Peter Steiner Recalls Experiences In Africa

For Peter Steiner, returning home to Ann Arbor in the fall after an experience abroad was like finally waking up from a haunting dream.

A professor of economics and law at The University of Michigan, Steiner made headlines last June when he helped gain the release of four hostages—one Dutch student and three American students from Stanford University—who had been kidnapped by rebels in central Africa.

The students had been studying priate behavior at a research center operated by British anthropologist Jane Goodall in western Tanzania. The rebels, from neighboring Zaire (the former Belgian Congo), sought ransom money, firearms, and publicity for their effort to overthrow the Zaire government.

A visiting professor for a year at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, Steiner was asked by the parents of one of the students, Barbara Smuts of Ann Arbor, and by Stanford University to represent the students' interests in the politically-tangled affair.

"For nearly a month, gaining release of the hostages became the sole focus of my life," the 53-year-old professor recalled in an interview in Ann Arbor. "I lived with the issue day and night. It was like a chess game, trying to determine what was in the minds of the PRP (the Popular Revolutionary Party of the Congo) and what their next move would be."

"I now find it hard to purge myself of an involvement like that," Steiner continued. "If the students had been killed, it would have been a nightmare I would carry with me for the rest of my life. Thank God it didn't turn out that way."

As it did turn out, the four hostages were released unharmed at different times during the summer. Steiner played a key role in attempting to establish contact with the kidnappers following the release of one of the hostages, Miss Smuts, who carried a message bearing a list of the rebels' demands.

According to Steiner, the rebels asked for a ransom of $500,000 in U.S. currency or 200,000 British pounds; they made a detailed list of American and Belgian firearms which they wanted; and they asked for the release of two named PRP rebels and several unnamed rebels who were being held in Tanzania at the request of the government of Zaire.

Steiner also notes an "implicit" demand for worldwide publicity. The rebels, he recalled, wished to portray themselves "not as bandits but as a socialist revolutionary movement working for the benefit of the people of the Congo."

It was agreed that the final settlement would remain secret, but Steiner—knowledgeable of the settlement but not a participant in the final negotiations—points out that there have been newspaper reports estimating the size of the ransom at $40,000 to $400,000.

"It is clear that a sizeable monetary ransom was agreed upon, and that it was raised by private sources," said Steiner. "This is all I can say.

"The official position of the U.S. government is that, while it cannot raise the ransom money itself, it will not prevent private parties from raising such money to gain release of a U.S. citizen," according to the U-M professor.

"It is also clear," Steiner said, "that the kidnappers got the release of some of the PRP prisoners held in Tanzania. But it is apparent they could not have gotten the arms they asked for. There is no way the government would consent to an agreement to provide arms to such a rebel group."

Finally, he noted, the PRP seems to have succeeded in gaining the worldwide publicity, which was their motive for kidnapping Americans or Europeans instead of Africans. "They recognized that African hostages would not serve to focus world attention on them."

After Miss Smuts' release, Steiner was authorized by the U.S. Embassy to fly to the city of Bujumbura in the small, neutral country of Burundi to seek contact with the PRP who were holding the hostages in a camp in eastern Zaire. Steiner chose Bujumbura as his base of operations because of its geographic location between Tanzania and Zaire and its political neutrality, which he hoped would lure the PRP into negotiating there.

A local Catholic missionary, a fisherman and others familiar with the jungle area were dispatched by Steiner to travel down Lake Tanganyika into Zaire, seeking to establish direct contact with the PRP. Meanwhile, Steiner's presence as an American negotiator was made known in local political circles and through radio messages carried over Voice of America, the British network, and in other broadcasts.

After nearly three weeks without direct contact with the PRP, Steiner returned to Nairobi to visit with his wife and children. Surprisingly, while Steiner was in Nairobi, PRP representatives chose to travel some 750 miles by railroad through politically-hostile Tanzania, arriving at the American Embassy in Dar es Salaam where they announced they were ready to negotiate.

Steiner believes the PRP made this daring appearance in Dar es Salaam because they sought maximum publicity by negotiating directly at the American Embassy, and also because they believed Burundi, despite its official neutrality, was too closely aligned politically with the government of Zaire.

One unforeseen result of the PRP's tactics was a U.S. State Department reprimand and eventual reassignment of W. Beverley Carter, U.S. ambassador to Tanzania. Carter was criticized for using the U.S. Embassy as a negotiating place, for granting political asylum to the rebels in order to carry out negotiations, and for using the U.S. diplomatic pouch in the delivery of the ransom money.

Steiner maintains there was no justification for removing Carter from his post. "Ambassador Carter was reprimanded for playing a larger role in the negotiations than is proper for a U.S. official," said Steiner, "but it seems to me that he had no alternative."

"It was a total surprise when the PRP showed up at the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, traveling some 750
miles across Tanzania and risking arrest. This came after nearly a month of our attempting to get in touch with them. Under these circumstances, it would have been unthinkable for Carter to expel them from the embassy and to refuse to allow negotiations with them."

Steiner speculates that Carter's reassignment from Tanzania was basically a "political move," designed to ease U.S.-Zaire relations which had been strained by the kidnapping.

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<th>Zaire President Mobutu Sese Seko, Steiner noted, sought to ignore the kidnapping and stifle any publicity about the PRP. &quot;But this would have been an impossible stance for the United States, since three U.S. citizens were involved,&quot; Steiner pointed out. &quot;In the end, I think the U.S. chose to use Ambassador Carter as a scapegoat.&quot; —Harley Schwadron</th>
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<td>Law Alumnae Directory Offered By Women Students</td>
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<td>If you need to know where to write to Her Majesty, Queen Juliana of The Netherlands, the Women Law Students Association at the U-M can help you. The Queen is listed along with other members of the Law School Class of 1952 in a directory of Michigan women law graduates published recently by the association. More than 400 alumnae are listed according to year of graduation and</td>
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**alumni notes**

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** A more complete listing of items about other law alumni is carried in the summer issue of Law Quadrangle Notes. Alumni information should be sent to Prof. Roy F. Poffitt, Director, Law School Relations, Hutchins Hall, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48109.

**Robert A. Manchester II,** a 1927 graduate of the Law School, has been selected as president of Rotary International for 1976-77. A member and past president of the Youngstown, Ohio, Rotary Club, Manchester will assume the presidency of the international organization on July 1. He has held many posts with Rotary International during the past 20 years, and has been active in local church and civic affairs. He served as mayor of Canfield, Ohio, where he resides, for eight years, and as solicitor of the village for 10 years. Manchester is a partner in the Youngstown law firm of Harrington, Huxley & Smith. He received both the A.B. and a law degree from Michigan.

**Hobart Taylor, Jr.** (right), a 1943 U-M law graduate, is the donor of two outdoor sculptures dedicated recently at the U-M's Bentley Library, which houses the Michigan Historical Collections. In photo, Taylor talks with Richard Hunt, well-known sculptor who executed the works. The sculptures, titled "Peregrine Section" (pictured here) and "Historical Circle," are both of weathering steel. Taylor, a Washington, D.C., attorney, commissioned and donated the sculptures as a memorial to his father, Hobart Taylor, Sr., a rancher, businessman, and political figure in Texas who died in 1972 at the age of 76. Before receiving his law degree from Michigan, the younger Taylor graduated from Prairie View College in 1939 and earned a master's degree from Howard University in 1941.