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Gregory A. Barnes

WARM BEDS, TODDIES AND ALL THE REST OF IT

It was the beginning of the rainy season, and there was unemployment, and hunger, in Sebradu. Almost all of its thousand inhabitants were farmers whose rice stores from last year's harvest were depleted and whose next crop could not be expected for another two months. A handful of civil service appointments were due in the chieftdom, but these were not enough to offset the general discomfort.

Even literates, Braima Jaijai for one, had trouble finding jobs. Braima had been a successful trader until his store burned down in 1948, but since that time he had been jobless. "I am temporarily unemployed for the time being," he would tell me, on his frequent visits. His cheerfulness, in the face of what seemed at the time to be great misfortune, was admirable. Of course he did get along. Somehow he found enough to provide his wants, including drink and the girl friends he always brought along to see me. "This is my new darling," he would say of these. "I am in the process of trying to conceive her." He repeated this with every new introduction, for the idea never ceased to amuse him.

Braima was about 45; stocky, but well-preserved; round-faced, with a high hairline; and the possessor of abnormally large eyes, which nearly rolled from their sockets when he laughed. He was not the sort to become depressed, even in this particular July, when he was lucky to get one meal a day. But he did have his problems, the jovial appearance he affected notwithstanding.

"I have come across disappointment in this rainy season," he had said. It was a cool Saturday, and he was wrapped in a heavy bathrobe, with a stocking cap pulled down over his ears.

"You mean you have no food?"

"Well, no sir, I haven't. But I was speaking of my darling." He laughed. "As the Bible says, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

"Which darling?"

"She is actually my wife. The last girl I brought here, I took her as my wife. And now she has left me."

"Why?"

"She says she's not got food. She says, let me feed her or she will go. And now she has gone, and it rained all last night and I had no one to keep me warm." He shook his head. "I was more than disgusted."

"I'm sorry," I said.

"It is very difficult in this rainy season," he said, "to be without no lover. I have no one to clean my house, cook my food and all the rest of it."

I nodded sympathetically.

"And that is why I am kindly asking you to go with me to Milahun and help me bring her back."

I avoided a hasty reply. "What help could I be?" I asked, at length.

"You see," he said, "this girl will not listen to me. But if a white man talks to her—well, may be." He laughed, his eyes bulging; after watching my deliberations a moment, he added, "This woman is my wife, and I have paid for her. She must come back, or her father must return me the bride price, and that's the long and short of it."

"But Chief Lahai would not approve," I said. The Paramount Chief had definite ideas about keeping Europeans in their place.

Braima laughed noisily. "I don't think whether we shall tell the Chief," he said.

In the end I was persuaded, for Braima persevered in matters dear to him. I promised to go to Milahun the following day if the weather was willing; and although it rained all night, an early sun gilded the tree-tops splendidly next morning. Braima arrived in pith helmet and bathrobe, grinning exuberantly.

"Today I shall get my lover back," he said.

"Let us hope so."

"Did you hear the rain last evening? It was too cold. And there I was, with no one to keep me warm. I was disgusting the whole of the night."

I shared my coffee and toast with him, and the two of us set out on trek. My house lay atop a hill about a quarter of a mile north of Sebradu; as we walked down the lane we enjoyed a panorama of thatched roofs in relief of the glistening jungle. The sky was only too clear; the sun, for eight o'clock, was precociously strong.

Milahun was situated some three miles northeast of Sebradu, near the eastern limit of the chiefdom. It was accessible only by bush path, which Braima, fortunately, knew how to catch without entering Sebradu. Before long we had passed a few small farms, including his own, and the high palms and thick underbrush had swallowed us; even the sun lost us, and coolness prevailed under the dripping foliage. As we skated along in the mud, Braima's voice came steadily from under the rim of his pith helmet.

"I am very suspicious of this mean Alimammy Joh," he said. "That is the father of my wife."

"What do you mean?"

"That man has done a wicked deed to me, which was very rascally." He laughed as he thought about it. "You see, he once promised to find me a lover if I would give him some omoli. That is our African gin."

"Yes, I know," I said. "Very powerful, too."

"Oh, very powerful." The thought seemed pleasant to him. "We Africans don't mess lightly with it, for it is more than powerful."

"Didn't he live up to his side of the bargain?"

"He didn't!" he said. "He didn't! I sent him two bottles of gin, and he didn't give me no lover." He finished with a coloratura laugh.

"What did you do?"

"Well sir," he said, still chuckling, "I went next day to collect my merchandise—you know, sir, the goods! But this wicked Alimammy Joh was sick, they told me, and wouldn't see me. But he wasn't sick, he was only tired from drinking our African whiskey."

"So he wouldn't see you?"

"I had to stay the night, to wait for his recovery. And there I was, all alone in a strange town without a woman to keep me warm. I didn't even have no one to give me a toddy."

His reminiscences seemed about to overcome him; he laughed for several minutes. The sun had relocated us by this time, but the growing number of people we met along the way gave hope that we were nearing the village.

"Did you get your lover the next day?" I asked, when he had quieted himself.

"No I didn't. That wicked man left the town before dawn the next day, and could not come back. And so I was forced to walk home without my merchandise."

"He's not a man to be trusted, it seems."

"At all, sir! At all!"

"Then how did you get your wife?"

"Well, I had to pay bride price, before witnesses. And that is what is to be discussed with him. I want my darling back, but if he says let me not have her, he must give me back my money, in the amount of fifteen pounds." He stopped. "And so I beg to leave you, sir."

I frowned. "I don't understand."

"I am kindly asking you to go alone, sir. My wife might become annoyed when she sees me."

"But how can I talk without an interpreter?"

"Oh, Alimammy Joh is lettered. He has been educated, you see."

Braima was a wily one, but I was a little slow in seeing it. All I managed to say was, "Well—if I must—"

"It is a very simple matter which can be done without difficulty," he assured me. "He must give me the girl, or I shall have my bride price back. That is the law, and it should be done by the law. But truthfully, I want this girl because she is a very good lover when she is not annoyed."

"But if he won't agree—?"

"Then you can offer him a bribe. But remember, I am a poor man without money, income or finances."

He sat down on a nearby stump, pulled out a pipe and began to smoke. I could muster no other argument, so I said good-bye and left him, a bit apprehensively, for the town. Within a hundred yards I had crested a knoll from which the cluster of mud huts was open to view, and five minutes more put me in front of a small verandah where a man lolled in his hammock. He was surprised; not many white men visited Milahun, I suppose.

"Who si' dies man Alimammy Joh?" I said.

"Na he ose," the man said, with an inclination of the head. I saw a gaunt, sober-faced individual in a long blue robe leaning against his house watching me.

"Good morning," I said.

"How you?" he answered. He spoke as though the question of my health was distasteful.

"Can't complain."

"Wetin you done come?" His eyes slid furtively; I had the feeling he was speaking patois as a means of defense until he was sure of his ground.

"Ah de come for dat female, she humbug Braima Jaijai."

He jumped. "Eh?"

"The woman is here," I said, "and my friend Mr. Jaijai wants her back. I have come to take her to him."

He was momentarily unsettled, then launched into poker-faced courtesy. "You are welcome, sir, in this village. I wish only that you could take this girl of whom we speak to my good friend, Mr. Braima Jaijai."

"You mean you won't send her back."

"Unfortunately, sir," he said, his listless eyes wandering from side to side as though he were not listening to the conversation, "the decision is not mine alone and cannot be made entirely by me. My daughter has been asked by me to return to this man Braima Jaija and she refuses, on grounds that she is hungry."

"Then, according to native law, you must refund the bride price."

"Hee hee hee," he said, attempting to laugh without smiling. "I regret to say that I am presently unemployed since about six years and have no money available at hand. I am only a poor farmer who tries to make a living by the grace of God. Therefore, I wish the woman to go back to her former ex-husband, who is, namely, the aforementioned Mr. Braima Jaijai."

"Good," I said, "because Mr. Jaijai wants her as soon as possible."

"Yes, he is liking my daughter." For the first time, Alimammy's eyes met mine. "Perhaps this could be arranged, but only with difficulty and complications, yet this is not entirely my responsibility, for a man shall feed his wife—"

"Let me see the girl, please."

"This way, sir, if you wish to see the girl in question."

I followed his lanky figure to the back of his house, where a girl stood crushing rice in a large wooden mortar. I remembered her vaguely. Although no more than sixteen, she was strikingly developed in one poorly covered dimension and elsewhere gave no sign of being underfed. But her behavior led me to believe she did, in fact, need a meal. She listened with increasing surliness as her father explained my mission in the vernacular. He had hardly finished when she burst out in a bellow of abuse, waving her arms and tossing her head. Her father's efforts to calm her were of no avail. A crowd began to gather around us, although she could be heard as clearly in any other corner of the town. When I realized she wasn't going to stop, I shouted to her father, three feet away, "What's she saying?"

"She is informing that she does not wish to return," he called back.

The girl then stepped up to within some few inches of my face, as though she hoped to deafen me. I was embarrassed, and finally walked away. But Alimammy Joh caught up with me and plucked my sleeve.

"I am humbly begging your pardon for my daughter's bad behaviors," he said, in the same manner as he might have said, "Ho-hum, it's time for bed." "You can see she is a disobedient girl who furthermore does not mind her father. But as my friend, the above-named Mr. Braima Jaijai, is wishing to have her in his home, I shall make all efforts to accomplish this task."

I was too unsettled to answer.

"I ask only as a friendly favor," he continued, "let my close comrade and brother Mr. Jaijai give me three bottles of his special omoli each and every week."

"I'll see what I can arrange," I said. I apologized for inciting an incident, shook hands and left. In a few minutes I was with Braima again.

"Well, you have finish," he said, stepping from the bush outside the path.

"Yes," I said, "and your wife refused to come."

"Yes sir, I heard. She is very lively, that girl. But what is her father's po'ition? In other words, sir, what does he require?"

Alimammy's words came back to me. "Three bottles of omoli a week. He didn't say how many weeks."

"A-ha! Well, I must consider." He fell into contemplation, full of "His po'ition is this," and "My po'ition is that."

"He claimed he couldn't return the bride price," I said. "Since you don't trust him anyway, I suppose you ought to take him to court."

The rim of the pith helmet came up and the large orbs turned on me. "In truth, sir, I want my lover back, for she was very lively, vigorous, etcetera. I am thinking only how to make an agreement with this man her father, who was once very wicked to me."

"But if you can't get enough rice for the girl, how will you get omoli for her father?"

"The matter is not difficult. You see, I am a skilled distiller of omoli, which is our native vodka. But I am lacking capital."

"I see. Do you have the equipment?"

"Yes sir. I have a private office with all the necessary distilling facilities. But these last two months I have not being able to procure the necessary sugar which would cost in the amount of two pounds."

He showed me a troubled expression that should have aroused my

suspensions; instead I felt concerned that he might be going hungry for the want of such a small sum.

"I am needing only a kindly investor at this moment to help me begin production. I would then have funds, and it would make me to be somebody, get back my wife, and all the rest of it."

I chewed my lip a moment, then said, "If you had the sugar, you would need nothing else?"

"At all, sir, at all. I can tap the palm wine, mix the brew, and make all the necessary preparations with the present facilities by myself. And so I am kindly asking you to present me with a loan of two pounds, no shillings, no pence, so that I can be able to purchase the sugar."

"Very well."

"Thank you, sir." He was taken aback by my forthright complicity, but not for long. "Now I need to only procure eighteen pounds, sixteen shillings and four pence and I shall be in business," he continued.

I stopped. "Why do you need eighteen pounds, sixteen shillings and four pence?"

"That is the amount of my darling's bill with the Syrian merchant, Mr. Hamdullah Badwallah. You see, sir, when she first came to me before two months ago, she was so lively, vigorous and so forth that I allowed her to buy beautiful dressings and decorations as wearing apparels. And now this merchant Badwallah has told me except I pay inside this week he shall take me to court."

"Can't you run off some gin and make a partial payment?"

"That would be difficult," he said, "for you see, Mr. Badwallah is the only merchant who sells sugar." He looked to me to share the humor of the situation and I smiled politely. Fortunately—for I was pondering whether or not I should advance him the money—his convulsive mirth saved me speech for a time; but inevitably, his next question was a straight forward, "What is your reply in regards of my propo'ition?"

"Perhaps we should discuss it tomorrow," I said.

"But the time has come for action. 'A rolling stone gathers no moss,' as they say. You see, sir, I wish to do this tapping of the palm wine tomorrow, so that my business may begin the production of our own African beverage. The people are very interested in it, now that we have this rainy season."

"And you want me to loan you eighteen-odd pounds plus two pounds for sugar?"

"Yes sir, I am turning to you in my need. I know you are a kind and honest man who will not desert me in this, my hour of want."

"Don't worry," I said. "I won't desert you." I was perhaps a little earnest in those days.

"I knew that since the time when we have met," he said. "I knew you would be my friend in any kind of weather."

I couldn't turn him down, I felt; he was counting on me too much. "Just one thing," I said, reaching for my wallet. "How long will it take you to earn twenty pounds?" I was worried that Chief Lahai would hear of this.

"A very short time, oh very short. The people like my product too much, you see. They want a toddy on these cold rainy evenings."

"What's your charge per bottle?"

"Four shillings."

"And how many bottles can you run off a day?"

"I think perhaps fifteen."

"That's three pounds. So if you paid me ten pounds a week your debt would be cleared in two weeks."

"Well, yes sir, approximately that."

Without another word I handed him twenty pounds, six shillings and four pence. But I couldn't resist offering some advice.

"I don't see why you can't find a good job," I said. "You could be getting this new appointment as police chief, or at least a clerkship."

"No sir," he said. "I don't think."

"Why not?"

"I don't believe whether the Paramount Chief would approve. You see, he once had me to be arrested." Braima chuckled.

"For what?"

"Well, it was concerning this omoli business. This chief is very strict in regards of law and order and these legal affairs—very strict!"

"You mean you don't have a distilling license?"

I was annoyed but he didn't notice. On the contrary, he was so amused at his misfortune that he wanted to finish the story. "It is our native custom to make presents to our chiefs," he explained, "and so, one day when I was being tired from testing my product I presented him with a bottle of it. He was more than disgusted. 'Let this man be arrested and taken from my sight,' he said. And so they put me in jail, sir."

"For how long?"

"Heh heh, just one night. But they fined me twenty pounds, and by that time I was having no kind investors. It was very difficult." He giggled with laughter; his eyes bulged enormously.

"So if the Chief catches you again, we're both in trouble," I said. We had by this time reached the path to my house.

He smiled the broader, unperturbed. "I don't think whether we shall tell the Chief," he said. "And so I beg to leave you, sir."

As I watched the bathrobe swish back and forth across the bare legs, I realized for the first time that Braima was a very shrewd individual, and that he had moreover a rare sense of timing. He was born for the confidence game.

THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY I found him on my verandah; but to my surprise he was not delivering the ten pounds I expected.

"It is not possible for me to pay, sir, in the amount which you have requested, for my factory has not yet begun production." He was wearing a green jumper and his pith helmet, from under which he ogled me as we sat across from each other. "There was this business of my debts, also I must tap the palm wine, and now the wine is fermenting for the requisite period of time in the barrel where I placed it."

The arguments sounded reasonable, whether or not they were true, and I relented. He had come, he said, for bottles. I dug up every quart container in the house and put them in an empty beer carton, which he carried away on his head (placing the pith helmet on top).

Almost another week sped by. I went to Sebradu on Friday afternoon, to make a few purchases from Badwallah, the Syrian trader, and came abruptly on Alimammy Joh. Dreamy-eyed and wooden-faced as usual, he stood like a gaunt scarecrow, watching me.

"What brings you to Sebradu?" I asked.

"Governun business," he muttered. His breath was ghastly, and I apparently grimaced. "Good afternoon," he said indifferently.

"Has Braima Jaijai seen you?" I said.

Alimammy pulled back a fold of his robe, and as I had expected, there, strapped to his waist, was one of my quart bottles. He was very much inebriated; and Phase I of our operation had been successfully completed.

A booming voice behind me caused Alimammy to blink. "I am going," he said, and he went. I turned; Paramount Chief T. V. M. Lahai was ambling majestically towards me. He was a large man, and looked larger in his copious robes. Around his left wrist rattled a chain of leopard's teeth, and in his right hand he held his chief's staff like a nightstick.

"Hesitate somewhat, Mr. Joh," he called, "for I have matters of the

utmost import to discuss with you." Alimammy, however, was out of sight. "Hmm, the gentleman appears to be dispossessed of his auditory faculties." He turned to me. "Good afternoon," he rumbled. "I wish an interlocution with you."

"Of course sir." The man cut an awesome figure, and I treated him with great deference.

"Rumor has reached me from impeccable sources," he said, "that you have contracted to discharge the debts of one Braima Jaijai, in the amount of eighteen pounds, six shillings and four pence. Said amount has been credited to the account of the party in question at the firm Hamdullah Badwallah in this city." His heavy face hung over mine like a bowling ball. "Is this correct?"

"Yes, I loaned him the money."

"What guarantee, collateral or negotiable deed did you procure as a surety against your principal?"

I cleared my throat. "I'm afraid it was a gentlemen's agreement."

"Aha!" he boomed. "Frequently I have admonished you Caucasians strenuously and vividly not to immerse yourselves in our inter-native affairs. You persist obdurately, and I do not regard this favorably. Furthermore, you have associated yourself with a charlatan, humbug and swindler who hasn't a good reputation."

"I didn't realize that," I said.

He folded his bulky arms across his chest; he looked, as a result, like a five-ton truck with an unusually high bumper. "Be advised," he intoned, "in re: this previously nominated malingerer, that you are to desist business matters with him. You cannot profit thereby."

"Very well, sir."

"I would be redundant if I did not counsel you thus."

"Thank you."

"At the moment I presently have insufficient subordinates to deal with unsavory elements in my chieftdom. But once my new police chief is appointed," he said, gesticulating with his left hand so that the leopard teeth rattled menacingly, "I shall deploy him in the pursuit of just such characters, e.g., that imposter, rogue and ne'er-do-well, Braima Jaijai."

He indicated that the interview was over, and it was none too soon for me. I watched his broad back wheel around a corner and set off hastily to find Braima. I tried his home first; he wasn't there. I then headed in the direction of his farm, as the sun mellowed in my eyes,

and was not long in seeing him coming along the rutted path, with bottles sticking out of so many nooks that he resembled a horned toad. His face was distorted in an unusually wide-eyed grin. At first it seemed he might be happy to see me, but abruptly he stumbled in a rut, staggered off the path into a ditch and finally hit his head against a mango tree, knocking himself to the ground. One bottle of omoli was smashed; the others tumbled into the ditch. As I rushed up, Braima engineered himself into a standing position—his beaming countenance unaltered but for the incipient lump on his forehead—and extended his hand to take mine.

"Well sir," he said, "I have come across a hard knock."

"Are you mad, walking along with all these bottles on display?"

"No sir, I am only a little weary, for I believe this to be my finest, most strongest beverage. This is the real African whiskey, very powerful."

The "pow" caused me to retreat a step.

"You are going to have to become more dedicated to your responsibilities," I said. "I have just seen Chief Lahai."

"I know this man the Paramount Chief, T. V. M. Lahai. At one time he had me to be arrested, for the distillation of—"

"He is unhappy with me for loaning you the money. I want you to pay me all you have—now, if you don't mind."

"Yes sir, I had intended coming to you tonight." He searched through all his pockets and at length handed me three pounds, twelve shillings. He caught my stunned look and seemed to sober. "You see, sir, the bottles I presently have with me now have not been sold."

"But you said you would run off seventy-five bottles a week. This represents only—only eighteen."

"No sir, I have sold forty-three, but I was required to keep four pounds for my own personal needs, and I had to invest one pound in my industrial equipment, that is to say, a new machete, bottles, and other types of materials."

"That leaves seventeen bottles unaccounted for."

"Well, you see, this man Alimammy Joh, the father of my darling, who I am disgusting to be without these cold rainy nights, demands three bottles a week."

I waited.

"And I think my bottles have had a very bad safety record. I can see that one has had the misfortune today to be broken. But altogether

only four have chanced to break and two others have lost themselves."

"What about the other eight bottles?" I said. "Did you drink them all?"

He laughed hugely at this. "This is our rainy season, sir, and I shall spend the whole of the night cold except I have my toddy. And I must steadily inspect the product to decide if it is suitable for the market."

My anger was obvious, and under its influence he became more serious, surveying the damage he had done in his fall. I helped him pick up the bottles, for we were beginning to lose our daylight, but I continued to scold. "I am not satisfied with your management of your business," I said. "Next week I expect no less than ten pounds."

"I don't believe whether that is possible," he said, "for I must now collect a new supply of this palm wine from the palm trees, and let it to ferment for the requisite period of time."

"You can tap that wine tomorrow morning," I said, "and it will ferment over the weekend."

He sighed. "Yes sir."

"And another thing. You must buy yourself a bag to carry the bottles in. Are we agreed?"

He was agreeable to everything by this time. My final stipulation was that he should not enter town before dark. Together we carried the bottles to a concealed point near Sebradu, where I left him, after further admonishment as to his conduct.

FOR SEVERAL DAYS I fretted over the situation in which I found myself. If I were to be paid only three pounds and twelve shillings every second week, my loan would not be finally settled for three months. And if Braima continued to drink in excess every day, he couldn't evade the Chief's detection that long, particularly if the new police chief was to keep him under constant surveillance.

At length I decided my personal supervision was needed at the distillery. I knew where Braima's farm was and I supposed I could find the still. This in fact proved easier than expected. As I neared the farm on the following Thursday noon, I saw the faintest wisp of smoke rising from the jungle behind it. Finding the path was a little more difficult, but soon I was winding down a hill beneath the high bush, hoping that no snakes were lying camouflaged in the foliage underfoot. Presently I entered a small clearing, in the middle of which stood a makeshift hut covered with thatch. There was the barrel, the crude coil, and a bottle mounted to catch the omoli as it trickled through.

There, too, in a not unexpected condition, lay Braima Jaijai, laughing to himself. He stood at sight of me.

"Welcome to my office," he cried. "You are seeing me at my temporary business."

"How are you doing?"

"Nothing to report, sir. Did you bring your camera?"

"No."

"I am very sorry for that, for you see, I would like a picture of this, my factory, too much. Well sir, this is our own African gin."

He gave me an "educational tour of the plant," as he called it, and although I conversed absentmindedly with him, I took in every detail of his assembly line. A method of increasing production was quickly envisaged. He had only one barrel and therefore, he claimed, he could not distill during the days the palm wine was fermenting. But he had three tapping buckets in which the wine could be allowed to sit during its period of gestation. I explained this to him, and requested that he start tapping.

"But I must watch my bottles, and sample the brew, and perform the other requisite operations," he said.

"I'll take care of filling your bottles."

He grinned at me. "But you see I think I am perhaps too weary to climb these palm trees today."

He had me there. I couldn't send him up a tree in his condition. About the only thing I could do was to supervise him, to make sure that he got no drunker. I shrugged my shoulders resignedly.

At that moment I was startled by a loud noise from the direction of the farm. Some one was shouting; and then there was a loud thrashing of the underbrush. Whoever it was was coming down the path towards us.

"Make way for the law," came a voice, and I promptly fled. Braima just stood there drunkenly. I realized I was deserting him, but there was nothing to be gained by my staying and a great deal to be lost. If Chief Lahai had sent his police after Braima, I was a whiskey-breath away from trouble. I had tragic visions of losing my job, of being deported. I concealed myself well, fifty yards in the bush, and there I lay, soundless but for my unsteady breath. I cocked my ear, listening for voices from the still. I heard a laugh—Braima's. He must be in a great deal of trouble, I thought, to laugh like that.

Then, to my surprise, some one began tapping a bottle, and I could hear sounds of dancing, followed by more laughter. I crept forward.

The laughter increased. At length I peered into the clearing. The first person I saw was Braima's wife, looking sullen, and the second, her father, who was as intoxicated as Braima, with whom he was performing a ceremonial dance.

Immediately I was angry. "What are you two trying to do?" I cried, emerging from my hiding place. "Get us all arrested?"


"No sir," said Braima. "I am happy to report that the situation has been rectified." He looked extraordinarily pleased.

"Not yet," I said. "You have your wife, but I don't have my money."

"That can be arranged, sir."

"The matter of your above-noted investment," Alimammy added unctuously, "need no longer be in doubt." He pulled out a badge to show me. My prospects of repayment were indeed very good, I saw; and as it happened, I did in time receive my twenty pounds, for after six years of applying, Alimammy Joh was finally awarded a civil service position by the government, that of police chief for our chieftdom.

Braima began his dance again. Alimammy threw me a salute and stuck out his hand to be congratulated. "Hee hee hee," he laughed, without smiling.

 GREGORY A. BARNES, after attending the Universities of Denver, Illinois, and Vienna, has spent most of the past eleven years abroad as a soldier, traveler, student and employee of the United States Government. Of his experiences in foreign lands, he writes, "Not all I want to say . . . is humorous but even in the midst of hunger, poverty, illiteracy and disease, I found an abundance of laughter." He hopes to complete a novel soon.