

## Ashoka and Solar Suitcase Donations

Your FON Board authorized and sent contributions totaling \$10,000 to two extremely worthy projects. This money comes from your carefully managed dues money. When you renew your membership, you are getting more than an outstanding newsletter, a directory of old friends, and a variety of information about former colleagues and the country where most of us served. You are directly contributing to innovative projects serving Nigerians, helping to create an infrastructure, and keeping our membership closely connected to a land most of us haven't seen for nearly half a century.

A total of \$7,000 was sent to the Ashoka organization, which supports social entrepreneurship projects in Nigeria



(and around the world). Their website is <http://www.ashoka.org/about>. Board member **Anne Sherwood (11) 64-66** did a tremendous amount of research to vet this organization, which has pledged to allocate our contribution to its work in Nigeria. Among other people, we are communicating with Ashoka's Nigeria representative, Josephine Nzerem. You can meet Josephine at: <http://orennotes.blogspot.com/2009/03/josephine-nzerem-human-angle.html>. Her profile is on Ashoka's site: <http://www.ashoka.org/fellow/2354>.

In addition, Ashoka Development Director, David Stoker, has now con-

firmed that our donation was matched from the Brin Foundation (Sergey Brin, of Google) so a total of "\$14,000 to Nigeria is breathing significant life into our work in the area, thanks!"

We also have provided \$3,000 to the innovative Solar Suitcase project, the brainchild and, almost literal, baby of Berkeley, CA OB/GYN specialist Laura Stachel. The organization brings in suitcase-size solar units to power hospitals, principally operating rooms, in Nigeria where Laura travels to care for patients. We first learned of this project from a National Public Radio report, which you can hear at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126453393>.

While the project works in several countries, including Haiti, our contribution is earmarked for the project's ongoing efforts in Nigeria. There are many strategic benefits to this project. Obviously, we are helping to ensure safe and healthy babies, but beyond that, we are demonstrating to our ultimate recipients in Nigeria how simple, innovative solutions can often be applied to overcome what before had seemed insurmountable obstacles. For more details, go to the website: <http://wecaresolar.com/mission>.

We expect to hear more about both of these projects, the people who are making them possible, and ultimately, the benefits that your money will bring to two very worthy organizations.

## 50th Anniversary of the Peace Corps

FON expects to hold its biennial general meeting next year in conjunction with the NPCA's 50th anniversary events in Washington, DC in Sept. 22-25, 2011.

We are starting to plan and hope to see as many of you as possible at that time. We have had some worthwhile, enjoyable gatherings in past years in Chicago, Portland, San Francisco, and most recently in Boston.

NPCA plans for Sept. 2011: The main events in Washington, DC will be held September 22-25, 2011. Generally, they will include an advocacy day (Thursday); a community service day (Friday); country of service activities (open for Saturday); a reception, a symposium on the future of PC, and a gala (Saturday evening); a gathering at Arlington Cemetery and noontime march of flags across the Memorial Bridge (both organized by RPCV/W) to an event on the Mall (Sunday). Outside of NPCA, a reunion for former PC staff (Friday evening) is being organized.



Kofan Gayan Pediatrics Ward Staff



Laura Stachel with hospital workers and solar suitcase



Solar panel for Pediatrics Ward



Headlamp demonstration in Northern Nigeria

# President's Column

By Mike Goodkind (16) 65-67

FON at its most basic level is a conduit for members to better understand and then follow up on issues that resonate with us. Here are some key issues:

Many of us joined FON because we wanted to keep up with events in a country where we served. FON is increasingly making it possible for you to learn what is happening in Nigeria from enthusiastic host nationals and dedicated individuals who are in-country to provide useful service. You probably have already seen the front page article on FON's donations of \$7,000 to the work in Nigeria of **Ashoka**, a venerable and respected international organization promoting social entrepreneurship, and \$3,000 to support the **Solar Suitcase** project, which is demonstrating directly how solar power can provide crucial services, including such basics as operating room lights, in Nigerian hospitals. [See page 1.]

Some of you have already read about our involvement in these two new ventures on our website or GoogleGroup. If you are not a member of the group, you can join the discussion by following the instructions on p. 12 or by contacting me ([mgoodkind@earthlink.net](mailto:mgoodkind@earthlink.net)).

As we undertake new ventures, please keep in mind our ongoing support to **VSO** volunteers in Nigeria and to the microlending and related economic development fostered by the **Fantsuam** Foundation. You can continue support for VSO and Fantsuam via the handy membership renewal/donation form on the back cover. You can also make your donation to FON projects a meaningful holiday gift. [See page 5 for details.]

All of our projects bring each of us added value, because each opens up a line of communication with people working actively in the field in Nigeria. Those who receive our support are enthusiastic in their passion to let us know what they are doing — and how the money you contribute is being spent. Along the way, we gain lots of information about the state of Nigeria today, often from people speaking directly to our membership.

Save the dates!! Our **biennial FON**

**meeting** next year is scheduled for Sept. 22-25, 2011 in Washington, DC. We plan a variety of fun and educational activities in conjunction with the Peace Corps' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, occurring concurrently with great fanfare in the capital. [See page 1.] Our planning has already begun. If you are a FON member or friend living in the Washington metro area and haven't been contacted already, please let me or another board member know if you are interested in helping with this event. We hope in the next month or so to announce a committee that will help make this event a fall destination for as many of us as possible. We've had very positive feedback on recent biennial meetings — 2007 in San Francisco and 2009 in Boston — and we're anticipating that the combination of our own activities and those planned by Peace Corps and the National Peace Corps Association for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary will make this the best meeting we've ever had.

Our biennial meeting is also an opportunity to **refresh our FON leadership**. Watch the next newsletter, the GoogleGroup, and our website in the coming months to learn about our candidates for the FON Board. If you have an interest in participating in any aspect of FON, including the board, please let us know. We have openings for communicators for our newsletter/website, for fundraisers to keep our projects rolling, for logistics and financial gurus to make sure our systems keep humming, and for social people to help with events. Board members or the people you read about in these pages are always interested in enthusiastically finding a place for you to apply your skills and express your creativity. You can contact me directly if you are interested in helping in any capacity. Our board development committee consists of **Mike Malaghan (25)** and **Greg Zell (06)**. Feel free to contact either if you have an interest in helping as a board member.

As always, please let me know your thoughts and concerns: [mgoodkind@earthlink.net](mailto:mgoodkind@earthlink.net).

## FRIENDS OF NIGERIA NEWSLETTER

Quarterly publication of  
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affiliate of the  
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### Editor

Warren Keller  
[warrendkk@yahoo.com](mailto:warrendkk@yahoo.com)

### Assistant Editor

Jim Clark  
[jclark7341@triad.rr.com](mailto:jclark7341@triad.rr.com)

### Nigeria News Editor

Virginia DeLancey  
[v-delancey@northwestern.edu](mailto:v-delancey@northwestern.edu)

### Book Editor

David Strain  
[destrain@pacbell.net](mailto:destrain@pacbell.net)

### Layout Editor

Owen Hartford  
[hartfordo@earthlink.net](mailto:hartfordo@earthlink.net)

### Proofreaders

Earl (Buzz) Welker  
Steve Manning  
Alice O'Grady  
Mary Ann Palmieri

### Printer

Leesburg Printing Company  
Leesburg, Florida

## FON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### President

Mike Goodkind  
[mgoodkind@earthlink.net](mailto:mgoodkind@earthlink.net)

### Vice President

Mike Malaghan  
[mgm@malaghan.net](mailto:mgm@malaghan.net)

### Treasurer

Peter J. Hansen  
[pjhansen@ia.net](mailto:pjhansen@ia.net)

### Secretary

Bob Wynne  
[sswynne@comcast.net](mailto:sswynne@comcast.net)  
Lucinda Boyd  
[cindarboyd@mindspring.com](mailto:cindarboyd@mindspring.com)  
Virginia DeLancey  
[v-delancey@northwestern.edu](mailto:v-delancey@northwestern.edu)

Greg Jones  
[gregory.j@comcast.net](mailto:gregory.j@comcast.net)  
Fr. Edward Inyanwachi  
[esinyanwachi@dons.usfca.edu](mailto:esinyanwachi@dons.usfca.edu)

Warren Keller  
[warrendkk@yahoo.com](mailto:warrendkk@yahoo.com)  
Anne Sherwood  
[annesherwood@comcast.net](mailto:annesherwood@comcast.net)  
Gregory Zell  
[gregzell@mindspring.com](mailto:gregzell@mindspring.com)

### Membership Chair

Barbara Tansy Bush  
[btbush@earthlink.net](mailto:btbush@earthlink.net)

### WEBSITE

[friendsofnigeria.org](http://friendsofnigeria.org)

### Website Manager

Greg Jones

### Website Newsletter Manager

CLeigh Purvis Gerber

The short "Wanted: Newsletter Feedback" item in the Summer Newsletter generated the largest reader response since the special "Back to Nigeria" Newsletter 2 years ago. Thanks to all who responded. I speak for the entire team when I say it's nice to know someone out there is reading the newsletter.



Printed below are the more detailed letters. Please know that all suggestions will be carefully evaluated by the production team.

Virginia DeLancey's work helps us remain Nigeria's informed friends. Often reviled, and sometimes with good reason, Nigeria needs such friends. How long has Virginia been compiling Nigeria News? Certainly, for as long as I can remember (a decade, perhaps). Since I write about Africa, I also read other news sources, but I still find her columns very useful. For instance, the Summer 2010 issue is a keeper, in part because of the capsule bios of Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan and the deft accounts of the succession process. Thanks for all this excellent work, Virginia.

Ron Singer (10) 64-67

Your FON newsletter is a treat to be savored, Warren.

Leading with the two VSO stories was a terrific entry. God, they are soooooo young! And bright and committed. With all the negative talk and news from Nigeria it is wonderful to read these good news stories.

I can see why Peter reports that our donations to support VSO are on track for another good year. It makes me proud that we are giving money where our mouth is. With VSOers like Teleri and Cicely helping Fantsuam and backing Emily, I understand why our modest contribution goes a long way.

Frank and Bob, thanks for sharing your experiences.

Virginia, I am not sure how or how

much time it takes to dig up all those Nigerian stories, but I am glad you do.

Mike Malaghan (25) 66-69

I think the summer 2010 edition of the newsletter is excellent. I liked David Strain's review of the Adichie short story collection and the "Recollections" essay by Frank Monahan and the "Then and Now" essay by Bob Randall. Please keep it coming. I think the Newsletter has a pretty devoted readership.

Larry Lesser (09) 63-65

I loved reading the newsletter. I especially liked Nick Thiemann's review of *Fela!* Clem and I saw it a couple of weeks ago with American friends. One of them is a jazz saxophonist and knew all about Fela. Her husband didn't. We loved *Fela!* and, of course, it brought back lots of memories. I remember driving somewhere in Surulere in Lagos in the early '80s when Fela came racing by in his car with the army in hot pursuit! We were near the shrine, and I heard that he made it back without being arrested that time at least!

Cathy Onyemelukwe (04) 62-64

I like the rather hodge-podge variety of article types, i.e. the mixture of short and long, nostalgic ("Learning the Value of Volunteering") and current (Nigeria VSO Volunteers).

I like the cultural aspects, like *The Thing Around Your Neck* review. I had read Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and it was right on, giving a great personal perspective on the Biafran war and the years afterward and the interactions of Nigerians with expatriates.

The Nigeria News section is fantastic and I hope a permanent feature. It is rather more neutral than some of the personalities deserve, but that is rather a political necessity.

Obituaries are depressing enough and there is no need to make them more so. No need for the grey background; make it white honoring the positive contributions the volunteer made. No need to mention the manner or cause of death; it adds nothing to the honoring, and death

is diminishing no matter how you look at it. A paragraph about their life, as a volunteer, as a citizen, and *perhaps*, as a family member is enough. The thin black border is okay.

Maybe one poem from a volunteer or just appropriate for the newsletter. [See page 11.]

Richard Holmquist (22) 65-67

I enjoyed reading "Learning the Value of Volunteering" by Frank Monahan, but what I missed is at least a small paragraph about Frank's life after the Peace Corps. [See page 8.] On the other hand, "It's a Marathon, Not a Sprint" was complete — Peace Corps experience and life experience. That was really great. I look forward to more.

I find the Nigeria News pieces are just too long. I suppose I should be interested, but I am not. Very few of them talk to me.

For a story idea: One person I would like to hear about is our former Eastern Nigeria Educational advisor Dick Mastain. What did he do with his life after the Peace Corps (I know he wrote a book on the Cincinnati newspaper, which was great)? Did he remain in the education field? Dick was instrumental in helping me as a teacher in Nigeria understand the importance of cultural relevancy in learning. While teaching in Nigeria, I organized a team of volunteers to counteract the rote-memory method of teaching and learning. We put together reading kits to help students improve their reading comprehension skills using African writers, African themes, and indigenous literature. Dick Mastain was the inspiration.

[More about Dick Mastain in a future newsletter].

The book review of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was well done. I'm going to be on the lookout for it.

I look forward to the Friends of Nigeria newsletter — there is always good material.

Ken Sale (15) 65-67

While I am not about to critique the format or editing — both of which seem

(Letters to the Editor, continued on page 7)

## Nigeria VSO Volunteer Teleri Jardine VSO & Fantsuam Foundation, Kaduna State

*This is a continuation of Teleri's introduction in the summer newsletter.*

### What led Teleri to volunteer through VSO in Nigeria at this time?

Her response:

My passion for International Development issues started approximately 8 years ago when I started actively learning about development issues through attending workshops, listening to British and overseas development speakers



and undertaking my own reading and learning. I spent 6 years working as a local volunteer campaigner primarily on trade justice and debt relief issues with a local community group and the NGOs, Christian Aid and Oxfam. I organised local events and discussion forums for campaigners, my local Member of Parliament, NGO workers and the diaspora community. Some of the work from the discussion forums was officially published online feeding into the UK government's consultation on the Africa

Commission and International Development policy.

I also spent over 3 years working for a small International Development charity, which worked with partners in Kenya and Uganda on HIV, Disability and Income Generating projects. My role there was as Finance Officer, having full responsibility for the accounts. I also wrote a bookkeeping manual and simple bookkeeping system to build our partners' capacities in East Africa. It was successfully introduced by the Programme Manager and is still being used today. The other element of my role was as volunteer manager and community fundraiser. When I joined the organisation there were very few volunteers; when I left there were 100 volunteers and a portfolio of community fundraising events.

I had wanted to get direct grass roots experience for some time and so I applied to VSO. When I was offered my current role with VSO I was thrilled, because trade and agriculture were among the first things that got me interested in international development issues. I was privileged to hear native speakers in the UK talking about their personal experiences of land rights in Brazil and fair trade in the Ivory Coast and Ghana. I have also had the privilege of spending a very short amount of time with small scale cotton producers in Zambia.

Agricultural trade impacts on everyone. World trade rules and increasingly climate change are having a huge impact on subsistence farmers in some of the world's most vulnerable communities. Agricultural trade impacts not only on livelihoods but food security, nutrition,

and water resources but also involves issues such as HIV.

International trade rules, designed by the world's wealthiest nations (through the WTO and IMF) often in their own interest, directly affect some of the world's poorest food producers. 96% of the world's farmers live in the developing world and the poorest people often live in rural areas where the main source of income is subsistence farming. So agriculture and its local and international food markets play a vital part in the economic health/ill health of a vast number of some of the world's most vulnerable people.

Heavily subsidised food from the West, prohibitively high tariffs placed on poor countries exporting foods to western countries and unfair and adverse IMF loan conditions make global food markets highly unequal. The inequality reduces poorer countries' ability to compete internationally while highly subsidised Western food imports swamping African food markets have resulted in many local producers going out of business. The result is that once locally thriving food markets have crumbled to nothing, as was the case with

### Keep The Lorry Rolling!

As of August 31, 2010:

#### VSO Project (since 2004):

Total raised:	\$38,754
Number of donations:	707
Number of donors:	358

#### Fantsuam Project (since 2008):

Total raised:	\$13,141
Number of donations:	200
Number of donors:	162

### VSO Blogs

Cicely Brown (UK) 2008-

Emily Bullock (UK) 2010-

Glenn Dodge (Canada) 2008-9

Wil van Koningsbrugge (the Netherlands) 2006-7

<http://cicelyinnigeria.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.emily-in-nigeria.blogspot.com/>

<http://acanuckamuck.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.wilvankoningsbrugge.whereareyou.net/>

rice and tomatoes in Ghana. Once self sufficient in these products, they now rely on imports. The impact on communities and individuals has been devastating, resulting in lost livelihoods and worsened living conditions for those across the local food production and supply chain. Those able to remain in the market have had to cope with much lower market prices and not all producers will be able to sustain that in the longer term.

Food security is an important issue for Nigeria and other countries. As the effects of global warming start to increasingly affect the seasons, rainfall, and temperatures and as fertility levels of soils change, food security is likely to become

even more of a concern. A recent report from Oxfam highlights the dramatic impact climate change is already having on farming communities around the world. Land rights issues are also starting to affect food production, with vast areas of land in developing countries being sold to wealthy foreign companies, further depleting a country's ability to feed itself.

All of these issues as well as other issues involved in agriculture and the trade it creates I find fascinating and many development experts say that trade has the potential to lift far more people out of poverty than all the financial aid countries give to Africa is likely to. It is a vitally important issue.

I love the work I am doing and it is a wonderful opportunity to learn about



## Holiday Card Donations

Want to make your donation to FON a meaningful holiday gift for someone? Request cards that show through photos and a brief text that you have contributed in their honor to VSO or Fantsuam. Just mail your check and indicate how many VSO and/or Fantsuam cards you'd like to Friends of Nigeria, c/o Thomas Cassidy, PO Box 421, Pocono Pines, PA 18350. We'll send one card to you for each \$25 you donate. See samples at: [http://www.friendsofnigeria.org/Announcements.htm#\\_FON\\_Donation\\_Gift](http://www.friendsofnigeria.org/Announcements.htm#_FON_Donation_Gift).

things first hand. I have been privileged to talk to a wide range of people in my research, to learn about their challenges and lives. Now I am able to continue the process by supporting the activities arising from the research, which are designed to improve incomes for poor and disadvantaged families.

### Treasurer's Report Fiscal Year 2009-10 Peter Hansen, Treasurer

<b>Income:</b>	
FON dues	7,167.50
NPCA dues	2,765.00
Unrestricted donations	1,487.20
VSO & Fantsuam Projects	10,741.00
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	<u>73.25</u>
Total Income	\$22,233.95

<b>Expenses:</b>	
Publications (newsletters and directory)	5,741.69
NPCA (dues rebates & affiliation fee)	3,125.00
VSO & Fantsuam Projects	11,116.00
Membership Solicitation & Fundraising	1,420.74
USPS & website	293.78
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	<u>50.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$21,747.21

Total Income fell short of last year's by about \$1,800. Although member donations to our VSO and Fantsuam Foundation projects were up by about \$500, FON dues and Unrestricted donations were down significantly. This decrease is probably a reflection of the timing of an annual membership renewal solicitation, which should have been mailed in May 2010, but was postponed until July 2010, and hence in the next fiscal year.

Total Expenses were less than last year's by about \$900. Approximately biennially FON publishes a hardcopy directory; last year's expenses included the publication of this directory (\$1,800), while this year's expenses did not. Last year's expenses also included a \$1,000 donation to the NPCA for their Peace Corps 50th Anniversary preparations. On the other hand, FON donations to our VSO and Fantsuam Foundation projects were up by more than \$2,100.

## **Helen Katherine Fleeson (staff) 66-68**

It is with sadness that *Friends of Nigeria* reports the passing of Helen Katherine Fleeson. Helen died on July 31, 2007, in Little River, Kansas where she was residing in the Sandstone Heights Nursing Home. She was a longtime resident of Lyons, KS having graduated from Lyons High School in 1956. She later received a degree from Sterling College.

Helen served as a Peace Corps secretary in Nigeria from 1966 to 1968. She was a longtime bookkeeper for Fanny Allen Hospital and the Vermont Housing Authority. She is survived by two brothers: Robert Fleeson of Nottingham, NH, and Harry Fleeson of Salina, KS.

[Source: *The Hutchinson (KS) News*.]

## **John Phillip Lanigir (staff) 66-68**

*Friends of Nigeria* is saddened to report the death of John Phillip Lanigir. John passed away on May 5, 2010, in Changuinola, Bocas del Tore, Republic of Panama at the age of 84.

John served in Kaduna, Nigeria from 1966-68 as an agricultural advisor on contract from the US Department of Agriculture. He later worked for the Forestry Division of the US Department of Agriculture. Prior to his death, John had had a series of operations for aneurysms in his leg and abdomen. Following his latest surgery and apparently good recovery, he passed away unexpectedly a week later. He is survived by a daughter, Kathleen, living in or near Sacramento, CA.

[Source: Joe Pulvino]

## **Walter T. Szyndler (16) 65-67**

It is with regret that *Friends of Nigeria* reports the passing of Walter Szyndler. Walter died on July 10,

2010, at his home in Washington, DC, of complications from gallbladder surgery. He was 70 years old. Walter was a member of Nigeria 16 serving from 1965-67.

Walter was born in Taunton, MA, and graduated from the University of Georgia. Following his Peace Corps service, he joined the Melwood Horticultural Training Center as a program coordinator. He established a greenhouse and landscaping program aimed at teaching plant-care skills to people with disabilities. He later managed the Melwood Farm and helped establish its vocational training programs.

In 1975, Walter went to Alberta, Canada, to work as a vocational and rehabilitation consultant. He returned to Melwood in 1984, and remained there as its director of research and demonstration until his retirement in 2006. While at Melwood, he created art therapy and horticultural therapy programs and advocated for the rights of people with disabilities to live together as couples.

In retirement, Walter enjoyed making and exhibiting painted sculptures out of gourds. He attended numerous workshops around the country and exhibited his works in solo shows and international competitions. He also volunteered with the Sisters of Charity and *Art Enables*, an arts program for people with disabilities in Northeast Washington.

Survivors include his companion of 21 years, Jose Segura of Washington, and a sister.

[Source: *The Washington Post*]

## **Mary Ware (11) 64-66**

*Friends of Nigeria* regretfully reports the death of Mary Ware. Mary was a member of Nigeria 11 from 1964-1966 and served as a teacher in Kano, Northern Nigeria.

At the time of her death on May 8, 2010, Mary was residing in Venice, California. She had a distinguished career as professor of English at Los

Angeles Southwest Community College located in South Central Los Angeles. She served for over 30 years at the college and was remembered fondly by her former students and fellow staff members.

[Source: *Los Angeles Times*]

## **Phyllis Porter McClure (01) 61-63**

*Friends of Nigeria* is saddened to report the death of Phyllis P. McClure. Phyllis was a member of Nigeria I from 1961-63 and served as a teacher in Arochukwu. She suffered from pancreatic cancer and passed away May 17, 2010 at her home in Washington, DC at the age of 72.

Phyllis was born in Berkeley, CA and graduated in 1960 from the University of Connecticut where she edited the college newspaper. After receiving a master's degree in history from the University of California at Berkeley, she served in the Peace Corps. She then received a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School.

In 1964, Phyllis joined the civil rights office in the Office of Education and helped with the federal government's first efforts to enforce desegregation but transferred in 1966 to the US Commission on Civil Rights. In 1969, she joined the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund where she used her passion and insight to uncover and illustrate the widespread misuse of federal funds meant to enhance educational opportunities for some of the country's neediest students.

She left the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in 1994 to become a consultant to school districts, foundations and watchdog groups. She continued to advocate for the enforcement of Title I as well as for school desegregation, giving workshops on Title I for black parents and community groups and filing complaints about the abuse of

(Letters to the Editor  
continued from p. 3)

entirely workable, even beyond the call of duty, for such a newsletter — I want to personally add my sincere thanks to you as editor and to all the others who put the Newsletter together.

My Nigeria PCV experience was truncated (I was only in Nigeria 3 months, then spirited away) and try as I might to distance myself from those strange months in sub-Saharan Africa, they haunt me still, for good reasons mostly. You can view my little story on the WikiFON under Group XX if you wish to get a taste.

It has been this newsletter that has re-awakened my instincts for Nigeria and my skirmishes there and has allowed me, however distantly, to enjoy the fellowship of all those others who served the new nation of Nigeria upon its independence in 1960. We were there.

I enjoy contributing to the VSO and Fantsuam Foundation projects and will continue to do so. These are actionable items, and statements about our group's ongoing commitment to Nigeria, despite the US Peace Corps itself having left a long while back.

Charles Kollerer (22) 66-66

Great job as usual! Yes, I do read most of each issue. This last issue has a nice clean and professional look to it. Nicer than some of the early issues which often appeared as though they were just compiled sheets. I realize that the earlier issues provided relevant information, but the current format makes it a more enjoyable read. Good job all staff!

Being a Nigeria CUSOite from way back in about 1970, I was drawn to the "Recollections" and the "Then and Now". Those stories bring back good memories

federal funds. In retirement, she wrote a book, *Jeanes Teachers: A View into Black Education in the Jim Crow South*.

Her marriage to **John McClure (01) 61-63** ended in divorce. She leaves a sister.

[Source: *The Washington Post*]

of my earlier years. Maybe those writers would be interested in adding to the Wiki stories which have not been added to in quite a while.

I was also very interested in the stories from the current VSO volunteers. We old-timers definitely had a different skill set from that of these newer volunteers with their logged-in technologies. We went out with idealism, enthusiasm, a certain naivety, and basic skills. This new group, 40 years later, is heading out with idealism, enthusiasm, worldliness, and lots of both management and social activism skills.

The same trend seems to be apparent in Peace Corps, VSO, and CUSO volunteer skills.

This may be because each of these organizations has just reached, or will quickly reach, its 50th anniversary.

Andy Buhler (CUSO) 69-71

I want to let you know that the efforts of you and the production team are appreciated by me, a Group X volunteer who served in a bush place by the name of Ozoro in the Midwest. I am grateful that your team has stepped up to give time and energy to a labor of love. The newsletter has a good balance just the way it is.

Our PC service was the kick-start for many of us to continue serving as needed. I am currently serving on the City Council and am an officer in the local heritage society at a small Colorado mountain village. I also have a similar question about the time and energy we give. Be assured that your contribution is appreciated by many even though you cannot often hear the applause.

Mike Wallace (10) 64-66

### William P. Vick (23) 66-67

It is with regret that *Friends of Nigeria* learned of the death of William P. Vick. Bill passed away on April 7, 2007 in Alexandria, VA. As a member of Nigeria 23, he served as a rural de-

## CUSO plans 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

By Andy Buhler (CUSO) 69-71  
50th Celebration Search Committee  
Co-chair, [brdrs@shaw.ca](mailto:brdrs@shaw.ca)

CUSO will turn 50 in 2011 and there is a big 50th Celebration planned to happen in Ottawa mid-June 2011. I am on a "Nancy Drew" CUSO-VSO sleuth committee tasked with trying to track down as

many of our "lost" RVs as possible to inform them about the 50th.

I would appreciate your letting FON CUSO members know of the 50th Celebration. A new website will be up by the time you read this and should be locatable

through the CUSO-VSO site: <http://www.cuso-vso.org/about-cuso-vso/contact/>



CUSO-VSO locations

## Help Wanted

by Peter Hansen (27) 67-68

The June 7, 2010 issue of *The Nation* included a review of the two books about Nollywood:

*Nollywood: The Video Phenomenon in Nigeria*, edited by Pierre Barrot, and *Nollywood*, by Pieter Hugo.

Although I did not find the reviewer to be a very good writer, she did reveal some interesting information. She stated that "600,000 video CDs are printed each day in Lagos alone." Nollywood may be a subject of interest to our newsletter readers. Would someone please volunteer to write an article for the newsletter? Please contact newsletter editor Warren Keller [warrendkk@yahoo.com](mailto:warrendkk@yahoo.com).

velopment specialist from 1966-1967.

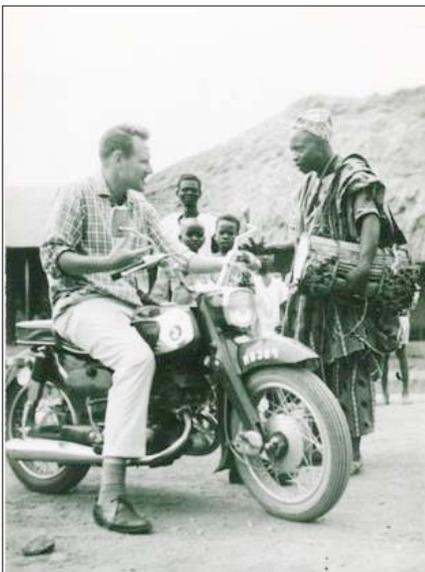
Bill was born on May 25, 1941 and graduated from the University of Oklahoma in Norman, OK where he was a member of the Gamma Phi chapter of Beta Theta Pi.

## Learning the Value of Volunteering, Part 2

By Frank Monahan (13) 64-67

*This is a continuation of Frank's article in the summer newsletter.*

After returning home from Nigeria I pursued a career which I believe was a natural evolution from the experience of serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer. As I was preparing to leave Nigeria, I had a conversation with **Del Lewis (staff) 66-69** about my future. I basically was



Frank then

seeking his advice on what a person who had just gone through the exhilarating experience of Peace Corps could do as an encore. Del said the newly created Great Society programs under the Johnson administration probably offered some similar opportunities. He advised that the church communities were major partners with the federal government in this effort as well and that, given my background of



Frank now

being born and raised in a wall-to-wall Irish Catholic community, I should probably check out the involvement of the Catholic Church. I followed that advice and the rest is history.

When I returned to my hometown of Chicago in the summer of 1967, I was offered an opportunity to manage two federally funded anti-poverty programs, Neighborhood Youth Corps and later the Headstart program, both sponsored by the Chicago Catholic School Board. In time, my responsibilities were expanded to include the management of federal education and nutrition programs for low-income and disadvantaged children in the inner city Catholic schools of Chicago. Among other things, we created a child nutrition program that provided school lunch and breakfast for fifty thousand inner city students.

A few years later I moved to Washington where I worked for the national Catholic Bishops' Conference on various aspects of their public policy and legislative agenda in the U.S. Congress and Federal agencies. Most of the issues were prioritized by how policies affected poor and disadvantaged people, including immigrants and refugees here and abroad. I ended my career there as the Director of their Office of Government Relations. Some time soon I hope to begin work on a book of "war stories" on that experience.

When I reflect on my time in the Peace Corps, I realize how significant it was as a life-altering experience. My Peace Corps experience instilled in me the importance of volunteer work, which I attempted to maintain throughout my professional

life. Since the mid-70s I have been involved in efforts of local volunteer groups in Northern Ireland working on peace and reconciliation issues. I continue to be active in that area. In 2005, through my local Catholic church, I helped organize and lead a four-year effort of relief work for victims of the Katrina hurricane along the gulf coast of Mississippi. Currently we are exploring ways to provide help in Haiti. I credit the Peace Corps for instilling in me these very important values.

### Bilharzia/Schistosomiasis

By Andy Philpot (VSO) 65-67

Anne and I returned from a three-week tour of Egypt earlier this year. When we were visiting El Alemein and the cemeteries near by, I noticed this little bit of information at the German Cemetery, reminding me of good old bilharzia/schistosomiasis causing so much pain in our lives in the Delta.

### Old Cairo Military Cemetery

The German cemetery of the former German colony lies in the "Old Cairo" quarter of the Egyptian capital. 125 dead have their final resting place in the civilian section. Among them is the renowned and, by the Egyptians, honored tropical doctor Dr. Theodor Bilharz (d. 1862). He discovered the dangerous worm disease Bilharzia, which was named after him.

In the war graves section, 126 First World War dead rest. 27 were transferred here in 1953 from Tell el Kebir during the search for the graves of World War II dead.



## The Peace Corps Makes a Difference for Everyone

By Alan Frishman (24) 66-68

I arrived in Nigeria in September 1966 as a 21-year-old college graduate. After my group's three-month training period at Boston University, I felt as if I had a rudimentary knowledge of Nigeria and Hausa. But like everyone else, I was wide-eyed for months after I arrived in Birnin Kudu to teach math at one of the two boys' secondary schools in Kano Province (later Kano State and now Jigawa State).

Surprisingly, I adjusted to small village life, which needless to say was quite different from my home in New York City. Everyone was friendly, the students were eager to learn, and as my Hausa improved, I was able to talk to people and make more friends in town. Things went so well that I extended for a third year and finally left in August 1969 to go to graduate school at Northwestern University. I studied economics and African studies and then got a Fulbright grant to go back to metropolitan Kano for my dissertation research. After I received my Ph.D., I continued to do research in Kano, which allowed me to return on five occasions.

I spent 1972 to 1975 doing dissertation research, six months in 1980, the summers of 1987 and 1993, a month in 2001, and a month last year, 2009. I realize that most returned volunteers never have the chance to return to the country where they were stationed in the Peace Corps, so I consider myself lucky to have been able to do so. Each time I returned, I found one or two of my former students who arranged for a dinner or get-together with others. As the years went by, these students became administrators, bankers, businessmen and teachers; they were always appreciative to see me and remind me of our times at Birnin Kudu and our classroom

experiences. During each visit, I also saw several of my fellow teachers from the 1960s and I made my pilgrimage to Birnin Kudu Secondary School to see how the town and school were doing.

Last year, however, I had an enlightening experience. I ran into Habib, one of the 1970 graduates, who told me that the "Birnin Kudu Class of 1970 Old Boys Club" was having a meeting that Sunday. He invited me to the monthly gathering and on Sunday morning, he came to pick me up. I soon found myself in a room with 24 of my former students, who were all in their 50s. Of course, they all remembered me (how many white Americans did they have teaching math to them in secondary school?) and many asked, in jest, if I remembered them. How can one remember men who were 18 or 19 some forty years ago and now were old with grey hair and white beards? To be honest, some of the names seemed familiar and a few of them even looked the way they did back when I taught them, but maybe that was only wishful thinking.

After they conducted their meeting's business, we went around the room and each of us explained what we had been doing for the past 40 years. Some were brief and others long-winded, but I was happy to hear that many of them had used math in some way in their careers. Perhaps I had made a contribution to their lives, I thought to myself. They told me that there were 60 in their class and 21 had died—a sad statistic. Altogether it was a wonderful experience, and before departing we assembled for a photo.

What this story shows is that although most volunteers leave their host countries and lose track of students and colleagues, they likely have had a meaningful impact on many people's lives. I have been fortunate to see that first-hand. It is very gratifying as I told my former students. I also told them that they left an indelible mark on my life and changed the way I view the world. They were surprised but pleased to hear that they were not the only ones to benefit from the Peace Corps.



Alan with former students in 2009.

## ***My Nigeria, Five Decades of Independence***

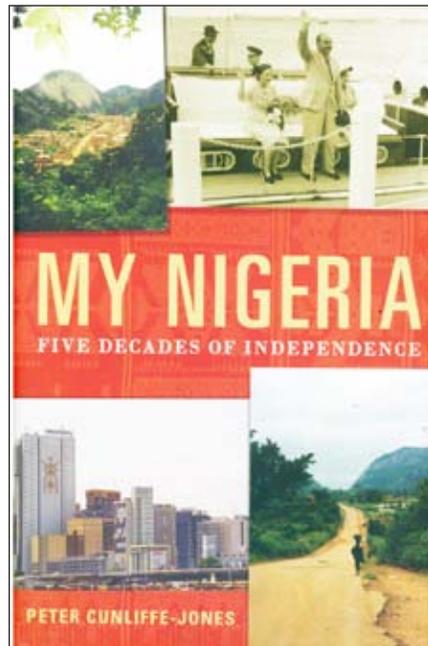
by Peter Cunliffe-Jones

Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 217 pages, \$26.00 (but see special offer below).

Reviewed by David Strain (07) 63-66

Author Peter Cunliffe-Jones has been a foreign correspondent for twenty years with the *Economist*, *The Independent*, and *Agence France Presse* where he is now a senior editor. In 1998, just as Nigeria began its latest flirtation with civilian government, he began a four-year reporting stint in Nigeria – he'd previously been in Nigeria all of four days, part of an African foray following university where he majored in African history. *My Nigeria, Five Decades . . .* seemed an odd title, a little grandiose under the circumstances, but it soon becomes apparent that the possessive is meant to emphasize that the book will be a tour of what he found personally while reporting from Nigeria as well as an account of the earlier experiences in West Africa of two relatives whose notes and memoirs Cunliffe-Jones brought with him in 1998.

His great grandmother's cousin Edward Burns touched down in Nigeria in 1883 when his coastal steamer to the Congo stopped at Bonny en route, and he and others were invited by a Nigerian producer to view his palm oil plantation. The skiff carrying the twenty of them grounded in the Delta waters, and he and the other guests were borne through the shallow waters the last half mile to the plantation on the backs of the slave laborers who had been rowing. Burns later proceeded to the Congo as an employee of Leopold's International African Association (IAA) whose ostensible purpose was the eradication of slavery and the bringing of the 3 C's espoused by the explorer David Livingstone: commerce, Christianity, and civilization. After enthusiastically making treaties between the IAA and various Congo chiefs, some at gunpoint, Burns came to realize that



the IAA was a sham to mask Leopold's exploitation of the Congo detailed in Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*. Burns resigned with the hope of an appointment to Nigeria where he thought things would be better but died of malaria at age 23 before he could extract himself from the Congo.

Cunliffe-Jones's grandfather's experience in Nigeria was extensive. After university graduation Hugo Marshall began his colonial service career as a lowly cadet officer in Akure, Western Nigeria and over the course of 27 years rose to the position of Lieutenant-Governor of the Western Region. He chose Nigeria over cushier, more favored appointments in East Africa because of his dislike of European whites' settlement in Africa and of the treatment of Africans where Europeans settled in numbers. During his career he protected those he governed, even from the demands of his own British government, and in the course of negotiating several constitutions for Nigeria in the 40s and 50s he used his good relations with Nigerian leaders to try to negotiate compromises between Northerners who wanted to delay independence until they could "catch up" and Southerners who were in a hurry. But Marshall was an administrator not a politician. He wanted to be outside,

building roads and infrastructure, not inside, battling political issues. A dispute with Chief Awolowo left Marshall physically ill. And from what Cunliffe-Jones has extracted from Marshall's apparently cryptic notes, Marshall was only the implementer, not the originator, of the British policies which Cunliffe-Jones charges were instrumental in the collapse of Nigeria only six years after independence in 1960.

*My Nigeria* is not a long book, only 210 pages, but Cunliffe-Jones manages to interweave the stories of his ancestors, George Goldie, and Lord Lugard with a brief but thorough history, not only of the post-independence years, but also with a general summary of the area's status up to the 1500s when the trans-Atlantic slave trade began. Were there really six coups since independence? I would not have believed it, but now we can keep it straight with a helpful Nigerian time line section.

The book's second half then pursues the questions of why everything has gone so badly in Nigeria and how responsible the colonial British were for the mess. As to the latter, I'm afraid to say that the well-meaning author takes his well-meaning ancestors to severe task in what appears to be a serious case of ancestor guilt (alleviated only somewhat by his Nigerian friends' laughing mockery of it.) Arguing that the British should have begun nation building when the northern and southern protectorates were merged in 1914, a merger which is described as something of an accounting adjustment to hide the losses of the north, Cunliffe-Jones gives no particulars about what that nation building should have been. In the context of Lugard's policies of indirect rule and the government's edicts that the colonies be self-sustaining, it is hard to know what the author has in mind, and he does not elaborate. The author further faults the British for favoring regionalism in the constitutions leading up to independence, resulting in strong regional governments and a weak central government. However, he doesn't discuss what powers should have gone to the



Peter Cunliffe-Jones

center and how the highly suspicious regional groups could have been cajoled into giving away such powers. Certainly his grandfather Hugo Marshall could not have done it!

On the issue of Nigerians and the mess, the author provides a series of always interesting vignettes of businessmen, state and local government leaders, and rebels, which develop the author's impressions of corruption, kleptocracy and misrule in contemporary Nigeria. Interesting, but not always telling. For instance Cunliffe-Jones's attempt to interview the businessman Mai Deribe, a wealthy trader in oil and government supplies in Maiduguri (and incidentally a former party secretary whose daughter was married to the Shehu of Borno), was canceled by Deribe's death in Saudi Arabia, so we are left with a fascinating description of his tour of Deribe's \$100 million pleasure palace guided by his son, but no interview of Deribe which might have exposed how he acquired his funds and what obligations to his people (however defined) he felt or acted upon. The author's trip to the Niger Delta to interview an unnamed rebel leader gives him a close-up view of its pillage by the oil interests, but no interview with the rebel leader who, he was told, was then too busy. Later the author finds that the leader's busyness was in cutting a deal with the oil companies which enriched himself but not his people. These gaps are the consequences of so personal a

tale – sometimes you get the story, sometimes you don't.

Cunliffe-Jones adopts Chinua Achebe's judgment that Nigeria's failures are not the failures of the people but failures of the leaders to lead. In a fascinating analogy to Indonesia, a country also blessed (or cursed) with oil, a tropical climate, multiple religions and ethnicities, and military rule for 34 years under President Suharto within the same time period, he contrasts Indonesia's development of a non-oil economy to Nigeria's decline and suggests that it is not only the leaders but also the led who must step up to bat in order to get ahead. He ascribes the power of the people in Indonesia to their battles with the Dutch and the Japanese before independence, and their ability to create fear of revolt within the Suharto regime, which despite rampant corruption and self aggrandizement, knew that it must also increase the prosperity of the country as a whole. And it did. Indonesia's value of oil exports as a percentage of all exports declined from 75% to 20% in the period.

Nigerians, unfortunately it appears, did not have to go to war for their independence, and in fact were not even particularly assertive in comparison with other African populations. However, Cunliffe-Jones does provide examples of pressure from below bringing change in Nigeria. In Lagos with more education and awareness of the world outside and more cell phones and televisions, the local government has been goaded to work on nighttime lighting, garbage collection, and other civic amenities. In the Niger Delta the rebels, with their destructive leverage, have forced the government to increase the benefits to the region, and in at least one obscure municipality the locals have used radio exposure to shame its officials into actually using the community's funds to improve the community.

Cunliffe-Jones does not wrap all of these issues in a nice box and tie it with a ribbon. In fact, many questions are left unanswered and some important questions, I think, go unasked. However, unlike some more academic tomes

(e.g. Daniel Jordan Smith's *A Culture of Corruption*) Cunliffe-Jones' tales of corruption are lively and not burdened with academic jargon. You won't fall asleep. For an audience like ours, it will both raise and answer questions, start arguments and lead to further exploration into why Nigeria is where it is and whether Nigeria's star is rising . . . or falling.

A 20% discount on its \$26 price is offered by the publisher to those who contact Palgrave Macmillan at [www.palgrave.com](http://www.palgrave.com) and enter XP356ED.

## Tony Zurlo's Book of Poems

Submitted by Peter Hansen (27) 67-68

**Tony Zurlo (13) 64-66** writes: My book of poems *The Mind Dancing* won the 2010 Award for the Outstanding Poetry Book published by a Peace Corps writer during 2009. The art work by Vivian Lu is really what makes the book stand out, I believe. It's a little late in life to brag, but it's unlikely the award will get me a free pass through the Pearly Gates. So I'll speak up while I'm still conscious. Seriously, I'm honored and humbled to win such a prestigious award.



Yin

rules the night  
from the shadows  
of memory,

her words the waves  
of creation, her voice  
nature's lyre.

Through pristine air  
she glides  
undetected,

cradling the mystery  
to her  
bosom.

## Peace Corps Digital Library

By Peter Hansen (27) 67-68

I discovered the Peace Corps Digital Library at <http://collection.peacecorps.gov/index.php>. Looking at a couple of old newsletters it dawned on me that there could be information of interest to FON newsletter readers. For example, I found the following from Vol 2, No.1 of the Peace Corps News, January 1962, by loading the newsletter (pdf) and searching for 'Nigeria':

### A SCHOOL IN NIGERIA

'Good Teachers and Good Friends'

It was the last day of practice teaching for seven Peace Corps Volunteers at Lagelu Grammar School in Ibadan. **Tom Seiler** of Pittsburgh, Pa., finished his last English class for the day and prepared to leave. Across the hall, **Harland Hibbard** of West Caldwell, N.J., closed his biology book and dismissed his students.

Similar scenes were occurring in other classrooms, presided over by practice teachers **James Lancaster** of Washing-

ton, D. C., **Paul Newman** and **Stanley Field** of Philadelphia, **Joel Splansky** of Los Angeles and **Robert Teller** of Havre de Grace, Md.

It was several minutes after the close of these final classes that the Volunteers found that school wasn't over. The entire student body of Lagelu School had assembled in their honor. There were speeches of good will by several students who spoke for all their classmates. One of these expressed the students' initial doubts when they learned that a group of Americans were coming to teach them, but stated their decision to reserve judgment. Now that the teaching period had ended, the speaker said, his fellow students wanted him to say they had enjoyed being taught by the Americans, whom they had found to be "good teachers and good friends." They were sorry that the Americans were leaving, he said, and they hoped that some or all of them could return to Lagelu School as regular teachers in the future.

## Nigerian Photo Gallery

By Irene Abdou (Niger) 95-99

I'm an Africa travel photographer and Niger RPCV (1995-1999). I've traveled to Nigeria several times over the past few years. My website is at <http://archive.ireneabdouphotography.com>, and my Nigeria photo gallery is at <http://stockarchive.photoshelter.com/gallery/Nigeria-Abuja-Enugu-Kano-Lagos-Malaria-HIV-AIDS-Water-Family-Planning-NGOs/G0000Zh7MGBBX08Y/>. Perhaps you will find these photos of interest.



© Irene Abdou

## How to Join the FON GoogleGroup

The FON GoogleGroup was established several years ago for two reasons. One purpose was to keep FON members informed about FON and Nigeria news in a timelier manner than the quarterly newsletter. The other was to provide a vehicle for ongoing discussions on a variety of topics of common interest.

FON president **Mike Goodkind (16)** has developed a simple 3-step process to join the FON GoogleGroup:

1. Send a message to [mgoodkind@earthlink.net](mailto:mgoodkind@earthlink.net) from your email address asking to join.

2. Briefly explain your interest in joining, e.g., "FON member" or "I'm the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria."

3. Mike will respond through the GoogleGroup with an invitation to join.

You will then start receiving emails from the group as they are posted and may post emails to the group by sending an email to [FONmembers@googlegroups.com](mailto:FONmembers@googlegroups.com). We strongly encourage you to become an active participant. If you have any difficulties receiving emails from or posting emails to the group, Mike would be happy to help. Email him directly.

If you wish to have access to the GoogleGroup website to view the past history of postings to the group, you will need to create a Google account. This involves entering your email address (not necessarily a Google email address) and a password of your own choosing. Go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), follow links at the top to the page to the Friends of Nigeria group and then follow the instructions.

Edited by Virginia DeLancey (04) 62-64

## Political Parties and Election Commission Agree to Postpone Elections

The spokesman for Nigeria's ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) said that a majority of the parties participating in next year's general election agree with the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) to postpone the presidential election that was originally scheduled for January 22. The Electoral Commission called for a postponement of the elections, saying that it needed more time to compile a complete voter registration list to be used for the elections. The INEC spokesman said that a delay in the elections would not affect the swearing-in scheduled for May 2011. (Source: VOANews.com, 9/20/10, 9/23/10).

## PDP Reschedules Its Presidential Primary; Jonathan Declares Candidacy

Nigeria's ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) has decided to reschedule its presidential primary which was to have been held between October 18 and 20. The results of the primary will allow the party to ratify a single candidate. President Goodluck Jonathan has formally declared that he will run. His eligibility was initially in question until recently when the PDP said he could run with other candidates. Under Nigerian "zoning" rules, power is to shift to different regions and ethnic groups every eight years. Jonathan, who is from the Niger Delta in the south, was part of a joint ticket with the late President Umaru Yar'Adua who was from the north. Yar'Adua's death in May upset the order of the zoning. Because Yar'Adua was elected in 2007, the north should have retained the presidency for eight years and Jonathan should not have been eligible to hold the office at this time without the consent of the PDP.

Some PDP members have urged Jonathan to abandon his Vice President, Mohammed Namadi Sambo. They believe that he lacks political clout, particularly the ability to mobilize the north

for Jonathan's presidential bid. Jonathan says, however, that he has no plans to abandon Sambo.

President Jonathan announced his candidacy on his Facebook page with a long discussion of what he intends to do for Nigeria. His activity on Facebook makes him Africa's most popular politician with a fan base of 200,000 friends, almost 10 times more than President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya. (Sources: CNN.com, 9/15/10, 9/16/10; *Daily Trust*, 9/17/10; *Leadership* [Abuja], 9/15/10; *This Day* [Lagos], 9/15/10; VOANews.com, 9/15/10).

## Many Candidates have Presidential Ambitions

President Jonathan will face competition from other candidates for the presidency of Nigeria. Former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar appears to be supported by at least 11 state governors who hope to ensure that he becomes the PDP's candidate. To further support his aspirations, Abubakar wrote letters to over 3,400 statutory delegates of the PDP, including President Goodluck Jonathan, urging them to give him their votes in the party's primary election. Opposition to Jonathan within his own party follows Jonathan's refusal to rule himself out of the race and leave the opportunity to a northern, Muslim Nigerian candidate.

The Senate Chief Whip, Senator Kanti Bello of Katsina, has written to the 109 Senators of the National Assembly, urging them to support the presidential ambition of General Ibrahim Babangida as the PDP's candidate.

Governor Bukola Saraki, the two-term governor of Kwara State, has also declared his interest to contest the presidential election. He became the fourth aspirant to declare his presidential bid on the platform of the PDP. He favors the policy of alternating the Presidency between the north and the south every eight years and has consistently opposed President Jonathan's presidential bid.

General Aliyu Gusau, the national security adviser to President Jonathan, has resigned his position in order to also contest the presidential election on the

PDP ticket. He is the third northerner in addition to former military leader Ibrahim Babangida and former vice-president Atiku Abubakar to seek the candidacy of the PDP.

The former chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Mallam Nuhu Riadu has also declared his candidacy, with speculation that he will seek the ticket of either the Action Congress of Nigeria (CAN) or the Labour Party. Alhaji Bashir Tofa, the previous presidential candidate of the now-defunct National Republic Convention (NRC), active in the June 1993 election, will launch his presidential bid on the platform of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP). (Sources: *Daily Trust*, 9/17/10; *Leadership* [Abuja], 9/20/10; *This Day* [Lagos/Abuja], 9/16/10; *Leadership* [Abuja], 9/20/10; VOANews.com, 6/21/10, 9/8/10, 9/20/10).

## Two Million Voters Could be Disenfranchised

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the United Nigeria Peoples Party has raised an alarm that more than two million Nigerian Muslims could be disenfranchised in the 2011 general election. He said that they could be denied the right to vote in the elections if they are unable to register to vote. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INED) has scheduled voter registration for November 1 to 14, at the same time that a large percentage of eligible voters will be on pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia for the lesser hajj.

In addition to the conflict with the lesser hajj, others believe that fourteen days is not enough time for the process in a country of 150 million people because most potential registrants will have to travel to their hometowns from wherever they work or live. They believe that the registration period should last for one full month, prior to the elections which will be held in January to choose new lawmakers, state governors, and a president. (Source: *This Day* [Ade-Ekiti], 9/14/10; VOANews.com [Dakar], 9/10/10).

## Parliament Approves New Electoral Chief

Parliament has approved President Goodluck Jonathan's nominee to oversee the upcoming elections. President Jonathan nominated political science professor Attahiru Jega to lead the electoral commission. He is Vice Chancellor of Bayero University in Kano and is a long-standing critic of military rule. The National Council of State unanimously approved the selection of someone who is not known to have any partisan political affiliation and a Nigerian who has distinguished himself in his career. He will replace Maurice Iwu, who President Jonathan dismissed in April, as he was widely blamed for the conduct of the 2007 elections that were marred by ballot-stuffing and voter intimidation.

Professor Jega maintains that he will not succumb to pressure from powerful politicians to approve questionable vote counts, and that he will call for tough new penalties for voter fraud. He is also calling for updated voter lists and the purging of names that do not belong on the lists. Names of pets, famous people, or the deceased were illegally added to voter lists in the past. Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka supposedly claimed that the name of Nelson Mandela, as well as some other African leaders who are not Nigerians, is on the list and that people actually show up claiming to be these leaders so they can vote and influence the outcome of the election. (Source: VOANews.com [Dakar], 6/9/10, 6/24/10).

## Nigeria @ 50

On October 1, Nigeria will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary as an independent nation. In preparation for the event, the Federal Government is making certain that it has completed the equipping of all airports for the arrival of guests. The Senior Special Assistant to the President on Aviation has said that all safety facilities and equipment needed for safe air travel have been provided and that all airports where dignitaries are expected to park their aircraft are undergoing upgrading

to be completed before the anniversary. More than 50 Heads of State and other guests are expected to attend, including the Duke of Gloucester, Prince Richard, to represent the Queen and her Majesty's Government. As part of the United Kingdom's contribution to the Nigeria @ 50 celebrations, HMS OCEAN (an amphibious assault ship of the Royal Navy) will visit Lagos, take part in the Presidential Fleet Review, and undertake naval training activities.

For some events taking place in the U.S., visit [www.nigeria@50.org](http://www.nigeria@50.org). (Source: *Daily Trust*, 9/21/10; *This Day*, [Lagos], 9/20/10).

## Nigeria and U.S. Sign Pact on Regional Security

In order to further strengthen the security system in the Niger Delta region, the U.S. has signed a bi-national agreement on regional security with Nigeria. (Source: *Leadership*. (Source: *Leadership* [Abuja], 9/15/10).

## U.S. to Re-Open Consulate in Kano

Recognizing the need to further strengthen bilateral relations between the U.S. and Nigeria, the American government has concluded plans to re-open a consulate in Kano State. The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Johnnie Carson, who announced this in Washington during the signing of the Regional Security pact with Nigeria, added that the U.S. government would consider enhanced representation in the Niger Delta. (Source: *Leadership* [Abuja], 9/15/10).

## Chinua Achebe to Receive Arts Award

Chinua Achebe has been chosen to receive the 2010 Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize. The prize of approximately \$300,000 from silent film stars Dorothy and Lillian Gish is one of the largest and most prestigious awards in the arts. Recipients are nominated by the worldwide arts community and selected for their unprecedented impact in their field. Achebe will receive the prize and

a silver medallion on October 27 at the Hudson Theatre in New York. He was selected by the Gish Prize Committee which this year includes Lowery Sims, Curator, Museum of Arts and Design; Jane Alexander, actor and former Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts; Kwame Anthony Appiah, President of PEN and Professor of Philosophy, Princeton University; Vallejo Gantner, Artistic Director, Performance Space 122; and Elizabeth Streb, Streb Laboratory for Action Mechanics. (Source: Press release, The Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize Trust [New York], 9/24/10).

## Yaba Tech Students Win \$90,000 World Bank Project

Twenty students of Yaba College of Technology have won \$90,000 from the World Bank STEP B Project under the Innovators of Tomorrow Award project. The awardees are final year students from the departments of Computer Science, Electrical/Electronics Engineering, Food Technology, Estate Management, Industrial Management and Mechanical Engineering. The award money won after competition with other institutions in Nigeria is to be used on the students' final year projects. The awardees were given special training on capacity building by the World Bank in mid-September in Abuja. (Source: *Leadership* [Abuja], 9/15/10).

## 721 Prisoners Escape

About 200 members of the Islamist sect Boko Haram attacked a prison in northern Nigeria on September 14, triggering a massive gun battle. The group freed 721 inmates. Police initially captured 35 of the escapees and were searching for the others. One police officer was killed and two prison officials were injured. Police suspect that the prison was attacked because it was holding 80 members of the sect. Boko Haram has been at odds with Nigerian officials because the group wants the government to impose Islamic law, sharia, in the entire Muslim-dominated northern half of Nigeria.

A week after the prison break, about 283 of the escapees returned to the prison to continue their sentences. Some of the returnees were those who had nearly completed their terms and those who had a good behavior record. In the meantime, the Bauchi state governor directed security agency employees to begin a house-to-house manhunt of all suspected Boko Haram members. The exercise is to continue until all the escapees are found. (Source: CNN.com, 9/8/10; VOANews.com, 9/8/10).

## Lead Poisoning Kills More than 163

Lead poisoning caused by illegal gold mining caused 355 cases of lead poisoning and killed more than 163 Nigerians, including 111 children from March to June, in several remote villages in northern Nigeria, Zamfara State. Many of the children who did not die are blind, deaf, and unable to walk.

Searching for gold in outlying mines, villagers brought rocks back to their homes where they smashed the rocks to search for gold. In the process, the lead and other metals were released. Local and international medical agencies are treating over 50 children at the nearby hospitals. The normal level of lead in children is below 5, but the levels of these children were well over 150, and one was as high as 200.

The United Nations is extending its assistance to authorities in Zamfara State and other northern parts of Nigeria where the outbreak of lead poisoning has occurred. A five-member team of environmental emergency specialists from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has arrived in Nigeria and will spend several weeks taking samples of soil and drinking water and analyzing them, and will also come up with recommendations on how to clean up pollution from lead, mercury and copper. OCHA has allocated \$2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund where the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) are working with local health authorities and non-governmental organizations to

treat victims of the outbreak. (Sources: Jon Gambrell, Associated Press [Gusau]; *Leadership* [Abuja], 6/5/10, 9/23/10; VOANews.com [Dakar], 6/10/10; *Vanguard* [Anka, Zamfara], 9/23/10).

## Nigeria's Rainforest is Disappearing

According to the World Resources Institute, Nigeria has 4,715 different types of plant species and more than 440 species of breeding birds and mammals, making it one of the most ecologically diverse locations on the earth. However, Nigeria also has one of the most rapid deforestation rates in the world. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, Nigeria cleared an average of nearly 410,000 hectares of forest from 1990 to 2005, which is nearly 4 percent of the country's rainforest disappearing every year. Less than 10 percent remains, and 50 percent of that is in the Cross River State. If this continues, there will be no forest remaining in six to ten years.

Because of the large population and the density of the population, the rainforests are under massive pressure. Moreover, because the government's priority has been on oil, the forest sector has not had sufficient attention and not much funding. Logging and agriculture have been the major threats. In addition, there is over-hunting, driven by the large population and huge demand from the cities for "bush meat" and other forest products. (Source: CNN.com [London], 9/1/10).

## South African Group Donates 10,000 Tree Seedlings

Enugu State Green Project, a campaign to emphasize tree planting culture, has received a donation of 10,000 seedlings. The donation was made by Enugu State residents of South Africa under the aegis of Enugu South Africa Green Project Committee during this year's tree planting campaign in the state. (Source: *Daily Champion* [Lagos], 9/13/10).

## Toxic Ship Berths in Lagos

A few weeks after the vessel MV

Maersk Nashville was intercepted in Lagos allegedly carrying a container of toxic materials, another vessel, MV Gumel, was detained for bringing into the country eight containers of materials suspected to be toxic. Officials of the National Environmental Standards Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) were inspecting the containers. The agency's counterpart in Antwerp alerted NESREA that the vessel was bringing used refrigerators, used television sets, compressors and used batteries. Nigeria is a signatory to the Basel Convention which seeks to eliminate the use of CFC because of its effect on the ozone layer. As CFC is no longer in use in Europe, some organizations collaborate with entrepreneurs to send the toxic items to Nigeria and other African countries. (Sources: *Daily Champion* [Lagos], 6/4/10; *Vanguard*, 6/4/10).

## Afrowood Airlines Initiates Flights to South America

Afrowood Airlines and Cargo Services Ltd. has begun direct flights from Lagos to South America. The CEO of the company said that the time has come to tap into the economies of other countries, especially those of Southern and Central America, because they are not only viable but also present an opportunity. This is the first time that such direct flights have been scheduled. The flight will be direct to Paraguay, from where passengers will get connecting flights to other countries in the region. (Source: *Leadership* [Abuja], 9/15/10).

## Central Bank Revokes 200 Microfinance Bank Licenses

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has revoked the operational licenses of 200 microfinance banks due to below-average performance of the institutions. The Governor of the CBN said that the necessary action is being taken to reorganize the sector, after which new licenses will be issued to those with the technical as well as the financial muscle to operate microfinance banks in Nigeria. (Source: *Leadership* [Abuja], 9/22/10).

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c/o Peter Hansen  
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