

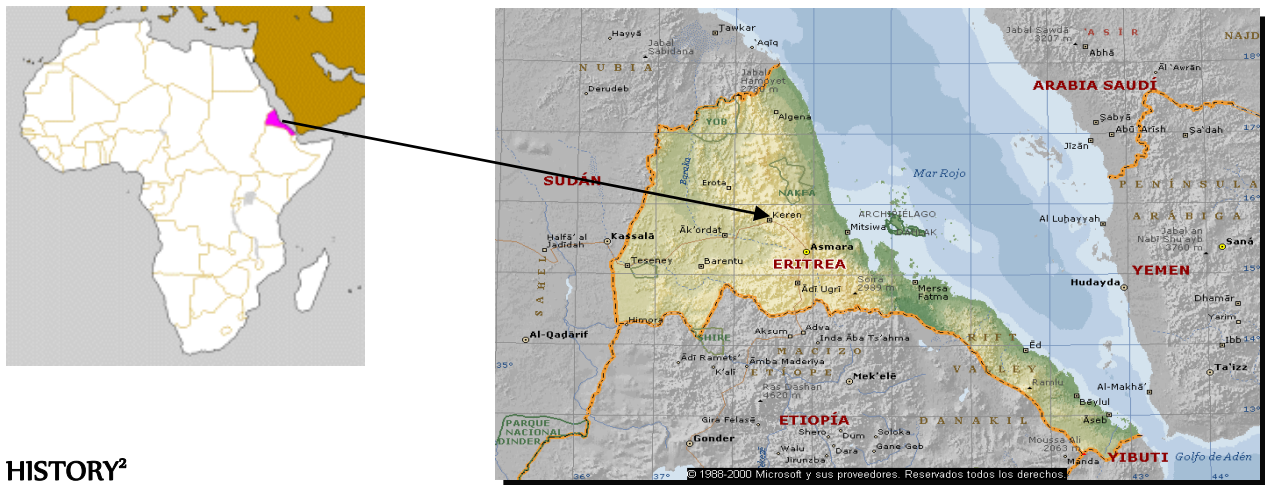
LALMBA 50 YEARS OF SERVICE, FROM A RIDE TO A PRIEST TO AN ASSOCIATION

Etimology:

Lalmaba (ላልምባ = ላኸሊ እምባ / ላቅል ህንባኸ) is Blin¹ word the mountain of Bees or the place of Bees. As we know bees produce honey, and honey is one of the best food items. Whoever offers honey, offers the best food, and that food give strength to body to grow and live. Hence, honey is life, and life most of the time depends not only on food but on hope. Therefore, the mountain of Lalmba can be called as the mountain of hope, life and growth. That is why Hugh and Marty rightly called the Association “Lalmba= ላልምባ).

Location:

Lalmba is a name of a mountain in Keren, Eritrea, in the locality named Shinnara, a village 10Kms NW of Keren.



HISTORY²

Hugh the young 22 years old boy, when stationed in East Africa in the Country of Eritrea in 1963 with US army, Hugh Downey's travels landed him in the town of Keren. It was Hugh's favorite place a 2 hours' drive form the capital city Asmara. He did not know why the town kept drawing him back. One day a chance encounter there, changed Hugh's life forever.

On September 21st, 1963 he hanged around the outdoor market in Keren, got bored, and had started to drive out of town. When he saw a Priest walking along the road. The priest wore a black cassock and a round crown hat with a brim. This reminded Hugh a picture of Pries in the 18th century Rome. That Priest was an Eritrean in the Eastern Geez Rite of the Catholic Church, called Abba Zereselassie Hadgu. Hugh stopped and offered him a ride. In the broken English, the priest explained that he is going to his village parish but the road was bad. After miles of bouncing in and out of mini-craters and lurching from side to side to avoid deep ruts, they arrived in a village called Shinnara.

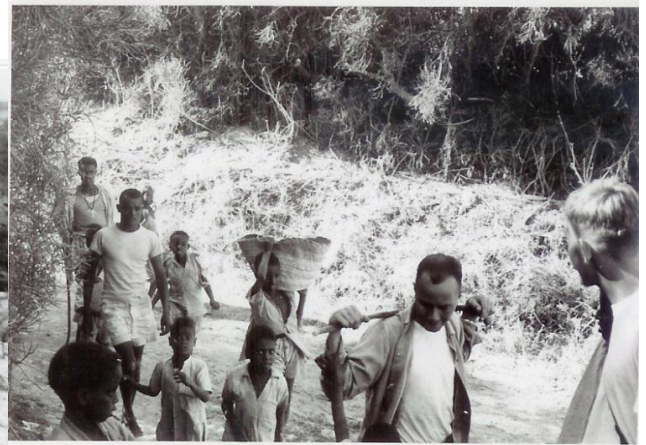
¹ One of the languages spoken in Keren, Eritrea, by the Blin people.

² Marty and Hugh and et al, On Heart's edge: a story of love and adventure in Africa, pp.17

Shinnara 1963



2.10.1963



Above Hugh and his Jeep, and coming down from the Church of Shinnara back to the place where his jeep is parked.



ASMAR - 1992 - goA Mr. Hugh - ን/ሁኒ Director
በ/የ ልብ ገጽ ሐረግ ክፍል ን/ሁኒ

Shinnara and that same jeep, Hugh and Abba Kidane in 1992.

The Priest after reaching his village he wanted to express his gratitude, but could not say it in English, he recalled that there is an ex seminarian called Siyum, and asked him to translate what he wanted to say. After thanking Hugh for the ride, he asked Hugh if he could help him in building a new school as the former school was almost collapsing. Downey gathered materials recruited help and got to work, and was able to build the school.

Those years were the time in which President J.F. Kennedy was assassinated, the Priest took with him some elderly people from the village and went to Asmara to express his condolence to Hugh, and told him he is naming the new school “J.F. Kennedy School, Shinnara” and invited Hugh to be present during its inauguration which took place in 1964.



The old and the new School

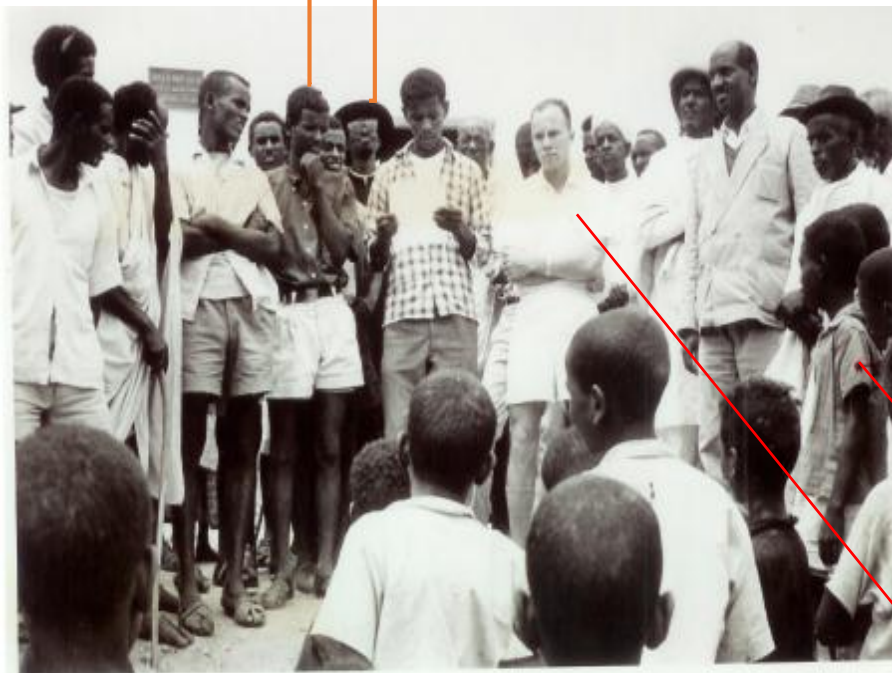
SIYUM

School inauguration date, people expressing their joy.



1964 16/7 556 (Mr. Hugh Haddad)

ABBA ZERESELASIYE



HUGH

Kidane

One boy, 5 years old Kidane, was one of the many children who was following the works of Hugh. Though the two didn't have same color skin, speak the same language or share the same culture, they formed an extraordinary friendship that endures to this day. "I had no idea, neither did he, what would become of our friendship" said Hugh. That visit to Shinnara changed the life of Hugh and those benefited from that school, such as Kidane. It was one of many bonds that formed that day, **September 21, 1963**, as it was *the beginning of Lalmba, a non-profitable organization* founded by Downey to serve the poorest of the poor in Africa.

That school of Shinnara in the 70s transferred to a better a better place, and in the 80s the Brothers of the Christian schools have taken the responsibility of running the school at the request of the Parish. Hence, they built a new school consisting of elementary and junior level.



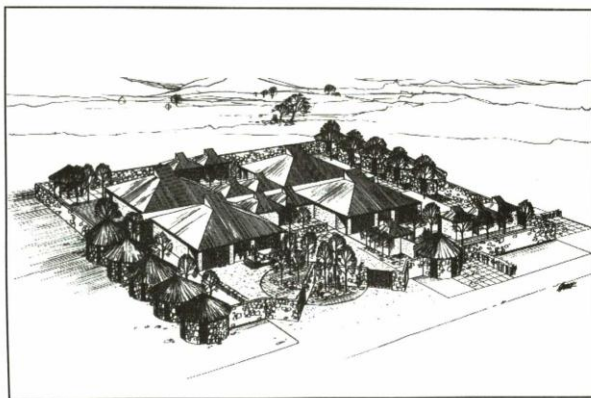
November 20, 1965 Marty and Hugh wed, and landed in Asmara January 1966. (the picture is not of that time)



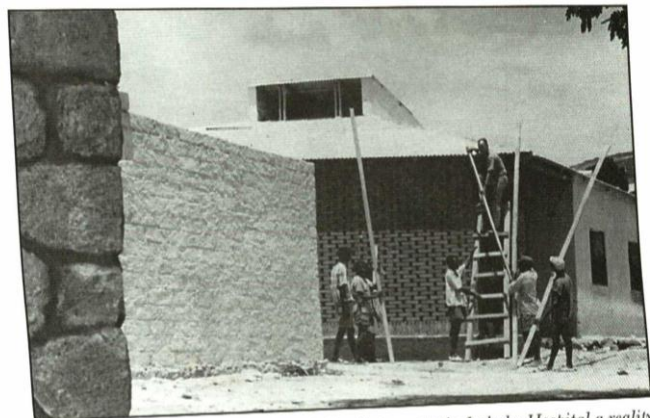
What made Hugh and Marty in fond of Keren:

- They considered themselves Eritreans, though never called themselves Eritreans.
- The grief they shared, the war they saw, the hardship, the poverty...etc.

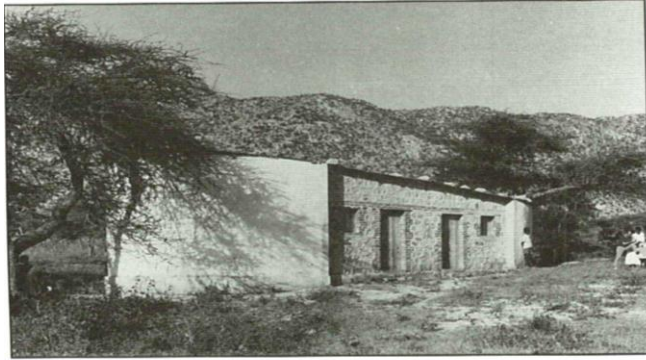
That experience inspired to build a hospital in 1968 in Keren,



Architect's rendering of the Lalmba Hospital, constructed in 1969-70

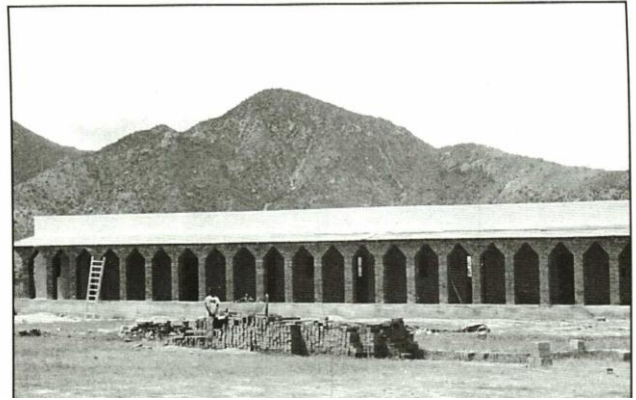


Volunteers and Professionals work side by side to make the Lalmba Hospital a reality (Keren, Eritrea 1970)

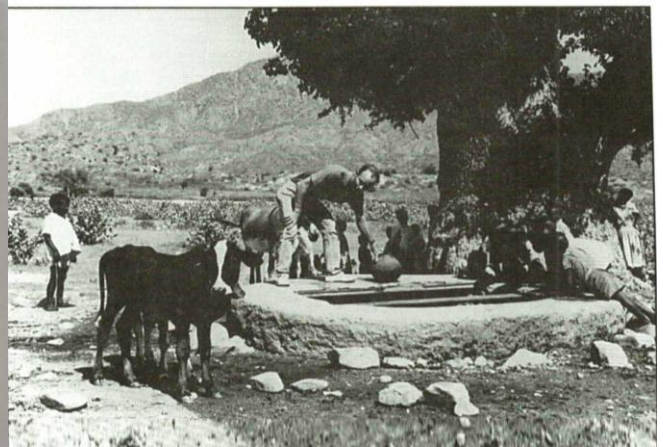


This building is one of seven village schools built by the Lalmba Association (Bogu, Eritrea 1964)

The Lalmba school for Orphans,



School in Boggu,



School and a well in Ghilas.

Since its founding, Lalmba has supported countless children orphaned by Africa's AIDS crisis, and treated many patients. Lalmba is empowering Africans to care for their own needs.

After 50 years of service, the Downey have turned the operations of Lalmba over to once missionaries Jeff and Hillary James who run it from its Arvada headquarters. "God has given different road for doing his work" Deacon Downey said, "and I have every reason to believe it will continue".