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JIM EVANS (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

## Peace Corps volunteer reports on four years in Lesotho

by Robert Lotman

Jim Evans returned home recently after spending nearly four years in Southern Africa.

Evans, 32, taught high school science for two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Lesotho, a small, landlocked country completely surrounded by South Africa. He also spent a year managing a drought relief project for the Peace Corps in Botswana, a large desert country that borders South Africa to the north, and he traveled in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Zaire.

Originally from Framingham, MA, Evans is visiting friends in Portland.

In Lesotho, he taught general science and biology to 200 teenagers at an Anglican mission school near the village of Ha Molemane, about 24 miles from Maseru, the capital. Most of the 100 Peace Corps volunteers in the country while he was there from 1981 to 1983 were teachers, Evans said. Lesotho has a teacher shortage, so the Peace Corps teachers filled a need for the country, he said.

Lesotho was a British protectorate for 100 years, and many of his students had a good understanding of English, Evans said. Learning English can be a liberating experience for people in the area, Evans believes, because it gives them a connection to the world and a hedge against being manipulated through their knowing only a local language.

The village was named after the local chief, according to Evans, who said that the tribal clan system of the country's Basotho people remains intact. Families continue to live in round stone and mud houses groups in family compounds, he said, and a system of chiefs extends up to the king, Moshoeshe II, great-grandson of Lesotho's founding chief.

Evans' photos showed a dry, mountainous country with few trees. Most of the population of one and a half million is crowded into a narrow plain between the Caledon River and a mountain range. The average income is about \$200 a year, Evans said. Villagers are not starving or suffering severe health problems even though drought conditions exist now, he said, because the people take care of each other and because the country receives considerable foreign aid. The staple diet is *papa* (heavy corn bread), rice, cabbage, and some meat, and the people wear western-style clothes and occasionally traditional blankets, he

said. "It's fairly disease-free because of the climactic conditions"—mainly dry with occasional snow in the winter and temperatures up to 90 in the summer, he said.

According to Evans, the Basotho people once occupied a wide area of what is now some of South Africa's best farmland. Pressured by the expansion of Afrikaner settlers on one side and Zulu people on the other, they came together under the leadership of Moshoeshe, repelled the settlers and became a British protectorate in about 1830. They lost much of their rich farmland, however.

Though independent, Lesotho is dominated by South Africa politically and economically. "They're at the mercy of South Africa," he said.

While citizens of Black-ruled Lesotho generally have more freedom than Blacks in South Africa, Lesotho has been in a state of virtual martial law since 1971 and its 60-day detention law is similar to that of South Africa, he said.

Lesotho does provide sanctuary to refugees from South Africa, and Prime Minister Leabua Jonathon occasionally makes harsh statements against apartheid, Evans said.

But South Africa finances a guerrilla movement to destabilize Lesotho, and the South African army has attacked across the border, allegedly in pursuit of African National Congress guerrillas. Forty people were killed during a South African raid in Maseru, according to Evans.

"Economically, Lesotho is totally dependent on South Africa," he continued. Corn grown in Lesotho for the country's staple corn bread is processed in South Africa and comes back at inflated prices, and many Lesotho workers leave their homes to work in South African mines, he said.

Being a minority felt strange at first, but the Black people he worked with made him feel welcome, Evans said. Still, he said, "People see whites as symbols of wealth, plus you always stand out in a crowd. People know your every move."

He recalled strange feelings evoked during visits to South Africa. "As a white going to South Africa, I wouldn't count on talking to that many Blacks. It's a very tense place. The place I felt the most tense was in Johannesburg. People seemed very scared—a New York City kind of thing."

# Frank Wilkinson: life dedicated to civil rights

by Jerry Garner

Frank Wilkinson has been fighting for civil rights almost all of his 72 years. Wilkinson planned on becoming a minister after graduating from UCLA in 1936. However, after taking a tour of the world, he changed his mind and embarked instead on a career in public housing.

In 1939, Wilkinson became Secretary of the Citizen's Housing Council of Los Angeles, a private, public-interest group designed to promote the construction of low-rent integrated public housing. In 1942, he joined the Los Angeles City Housing Authority. During his tenure with the Housing Authority, Wilkinson became a national authority on slum clearance. Wilkinson was the first manager of the first integrated housing in Watts in 1942. It was during this period the FBI started to follow Wilkinson around.

"I found out five years ago that in 1942 the FBI started following me around until 1980," Wilkinson was called before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) and asked to name all the organizations to which he had belonged since 1931. Refusing to answer, he was fired from his job. In 1953, Wilkinson became executive secretary of the Citizen's Committee to Preserve American Freedom. The organization was dedicated to abolishing HUAC.

In 1958, Wilkinson was invited to Atlanta to circulate a petition among Black church leaders in Georgia. The purpose of this was to keep HUAC out of the South. "HUAC was coming to put a subversive label on the Southern Christian Leadership (SCLC) and Martin Luther King, Jr. and Sr. "As soon as I arrived in Atlanta, I was subpoenaed by HUAC. Myself, along with the late Carl Braden, another civil liberties organizer, declined to answer on the First Amendment grounds."

Wilkinson and Braden were cited



FRANK WILKINSON

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

for contempt and lost in the U.S. Supreme Court by five-to-four decisions. The two were sentenced to one year in federal prison.

Wilkinson said this about his prison sentence: "I agreed to make a test case, knowing I would probably lose and go to jail, but there are times when the best place to be is in jail."

Before entering prison, Wilkinson and Braden were honored with a reception by Morehouse College. Among those who attended the recep-

tion in 1961 was Martin Luther King, Jr.

Later Dr. King and Howard Schomer (secretary of the World Council of Churches) and others petitioned for their freedom. Both Wilkinson and Braden were released in 1962.

After his release, Wilkinson returned to the National Committee to abolish HUAC. It was finally abolished in 1975.

Wilkinson's group changed its

name to the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation (NCARL). In 1968, NCARL joined with the Japanese-American Citizens League in a successful three-year campaign to repeal the 1950 Emergency Detention Act, which authorized the establishment of concentration camps for political dissenters in times of "national emergency."

When Wilkinson was asked about civil liberties protection under President Reagan, he said, "I am 72 years old and I've seen many Presidents. President Reagan is trying to turn back the clock on affirmative action, school integration, and protection of the Bill of Rights such as the Miranda Ruling and the Escobedo Ruling. Another reason why I say civil liberties are under attack today more than in the past is because Congress members (both Democrats and Republicans) are prone to compromise. Also we have a Supreme Court that is on a collision course with the Bill of Rights. We are getting decisions from the Burger Court that are contrary to what we would have expected from the most conservative members of the court during the time of Earl Warren."

Wilkinson said that the Reagan administration's attacks on the Freedom of Information Act is an example of the administration's attacks on civil liberties.

"In 1983, Reagan issued an executive order that reclassified over a million documents, that in the past years were declassified." This, says Wilkinson, will prevent the public from knowing about abuse of government powers. Wilkinson said, "if a citizen wanted to find out what the FBI is doing with the closed file on Dr. Martin Luther King, he would be denied this information due to Reagan's executive order. Reagan is trying to deny the public knowledge that the public must have if we are going to move at all down the road toward more democratic norms."

## Police misconduct costing cities

by Jerry Garner

Up until 1978, an individual could not sue a municipality for damages as a result of police brutality or personal injuries. Cities and towns were protected by "sovereign immunity," a derivative of the rule that "the King can do no wrong." This immunity changed in 1978 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that local governments were liable for civil rights violations. In 1980 the court eliminated the defense that a city, or its employee, had acted in "good faith."

These two decisions by the high court have resulted in cities across the nation paying out millions of dollars in damages for police misconduct. Below are a few examples:

- The city of Richmond, California was ordered by a federal court to pay the family of two Black men \$3 million dollars after they were shot to death in separate incidents by two white policemen. The jury ruled that the victims' civil rights were violated.
- The city of Milwaukee was or-

dered to pay \$1.4 million to a family of a Black man who was shot in 1958 by a white policeman. Police covered up the murder. A three-judge federal appeals court approved the award to the victim's family.

• Miami officials awarded over \$1 million to the family of Arthur McDuffie, a Black insurance executive, was beaten to death by five policemen. Although one of the officers involved in the murder testified in court that he was told to cover up the killing, the four officers who were charged were found innocent by an all-white jury.

• As a result of the Special Investigations Division (SID) scandal in 1981, the city of Portland awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars to individuals who were framed by SID officers.

The above examples are only a few of the many cases in which cities have paid out large settlements to families of victims who were killed as a result of criminal acts by the police.

Not only are cities paying out money to victims' families who died

from police misconduct, citizens are also being awarded hefty sums in cases of police brutality and acts of racism.

When Portland police officers threw dead opossums in front of the Burger Barn Restaurant in Northeast Portland, the owner received almost \$70,000 in an out-of-court settlement. In September of this year, a Multnomah County Circuit Court awarded \$5,000 in damages to a Portland man who was detained by police even after police learned he was not a suspect in an incident under investigation.

Besides paying millions of dollars in awards, cities are spending hundreds of thousands in legal fees. Even if a plaintiff wins nothing, the cost of mounting a defense can strain the budget of cities.

Examples of this can be seen in the "Don't Choke 'Em, Smoke 'Em" T-shirt incident and the Stevenson's inquest. It cost the city of Portland \$40,976 in legal fees in defense of the decision by Mayor Bud Clark to fire the two officers who sold the T-shirts.

The city also had to pay a portion of the arbitrator's \$7,750 fee. The law firm of Birkland, Koch and Houze was paid \$15,160 by the city for legal fees for representing policeman Gary L. Barbour, one of the four officers involved in the death of Lloyd D. Stevenson. The city paid \$16,500 in legal fees for the three other policemen involved in Stevenson's death.

Such large awards are draining the resources of many cities. Municipalities are facing serious fiscal problems as a result of declining federal revenues and police misconduct. The city reserves may dwindle further due to an upcoming suit by the family of Lloyd D. Stevenson. Stevenson's family is suing the city for \$15 million.

Portland's financial reserves are at the lowest point in more than a decade. Given the money the city has paid out over the years in awards to individuals due to police criminal behavior, it is not surprising the city reserves are low.