

Ethiopian student recalls transition to socialism

By Joan Sterk

For most Americans who live in a relatively free-thinking and democratic atmosphere, the word socialism connotes oppression and confinement.

But for one UNCA student from Ethiopia, socialism was a reality for three years.

Hagazi Kebede, born in Tigray, Ethiopia, grew up in a feudal system under Emperor Haile Selassie, whose reign lasted until 1974. He witnessed the transition to socialism in 1975 and saw friends murdered simply because socialist authorities suspected them of some wrong.

Kebede, a small, dark-skinned man with solemn eyes, serves as Campus Commission Business Manager at UNCA.

He has almost completed a degree in accounting. He has a 3.56 grade point average and will graduate in May.

He left Ethiopia on Dec. 5, 1978, afraid that by staying he might one day meet the fate of his friends, who were branded



UNCA STUDENT HAGAZI KEBEDE (pictured here with his wife Carolyn) left Ethiopia in 1978 after he realized he could not adjust to a situation where he disagreed with his government's policies. He said the government murdered citizens whom it considered "enemies of the people."

Staff photo by Betsy Phillips

"capitalist stooges." He also felt that if he stayed, he would have been agreeing with the socialist government.

And he did not agree. Kebede worked for the only petroleum refinery in Ethiopia for two years. The government paid for

his education in India, where he earned a degree in chemical engineering.

An education and government job are marks of importance in Ethiopia, where only 10 percent of the people are literate.

Even though his job was prestigious, Kebede did not feel comfortable with

the situation.

"If I worked for the government and was getting paid, then I was a part of it (socialism) and helping it," Kebede said.

Former Emperor Haile Selassie saw the need to educate his people and gave money to parents to send their children to school.

"He was much adored. He was a really great man. Can you imagine? He paid parents to entice them to educate their children," said Kebede.

Haile Selassie ruled from 1923-1973. By the end of his 50-year rule, Haile Selassie had erected high schools in all 14 provinces. Before his reign, Ethiopia had only one high school.

Haile Selassie understood the problems of the people and talked with the villagers. This added to his greatness, said Kebede.

"In America, there is a trend of the rich living away from the poor. They don't know what poverty is. Haile Selassie knew

poverty and tried to help the poor," Kebede said.

In 1974, when the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) took over, they placed Haile Selassie under house arrest.

Kebede described some of the atrocities he said the PMAC committed.

"It was hard to adjust to the change. The most acceptable military leaders were in the PMAC. Two of them, chosen as chairmen, couldn't be puppets, so they (PMAC) killed them," Kebede said.

"If the PMAC was suspicious of you, they would take you somewhere and shoot you. They would cover the corpse with a sign saying, 'Enemy of the People,'" Kebede said.

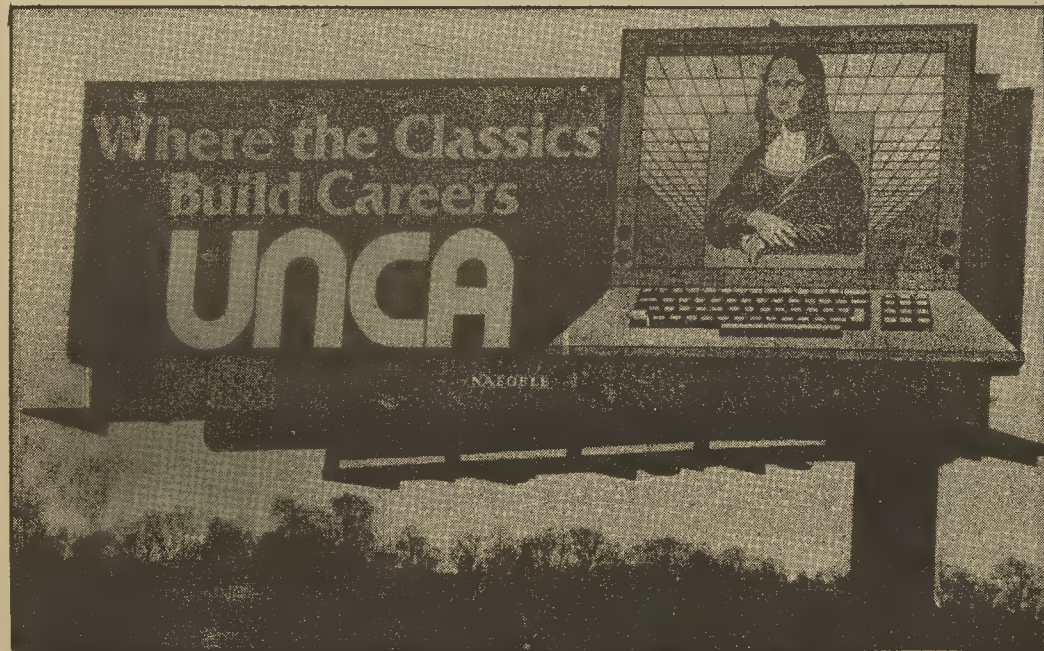
If a family wanted to bury the murdered relative in a civilized fashion, they had to pay the Council in order to pick up the body.

"They would make you pay them for the bullets they used to kill the person before you could pick up the corpse."

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Mona Lisa and a computer terminal?

Giant billboard stresses 'centrality of classics'



A \$15,360 DISCOUNT FOR UNCA: If Naegele Outdoor Advertising displays the billboard as a public service for one

year in six different locations, UNCA will receive \$15,960 in billboard publicity for \$600. Staff photo by Sylvia Hawkins

By David Proffitt

Motorists traveling west on I-240 who see a gigantic, eye-catching billboard advertising UNCA as a place "Where the Clas-

sics Build Careers" may wonder at the unusual juxtaposition of Mona Lisa and a computer terminal.

The billboard is the result of discussion among

various administrators including the chancellor, the admissions office, and the university relations office, said Dr. Tom Cochran, assistant vice chan-

cellor for academic affairs.

Dr. Alfred Canon, director of university relations, said a vice president of Naegele Outdoor Advertising approached the university with the proposal.

"They said they would furnish the billboard for six months if UNCA would pay for the cost of the artwork," said Canon.

Cochran said the administration and the University Planning Council, which looks at long-range goals for UNCA, wanted the giant ad to stress "our grounding in the liberal arts and the centrality of the classics at UNCA."

"We started with Socrates seated at a computer, but the advertising people told us Mona Lisa would be a more recognizable and more easily understood figure," said Cochran.

The Admissions Office and Continuing Education department provided the \$600 needed to cover

Naegele's out-of-pocket expenses in producing the sign.

Tammy Gilbert, secretary to the vice president of Corporate Development of Naegele Outdoor Advertising, said Naegele often donates space as a public service to non-profit organizations.

"We have a public service program at Naegele. UNCA had to pay our out-of-pocket expenses, and we plan to use the billboard at least six months, possibly longer."

Gilbert said Naegele usually charges \$1330 per month for a billboard of that size. They will move the sign to a different location every two months.

Another smaller "poster" billboard on Swannanoa River Road advertising WCQS, the campus radio station, only remains in place for 30 days.

Naegele also provided it as a public service to UNCA and the community.