



Our dream: a public library in Ethiopia

By Jean Bailey

An offer to give a friend a lift to Colindale underground station in 1991 was the beginning of the realisation of a dream. Here I met my late husband, Aysanew. We were from two different countries, two different religions and cultures, yet we had in common a passion for many things and ideas.

Political involvement in the 1970s Ethiopian turmoil and terrors, horrendous torture in prison, followed by work as a lawyer in Ethiopia, other African countries and Switzerland, all shaped Aysanew. Our passion for the pursuit of social change was the glue that united us. We believed that this could best be achieved through education, especially for girls and high achievers who drop out from school through poverty.

Vision plus action

This was the beginning of the Azezo education project and the realisation of our dream. By the time of Aysanew's death the project supported 20 students in universities across Ethiopia. This was the challenge I accepted. In the words of Nelson Mandela: "A vision with action is merely dreaming. Action without a vision is just passing the time of day. But with a vision and actions you can change the world."

St. Mary's Catholic Church, East Finchley, Justice and Peace group has adopted the Aysanew Kassa trust as their overseas charity for 2010. The aim this year is to build a public library in Azezo. The nearest similar facility is 10km away and transport is expensive.

It will provide a safe, quiet place for children, especially

girls, to study and access books, and also space for older people as an alternative to poor mudhouses and bars. There are no other public amenities in the town. The whole Azezo community is excited about this project; the design and much of the labour are being undertaken freely.

If you can help it would make a huge difference to the people and their hope for a public library. Please contact Jean307@btinternet.com or 020 8883 8722.

Beware fake police

By Janet Maitland

Barnet Boroughwatch has issued a warning about fraudulent police officers who are targeting elderly people.

"These criminals phone a potential victim, claiming to be police officers investigating fraud," said Paul Hammond, of Boroughwatch. "They will call several times, asking for the victim's finances and account details. Later they go to the victim's address to collect bank cards, which they then use to withdraw large amounts of cash. In the most recent offence the victim was actually taken to the bank to withdraw money."

Marvellous music man

By Judith Abbs

It's Tuesday morning and about 30 singers are revelling in the amazing improvisations of their accompanist as he transposes to any key that suits their voices, creates witty introductions and plays every tune that anyone suggests, all without a sheet of music in sight.

The pianist is Martin Goldstein and his long list of stage credits includes *The Music Man*, *Candide*, *Barnum*, *Oh! What a Lovely War*, *West Side Story*, *Hello Dolly*, and *Evita*. But that's not the whole story.

Martin says: "The lot of most freelance musicians, mine included, has always been a chaotic jumble. Touring, light music broadcasting, commercial recording and West End shows, even playing in the Lounge Bar on the Orient Express, made for an exciting, if ultimately exhausting, brew of daily life."



Martin Goldstein

In the mid-1980s Martin became Director of Music at the Arts Educational Schools and joined the Examining Board of the Royal Schools of Music. He finally retired in 2001 and moved from St John's Wood to East Finchley in 2006.

New challenges

Here he immediately joined the North London University of the Third Age (NLU3A). In spite of the name, this is not a conventional university. NLU3A offers a form of learning in which older people share lifelong interests and skills and find new activities. Above all, it enables them to get out and mix with others in a stimulating environment.

The singers he accompanies on Tuesday mornings are members of the U3A Singing for Pleasure group. Reflecting on life at the age of 81, Martin says: "Retirement provided a welcome respite for a while but there will always be new challenges for the old fingers."

Further information about all NLU3A groups is available at www.nlu3a.org.uk or by contacting Helene Davidian on helenedavidian@googlemail.com or 020 8444 3669.



Friendly faces: East Finchley Open artists (left to right) jewellery maker Monica Peiser, silk artist Ann Froemberg, painter Christine Watson and glass maker Philip Vallentin, with two of Philip's pieces. Photo by John Lawrence

Face to face with art

Art-lovers were able to get close to some superb works of art and the people who created them at two East Finchley Open weekends in early July.

Artists threw open their homes and studios, giving visitors a chance to chat to them about their creations and maybe buy some very individual pieces.

There were prints, paintings, textiles, ceramics, jewellery, sculpture, glassworks, videos and basketry at 16 venues in East

Finchley and Muswell Hill.

This is now an established annual event for the EFO artists. Jewellery maker Monica Peiser, who opened her home in Hertford Road, said: "I always enjoy the open weekends. It's nice to hear first hand what people have to say."

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Are you flying south for the summer?

Yes, summer's here, time to forget about austerity chic. Now is the time for barbecues, cold beer, holidays, cheap flights, cheap wine and cheaper tricks. Yes folks, time for a bit of collective insanity as the country decamps to some miserable air terminal and flies Sleazy Jet to the Costa del Living for sun, sea and sangria. And guess what, I'm not going.

Holidays start going downhill just after you book them and keep on going until they crash into the ground. It starts when you find out that CheapoFlytes doesn't stop at charging you for going to the toilet, it charges you for not going as well. And that's before you discover that your flight to Barcelona actually lands in France.

Things don't improve when you arrive at the airport and join the queue to join the queue for people who checked in online and are queuing to pay the online check-in surcharge. Then it's goodbye to your luggage as it heads off for a skiing holiday in Iceland and you wait for your flight to the sun.

Once upon a time there was something unique about flying and it was called airline food. This strange culinary invention tried to match the exotic with the insane and came wrapped in plastic that tasted better than the food inside. The only thing that made it palatable was whatever free booze you could scrounge. Except that nowadays you need to fly fat cat class to get anything more than a glass of recycled water.

Then you have to get home. Even if another unpronounceable Icelandic volcano hasn't decided that it's time to ground everything that flies apart from seagulls, getting home is never easy. Well at least it isn't with CheapoFlytes, not when you've been stuck in some air terminal for a day while they try to find a pilot. It was at that moment a couple of years ago I realised that granny was right when she said there is nothing wrong with holidaying at home. But then again, she did claim that if God had meant us not to fly he'd never have given us the Titanic.

Judith Costa BSc HPC

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