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EMIBAMA Bulletin Interview with Ato Wagaye Hagos



Ato Wagaye Hagos was a deacon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in his early childhood. When he was ten years old he did turn his face towards the formal education and gradually built his career in the field of meteorology. This new career of his took him to various institutes in the USA for advanced courses in meteorology.

During his time as a weatherman, he served his country in different places, right from the position of meteorological observer to the level of leading meteorological section. Besides, he was in charge of establishing the first meteorological station in Neghele Borena. As a weatherman, Ato Wagaye also had a chance to work with His Excellency Girma Wolde Giorgis, the current president of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

The EMIBAMA newsletter is pleased to make Ato Wagaye Hagos the first guest of the newsletter so that our readers could learn from his matured experience.

EMIBAMA NL: Could you start off by telling us something about your earliest days, your family and your school days?

Ato Wagaye: I was born in December 1935 in Gamu Gofa, Southern Region of Ethiopia, in a district called Kemba. I went to an Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church School at St. Mary's Church in Kara, Belta, until I was six years old. Then I moved to Addis Ababa and continued my studies in Coptic religion, serving as a deacon in St. Stephanos Church in Addis Ababa, near Meskel Square. At the age of ten, I went to Tesfa Kokeb Elementary School, and on passing Ethiopian Elementary School Leaving Examination, I joined the General Wingate Secondary School

on the recommendation of our British School master, named Mr. Waller.

Coming to my family life, born from farming parents, I was educated in Ethiopia by the taxpayers' money and abroad on scholarships. After graduation I started working as Aeronautical Weather Forecaster and immediately married at the age of 22 to Besrat Afework, a beautiful and a hard working Ethiopian girl, a nurse by profession. I am blessed to be the father of a boy and three girls, all of whom have a college education. I have a grandson who would be eight years old this coming January. He is now living in USA, and a couple of days ago by he sent me an e-mail to inform me that has scored 900-1000 points in

playing Chess, which is a good score as compared with the Champions highest score, which is between 2000 and 2800 points. He has also told me that he has read some 150 books so far. I am indeed proud of him and told him that the prize he would get from me for his achievements is, however, subject to playing with me Chess and pass a reading test. It is only over a year since I lost my wife after 49 years of marriage. My son, Geti too passed away five years ago. This is more or less my family life.

EMIBAMA NL: Can you identify a moment when your interest in meteorology quickened?

Ato Wagaye: When I was in the third year in General Wingate

Secondary School, a delegation of four foreigners from Canada, USA, Britain and Sweden came to our School to give us briefings on the new International Civil Aviation Technical School to be opened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Each one of them gave us detailed information in their respective areas of assignments i.e on the General Administration of the School and the various areas of technical studies. i.e. aircraft maintenance, radio maintenance and Meteorology (weather observation). After presentation of the experts, about one hundred gathered in the assembly hall. Then, the Chief of Mission Mr. Stewart Graham asked those who were interested to join the New Technical School. Without hesitation I was among the very few who joined the technical school and later chose the science of weather as my career.

EMIBAMA NL: Where did you go for meteorological training?

Ato Wagaye: It was in mid semester of 1951 that I first went to the ICAO Technical School that was just opened. There I learnt weather observation, map plotting, advanced meteorology and higher mathematics. Afterwards, I went to USA and joined the College of Mineral Industries at Penn. State University. I studied various subjects of meteorology that valued at 35 credit hours and received a diploma. After graduation, I took another training in an aeronautical weather forecaster and Tropical Meteorology in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

EMIBAMA NL: What did you do then?

Ato Wagaye: With the help of a Swedish Professor Mr. Olson and his wife, I studied weather Observation, map plotting, pilot balloon tracking with the theodolite and I was assigned to establish the first surface weather station in the summer of June 1951 at Dide Leben, Negele- Borena.

EMIBAMA NL: Tell us about your work related with his Excellency President Girma Wolde Giorgis, including his role in meteorological activities?

Ato Wagaye: It was in 1956 after Eritrea became part of Ethiopia by federation that the Civil Aviation Department of the Federal Government of Ethiopia took over the Civil Aviation Administration in Asmara from a British Company called Air Radio Limited. Lt. Girma Wolde Giorgis, our current President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia was appointed as Chief of Civil Aviation in Asmara, and he was the one who assigned me to be in charge of the Meteorological Section in Asmara Airport. At that time, the Meteorological service was being given under the Civil Aviation Department. I worked under him until he was transferred to Addis Ababa as Director General of Civil Aviation Department and.

EMIBAMA NL: Could you tell us about memorable moments, if there were any, you came across in meteorology?

Ato Wagaye: As weather observer I have served in three stations namely Negele, Dire Dawa and Combolcha, Wello. As weather forecaster I was assigned in Asmara for three years. During that period I opened some synoptic stations including, including pilot balloon station in Quiha, Nakfa. I also established a sunshine recording station in Dallol.

While I was working in Negele and Combolcha I encountered wild tigers. In the Negele instant, I was confronted face to face with the wild Tiger on the road that leads to Negele Town from Dide Liben airport or weather station, when I had to go to fetch water, with the police security Guard, Sergeant Atnafu. It was in the middle of the road that goes to Negele Town that we observed something at a distant, which was identified as a tiger when we went closer and closer. It was my security guard

who realized that the tiger was faced with a problem when he saw it scratching its eyes. He was convinced that the tiger had thorns in its eyes while roaming in the bush. And it was there in the middle of the road waiting for an intruder to help him in taking out the thorns. So the Security Guard instructed me to follow him without any panic, and took down his rifle from his shoulder, put it on the ground and touched the tiger's eyes gently and took off the thorns from its both eyes. The tiger was relieved from its sufferings and immediately went into the bush. That was not the end of it. While we were continuing our journey to the Town of Negele the tiger was accompanying us by showing itself on and off until we entered the town in the dark. The Security Guard explained to me that the tiger had been protecting us from being attacked by other animals, as a favor for what we did to him. It was one of the greatest lessons I had in my life. And that is, if you do good unto others, you can live in peace with animals, let alone, with human beings.

The second experience was in Combolcha weather station when the tiger that my colleague Leoul Seqed and I saw on our way back after celebrating the Timket ceremony in the town of Combolcha, entered on to the ceiling of our bed room. All the night the tiger and my roommate had a confrontation until a quarter to 6:00 in the morning when I happened to wake up. When I saw the tiger from the ceiling of the room, focusing its eyes on both of us; I immediately covered my eyes with the bed sheets and started praying. After a few minutes of silence the tiger turned its back to us and dropped out of the house. We were both then relieved, and, went out safely and did our early morning Synoptic Observation.

EMIBAMA NL: When did you stop working for the then civil aviation Authority and why?

Ato Wagaye: I stopped working for the then civil Aviation Department in June 1964. A new administrator with the rank of Minister of state, was appointed to the Department of Civil Aviation, and for a reason that I did not understand, we could not get along well, so I was transferred to the Ministry of Public Works. I was not happy of the transfer and in view of that I was frustrated with the whole thing and decided to quit the services of the Imperial Ethiopian Government for once and all and earn my living as a commoner.

EMIBAMA NL: Despite that you have been away from direct involvement of meteorological activities, it sounds that you are still strongly attached to the field. Could you tell us the reason for this?

Ato Wagaye: The Science of the weather is in my blood. I love it. Had it not been for my boss's decision, our present President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, Girma Wolde Giorgis, I had no intention what so ever to quit my first profession i.e. Meteorology.

Let alone to me as a professional, even to the ordinary persons, the weather is in their daily life. When it comes to me, the clear sky, the cirrus cirrostratus, cirrocumulus, altostratus, altocumulus, cumulus, stratocumulus, cumulonimbus, the stratus, the fog, the mist, the visibility, the drizzle and everything associated with the atmospheric disturbance come across to remind me of the days I spent as weather observer or aeronautical forecaster. I love the atmosphere, for it is a big laboratory in which nature performs its daily experiments. To be part and parcel of that is not only great opportunity, but it gives me real satisfaction. In view of that, there are times I tend to give the daily forecast for my self.

EMIBAMA NL: After quitting the then Civil Aviation Department, were there times in which you attempted to make aware of the people you were working with

about the importance of meteorology?

Ato Wagaye: Really and truly, I was so disappointed with the administration as a whole, in those days, that I did not want to go back in their vicinities, even to claim my salary for the last twelve days that I had been with the Government office. In other words I completely terminated my contacts even with friends that I had been working with. Sometimes I feel bitter, when I remember those days that I spent with the Civil Aviation Department and The Ministry of Public works, from 1963 to the summer of 1964, except for the six months that I spent in the United Kingdom studying Air transport Law, Management and Industrial Relations Course from January first to end of June 1963.

EMIBAMA NL: How do you evaluate the advancement of meteorological services since your time, both locally and internationally? Tell us also your view regarding the contribution of meteorology, in general, and our meteorological society, in particular, to the socio-economic development of Ethiopia.

Ato Wagaye: Meteorology has advanced a lot. Thanks to Information Technology and space science. Satellites have contributed a lot too. People have become more weather conscious locally and internationally. The Governments we had in Ethiopia in the past thirty years have given more importance to the science of the weather and, because of their support the Institution has grown administratively and technically to such a high level that we can say it has reached international standard.

The contributions of Meteorology, i.e science of the weather, especially, in the areas of aviation, agriculture, space exploration, tourism and the day to day activities of the human race has been tremendous in the past sixty years, i.e after the Second World War.

Early warnings in connection with hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts, floods, tsunamis, and the heavy rains associated with Monsoons, has saved not only the lives of millions of people but billions of dollars worth of properties. The creation of international institutions such as the World Meteorological Organizations has been instrumental to the development and spread of the weather services The World over. The weather forecast issued on thousands of cities and broadcasted through the Mass Medias in the entire world is one of the services worth mentioning. The most sensitive issue of Global Warming in affecting the future Climatic Change, as I see it is the baby of the Institution of Meteorology.

I foresee the important role Meteorology is expected to play in the coming few decades in the areas of Environmental issues especially in warning the disasters related to the extinction of wild animals and the migration of human races out of their birth places as a result of the melting of the icebergs both in the Arctic and The Antarctic parts of our planet due to the Global Warming.

When we come to Ethiopia, Meteorology was seriously introduced into the country in the early nineteen fifties, through the Department of Civil Aviation and The Air Force mainly to give aviation services. Now it is established as an independent institution within The Ministry of Water Resources, expanding its services to all areas of activities, hence contributing o the socio-economic development of the country. The recent Ethiopian Meteorological Society namely EMIBAMA is indicative of the fast growth of the profession in such a short time.

EMIBAMA NL: You are also known as an author of books. Could you tell us something about your books?

Ato Wagaye: Since 2005, just a few months before The National Election Day of May, 2005 I had my first book “ Kirmo Tidja? Ene Enja!!” Published and available for the public. The second one “ Sele Fikere Besmam Yiker” in connection with the turmoil we had nationwide, particularly in Addis, after the results of the election were officially announced. The book was not on sale to the public but distributed to High Government officials, both, Federal and Regional, to the various leaders of the opposition parties, to democrats, well known citizens, and presidents of Higher Educational Institution.

The third one was “Biruhe Tesfa” published in July 2007 and distributed to the public at a nominal price of Birr 1.00 In brief, the first book is a “Memoir” in poem and prose prepared over a period of years and some chapters in connection with our economic, social, and political situations prevailing in the year 2005.

As to the other two books one can guess what they are all about just from their titles.

EMIBAMA NL: Out of your matured experience in life, what message do you have for the new generation of meteorological personnel?

Ato Wagaye: Ethiopians who have taken Meteorology as their profession in this age of Information are lucky, firstly it is highly recognized institution by the Government and secondly the remuneration for the services rendered is not bad at all as in our days.

Since the Global warming and Environmental issues are interrelated with meteorological phenomena, the professional in this field is becoming more and more important. He or She will be indispensable. They will be the key actors in the years to come. So, they have a good future. Hence they have to prove themselves

qualified and responsible. One thing that I want to communicate to the weather person is that to stay in the business, one has to keep learning.

EMIBAMA NL: Thank you so much for according us this interview.

Ato Wagaye: Thank you for the honor and the opportunity.

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SIGNIFICANT METEOROLOGICAL AND HYDROLOGICAL EVENTS

Significant Meteorological Events of the Year 2007 (source: NMA, Weather Forecast and Early Warning Team)

[Updated information will be included in here!](#)

El Nino/La Nina update (source: The International Research Institute for Climate and Society, updated on 19 December 2007)

The most recent weekly SST anomaly in the NINO3.4 region, at -1.6 C, suggests moderately strong La Niña conditions, consistent with the -1.45C NINO3.4 anomaly averaged over the past month. The issue at this point is whether

persistence of the La Niña conditions are likely, or equivalently when and how rapidly the tropical Pacific is likely to transition out of La Niña conditions. Factors of relevance to La Niña maintenance are the enhanced easterly winds, which reinforce the shallow thermocline anomalies, and the strongly negative SST anomalies observed east of the dateline. These features suggest that La Niña conditions could remain for at least a couple more months. Furthermore, in terms of La Niña's demise, at this time there are only weak manifestations of deep thermocline anomalies in the western and off-equatorial Pacific that could bring about a rapid transition out of the current La Niña conditions. A high probability exists that the system will retain La Niña conditions over the coming seasons.

Development of El Niño conditions is very unlikely, with probabilities not exceeding 10% until Apr-May-Jun of 2008. There is an approximately 97% likelihood for La Niña conditions during the Dec-Jan-Feb season, and only a 2% probability for ENSO-neutral conditions. As the peak of the La Niña conditions is likely occurring now, the probabilities for La Niña decline going forward, although La Niña conditions still are indicated as most likely through early 2008.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- CHy Advisory Working Group - Third session, 11-15 February 2008 to be held in Geneva, WMO Secretariat
- First Meeting of the EC Working Group on WMO Strategic and Operational Planning (WG/SOP), 27-29 February 2008 to be held in Geneva, WMO Secretariat
- Fifth Meeting of the Steering Committee of WCP-Water, February 2008

(Date and place to be decided)

- CBS OPAG-IOS: Fourth Workshop on the Impact of Various Observing Systems on NWP, 3-5 March 2008 to be held in Geneva, WMO Secretariat
- RA III / RA IV Regional Training Seminar for National Trainers, 3-14 March 2008, Caracas, Venezuela (tentative)
- Subregional Workshop on CLIMAT Reports, 24-28 March 2008 Nadi, Fiji (tentative)
- EC Working Group on Climate, Water and Environment Matters, 6-28 March 2008 Geneva, WMO Secretariat (tentative)
- First Expert Group Meeting on Flood Mapping, First quarter 2008 (Date to be decided) Geneva, WMO Secretariat
- Meeting of Severe Weather Demonstration Project Steering Group, First quarter 2008 (Date to be decided) Geneva, WMO Secretariat (tentative)
- Meeting of the CCI Expert Team on Research Needs for Intraseasonal, Seasonal and Interannual Prediction, including the Application of these Predictions, First quarter 2008 (Date and place to be decided)
- Meeting of the CCI Expert Team on Climate and Tourism, First quarter 2008 (Date and place to be decided)

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We welcome your comments about EMIBAMA Newsletter and look forward to hearing from you.