cut off the heads and tails of the pile of fish I selected, which was a win-win since you knew she was going to put those heads and tails in a meal for her family. (I miss that way of getting fresh fish or shellfish, where you buy directly from the boat and others can for a fee "process" what you buy.)

I also thought about how much fun it would be to take a pirogue out on the river with a canoe paddle, since it would be great exercise and I could visit the small islands that you could barely see about a mile up the river. Also, the TEFL house was a true duplex, and so being a guest with Tim was easy, we had fun going around town and eating on his porch, but with separate bathrooms and showers could stay out of each other's way.

But when I returned to Kolda, I did enjoy the places that a larger town has, and each has its vivid memories because of the climate and culture.

One was the outdoor film theater. It obviously wasn't a drive-in, but a sand field where the wall of a building had been painted white. Every weekend they showed whatever film the owner could get. In a way I was back at Le Stage, since the films were all over the place in terms of genre. Most were Bollywood or B-rated action films, but a few stick out. There was an episode of the *Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau* about Antarctica, and while not many attended I saw it twice, watching the divers swim inside icebergs made of water that had been frozen for 10,000 years and were clear as glass. Another time I had to go was for James Bond films, usually the ones with Sean Connery, and what I liked most was the way Bond was portrayed in French; “un artiste en amour, mais un technician to murtrier, license a tuer 007.”

But the films where the town went crazy were the Bruce Lee films. The school principal would say on the last school day of the week, “avec Bruce Lee, la ville est mobilisée!” Kids would always show up for tea that afternoon, since I would give them money to buy tickets for the movie, which were about a dime and kept the kids entertained. I myself only went to one Bruce Lee film, *Enter the Dragon*, and the field was a madhouse, packed with kids who whooped and mimicked every Bruce Lee move. The image that impressed me was when Lee went up and down a rope using only his hands, with his leg at 90° and not touching the rope, something I knew I could never do no matter what shape I was in. In the documentary *Forks over Knives*, there is a firefighter who does this on a fire pole to show that a plant-based diet can give you strength, but it doesn't have the same grace and is not on a rope.

Another place that Kolda had being a larger town was a bakery with dough machines, since the number of rolls and baguettes needed could not be handled by the small bakeries that mix the flour by hand. My students said *les gosses* would get up early on Saturday morning to watch and smell the bread being prepared and baked. So I got up at 5 AM to see what that was like. The smell was intoxicating; I could only imagine what it would be like for the truly hungry gosses. I therefore bought a large bag of rolls and quickly passed them out before I would be engulfed by children. There is a book of short stories by Egyptian authors entitled *The Smell of It*, and in one a starving boy has dreams of going to a bakery and being able to actually eat what he smells and sees being prepared.

As the next summer approached I decided not to visit the states, as my parents visited Dakar over Christmas, a trip that was silly since it hadn't been that long and as Western tourists they weren't wealthy enough to visit. But Tim was very helpful and made the visit less stressful, for which I will be eternally grateful since I wasn't seasoned enough to be a host. He also told me over the first Christmas that once the year was up, he would probably work on the staff in Dakar, so I began wondering even then about

transferring to Sedhiou. Despite the friends I had made in Kolda, I needed my water fix and Sedhiou just felt more like home.

I decided to help with the summer Stage, and once again they needed someone to run the projectors. This Stage was much easier since I knew how Stages worked and I was more aware of relationships between staff and new volunteers. Will was on staff as well and despite his knowledge and intellect he was always up for dirt/gossip, and he knew what had happened to relationships since the last stage. The only time I saw Leslie was when she came up to Dakar for a few days with Jan to get their shots and then return to Tombacunda, where school was out and it was brutally hot. They were treated as heroes for the females who survived Tombacunda, and while they were portraying themselves as feminist heroes for spending the summer there, I wondered what they did all day, since they couldn't lift weights on the front porch or go running in shorts in the savannah. I assumed they spent their time in front of the fan reading books that portrayed men as the enemy.

The only time I was peripherally involved in a romantic relationship was when I was talking to one of the trainees who was from California and looked like she had just stepped off a set for a beach movie. Many members of the staff were interested in her, but I knew a hopeless cause. We talked about college, and in one of her classes a guest was Herbert Marcuse, and it re-awakened my lectures the previous Stage. She enjoyed our talk and wanted to know if we could go out to dinner Friday night and discuss this some more. I shrugged my shoulders and said OK.

When I told this to Chuck, who was also working at the Stage, he couldn't believe I was going out with her, but after all I had no ulterior motive (today it would be called "leveraging my integrity"). Chuck wanted to come along, and since he could take the three of us in the truck and I had no agenda beyond conversation, I easily agreed.

At the restaurant, I began talking about the 60's and whether any of the social movements would have a real impact (with members of Congress it certainly hasn't), but she began talking about her "vegetable quota" and "energy aura," terms I guess one hears in California. When she went to the restroom I told Chuck, "She's a space cadette." Chuck replied that was OK, just keep talking and try to work me into the conversation. I tried but she repelled all efforts Chuck made to make her notice him.

We soon saw why she repelled any male attention when she starting talking about her fiancée, and when he actually came to Dakar towards the end of the Stage that's all she would talk about. Even Chuck saw she was in her romantic bubble.

Once we left le Stage for our posts, I now and then would catch up on gossip, especially with Will. She ended up in St. Louis, the main city (and original capital) in the north, a smaller version of Dakar with old French colonial buildings and a *corniche* along the water. She had apparently moved in with an older Frenchman whose wife had

decided to stay in France during his tour. Still being naïve, I protested to Will, saying how is that possible, after driving us crazy talking all the time about her fiancée and his arrival as the Second Coming? Will replied "That's archeology" and when I protested some more he said that relationship was in "the dustbin of history." Will was politically much more conservative than me, but he knew his Trotsky.

My favorite part of the stage, I shamefully admit, was the urbanity of the Dakar. One of my favorite activities was going to a downtown French café, ordering a café au lait and croissants, and reading a section of the book *Principles of Money, Banking, and Financial Markets*, by Ritter and Silber, a difficult book that made some points with New Yorker cartoons. My favorite one is Chicken Little as the professor lecturing the other farm animals, there are lots of charts and Chicken Little says "So, extrapolating from the latest data, we can conclusively predict the sky will indeed fall." That may be decades ago, but this book really explains monetary policy, Keynes versus Friedman economic theories, and how the Fed works. I'm sure Rand Paul has never tried to read this book.

I would also drop by and see Sue, she had an apartment on the corniche. It was almost like the one I visited on Goree, and one could imagine being on the southern coast of France. For music there was no expensive stereo system but a simple radio/cassette player. But one time she was playing *Silk Degrees* by Boz Scaggs. It was still decades until I had a true Proustian moment (see *Bookends*), but when *Lowdown* started, I was immediately back on the bow of the fishing boat *Hampton* as we entered the Chesapeake Bay at 5 am on a beautiful summer morning.

There were also visitors from the US government, and the two most interesting were Jimmy Carter's mom and Andrew Young. If you read Lillian Carter's book on her time in the Peace Corps in India as an older adult, it has passages on her feelings of hopelessness, so I wanted to know what training she had 15 years before us. When she arrived at the embassy there was heavy security, yet she wandered through a side door while security scrambled. I did get to talk to her, but it was a glimpse into old age, one minute she was on point and fun to talk with, another minute her mind was wandering off. Andy Young was interesting since he had recently made the comments about Cuban troops being a "stabilizing force" in Angola, which in the Cold War had everyone baffled. I'll need to read up on that to see what history has judged. (I have, and Angola is a crony-capitalist failed state.) But in talking to us it was like being with the Peace Corps Director in a group setting, there were a lot of questions, some pointed, and while you felt like you were receiving a lot of information, afterwards you really couldn't tell someone else what new information you had learned.

I left Le Stage a week early as I did to get the transfer to Sedhiou, and so I had to pack up the appliances that were going to Kolda, wrap up some administrative chores (i.e. complete forms at the school and prefect's office that would be filed and never be

seen again), and pack my bags. I could have hired a Peugeot pickup truck and had a driver take me to Sedhiou, but the Peace Corps had on staff local Logistical Coordinators (there's that term again) in various areas of the country to help in tracking or moving items such as my *frigo* (the expat French term for refrigerator).

For me the most important possession to pack was Bombay, and my trust in Seny was justified, and the fact I told Seny if he was okay I would give him Fr.1000. When I walked through the gate Bombay leapt in the air with delight, and that night as Seny made the last dinner for me in this house, Bombay was once again on his mat and fast asleep. I assumed Seny thought it was just a strange relation between Toubabis and dogs.

I spent the next day filling the forms and saying goodbye to the friends I had made and said they could visit any time. The next morning the Logistics Coordinator arrived and we packed everything, including the frigo, and took the north paved route to Sedhiou. Being on an asphalt road was good since even though he had never been in any type of car, Bombay loved sitting in my lap and sticking his nose out the open window. Maybe it's genetic, but I've never seen in Europe a car with the dog's head sticking out the window. Maybe in the US we just indulge them.

Since I had visited Sedhiou a number of times and talked with Tim about the students there, I settled in quickly and did get to use the oral pedagogy taught at Le Stage, although I still used the poster drawings to really reinforce vocabulary, grammar, and speaking.

With the extra frigo the TEFL Peace Corps house was now a true duplex, and so guests could really stay for any length of time, which I felt responsibility for since I was the closest place a lot of volunteers could crash.

My health and strength got even better as I talked to one of the fishing families and paid them a weekly fee to let me use their pirogue in the late afternoon. (They went out fishing at 9 PM and were out until the morning so there were no logistical problems.) I borrowed a paddle and showed them I was competent, and so it was a win-win. I also asked if there was somebody who could make me two paddles, and a week later they had made two paddles of teak for Fr.2000, which I felt guilty about since teak was getting scarce and still being smuggled out. But I knew they would last for years and I promised to let them have the paddles when I left. I then went out three or four times per week, sometimes with a guest but usually alone. I found out later the villagers along the river were thoroughly confused, why was I paddling if not fishing or transporting passengers? There was even a rumor that I was doing some sort of communication with a spirit on the small islands, otherwise why would I want to visit them? I sometimes took Bombay along, which further confused them.

I was also quite healthy because of my diet, which was simple, fresh, and cheap. There was only one “real” restaurant on the Sedhiou loop, a cement blockhouse with four tables and a peanut oil fryer and grill in back. I got to know the owner, and he would drop by the abattoir (really just a cement floor with a roof and benches) to get some meat or organs from the one cow killed daily. I discovered I loved fried liver and onions, both sliced thin. After a while I came by almost every day for lunch, during a break in classes, and the owner usually had the meal almost prepared when I arrived. I would save one piece for Bombay and give it to him on the way back to class. It was also an exercise in eating non-processed food from a grass fed cow, as my cholesterol was 150 at the end of my tour, despite eating all that liver. (When I went back to the states, I bought some liver at the supermarket and sliced it and fried it in onions, and it tasted awful.)

Completing my lifestyle was Seny, who had family at Sedhiou and decided to come here since there was no longer a TEFL teacher in Kolda, and I was more than happy to have him work and prepare dinners. Since shrimp was so readily available, he came up with a shrimp, rice, and vegetable casserole that every guest liked. I could therefore easily accommodate any guest for long periods.

The first guest was Alfred, who worked in a village off the paved road to Kolda. He introduced me to Madeleine, a French woman who worked for *Medecins sans Frontieres*. She lived in a nice cottage and had a Citroen 2CV, the VW of France, so you could see that the French gave decent logistical help to those in rural areas. She was also like Joan and Celeste, pretty and slightly overweight, and had a Senegalese boyfriend. I got to watch the relationship end badly in real time, as in three weeks he went from “Un homme qui j’aime, j’aime beaucoup” to “Il est le pire des ordures.” (He is the worst of the trash, to translate mildly). I then began to see Alfred less often, and began to see his moped outside Madeleine’s house when I took a bicycle ride on the Kolda road.

The strangest guest was a woman volunteer who worked in a village east of Sedhiou, she was fairly new and I wanted to be sure she could rest up. She showed up pretty haggard (although nothing compared to my first fishing trip), but luckily arrived just after class was finished and I was home. The water pipes were on the roof of the house, and from noon to five you got hot water for about a minute, which I'm sure to her was a real luxury. I then took her out on the pirogue, and she later enjoyed eating the shrimp casserole and watching Bombay jump up for food.

I saw her off to Zichinchor after a few days and went back to my usual routine, until I went to Zichinchor myself about two weeks later. There was usually a spare bed or mattress at the main Peace Corps house and I wanted to help someone with a bicycle project to shell peanuts (explained later). Everything was normal until a volunteer I didn't know asked my name and my post. When I said Kollmann and Sedhiou, he yelled, "Wow here's the last person she was with before she flipped out!" Apparently once in

Zichinchor she was acting so strangely a senior volunteer took her to Dakar, and once there she became psychotic and had to be flown to Rammstein Germany while sedated and restrained. People were medevac'd all the time, but this was the first "psycho-vac" anyone had seen, and I was questioned as to whether I had "messed with her mind" while she was with me. I assured them I had done nothing, but that one guy would keep saying, "Wow man, you made her flip out!" I'll have more on her in the epilogue.

But the story on that visit in Zichinchor was helping a village volunteer with a contraption that intrigued me. When I visited Zichinchor, I would have dinner sometimes with Steve. He worked in a village nearby and usually came into town for one day on the weekend. He was from New York and was an ardent fan of Joan Rivers. He would interrupt his dead-on imitation of her with, "Can we talk?"

One thing he did talk about was building a bicycle-powered peanut-shelling contraption. The local Peugeot bicycle, as I mentioned, had five gears and so only a rear derailleur. But with the rear cog assembly, you could have the bicycle chain on the largest cog (first gear) and put a second chain on a smaller cog. The second chain would attach to a worm-gear assembly that rotated a cone-shaped cylinder over a grinding wheel. You could then feed peanuts into the top of the cylinder, and with the right pressure the shells would break off and the peanuts would fall (in theory) almost under the cylinder, since the shells were lighter and go further out.

I told him if he got a good start on the contraption, I would be willing to help on a weekend. The USAID seemed to always be involved in large projects such as road building or large areas for agriculture, while volunteers did small projects to help a village. But something that used simple (i.e. maintenance-free) technology and was scalable at a local level didn't seem to happen. In college I had read Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, and I wanted to see something that followed his concepts.

I arrived Friday evening prepared for a long weekend made even longer by being accused of making the female volunteer "flip out." I wanted to escape for some dinner and Steve showed up saying he had had a long week and wanted to go out and "unwind." Getting accustomed to the local beer, Gazelle, was no different than trying sweetened condensed milk; what started out as vile ended up something you looked forward to. I had one Gazelle while Steve had several. I reminded him we needed to get up early since there are always unforeseen problems to resolve when you are putting something together. (In my own experience, by the time you put something together, you know enough to completely disassemble it and put it together correctly.) He said no problem, he would be up at eight and ready to go.

At 10:30 I finally knocked on his door. He got up looking a bit haggard, but he said he had the contraption in the courtyard of the Peace Corps house, so getting to it involved no painful (for him) walk in the now hot sun.

To my surprise the worm-gear and grinder assembly was almost complete. He was confident it would work (in theory at least), but we needed to get the bicycle rear wheel off the floor and attach a second chain to actually turn the worm gear.

Putting a bicycle on a stand is nothing now, with all of the rear-wheel trainers, but back then bicycle trainers were usually two cylinders connecting a conveyer belt and a third cylinder to let the front tire spin, so you were balancing as much as training. All other bike trainers used a chain to one front wheel, such as the Schwinn Air-Dyne. When I went back to the States, the very first rear wheel trainers were being made by a company called Skid-Lid in California, and it would have been perfect here, but they were \$200 each and they were just coming out. So we went around hardware stores looking for the zinc-plate bars with holes, various nuts and bolts, and pipe-end covers. It took the rest of the day, but we put together a stand and used the pipe covers to slip over the rear wheel hub nuts.

At dinner we discussed the next problem to resolve, getting another chain on a smaller cog and onto the worm assembly. But once again he needed to unwind so the next morning started the same way. And getting a chain, as with making a stand, was not easy, since the places that sold bicycles rarely had spare parts. For that you had to visit local mechanics who mainly worked on autos, and some of them happened to work on bicycles. Some mechanics were good and some were not good. (For my bike, I wrote a real letter to Peugeot headquarters in France to order a pedal crank, and I then replaced it myself, as many mechanics made something fit by banging harder with a hammer.) After visiting many places, we found a place that had chains and could put together one that was much longer than the bicycle chain. I'm sure in the States or France you could order the chain on spec and get the cotter pin link to put it together, but here everything was hard. I felt like Chuck, the Logistics Coordinator back at Le Stage.

We were exhausted and it was late, and I had to get back to Sedhiou. I said I would come back and keep working on it since all we had to do was get the chain onto the worm gear. Steve said fine but when I came back a few weeks later, he didn't mention his project and I thought and feared it didn't work, so I didn't bring it up. But the experience did show me just how hard it is to get something built when you are not sure about the design and you must work with the parts you have on hand. One should always watch old MacGyver shows with a grain of salt.

It's funny how 35 years later everything has changed but nothing has changed. I recently saw Chelsea Clinton on a late-night talk show, and she mentioned the Clinton Global Initiative, where one of its goals is to empower those in poverty. One invention they were advocating was a soccer ball that inside had a battery that charged while the ball was being kicked or rolled. Once charged, the ball could power a phone or small light bulb so students could study at night. I shook my head; in the 3rd world everything is coated with mud, dirt, and dust, and so any plug, no matter how well integrated into

the ball, is going to get clogged. The quality of the parts inside the ball would have to be extremely high, since if a connection were to break you would need to take the ball apart, but like a boat you should never compromise the integrity of the hull. And there are no Radio Shacks (although Radio Shacks are disappearing here as well, since fewer people like to learn engineering from the ground up).

I do see some effort in trying to come up with the “right” invention to help those in poverty. In Wilmington, NC, only two hours from Raleigh, is the company Full Belly, and sure enough they have developed a bicycle-powered peanut sheller, using the Schwin Air-Dyne concept. It looks like they welded the bike frame together, so I’d like to go there if I can travel again. And just on the PBS news hour was a segment on a small company that makes similar inventions. But the staff is mostly older engineers who work on a volunteer basis. Maybe the whole idea of mass-producing a product for low scale work is a paradox. In any case, the Chinese are investing massive amounts of money into Africa, and most of the investment is for large-scale mineral extraction or large-scale hotel complexes. I doubt their motive is to provide self-help at the local level.

Another guest (and host) was the Pere Poulain, who was the priest of a small Catholic Church in Sedhiou near the shore. He had been there 25 years, and I had met and dined with him when visiting Tim, so it was a matter of swapping Tim out for me as the American in town. In the Casamance region, religion was more diverse, with Catholic, Muslim, and animist beliefs coexisting in (what I thought) harmony, or at least beyond politics. But I was naïve; Pere Poulain explained that the region was in many ways ignored and all the political influence and money was concentrated in the mainly Wolof-speaking and Muslim north. (I suppose if oil had been discovered in the Casamance, it would have been like Nigeria or, more recently, the Sudan.) There would eventually be a real conflict, but by then the Pere had gone back to France, and I was back in the States.

Pere Poulain also had a fairly old shortwave. At first I avoided having one since I liked the solitude and didn't want listening to the radio to become as mindless as watching TV. But there was a high quality Phillips for sale and I couldn't resist. I could also entertain guests with something besides myself. It was 30 years before the smart phone, but a good short wave radio made you feel you had a "real-time" technology, which meant it was a blessing and a curse. I easily got BBC1, BBC2, VOA, Radio Free Europe (it was still the Cold War), and RF1 (Paris). All of a sudden I felt “out there” when I should have stayed focused on my work “in here”. But one broadcast that I enjoyed was first described to me by my students during our tea ceremony (much smaller since Sedhiou was a rural town). The leader of Guinea-Conakry, Sekou Touré, gave speeches that were like Castro's in that he would rant for hours on how the country was in mortal danger and only he could save it, how enemies were everywhere, etc., as he drove the country into the ground. He ended every speech with "Je ... suis ... P..P..R!" or "Je ... suis

...Prêt ...Pour la ...Revolution!" (Je suis prêt means I am ready.) I learned later that the black activist Stokely Carmichael was in exile there and he said this phrase all the time, so maybe that is where Toure got the phrase. The students would imitate him for fun, such as "Je suis PPE" where E was l'Examination. I would cycle briefly there but that is coming up.

The next guest stayed at my house purely by chance and proved how few degrees of separation in people there are. I was entering my restaurant to get my liver and onions when I saw at one of the other three tables an older Frenchman. I introduced myself and he said he had been here as a doctor serving for the French government when he had just left medical school, and after 30 years he finally had the chance to return. He said little had changed except the loop was now paved, as well as the road to Kolda. He didn't remember Père Poulain, otherwise that really would have been a reunion. So I invited him to stay at my place, and he spent the next few days walking around, going out in the pirogue, and talking in the evening while Seny made the shrimp casserole. Before he left he gave me an address in Paris and said if I was ever in Paris to drop by and he would return the favor. Little did I realize in a few years I would visit both Père Poulain and then M. Granier only a few hours later in an exhausting sequence, but that is in the epilogue.

The next guest was the Peace Corps director from Dakar. When a director visits a volunteer's house it's usually exhausting to get ready, but with the duplex it was easy. He had heard I was doing well with the students, and unlike previous talks in group settings we had a real conversation. He said to watch out for tension at the school, since there had been reports of both teacher and student unrest because of the lack of resources in the Casamance. I said I was unaware of anything, but I would be proven naïve.

The final guest (or guests) was actually a family from America. They just showed up at my gate and asked if they could stay one or two nights until they got settled. I could see how exhausted they looked, and thought to myself probably more than two nights, and it actually ended up being three weeks.

Their name was Whittemore, and Robert the father had served near Sedhiou 10 years ago and was now on a Fulbright scholarship to study village traditions and customs. The wife Elizabeth had been in another country for Peace Corps (I forget which one), and looked like a thinner version of Hillary Clinton in her Yale days. The interesting person was Miranda, their four-year-old daughter, and the adventures and dangers awaiting an American child of less than five years old in a place like Sedhiou, far from any real medical help. But I guess they had assumed that risk. I thought Miranda was a strange name, my nerd first thought of a great SLR camera made in the 60s and early 70s, but then I remembered my Shakespeare. They also had very liberal views, so I could see them giving a child that name.

After a good night's sleep Robert was off to the village where he had lived. Since he knew the heads of families there he was sure they would remember him and let him build a small house. When he returned, it was on to the prefect to show his papers and to get official permission. The village was across the river, so every day he would go to the store to buy cement bags and then take them and usually Miranda to the pirogue crossing and on to the village, where he would work with villagers to make cement blocks and build a house, while Miranda would play with the children. The wife would sometimes go with them but usually not, as she enjoyed the duplex, and while I was at school she would read, visit the market, take walks, etc. I visited the village once during this time, and Robert was working his tail off, luckily his Mandingue was good and he worked well with other villagers. Miranda would play with the young children and say nothing.

I sensed the tension between Robert and Elizabeth after about two weeks, as she was enjoying herself and he was totally exhausted. One day I was returning from school and Robert had decided to spend the day at my house so he could rest, but as I approached the house I could hear a shouting match where he was yelling that she was not pulling her weight. I rattled the gate a few times so they would know I was approaching, and they managed to become civil when I entered. But that night I said I would be having some other guests soon and so they would need to leave. I think they got the message as the wife went across the river every day and the house was finished in a few days.

After the Whittemores left, I had a second medical crisis, but unlike the heat stroke I had a moment where the pain clouded my thinking and I made a mistake. Right after the last class for the week, I suddenly had an earache that on a pain scale of 1 to 10 was a 9. The pressure in my right ear was almost unbearable, it was like someone was jabbing a thin metal spike into my brain.

I asked the principal where a local doctor was who could look at my ear, and he told me where on the loop his office was. I explained to the "doctor" my pain and before I knew it he was probing into my right ear with a q-tip, something you should never do. I left the doctor as quickly as possible and went home to take some aspirin, which I hoped would help with the pain so I could get to sleep.

The pain was beginning to lessen by midnight so I managed to fall asleep. I woke up at 3 a.m. The pain had lessened a bit more, but I noticed a spot of blood on the pillow and a 90% loss of hearing in my right ear. That got my attention, so I lay in bed until 5 a.m. and then went to the taxi-gare. Luckily on the weekend there are taxis that leave early for Zichinchor. So I took one and then took another taxi to Dakar.

Once in Dakar I immediately went to the Peace Corps office, on the weekend there is always one person there who can contact others, and I wanted to see the Peace Corps doctor ASAP. The doctor drove up in his car in 20 minutes and proceeded to examine me in his office. He looked in my right ear and said frankly it was a mess of swelling and blood clotting. All he could do was flush the ear out and take me to his house where I would be more comfortable.

That evening at his house he looked again and said it looked like a torn eardrum and that while it would heal over time, I would always have a 10-20% hearing loss in my right ear. He then gave me a tablet called Tylenol-3. I didn't know back then why it had the number 3, but I slept for 10 hours and felt well enough to go back to Sedhiou the next day.

Although I didn't like the slight hearing loss, it was better than being deaf in one ear. But I remembered that whenever I went to Dakar for the gamma globulin shot, the nurse would check my ear and find the right ear full of wax. (Many years later I found out my right ear has an extra curve going to the eardrum, which would explain the right earaches after swimming.) She removed the earwax with a contraption one doesn't see anymore. It was a small stainless steel satellite disk with a tube and plunger. She would fill the tube with hot water and inject it into my right ear, then pull out the long black cylinder of wax. It was painful but perhaps if I had done it more often I wouldn't have torn my right eardrum. The reason I mention all this is that once we become adults, most of us rarely get a full ear examination, which is a mistake since when we need one it is usually a crisis we may not recover from.

Once back in Sedhiou, I decided to visit the Whittemores, since they only came into town in the mornings while I was at school. The house was finished, and Robert had designed it well; it was in the shade a good portion of the day and in the evening there was a breeze that went between the two windows in the main room. I took a picture of Elizabeth and Miranda sitting at a window; it is a beautiful picture that I hope is in one of my boxes. I also saw what living in a culture at an early age provides; Miranda spoke Fulani at the same level as the other four year olds, and Robert said one day out of the blue she began talking.

Although I only cycled back to Kolda twice during my year in Sedhiou, I did stay in cycling shape by doing fast cycles on the paved road to Kolda. I wanted to visit the two countries on the southern border of Senegal, Guinea-Conakry on the east and Guinea-Bissau on the west. I managed to get visas for both, and entered Guinea-Conakry first. But once I cycled across the border I found the road in terrible shape, and frankly the country looked poor and nothing else, I guess Sekou Touré was doing his job. Just getting food and potable water was a struggle, so I turned around and once back in

Senegal took a bus taxi to Zichinchor to stay at the Peace Corps house, and there plotted my cycle to Guinea-Bissau, where someone said the roads were bad but cyclable.

And the trip was worth it, as the capital Bissau was a time-travel experience; it could have been Cuba in the early 70's. One of the greatest ironies of history is that Communist revolutions happened in mainly rural economies where there was no proletariat, and the one country where it was supposed to happen and end up as a worker's paradise, Germany, went fascist and wrecked the modern world. So here in this mainly jungle economy had been a Communist revolution, and a former Portuguese colony capital, laid out like Lisbon with beautiful if aging Mediterranean buildings, had posters of Marx and Lenin together proclaiming in Portuguese that history was on their side.

A few weeks later I went to a conference in Djoula on the coast and decided to take a few days to bike down to Gambia. Normally to get to the Casamance from Dakar you crossed the Gambia River far up river and it was only a few hundred yards wide. The ferry there carried cars and trucks. It was not far from where Alex Haley said he had found his ancestors, but Senegal claimed to be a source of slave ancestry as well. As tour groups popped up in canned tours the volunteers became jaded, as even black volunteers derisively called these tourists "Rooters."

But to go to Banjul on the coast you had to take the coastal road and cross at the river entrance, a true bay that was subject to the tide and winds. Moreover, there were no ferries that took cars, at least where I arrived at the end of the road. There were only passenger ferries that were really not large enough to plow through the waves. And so just as when I bicycled from Kolda to Sedhiou, I biked down the boat ramp just as the ferry was leaving, once again throwing my duffle bag, my bike, and then myself into the boat as it cleared the pier.

The ride across the channel was in rough water, which I hadn't experienced since my fishing boat days. I did feel some nausea by the time we landed, but once on the bike going into town it cleared. Now I was in Banjul with no place to stay, and Banjul was more a ramshackle city; there were no obvious hotels where I could crash for a night and get my bearings.

I was walking my bike around the streets late at night wondering what to do when a 1960's VW van drove by and the driver said, "Hi Keith!" It was Vickie, a volunteer whom I worked with at Le Stage who had been in Senegal quite a while, and I had told her at the conference when I would be arriving here. She was staying at the Director's house, a fairly young guy whom I had met before and seemed to have less political agendas. So it was from dirt and sand to a hot shower and a great three days touring. I spent one day touring Banjul and even in the day it wasn't much, but you knew you were in a former British colony when you entered the main square; all of a sudden there was a dark green pitch for soccer or cricket. The color was like entering Oz from the tornado house, and it

made you realize not only that this was a spot of England, but that if you went directly back to a place like England the grass color everywhere would overwhelm you.

On the second day Vicki took me to what was called diplomat beach, since there were no tourists or locals. I don't know how it was restricted, but it will remain in my memory, miles of pristine beach with nobody but us on it. The water was a few feet deep for about ten yards out before dropping off, so you could walk in the water for a while and just plop down to cool off. I'll need to find out what it is now; beaches like that just don't stay like that anymore. In such a place you can have a nice chat, so we talked about our future plans. Vickie had been there longer than me and planned on staying. I knew my life was actually pretty good and the external world was getting hostile to young people looking for a job, as the Iranian hostage crisis was going on and on and the price of fuel kept rising. I decided on that walk to return home since I was confident I could pass the Foreign Service exam, and if I started at a dangerous or remote post that was fine. Otherwise I would need to spend at least five more years here to have a real impact, and when you're young five years is a large ratio to your life, instead of just a blip as you get older.

So on my next trip to Dakar, I took the Foreign Service exam and told the Director my plans. He was surprised since I seemed pretty set in Sedhiou, but he did write me a very nice reference letter, as word had gotten back to him about my garden project, which showed I did things beyond TEFL.

Back in Sedhiou I was finishing up the last few weeks of classes and assumed there would be no drama, but I was proven wrong. The Peace Corps director was right, there were rumors of protests and possible riots against schools and government buildings. At the beginning of one week, a teacher I worked with a lot told me it could be any day, and the next day at the end of class all the students gathered at the school periphery instead of going home.

The principal herded us between the two admin buildings near the center, and then we heard one rock, then another, then a rain of rocks and stones on the roofs of the buildings. I could see why the principal wanted us to be in a place where only rocks of a very narrow angle would hit us. (I don't know why we didn't go into a building, maybe we had to show we weren't afraid.) I'm not a child of the '60s, and this level of rock throwing was new to me. It was like a deafening downpour for about five minutes, and then it subsided. Once it truly stopped, the principle told us to go home quickly.

The next day began normally but between classes the principal called a quick meeting and said one administrator (really the vice-principal) and one teacher had been "removed." I assumed they were implicated in raising tensions, as I found out through other volunteers there were protests in other schools in the Casamance at about the same time. Things did settle down, but it showed the tensions beneath the surface.

As the other teachers absorbed the fact I was leaving, I assured them the next volunteer would be good and would continue to use the poster drawings. (I was going to leave a note to the next volunteer explaining how to use them.) My only concern was Bombay, since there would be a six-week gap between my leaving and the new volunteer arriving, and Bombay was special, having no real survival experience and assuming humans were all his friends. I was more concerned when Seny told me once I left he was going back to Kolda until the new volunteer arrived, and the Père Poulain would be gone as well. I know the Père would have taken care of Bombay since he had a dog as a companion for years. Yet somehow his dog had eaten some of the poisoned meat they left at the dog gathering place, and the dog died over the course of two days, something that must have terribly affected him, although he was stoic.

I was on good terms with the neighbors in front of me; one of the sons hit his hand on the flywheel of a moped, and he had deep cuts that should have had stitches. Luckily I had some very good butterfly bandages as well as antiseptic, and although there were scars the hand did heal. I met with the father and gave him Fr.1000 for the favor and Fr.2000 for the feeding; he was to give Bombay a bowl of yassah and water every day at noon. Bombay would lose some weight and the glossiness of his coat, but he would survive. I also promised another Fr.2000 as a reward when the new volunteer arrived, money I would leave with the note for the next volunteer. Like Seny, the neighbor would see that a future payment of money could only happen by following through.

I said my final goodbyes and gave away a lot of the items that I might normally take with me (the fisherman's family was grateful for the teak paddles). I left the bike at the Sedhiou house and included in the note to my replacement that any volunteer could have the bicycle as long as they took care of it. As a result I got on the plane in Dakar with only the one duffle bag I arrived with. The only true gifts I took with me were batiks, since I always enjoyed visiting a "studio" in Zichinchor where I watched and learned how batiks are made.

I expected the return to the States to be an adjustment, but I wasn't ready for 1st world dysfunction. My final flight was from Paris to DC, and I took a bus from Dulles to downtown DC. I would be staying at my brother's, who had moved to Laurel, MD, a sparsely populated area that exploded once 95 and the Metro went through there. I took the Metro to what I thought was Carrolton Station, and waited an hour for my brother, who was supposed to meet me at 3 p.m. But then I realized there were two Carrolton stations and I was probably at the wrong one. There were no cell phones then and I hoped I was right, and luckily my brother was still waiting for me. I explained my mistake, and it didn't seem a big deal. But back at the house, his wife went crazy, saying that our being late had "ruined" her dinner of spaghetti and meatballs. I had forgotten that in the first world, alpha female LEMs (described in *Bookends*) would hijack any situation so they could become the center of attention and create stressful yet

meaningless drama. The evening ended up one where my brother spent the evening apologizing to his wife, I was to blame, and the fact I had returned from two years abroad and was exhausted was irrelevant.

Arriving back at the yellow house in Hampton was better, there was actually a banner above the back porch, and my first order of business was to take out the Alden rowing shell and say hi to all my old landmark friends out in Hampton Roads. I thought my next steps were set, and there was some kind of pattern (or that favorite German word, plan) to how my life was progressing, but nothing turned out as I thought.

I remember reading that Bush senior taught his children that from your earliest years you always wrote thank you notes and always kept the names and addresses of people you met up to date. This would be an obvious thing to teach if your family had members that were in politics, but it is actually sound advice for anyone. I certainly wished I had rigorously done this over the years, as afterwards I did come in contact with people I met in Peace Corps, which is included in the Epilog. But since I did not end up in the Foreign Service and finally ended up in the middle class world of mortgage rates, home maintenance, and long hours at work, my sense of that world faded and so did the people with it. Moreover, I'm not a true politician, since keeping up with everybody means some of them know or will know people you would rather never meet again, and in politics (at least until recently), you always put your emotions aside since you may need to become allies with anyone, no matter how you may feel about them personally or ideologically.

Besides, I thought I would retire with my health and so could (selectively) find where certain volunteers are now by going to Peace Corps headquarters or using LinkedIn. I may still do that, but unless my health improves it won't happen, as I would like to see these people again in person and right now I cannot travel. But at least I can write, and in the Epilog I start on the next episode of my youth and the people I would meet (or meet again) there.

Epilogue

I have already written in *Bookends* about my return to the States and how I ended up on a teaching project for Middle East (mainly Saudi) students, and that I left behind at Peace Corps headquarters my forwarding address if someone wished to write me. I did receive three letters worth mentioning.

The first I received not long after arriving in D.C. was from the volunteer that took my place, a woman. My worst fears for Bombay were realized, as the neighbors were so desperate for money that they simply took the "feeding" money and didn't care about the "reward" money, and just released Bombay on the street. Since Bombay had no real

survival skills, he must have approached humans only to be kicked or stoned. He probably drank foul water from ditches after a rain. The new volunteer told Seny to find Bombay the second she read my note, and he did find him, but by then he was emaciated, flea-ridden, and listless. I guess she felt it was the humane decision, she had Seny kill Bombay with a rock to the head, and then he buried him in the corner of the front yard. I know it's cruel to say, but I felt as much sadness for Bombay as I felt for the two-year olds that died needless deaths, since all Bombay asked for was kindness that he would have returned ten-fold.

The second letter arrived five months later, when the weather in D.C. was getting hot. I had completely forgotten about the woman who "flipped out," when I received a letter with a return address in Vermont. I didn't figure out who sent the letter until I opened it. It was that woman, and she said even though the place was confining with bars on the windows, she was taking medication and feeling better. She included a hand-drawn figure of what she thought she viewed from the window. My apartment mate Mike and I have pretty good knowledge of art history, but here was the artistic/mental state relation playing out real-time. The drawing, while only on a 5 x 7" piece of paper, had many lines of different colors that crudely resembled a jungle that was half Rousseau, half Van Gogh. When Mike and I moved in, we put up on one wall a large poster board and would add pictures that we felt represented our experiences during this time. Some required a lot of debate, but this one was pasted on immediately. When we left we had to take the poster down, but I may still have that drawing in one of my boxes.

The third letter was from Sue Lutz; she was starting her life from scratch, as she bought a car and drove it by herself from D.C. to Arizona, quite a change from the State Department world. I do remember she called her car "bessne," Wolof for gasoline, so some part of Peace Corps would be with her.

Others were to bubble up in the oddest ways, as I would know someone who knew someone and we would contact each other. Joan returned to D.C, and her political and administrative knowledge landed her a job as a staff member for a U.S. Senator. She took pity on me in my near-poverty state and took me to a top Italian restaurant, after which we saw *Othello* with James Earl Jones and Christopher Plummer. Maybe it was just me, but I could sense in the audience sympathy for Iago, since he was not justly promoted, and Othello's emotional turmoil and marital tragedy were the result of his promotion of Rodrigo over Iago. (The whole *House of Cards* plot, while following a *Richard the Third* style, is really based on Underwood not getting the Secretary of State job he was promised.)

We also took walks on Sundays when DC was quiet and empty (at the start of the Reagan administration, DC was pretty navigable except during rush hour). One Sunday we were walking along the pier at Anacostia and saw a 40-foot cabin boat with nobody on it. My memory of boat shapes is pretty good, and I said "Wow, that looks like Nixon's

old boat,” and sure enough it was the *Sequoia*. At least the cabin was locked, but it shows how the world was different back then. I remember the Life magazine photos of Nixon meeting Bebe Rebozo on the boat cutting nefarious deals, and now it was basically abandoned.

I’m sure Leslie came to her senses and married well.

I met Nancy again while she was in DC visiting my boss, Larry, and she seemed depressed, odd for such a wonderful person. I found out later her fiancé had just dumped her. I played her some Beethoven pieces and that cheered her up. I’m glad when things work out for a good person, I found out later she married a British doctor and was working in Nepal. If I were retired and healthy I would go to Nepal and start asking around about British doctors, which would probably be more efficient than Google.

I found out that Geoff had become a Deadhead and rode around the country following Grateful Dead concerts. I would like to imagine he and Bill Walton’s paths intersecting, since they had two similar passions.

The longest part of this Epilog is about Père Poulain and M. Granier, since visiting them was such a contrast in dropping in as a guest; I never imagined I would see Père Poulain and then M. Granier less than 24 hours apart, as one was in West Brittany and the other in Paris.

A few years after Peace Corps I was cycling through Europe (something I had done before), but I’d always wanted to cycle in Brittany since it was the home and training area for my cycling hero, Bernard Hinault. (The American Greg Lemond would join Hinault’s team and ultimately take the Tour de France away from him.)

All I had from the Père was an address that was only a name and a road near a small town, but I did manage to find the small church complex. West Brittany is rocky and barren and the complex was only slightly less primitive than the church in Sedhiou. I knocked at the small door next to the church and there was the Père, and he seemed happy to see me. I told him I would be cycling to various areas of Brittany during the day but would like to return for the evening to eat and chat. I offered to pay for lodging and food, but he insisted that as a guest I could stay and eat as long as I wished. We then went inside to meet a sister; she was not as cordial and simply said there was a spare bed in the upper level of a barn/storage shed behind the house.

The Père had an old Citroën 2CV, just like Madeleine, and I would have gladly paid for gas to go to a large town for a large (but cheap here) seafood meal, but he said no to my offer, and to wash up in the house bathroom to get ready for the evening meal.

When I was clean and famished, I sat down to a simple fish stew and a chunk of bread, and I could see what was on the table was the entire dinner. There was some conversation and then the Père said it was 9 p.m. and time for bed.

I went up to the barn/shed and tried to go to sleep, but I was too hungry. I then could hear a conversation, and went down to the door. It was the Père and the sister, with the sister exclaiming why was I here, since they couldn't afford the extra food for me. I hated being in the old-world trap when a host insists you are not imposing but you are. But I also felt sorry for the Père; after working so long in a "primitive" area, he was now in an area even more stressful; in Sedhiou he could at least have more than enough seafood since it was so simple and cheap, and here at home he didn't have enough money even though Brittany has seafood everywhere. He could also have in Sedhiou his occasional bouteille de vin rouge.

I quietly went back to bed and slept a few fitful hours, then physically got up at 6 a.m. to find breakfast was already prepared; a boiled egg, one roll, and a café au lait. To stop this charade, I said I had forgotten about meeting a friend in Caen in Normandy, so I would need to leave today. The Père said he was sorry I was leaving, but as I put my duffle bag on my bicycle, the sister said nothing.

I decided to cycle a few hours to see a bit more of West Brittany before catching a train to Cherbourg and then to Caen. The cycle was very hard, as the narrow roads were never flat and there was always a head or side wind, so it made sense Hinault would train here.

I took the trains and arrived at Caen around 6. I should have just found a hotel, but since I had just toured Normandy I went into Euro-pass mode and thought I could take an evening train to Paris and take a nap, then sleep a few more hours in the waiting room during the night, avoiding the cost of an expensive hotel. I could then focus on seeing if M. Granier was at the address in Paris he had given me.

I arrived in the Gare du Nord around 1 a.m. and found one of the smaller waiting rooms where I thought I could lie on my mat and my duffle bag pillow to get a few more hours of sleep. Just as I was settling in, some security guards were herding other backpackers and homeless into "my" room and spreading us around on the floor. (The seats were designed so you would not be able to sleep on them.)

I thought I could still get some sleep, but every 30 minutes, just as you were almost really asleep, the guards would come by and kick our feet, perhaps to see if we were alive but more likely to ensure we were miserable and so wouldn't do this again. This continued until 5 a.m., when they ordered us all to get up and leave, so that regular commuters wouldn't see us.

I felt pretty wretched as I walked out of the Gare, but the sun was just coming up and the streets were still pretty empty, so I hopped on my bike and decided to bicycle around Paris to clear my head. And Paris is (or was) a fantastic place to cycle at this time; many seemingly large cities are really not that large when there is little traffic and you can travel 15 miles per hour. I visited my old haunts (or at least went by them) in less than two hours. Because of this, I have cycled London and Rome at this hour, an experience I'm sure today would be different.

I stopped at a large café near the Place Vendôme at 8 a.m. to change clothes; I'm sure I looked dreadful. I had one set of clean clothes and shoes in a plastic bag (shades of *Shawshank Redemption*), so I entered the restroom looking like a homeless vagrant and left it looking pretty good. When you have an athletic body simple clothes fall correctly. The *commis de bar* gave me an ugly look, but I ordered a large café au lait and croissant to show I was paying something for his "hospitality."

Now that I was civilized I dug up M. Granier's street address, and when I showed it to the *commis*, he said it was the National Military Hospital (l'Hôpital de la Défense). The weather was still clear so it was no problem cycling there, although the traffic was awful by now (but nothing compared to Rome during rush hour, which was coming up later). I got to the front gate and asked if I could see a M. Granier, it was M. Kollmann. After about 10 minutes the guard let me in to the front office, and after another 10 minutes M. Granier appeared. It was disconcerting to see M. Granier in a doctor's outfit in a first-world setting. But unlike the Père he seemed genuinely delighted to see me, and gave me the address of his family where I could stay as long as I wished. The address was a fairly close suburb (*banlieue*), which was good news since I was reaching total exhaustion.

When I knocked on the door of the apartment, Madam Granier appeared and knew I was coming, so M. Granier must have alerted her to my arrival as well as my condition. She took my dirty clothes and put them in the wash, then pointed me to a shower and guest bedroom. After taking a shower, I crawled into bed and slept until mid-afternoon. I went into the kitchen, as Madam Granier was starting to prepare dinner. I thought the long preparation was because she was making something different for me, but every meal, especially dinner, was a production. It was fun chatting with her as she prepared the various dishes. I was wearing my Levi jeans and she assured me that blue jeans came from Nîmes because that was where the material came from (de Nîmes), and I wasn't going to argue idea versus application.

M. Granier showed up around 5:30 and said he would first like to give me a tour of a nearby park, once a royal park under Louis XIV. The French have their idea of a garden; it was laid out precisely and at every intersection was a plaque or statue. The walk was good for both of us and we returned hungry.

By this time the two daughters had arrived, and they were quite a contrast; one was quiet, studious, and was already taking medical courses, while the other was studying film at the University of Paris and had no problem explaining in detail camera techniques for various films. Yet M. and Madam Granier saw them both as equals in their subject matter, which could only happen in France where studying art was considered as rigorous as a science. My two-semester film course at UVA paid off as I could keep up and comment on most classic French films she had studied. One area where there was no contrast between the sisters, I later saw, was their ability to prepare food. Maybe it was by osmosis from the mom, but both were complete cooks.

I spent a week there, visiting Paris during the day, and finally visiting Versailles and the *Galerie des Glaces* where the WWI armistice was signed. Since my next area to bicycle was the south of France, Madam Granier had no problem informing me about every aspect of its history. So during and after every dinner, I got my history lesson and food that was the equal of any Michelin star restaurant. The taste I remember to this day was when Madam Granier instructed me how to eat artichoke hearts. You had to scrape the underside with a special utensil and dip it in a sauce she made from scratch. I could eat that every day the rest of my life.

One topic that was serious is when a synagogue was attacked (although nothing compared to now), only then did I find out the Graniers were Jewish. One dinner was a long history of anti-Semitism in France. I knew that history pretty well and added what I could. Looking back I wonder if their being Jewish was part of letting an outsider like me so welcome, especially in contrast to the Père.

We saw each other next summer when I brought along my college friend Kim from New Jersey, and since the daughters were learning German and Kim spoke German (I spoke some), dinners were sometimes three languages going on at once. It was nice being in an atmosphere where you could pretend the 1930's and WWII hadn't occurred yet.

After visiting the Granier's, Kim and I went on to Germany to visit Herr Grunstedt, a painter that was at Hampton Institute in the early 60's and was wrapping up quite a life. You can learn about that story (or review it) in the story *Hampton Institute: a Place in Time*.

Lisa went on to get a job in New York as an international banker. Years later when I was co-oping at IBM in Kingston I would work all Thursday night, travel down to Manhattan Friday evening, and we would walk the streets until 3 a.m., as she knew all the clubs and hole-in-the-wall restaurants. She was a fantastic woman but way out of my league.

I learned about Will only after I was in Saudi Arabia, he had gotten a job teaching at the University of Beijing, and when I left Saudi Arabia and worked my way east back

home, I got a visa through him and so visited him in China. China at that time (early 80's) had few tourists and still no real development, and I was able get around by (what else) bicycle. That visit to China was really the end of my Saudi Arabia story, so the next story will go back to its beginning in a classroom in DC.