Memoir: The Long Hello

AMBASSADOR DONALD C. JOHNSON

MEMOIR

September 1984 -- Going Nowhere

If anyone had asked for a description of U.S.-Mongolian relations in the fall of 1984, "going nowhere" would have been the words most likely to spring to mind. After decades of sporadic contact, and having tried and failed to normalize relations during the early 1970's, things were at a standstill. Like a jeep in the Gobi with four flat tires, things were not looking very hopeful at all.

Consider this: We had not had a single American diplomat received officially at the Foreign Ministry in Ulaanbaatar since Vice President Henry Wallace made his ill-starred visit to Mongolia in July 1944. (With regard to Henry Wallace: He actually spent the 4th of July 1944 in Mongolia. His trip to the Far East coincided with efforts by the Democratic Party leadership who wanted to replace him with Harry Truman on the 1944 Democratic presidential ticket. By the summer of that year, insiders could see that Roosevelt was unlikely to serve out his fourth term in office, and the party leaders considered Wallace far too liberal for their liking. Fifty years later, I arranged a photo exhibit of his visit, and was able to track down a Mongolian official who had participated in it. He recalled for me how on the morning of the Fourth of July 1944, a patriotic officer in Wallace's party had fired off his pistol in celebration of the day; for a few very tense minutes, the Mongolians had thought the VIP camp was under attack.)

In September 1984, while serving at the American Embassy in Beijing, I happened to look through our Embassy background material, wondering when the last trip to Mongolia had taken place. As far as I could determine, no officer from Beijing had visited Ulaanbaatar for years. A few may have transited the Mongolian capital on the Trans-Siberian railroad, but that was the size of it.

As it happened, the newly-arrived Political Counselor at the Embassy -- Darryl Johnson, who later served as U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania and Thailand -- had visited Ulaanbaatar from Moscow a number of years before. He had been received by officials at the Mongolia Academy of Sciences, but not at the Foreign Ministry. Furthermore, Darryl told me that he thought nobody else had traveled there from Moscow since then.

I asked him if it would be alright if I approached the Mongolian Embassy in Beijing, which was located only a few blocks from our own Chancery, to see if I could make a visit. If the answer was "no," so be it, and I would not bother him (or them) about it again. The Office of China and Mongolia Affairs at the State Department was duly consulted on the matter, and I have to say that the approval that I received was tepid at best. The China Desk's position might best be summed up like this: "We've been waiting for a response from Mongolia for years; if they want to move, it's up to them to send us a signal." There is no need to exaggerate the point -- there was just not a whole lot of interest in what I had proposed.

Tepid or not, the Department's approval was good enough for me. I got on my bicycle and pedaled the few short blocks to the Mongolian Embassy. I parked my bike, and presented my passport and my diplomatic card to the rather startled clerk at the entrance, explaining that I was an American diplomat who wished to apply for a visa to go visit his country. I got a "Please wait a few minutes" response, and the official disappeared. So I waited, and when the receptionist returned, it was to tell me that I would have to travel to Mongolia "as a tourist." I said that was perfectly all right with me, did the paperwork and left.

When I returned to pick up the passport, though, the visa was very clearly marked "Diplomat" in big Cyrillic letters. I thought that was fine too, got my tickets for the Trans-Siberian train, bought a couple of bags or boxes of vegetables to share with Japanese and British diplomats in Ulaanbaatar, and left Beijing at 7:40 AM on the morning of September 19, 1984. That notation was one of the first in the journal I kept of my trip; it has survived umpteen Foreign Service moves and is still with me.

Looking Out -- and Looking Back

I don't know whether it still does, but at that time the Trans-Siberian actually went under the Great Wall of China near Badaling, and then moved slowly across the yellow-brown landscape of northern China. I had never had a chance to see this landscape close-up from a train, and I was fascinated from the very start. It came as a huge surprise to me that earthen watch towers and stretches of wall much older than the Ming Dynasty Great Wall near Beijing could easily be seen all along the way.

Fascination is one thing, but the international situation and context is quite another. I therefore think it useful to look back very briefly to consider what was happening around that time. Relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union were not exactly warm. The Carter administration had been replaced in January 1981 by a Reagan administration that had embarked on a much tougher policy in dealing with the Soviet Union. By the fall of 1984, we were busy challenging the Soviets on at least three important fronts -- in Afghanistan, in Angola, and in Central America. We had put Pershing 2 missiles in Western Europe to counter the Soviet SS-20s. U.S. defense spending had been ratcheted upwards. Relations with China were as warm as they had ever been. Thousands of Chinese students were flocking to U.S. universities, and tens of thousands of American tourists had rushed to "discover" China. Presidential elections were under way in the

United States, but by late September 1984, it was clear that Ronald Reagan would win a second term as President, too.

For Mongolia, it could not have been the easiest of times. It was still the only country in the world completely surrounded by nuclear-weapons states. Ulaanbaatar was the only capital city in East Asia that could not be reached by regular air service from any other capital in East Asia. (And if one rules out flights from Irkutsk to Ulaanbaatar, there was no regular air service to Mongolia from anywhere in Asia. Not from China. Not from Japan. Not from Korea.) Which explains why I was sitting on the Trans-Siberian train.

The train reached the China-Mongolia border just before 9:00 PM, the entire train's wheels were changed from the narrower Chinese gauge to the wider Soviet/Mongolian one and the Chinese restaurant car was replaced with a Mongolian one, and we crept across the border to Zamiin Uud for another stop, where I was stamped into Mongolia just after midnight on September 20. Just after dawn that morning, we stopped at the town of Sainshand, and I still can remember how crisp and clear the air was in comparison to Beijing's. In my journal, I also noted "Goats running wild right across from the train platform."

Talking About Relations

The Mongolia that I visited in 1984 still had 50,000 Soviet troops posted there, scattered at bases all around the country. We took it for granted that the Soviet air bases dotting the countryside had nuclear weapons on them. One of these bases was easily visible from the train as we neared Ulaanbaatar; the combat aircraft could be seen by anyone who glanced out the window, as they were parked in and around the huge concrete bunkers at the edge of the base's runway. That too offered a sobering thought about where I was.

I was met at the Ulaanbaatar train station by a Zhuulchin travel guide, and after reaching the venerable Ulaanbaatar Hotel at the edge of Sukhbaatar Square at the center of the city, I swiftly made arrangements to deliver the rather wilted boxes of vegetables that I had brought for the British and Japanese Embassies. (My journal notes that the broccoli was looking rather the worse for wear upon delivery.) When my Zhuulchin guide asked what I would like to see during my visit, my journal records "Made request to see people at factories, schools, Academy of Sciences, and Foreign Affairs Ministry." The theory, I suppose, is that there is no harm in asking; I certainly was not demanding to see any of these. Nobody in the Department was insisting on this, either. My journal records the following: The Zhuulchin guide asked "what subjects I would raise," and my reply: "Mongolia's foreign policy, and particularly its relations with [its] two neighbors, the Soviet Union and China." Again, I suppose there is no harm in stating the obvious.

Let me now jump forward a few days, during which time I traveled by plane down to the Gobi Desert, where I actually bought a camel saddle (for hard currency) from an amazed but nevertheless hard-bargaining Mongolia camel herder.

On September 25, I was told that it "might be possible" for a meeting to take place at the Foreign Ministry. That was not exactly a commitment, so I continued with the planned visit to Karakorum. I reached Karakorum all right, but bad weather made it impossible to fly back, so I had to make a jolting nine-hour jeep ride back to Ulaanbaatar on September 27. My journal records that the following morning, on September 28 at 9:05 AM, I was told that I would have a meeting at the Foreign Ministry at 10:00, so I walked across the street from my hotel to the appointment. I had no briefing books, no Department-supplied talking points, but a good deal of curiosity.

At the Foreign Ministry, I was ushered into a meeting room, and received by First Secretary J. Choinkhor. I noted in my journal that "He came equipped with a stack of briefing books and a couple of gift books on Mongolia, and he had obviously been preparing to talk about the agenda items I had suggested before." He outlined Mongolian Foreign policy with some detail -- all recorded in my journal. He was very thorough, professional, and precise. (Quite a few years later over dinner, when we were recalling our first meeting, he told me that his meeting with me had been approved "by the Central Committee.")

My journal records the following from near the end of that meeting:

"At the very end of the conversation, he asked about the American position on [bilateral] relations. I told him I had no instructions on this, but would be happy to convey any message or points that he might wish to give. He said he had none to give me, but then pulled out the December 1983 Background Notes on Mongolia and asked about the statement that the U.S. has never recognized Mongolia 'as an independent state' or the status of the Mongolian People's Republic. He said they had gotten the Background Notes from the United Nations library or information service. I told him that the Notes should be read to mean what they say, no more no less. He focused on the <u>independent state</u> language, and my guess was fishing to see if we were giving support [to] the putative Chinese claims to sovereignty over Mongolia, and also to see if there was any other message I could give him. He didn't get it, but I did tell him not to take the words and make more of them than they were. I also thanked him for his time (1 1/4 hours) and for the hospitality shown to me in Mongolia. ... They saw me to the door, and another very curious Western official emerged about then, and watched as we shook hands and I went out the door. I walked over to the hotel, settled my bill, and headed out the door for the train station, with only about 10 minutes to train time."

It was an exciting and fascinating trip for me, and I dutifully reported on my trip as well as the meeting at the Foreign Ministry. The State Department did not send us instructions to follow up on the trip or probe more deeply with regard to diplomatic relations. I had traveled to Mongolia, been received at the Foreign Ministry, but that was that. Life returned to its normal rhythms. (It was only much later that I could establish that I was the first U.S. diplomat to be formally received at Mongolia's Foreign Ministry since the 1944 visit by Vice President Henry Wallace.)

The trip had taken place at my initiative, but a year later, in the fall of 1985, it seemed that pretty much nothing had changed as a result.

The "Big Veto" is Lifted

And yet, even if we did not know it, things were about to happen. American diplomats had long assumed that the silence from Mongolia -- and our inability to move beyond inconsequential contacts -- was the result of strong opposition from the Soviet Union. That opposition was made abundantly clear many years later in a memoir published by a senior Mongolian diplomat, D. Yondon. (D. Yondon, The Big Veto, English manuscript translated in 1997. Published by Monsudar Publishing, Ulaanbaatar in Mongolian in 2007.) Recalling a 1976 meeting with the Mongolian Foreign Minister, Yondon quotes Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko as follows:

"As far as I remember we touched this issue a year ago. We stated our position at the meeting between Tsedenbal and Brezhnev and this position has not been altered. It is extremely complicated to establish diplomatic relations with the U.S. Do you expect to develop cooperation with the U.S. in particular fields? To my mind their plans are quite different. They wish to have an intelligence site in Mongolia. You will gain nothing by establishing these relations and more likely you'll get problems. Therefore there is no need to hurry with this."

No visit by an American Embassy First Secretary to Ulaanbaatar in September 1984 was going to get around that objection. And indeed it did not. Yondon states categorically that it was not until January 1986 that things changed. According to his account, it came during a January 24, 1986 meeting between Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Mongolian leader Batmunkh. According to Yondon's account, Shevardnadze took the initiative to say:

"I think the time for reviewing the matter and making it clear has come. We understand our Mongolian friends' concern on this matter. Our position we adhered to all these years was right. However, it seems not to fit the current time. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. has reviewed the matter and believes the matter should be reconsidered from these new points of view. The establishment of relations with the U.S.A. will correspond with our common interests. ... Relations with the U.S.A. can happen and must be established."

It was, as Yondon says, "the answer we had awaited for thirteen years." As far as I can tell, however, we in the United States knew nothing about it. Not even a glimmer.

The Tokyo Angle

At this juncture, I find that I face the painful duty to refute the inaccurate -- indeed, utterly preposterous -- claims by a former American official about her role in the process leading to normalization. Put quite simply, this official claims that she was engaged in

secret negotiations with a Mongolian Embassy official during the period of 1985-1986, having been specially picked for this task by Ambassador Mike Mansfield. The claims are made by Dr. Alicia J. Campi in a monograph titled "U.S. Embassy Tokyo Role in the Establishment of U.S.-Mongolia Relations," published in the November 2018 edition of American Diplomacy.

Dr. Campi deserves great credit and recognition for her efforts over many years on behalf of U.S.-Mongolian relations, but her claim to have played an important -- maybe even central -- role in the establishment of bilateral relations is both demonstrably inaccurate and a disservice to the historical record.

She claims that she was "assigned" by Ambassador Mike Mansfield to engage in secret negotiations with a Mongolian intelligence officer assigned to the Mongolian Embassy in Tokyo. Over and over again in her narrative she refers to "negotiations," going so far at one point to refer to them as "my negotiations." This is patently wrong. She no doubt was given permission to meet with Mr. Bold -- I take no position on that particular point -- but such diplomatic contacts are a far cry from being authorized to engage in diplomatic negotiations on behalf of the United States of America. Negotiations on behalf of the United States require approval by the Department of State, they leave a paper trail, and more than one person knows about them. Campi's failure to put forward any documentary proof to support her claims raises a very large red flag to anyone with a knowledge of the workings of the American foreign policy process.

For any experienced practitioner of U.S. diplomacy, the initial reaction to her claims is "Why?" Our Embassy in Tokyo is a very big place. It manages all aspects of an exceedingly varied and complex alliance. Why would a United States Ambassador by-pass three or four levels of his large Embassy's structure -- Deputy Chief of Mission, Political Counselor, Chief of Station, Consul General -- and commission a junior officer to engage in "negotiations?" Where is the ambassadorial memorandum or Department of State instruction letter supporting this?

How would it be possible, as Dr. Campi claims, for the State Department to send her "instructions or commentary" without others in that Embassy being aware of it? The Director of the State Department's Office of Chinese and Mongolian Affairs at the time says he knew nothing of her activities. Why would the Office of Chinese and Mongolian Affairs even want to? Who would have ordered that the American Embassy in Beijing be kept in the dark about these "negotiations"? Unless she is prepared to offer documentary evidence to support these claims, I am not prepared to give them credence. They simply defy belief.

Thus, her follow-on assertion that the U.S. Embassy in Beijing was watching her efforts with "growing concern" cannot be taken at face value. Neither I nor anyone else in the Political Section in Beijing knew anything about her activities in Tokyo. The United States Embassy in Beijing was not merely "technically responsible" (her words) for our dealings with Mongolia. It was responsible in fact, and the State Department internal organization clearly reflected that reality. Her claim that "Ambassador Mansfield insisted

the line of communication stay in Tokyo through me" is not supported by anything I have seen or anyone to whom I have spoken.

This is not the last of the problems. I was not "Beijing Political Section head" during this time frame. Darryl Johnson was. The claim that I "decided to go there to investigate the seriousness of the intent of the Mongols" is totally incorrect. I did not just wake up some fine morning in the spring of 1986 and run over to the Mongolian Embassy for a visa. My first trip to UB in 1984 was my initiative, but my second trip there was not. I was sent to UB in May 1986. I traveled with the full knowledge and approval of my immediate superiors and the relevant officers in the Department of State. The claim that "he did not inform me" prior to the 1986 trip is ridiculous. There was neither a requirement nor a necessity to check with her.

My May 1986 Visit to Ulaanbaatar

What generated my May visit? I had no plans for a second trip to Mongolia in the spring of 1986, but something happened in Tokyo that got Embassy Beijing involved and caused me to travel. A CIA analytical report, prepared in September 1986, says: "In April [1986], the Mongolians passed a message through the Japanese to the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo expressing the 'strong hope' that relations could be normalized." Embassy Tokyo reported this to the Department of State as a possible signal from the Mongolian side. That communication reached (or was briefed to) the Office of Chinese and Mongolia Affairs.

That was where I came in again -- in late April or very early May, 1986. The China Desk told Embassy Beijing about the possible signal from Tokyo, wanting to get Embassy Beijing's reaction and comment. (My memory is that all of this consultation was handled through the Official/Informal channel through which the Embassy and the Department's China/Mongolia Desk consulted on a nearly daily basis back in those dim dark days before e-mail.) The Embassy Front Office sent this down to the Embassy Political Section for action.

I let Political Counselor Darryl Johnson know that if Washington wanted to send a positive signal, I was willing to make a second trip up to UB to give that signal. My trip was approved by the Embassy leadership and the State Department, so I pedaled back to the Mongolian Embassy to apply for another visa. This time, however, there would be no tourism, no trip to the Gobi Desert or Karakorum. I planned to call at the Foreign Ministry, visit the British and Japanese embassies, and return to Beijing on the southbound Trans-Siberian train to report.

I did not remain "in UB for one week waiting contact with the Mongols" as Alicia Campi claims. I know, because I still have my diplomatic passport from that time, and the entry and exit stamps for China are quite legible. My Diplomatic Visa for Mongolia was issued on Monday, May 5, and I entered Mongolia by train late on the night of Wednesday, May 7. I arrived in Ulaanbaatar in the late afternoon of Thursday, May 8. The Japanese Embassy in Ulaanbaatar knew of my arrival in the Mongolian capital that afternoon --

because I called them to tell them of that fact and to deliver the box of vegetables that I had carried up from Beijing with me.

I discovered the following morning -- Friday, May 9 -- that the Foreign Ministry was closed in observance of the end of World War II. I learned this when I again walked across the street from my hotel to knock on the door of the Foreign Ministry, intending to leave my card and make known my availability for a meeting. I found the building closed tight. While I was standing there, a window in the Foreign Ministry opened and (as I now recall it these many years later), someone stuck his head out and called down to me in Russian, "Zakrit" (Closed). I went back to my hotel, thoroughly perplexed: Why would I have been issued a diplomatic visa in Beijing only to get the cold shoulder once I reached Ulaanbaatar?

I am certain that I let the Japanese Embassy know how things stood. If the Mongolian side had told me "We can't see you right now because of the holiday, but please wait until Monday or Tuesday, and we will have a chat," I could have remained in Ulaanbaatar and taken the Friday train back to Beijing. I had the flexibility to do so. But when it became clear that no message or meeting in Ulaanbaatar was going to occur, I caught the next available southbound Trans-Siberian train, which left Ulaanbaatar on Sunday, May 11 or very early on Monday, May 12. For the record, I have no memory of having met a Mr. L. Davaagiv during my 1986 visit as Dr. Campi claims, or having any substantive discussion with him at that time.

Dr. Campi's account also contradicts what Amb. Yondon says about my May visit. He claims that he was contacted by Japanese Ambassador Ota, who told him I was in Ulaanbaatar. I have no idea whether the Mongolian Foreign Ministry knew of Dr. Campi's contacts in Tokyo, but they definitely had every opportunity to know of my return visit to Mongolia. After all, I had applied for a visa in Beijing, and been granted a diplomatic visa. Such visa requests were pretty unique in 1986, and it is inconceivable that such a request would not have been reported to the Foreign Ministry.

The statement that I "believed that the information coming out of Tokyo about Mongolian interest in diplomatic relations likely was a ruse or a game being played on naive" Alicia Campi is another complete inaccuracy. Let me be clear: I was quite willing to receive and pass along to the Department any friendly signal from Mongolia. In the absence of such a signal, however, there was nothing to do except return to Beijing. I therefore caught the next available train back to Beijing, disappointed at what had apparently been a giant waste of time. On the long train ride back to Beijing, there was plenty of time for speculation: Had we misread the situation? Had the Mongolian side decided to pull back for some reason? Had the Soviets stepped in yet again to put the kibosh on further progress? Upon my return to Beijing, I reported on the failure of my efforts, and that the ball was clearly in the Mongolians' court.

That was apparently the China Desk's view of things, too. Shortly after my return, the China Desk sent a needling back-channel "Official Informal" message slugged for me. It was set to the tune of a Simon and Garfunkel song and began:

"Hello UB my old friend,
I've come to talk to you again,..."

And ended with:

The sounds of silence."

Embassy Beijing received no further instructions from the State Department for follow-up with the Mongolians prior to my departure that summer. Nevertheless, I believe hindsight allows me to conclude several things regarding the state of play as of May 1986. First, the Mongolian side was not yet ready to move on relations with the United States at that time. Second, the Mongolian side knew that the door to diplomatic relations with the United States was open. And third, they did not act until they reached an internal consensus and double-checked with the Soviets to make certain that the green light they had received from Foreign Minister Shevardnadze in January remained in effect.

I left Beijing that summer, went on to another foreign assignment, and I heard nothing more about my trip or relations with Mongolia until the following January of 1987, when Washington and Ulaanbaatar made the joint announcement of the establishment of diplomatic relations. But I offer this summary of subsequent developments: During the summer and fall of 1986, contacts shifted to New York. My understanding is that senior Chinese officials (and possibly Japanese and others) urged very senior American officials to make another effort that summer. In August 1986 U.N. Ambassador Vernon Walters was instructed by the State Department to make yet another approach to the Mongolian side. He did so in a meeting with Mongolian U.N. Ambassador Nyamdoo. This time, the Mongolian side was ready to move, and things proceeded from there.

Final Thoughts

I believe that a couple of points are in order here. First, with regard to the writing of history. I am quite prepared to admit that my own role in the normalization of U.S.-Mongolian relations was quite modest, but it was also real. That is why I react so strongly to claims that I find both immodest and unsubstantiated.

Second, and far more important, is my belief that what came after normalization is far more significant than arguing over shreds of credit for bringing it about. The work of people like Amb. Joe Lake, our first resident Ambassador in Ulaanbaatar and the man who helped Mongolia navigate its first steps in the democratization process, comes quite readily to mind. Even more important was the interest that Secretary of State James Baker showed in Mongolia before and after his service as Secretary. Secretary Baker's interest was key to obtaining the United States' support as well as assistance from other countries in the critical early years of Mongolia's democratic transition. He came back to Mongolia in the summer of 1996, traveled around the country to monitor national

elections, and was able to tell the stunned losing party in those elections how to accept defeat graciously.

It would also be ungracious and inaccurate to fail to mention the work of a number of far-sighted Mongolian diplomats. They understood the constraints imposed upon them by geography and politics, but they always kept looking for opportunities to expand Mongolia's contacts and enhance their country's standing in the world. Diplomats such as Nyamdoo, Yondon, and Choinkhor and others all worked tirelessly on their country's behalf, and all deserve recognition.

The list could go on, but I will not. For my part, I know that I was immensely fortunate to have had the chance to visit Mongolia before and after establishment of diplomatic relations. It was also my honor to follow Amb. Lake as the second resident U.S. Ambassador in Mongolia. Mongolians attach great significance to karma and numbers, especially the number 9. Almost exactly nine years after I met Choinkhor for the first time in Ulaanbaatar, I presented my credentials as U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia. In retrospect, the fact that I became Ambassador to his country, and he became Mongolia's Ambassador to the United States, seems both amazing and immensely auspicious.

End of Memoir

Donald C. Johnson served as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer for over 34 years (1974-2008), and held three ambassadorial assignments, the first of which was to Mongolia from 1993 to 1996. Besides his ambassadorial assignments, he served on the National Security Council staff at the White House, as Head of Mission for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Moldova and as the U.S. Commissioner on the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning in the Irish peace process.

ADDENDA

Wallace Visit Exhibit Mongolia

Images and their captions below were provided to Ambassador Donald C. Johnson in 1994 by the Mongolian National Archives, for use in a U.S. Embassy exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Wallace visit.

Saying farewell to Vice President Henry Wallace at the airport. From right to left: Vice President Wallace, Professor Owen Lattimore, Minister of Internal Affairs, Marshall Choibalsan, press representative Ts. Damdinsuren.

Буянт Ухаагийн онгоцны буудлаас төлөөлөгчдийг үдэж байгаа нь. Баруун гар талаас: Дэд ерөнхийлөгч Х. Уолэ с, хэлмэрч О. Латтимор, ДЯЯ-ны сайд, маршал Х.Чойбалсан, сонины ажилтан Ц. Дамдинсүрэн /эрдэмтэн/

The American delegates talking with Mongolian officials at the Nuhtyn Am Residence.

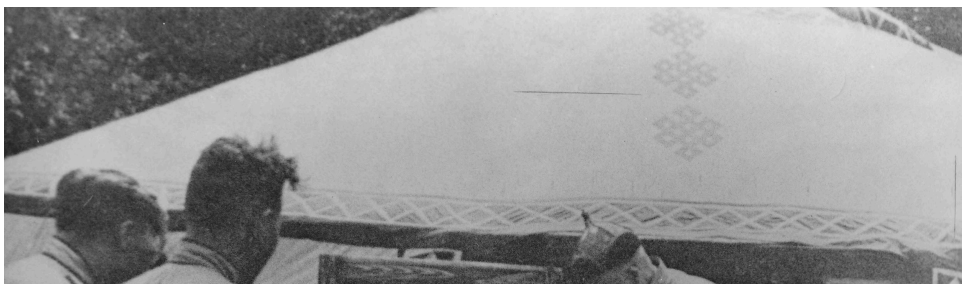
Америкийн төлөөлөгчид Нүхтын амны байрнынхаа дэргэд Монголын албаны хүмүүстэй ярилцаж буй нь.

Saying farewell to the American delegates. From right to left: Ambassador Ivanov, Vice President Henry Wallace, Marshall Choibalsan, Luvsan.

Америкийн төлөөлөгчдийг үдэхээр онгоцны зүг явж буй нь.
Баруун гараас: Элчин сайд Иванов, Дэд ерөнхийлөгч Х. Уоллэс, Маршал Чойбалсан, Лувсан нар.

Upon their arrival at the airport, the American delegates are taken to a special tent to have airag. From right to left: Yu. Tsedenbal, John hazard, John Carter Vincent, Owen Lattimore, Vice President Henry Wallace, Marshall Choibalsan, Ambassador Ivanov from USSR.

Америкийн төлөөлөгчдийг угтаж аваад, тусгай бэлдсэн асарт оруулж, айраг барих гэж байгаа нь.
Баруун гараас: Ю. Цэдэнбал, Жон Хазард, Жон Картер Винсент, Овен Латимор, Дамба, Дэд Ерөнхийлөгч Х. Уоллэс, Маршал Чойбалсан, ЗХУ-ын Элчин сайд Иванов нар сууцгаж байна

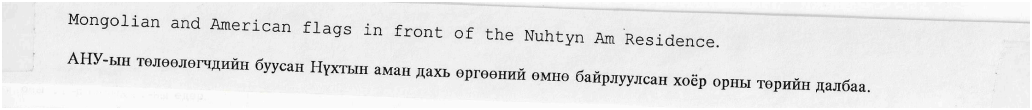


Mr.Wallace coming out of the residence wearing a deel, hat and boots that had been presented to him

Ноён Уоллэс, түүнд бэлэглэсэн Монгол дээл, малгай, гутлаа өмсөн, Нүхтын аманд байрлаж байсан өргөөнөөсөө гарч ирж байгаа нь

Cars of the guests waiting at the entrance of the Bogdo Khan Museum

Төлөөлөгчдийн унаа Голын музейн үүдэнд зочидоо хүлээж байгаа нь



Mongolian and American flags in front of the Nuhtyn Am Residence.

АНУ-ын төлөөлөгчдийн буусан Нүхтын аман дахь өргөөний өмнө байрлуулсан хоёр орны төрийн далбаа.

The First Decommissioning
December 18, 1998
Belfast and Portadown, Northern Ireland

It was a pretty gray and gloomy December morning in Northern Ireland when we set out for our rendezvous just after seven AM. The goal: to achieve the first voluntary "decommissioning" of weapons in Northern Ireland since the beginning of "The Troubles." There were two other people in the car -- my colleague Brig. Tauno Nieminen of Finland, and an American military officer with special skill in weapons and explosives.

We drove south out of Belfast to Portadown, and at 7:40 AM arrived at the deserted parking lot outside Tipler's Pub to wait for a phone call. None of us had ever done what we had set out to do that morning. The car was very quiet as we sat and waited. It took 40 minutes before the phone rang.

<u>BACKGROUND:</u>
The six counties that make up Northern Ireland remained within the United Kingdom when an independent Republic of Ireland was created. These six counties had received a huge influx of Scottish immigrants -- overwhelmingly Protestant, in contrast to the

overwhelmingly Catholic makeup of the rest of Ireland -- and their fierce reluctance to join the Republic led to the partition. The two communities that made up Northern Ireland lived in uneasy states of distance and distrust, which sometimes erupted into outright conflict. Beginning in the 1970s, Northern Ireland was plunged into what came to be called "The Troubles," during which the Irish Republican Army (IRA) battled with British police and soldiers. It was not a pleasant place or time.

The Troubles also produced its own very local lexicon, which requires the briefest possible explanation: Northern Ireland politics splintered along four major fault lines. Those wishing to leave the United Kingdom and be incorporated into the Republic of Ireland were called "Nationalists," and they were overwhelmingly Catholic; while those wishing to remain within the United Kingdom were "Unionists," who were equally passionate Protestants. Within each of these two camps there were people willing to resort to force to achieve what they wanted -- "Republicans" being those who were willing to fight for unification with the Republic, and "Loyalists" being those who were willing to fight to stay in the United Kingdom. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was the largest of all the military/paramilitary forces, while Loyalists were more loosely organized into groups such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF).

Many efforts were made to stop the violence, but it was not until the late 1990s that hopes for success turned brighter. The various political factions finally agreed to sit down and work for peace, with a group of international mediators, led by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, working tirelessly to keep things from falling apart and nudging the parties toward accommodation.

One of the major stumbling blocks to the whole process was military -- on the Unionist side, there was a determined reluctance to cut a deal with Nationalists if the IRA, which was represented in the negotiations by its political wing, were allowed to keep its weapons. On the Nationalist side, those parties who were not directly affiliated with the IRA kept urging for "trust and rust" as the solution.

Even the word "disarmament" was toxic to the various groups with guns. So all parties in Northern Ireland came up with the term "decommissioning" as a way around the problem. The fighters were not "disarming" or being "disarmed;" they were "decommissioning." The British and Irish Governments agreed to set up an international commission to help with the process: The Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD). It came into being in September 1997.

Which is where I come into the picture. I had never even heard the word "decommissioning" in relation to military conflict when I was contacted from the State Department to ask me if I would be willing to go to serve on the Commission. At the time, I was serving as Head of Mission for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Moldova, working to resolve one of the conflicts that erupted after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moldova was my third "conflict zone," as I had previously served in Guatemala in the 1970s and in Honduras during the Contra War of

the 1980s. Northern Ireland would be my fourth. I flew into Belfast directly from Moldova that September. The Europa Hotel where I stayed during the first several weeks was widely known as "the most bombed hotel in Europe." It served a great "Ulster breakfast," though.

The arrangement by which I went to serve on the Commission was unique. I was officially "on loan" from the State Department to the British and Irish Governments, who jointly reimbursed the State Department for my salary and benefits. I remained on active duty as a Foreign Service Officer, but was serving overseas without being part of any Embassy. What I did have was the catchiest title of my Foreign Service Career: Commissioner on the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning. I still have one of my cards to prove it.

We went straight to work setting up shop in both Belfast and Dublin, and reaching out to representatives of all sides of the conflict. We saw them all. It was instructive to look across the table and realize that several of the men we were meeting with had killed people during the Troubles. Our job was to convince them that there was a clear pathway -- a respectable and certain one -- to get weapons and explosives out of Northern Ireland politics. Particularly troublesome were the issues of semtex explosive, of which the IRA had a very great deal (it has a shelf life of many years if stored under the right conditions), and the question AK-47 assault weapons, of which the IRA also had a great many (packed in grease and stored in boxes, these can last for years as well, unaffected by the damp and rainy Hibernian climate.) I remember having to explain this fact to a senior Northern Ireland nationalist politician, telling him that "trust and rust" would not take care of those two categories of weapons.

By the time the Good Friday Agreement was achieved in early April, 1998, the Commission was thoroughly ready for business. It had operating procedures and personnel ready for decommissioning.

All that was missing was clientele. Those with the weapons.

***

That is how I ended up in that deserted tavern parking lot in Portadown at 7:40 AM on December 18.

When the cell phone rang at 8:20 AM, it was from the intermediary that had been chosen by the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF). This man, whose identity I choose not to reveal here, gave us an address in the nearby area. The weapons had been delivered there by the LVF, and were ready for pickup. It was showtime.

We drove to the address, which was in one of those unremarkable housing complexes that abounded in that part of Northern Ireland -- again, deliberate vagueness -- and were shown the weapons. They were checked to see that they were unloaded and in a "can move" condition, and there was a brief delay while a jammed cartridge was removed very

carefully from one of the Madsen sub-machine guns. All the items were loaded into the IICD vehicle within minutes, and we departed the site. A few minutes later, by pre-arrangement with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, we linked up with RUC escort vehicles and returned to the IICD offices at Rosepark House.

The decommissioned items were examined again for safety, the weapons were displayed for the press, and immediately cut up with special angle grinders.

The press was invited to watch, and the sparks flying from the angle grinders made for perfect television coverage.

The ammunition, detonators, and the pipe bombs (neutralized in water), departed from the Commission premises to a British Army site, where they were "cooked off" under professional supervision and in the presence of a Commission staff member.

A separate vehicle with the cut-up weapons also departed from Rosepark House to a separate location where they were ground to unrecognizable scrap. By the end of the afternoon, all personnel were back at the Commission offices at Rosepark House. The first voluntary decommissioning in Northern Ireland's history was over. Successfully.

The Commission's hope, of course, was that others would emulate the LVF example. Sadly, others did not rush to request our services. The Commission spent months waiting, meeting, urging, and encouraging. Progress was glacial, and in the summer of 1999, I decided to return to the State Department to resume my career. After working for the Director General of the Foreign Service, I was selected for a second Ambassadorship to the Republic of Cabo Verde, where I served from 2002-2005. After a third

ambassadorial assignment in Equatorial Guinea, I retired from the Foreign Service in 2008. When I retired, the IICD was still laboring ...

WHAT WAS DECOMMISSIONED THAT DAY?

Madsen 9 mm sub-machine gun -- 2
Sten 9 mm Mark 2 sub-machine gun -- 1
Modified Lanchester 9 mm Mark I sub-machine gun -- 1
Steyr 7 mm rifle -- 1
Homemade .22 caliber rifle -- 1
Sawn-off double barrelled 12 gauge shotgun -- 1
FN Browning 9 mm semi-automatic pistol -- 1
FN 7.65 mm semi-automatic pistol -- 1

12 gauge magnum 00 buckshot shotgun shells -- 31
.38 caliber cartridges -- 23
.556 caliber cartridges -- 45
9 mm cartridges -- 280

Electrical Detonators -- 5
Pipe Bombs -- 2
Weapon stocks -- 2
Assorted magazines -- 5

Diary Letters On Clock Repairs

Praia, Cape Verde
August 1, 2003

Dear Mom and Dad,

When we got back from Sao Nicolau, we got the messages from Paul and Tom regarding Dad's discharge from the hospital. We were really pleased to hear that news, since Dad had told us a few days before that he might not be released until early August. So we hope that his knee and his stomach are adapting well to being back on Lindale Drive. We'll be eager to get details.

I'm starting this letter tonight, because Nelda and I have to get up at one in the morning (Aug. 1) and head down to the ship that is going to take us back to Brava. We have a container of hospital equipment and furniture as well as a large truck to deliver. It's in the process of being loaded as I write.

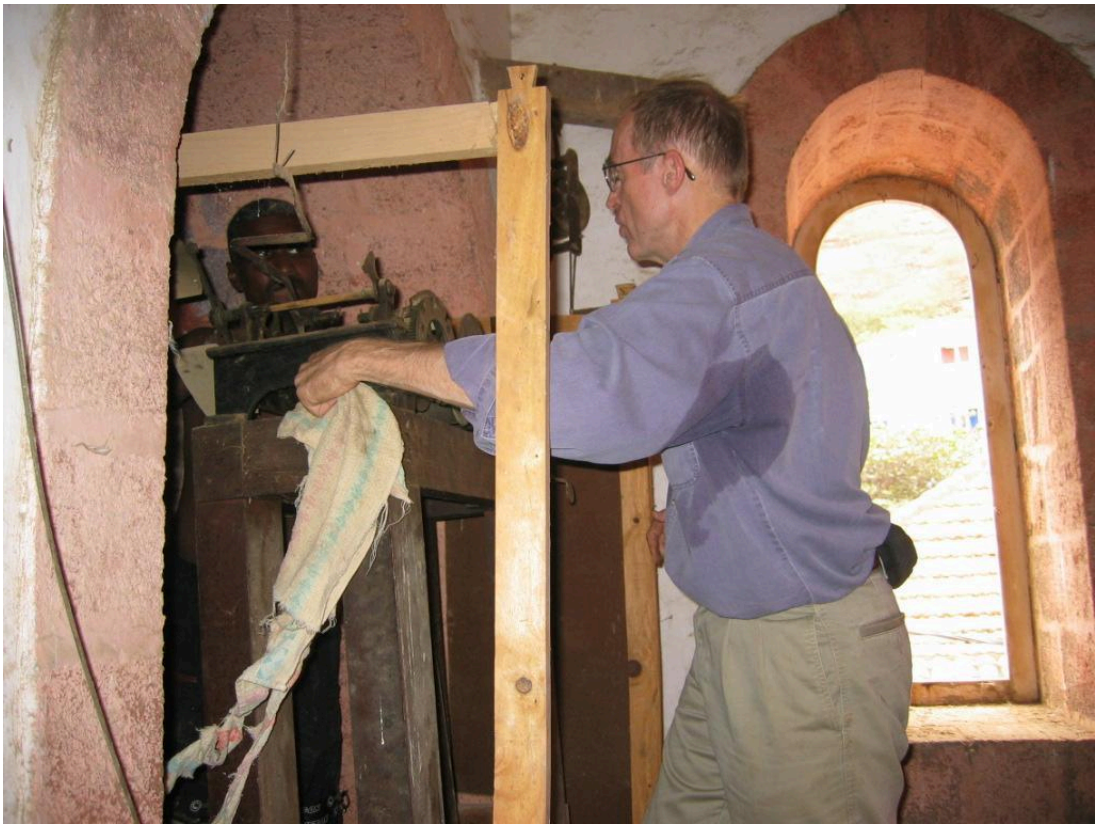
The trip to Brava is an add-on to our schedule this week, but since I was the person who lobbied for the donation, I feel a strong responsibility to make sure it gets to its final destination. The plan is that we'll go out to Brava on the boat, see the stuff delivered at the port in Brava, maybe run up the mountain to check on two other projects, then race back to the boat and come home late tomorrow night. Not much time for hiking or tourism this time around.

And I see that it's taken me four paragraphs to get to the essence of this letter, which is to tell you about our trip to Sao Nicolau from Sunday the 27th to Wednesday the 30th. For those not particularly interested in clocks, I give fair notice: You can probably skip most of the rest of the letter. For those who want to know whether the trip was successful, you'll need to read further.

We flew out of Praia two hours late, for reasons known only to the airline. Fortunately we were told about the delay before leaving for the airport, and spent the wait at home rather than in the stuffy VIP room at the airport. It's only a 40-minute flight from Praia to Sao Nicolau, but without much to see; once we cleared Santiago Island, there was nothing but water and clouds until we got near our destination. The local mayor was there to meet us and wish us luck; he was leaving later that same afternoon for Praia on the return flight.

We stayed in a local pensao (Spanish: pension), a brand new building in the center of the town of Ribeira Brava. The owner of the pensao is also the owner of a restaurant nearby, so you can imagine where we ate most of our meals. It really was quite pleasant, and had a great view of the church where we were supposed to work. After a quick lunch, we climbed up to the clock tower with the young priest who had given us permission to work there. That was about three in the afternoon.

The clock was still there, covered with an even thicker coat of dust than it had been last December. It was encased in a rather makeshift cabinet that helped keep the pigeons out and the dust in.



Other than that, however, the pigeons had obviously had free and easy access to this clock tower for some time. In addition to the dust of the ages – some of it no doubt from the Sahara – there was a generous collection of cobwebs as well.

First step was to clear out the junk all around it. There were wooden candlesticks, some metal tubes that belonged to some long-lost (or never installed) church organ, more wooden tubes apparently belonging to the organ as well, and old church records which termites were ravaging. I opened one box, and found correspondence for the year 1907. The priest had all this hauled out of the clock tower and into the choir loft, and the next morning he got volunteers to remove the whole lot of it. I didn't ask what the fate of the organ tubes would be.

That made it possible for us to go through a detailed inspection of the clock. The most important thing was to find out if all the pieces were still there. That meant dismantling the jury-rigged cabinet around the clock, and putting most of the pieces into the "never want to see again" pile. Amazingly, after all these years, everything still seemed to be in place.

Except for some pieces of wire, there were no replacement parts in the mechanism. The weights were hanging in their right places, and there were no pieces that had been pilfered or broken.

We took off the weights, which weighed around a hundred pounds on the strike side of the clock (the part connected to the bell), and even more on the time side. We piled these into a corner. The pendulum came next; it was in terrific shape given the circumstances. When we gave it a few tentative pushes, it gave off a very clear ticking sound. It was taken off and laid carefully in the choir loft, with clear instructions to all our volunteers not to touch it.

While Luis Saldanha, the man who had repaired the clock in Praia and who had volunteered to come out to Sao Nicolau to lead this repair effort, went over the clock mechanism, I got a ladder and climbed up to the bell. I had tried the chain that was hanging loose off the clock striking arm, to see if the hammer was in working shape, and instead of a nice bell tone I got a loud "plonk." I climbed up to find out why.

It didn't require extensive detective work. The bell was coated in pigeon droppings, and no sound would propagate through all that organic insulation.

I got a wire brush and went back up there to scrape it all off. That took a while, but the result was worth it – the sound of a real bell. It was struck by a hammer which in turn was lifted by a wire chain connected to an arm on the striking side of the clock. Thus encouraged, I connected the chain to the striking arm, put the weights back on the strike side of the clock, and ran the clock through a full striking sequence of 12 hours. It struck the hours and half hours immediately.

That was the good news. The not-so-good news was that we would have to take a detour and work on the clock dial before we could really hope to show whether the time side of the clock would work. The copper dial was attached to the wall by pieces of wood anchored to the stones inside the clock tower, but several of them had rotted away, leaving the dial in danger of falling off into the square. We couldn't go any further until this was corrected.

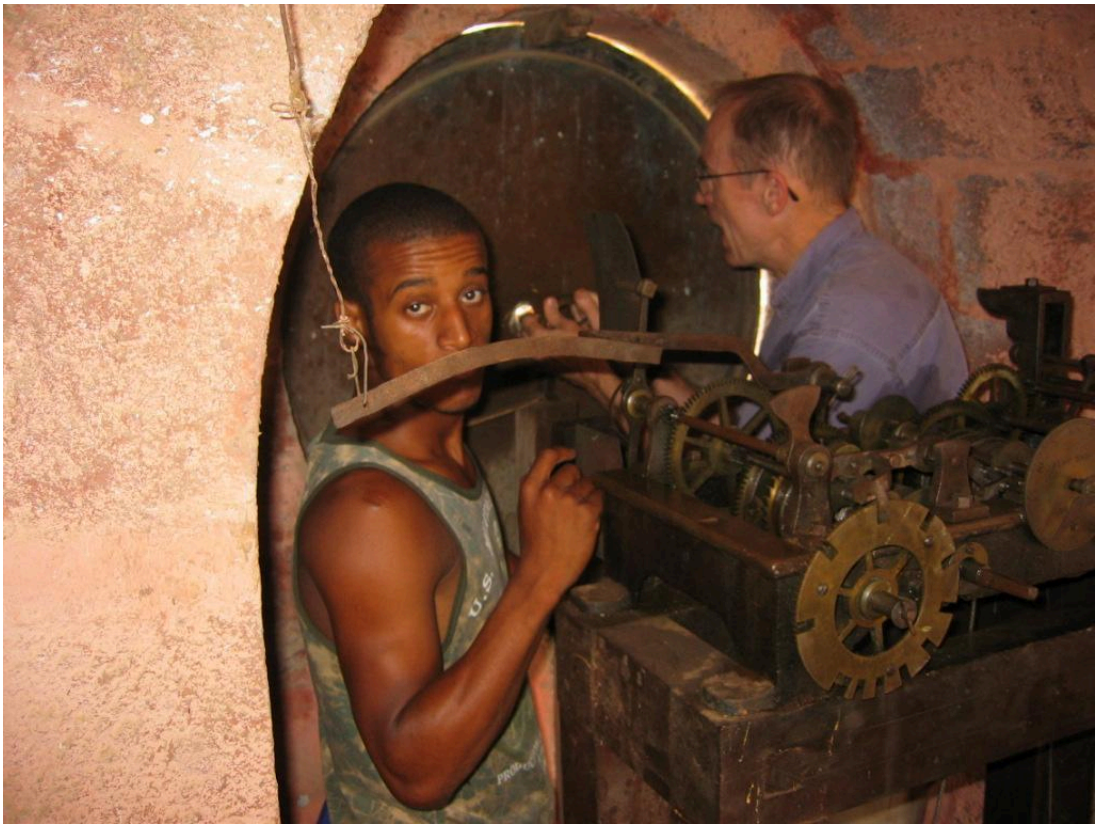
Since it was Sunday afternoon, carpenters were not exactly in abundance around us, so we had to content ourselves with scraping more congealed black gunk off the gears of the clock mechanism (the plastic gloves I brought with me came in handy for this) and keep on cleaning the area around us. At 6:30 PM we called it a day.

On Monday morning, we were at the church at 8:30 AM to start working again. Our arrival was followed a few minutes later by the cleaning crew of volunteers whose task was to remove all the junk we had placed in the choir loft on Sunday afternoon. They did a great job. We also were joined by a carpenter, and we explained what would be needed in terms of pieces of wood to strengthen the dial. We told him that we needed the pieces to be of some very good quality wood, preferably mahogany, so they would last a long time. Another person was dispatched to the local hardware store to buy anchor bolts for the wood, and yet another was sent off on a mission to find a good drill and drill bits.

Assembling all these pieces and then anchoring the clock dial took pretty much the whole of Monday morning.

While we waited, there was still plenty of junk to be scraped off the mechanism. While doing so, we also discovered that the motion works – the gears that make the hands go around – were also loose in their position behind the dial, so they had to come off and yet another piece of mahogany had to be found to hold these more securely in order to take the strong force generated by the mechanism.

Cleaning of the motion works finished off the last of the rubber gloves, but the priest went off and found us several new pairs.



Down in the square, people congregated in large numbers to watch, drawn by the ropes that were lowering junk out of the choir loft, and also because the early morning national radio news program had reported that the American Ambassador was in Sao Nicolau to help repair the clock. Nelda and I had been sitting in the restaurant eating breakfast and listening to the radio news when the story came over. I had nothing to do with issuing this news bulletin, I hasten to add.

By 1:30, it was time for a break. We went off for lunch at a restaurant we had visited in December, and were back to work just after 3:00 PM. We were able to put the motion works into the right place, but it took a long time. Five in the afternoon came and went, and we were still wrestling with the connection between the main clock mechanism and the motion works.

Finally we decided that it was about ready to test, and put on the weights and pendulum. In checking the cable, however, we discovered that a five-foot section had to be changed. Off came the weights again, the bad section of cable was removed, a new section was anchored in place, and we tried again. We pushed it into motion, and instead of a steady tick-tock, we got a very rickety clickety-tock. No way that was going to work.

The problem was that there was some scoring on the anchor that moved back and forth over the escape wheel, releasing power from the weights to push the pendulum. Over the years the Sahara dust and general wear and tear had worn a small groove in the anchor.

It took an hour and a half, some very careful filing, and 3 removals of the anchor in order to get a solution. Luis Saldanha deserves all the credit for patiently working his way through this problem; my contribution was to have brought the right files and to hold the

light while he worked.

Just after 7:30 PM, after the third try with the anchor, the clock finally delivered a steady ticking. We set the striking side in the right position, and waited. The priest arrived, the head of the local church restoration committee arrived, the carpenter came up, but there was nothing for us to do except listen to the ticking, hold our collective breaths, look at our watches, and wait.

At eight, we heard the lifting arm drop into place, and the clock delivered eight very lovely (and welcome) peals. There was cheering and handshaking. We weren't done, but the clock was running again.

We didn't know whether it would make it through the night, and at 5 AM I was awake straining my ears to hear. It was a great feeling to hear it striking, I can assure you. We had three other tasks, however – install metal supports below the clock mechanism, install the hands, and regulate the timing. So I was back in the tower in my now quite grungy work clothes to help install metal braces that would keep the clock off the old wooden floor and supported exclusively by the wall.

When we installed the braces, we discovered that the cables passed too close to them, so we had to remove them and file notches in each of the braces to allow the cable to move freely. Finally, it was the hands. A lot of the town population was watching while they were put on and set at eleven. We thought we'd be done by then, but we were getting ahead of ourselves.

When we test-started it again, the clock wouldn't run. It turns out we had pushed the mechanism just a bit forward when we had installed the braces, and the mechanism was too tight. Adjustments and more adjustments, and by then it was after eleven, and the striking part of the clock had to be resynchronized with the hands. Finally, at 12:37, we had it all in place and gave the pendulum its official push – with all the pieces in their official places, cleaned, oiled and in working order. It started right up.

After closing up the bell tower, we went down to the square to sit on a bench and just watch it for a while. I was called back to the tower to explain what we'd done to the members of the committee, and the clock cooperated by striking one while they were there.

The afternoon was spent in official activities, including some travel around the island and attending the opening of a new bank building in the town of Tarrafal. Wednesday morning, we discovered that the clock had gained four minutes, which meant some adjustments to the pendulum length. Other than that, we were cleaning up, putting away our tools, and just enjoying listening to it run. At noon, Nelda and I hosted a celebration and thank you lunch for all those who had worked on the project. The restaurant produced lobster, chicken, grouper, buzio, rice, peas, and flan for a very jolly group.

Love, Don

P.S. (Aug. 2)
We traveled to Fogo and Brava successfully to deliver the humanitarian assistance. We were up at 1 AM to catch the boat, and had a very lively crossing to Fogo. We had breakfast there while the ship unloaded passengers and cargo, and also visited the church tower clock there. It's stuck in a corner of a church restoration project, and needs rescue.

On to Brava, to see the truck and container winched off the ship and to deliver the keys of both container and truck to the local mayor. We raced around the island for a couple of hours, then were back on the ship for departure at 4:45. We were back at the house just after 10 PM – a total of 21 hours after we'd left.

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Praia, Cape Verde
June 28, 2004

Dear Mom and Dad,

We're delighted to know that Dad has been able to return home and that he's making such good progress. Having a nurse and a pharmacist in the family to scrutinize what was going on at the hospital certainly seemed to help things. We're grateful to both of them for keeping such a good watch on the medications, and also to Tom and Paul for their e-mails. We had been concerned earlier in the week when Dad's speech seemed a bit strange, but Linda's solution to the puzzle was a real relief. And when Dad was allowed to go home on Friday, we felt even better.

So with Dad recuperating at home, and obviously needing things to read, I guess it's time to put together another diary letter to catch you up on activities here in Cape Verde. Thus far, it's been a very busy month, and we have another busy week to go.

Early in the month, we had a visit from an FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) team that is working with Cape Verde on certification of its planes to fly across the Atlantic. The new Boeing 757 has the range, but there is a special certification required for two-engine jets flying over the ocean, and Cape Verde is hard at work getting this. When they do, it will allow them to fly directly to Boston without having to contract with other airlines to do the flights.

On June 9, the Santo Antao clock volunteers gathered to pack up the town's clock and take it down to the port for shipment back to that island.

We wanted it to go ahead of us, to ensure that it would be there and ready for us to work on later in the month.

June 11 was the National Day of Mourning for Pres. Reagan, and we spent much of the afternoon watching the very impressive ceremony and the service at National Cathedral.

From the 13th to the 15th, we hosted a visit by a Director of the EXIM Bank in Washington, who was making his first visit to Cape Verde. The goal is to look for projects on which EXIM financing would be feasible. The EXIM promotes exports of goods and services from the U.S., and can provide bank guarantees for up to 85% of a loan amount, thereby reducing the risk and making the costs of borrowing lower for people who would buy U.S. products. We made the rounds here with bankers and business people, and at the end of it, we thought there were three or four possible projects that could be eligible. Since EXIM has never done an operation here, we obviously want to pick a "winner" for the first outing, and have a success to build on for the future.

Early on the 18th, Nelda and I took off around 6:45 AM from Praia for Sao Vicente Island, en route to Santo Antao. Six other members of our group of volunteers had left Praia the evening before, carrying equipment and tools for the clock installation project on Santo Antao. We arrived at the airport in Sao Vicente just after 7:30 AM, were met by a taxi, and then sped from the airport to the seaport in order to catch the 8:00 AM ferry across to Santo Antao. By 9:00 AM, we were pulling into the dock at Porto Novo, on the southern part of that island. We had beaten our other volunteers by several hours, so we went across to the northern part of the island, got ourselves settled in the hotel, and

waited until they arrived. When they finally made it across the mountains to Ribeira Grande, we met them at the work site and started to unload our stuff. This included a platform on which to set the town clock for people to view at the City Hall entrance. We spent from about 4:30 until 7:30 in the evening doing this setup work.

On Saturday, we worked from 8:30 AM until after 11 PM. Only a couple of hours of this time were actually spent working with the clock mechanism.

A great deal was spent on carpentry and other preparatory work, because the entire clock and all its beams and pulleys had been removed before we arrived on the scene, and we were required to reconstruct the layout of the entire system.

Not only that, the bell had been removed as well, and we discovered that the bell had been mounted to one of the beams, and held on a steel pole that projected through the roof of the building. We spent a lot of time getting the beam put into place, the metal pole attached to the beam, and the clock back onto the pole.

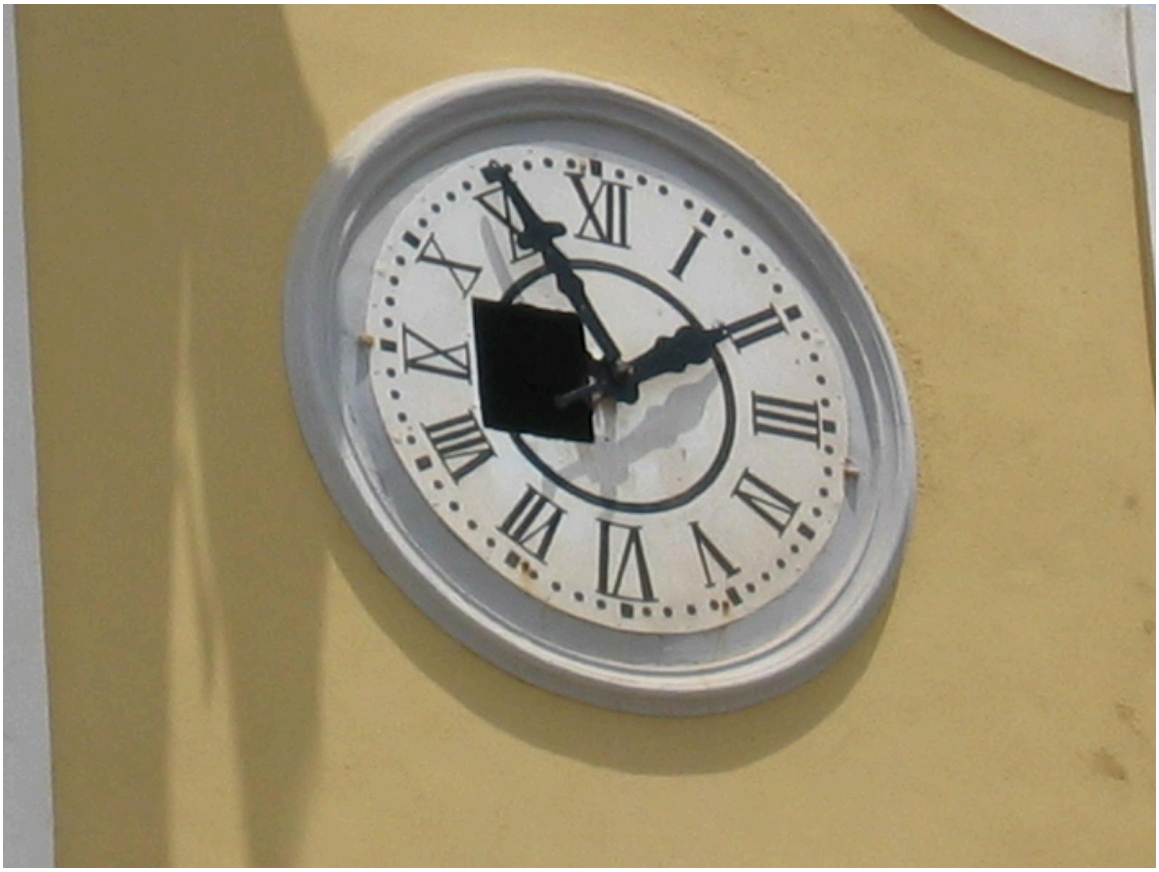
In the process, we discovered that the bell had cracked somewhere along the line. Instead of a very nice rich “bong,” it gave out a very weak “plonk” which could not be heard even a hundred feet from the building. The volunteers tried numerous variants to see if they could make it sound healthy, including an effort to weld the crack, but nothing helped.

We were left with the sad duty of reporting to the mayor that he would need to either borrow or otherwise acquire an uncracked bell before we would be able to make the clock deliver a decent sound through town.

That was just one of our problems. The other major time-consumer was the connection of the mechanism to the dial. The gear which I sent off to be cut in the States worked just fine, but power had to be transmitted from the mechanism to the dial through a couple of gears and rods. One rod went vertically up to the "differential," and then power was transmitted horizontally to the hands. The problem was that the rods had too much play in them, which meant that the hands would either sag or lag. We spent hours and hours working to solve this, including work on the differential gears, making of new and tighter pins for the rods, and so forth.

In the process, we also discovered that we had made a mistake in the positioning of the differential. This became obvious when the clock started to run backward. We had assumed that the gear with a connection point for one of the rods had been placed correctly; it hadn't, so we had to take the whole differential mechanism off and turn it around so that power would be transmitted to the hand in the proper direction.

In retrospect, it all sounds quite logical, but during the process, it was much more puzzling, as we worked to overcome problems that we'd never expected. What was very pleasing was the level of enthusiasm and teamwork by the volunteers. We divided up the work in groups, with one group concentrating on the bell, others on the carpentry issues, and a third on putting the mechanism and pulleys in the right positions. The mayor commented at one point that it looked like the volunteers had been working together for a considerable time.



By Sunday evening, we were finally able to give the pendulum a push and set the thing running, even without cooperation from the bell. It still has a bit of play in the rods, but it is keeping time. We will definitely need to go back there and do some more work when a bell appears. The obvious solution is to elevate the clock so that power is transmitted through a single rod, thereby reducing the number of points at which “play” in the transmission belt has an effect on the hands.

We packed up our tools Sunday evening, and headed across the mountains early Monday morning, in time to catch the 10:00 AM ferry from Porto Novo to Sao Vicente.

All of us went together, and nobody got seasick even though the channel was a bit rough. The biggest excitement was when we spotted a large shark; even the pilots rushed out of the bridge to get a look. Its black fin was clearly visible on the surface for a good while as we moved along.

In Sao Vicente, we had a date with yet another clock. This time it was the 1873 clock located in City Hall in the center of the country's second-largest town.

We had asked for help in removing the hands, and when we arrived, the town's fire department had set up a ladder truck right in front of city hall. A large crowd watched while two of our volunteers were raised up in the basket to unscrew the hands and bring them down. We then went inside, and took many pictures of the layout (wishing to avoid the mystification we'd experienced in Santo Antao), then lowered the heavy mechanism to the ground level so we could take it apart.

This process took just over two hours, and by two in the afternoon, we had it packed and ready to take out to the ship that would bring it to Praia.

We then treated our whole group of volunteers to pizza at a local restaurant, and spent the rest of the afternoon wandering about town and waiting for time to pass until we could go out to the airport to catch our plane.

Most of the volunteers were returning by ship to Praia accompanying the Sao Vicente clock mechanism, so they were off doing their own thing. We finally got back into Praia around 11 PM, and I was back in the office on Tuesday AM to catch up, check on Dad's progress, and see whether I would have to make another trip later in the week to Brava.

On Tuesday, it wasn't clear whether there would be an inauguration on Brava, as they still had several more days of painting and other work to complete. I simply let it be known that if the place was ready, I would attend. If it wasn't, I would stay in Praia. We made reservations, just in case, but didn't know until Friday afternoon whether we really were going to go.

In the meantime, Nelda was keeping busy preparing for the 4th of July reception. She has her crew of ladies working full-time on pizzas, empanadas, tuna rolls, and all the other stuff that she is planning to serve to an expected 200 guests. Somehow, she also found time to prepare a surprise birthday party for me as well. On the afternoon of Friday, I was called down to the lobby on the pretext that we had a "security incident" that I needed to be briefed about, and Nelda had gathered all the American and Cape Verdean employees in the Consular waiting room to sing "Happy Birthday." She had prepared 5 different cakes, each with a single candle, and five different greeting cards, in Spanish, Mongolian, Portuguese, and Russian. It helped me remember the number 55, an increasingly difficult task at my advanced age. The interesting thing about it all was that I never smelled any cakes being baked at home during this period. I think she covered up the smell by serving me tuna and shrimp on the two days when she had cakes in the oven.

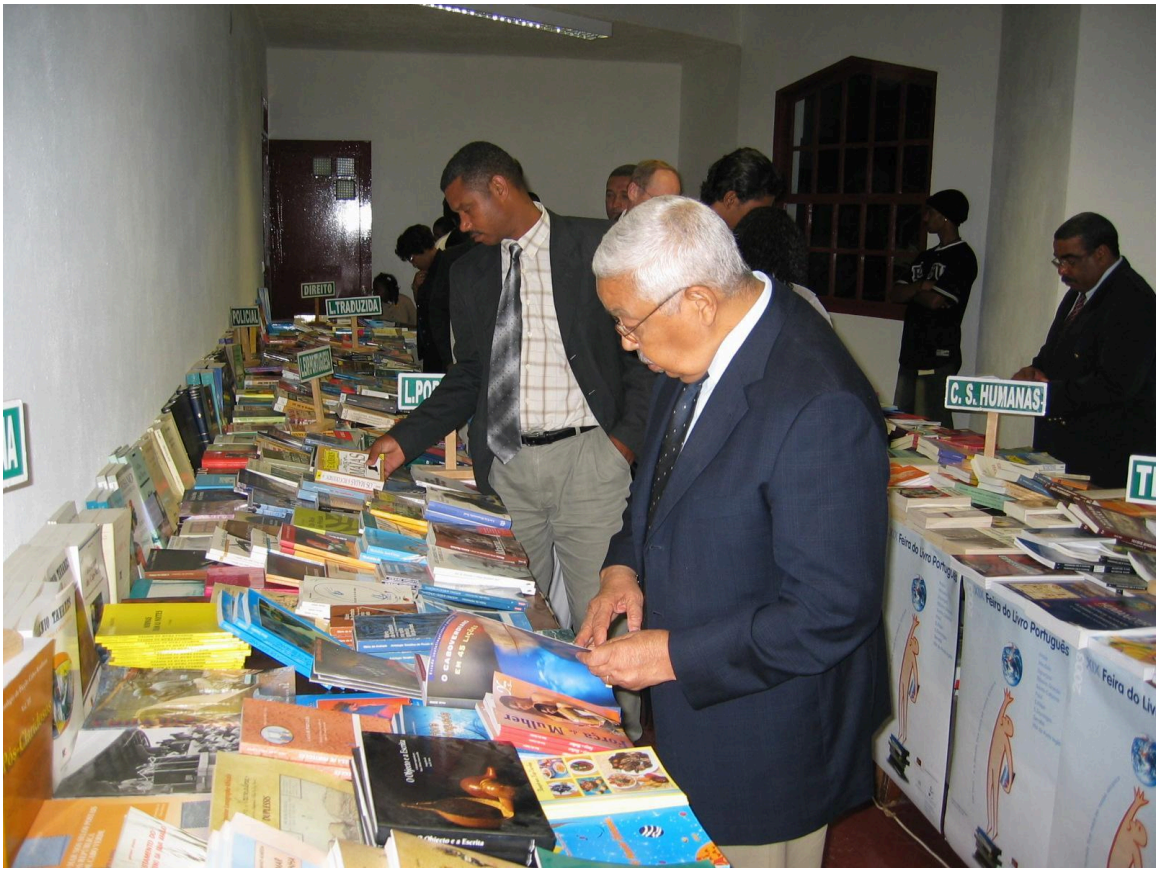
It was a very nice and fattening surprise, but I noticed that others were quite willing to help me share the calories with them. Only a piece of one of the five cakes made it back to the Residence with us.

Which brings me to my actual birthday, which began at 1 AM on the 26th, with the ringing of the alarm to wake us to catch the ship. The ship left at 2 from the port of Praia, going direct to Brava Island. The President of Cape Verde was also aboard, since the mayor of Brava is a political protégé of his, and he had been invited to come over for the process.

I got up just before six, and went up to the bridge to see if any dolphins would appear. They came out in force to greet the ship, with thirty or forty of them jumping and playing around the ship for about five minutes. I ran down and called Nelda, who got out of bed in time to see a good part of the show as well. They really appeared to be having a great time, and it was so quiet that we could hear the "swish" that they would make as they jumped out of the water. Nelda and I and the officer of the watch were the only ones who got to see this show because everyone else was still asleep.

On Brava, we discovered that the painting and preparatory work was still going on.

We put together a small meeting with American citizens during the morning, and while we were waiting for it to start, the local priest came by. He quite cheerfully informed me that he had visited it the day before, and added that “only divine intervention” would make it possible for the place to be inaugurated on Saturday. I told him I was all in favor of divine intervention, and we continued to wait for word.



Around lunch-time, we were told that the 4 PM inauguration time was going to be pushed back "a little bit." That didn't sound like divine intervention to me, but since I was already on the island, and the ship wasn't leaving until Sunday, I suggested that we could inaugurate the place anytime until the departure of the ship if the building was actually ready.

More time passed. After 7:30 PM, as we were preparing to dress to go to the ceremony, I got a call saying that the mayor would like to have us go to get a quick dinner first, and then inaugurate "after dinner." We agreed, of course, and were told to be ready at 8:15. When we appeared at the appointed place and time, a very surprised hostess opened the door. It was clear she wasn't expecting company at such an early hour. After a somewhat embarrassed chit-chat, the President arrived as well, so he and we waited in the living room while they finished cooking the dinner.

At 9:40 PM, no doubt as a result of the badly-needed divine intervention to complement the considerable human effort, we were told that people were waiting for us at the community center, so we all trooped over there.

A large crowd, between 300 and 400 people, were on hand to watch the President cut the ribbon.

We then made a quick tour of the facilities, which had a refreshing smell of new paint to them, and did the requisite speeches. Following the speeches, there was delivery of sports trophies, a local theater group did a short play, and at 11:40 PM, the main act came on the stage. It was a very good group from Santo Antao, and they were delivering a strong message against social ills, but for someone who had caught a boat at 2 AM, spent his birthday waiting to see whether a building could be inaugurated, and had already sat for a couple of hours on a very hard chair, the additional 90-minute program was a bit much.

When they finally declared a break at 1 AM, with the full intention of continuing with other singers, I quite firmly let them know that I was calling it a day. They nevertheless continued without us, with music until around 2:30 AM, and another group adjourning to our dinner hostess' home for more music until dawn.

Sunday morning things got off to a rather slow start, as you might imagine. We had been told that there would be a picnic for the Cape Verdean-American community "around 9," but we did not even start making serious inquiries about the event until noon, and didn't arrive there until after 1, and we didn't miss the meal. Instead, we had time for a quick hike outside of the town of Nova Sintra, and were able to get some beautiful pictures of the town from the hills above it.

After the lunch, which the President also attended, we all went separate directions to get ready to catch the boat back to Praia. It left nearly on schedule, to the amazement of some of the passengers, who came racing up two minutes after the time of departure and tossed themselves and packages on board.

We all spent the first hour-plus on deck, keeping a watch for dolphins, and just as we were about to give up because of lack of light, somebody spotted them. Not as many and not as lively as on Saturday morning, but enough to be very interesting.

We had supper of salami and cheese sandwiches, then lay down for a while to rest while we navigated the channel between Fogo and Santiago Islands. We must have been pretty tired, because I didn't hear or feel a thing until we were docking in Praia near midnight.

Bella was happy to see us, and quite pleased to sleep on Nelda's pillow for the remainder of the night. Today, we are setting about the preparations for the 4th of July, as well as a visitor that we have on Wednesday and Thursday from the Trade Development Agency in Washington. We're supposed to sign an agreement of nearly half a million dollars related to future development of the port of Sao Vicente.

So this catches you up on our doings for the last several weeks. This coming weekend we have already made plans – to stay at home and not install or inaugurate anything.

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Praia, Cape Verde
July 28, 2004

Dear Mom and Dad,

I have a small window of time in today's schedule, so I'm starting work on this diary letter to catch you up on our trip around the islands last weekend.

We left Praia at two in the morning on Friday, July 23, on the ferryboat. We had a large group, because we were carrying the Sao Vicente clock with us and we needed a full crew to finish the job of installing the clock there. There were eight of us to work on the clock, plus Nelda and my security person, which makes ten. Three others asked to go along for the ride, to have a reason to visit Sao Vicente, and that was fine with us.

Our first stop was on Fogo Island, which we reached about seven in the morning after a choppy ride through the deep channel between Santiago and Fogo Islands. The dolphins did not put on the fantastic leaping and diving display that they have done on previous trips, but they did appear at the usual place and time to swim alongside the ship for a while and provide us with a reason to get up early.

Immediately after getting off the boat, I went right to work, delivering the keys to a large scoop loader for the town of Mosteiros on Fogo.

The scoop loader had come on the ferryboat two days before, and was sitting at the dock waiting for the official ceremony.

The mayor of Mosteiros seemed quite pleased with this bright orange addition to his road maintenance capability, and after the requisite remarks and photos, we piled into several cars and drove into Sao Filipe for breakfast at the "pousada" owned by our Embassy carpenter. While he works in Praia, his wife runs the inn. She had prepared a massive Cape Verdean breakfast, and our large group was hungry after a night on the boat.

To walk off some of the calories afterwards, we made a few calls around town. We went up into the tower of the Fogo church, where we hope to eventually install the town clock, only to discover that in the last months nothing at all has been done on the building, and the cracks in the walls are not getting any smaller. There is a good bit of talk about fixing the place, but nobody has put a shovel into the ground yet. Each bureaucracy seems to have a compelling reason why it hasn't acted and why its inaction is dictated by the inaction of some other. After climbing up into the tower and walking around the church, I pretty much resigned myself to the fact that the installation of the clock is unlikely during my time as ambassador here.

Other stops in Fogo were to visit the Casa da Memoria, a private home and museum of life in Fogo that is run by Monique Widmer, a Swiss lady who has lived in Cape Verde for many years. Many of the members of the group had not only never visited it, they hadn't even known it existed. Ms. Widmer has set up summer reading and crafts

activities for kids in one of the rooms off the museum, in an effort to offer kids a chance to do something creative while they're out of school. Nelda also shopped for American jam at one of the stores owned by a Cape Verdean-American, and we hauled the ten jars around in a box for the rest of our visit. It's really quite striking to find things in Sao Filipe that are completely lacking from the shelves of any store in Praia. The emigrants ship directly to Fogo, and skip Praia altogether.

We had been told by the ship's captain to be back on board around 2 PM for departure to Brava, so we ordered what was supposed to be a quick lunch at a restaurant owned by another Cape Verdean-American. (It is located right down the street from the church tower, and has a great view of the ocean.) The waitresses were cheerful but not in a hurry, so it was an hour before the fish made its appearance, and it was well after 2 PM by the time we got back down to the port, but the Cape Verdeans in the group were not particularly anxious about the ship leaving without us. They were right, of course; we need not have rushed. The loading of the ship was way behind schedule, and it was clear that we weren't leaving anytime in the next two hours. The rest of our group therefore headed back to Sao Filipe, but we stayed on board. We finally left the port just before 5:30 PM. Every member of our group made it.

Brava is just an hour's sailing from Fogo, and the sea was unusually calm between the two islands. We got to Brava with just enough daylight to take pictures of the unloading of the ambulance and the presentation of the documents to the Mayor of Brava.

The Chevy 4WD diesel engine roared to life on the first try, and when we tested the siren I was sure it could be heard a good ways up the mountain toward Nova Sintra.

Three members of our group had never been up to Nova Sintra, so we drove up the mountain in the dusk to give them a view. Unfortunately, as we were going up the mountain, the fog was coming down, and by the time we drove into Nova Sintra, it was a real London "pea-souper." The fog swirling around the city required our visitors to use lots of imagination in order to credit our reports of the city's attractiveness.

So it was back down the mountain, out of the fog, and onto the ship. We set sail for Sao Vicente around nine in the evening, and as we unmoored, Nelda brought out the bread, potato chips, ham, cheese, cookies, raisins, and chocolate for an evening picnic on board. The group fell upon these things as though they hadn't already had two large meals in the course of the day. Then it was off to bed to let the rocking of the ship put us to sleep for the nine-hour trip north. Neither the rocking motion nor the full stomach caused either of us any distress, I'm happy to report.

We awoke right before six in the morning to discover that we were pulling into Sao Vicente's half-moon bay. We unloaded all of our stuff, then went to get the two crates with the clock lifted out of the hold in mesh netting.

With the clock safely back on the dock, we went to the hotel for a big breakfast, and on to City Hall to start the work.

All of you who are not passionately interested in clocks can skip the next few paragraphs, which will describe what we did for most of the rest of Saturday and part of Sunday.

We got to City Hall just before nine, opened the boxes, and carried up all the pieces in their wrapping paper to the clock tower area.

From there, we divided into two groups – one to work on getting the bell prepared, the other to put the clock together and the hands on.

Before we assembled the clock itself, we had to install the tube that carries the hands, and then put the hands of the clocks on the face. This may seem like doing the job backwards, but we actually needed to have the hands on the clock before we could attach and regulate the various pieces of the mechanism. Luis Saldanha and I therefore took a ride up to the clock face in the basket of the local fire truck – there was a very good view from up there – and carefully, very carefully put the hour and minute hands back on the clock face.

This event attracted the usual group of curious idlers, but it was actually accomplished in less than 15 minutes from the time we got into the basket until we were back down on the ground.

Then back to the tower to assemble pieces. First we put together the frame of the clock, since it was cast iron and very heavy. We decided against trying to put the whole thing together on the floor of the tower and then hoisting it up into place as being too risky. Our safer option meant running up and down the ladder carrying piece after piece and putting it carefully into the frame, which took a lot longer, but we managed to get it all together without bending, breaking, or cracking anything. At one juncture, we had too many willing hands crowded around the mechanism, and we had to shoo them away so that we could have fewer opinions and more focus.

As a sideshow, the press was down below asking “how soon will the job be done.”

We had to communicate to them that we could not rush the job, but they were welcome to come up and take a look whenever it was convenient. We got it all together shortly after one o'clock, but efforts to connect the mechanism to the bell were sidetracked while we sent someone off to find a better, sturdier cord. The nylon cord we'd brought with us turned out to be too rough and too thick for the pulleys.

When three o'clock rolled around, Nelda insisted that we take a break and get some lunch before the restaurant closed its doors. By that point, we had gotten the clock ticking, and it was keeping excellent time, but we still hadn't gotten the bell finished. That had to wait until after lunch.

We worked from 4:30 until 6:30 PM hooking up the bell mechanism, and then went down to the square to hold our breath to see what would happen. It chimed right on schedule at 7:00 PM, and we all clapped, shook hands, and went to the hotel for a shower.

Unfortunately, during the night the strike sequence got messed up, so we spent the morning of Sunday adjusting it and getting it back in order. It struck right on schedule for over 14 hours, but got jammed again between three and four AM on Monday morning. We spent another couple of hours up there on Monday trying to figure out why two teeth were jamming on the strike sequence. We oiled, scraped, checked alignment, and so forth, and then left it ticking along at 11:00 AM. It struck every hour just right for the rest of the day; my last act before heading to the airport at 9 PM was to listen to it strike.

We made it back to Praia shortly before 11 PM on Monday night, and have spent Tuesday and Wednesday playing catch-up. Yesterday afternoon the Brazilian President arrived for a one-day visit, and the diplomatic corps was rousted out to the airport to greet him and then again to a sit-down dinner in his honor to which none of the ambassadorial spouses were invited. Even the Cape Verdean President's wife was not invited, so we had a situation where 90% of the attendees were men. The diplomatic corps was put at one table, and since we all know each other and have long since run out of topics of polite conversation, it was not a very lively place. Not only that, but the room was sweltering hot, and we were all in dark suits eating a dinner which didn't start until nearly 10 PM. I hope my country is grateful for my patience and perspiration.

Today we all have a return engagement. We have to go out to the airport to see him off. As in previous occasions, this consists in standing in line along the border of a red carpet, shaking hands, and saying "Goodbye, Mr. President," a task which does not brim over with complexity or other mental challenges, but which is preceded by a good long wait in another hot room while people assemble and are put into position.

So with this, I close this letter, hoping that both of you are well and not having to stand anywhere near a red carpet on a very hot afternoon.

Love,
Don