

Junior Volunteer Recalls Struggle Out of Africa

Megbit Berhe may only be 18 years old, but her wisdom and experience in the world far exceeds those years.

Megbit, a junior volunteer at Emanuel, has had to struggle to remain alive, was separated by war from her mother when she was 10 and has traveled from her home country of Eritrea to Africa to Sudan, to Saudi Arabia, to Egypt, to Italy, and finally to Portland. All this by the time she was 14.

When she tells her story, she simply recounts the events of her life, not boasting — just recalling what happened to her as if her struggle has not been extraordinary. It is the kind of story that could be made into a movie for American audiences to devour in an evening and then forget. But Megbit (pronounced Meg-Bee) cannot forget. For her, it is true.



Megbit Berhe

The tiny young lady recalls her village in Eritrea with obvious fondness. It was a beautiful place, she remembers, bordering the Red Sea.

"It was all grasses. We had papayas and oranges. It was beautiful," she remembers.

Her country of Eritrea bordered Ethiopia. Land-locked Ethiopia wanted Eritrea as part of its territory for access to the Red Sea. The conflict has been going on for years.

"Fighters," as Megbit calls the soldiers, swarmed over the village.

"The fighters, they feed children and let us grow and let us help fight for our

country. Everybody was going. Everyone fought," she says.

Her two brothers became fighters for Eritrea and to this day Megbit doesn't know if they are still alive, but she hopes. When the fighting had reached Megbit's village, her mother was afraid that Megbit would also be forced to fight with the Eritrean revolutionary forces. So instead, her mother sent her away with a friend. Megbit's mother, however, remained behind and Megbit went alone. She was only 10.

Her mother's friend traveled with Megbit to Sudan to escape the war, walking the entire time. They traveled at night to hide from the Ethiopian fighter planes searching for villagers trying to flee. It took them 14 nights to travel, sleeping under trees and hiding in the grass during the day.

The woman had told Megbit her mother would come too, but she never did. Megbit decided to return to her village but another woman in an office where the fighters met told her it was unsafe. Instead, this new woman took Megbit in for a year and three months.

"She was very nice, just like my mom. I loved her very much," Megbit recalls.

By now, Megbit believes she was 11½. Her new friend decided it would be best for Megbit to become a babysitter for a family in Saudi Arabia where she could earn an income.

"I worked hard. I liked working. I was with the family for nine months. Then we went to Egypt and we were there one year and three months."

The family had heard that if Megbit went to Italy she would have a chance to come to America for a better life. So Megbit was off to yet another country and forced to learn yet another language. She ended up with Catholic nuns in a home something like an orphanage in the mountains outside Rome. She remained with them for five months and got her first taste of school — Bible school. The nuns also taught her to knit. Megbit learned she had a relative in Portland and she was sent here.

Another new land. Another new language.

"Every country I don't know the language. But later I learn to speak all of it. When I was young, I think it was easier for my brain," she says in easily understood English.

When Megbit arrived in Portland, she was 14 and had already been to countries most American teen-agers don't even know exist. She had witnessed the pain and horror of war, of losing her family and of being a stranger in a strange land.

Her spirit, however, is far from broken.

"I work so hard," she says softly. "I try so hard in school. My dream in school was to learn, just to learn and get a job."

Now a senior at Jefferson High School, she has since moved to live with a teacher from there, Christine Enberg. She has heard from her mother once. Because she never had school and was so young when she left her home, she remembers little of her written language to be able to write her mother. She knows one letter got through, however, because she received one reply — a letter the Ethiopian government had torn up before sending.

"I pasted it together piece by piece. It said 'I miss you,' that's all," she says.

Megbit isn't looking back. She has plans to attend school at Western Oregon State College in Monmouth next fall with her goal of becoming a nurse.

At the prodding of Enberg, she has written her memories down so she can recall her village, her brothers and mother, and the places she has seen.

"It is easy when you say it, but it was all hard, the killing and dying. People bleeding in front of you," she says.

Working as a hospital volunteer, helping patients, answering the telephone in the volunteer office, Megbit looks much like any other junior volunteer. Her long fingernails are painted, she has tiny pearl earrings, a black braid goes down her back and her bangs are curly on her forehead. She keeps time with a stylish black and gold American watch.

But in her bright eyes and her soft voice is a hint of the experiences that set her apart from her peers. She has seen more than most Americans ever will.

"People here have never seen killing. They don't know how life is. Life is hard."

Multnomah County Library News Update

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Friday & Saturday, June 20th & 21st at 8:00 p.m.

"Virginia Woolf: a Spark of Fire," a one-woman show by Kathleen Worley. AT: First Congregational Church, 1126 SW Park Avenue. TICKETS: \$10.00 (Call 777-0236 or send check payable to: "Friends of the Library, P.O. Box 3261, Portland, OR 97208)



Dr. Thomas Seibles checks experimental results in the plant science lab of USDA's Eastern Regional Research Center.



Johanna Holden Moore prepares solution in center's animal biomaterials lab.



Frederick Douglas Jr. checks nutrients of fruits in center's plant science lab.

Black Scientists Help Improve Food and Fiber at USDA Research Center

WYNDMOOR, PA — In a small cluster of buildings just beyond the city limits of Philadelphia, scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Eastern Regional Research Center are at work on projects ranging from new ways to tan leather to controlling crop diseases. Despite the wide range of subjects, all of these investigations share the same goal: improving the quality of food and fiber for Americans.

Black scientists are playing important roles in this research. Here are profiles of three of them:

Dr. Thomas Seibles is a chemist at the research center's plant science laboratory. Seibles conducts basic and applied research on fruits and vegetables and their products, including investigations of the properties of plant enzymes.

Seibles currently studies black rot in potatoes, a fungus disease that damages potato crops.

"We are looking at how black rot works, how it invades the potato, what has to happen before it attacks, and why some potatoes resist the fungus," says Seibles. "If we understand these

mechanisms, we'll be on the road to finding prevention and better control for this destructive disease."

Seibles has been conducting research at the center for 30 years. Asked how he likes his job as a USDA research scientist, Seibles is unequivocal: "I think it's great. It requires discipline, but to me it's a very rewarding profession."

Johanna M. Holden Moore is a chemist in the research center's animal biomaterials laboratory. Moore has studied several aspects of hide preservation and tanning. The goal of this research is to find new ways of tanning leather that are efficient and safe for the environment.

"The hide and leather industry is dying in America, a victim of competition from abroad and other factors," says Moore. "Our research is an effort to help return a competitive edge to the U.S. leather industry."

Moore has worked at the research center since 1978, starting as a cooperative education student from Cheney University. After receiving her undergraduate degree from Cheney, Moore was hired as a chemist on the research

center's permanent staff.

Frederic W. Douglas Jr. is a chemist at the center's plant science research unit. Douglas currently studies retention of nutrients and storage stability of processed fruits and vegetables. The aim of this research is to maximize the nutrient value of these products.

In his current investigation, Douglas can draw on over two decades of experience in food technology and biochemistry. His past research includes studies of chemical changes in milk during processing and ways for enriching milk with iron compounds.

Douglas joined USDA in 1959 as an analyst in the Dairy Products Laboratory in Washington, D.C. He was a key member of a USDA team of scientists that researched removal of strontium-90 from milk. In 1964, the team received the USDA Award for Superior Service for its work. Douglas transferred to the Eastern Regional Research Center in 1974. He holds an undergraduate degree in chemistry from North Carolina College, and performed two years of graduate work in organic chemistry at the same university.

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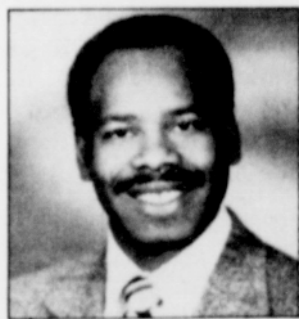
Portland Observer!

Consider banking.

First Interstate Bank of Oregon is proud to offer a variety of career opportunities for people with all levels of education and expertise. And we support the advancement of our employees through many education and

training programs. We urge you to consider banking for your career.

Here are profiles of three of our thousands of employees located throughout the state.



Lonnie Bates

Lonnie began his career at First Interstate in 1967 as a management trainee. He has worked as an operations officer, a transitional trainee in Loans, a Credit Department officer, and manager of three different branches. He has managed the Peninsula Center branch for the past four years. In addition to holding a degree from Portland Community College, Lonnie graduated from Pacific Coast Banking School, an industry sponsored school for professionals in banking, in 1985.



Michael James

First Interstate Bank recruited Michael in 1981 from the University of Washington's School of Business Administration, where he earned a B.A. in Finance. After completing his management training, he held a number of positions before moving to his current post as assistant income property loan officer in Commercial Mortgage, where he deals primarily with new construction loans. Michael credits his success to his college education, his background in the construction trade, and the continuing education he receives at the bank through classes and seminars.



Lynn Nagasako

Lynn has been an associate general counselor in the bank's Law Department since 1983. She attended Reed College, received her undergraduate degree from Princeton University, and graduated from Columbia Law School in 1973. Her areas of responsibility at the bank include commercial transactions, bankruptcies, and employment-related work. Lynn enjoys banking law because "I've always liked working in the credit area, and credit is the heart of the bank's business."

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That's good advice.

We're learning that moderation is the key to a safe and healthy life. We are each becoming more concerned with nutrition, exercise and overall physical fitness. That's why we're watching our salt intake, for example.

We know that there are certain safety lines and we don't cross them. Because excess means abuse and abuse means problems.

The majority of people who drink alcohol do so responsibly because they do so in moderation. They know how to enjoy alcohol beverages and gain the social, personal and health benefits that come with responsible drinking.

They know the responsibility they take on when they drink alcohol beverages or serve these beverages to others — a responsibility for safety, health and proper conduct.

And they know the best way to practice that responsibility is through moderation.

By knowing their limits, and sticking to them.

By neither accepting, nor offering, one for the road.

By neither condoning nor contributing to irresponsible behavior.

And by exhibiting at all times, a responsible attitude about alcohol.

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