

**SHORT STORIES OF
WEST AFRICA
LONG REMEMBERED**

by

Bill and Gerry Nicks

Missionary experiences over a period of 33 years

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Preface

We wondered what would be an appropriate title for this book. We considered, "Our Memoirs," but we felt that might imply we thought we had done some great things. We feel our lives have been ordinary, but we have been blessed with fine churches and Christian individuals who supported us in West Africa for many years.

We agree with J. C. Choate that these experiences need to be written down for future generations who need encouragement and instruction in their preparation for service in the foreign mission fields. Furthermore, the average Christian of our day can find inspiration from the reading of experiences of missionaries.

A book I have written earlier, **Missions and the Message of the Master**, published by J. C. Choate, was designed to prepare missionaries and students in college. However, this book has a wider audience in mind, and a different purpose, although students in college may find it helpful. Everyone is interested in stories, thus "Short Stories of West Africa Long Remembered." Although it is in short story form, it in a sense contains a historical account of our association with the African field over a period of 33 years, from 1955-1988.

Furthermore, preachers look for illustrations. We have given an illustration index which may give some material usable in sermons. We have tried to combine mission experiences with Biblical principles as well as give some

historical data regarding our work and that of our fellow-workers, both African and American. May the Lord bless all of our efforts and theirs for the glory of God in Christ.

Bill and Gerry Nicks
Jupiter-Tequesta Church of Christ.
11701 SE 171st Street
Tequesta, FL 33469

Note: Gerry and I hope you not only obtain profit from reading this book, but that you will receive genuine enjoyment. All stories are written by Bill Nicks, unless otherwise indicated.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the following churches. We thank God for their fellowship in the furtherance of the gospel:

Claxton Church of Christ, Powell, TN

Karns Church of Christ, Knoxville, TN

Cox Boulevard Church of Christ, Sheffield, AL

Proctor Street Church of Christ, Port Arthur, TX

Savannah Church of Christ, Savannah, TN

Brewton Church of Christ, Brewton, AL

The Publisher's Statement

The Lord's work in Nigeria, along with other West African countries, has been some of the most fruitful in modern times. One cannot read about it, or visit there and see it firsthand, without becoming excited. I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to do both, and this has prompted my wife and me to become involved there through the printing of much needed literature.

A number of brethren have done missionary work in Nigeria. Many have been exemplary but none more so, I think, than Bill and Gerry Nicks.

I first became acquainted with the Nicks family through our gospel papers. They worked for different congregations here in the States before they entered the Nigerian mission field in 1955. Later they moved to Liberia to continue their service to the African people. Although they have been back in the States for several years, they have continued to visit those countries from time to time to preach and to encourage the local brethren. I have admired them and their work, their dedication, and their continued influence for good. For the past number of years, Bro. Nicks has worked with the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, Tennessee as a teacher and director.

Three years ago, Bro. Nicks honored us by allowing us to publish his book, **Missions and the Message of the**

Master. We are thrilled, now, to add **Short Stories of West Africa Long Remembered** to the growing body of materials written about the efforts of missionaries of the Lord's church.

This volume is a treasury of stories and pictures about the Lord's work in Nigeria and Liberia, about the many American missionaries and local brethren who helped to make the cause of Christ there the success story it has become. Surely this book will be valued by all who have been a part of that effort in the past, as well as by those who will come on the scene in future years.

As far as I know, this is the first major book about the Lord's church in these particular countries. Surely it will be the means of creating a greater interest in missions in that part of the world. We therefore offer our heartfelt thanks to Bill and Gerry Nicks for their work and for taking the time to write this story so that we might share along with them and others all of the wonderful things which have been done there to the glory of God.

J. C. Choate
Winona, MS
Sept. 1, 1997

Introduction

Throughout the past centuries, even as far back as historical records exist, numerous wars have been fought within or between nations. The Bible, as well as secular writers, record these horrible encounters by mankind. All of them seem to result in a great loss of human life and destruction of property. Following each war there were many drastic changes brought about in the lives of those who survived.

World War II (1941-1945) was one of these wars which we well remember. It was responsible for dramatic changes on a world-wide scale. Extensive changes were brought about here and abroad which affected the lives of many, many people. References herein are made primarily to spiritual changes rather than physical.

This war contributed to the spread of the gospel to a number of foreign countries. Some of our service men, stationed in these countries, were quite active in preaching and teaching the word of God to the native people. They converted many of them and were able to establish congregations of the Lord's people in many places.

One place in particular in the United States which made a significant contribution to the spread of the Gospel was Oak Ridge, Tennessee. This city "carved out of the wilds" is located along the Clinch River near Knoxville. Construction was started by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in the early 1940's. It was built for the sole pur-

pose of developing and producing materials in support of the war effort. Thousands of people were required to work on this project. They came in large numbers from every state in the Union. The city of Oak Ridge, by the end of the war, had grown in population to approximately 75,000. Other thousands moved to, or lived in, local communities or towns. Many of these people were also employed in Oak Ridge.

Among those who came to Oak Ridge were a few Christians who set about immediately to seek ways to organize and promote church activities there. By 1945 there were four congregations of the church established in the city. They first began to meet in school rooms and other places made available by the Army Management organizations. Later, land was assigned or purchased by these groups. Soon thereafter they were worshipping in their own buildings. All of these congregations were motivated by a great spark of evangelism and set about to spread the "Good News" to others, both in the city of Oak Ridge, and in the nearby towns and communities. Truly, the area was "white to the harvest" (John 4:35).

This is where I first met Bill and Gerry Nicks. They came to work with the Highland View Congregation in Oak Ridge. They, with others from Highland View, as well as Christians from other congregations started to go outside Oak Ridge where they conducted tent meetings, taught home studies and spoke to other gatherings. These activities led to the beginnings of many congregations of the Lord's people. One of these tent meetings led to the begin-

ning of the Karns congregation where I have served as an elder for about 27 years.

My wife, Della, and I came to Oak Ridge near the beginning of the project. We had attended worship services there from the time congregations were first started. Della was a member and had been since childhood. I was not a Christian at that time. My past teaching had not been such as to move me to obedience.

In 1950 we purchased property and built a home in Karns, about ten miles away. We moved to this new home from Oak Ridge. We continued to attend worship services in Oak Ridge.

In 1953 Bro. Nicks preached a series of lessons under a tent in our community. During this meeting he convinced me, from God's word, that I had no reasonable choice except to obey the Lord in baptism. He baptized me into Christ following one of the evening services. This event marks a turning point in my life.

A small nucleus of members, consisting of those who lived nearby and those who were converted during the tent meeting, began to meet on Sunday afternoons for worship and on Thursday evenings for Bible study. Arrangements were made to meet in the local school building. Bro. Nicks came out from Oak Ridge and preached for us at 3:00 p.m. each Sunday. He came also on Thursday evenings and taught our adult Bible class. We were nurtured by this arrangement for about one year. By this time we had purchased land and plans were made to construct our own meeting house.

Bill's and Gerry's missionary zeal led them to leave Oak Ridge in the early 1950's to prepare for a most unusual missionary effort in West Africa. Details of these efforts and many years of service as missionaries are brought to life in this book which is a moving account of their varied activities in Nigeria and Liberia over a period of several years.

Bill and Gerry are back in the States now, even though their hearts often turn to West Africa. They continue to work closely with the schools and the hospital which were established largely through their efforts.

Bill now preaches for the Claxton congregation. This congregation is just across the Clinch River from Oak Ridge. It is another one of the congregations which he helped to establish in the early 1950's. He is also a full-time teacher of Bible in the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions located in the Karns building and under the Karns eldership. In this work he continues the work that he loves and has done so well — teaching others to teach others the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I will close this introduction with a brief account of a trip of about three weeks which Della and I made with Bill and Gerry in 1982 to Nigeria and Liberia. We were privileged to visit the schools and the hospital which he had started. We also visited several congregations in the "bush" country and met many of his former students who were still preaching. It was heart-warming to us as we witnessed the love, respect, and admiration poured forth toward this missionary family by those whom they had

influenced many years before.

After reading this book you will understand why I consider the Nicks family one of the greatest in the history of modern evangelism. One question I will continue to ponder: Had it not been for World War II, coupled with God's wonderful providence, how could I ever be privileged to be a part of the evangelistic accomplishments of these two great servants of the Lord? May He continue to bless them with many more years of faithful service.

H.D. Duncan, Elder
Karns Church of Christ
Knoxville, TN

In Appreciation

Our profound gratitude is expressed to Jay Morris for designing the book cover and to long-time friend and brother Harold Duncan for writing the introduction.

Bill and Gerry Nicks

Nigerian Hodge-Podge

by Bill Nicks

Pineapples, paw-paws, peanuts and puddles,
Rain on a tin roof, language befuddles;
Carrots and cauliflower, cabbages and cocoa,
Natives at my doorstep, clapping drives me loco.

Bananas and beans, bees, bats and bugs,
Line ants and green plants, hospitals and drugs;
Houses and horns, hoes, handles that vary,
Hoing up cassava, to cook a pot of ghari.

Aleanders, alligators, bougainvillea, and bags,
Made out of raffia, with designs like our flags;
Frogs, fowls, fish, and goats running fast,
To reach a little bush path, then you are past.

Thatch huts and mud blocks, white ants and cannas,
Plenty of palm fronds, and banana leaves to fan us;
Coconuts and oranges, plenty ground nut stew,
So many things the Lord wants us to do.

(Poem's unrhythmic, any fool can plainly see,
But God up in heaven knows that we love thee.)

Dedicated to Jeanie Langford, my daughter, on her
25th birthday, January 20, 1973, who had previously
served with her husband as a missionary in Liberia, W. A.

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Part One

Nigeria

Chapter One

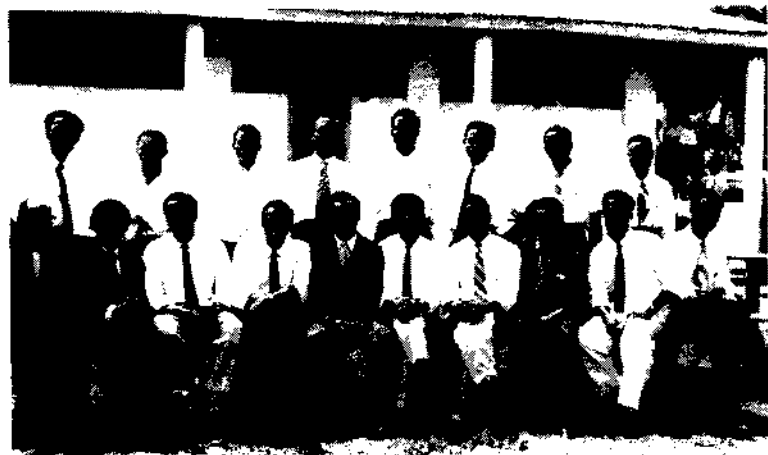
Nigeria, C.A.O. Essien and God's Providence

Nigeria, so far as pure New Testament Christianity is concerned, is a thrilling story. It all started when a church in Tennessee, the Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ in Nashville, worked in conjunction unknowingly with a church in Cleburne, Texas, where Reuel Lemmons taped sermons that were sent to air over the station at Lourenco Marques, Mozambique in Portuguese East Africa. The radio waves went past Nigeria and other African countries and into Germany, where a pen pal of C. (for constable) A.O. Essien was listening. It happened that Essien had asked a woman in a letter in English if she knew of an English Bible correspondence course which was being offered. She had heard the radio program of brother Lemmons, at the end of which was offered the free Bible course put out by Lawrence Avenue. At that time, Gordon Turner was the preacher and handled the correspondence course. Brother Essien, who had attended Hope Waddell College, a Presbyterian school in Calabar, sent for the course. This was the beginning of the work, for he began to preach the gospel after being baptized into Christ. We did not know it at the time but he was a polygamist. We believe he gave it up after brother Howard Horton moved to Ikot Usen, his home village, as a missionary. It

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is our understanding he had established some 60 churches in Calabar province before our missionaries arrived. God's providence had used him!

When my family and I arrived in 1955, I began to live and work with the school at Ukpom, along with Lucien Palmer, Wendell Broom and Burney Bawcom, the latter two living at Ikot Usen, about 15 miles away, the home of brother Essien. One day, brother Essien asked me to go with him on a week's missionary tour to the churches in Akpabuyo, which was located across the Cross River, beyond Calabar. To get to Calabar then, we had to cross from Oron on the Launch (ferry) with our car. It took about one and a half hours to reach Calabar by ferry from Oron. It was always a pleasant ride. Nowadays, one may cross a bridge to get to Calabar, and the Launch, a ship of the Elder Dempster Lines, has ceased to operate. After



Graduates at Onicha Ngwa Bible College, 1958.

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reaching Calabar, we signed in at the British Rest House, where we could stay in comfort. Each morning they would fix our lunch, which we would take with us and be gone to Akpabuyo all day on our preaching tour. This we did all week long encouraging several of the Akpabuyo churches. We took along tracts and old copies of journals which they were eager to receive.

Each day we would cross in my car, a Chevrolet pickup truck, over a ferry on the Cross River, which was pole-pushed across. It only took a few minutes to reach the other side, but we often had to wait 30 or 40 minutes for it to return to take us over. Among the members of the churches in Akpabuyo were some very intelligent people who asked good and honest Bible questions. I remember



Steven Okoronkwo, Gerry Nicks, Daphne Okoronkwo looking at Calabar church building, Cross Rivers State. Pictured is the new van purchased by funds donated by American churches for Nigerian Christian Seminary.



Lucien Palmer, Marshall Keeble, at C.A.O. Essiens' grave, Ikot Usen.

using some charts which explained in simple terms some of the great Bible principles, such as how to rightly divide the Bible, and a simple lesson on "The Hem of His Garment," which illustrated His Spirit, His Gospel, His Blood, His Church, His Baptism, His Supper, His Day, etc.

Although I haven't been back to Akpabuyo since that time in 1956 with brother Essien, I have confidence that the churches there are growing in strength and in numbers. I had the pleasure of visiting the church in Calabar in 1986, and the preacher showed us around a large building, and the bulletin board showed they were having nearly 1,000 in regular attendance.

From a small acorn a mighty oak grows. From the small seeds that missionaries planted in the early 1950's, and nurtured regularly by the Nigerian preachers we had

trained, and by fellow-American missionaries in the meantime, we now have in the whole of Nigeria some 1,000 churches with over 100,000 members.

Brother C.A.O. Essien died of malaria in 1960, shortly before my family and I returned home from our first five years in Nigeria. He felt he could combat it by packing his head with mud, as some attempted with their home remedy, but malaria, alas, goes to the brain without some quinine to combat it. One of our missionaries, Burney Bawcom, and another, John Featherstone, begged him to go to the hospital which he finally did, but it was too late. He soon passed away quietly. He held the respect of not only his Nigerian brethren but of his American brethren, who had worked diligently with him from 1950-1960 to promote pure New Testament Christianity.

I attended his funeral at Ikot Usen. While there I had a strange experience. A member of the church in Ikot Usen handed me a letter, and to my surprise it was from C.A.O. Essien, the last letter he ever wrote. Just before he died, he wrote, hoping to get well soon, and asked me if I would go with him in my car on a missionary tour to the north. He said his heart went out to the Moslems of the north and he wanted us to go there and preach to them. "A prince and a great man had fallen."

Our First Missionaries

Eldred Echols and Boyd Reese made initial visits to Nigeria in response to correspondence with C.A.O. Essien, the policeman (constable). Later Eldred came back to spend about six months with brother Essien. However, the first missionaries to go for a two-year period were Howard and Mildred Horton, and Jimmy and Rosalee Johnson. They built houses of block in Ikot Usen, which were later occupied by succeeding missionary families: the Elvis Huffards, the Burney Bawcoms, the Eugene Pedens, the Wendell Brooms, the Tommy Keltons, the Joe Crosses, the John Beckloffs, the Leonard Johnsons, the John Featherstones, and June Hobbs. Each of these were engaged in mission work among churches, as well as teaching at the Bible Training College, located at Ukpom Abak, about 15 miles away.

The Howard Hortons were highly motivated and effective missionaries. They were supported largely by Union Avenue Church of Christ in Memphis and Lawrence Avenue in Nashville. They truly showed love for the Nigerian people in many ways, and their humility and willingness to help others made them in turn loved and respected by the Nigerians. They served from 1952-54, returning home in the Spring of 1954. We were thinking seriously of entering the Nigerian mission field at that time, so Gerry

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and I visited them in Nashville where they were working with the Lawrence Avenue church. They showed us many pictures, told of the great need for other workers, and encouraged us to go. Howard emphasized the need for someone to undertake the project of spearheading a move into Iboland. He explained that the Ibos were the "Jews of West Africa," and that they were good traders travelling to many areas, as well as being bright, ambitious, and receptive to the gospel.

Our work among the Ibos was largely the result of the visit we paid the Hortons, for we left that fall after raising the necessary funds. Howard travelled to a few places and helped me to raise the funds for our travel, car, and other necessary expenses. He said I would need \$10,000 in our work fund, in addition to our regular salary, which was taken over by Procter Street in Port Arthur, Texas. I thought the \$10,000 sounded like a million dollars, and



Baptizing scene, Nigeria, 1959.

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thought it would be a difficult, if not impossible, task to raise it. But in two months time after we resigned the work at Highland View in Oak Ridge, little by little, the fund grew to the necessary amount. God does all things well. When we trust in Him, and believe it can be accomplished, if it is for His Cause, not our selfish desire, He will see that it is done. And may all praise and honor be to Him.

“Familiarity Breeds Contempt”?

This is an old saying which is not always true. It depends on the ones with whom we are familiar. When we first came to Nigeria, we were forced to live with another family. The Lucien Palmers already had their house in Ukpom, so they took us in. We will forever be grateful to them, not only for this, but for compatibility in trying circumstances. The house had only two bedrooms, but the Palmers had two children, Patsy and Eddie, and we had three, Becky, Jeanie and Sue. The four Palmers occupied one bedroom, Gerry and I the other, and we curtained off a small part of the living room to make a bedroom for our three daughters.

Ida Palmer was exceedingly agreeable. She asked Gerry to prepare the menus for our meals one week, and she would prepare it the next. We all ate together at the table fixed by either one. Asuquo was their cook, and Etim, our cook, was his assistant. Mfon served as house-boy. Gerry and Ida both kept busy teaching their respective children via the Calvert system, a job within itself.

Lucien and I would both buy groceries of things our families liked. At the end of the month each would present the tickets for what he had bought. If one had purchased more than the other, we would share the difference, thus making each of us spend an equal amount. I suppose we



Gerry and Ida Palmer, Ukpom, 1957.

got the better end of the deal since we had three children and they had only two, but the Palmers never complained.

Lucien had followed Elvis Huffard as manager of Nigerian Christian Schools, started under the auspices of the Church of Christ. This was in the day when Volunteer Agencies were allowed to

start and maintain schools on behalf of the government. They cooperated with the Government Education Department, located then at Calabar, since it was Calabar Province. We had about 20 schools at the time, and graduates of our Preacher Training School could be hired to teach Bible. Christians could be hired for other subjects. In addition, Lucien taught at and managed, on behalf of Lawrence Avenue, the Nigerian Bible College located at Ukpom. We lived on the compound of the school, and later Wendell Broom and I pooled our resources to build a house on the other side for our dwelling. Joe Cross later lived in that house after we moved into Iboland.

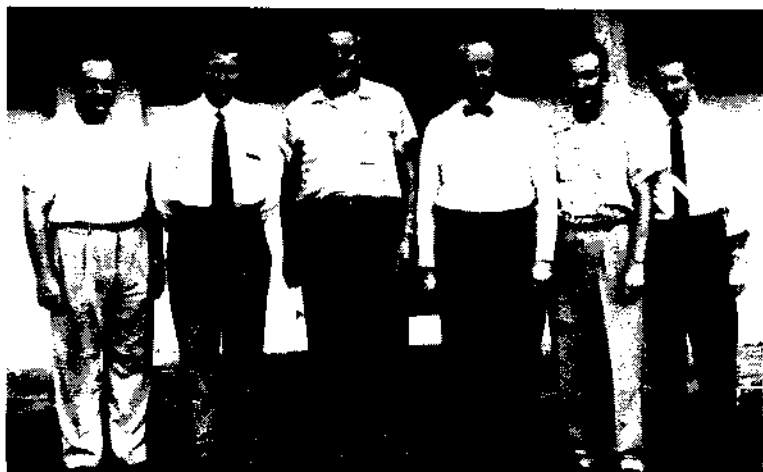
If people are brothers, they can endure close living quarters, although it is not the ideal situation. When missionaries are in a foreign land, they often must endure more difficult and trying situations than in our land of plenty. The cause we serve demands that we be willing to endure hardships.

We had the pleasure of working with the Palmers at Michigan Christian College from 1962-65, where Lucien served as Dean and, after Otis Gatewood left, as President. He has been active for many years with African Christian Schools Foundation and has been instrumental in starting a Clinic in Ikot Usen, located about eight miles from Uyo. We hope much good will come from Palmer Clinic as well as the Nigerian Christian College at Ukpom.

Chapter Four

Fellow Workers in the Lord

To me, one of the blessings of being a foreign missionary was the privilege of working with people of "like precious faith." Some of these dear people I had never met until our paths crossed overseas. Gerry and I had never met the Lucien Palmers, the Jim Masseys, the Rees Bryants, the Leonard Johnsons, the Doug Lawyers, the Joe Crosses, the Tommy Keltons, the Johnny Rosses,



Nigerian Missionaries in the 1950's: J. Finney, B. Nicks,
E. Peden, L. Palmer, S. Hall, T. Kelton.

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the John Featherstones, the Burney Bawcoms, the John Beckloffs, the Sewell Halls nor the Leslie Diestelkamps until our work together in Nigeria. We had known Wendell Broom, Eugene Peden, James Finney and their families due to our schooling together at Freed-Hardeman College in the early 1940's.

We worked more closely with some of these than others, so I will comment only on those. This does not mean that the others did not do good work. but simply that I knew less about their efforts than the others. We were closely associated with the Palmers, Brooms, Bawcoms and Finneys on our first tour in the 1950's.

Elsewhere we have written about our fine association with the Palmers, having lived in the same house for about ten months. We stayed about five months with the Finneys in a new house, which was constructed by a barefooted



Jim and Joyce Massey, Carol, Beth and Anne Marie
at Onicha Ngwa, 1958.



Glenn and Dee Martin, Glenda and Jeff, Ukpom, 1959.

contractor. Wendell Broom and I raised the money for this home. Later, the Finneys moved up with us to Iboland, after we had secured property and built a house. They built another house on the same 15 acres at Onicha Ngwa. Eventually, six school buildings and three missionary houses with three servants' houses were erected. James Finney and I taught in the "palaver houses" in the village at first, until our school buildings could be raised.

James had a different view regarding church cooperation and orphan homes, so he sold his house to Rees Bryant, who occupied the house next, and gave his money to Leslie Diestelkamp who had moved from our area to Lagos, and who held his same views. Sewell Hall, who had worked with us in the Bible College on his first tour,

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worked with the Lagos group on his second tour due to his change of conviction regarding the work of the church.

Eugene Peden had preceded us but came back for a second tour at the close of our first. For a while he worked with us in Iboland but moved back to Ukpom and worked in the Bible College there. Gene would also very actively preach in the “bush” and was a source of strength to the churches as well as the preachers. Wendell Broom also did much preaching in Nigeria and took a group to the Cameroun, which was the beginning of that work. It was a joy to work with these men both in the Bible College and in fellowship in preaching the gospel in many places. It was this militant preaching that pressed the gospel into many villages of Nigeria. These people proved to be much more receptive than those in the large cities and later, as they moved to the cities, became the backbone of the church. This proved to be wiser than if we had moved first



John and Marilyn Featherstone and
Johnny and Mari Lyn, 1959.

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to the city and then preached to the bush people.

John Featherstone and Leonard Johnson followed Elvis Huffard in working with the Voluntary Agency school system, explained in other places. Upon entering the country, we had promised to the government of Nigeria that we would not only assist in teaching religion but also in the educational development and in the helping of their sick people by establishing clinics or hospitals. We fulfilled all of these promises, since we felt they were also a mark of Christianity for us to be involved in these but especially in preaching the gospel. All of them were saving souls, and we only practiced them as we felt they contributed to such.

Jim Massey was one of the hardest workers with us in the Iboland area. Jim not only taught in the Bible College daily but took students with him in his little "bug"



Bill, John Beckloff, Becky Gross and Melody.



Myra and David Underwood and Davey and Bryan.

(Volkswagen) on many appointments. He helped the work tremendously by his printing of needed works, such as his work on "The Organization of the Church," and on "The Cessation of Miracles." His wife, Joyce, was a fine helper, and they had three small girls, a family feature we held in common. Jim worked hard with preachers and handled the fund for evangelists, a fund sent to us by churches in the United States to help preachers who were doing good but were not being adequately supported.

Rees Bryant was also a hard worker. Rees, Jim and I worked closely for a time in 1959 and 1960 at the Bible College. Rees was also zealous to go on appointments as well as teaching at the Bible College. He and Jim worked well together after our departure in 1960. Patti Bryant, daughter of F. W. Mattox, was a good helper, and they had three precious children at the time (later four), which occu-

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ped her time. They worked hard to encourage the beginning of the hospital and Rees later became the first president of African Christian Hospital Foundation of which Glenn Boyd is now the president. This group of doctors and others raise funds and supervise on behalf of Nigerian Christian Hospital, and other benevolent works in other countries.

Johnny Ross was a former coach-teacher-mechanic, a man who is extremely useful on the mission field. He came to the Trade-Tech school at Oyubia-Oron, which the government later took over. Johnny and wife, Sue, who gave birth to a son at Nigerian Christian Hospital, were pleasant and useful workers.

Burney Bawcom and his wife, Luanna, were also effective workers in Nigeria. He not only taught at the Bible College at Ukpom but did a great deal of bush preaching



P.T. and Evelyn Menefee and daughter.

and encouraging preachers. They had three sons, now grown. We were saddened to learn not long ago of the death of Luanna. She was a fine Christian lady. Her book, **Journey With Joy**, has been read by many of you who will read this book. No one can give a woman's view of missionary work better than a woman. That is why Gerry is writing with me in this book.

Joe Cross and his wife, Dorothy, also did a good work in Nigeria. Joe was associated with the work at Ukpom, near Abak, in his first tour and was there when the high school was being built across from the Bible Training College. We were living at Onicha Ngwa and would often visit the Crosses, and they would visit us. I remember one



Rees and Patti Bryant and children, Sarah Jo and Billy Rees, at airport, Port Harcourt.

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time Joe and I played golf together at the Aba golf course. Joe was of a calm and humble disposition which was winning to the African people. He came back to Nigeria in 1974 to replace me when we returned to the states. But Joe became ill and could not finish out his tour on that occasion. He stayed only four or five months.

Doug Lawyer and his wife, Charla, also did a good work, although I was not present when he came. He raised money to build one of the missionary houses at Onicha Ngwa. Those who worked with him report a good work by him. I was able to visit on a short tour when he was there, and later in the early 1970's he came back for a campaign to help in the work.

One of the missionaries that has spent as much or more time in Nigeria as any is John Beckloff, along with his wife, Dottie. They are even at this time (1989) working at the school at Ukpom. I had a very nice visit with them in December of 1988, and they were still doing their usual good work. John and Dottie also spent some years in Sierra Leone and have encouraged all fields in West Africa. They are stable and reliable people. For a while after John returned from his first tour to Nigeria, he served as editor of the *Christian Chronicle*.

Dayton Keese did a good work in Enugu before the Civil war in the late 1960's. I was not present at the time, but know Dayton is a great preacher and good man. He visited back after the war and encouraged us in our work. He now teaches at Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas.

Another faithful missionary family who spent several years at Ukpom as teacher in the Bible College and preach-

er in the churches in the vicinity of Uyo was Glenn Martin, who now preaches in Dearborn, Michigan. Along with his fine wife, Dee, they helped greatly to strengthen the work at Ukpom and the churches in that area. They had with them in those days their two children, Glenda and Jeff, in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Both of their children are now grown and married.

Our children will never forget the days they lived with their parents in a different land and culture. We do not believe they were deprived of anything but rather gained much both educationally and spiritually by such experiences in their childhood.

“Okorobeke,” Son of a White Man

His real name was Stephen Thomas Okoronkwo, and he was my right hand man in Nigeria. He was with me so much, the nationals called him “Okorobeke,” which means “son of a white man,” instead of Okoronkwo, which is “son of Nkwo.” I first met Stephen when he came to Ukpom-Abak, near Uyo, to the school where I was teaching in 1955 and 1956. His parents were Ibo people, but they had moved among the Efiks where Stephen had learned to speak both Ibo and Efik and even spoke sometimes in pidgin, a broken English understood by the uneducated. As he put it, “I blow Efik a while, then I change gears and blow Ibo. If they don’t savvy either one, I blow pidgin.”

When my family and I moved into Iboland to begin a school among the Ibo people and train their preachers, Stephen and his friend, Anike Udong, accompanied us. We lived in an abandoned District Officer’s house, where courts formerly were held in the bush. It had three houses, one being a mud house in which we slept, another mud house where our cook and house boy slept and cooked for us and a third which we used as a living and dining room and bath room. Baths were taken in a galvanized tub, and the commode consisted of a bucket, cleaned out each night by our watchnight. These were temporary but necessary,

while we were negotiating for land and building our concrete block house which would have more conveniences. Stephen and Anike lived in a mud house on land we were leasing on which to build the school at Onicha Ngwa. They were timekeepers for the workers who were making blocks for the house that would soon be built and later for workers on the house and school buildings. They would figure time and on payday would bring them to us for pay.

Stephen was well-respected by the villagers at Onicha



Stephen T. Okoronkwo
as a young man in 1958.

Ngwa where we had a fine congregation. He would often preach for them. They called on him to judge in cases of disputes. He had much common sense as well as being a good Bible student. Also, he possessed a charm seldom seen in a young man his age, which was 18 when he first came with us in 1957. He was

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always happy, and his cheerful disposition meant much to me and my family during some trying and lonely days in starting the school.

One day he went on an appointment with me, and on the way I ran over a small dog that ran in front of the car unexpectedly. On the way back, the owner of the dog stopped us demanding payment for his dog. He wanted an exaggerated sum, much more than the dog's worth, but, like the farmer's cow when hit by the train, always the most expensive of the lot. He kept repeating the phrase, "You killed my dog!" Stephen heard this several times and came back with this sharp reply: "Sir, we did not kill your dog!" The man repeated that we did kill his dog, that he knew it was our car that hit him for he saw it and "the dog is lying here dead." Stephen said, "We did not kill your dog. Your dog committed suicide!" This was, of course, the truth of the matter, but I don't think I would have had the presence of mind to say it so succinctly to this overheated dog owner. The man had no reply but simply walked away.

When many people came to our house after the school was built, asking us to take their sick ones to the Hospital, Stephen would go with me. Eventually they would learn to wake Stephen, who would in turn wake me in the middle of the night to take them. We took them either to Urua-Akpan, a bush Catholic Hospital, or to Aba township, both about the same distance, some 15 miles. Later, I taught Stephen to drive. It was a joke between us that while learning, he once drove the car into the bush. After learning, he would take them to the hospital. Sometimes while he was gone, I would get another call, and both of us



Douglas and Charla Lawyer and children.

would be kept busy. Other times, a third call would come, and while we were gone, Gerry would take them in another car borrowed from a fellow missionary.

On one occasion when Stephen was with me taking one lady to the Hospital, we picked up another also needing help. Stephen began laughing as we were travelling along, and I asked what was funny. He said, "One of the women said, 'my pain is worse than your pain!'" Of course, everyone thinks his troubles are greater than that of the other person. If we could really know the heart of others, we would probably see that their troubles really are worse than our own. I know the troubles of Africans often are greater than our own. We live in the most prosperous country in the world, yet so many of us complain. We should be of all people in the world most grateful for our rich blessings and freedom.

After I came home and began teaching at Michigan Christian College in 1962, I visited Nigeria again in 1963. Jim Massey was teaching at the Bible College at Onicha Ngwa doing a good work. Along with him were Doug Lawyer and Bill Curry, who also did good work. We talked about sending Stephen to school at Michigan Christian College, and this later took place in early 1964. Stephen became my student again, only this time in the United States. He later attended Oklahoma Christian College. After finishing, he wanted to go home, but the Nigerian civil war was still going on. Stephen moved to Pontiac, Michigan and began to work. He met and married a fine young lady from St. Ann, Jamaica, who also was working with IBM in Pontiac. Stephen was determined to convert Daphne Galloway, a member of the Anglican church, before he married her. He taught her the sweet story of salvation in Christ, and she was baptized in one of the churches in Pontiac. After the war was over, Stephen first came home to Nigeria, then Daphne followed him, where they have lived ever since. Daphne has made a good wife and has borne Stephen five children. In addition, they have taken care of Obioma and his younger brother, Ngoze (pronounced **in-go-zi**). These two are children of Tity (pronounced **Tee-Tee**), Stephen's younger sister, who was deaf and dumb. She is a story all by herself, which I will relate next, a beautiful story.

Stephen became the principal of the school after the other missionaries and I had left. On his return to the school after the war, he and I had the pleasure of working together again, only this time he was the principal and I was his assistant, a reversal of roles. But people who love

each other and work well together don't have jealousies; they are only interested in getting the job done well and teaching students. I had realized my goal, because it was a maxim among us, "we will work ourselves out of a job, by training the nationals to take over." When we train nationals properly, they will be able to take it over themselves and carry on the work long after we have gone back to our homeland.

Stephen is one in whom I place a great deal of confidence as a man who loves the truth, his fellow man and the Lord. He has done outstanding work as a principal of the school during times of crises. He had to move the school because of the threat to the lives of himself and his family and his students on March 2, 1988. The school has been relocated in Aba, where it is doing even greater good than at Onicha Ngwa, though it was a great loss of property built up over the years. However, lives are much more valuable than buildings, no matter how materially valuable.

Brother Norman Rhodes, who directs the World Radio, states that Stephen is doing a good work as preacher for the program over the station at Owerri, which they sponsor. I can testify to that fact, since in the past few years, in short visits back to Nigeria, I have heard some of his programs. Many are listening, and many are obeying the gospel as a result. Each visit, Stephen would ask me, his old friend, to speak on the program, introducing me as his brother, friend and former "master." The latter word comes from "headmaster," their word for the principal and teacher of a school. Gerry was called "Madam."

A Lovely Deaf and Dumb Christian Lady

We first met Tity (pronounced Tee-Tee) Okoronkwo in 1958, when she came to live on the campus of the school, newly established at Onicha Ngwa, near Aba, Nigeria. Although deaf and dumb, she was a very bright girl of about 12 years of age. She was Stephen Okoronkwo's younger sister and, like her brother, she was of a cheerful disposition. The only reason she could not talk was because no one had taught her. She could not hear, but if she had been trained at that early age, like



Our girls playing with Tity, standing in left swing.



Tity (TEE-TEE) Okoronkwo, 1958.

Helen Keller, she could have learned to talk. Our daughters played with her in the swings. Becky, Jeanie and Susie loved Tity, as did all of us. They taught her to say words like “paw-paw,” a fruit that grew in our yard on a high tree. It was easy for her to duplicate words with a labial sound, like “mma,” the Ibo word for a woman. However, no one ever took the time or trouble to really teach her to speak fluently, so she spent her life as a mute, but she was far from “dumb” in the ordinary sense of the word.

She cooked and cleaned house for Stephen, performing many tasks of the household. Her mother had evidently taught her well. In the last days of the Civil War in Nigeria (1967-70), Tity and her mother were travelling, with Tity’s two young sons, Obioma and Ngoze, when the lorry (truck) driver panicked at approaching Federal soldiers. He lost control of the truck and it was wrecked, turning

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over and killing Stephen's and Tity's mother. Tity and the two young sons were injured, and bore scars from the accident. Tity was never married, but during and immediately at the close of the war, she was "commandeered" by some soldiers. A helpless mute could not cry out for help. Her two children were the result of lustful soldiers who took advantage of her. But she loved and cared for those boys, who are now grown Christian men. However much we despise what the soldiers did, God brought good out of evil, for the boys brought much joy to Tity in her short life of about 40 years.

Her life was cut short when, on March 2, 1988, a gang of terrorists from a bordering village made a cowardly



Tity Okoronkwo and children, Ngoze and Obioma, Onicha Ngwa 1970.

attack on the school, using automatic weapons. They killed Tity and her cousin, a contractor who had just finished the new girls' dormitory for the school. He was decapitated, and it is not known how Tity died, since her body was never found. Two students also died in the attack, making four who were martyred on that fateful day. The terrorists also vandalized Stephen's house and carried away most of his household goods. Stephen and his family, along with several students, had barricaded themselves in one of the bedrooms and were fortunate to have escaped. Perhaps because Tity could not hear, she was not aware of the confusion, which happened so suddenly they did not have time to get her from the kitchen, which was adjacent to the house. She died in the line of duty, cooking supper for the family.

Because of our love for Tity, when Bill Walker and I visited in 1988 (November and December), some money which I had raised from individuals and churches was also given to the school in memory of these four martyrs who lost their lives. Also, we later sent a plaque to be placed on the wall of the school to memorialize those who died. It said, "In loving memory of (the four names), who were martyred at Onicha Ngwa in March, 1988. They will remain evergreen in our memory." The first name among them was Tity Okoronkwo. She will remain evergreen in my memory.

Included in this book is a report which was written by Bill Walker, my travelling companion and former school-mate, after we returned home from our trip in 1988. He summarized in words better than I could relate the details of our trip.

American Problems Affect Africa

When Jesus built the church, he meant for it to be a universal body, with all members "loving the brotherhood." We are "one body, one bread." A spirit of unity which is world-wide should prevail so that when we visit brethren in other lands we have such mutual ties that we blend together in worship, work and will. We are fighting for the same Cause with the same King and Savior as our supreme commander.

Unfortunately, division comes to our ranks, and our humanity intervenes to break the peace of the perfect plan of God for his Kingdom. "*How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity,*" said David in Psalm 133:1. The "anti" movement affected us in Nigeria in the 1970's and threatened to tear asunder the work we had done. But we mustered all our powers to stem the tide of division, and as a result only about ten to fifteen churches out of the four or five hundred in Iboland were affected. One African of the Efik tribe, Felix Bassey, was sent by brethren of the anti-orphan home, church co-operation persuasion. He was heavily funded and drove a beautiful Volkswagen van. He was sent as a "missionary" to Aba township. It was obvious that his sponsors in the states were vengeful, since Aba was the area we had most of our churches and where we had our Bible training school.

Felix was meeting with many of our preachers and secretly promising them American support if they would change over to the “anti” doctrine. Some even said they were promised motorcycles and \$200 per month for life. Naturally this was appealing to men who were being paid by their churches only about \$30 to \$50 per month. To help some of them with their large families, we had raised some support from American churches to help them, but we were also trying to teach the churches to be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. So some of the preachers were turned around, and for a time it seemed that about 65 or 70 of them might swing in that direction.

I sent for Jacob Achinefu, one of our Ibo preachers who was schooling at Lubbock Christian in the states at the time. I also sent for Young Owukiabu, who had worked with the “anti” brethren in Lagos but had seen the fallacies and had begun to teach Lagos churches away from this divisive doctrine. I called for a general meeting of churches to send their representatives to our school for a one day meeting. At that meeting, it was pointed out that the offer of money to these preachers was the problem and not that their doctrine was according to truth. The brethren were made to see at that meeting that these preachers were being disloyal to the Lord’s church in Nigeria in favor of their own selfish interests. Felix Bassey became so unpopular that he moved away from Aba to the Uyo area. The last I heard of him was that he was involved in some private enterprise and was no longer preaching. After he left, the churches were at peace again.

Only last year, one of the Ibo preachers who graduated from our school came to America for schooling. While

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here, he came in touch with some anti-Sunday school, anti-individual communion cup people who are now supporting him in Nigeria. He is now trying to lead preachers into that divisive doctrine with the same promise of financial support. I am quoting now from a letter written to Procter Street church in Port Arthur, Texas, the church which first sent my family to Nigeria as missionaries and which has continued to stand behind the school that was started when we were there. They sent their preacher, Bill Walker, and me to Nigeria in 1988 (November and December) to encourage brethren after the tragedy at Onicha Ngwa in March, 1988, during which time four people were killed when terrorists invaded the school compound. Stephen Okoronkwo, principal of the school, said in this letter (directed to Bill Walker):

“My family, staff and students of Nigerian Christian



Josiah, Bill and Stephen (faculty, second row right) and students of Nigerian Christian College, 1958.

Seminary are highly thankful to the elders and members of Procter Street Church of Christ for their generous and sacrificial support for the work of the Lord here. We do not know how we could have made it without their aide, concern and prayers. We are truly made to feel the impact of brotherly love, and we are humbled by their love magnified at that crucial period of great need. Your short visit, along with Brother Nicks, brought a great strength, comfort and relief to most of us. It was indeed a great trip of help-out for the glory of the work of the Lord. We praise God for your ability and insight.

As I told you and Brother Nicks, the problem that we have here is that of some preachers who want to make laws where the Bible does not. In January this year, two Americans were brought in by some of these preachers, teaching about one cup and one bread, no Sunday School classes and no woman to teach in women assembly or gathering. Another set is coming in this March, 1989, teaching the same thing, promising the preachers American support. This is similar to that which happened when Brother Nicks was here in 1973. I noticed their teaching has no foundation. Hence, we have set up to hold a meeting with preachers on 25th February, 1989 at 12 noon at Aba. As you know, there is inflation here, and it is a trying period for the churches too. I hope you will be praying for us and the church too. . . . Our problems are many, but we trust God will take care of them one after the other. Thank you for everything. May God bless you and His people at Procter Street.”

Your brother in Christ,
Stephen T. Okoronkwo

“She Put No Pepper in the Soup”

One night we were visiting a fellow-missionary when we heard a woman sobbing. Her cry of “yammy-O, yammy-O” let us know she was in great pain. When we walked out, the first person we saw was Tom, our yard boy. I asked him who was crying, and he said it was his wife. I asked what the trouble was. He said, “I beat her!” I said, “Tom, why did you beat her?” He replied with what seemed to him a justifiable reason, “She failed to put pepper in the soup!”

The people of Nigeria who lived out in the bush, and some in the townships, had little respect for their wives. Perhaps this was due to their ideas which sprang from polygamy. A polygamist would treat his wives like children. This was the only way, so they thought, to bring them in subjection.

I tried to teach Tom to have more respect for his wife and to treat her with kindness and love. I read to him later the passage in Ephesians 5:23-33, where the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. No husband deserves to have a wife who will submit to him and follow him in love if he is abusive to her. This is perhaps not too much a problem in America of husbands who beat their wives with a club, but our problem is more that of mental and emotional abuse. When husbands domineer their

wives and feel so macho that their wives are not allowed to think or to make decisions for themselves, they are being abusive. However, even in our enlightened country, there are many battered wives, literally, but our divorce rate would indicate that many others are battered emotionally. Not that all the blame is to be laid at the feet of husbands, but due to the role in which God has placed them as head, it seems that the largest share of the blame should be theirs. If they are the proper kind of leaders in their homes, they will usually bring peace to the home, for their wives will respect them for their character and devotion to them.

Tom was an uneducated person and had never had the privilege of reading the Bible. It was more understandable that he would be victimized by traditions of his country. But people who can read and have opportunity to learn have no excuse. If you are a wife-beater or an emotional abuser of your wife, read I Peter 3:7 and understand that God will not hear your prayers unless you repent and dwell with your wife *“according to knowledge, giving honor to the woman. . . to the end that your prayers be not hindered.”*

Obstacles in the Road

In our work of taking Christ to the people of Nigeria, we often travelled on roads that were extremely bad. The bush roads were unpaved, and when lorries would ply them in the rainy season, they would make deep trenches which would be filled with water and mud. Small cars would have to go around them or else be mired up to the spark plugs. Often I would have to beg help to push me out of one of the holes in which my car had become



Jerry and Jeanie Langford and Kim, Dr. Tom and Nita Drinnen, Susan and Tommy, Sarah Young, and two Liberian students.

stuck.

On my last appointment in Nigeria, the day before we were to fly back to the United States in 1974, Joe Cross was with me. We passed by this mud hole on the way, but returning I made the poor choice of trying to go through it on my side of the road. It was so deep we became helplessly stuck and with much help pushed it out. But the spark plugs had become wet, and it was a long time before we could get someone with tools to loosen and dry them for us. We missed our afternoon appointment at Owerrie because of it.

On an earlier appointment, Jim Massey and I were delayed in getting to the people because a tree had fallen across the road. On this occasion it was a very large tree,



Bill, Chief Ebere, Jim Massey

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and it would have taken a chain saw, which we did not have, to clear it. The only way was to go around it, which necessitated all of us pitching in and making a path through the bush and the mud for the car to pass. When we arrived, we did not look altogether presentable, but the people were glad we showed up in spite of the difficulties. Sometimes people would clap when we arrived, knowing how difficult it was in rainy weather and bad roads to reach them.

One night in the 1950's, we were paying a social visit from Ukpom to Ikot Usen, where other missionaries lived. On the way we encountered a palm tree across the road, which had fallen in a storm that day. We usually carried a matchet (British word for French machete) in the car to meet such emergencies. We had Stephen and Anike with us, so they took the matchet in turns and soon had the tree cut into two pieces and rolled away so the car could pass.

There are many obstacles in the path of the Christian. On all of them we must use the "matchet" of God's word, the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17). By following the path recommended by the Spirit, we can safely reach our destination, heaven.

Two Unusual Cases

The first of these unusual cases happened in 1957 before we had our own hospital. A bicycle rider came to our house excitedly saying that we should come quickly, that a man had fallen out of a palm tree. I later learned the man's name was Lazarus. When I started toward his village about six miles from Onicha Ngwa, I met one of our preachers holding a man on a bicycle. It was Apollos Ehiemere. He said this was the man who fell from the palm tree. It would have been better had Apollos left him lying there until I arrived, but he did not know this, and did the best he knew to do, namely, to hasten to my home and get me to take him to the hospital, about 15 miles away, in a car.

I took him to Urua-Akpan Catholic Hospital, but the women there said they had no means to give traction, which this patient needed. They said I should take him to the Catholic Hospital near Uyo. When I arrived, they gave him the traction, but his neck was broken and the man died the next day. However, I had returned home the day I took him there, thinking they could save his life. I feel sure they did all they could, but to no avail. The next day the people who went there to see him learned that he had died, but that the Hospital would not release the body unless they paid seven pounds (about \$21.00). At that time, this was a

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great deal of money for this poor family, and they did not have it. They came to me and told me about it, asking if I could loan them the money so they could get their brother out of the Hospital to bury him, and would I also go and bring him in my car. I did this out of sympathy for the family and their poverty.

On the way home, with the body in the cab, and one of the brothers and one of his wives in the car with me, I learned the man had two wives, but was a member of the church. His younger widow was sobbing, "He taught me the Bible, O!" In his ignorance, he had taken this young and beautiful second wife, but at the same time was trying to teach her the Bible. This was 1958, when I helped preach the man's funeral. The brothers visited me in May of 1960, as we were returning to the States. They brought the \$21.00 they had borrowed, and thanked me, as we were getting ready to catch the plane to go home.

The other unusual case was the chief who had smallpox. I had never seen a case of this dread disease. It was 1973 and he had come to our hospital. One of our nurses was his daughter. Before he died, the nurse came to my house, and begged me to take her father to his village to die. She explained that it was a shame to the village and to the chief if he died away from their village. She, even in her strong feeling about this, and in her begging me to help her, rolled before me in the floor as a symbol of her intense grief and need for help. I decided to do it, but first talked to Dr. Maurice Hood, the doctor at the Hospital. He said, "It is highly contagious, but I will give you a smallpox shot, and after your return, you should have your car (a VW double cab pickup) scrubbed down," both of which we



On school compound, near Nigerian Christian Hospital: Burney and Louanna Bawcom, Dr. Maurice and Jonnie Hood, Della Duncan, the Dr. Frank Blacks, Bill and Gerry.

did. This was a rare case, since we had never had a case before, nor since, to my knowledge, of smallpox. The vaccinations have practically eliminated the disease. Incidentally, the vaccination that I took did not take. The one I had when I was six years old when I started to school was still good!

We were always thankful that brethren bought us a car for use on the mission field. In the eleven years spent by us in the fields of West Africa we wore out five cars, but they were used to help people who were in need. We believe we must obey 1 John 4:21, *“And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.”*

The "Healing Prophet"

As Americans in third world countries, we are subject to being victimized by thieves who see that we have more than the average person. We have cars, good clothing, and eat good food. Often they are deprived of these luxuries of life, for many do not have shoes, and even if some benevolent person should give them a car, they would be unable to maintain it with gas, oil, etc. We were robbed seven times in West Africa.

But I soon learned that there was a danger of being victimized by pious con men who used religion to feather their own nests, not sincerely, but "*supposing that gain is godliness*" (1 Timothy 6:5). Marcus Cookie Gam was such a man. He was an Ibo man living near Aba. He claimed to be a healing prophet. At that time I was traveling all over Iboland having open lectures. People by the hundreds were obeying the gospel, and it was truly a thrilling time to see such a reception to the truth. This man showed up at many of the lectures. When questions about faith healing were asked, I would give scriptural answers, namely, that we could not heal miraculously any more than we could feed thousands miraculously, as Jesus did. The apostles were able to do these things since Jesus gave them power to do it, the purpose being to confirm their word as the New Testament was being revealed to them (John



Our first Hospital, Gerry and girls and patient on our porch.

16:13; 14:26), but when it was finally revealed in about 96 A.D., those powers were removed from the church, then in its infant stages. Now we have maturity since we have the means for knowing God's will, and not be *"tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine"* (Ephesians 4:8-16; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). I thought Marcus would learn enough to turn away from his false practice.

He was flattering to tell how much he enjoyed the teaching. He said he had 34 churches "under him" which he would turn over to me if I wished to have them. I felt I would rather start people from "scratch" with the truth than to try to fix what he had messed up by his doctrine. So I refused his offer, but encouraged him to obey the gospel. He said, "I will be baptized if you say so." I explained that I would not baptize him on those terms, but that I wanted him to yield because it was what God wanted him to do

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(Mark 16:16). He said he wanted to do it for that reason, so he was baptized. Soon afterwards I received a letter from him requesting 35 pounds (about \$100) to help him pay for his dowry, for he was wanting to marry. When I refused, I never saw him again, but read in the Aba paper about three months later that he had died with a throat infection. If the healer had obeyed the truth, he would have learned God's way of healing today, namely by medicines and doctors, not miracles.

Discussion With a Pagan

All along the roadsides in the Eastern region of Nigeria were shrines built by pagans where they offered their sacrifices. These would consist of goats, chickens, or for the very poor, palm wine. Often we would see a table covered over with a cloth, and on which would be a wooden bowl and perhaps a flash light, probably with dead batteries. This indicates man's nature to want to worship some higher being, but here were people, ignorant of Jehovah God, who worshipped some higher power in their self-described way. People of this kind in the Bible are called by the terms: heathen, Gentiles, or nations.

These constitute the majority of religious people in Africa, but their number is decreasing as the light of God's truth is presented to them. We saw a significant decrease of their shrines from the years 1955-1988, the period of time in which I was able to personally observe. Nigeria is perhaps 75% pagan, 15% Moslem and the other 10% would be the various "kinds" of Christians. Liberia would have the same proportions according to Collins Wesley, president of Liberian Bible College in Monrovia. Many times I have gone into villages to preach, with my audience largely made up of pagans.

On one occasion, I remember talking to a pagan "priest." They believe that the elder brother in the family

is the priest who can communicate with their god. He told me that he could communicate with his god but that I could not. I told him that my God was not a respecter of persons and that He speaks to all just alike (Acts 10:34f). I held before him my Bible and said, "He speaks to you in this book just like He does to me. I want you to read it so you will know for sure just what He wants you to believe and to do." Then I read to him from Psalms 135:15-18, "*The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; Nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them.*" The technical term for the kind of religion he espoused was "animism," a belief that spirits of dead ones come back and inhabit trees, their shrines, etc. In fact, if a tree is declared sacred, no one dare cut it down, even if it is in the middle of a highway. They just travel around it. I don't know if this "priest" ever turned from his paganism, since it was the way his fathers and brothers had worshipped for many years. However, many times we would baptize people and the pagans would stand around while washing their clothes at the stream and witness the baptizing. They would hear us speak to them and explain why these people were being baptized. Often they would learn enough to become interested, and although they had laughed at those being baptized, they themselves would obey the gospel.

After leaving paganism, they would call their fellow Christians to their compound for a special occasion. They would pile all their implements used in "ju-ju" worship and

service in a special place, and pour kerosene on them. While Christians would sing, “nani oberanke Jisus,” (Nothing but the blood of Jesus), someone would light the match and all would joyfully watch the meaningless implements burn to ashes. It was at times like these that I would feel good about my being in Africa. Here was the real news taking place on this good earth. Honest souls were, like the ancient Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:9), *“turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”*



A Ju-Ju Burning.

**Royalty or Monkeys?
(By Gerry Nicks)**

There were many times in West Africa when we were made to wonder if we were a King with his Queen and three Princesses, or if we were monkeys in a zoo. We were definitely oddities because we were so different from all the people around us.

When we began driving the roads in Iboland, the children, and adults as well, came out to the road and ran along screaming, "Beke! Beke!" (pronounced **Beck-ay**). Our daughter, Becky, decided her fame had preceded her and she was personally being welcomed. That is, until she learned that the word "beke" is the Ibo word for "white man."

Our first conveyance was a pickup truck with a built-on high bed with canvas cover. When the family travelled together, the girls sat in the back in hand-made raffia chairs. The tropical climate, along with no air-conditioning, added up to some very hot trips in that truck. All we had to do to have a crowd around us was to stop. This was a great advantage for the men when they wanted an audience for preaching the word. However, on other occasions the truck became covered with swarms of curious onlookers until even our air for breathing was cut off. They wanted to see what our hair was like, since it looked so different

from theirs. Their way of discovering how our white skin felt was to pinch our arms. Although they didn't mean to hurt anyone, we sometimes wound up with very uncomfortable and crying children.

When we first moved to Iboland in 1957, we were the only American family for miles around. It was only natural that the people would want to learn all about us, but it was difficult for us to understand their ways of doing it. Nearly anytime of the day we could look up from whatever we were doing and see faces looking in our windows and doors. It was even hard to eat our meals because we wondered if they were hungry and wishing for our food. I remember being so engrossed in a job at the sewing machine one day that by the time I looked up, there was a sea of faces stacked all the way to the top of the window in front of me. Finally Bill went to the chief of the village of



Nicks family on appointment with Stephen Okoronkwo, acting as interpreter, Nigeria, 1957.

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Nlagu and asked him to talk to his people and ask them not to stand around our house all day. He did talk to the people and they listened to him, so we were able to live a more normal life.

Another time when this curiosity created a problem was at the worship services in the village churches. At first we tried to go with our husbands on their preaching appointments, but found it to be very distracting for those who attended, especially to have white children in their midst. So for a long time we had Bible classes for our children on the compound, then attended services in the evening after the men returned from their appointments.

As more and more white people came to work with us, the problem gradually lessened. We began to feel more at home and less like curiosities. The people of Nigeria are by nature a friendly people, and as we began to know each other, we were able to work together effectively.

Yes, we were treated very courteously, often better than we deserved, which made us feel like King and Queen. But also we felt at times we were on exhibit, like "monkeys in the zoo."

Chapter Fourteen

The Watchnight That Needed Company (by Gerry Nicks)

Not long after we had moved into a new area to work with the Ibo people, my husband became very ill with malaria and other complications. One morning at 4:30 we rushed him to the Hospital at Port Harcourt, a distance of some 60 miles. He had to stay a few days, which meant that our three daughters and I would have to stay at home by ourselves, the only white people for miles around. But we felt safe because we had Abraham, a hired man, to



**John Featherstone, Wendell Broom, Bill Nicks and Rees Bryant
at Port Harcourt.**

come and watch on the compound at night. In Nigeria, such men are called "watchnights." When the other missionaries heard what had happened, they came from Ukpom, about 50 miles in another direction, and insisted that we go and spend a night or two with them, until Bill could return home.

Late in the evening, as we were preparing to leave with the fellow-missionaries who had invited us, our watchnight came. I explained to him what had happened and told him our plans to be gone a few days, and that we would expect him to keep a good eye out for our place. He quickly answered, "Oh, no, Madam, if you leave, I cannot stay here because I am afraid of these people who live around here!" So we stayed to watch with the watchnight!

This points to a problem that became acute in later years. Abraham was Ibo and the village nearest our house was Efik, a different tribe. We were living on the border between what later became Imo State and Cross River State. This ethnic difference brought about rivalries and jealousies, which led to open hostility. Our school and churches did much good on the border to cement the relationships, and when the hospital came, it also did much good. But, unfortunately, not all were Christians, and some who were did not manifest Christian dispositions. Open fighting occurred frequently in the late 70's and on March 12, 1988, four students in our school were killed due to the dispute between the two tribes over a tract of land. This caused our school to move to Aba township, 11 miles away.

**We're Never Alone
(by Gerry Nicks)**

In the very early days of our work in Nigeria (1955), I received a request that seemed strange. One day I heard someone clapping at our door (clapping hands is their way of knocking) and, when I answered, there was a young man with a letter in his hand. Since it was addressed to me, I immediately opened it.

The letter was from one of the village elders in a place around ten miles back in the bush from where we lived. Here was his request: "The women in our village are wild. We would like for you to come and tame them for us." They asked that I come on Sunday afternoon, which created a problem due to the fact that the men used all the "motors" (cars) on that day and it would be a long walk. Someone came up with the loan of a bicycle for the trip. My interpreter was intelligent, had been to school and knew both her native tongue and English, but she was even shorter and smaller than I. She would not be much protection if such were needed, but we decided to go on anyway. Her name was Mary James.

We set a date to begin and made the first several trips with good interest in the classes without any interference. Then one Sunday, as we were in the midst of the lesson, a big, burly man came into the building. Coming down the

aisle to the front, he began speaking in Efik to my interpreter. Her interpretation went something like this: "We really appreciate your coming to teach our women, but I have heard that you are teaching about adultery. Our men already know about adultery, and our women don't need to know." My reply was, "There is no need for me to come if I can't teach what the Bible says on any subject." At this juncture, the women began to talk back to the man in their language. They shouted him down and he left. We finished our lesson and the women insisted that we come back. We did for many weeks.

Afterwards, we found that the man had some of his wives in the class and he was not wanting them to learn the truth and leave him. More wives meant more money to him as well as his enjoyment and the pride of being a "big man" with a large compound of children.

When I wrote my mother about the encounter with the man, she immediately wrote back and said, "Don't you go to that place again without a bodyguard!" On our return to the States, I related this story to a group of ladies in Nashville. A sweet lady on the front row spoke up and said, "Your mother forgot that you had one all the time."

How It Felt To Be Robbed (by Gerry Nicks)

We were robbed seven times in West Africa. But we will long remember that first time thieves came. One dark night, as we were sleeping soundly, two native men of Nigeria quietly cut the window screens and entered our house. We didn't hear them as they broke open a locked drawer in the desk of our office, and escaped with our money box, which also contained our passports and visas. There was not much money, perhaps up to \$100, but the passports with visas stamped in them! How helpless we would be without them in a foreign land! You can imagine our amazement and fear when we discovered what had happened.

During the sleepless nights that followed, we felt a loneliness and helplessness that made us ask ourselves: "Why did we come to this strange land?" One answer came when literally hundreds of people, after hearing about it, came on foot from miles around to express their sympathy and shame because of the terrible deed of some of their people. They wanted to reassure us that God would be with us and repay us for our loss. We then realized that many others had been victimized by thieves, and were fellow-sufferers with us. It is a common fault to generalize and condemn all of a certain race, tribe, or national-

ity because only a few are guilty of wrong-doing.

Knowing we had Christian friends who appreciated the good we were doing in their land, and even many non-Christians who were good moral people, and would not mistreat us, gave us good reason to believe that God was truly with us. How could we continue to feel lonely with such comfort?

“How Much for Your Daughter?”

We felt safe in driving from our home into various parts of Nigeria, particularly near home. We did much of our shopping in Aba, a town of about 200,000 people. It was an important commercial city in Iboland, about 50 miles inland from Port Harcourt.

The open market in Aba was a very large and expansive area. One could purchase nearly anything he desired there. As we were shopping with our children, one of the older men approached me with this brazen question, “Sir, how much will you take for your daughter?” I knew there was much polygamy in the land, and also understood that a bride price was required as a native custom. Of course, it was odious to me to even consider such a question, but I decided to answer it. I asked, “How much money do you think is in the Nigerian treasury in Lagos?” He said, “I don’t know. Why do you ask?” I replied, “Because if I were to sell her, the price would be higher than the amount in the treasury of your country!” He laughed and went away.

It is the custom of the Nigerian men to begin paying bride price on a very young girl, even when she is six to ten years of age, so that by the time she reaches the flower of her age, he will have paid the price installmentally. I did not understand that at first. When we were beginning to



Teen Age Girls' Class.

help some of the students at Ukpom in the 1950's, we one day told them that if they were married we would help them a small amount more than if they were single. All of them said they were married, even the very young ones. They called their "intended" their wife. We asked them to bring their wives to the school for one weekend so we might meet the rest of their family. We saw some 10 and 12 year olds, who were called by them their wives. I asked one of them how old his "wife" was. His reply was, "I don't know whether she is seventeen or ten!"

The Nigerians do not regard it as "buying" their wives, although it appears so to us. They feel that their custom of parents selecting wives for them, and the bride price

arrangement is a good one. To us, it somehow lowers the dignity of marriage, and permits parents to dicker over the bride price as though the girl were an impersonal object, rather than a dignified human being. So far as parents helping their young make a choice, this custom, practiced in the Orient as well, may be even better in some cases than our own. Our young often make wrong choices, but still they must be allowed freedom of choice when they reach 18-20 years of age. The important thing is what we have taught them before their choice is made.

A Prejudiced Headmaster Converted

I first met Josiah Akandu when he was a student at the Bible College in Ukpom-Abak, in what is now Cross River State, but which then was Calabar Province. In those days (1955-1960), Nigeria was a Protectorate under the British Empire, and did not receive its independence until October, 1960. Josiah had been converted in a village called Udoh, about 20 miles from Umuahia. Other missionaries had preceded me in preaching at Udoh, but when I began to preach there on appointments with Josiah, he told me this story about himself.

He was a Headmaster of an Anglican school in Udoh, a neighboring village to his home, Obizi. He was an Anglican by religion, and very prejudiced against the recently established church of Christ at Udoh. The school was under the Volunteer Agency of the Anglican church. Any church at that time which started a school had the privilege of administering it by selecting its own teachers who would instruct according to their religious beliefs so long as they met academic standards. Later, the government took over the school system, after independence, and the Volunteer Agent's role became very limited.

The missionary who preached at Udoh at the local church of Christ had given tracts to be distributed. One small boy, a student of the school, attended the worship

services of the church of Christ with his parents. The boy was convinced that his parents' religion was correct, so honestly and sincerely he gave some of the tracts to the Headmaster. Each time the young man would give him one, Josiah would punish him, which included digging up a stump in the school yard, or some other kind of physical labor. Each time the boy would be given his punishment, he would very politely and obediently say, "yessir," and then do it. This frustrated the Headmaster, and his conscience began to smite him. The conduct of this small boy, whose parents gave him the tracts, made such an impression on Josiah that he began to read them, and was caught in the "gospel net." He was baptized after the next few visits of the missionaries who answered his questions.



Bill and Josiah Akandu (now deceased) at church near Owerri, Nigeria.

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Soon after that, he enrolled in the Bible school at Ukpom, and, after we began the new school at Onicha Ngwa, he came with us and finished his second year at the Ibo school.

After finishing at Onicha Ngwa, he preached for Udo-na-Obizi, where he had once been an Anglican Headmaster. In about two years, we needed a teacher to help at the Bible College, so we asked Josiah to be a teacher with us. He taught until the war, and lived only about three years after the war, when he died at his home in Obizi about 1974. He and his wife had ten children.



The Bible College dormitory at Ukpom.

A Preacher With an Arrhythmic Heart

Reginald Egbulefu was a preacher of great ability. All of us as missionaries liked to have him go with us on appointments. He had a sharp mind and was enthusiastic in his presentation of the gospel. He had graduated in the early sixties from the Bible College at Onicha Ngwa. Along with all others living in the Eastern region, he suffered hardship during the Civil War, which came in 1967-70. It was my privilege to work closely with Reginald on numbers of occasions.

I especially remember having him with me when we had outdoor lectures. We would have people from all kinds of religious groups present, and they would bombard us with questions. In order to get over the point I would be trying to make, Reginald would use the ground as a sort of "blackboard," and take a stick, or some sharp object, and draw pictures on the ground to illustrate. People would gather around in a circle and observe the visual aid. In that way, we would be able to teach many people the true and living way of Christ and His word.

Dr. Maurice Hood, a famous heart surgeon who was an elder of the Highland Village church in Austin, Texas, came to work with the Hospital. He examined Reginald one day and reported the bad news to me. He said,

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“Reginald has an arrhythmic heart. He could pass away at any time, especially under stressful situations like riding a bicycle, pushing it up a hill, or some such stress on his body. If you don’t help get another means of conveyance, we may lose him any time.” He explained to me that an arrhythmic heart would beat twice and pump blood, instead of once as in a normal heart. In other words, it was working twice as fast as the ordinary person’s heart, and this was dangerous. I was thankful that we had an expert like Dr. Hood to tell us these things to help preserve the lives of all of us.

In the course of time, when Dr. Hood returned to Austin, the church where he was an elder sent enough funds for Reginald to purchase a small motorcycle. Reginald lived six years after that, and preached for the church in Aba township. He died in 1977 and everyone mourned his passing. Many concerned Christians have aided his widow and their children. If Dr. Hood had not discovered the problem, we perhaps would not have had those last six years of service from one of God’s great Nigerian soldiers.

Why Have Servants If You're Not Rich? (by Gerry Nicks)

When we left for West Africa in 1955, having servants was as foreign to me as the continent of Africa, itself. When former missionaries told us we would need to hire helpers in the house, as well as on the outside, my immediate answer was, "I don't know how to tell someone else to do the work that I am accustomed to doing myself." It took me several months to learn the value of these helpers and how to manage a house with servants.

The need for these helpers was twofold. In the first place, living conditions in the bush country was like fifty to a hundred years ago in the U. S. There was no electricity and no running water. Everything had to be done the hard way. Water had to be carried from a stream unless we had enough rain to fill the barrels. It had to be boiled and filtered for drinking and cooking. Water for washing had to be heated in a pot over an open fire. The ironing was done with a kerosene iron, after using a charcoal iron for some time. Sweeping was done with handleless brooms made from palm frond spines (piassava) tied together at one end. Because of the sand, spiders, lizards, etc., the sweeping needed to be done every day. When the added jobs of full-time teacher and part-time nurse are considered, the need for help was clear.

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The second reason was that there were many young men who needed jobs in order to feed their families. We were helping them as they helped us. What we paid them amounted to about the same as our utilities would cost in the U. S.

We hired Christians for these jobs and so, like Onesimus, they were more than servants, they were our brothers. Because they became an added family to our household, we also shared in their family problems, which were many. The more servants we had, the more problems. Sometimes we grew weary and frustrated with these, and wished for more privacy with our own family. On the other side of the ledger, they were our teachers: they



Efflong and Francis, our "Running Water."

helped us to learn patience. It was through them that we learned much about how Africans lived, how they thought and felt about things in ways so different from ours. Our daily association with our helpers opened up our understanding of the African people so that we could more easily relate to them as we went out to teach and worship with them.

One of our workers who was very special to me was a young man named Mark Apollos. He had been trained as a cook but he also knew the other needs of a household. He became our helper on our second tour when our children were not with us. Bill and I decided that with Mark and me working together, we wouldn't need other helpers in the house. He was an excellent cook, even though he could neither read nor write. For some uncanny reason, all I had to do was go over a new recipe with him once and he could use it over and over again.

Mark became a real friend to both of us. He could cheer us up when we were down, and encourage us to go on when we felt like giving up. His name should have been Barnabas!

The Boy With a "Popeye"

This is the story about a small African boy, about the age of thirteen when I first met him. It was 1972 when I was working in a village called Ntigha Onicha Ngwa, where we had located Nigerian Christian Bible College and later Nigerian Christian Hospital. Peter was an Ibo boy whose mother and father had died.

This orphaned boy was staying with some of his relatives who were very poor and scarcely able to care for their own children, much less the son of their dead brother. Peter Ajimiro was not like other children. He had a tumor on his right eye which protruded very noticeably, making him look horrible. So, he could not go to school like other boys and girls his age. He tried to find a job, but no one wanted such a child to work for them. How he wished to be self-supporting, and not burden his relatives! He was desperate when he came to me. He had heard of the mercy shown by missionaries and doctors connected with the church of Christ at Onicha Ngwa, which was about 15 miles from his village. He had walked all the way, and as he approached I sensed he needed expert care, such as our doctors in our hospital could not give.

He told me of his plight as an orphan, and his inability to do things he wished to do in life because of his tumorous eye. I was touched by his appeal, and decided I would do

what I could to help Peter, though I did not know what it would be. First, I talked to one of our missionary doctors at our Hospital. His reply was, "It would take a neuro-surgeon to remove it and the nearest one is in Lagos or Ibadan, 600 miles away. He likely has cancer and will die anyway. I could cure 60 preachers of worms for what it would take to send him there, and even then, they could likely not cure him." I talked to another missionary doctor, Dr. Maurice Hood. It is always good to get a second opinion. He gave me more encouragement. He and I decided we would send him to Enugu Hospital, which was much closer, but soon he returned saying they could not help him. Then we gave him enough money for transport to and from Ibadan with about 20 naira to spare (\$30.00 then), which we knew could not properly cover such an operation, but we trust in the mercy of others, as we had tried to show in our own hospital. This salved my conscience to know that we were doing everything we could do in regard to little Peter. I imagined myself at his age and circumstance, and felt I would want someone to help me become a normal human being, able to cope with life and its many problems. So, I wrote a letter on Hospital stationery, and told of Peter's orphaned condition, that we had no doctors or facilities for such surgery, and would they please help him in any way they could.

Time went by and we heard nothing from Peter. But about six weeks later, Peter walked into our house and I was amazed. He looked marvelously normal. The tumor was gone and his "pop-eye" was a beautiful normal eye that could allow him proper vision to go to school and function as other boys and girls. I asked about how this had hap-

pened. He said they had treated him courteously in response to the letter, and had not only operated successfully, but charged him nothing. He came home with six naira change, which he handed to me. Peter fell down at my feet and was apparently worshipping me, out of gratitude for "saving my life." I remembered Paul and Barnabas at Lystra who healed a man crippled since birth. The people could scarcely be restrained from doing them sacrifice and called them "*gods come down in the likeness of men.*" But Paul and Barnabas rent their garments and cried out saying, "*Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto a liv-*



Della Duncan, Gerry and Peter washing clothes.

ing God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is” (Acts 14:8-15). This gave me the opportunity to teach Peter about Jesus and his love for us, and that the reason we had helped him was our love for the Lord who saved us, and that we wanted him to give glory to God by giving his life to Him. I sent him back to his people, with the six naira. About two weeks later he was baptized into Christ at his local congregation. We helped him with his school fees for one term until he could get help further from his people. I have seen Peter on several occasions on visits in 1978, 1982, 1986 and 1988. He is a strong healthy looking young man and is still thankful to the Lord who sent help to him from many sources. A picture of Peter Ajimiro is seen in Dr. Maurice Hood’s book, **Please, Doctor**. He is shown before the surgery with his “popeye”, and after his surgery. Dr. Hood’s book, which is his account of cases connected with Nigerian Christian Hospital, and is most interesting and graphic, may be ordered from him at his home, 5504 Shoal Creek Rd., Austin, Texas 78756.

A Roman Catholic Architect Converted

I met Anthony Agali on the street in Aba in 1957. He had some building plans to show me. He had heard I was planning to build a school building and a missionary house at Onicha Ngwa. He said, "I'll not only draw plans for you, but serve as foreman of the men who lay blocks. I will lay as many as any of them." I hired Anthony and he became one of the best workers I have ever known. He would cycle out from Aba every day, Monday through Saturday, work hard in laying blocks or whatever there was to be done, then cycle back home. This round trip on a bicycle would have



Anthony Agali, architect and builder,
Onicha Ngwa.

worn me out, but he put in eight hours of hard work in addition to 22 miles of cycling.

In the course of time, after talking to Anthony about the Lord and His church, he obeyed the gospel, and has been faithful ever since. He, along with his wife and their five children, have been good people and hard workers through the years.

When I came back to serve as Consultant to the Administrator of the Hospital in 1971, I heard that Anthony had been killed during the war (1967-70). However, I saw his sister in Aba at a store one day, and expressed sympathy to her. She said, "No, Anthony was not killed. He is



alive and working in Onitsha, our home." I replied, "Then please get word to him that a job is awaiting him at the hospital as foreman of all workers." He did return and accepted the position, which he still holds to this day. Everyone who has ever known him respects him for his quiet and gentle spirit, and his know-how to do

John Igwe, Carpenter, Onicha Ngwa.

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many things with his hands, always doing it well.

There are many Christians like Anthony, about whom you perhaps will never hear or read as having done anything great. But, in the eyes of the Lord, they are great because they are servants and take pride in doing their job faithfully and well (Matthew 20:25-28). They are the salt of the earth; may their tribe increase. The church depends on such people to spread the gospel by their good influence.

An Unexpected Opportunity (by Gerry Nicks)

My husband is not a doctor and I am not a nurse, so we didn't hang out a shingle in front of our house. We didn't have to, because it wasn't long until the people were coming day and night for us to help them with their physical problems. The most common complaints were headaches, malaria, tropical ulcers, and their "belly trouble," which could mean a lot of things. The serious ones were accident injuries, women with delivery problems, babies with tetanus, dysentery and other life-threatening situations.

One day a lady came with a very bad tropical ulcer on her leg. The flesh was eaten away to the bone and the odor would scarcely let us get close enough to treat her. I poured on the hydrogen peroxide, sprinkled it profusely with terramycin powder (which brother Batsell Barrett Baxter had sent us). After bandaging it, I told her she needed to come back every day for a while to have it cleaned and treated. I learned that she had crawled up a steep hill to get there, and it would be very hard for her to come every day. My first and only house calls were made to that lady's compound, but they were successful. She was finally able to walk again after a few weeks.

Because sick people began to come in such numbers

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that out school time was interrupted and the workers were being disturbed, we had a small shed built away from the house and established certain hours in the afternoon for them to come. Of course, emergencies were handled as soon as possible. One of our workers would interpret for us so we could decide how to help their problems. The people were willing to stand in line for a long period of time to get medicine for their illnesses. We gave out so many aspirin during the Asiatic flu epidemic that they called it "the white man's ju-ju."

As the line was slowly going through one hot day, a little old wrinkled lady stepped up. When the interpreter asked her what her problem was and she had answered, he turned to me and said, "Madam, she is suffering from bloodlessness." She was very serious and I'm sure she was



Nurses Nancy Petty, Sarah Young, with Gerry.

anemic, but I couldn't keep back a smile when I thought of where she would be if she were really in the condition she mentioned.

Many of the missionary wives, although not nurses, gave some of their time to help in this work. We used our knowledge of first aid, and treated their ills the way we would our own families. There were many times when we were unable to do anything and had to take them many miles to the hospital. There was one experience I shall never forget. A runner came to us with a request to come and pick up a woman about ten miles away. She was having trouble delivering a baby and was not able to ride a bicycle. I took an interpreter and made the trip to her house. As soon as we drove into her yard, we knew we had made the trip in vain. The noise of rejoicing told us the baby had already arrived. We walked into the mud house to see the new mother lying on the mud floor, with the midwife nearby holding the baby. The baby had not yet breathed and as we watched, the midwife took mouthfuls of dirty water from a rusty can and spewed it into the baby's face. After several times, that baby came to life and began to cry. As far as we ever knew, the little one survived along with the mother.

Perhaps we saved a few lives in one way or another, but we rejoiced to see our hospital built close enough to serve the people of our area. It has been a blessing both physically and spiritually to many, many Nigerians. It was established in 1964, with buildings gradually built through the years. It survived the Civil War, and is still serving usefully a benevolent purpose to complement the work of saving souls by saving lives.

Our Indian Friends

When one is in a foreign land, he has sympathy for others who are also strangers. That was the mutual tie we had with Nathur and Satwani, who were merchants for K. Chelleram, a chain of grocery stores in Nigeria, with its base in India. These men were Hindu in religion, so our social life with them was very limited. We did enjoy the business relationship, for when we shopped at their store in Aba, they were very friendly and hospitable.

We felt they were lonely, since they were the only Indian people in Aba, and we were among the only Americans, so we invited them to come out to Onicha Ngwa, a distance of 11 miles, to eat a meal with us. We knew of their aversion to eating beef, due to their religious view of the sacredness of the cow. We respected their views and served chicken, a dish we felt they would be able to enjoy. They did indeed enjoy the meal and ate heartily, and we had a nice visit together. These men had families back in India, but spent two years in foreign service away from them. I felt fortunate in that my family was with me on the mission field. It is my conviction that one should not leave his family for such long periods. I don't believe I would have gone to Africa for the eleven years we spent there if I had to leave family behind. They

are too dear to me. Also, Satan presents temptations under such circumstances, and Paul warns against too long separation of husband from wife (1 Corinthians 7: 1-5).

Nathur and Satwani returned the hospitality and invited us to eat a meal in their home, which was an apartment behind the K. Chelleram store. They served good food, and it was the first time we had eaten lily roots, which seemed to be a favorite Indian dish. Nathur told us he worshipped Shiva each morning by standing before a picture, and his devotion consisted in a ceremonial washing. We gave them a copy of a New Testament, but their interest did not seem to be keen in discussing the Christian religion. I believe we can do no good in pressing the subject if there is no interest. Perhaps in such cases, the best we can do is let them know of our concern for them, leaving a good impression so that when they do want to discuss it, they would want to discuss with us due to confidence built up over a period of time. Actually, I pitied them due to their background with an absence of Christ. How much people miss going through life without Him and His great love! Our greatest task is to convince people like Nathur and Satwani of their need for Him.

The Broken Spring

Our first car in Nigeria was a Chevrolet pick-up truck. We had shipped it from New York and we had to drive 80 miles to Port Harcourt to get it when it arrived. I remember seeing it lifted by crane from a tug-boat to the main ship on the dock, since the ship on which it arrived could not get a berth at the port. We had a rather high frame with a canvas top built on the cab, in order to haul things and people. Once, when I was driving through a village, one of the men yelled, "Your house is too high!" They used the word "too" as we do the word "very." Also, another peculiarity in word usage is that of "wonderful." I reported the death of a man one day and the one I was telling of it replied, "Wonderful!" To them, this word means "amazing, a thing to be marvelled at." But in my mind, I thought, "what is wonderful about it?"

We had appointments that reached far out on very poor roads, and often those roads became mere paths. Most were very rough and bumpy. In the course of my work, I had broken a spring in the front seat on the driver's side where I sat. One night I awoke with pains in my back. I imagined that I had amoebic dysentery, or bacillary dysentery. Tests at the hospital showed that I had none of these. But the pains continued to plague me. I decided to ask an old doctor at Itu Mba, who had been there a long time. He

was a British doctor. He asked, after I described the ailment, "Have you had a jolt lately?" I said, "No more than the jolting I get regularly from riding in my car. It has a broken seat spring." He said that would cause me to have an inflamed nerve in my back. He prescribed that I get a new seat for the car and take some Vitamin B-12, which he gave me. I did these and never had any more problems with my back.

Often severe problems are caused by seemingly little things. When those little causes are removed, we become normal. Alcohol and drugs are causes of many problems in the world. Drunk drivers cause more than half the deaths on the highway. Drug addicts are tempted to steal in order to feed their evil habit. Smoking cigarettes is a leading cause of cancer and emphysema. Use of self-control and a sensible giving up of these causes would solve many of life's problems.

The Rotund New Missionary

I had been in Nigeria for over a year and had learned somewhat of the ways of the people and their peculiar expressions. Everyone among the common folk refer to food as “chop.” One of our new missionaries who joined us was rather hefty. I will not identify him for obvious reasons. He and I were on an appointment one day and were stopped by a roadblock. It was at night when we returned from the appointment, and some of the bush villagers had been troubled by thieves, some of whom came in lorries, which were large trucks. They would carry away their loot in the trucks. The villagers made roadblocks and questioned every car that would pass.

I drove a Chevrolet pick-up truck at that time. The villager that questioned me asked where we were from and where we were going. After I explained that we were with the “Mission,” he began to beg for snuff. I told him I did not use it, and did not recommend that he use it. He then wanted money. I explained to him that we carried his people to the hospital and were here to help them with the gospel, and that they ought not to charge us to drive by their village. He then became more jovial and turned to my new missionary friend and said, “Good chop!” I said, “Yes, he is,” and drove away. My friend asked, “What did he mean by that?” Jokingly, I said, “He meant you are a

fat man and when boiled in the pot would make a good dish to eat.” When I saw his eyes widen, I felt he was not taking it as a joke. Then I explained that they called food, “chop,” and all he meant was that “you have been fed well to gain that much weight.” “Oh, that’s different,” he said.

Most Nigerian people are slight of build simply because they do not have the money to buy much rich food, like that which is available in our stores, and which we buy in abundance. Living in the U. S. is like living on the top of the mountain. When we leave it, there is no place to go but down. Perhaps I am biased, but there is much proof that we have more material things than any nation in the world. We have more than kings and princes formerly had. We have more telephones, bathtubs, cars and other conveniences, as well as roads on which to drive our cars.

Preaching in a Very Backward Village

One of our Ibo students at the school at Ukpom when I first arrived in Nigeria was A.K. Onwusoro. His home was Ogboko, near Uzuakoli, some 65 or 70 miles from our school. Brother Onwusoro was very Biblical, in fact so much so that in his prayers, he would not only use the Biblical language, but give the scriptural citation. For example, he would say, "And Lord, help us to be kind to widows and orphans, for you have said, 'visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction' (James 1:27.)" One day, I said, "A. K., don't you think the Lord knows where that passage is found without your having to tell him?" It didn't seem to impress him for he continued to give the citation in his prayers. But some brethren are unable to distinguish between preaching and praying. In praying, we are talking to God; in preaching we are directing our discourse to men. In prayer, we are not to speak as though we are informing an omniscient God.

He came to me one day and excitedly told me of a place he had recently preached back in the bush country, several miles north of his home. He said, "When I drove up in a car, they all scattered. They were afraid I was with the British and was going to conscript them. When I yelled to them that I had come to preach to them, they gradually

filtered back. To my surprise, some of the grown girls appeared naked. I had never seen such a custom among our people." I thought at the time that he was just exaggerating, but when he asked me to go there and preach to them with him, I agreed, so we set the time and went.

Sure enough, when we drove up, the people began to run away, but when he cried out to them in Ibo that we were preachers, they came back. During the course of my preaching and his interpreting, his story about the naked girls was confirmed. They were returning from the stream with water on their heads. They mingled unashamedly in the crowd gathered around our preaching. It seemed I was



Preaching in a village with an interpreter.

in a different world than I was accustomed to living. They soon departed, and we baptized fifteen young men on that occasion. It was the beginning of a church at Akaeze, from which Abia Ngwoze, a convert that day, became a student preacher, later going back to preach to his people.

Although many Nigerians at that time took baths at streams and unclothed themselves, they tried to be modest, the women always putting loin cloths around the lower part of their body when coming up out of the water. The men would usually cover their private parts with their hands until they could put on their clothing. But I asked a villager why these girls wore no clothing, a spectacle amazing to Africans themselves, and considered very backward. He said, "Some of the parents believe they can best tell that their daughters are virgins if they wear no cloth." Whether this makes sense or not, it seemed to be the best that could be given for the practice. We felt it even more imperative that the gospel go to such people, for it would be the medicine to bring them out of not only this heathen practice but all others.

In later years, after 1956 (when we made the trip to Akaeze, among the Wa-Wa people), a paved road was built through their village. This brought traffic and other forms of civilization to them. One day, a truck driver from Lagos brought a newspaper man through the village, and the newspaper man had a camera. He was reporting for the Lagos *Daily Times*, a paper that went all over Nigeria. The picture came out of two girls, naked and running away from the camera man. The story was ridiculing the backwardness of the people in the bush, whose girls wore no clothing. Perhaps our American women, who see no harm

in wearing almost no clothing, should remember that even in what they would call a heathen land, the people look down on such. I was in a “rest house” in Aba one day eating lunch with one of my Nigerian friends. A British lady came in with very short shorts and a halter. He was shocked at the immodesty of this woman. Even though some “bush” African women at that time appeared “topless” in public, yet they were not as immodest as this.

We need to teach Christian women the principle which Paul taught in 1 Timothy 2:9, *“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.”* We need more shamed faces which prevent shameless acts.

A Troublesome Student Expelled

I don't remember ever expelling but one student from our school at Onicha Ngwa. This case, I believe you will agree, was justifiable. His name was Princewell Seko de Lamb Brown. I suppose I should have known with a name like that he was bound to give trouble. He had been a Jehovah's Witness member, but said he had studied our tracts and wanted to study further in school. We admitted him. His wife delivered twin boys, so we helped him get powdered milk to feed them. In addition, we paid our students a few dollars each month for keeping the school yard and ball field cut, and other tasks assigned them. This made it possible for poor young men to go to school, and all of them were poor. The six dollars per month they earned spelled the difference in their having food to eat, or starving.

One of our students came to us with the story that Princewell was cohabiting with harlots in Aba, and was trying to corrupt some of the other students. On investigation, we found it was true and he finally admitted it. He was summarily dismissed from school permanently. There was a denomination school sponsored by an American Holiness group located about 40 miles away, which he tried to enter. They wrote me as to his character, and I told them it was bad, and if they desired further details they

could come to see me and I would tell them. But they would not take him. About three days after he was refused admission into the other school, he came with a friend, whom he said was a partner in business, and that they were now working with a “joinery” in Port Harcourt. I later learned that his friend was an ex-convict, and they were “casing” my office to rob it. He asked for tracts in a deceptive manner, and while I went to get them, he was telling his friend that was my office and where I kept the money. In two or three nights, they entered our house and took the cash box and several other things, such as towels, bed clothing, books, etc. We worked hard during the day and slept soundly at night, so none of us heard the commotion. We were surprised the next morning to find the office desk drawer pried open and the cash box gone. I had put most of the money in envelopes to pay the workers the next day, which they missed. In that, we were fortunate.

No one had a clue, nor suspected this man until Ezekiel Nwakanma, one of our students, said he saw Princewell in Aba. Before that, Job, our painter said he saw him wearing a pink “dashiki” which looked as though it had been made from one of our bedsheets, which he observed while painting our room. After that, when Ezekiel saw him in town, he called a police who arrested him. The next day he brought Princewell to our house. The police said, “I have no car, only a bicycle, but if you will take us in your car, we will search his house and places he has been frequenting in Aba to see if we can find any evidence.” I took him to his house, where we found nothing. Then we took him to the places of two harlots he had seen (I had never been in such a place before or since), but nothing was found.

Next, we took him to a laundry, and asked if he had left anything there. They said, no, but they knew he had taken something to be made into clothing and laundered at a neighboring place. When arriving there, we found he had some of our table cloths and sheets made into clothing. This was the evidence that convicted him. He was sent to prison for three years. I never saw him again, but hope he repented. We also found some Bibles and other books he had taken from us, hidden in another place.

The other man was caught at another time. I was not called to the trial of Princewell, but I was called to testify in the case of the ex-convict, but that is another story: "My Day in Court."

One thing that impressed me as we were coming out of the laundry with the evidence was the action of the people in the market across the street who saw us coming out toward my car with a thief who had been caught. As the police put him in the car, the people began to poke their fists, trying to hit him through the windows. The police said, "If I let them have him three minutes, they would thrash him to death." Not only I, but those people also hate thievery. Anyone who has ever been robbed feels the resentment of people violating their rights, invading their property and taking what does not belong to them. These people in the Aba market had evidently had such an experience, and were glad to see justice being done to this thief.

The Bible is plain, "*Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands*" (Ephesians. 4:28). "*Thou shalt not steal*" (Romans 13:9).

My Day in Court

I had never testified in court regarding a crime, but I had been summoned to appear as a witness against the ex-convict, whose name I do not recall, but who was an accomplice of Princewell Seko de Lamb Brown, the troublesome student who was expelled for dwelling with harlots in Aba. It was so hot in Nigeria, that we never wore a coat, except when we were leaving for home and the cold climate. Our usual dress consisted of sport shirts during the week, and on Sunday, a dress shirt and tie, but never a coat. So, when I went to court I appeared in a dress shirt and tie. I was sitting in the court room, and observing the judge try the case before the one that I was to serve as witness. He had the usual dignity of a judge and as in Britain, he had a wig, bearing the customary dignity of British authority. At that time, 1959, Nigeria was a British Protectorate and there were many British civil servants ruling the country, with Nigerian underlings being trained for the Independence, which came in 1960. The judge saw me and knew that I was the witness, and sent the bailiff to tell me that I should go and get my coat to appear in proper dress in court. Well, my home was 11 miles away, so I went out in town to the home of a denominational white man that I knew and borrowed his coat with the promise I would bring it back shortly.

When my time came, the judge asked me to explain what had happened, which I did, telling of the two men coming to my door asking for tracts, but prior to that about how I had expelled Princewell for misconduct, his efforts to get into another school failing, and that this man was the one with him when they seemed to be studying my house for some mischief, disguising it with the story they were working for a “joinery” and he wanted tracts to teach people. The man was given also a three or four year jail sentence as an accomplice to a crime. This case was cut and dried, since evidence had been found in Princewell’s case.

Later, I felt it was strange that I would have to wear a coat, since many women go “topless” on the streets, and people bathe at the streams all along the roadside. However, I appreciated the fact that this judge upheld the dignity of his court. If we ever have law and order, we will have to respect those who are trying to uphold it.

“If Ye Bite and Devour One Another”

I was reminded of this passage in Galatians 5:15 one night, when two students were brought to me by our “prefect.” He said these men got into a fight over a cup of gharri. Gharri is somewhat like cream of wheat, which is made from the cassava root. Nigerians cook it in various ways, but mostly it is ground up into a meal-like substance and sold by the cup, which now costs one naira per cup, but in 1958 one could buy 12 cups for 12 cents (a shilling). This shows how far their economy has inflated since a naira equals about ten of the old shillings. What these boys were fighting over was a paltry amount, but if one is contentious, it doesn’t take much to start a fight.

This was an unusual fight. The two of them had teeth prints all over arms, shoulders and back, even their necks. I knew that human bites, like monkey bites, could be dangerous, spreading the infection, so I asked Gerry to clean these sores with hydrogen peroxide, and put iodine on them, which she did. This may have saved their lives.

I quoted the above passage from Galatians 5:15, *“but if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”* I told them I had read that before, but had never seen a literal example of it like this. I said, “I don’t believe Paul was talking about this but of

people backbiting, slandering and speaking evil of one another. But what you have done is even worse, because you have shown by your action that you hate each other enough to kill each other, and that over an insignificant thing like a cup of gharri. Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?" They admitted they were and apologized to each other and to us.

Even preachers who are daily studying God's word to preach it to others fall short at times and need rebuke. All of us must "confess our faults one to another" when we discover that we have made mistakes. And we must forgive others when they sin, else God will not forgive our trespasses (Matthew 6:9-15).

Another Lydia (by Gerry Nicks)

In one of our village classes there was a pretty young woman named Lydia. She showed a great interest in learning more about God and His word. After listening to some of our men as they preached in her village, she attended the women's class for a while. She became a Christian and a part of the newly-formed congregation in that village. As she kept on learning, she discovered that she was living in an unscriptural marital situation, and came to us with her problem. She was one of three wives of a man who had no interest in religion. She knew he would not listen to her plea to let her leave him because that would mean a great loss to him. He had paid a price (dowry) for her. She also worked on his farm to make money for him. However, she also knew that she had to make a decision to get herself right with God. After much discussion, thought and prayer, she came to us with her decision. She told her husband she would stay and work for him, but she could not live with him as his wife. Since she had her own little house on his compound, she thought this might be a workable solution. We wondered if this were wise and how long it could last.

One day Lydia came to me and said she didn't have a Bible of her own that she could read. That was one way that I could help. She was so pleased with her Bible in Ibo

language. She continued reading her Bible, attending church services faithfully and coming to class for several months, and then her trouble began.

Her husband was satisfied with her work, but she was too pretty to live on his compound and not be his wife, especially since he had paid for her. He started making it hard on her to keep her from going to church. Then he forcefully took her Bible from her and destroyed it. This was the final straw. She knew she had to leave his compound. We didn't see Lydia after she left, but we heard later that she had married a Christian man, and was a faithful and happy wife.

It isn't always easy to be a Christian. *"How can two*



Gerry and Lydia

walk together except they agree?" (Amos 3:3). God blesses those who come out of situations which are sinful, like Lydia did. I'll always remember how my faith was strengthened by the way the Lord blessed Lydia. She put the Lord and his kingdom first (Matthew 6:33).

They Also Slept In Their Schoolroom (by Gerry Nicks)

On our first tour in Nigeria, our three girls were with us. Becky was ten and in the 5th grade; Jeanie was seven and in the 2nd grade, and Susie was six and in the 1st grade. We knew before we went that they could not attend the local schools where we would be living, so we ordered books and materials from Calvert School in Baltimore, Maryland. This school caters to military families and missionary families overseas. It turned out to be a very wonderful experience for our whole family. Since we couldn't build a school building for three students, we had a special desk built of mahogany, obtainable for less cost in Nigeria than plywood, for each one, and the desks were placed in their bedrooms. This meant they had to learn some neatness in order to use their room for both purposes.

As their teacher, my job was to help them to complete all the daily requirements set out in the teacher's manuals and give them the monthly tests, and send them to the school. Each child had her own teacher in the States who graded the tests and returned them each month. Along with their grades would be a personal letter from the teacher. At the height of the Hula Hoop craze, Susie wrote one of her many compositions on what a difficult time she was having learning to make that Hula Hoop work. Back

came a letter from her teacher saying, "Susie, just place the Hoop against your back and then give it a throw from right to left and begin moving." We all learned from her instructions, some of which were amusingly personal.

The one thing the girls disliked about Calvert School was the number of required written compositions. The greatest reward I could give them for good work was to skip a composition occasionally. Now we all believe that those hated compositions were a real asset in their later schooling.

One of the great things about this kind of school was that we could go at our own pace. Our school day was usually from eight to noon, with unfinished work completed after lunch. The self-appointed principal, my husband, could declare a holiday on any day, and we could easily



Susie and her hula hoop.

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make up for it by doing two lessons in one day, or we could have school on Saturday if we chose.

We wondered a lot about whether our girls would be behind when we came back to the schools of America. Actually in many ways they were ahead, although they did have some social adjustment after going to school in their own bedrooms for five years. This is just one way children can feel they are having a part in mission work. When people ask how I felt about my teacher's job, I say, "I learned a lot more than they did."

Chuku and Violet Ogwuru

Most of the students at Ukpom-Abak, located among the Efik-speaking people, were Efik. But four men had come from the very few Ibo churches that had been planted by 1955. I had been teaching at the school about a year, making visits into Iboland, with a view to expanding our work and eventually starting a school designed to train Ibo preachers especially. Each of the four Ibo students were from different villages, and each wanted the school to be placed in their village. The student who impressed me most with his good sense, and compatible disposition was Chuku Ogwuru. He encouraged me to make the decision based on my best judgment as to availability of water, etc.

When we moved to Onicha Ngwa, Chuku came as a preacher at the village about five miles away called Umudosi. He was helpful as an interpreter, as well as a good local preacher.

Having been taught Christian principles, he wanted to found his home on those principles. He wanted me to perform his wedding in the church at Umudosi. He and Violet were married in a quiet ceremony with Christians as witnesses. Violet had made some artificial flowers for the occasion, which they prized more than if hundreds of dollars in real flowers had been bought. They were poor



At wedding of Chuku and Violet Ogwuru with Eric Anyanwu.

because the church could not pay Chuku over \$10 every two weeks. Along with the \$20 per month he received from the church, a U. S. church sent him \$20 per month. They survived for a long time on that \$40 per month, which was more than some around them were making.

Chuku and Violet have raised five boys in their family. They have been faithful through the years. When the Civil War occurred in 1967-70, they both suffered, along with all others who were living in Biafra, the state that rebelled against the Federal government, but were defeated in the war. Chuku sometimes had to live on cassava leaves, which they learned could be eaten after cooking. Before the war, only goats ate these leaves, but when people are starving, they will eat many things not ordinarily eaten, such as mice, lizards, cats and dogs. In the early '70's, when I returned after the war, Chuku was receiving \$25 from the Hayes Avenue church in Detroit. A postal clerk

stole his check several times. He saw it in a store and asked the clerk where he got it. The man described the postal clerk. Chuku told the police, who went after the man. The man ran away and they never found him. We had lost several checks that way and it was Chuku who solved the mystery.

Reuben and Rachel

Reuben Iheanachor was one of our students who finished two years of intensive training at the Bible College among the Ibos at Onicha Ngwa. He showed a good disposition to learn and to get along with others. However, it takes a good deal of love and patience to get along with the one with whom one is most intimate, his wife. When Reuben married Rachel, a fine Christian girl, and their first-born child came, she left the child on a palm frond, and went some distance away to farm a field. When Reuben came and heard the child crying, he and Rachel entered an argument that resulted in Reuben having a chunk bitten out of his ear by Rachel. He came to me the next day to tell me about it, and showed me the wounded ear. It was as though a section had been cut out by a jigsaw. I urged him to patch up with Rachel, and beg pardon for any language he had used that was abusive, and that he could not afford to lose the respect of his beloved, and the mother of his child. He did this and he and Rachel spent many long and happy years together afterwards. They married in 1958 and he died in 1982. His lung was eaten away with tuberculosis.

In connection with their argument, Reuben's father came to me a few days later and asked me to talk to the girl, because she was giving Reuben a hard time. I said it

was not Rachel's fault, but his own. He was surprised that I blamed it on him, the father-in-law. I knew that it was their custom to keep the son and daughter-in-law in the same compound after marriage. So, I said, "You need to allow Reuben and Rachel to leave father and mother." I read to him the passage in Genesis 2:24. "If you allow Reuben and Rachel to live apart from you, they can settle their own problems without any interference from the in-laws." Soon after that a congregation invited Reuben to live with them, and they provided a house for them. Although it was a mud house, it was a place they could call home and in which they could raise their children, which they did.

On a visit to Nigeria in 1982, after Reuben had died, it was my privilege to give some money to his widow, Rachel, from funds I had raised among U. S. churches to help Nigerian preachers in need. It was enough to help her, and enough to pay for their son's course in radio repair, which he was taking in Aba. I told the son I was counting on him to help his mother now that the father had passed on. He is still doing so, to my knowledge, and so are the other children.

A Student, a Bicycle and His Brothers

Apollos was a student in our “Bible College” at Onicha Ngwa, designed to train young Ibo men for the work of preaching to their people. He was son number one of wife number twelve of a polygamous Paramount Chief who had thirty wives. Polygamy was our number one problem in Nigeria. Strong Christian people of Nigeria were fervently opposed to the practice, although it was an ancient, and deeply rooted custom. Some referred to it as “female slavery.”

One day Apollos needed treatment at the Hospital in Aba. This was in 1957, before we had our own Hospital beginning in 1964. He asked if he could borrow my bicycle, a fairly new one, to get his treatment at the Hospital, 11 miles distant. I granted him permission to use it. When he returned by lorry, he came immediately and reported that someone had stolen the bicycle while he was having his treatment. He said he locked it, but that sometimes thieves would put the bicycle on their heads and carry it off. I told him not to worry, that it was not his fault and he could not be charged.

The next day two of his half-brothers came in to express their regrets that the bicycle was stolen and offered to replace it. I told them I did not expect them to do that,



A Lorry, Motor Park, Aba.

but that I would suggest something they could do. When they asked what, I told them that since Apollos was a preacher of the gospel, and had to travel to his appointments, I would like to see him have a bicycle of his own, and would they get him one. They said they would do it.

After they left, I asked Apollos if they would. He said, "No, sir!" I asked, "Why not?" He began to tell me of the strife within a polygamous compound. "When the son of one wife is up, the sons of the other wives begin to cut him down. There is much jealousy, not only among the wives, but also their children." This made me feel sorry for any child brought up in such an environment.

God's way is always the best. His wisdom is seen in

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the restrictions placed on the home and marriage. The first polygamist, Lamech, a descendent of Cain, said, "I have slain a man for wounding me, and a young man for bruising me"(Genesis 4:19-23). Ever since then, polygamous families have had troubles, including that of Abraham and David. Hagar and Sarah; Isaac and Ishmael were at loggerheads. Absalom slew Amnon for raping Tamar, his sister. This is divine retribution for changing God's way. God planned marriage for our happiness and for our good (1 Corinthians 7:2; Matthew 19:9; Genesis 2:23f).

Death of a Paramount Chief

A Paramount Chief is a chief over several chiefs, which means he has a large Chieftom. It is similar to a governor over many mayors. The student referred to previously, Apollos, asked my help after the death of his father, the Paramount Chief. His problem was this: his brothers were all pagans, and only he and his mother from the large compound had obeyed the gospel. It is a rocky road when one has that much opposition in his own family. It was the custom that when a chief of his standing died, they would offer sacrifices of animals (goats), and the wives would mourn by parading publicly through the market naked.

Apollos said, "They want me to contribute money toward the sacrifice, and they want my mother to join the other wives in mourning the customary way." He asked if I would go with him to join his brothers in a discussion, begging them not to force him to pay for the sacrifice. He also wanted me to beg them not to force his mother to walk naked in public. I told him I would go with him.

As we were all seated around the courtyard of the Chief's compound, I first expressed my sympathy to them in the loss of their father. Then I explained that Apollos could not conscientiously offer a sacrifice, since it is our belief that Christ has once for all offered himself as our

sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews 9:28; 9:12-14,22). That is why the blood of animals cannot take away sins, because Christ has "*offered one sacrifice for sins forever, and sat down on the right hand of God*" (Hebrews 10:1-4,12). I asked them to respect Apollos' convictions in the matter, and they said they would, although begrudgingly, because in their materialism, they felt he should share in the cost. Nevertheless, I felt it was a good opportunity to teach them, and perhaps some of them would long remember the plea, although it often takes long years to lead people out of evil customs and pagan ways.

They also agreed not to force his mother to go naked in the market. I explained to them the Bible teaching of modesty, how that from the beginning of time God had clothed man and woman with coats of skins (Genesis 3:21), and taught us in the New Testament to dress modestly (1 Timothy 2:9), "*with shamefacedness and sobriety.*"

It was a blessing to the mother of Apollos to be severed from an unchristian relationship, though it was by death. Yet, according to God's law, he was not a scriptural husband, nor was she a scriptural wife.

Not All Women Approved Polygamy

Polygamy was so prevalent in Nigeria that I thought all who engaged in it, both men and women, approved it. I had heard that often women would suggest to their husbands to get other wives to relieve them of much drudgery around the compound and on their farms. After all, women did most of the hard work, using crook-necked hoes in primitive fashion to plow the earth, and sweeping the mud and concrete floors (usually their own was mud, but the “great man” of the house lived in a concrete building, with as many mud houses surrounding it as there were wives) with handleless brooms, made from piassava from the palm tree. But an incident happened on an appointment that convinced me that not all, and perhaps the majority of wives, did not share this sentiment. After I had preached at Udoh, one of the members invited me to his compound for refreshments, usually consisting of kola nuts (which were very bitter, but were a symbol of fellowship among Ibos. I would usually cut them into small pieces with my knife and take one small piece and eat it, passing the rest to others). They would also serve some kind of soft drink, called Fanta.

When the lady of the household brought refreshments, the man said this is my “senior wife.” I said, “Oh, that is bad.” He wanted to know why. “That implies you have a

'junior wife'," I replied. He said, "Oh, yea, I do." He seemed unashamed of having two wives, while at the same time being a member of the Lord's church. He was untaught, so I felt it a good opportunity to teach him and his wives. I said, "Would you permit me to ask your 'senior wife' a question?" He agreed, upon which I asked, "Madam, when your husband asked the 'junior wife' to come into your compound as his wife also, did it cause you to think more of him (raising my hands high, since she did not speak English), or less (lowering my hands about to my hips)?" An interpreter put it in Ibo, but before he finished, she took her own hands and lowered them to the floor! I felt this represented how most women felt. It is not natural for them to want to share the intimacy of their husband with another woman (or women).

Again, we can see the wisdom of God's plan for "*every man to have his own wife, and every woman to have her own husband*" (1 Corinthians 7:2). Even in the starlight age of Patriarchy, men were told, "*Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away*" (Deuteronomy 17:17).

The Ever-Present Jehovah's Witnesses

The most troublesome sect in Nigeria were the Jehovah's Witnesses. We did not run into any Americans, but the nationals had been converted to them by the tons of literature sent over from the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. This sect was especially odious because of their refusal to believe in the Deity of Jesus, their rejection of hell, and their refusal to respect or salute the flag of their own country, or any country.

We could always spot a member of the Witnesses. They carried a portfolio with their books and pamphlets, and they were fanatical in their beliefs. I conducted many open-air lectures. Nigerians would stand, often in the sun, with nothing but an umbrella (and many without any shade) to cover their heads. It was not uncommon to spend two hours answering questions on the Bible, asked by sincere seekers of truth. But the Witnesses were not sincere seekers. They were like the lawyer in Luke 10:25-37 who stood up and *"tested Jesus, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'"* When Jesus told him, he was not satisfied, but *"wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"* On one occasion, one of them tested me by asking, "Where did the parents of Jesus take him as a babe to flee the wrath of Herod?" I tried always to give a Bible answer, so I answered, "Egypt." This seemed

to frustrate the querist, since he thought he could spring a question on me that I did not know and he could take the audience from me. The audience, sensing this was a Jehovah's Witness who had asked the question, took over from there. They began to taunt him unmercifully. Some said, "Egypt is in North Africa. Do you want to go there?" Another chided, "Cairo is the Capitol. Why don't you go down there now?" He sensed he had lost the battle, so he slipped out and we were no longer bothered with him. We continued with honest questions and sensible answers. Often, the Witnesses would ask, "What did Jesus mean when he said 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth'?" I knew what they were implying by the question and would always reply that Jesus was not coming back to reign on this earth again, but that the kingdom had already been established on Pentecost, and we had the privilege of being born again by faith, repentance and baptism, and that we then really inherited blessings and joys both now and hereafter in heaven. This would refute their false idea of the premillennial doctrine.

Sudoki, the Moslem Trader

We did not live in the predominantly Moslem sector of Nigeria. They were the Hausa tribe of Northern Nigeria. Missionaries, at the time we were there, were not allowed to go to that section to live. But many of the Moslems came to the Eastern Region, where we lived, to trade. They would drive the cows down to the market, and bring their wares to sell, such as ivory beautifully carved, and ebony carvings, boa skins and many other trinkets attractive to foreigners. Some of my prized tokens from Africa are walking canes with ebony carved elephants and lions, a carved representation in ebony of the ancient slave man with chains around head, hands and feet, and a few carved pieces in ivory.

Sudoki was one of the Moslem traders that during the years prior to the Nigerian Civil War (1955-1969) would come into the Aba area and sell his wares. Usually, he would come out from Aba to our place in a taxi, open up a large bag of various trinkets, and we would dicker over the price. He would usually ask about twice, sometimes three times, the worth of the item desired. I would reply, "Too dear, Sudoki!" He would say, "Hubba, Hubba, Master, not too dear." Then he would say, "All right, you have changey, changey?" By that, he would mean, "Do you have some old things you could throw into the price, such

as old tires, old magazines, or even old clothes?" which he could sell or use. When he would say, "What will you give me?" I would say, "What is your last price?" He would then quote a supposedly low price. If I still thought it too high, I would suggest what I would give. If it was really too low, he would begin to fold his bag as if to go away. If I started to walk away, he would say, if it was not too ridiculously low, "Bring money." But always our discussion over the price would be in good humor, and he respected us, and we respected him as a business man, though not his religion.



Sudoki, the Hausa trader (Moslem).

If Sudoki could be seen at noon, one would see him bow to the earth and pray toward Mecca, the Moslem holy city. This he would do several times a day. Quite a few Moslems lived in Aba, sufficient for them to have a small Mosque. If a missionary lived in a predominately Moslem area, such as Libya, he could not teach a Moslem in his home, nor teach him publicly in the streets, nor in the newspapers. If they allowed a church of the Lord to be built, that would be the only place we could teach. Brother Bob Douglas was deported both from Libya (Benghazi) and Egypt (Cairo) for proselyting.

The last time I saw Sudoki was in 1972. I had heard he was killed during the war, but when he drove up to our place, we had an emotional greeting for old times sake. I was glad an old business friend had been spared.

Doctoring the Witch Doctor

Reuel Lemmons, now deceased, former editor of the *Firm Foundation*, paid a visit to Nigeria in 1958, and spent the night with us on his way out. It was the day after we had thieves to rob our house. He slept well, for we could hear his snoring. But for fear thieves might strike again, we slept less soundly. The next morning, chiefs of our village heard of it and came in a body to sympathize, along with other villagers. Reuel was impressed with what he saw in Nigeria, and, after I told him the following story, he said, "If you will write about this and call it 'Doctoring the Witch Doctor', I will print it in the *Firm Foundation*." Following is the substance of what I wrote.

In our village lives a man who practices "ju-ju" medicine, and the national people call such a "native doctor." In other parts of Africa, such men are called "witch doctors." Their remedies are based on superstitions, not on modern knowledge of the means to heal. For example, for diarrhea, the remedy is to tie a tight string around the waist. Someone jokingly said, "Well, if it were tight enough, it would heal, but of course it might kill, too!" They claimed to heal madness, for which the remedy would be to beat one on the back with a pliable stick, called an "opete" (pronounced **opi-tay**). They also claimed to cure gonorrhea, and to be able to give the



Ju-Ju Burning

patients good luck charms. I did not learn what these were, but I know that during the Asiatic flu epidemic, the remedy of the native doctor was to squeeze out a certain type of leaf, and give that to the patient. Of course, this would not cure, and many died. He learned that those who came to us, and took the aspirin as we prescribed, and went to bed and obtained the rest, they would live.

One day he became ill with what I knew was a serious type of dysentery, either amoebic or bacillary. One can become dehydrated in three or four days with such and die. He sent for me to come to help him. He knew that his remedies would not heal, and he was able to see that what he had charged others for would not be safe on himself. When I arrived, he was sitting in a corner of his room on the floor. Very meekly, he said, "Help me." I said, "Come with me, I am going to take you in my car to the Hospital."

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Native Doctor (Witch Doctor).

He said, "Don't take me to the Hospital." I replied, "I must take you, because if you don't go and take some medicine, you will die." When he finally agreed to go with me, he said, "Alright, I'll go, but don't let them give me an injection." This was to him "European medicine," against which he had warned his customers. He felt his remedies were the best. I told him, "you will take whatever remedy they prescribe, because we love you and want you to get well." He had been our friend and had allowed, before we built our dormitory for students, one of them to live in a room he rented, and without charge. After he had spent four days in the hospital and had taken the necessary injections, he became well again and I went after him to bring him home. The people began to say, "The healer could not heal himself." We felt that not only modern medicine had

won a victory, but above all, the gospel of Christ, which leads people to greater knowledge and open-mindedness about the world in which we live and about ourselves, as well as about salvation.

It was in such experiences that convinced us we needed doctors and nurses in our area to help us teach the truth to our Nigerian friends.

A Little Old Woman With Her Beads (by Gerry Nicks)

Ohanze Ogwa, a village not far from our African home, was completely pagan. There was no church of any kind in the village. They asked that someone come to help their women, so arrangements were made for a class each Monday at 6 a.m. The first Monday, there were nine present and all were pagans. By the next week, all of these had become my sisters and they had brought more women with them. As Stephen (my interpreter) and I drove to and from these classes, we noticed a little old gray-haired woman in one of the compounds that we passed. She was wearing strange looking beads around her neck. One morning we stopped and invited her to the class; she turned and walked away without speaking. Because she stayed in our thoughts, we made a special trip one Sunday afternoon to try to talk to her. When she finally broke down and began to talk, she pointed to those beads and said, "This is life to me. If I take these off, I will die." She would not listen to us and we then had to leave her.

We decided it was hopeless until a few weeks later, as we were beginning the class, and it became light enough for us to see clearly, there was our little old gray-haired woman with her beads sitting over in the corner. She con-



Josiah Akandu baptizing a woman.

tinued to come for several weeks and then one morning she came to us and said, "I want to be baptized!" Gladly we took her to the stream, and, as Stephen took her down into the water she took off the beads and threw them into the bush.

God can make a difference in our lives, but He depends on us to let others know of our faith in Him. We can even give up something formerly considered dear to us, as did the little old woman with the beads, when we are convinced they are a hindrance to our Christian belief and conduct.

A Different Kind of Ladies Class (by Gerry Nicks)

Back in the bush country of Nigeria lies the little village of Ikot Idomo. Very few of the older people speak English, which means that very few had been to school. As a consequence, they were rather backward. These were the days in which the British civil officers were in political control, and the story has been told of a chief of a village coming into a District Officer's room one day, handing him 300 pounds (about \$900), saying, "Come to our village and civilize us!"

The village women decided one day to send for one of the white women to come and teach them. Being the only white woman in the area, and believing that the gospel is God's way of saving, as well as civilizing people, I took an interpreter and went on the afternoon they suggested. When we arrived, the little mud building was full of women clothed only with loin cloths tied around their hips, which means they were, as we would say, "topless." Seeing the need, I changed the subject I had intended to teach that day to one on "Modesty." They asked many questions and invited us back the next week.

On our second arrival, we were pleasantly surprised to see the building filled with women completely clothed and eager to hear more. Just as I was congratulating myself on

my effective teaching, I looked up to see a woman coming to the door with her blouse on her arm. As she started inside, she quickly slipped it over her head. No doubt, she slipped it off as she started home.

When we first went to Nigeria, most of the women thought nothing about going “topless.” In later years, we could see a change in the way they dressed. We attributed it in part to the spread of the gospel in that area. We saw many women being used more like slaves to carry the heavy loads, do the hard work and to bear many children. They were neglected as far as education and training were concerned. I had a desire to help them to at least know what their Maker wanted them to be and do in order to make their lives better here and hereafter.

They liked to have Bible classes, but in order to do their work on their farms, they often asked that we come to teach them at 5:30 or 6:00 a.m. Most of the time, I could go for the class and be back in time for breakfast with the family. I was amazed at some of those early morning meetings to have 100 women in attendance. We read our lesson notes and scriptures by the light of a bush lantern (kerosene) until the daylight came.

I had never taught a ladies' class until I went to Nigeria. I didn't think I could, but since most of them were on a child's level of learning, I found that I could use methods that I had used earlier with classes at home. They enjoyed learning with visual aids and illustrations that helped them to apply the lessons. I remember one day getting to the building early and hiding a coin. Then as I told them the parable of the lost coin in Luke 5, I lit a candle, took one of their short brooms and swept all the corners

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until the coin was found. When I held it up, they rejoiced with me without any prompting. One coin was so important to them that they could easily understand the importance of one soul. I learned many lessons from teaching the African women and young girls, but that is another story.

The Student With Malaria

One of our students was brought to me one day with malaria. His name was Ibezim Okueze. He was brought to me because I was the founder and principal of the school, and had to make the final decisions. The prefect, as the senior student in charge of student affairs was called, told me that Ibezim had been babbling, and he needed some treatment for what he believed was malaria. I told Ibezim that we would take him to the Hospital in Aba. Perhaps remembering some points we had studied in Homiletics on how to prepare and deliver sermons, he protested in this manner: "Number 1: I know who I am. Number 2: I don't have malaria. Number 3: I don't want to go to the Hospital." The prefect and other student had told me that he did not even know his own name. His strange way of approaching his problem convinced me he did have malaria. Though he was frightened at the great unknown, since he had never been to the Hospital in his life, we convinced him he needed to go and we took him, where he stayed for over a week for treatment, and was cured. If he had not had the treatment he would have died.

Malaria was a dread disease in our country many years ago, but through much effort to eradicate the mosquito, we never hear of anyone having it now. The mosquito bites an infected animal or person and carries a germ called



Dr. Tom Drinnen, D. Henry Farrar and Bill Nicks

“anopheles,” in which case, the person bitten gets malaria. The only cure is some form of quinine, which comes from the Peruvian bark. Although the World Health Organization has tried to prevent malaria in West Africa, it is a most difficult task. In the rain forest area, the rain is often over 150-300 inches in an eight month period, with about four months of dry season. This is the area in which we lived. That is why we slept under mosquito nets, and took either daraprim, a tasteless one time per week medicine as a preventive, or paludrine, a daily preventive. When you contract malaria, the symptoms are high fever, perspiring, and you are sore right down to your eyeballs and skin. Taking quinicrine or some pill extracted from the

quinine obtained from the cinchona bark, will help you recover.

Sometimes, people are ignorant of the cause and cure. Some national people in Nigeria would pack their head with mud, thinking it would cure them. I have known of several to die with such treatment because the malaria would go to the brain, and that is fatal. An old Britannica explained the reason for many deaths in West Africa as due to the emission of poisonous gases from the rocks. That was before men knew of malaria and the anopheles parasite carried by the mosquito.

A Rotten Bridge Is Unsafe

Those of us who were American missionaries in Nigeria kept our appointment books filled for several months in advance. Usually, we would take one of our students at the Bible training school with us to interpret, or perhaps to lead us if we did not know the way. This particular appointment was with brother G. M. Ntuk, one of the older students. He had been one of the original preachers and had come back for advanced training.

He was leading me to a village near Opobo, the best I remember, and it was his home village. He was anxious to get there to see his people, so he led me the short way. This would have been fine, by bicycle, but not by car. We came to a bridge we had to cross. It looked very unsafe to me, so I stopped to investigate. I said, "Brother Ntuk, this bridge can't hold up a car. It is rotten, and we would fall into the river." He said, "Oh, no, God would not let us fall." I said, "God has also given us some sense to see that this bridge might hold up a cyclist, but not a car. It is too heavy, and I can see that cars have not been crossing it for a long time." He accepted my suggestion, although we had to go around for 15 miles to get to his home the other way, whereas we were close to it from the bridge.

I thought of "so near and yet so far," and the fact that the closest way is not always the best way. A straight line

may be the shortest distance between two points, but one must discern whether it is better to be safe than sorry.

The church which Jesus built is safe. If one tries to cross into heaven on an unsafe route, cluttered with the doctrines and commandments of men, he will fall into the river. If someone says, "I don't believe in jumping from limb to limb," perhaps he should consider whether the limb he is on is unsafe, like that bridge. Churches built by men are unsafe (Matthew 15:9, 13f).

The Lawyer Was Arrested

O. J. and Ann Webber were faithful members at Beaumont, Texas. I had known them during my visits to Beaumont and Port Arthur. When we were in Nigeria after the Nigerian civil war (sometimes called the Biafran War), they wrote that they planned to come and help us for two or three weeks. Ann was a nurse and could help us in the Hospital. O. J. was a lawyer and could encourage churches with his teaching, since he was a good Bible student and an elder.

We asked them to bring along 100 disposable needles, which were in short supply at our Hospital. At that time, I was in charge of purchasing medicines and supplies for the Hospital. Anything we could get donated was a help, since we helped many people, such as preachers and their families, without charge. In coming by plane to our place, Pan Am stopped in Lagos, and one had to go through Customs there, then change to Nigerian Airways for a 45 minute flight to Port Harcourt.

When the Webbers landed in Lagos and went through Customs, the Nigerian officials saw the 100 hypodermic needles. They accused O. J. of being a dope peddler, and took him to the police. When Ann saw her husband being taken away in a black van to the police, she was understandably frightened. Imagine going to a foreign country

for the first time, getting arrested, or seeing your husband arrested, not knowing whether he would have to spend time in jail. But O. J.'s experience as a lawyer stood him in good stead. He told them of his connection with the Nigerian Christian Hospital, that he was not smuggling dope, but that the Hospital needed the disposable needles for their people, and that he was merely serving their own people.

The Customs officials argued that the needles were an "essential ingredient" of dope peddling, and that he was highly suspect. O. J. insisted that there were other uses of hypodermic needles that were legitimate, and that was the use he was making of them. However, because of a recent problem with drugs entering their country, Nigerian offi-



"Green Elephant," old prop plane on which missionaries arrived from Lagos in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

cials would not allow him to take the needles to our hospital.

O. J. and Ann spent a few weeks with us and helped greatly in our work. There is no greater joy to foreign missionaries than to have people from their own country to visit the field and lend a helping hand in the many tasks that are at hand. But most of all, to give encouragement to missionaries who have missed their native land and their own people for a long time is the greatest need. Money is not misspent by churches who send elders or other members for this purpose.

“They Commandeered My Wife”

These three short stories depict the hardships of the Ibo people after the rebellion was “crushed”. Biafra went down in defeat and Nigeria became again a united country. “To the victor belong the spoils” is an old adage, which seems to carry over into modern times.

Thompson Jibueze had been a student at our Bible College and had completed two years, serving later in a congregation until the outbreak of the Civil War. On the way home from the last outpost of the Biafrans at Owerri, he was with his beautiful wife, whom Federal soldiers spied among his group of returnees. Thompson told me, “they commandeered my wife and I have never seen her since.” Federal soldiers immediately following the war ravaged the farms of the Ibos, rooting up their cassava crops and other things they could steal from the homes of those who had not yet returned. If they saw something they wanted, even a man’s wife, they would “commandeer” her, very much like they would force the Ibos to give up their bicycles, or any other possession. Thompson will probably never know what happened to his wife. The last time I saw him, he had remarried and was still preaching the gospel. He considered her as dead. Most likely, the Federal soldiers turned her into a prostitute, or else married her, refusing her ever to return to her home.

We knew of one student who was in our school during postwar days, whose wife came to our compound as a prostitute. The occupation army, stationed near us, had commandeered two of our buildings on the school grounds, in which the officers had a mess hall, and place for their higher officers to live. They sold beer and hosted prostitutes. We could do nothing about it, since they were the victors. This student, seeing his wife frequenting the officers, reported the fact to us. He had lost respect and love for her and had remarried.

Emmanuel Okwubunku, also a former student, returned home to find that his wife was missing. He heard that she had married a Federal soldier, and was living at a military camp at Elele, near Port Harcourt. He came to me and asked me to go and find out for him if she was there, and ask her to come back to him. I said that this was his responsibility and he should go. He said, "If I go, they will kill me." Then I suggested that he send his brother to the camp to see her, and ask her privately to come back to him. He learned that she had borne a child to the soldier. When she returned to him, she was without the child. She had scratches on her neck, which she explained were made by her husband when she tried to bring the child and he refused to allow it. She stayed with Emmanuel about a month, then returned to her soldier husband.

The war brought such hardships on people. It became a test of character for the woman who found herself with two husbands. She could have come back to her true husband, a Christian and a gospel preacher. But the soldier had more money and could give her an easier economic life. She had made her choice. She chose the easier life.

The only way I could console Emmanuel was, “with that kind of character, she was not worthy of you.” Josiah Nwamuo, another of our students in the 1950’s who had served as preacher until the war, was with a platoon of soldiers, all of whom were presumed killed, since most were in a skirmish in the Ozuitem area. But Josiah was captured and pressed into service in the Federal army as a cook. When the war ended and he returned home, he found that his wife, who had heard that her husband had been killed, had married a Federal soldier of the occupation army. He told her she would have to choose between her first and true husband, and the man she had married, a non-Christian. She told him she preferred the soldier. Again, a character had been tested, and the wife of Josiah had chosen the easier and more profitable life. She knew the life of a preacher entailed hardships, but what she failed to consider was the reward of serving God in His kingdom, and the preparation it gives for our future life in heaven. Not only so, but she failed to take into consideration, that with all its hardships, it is still the happiest and best life on earth.

Good Cooks, Good Food

The wives of missionaries are often needed as school teachers for their children. We ordered five grades of each of our three children the first five years we were in Nigeria. They came from the Calvert System, out of Baltimore, Maryland. The daily lessons were well constructed, easy for the mother to teach her children. Every 20th lesson was a test, which was filled out by each child and sent to Calvert, who in turn would grade it and correspond with the child. In this way, our children did not miss any schooling. We felt they profited, since they not only had good learning and an excellent teacher, but they had the benefit of travel, cross-cultural interaction and freedom from distractions that characterize the American way of life. For example, we had no TV, which was a blessing in many ways. The children had to improvise their recreation and entertainment, which was good for them. They developed a trio and entertained both themselves and us singing songs they learned from the Lennon Sisters, Andrew Sisters, Mcquire Sisters and others. We had a record player operated by batteries which they could play. We had a devotional each morning and each evening with our family participating. It would consist of singing, Bible reading and a round of prayers by each person. We look back on these times as some of the most enjoyable of our lives.



Gerry and children doing home work for Calvert correspondence school.

Because of the responsibilities of the children, we relieved our wives of as much housework as possible. We hired men who were eager to get the jobs to do our cooking and housecleaning, washing and ironing. The first cook we had was Etim Inyang, from Ikot Usen, home of the first church established in Nigeria, and home of C.A.O. Essien, the first convert from the Correspondence Courses sent out by Lawrence Avenue in Nashville. Etim was a good cook, having learned much from working with a Scottish family before working with us. We took him with us when moving into Iboland, which turned out to be a mistake. It was hard for him to get along with some of the Ibo people. Not all racial prejudice is black-white, but in this case it was

black-black, but especially Ibo-Efik, language difference.

We had to let Etim go because he was unhappy. We hired Mark Apollos, native of Onicha Ngwa, and member of the local church. Mark was always happy, compatible, and considerate. Gerry would plan the menus and he would go to the market for food. We would give him more money than needed, and he always brought back the correct change. He was careful not to take anything that did not belong to him. For that reason we grew to trust and love him. He had a large family of children which Victoria, his wife bore him. We would often send them clothing for her and the children. In the last visit to Nigeria, Bill Walker and I stayed in one of the Hospital houses, since the School where we usually stayed was closed and moved to Aba. Mark cooked for us, and we gave him a 100 naira tip in addition to paying the hospital for his services. He is employed by the Hospital to cook for American doctors, nurses and missionaries who come. He is loved by all, but especially so by Gerry and me.

One day, I was on a Sunday appointment, and Gerry rode her bicycle to the church at Onicha Ngwa, one mile from our house. On the way, she fainted, and a small boy ran to the church building and told Mark. He immediately left church and came and took her on his bicycle back home, where she recovered. We could always count on Mark to help us in any way that was needed. He was a good all-round worker. He and Gerry would wash clothes together in a galvanized tub, and hang them out to dry on the clothes line in dry season, and on lines in our shed and porch in the rainy season.

During the war, Mark did not serve as a soldier, but

made his living carrying people on his bicycle, serving as a "bicycle taxi-driver." He was strong and healthy. Although Mark could not read, he knew enough by listening to others to develop a cleverness and alertness that took him through most any occasion. In addition to hard work with the missionaries, he farmed his land for food for his family, and built a concrete block house for them. Most people in his village lived in mud huts. Mark is an example of one who can be a genuine servant and a good and faithful Christian. He was respected for his gentle and pleasant disposition, his cleanness, his honesty and for his industrious nature. On our many visits to Nigeria since our return in 1974, we always think to take something special for Mark, our brother, as well as our servant.

Everybody loves a good sense of humor, and Mark had one. Sometimes at the table, which he served, Gerry or I would spill our tea, or some other table disaster. Mark would come running with a rag and say, "I have to clean up after the children!"

Dr. Farrar and the Nigerian Christian Hospital

Whenever we had a sick person come to us, we would do our best to treat them in our back yard. Gerry often had a stream of 20 to 40 people per day with cuts, malaria, tropical ulcers, Asiatic flu and other diseases. If we could not treat them, we took them to the hospital. We did not pretend we were doctors, but did the best we could with home remedies in a situation where we knew much more than native doctors about modern medicines. But when we took them to the hospitals, it would be to a Catholic Hospital at Urua Akpan, or at Uyo, or at the Government Hospital in Aba. These were far distant from us, especially when we had to get up in the middle of the night to take a woman to have her baby, or some other emergency. We longed for the day we could have our own Hospital.

The first one we visited when returning in 1960 was Henry Farrar. I had known him and his brother George, a close friend, from my youth in Nashville, Tenn. Henry had finished his M.D. at U.T. He was ready to return then, but his Uncle Dr. John Cayce, his benefactor, thought he should go further and finish his F.A.C.S. (Fellow of American College of Surgeons). Henry took his advice, but did not forget his commitment to go to Nigeria. He

went in 1964 and used the old D.O. house, where we formerly lived, for a hospital. Later buildings were built and land secured, leased for 99 years.

Henry at first had his family with him, but later would go on short trips without them. He had an excellent disposition, always smiling and happy, which in itself was good therapy for patients. His bedside manner was good, and his treatment of fellow workers, nurses, and others was such as to bring good relations between Americans and Nigerians. Grace was a fine helper and did much to help. They have six children: Paul, Marty, David, Hank, Lee and Samantha. Hank, Lee and Samantha were with them in the early seventies when we worked together. Henry worked hard with many patients on whom he operated for hernia,



Sarah Young, Nurse, Dr. Henry Farrar, Dr. Tom and Nita Drinnen, Susan and Tommy and Gerry Nicks in Monrovia, Liberia.

C-sections, tumors, and many abdominal surgeries. I often jokingly called him the “abominable” surgeon. He did much to inspire other Christian doctors to come and serve at the Hospital he established. These doctors stagger their time, and usually give their services, even paying their way back and forth.

Perhaps Dr. Farrar and Dr. Maurice Hood have given more time to help the Hospital than any others, though many have helped. A board of men oversee this work from the States, with Glenn Boyd as President. They raise funds for capital expenses, medicines, etc. They also help send nurses, and other needed personnel.

Before Henry came to establish the Hospital, he determined that all services would not be free. He said, “Even if they can’t afford to pay but a coconut, we will charge that.” Also, he determined that God would get the glory for any work done. He had signs put on the walls of the Hospital, “God Heals — We Dress the Wounds.” Henry is also a good preacher, and he conducted many appointments, encouraging the people. He would usually preach at the vicinity of the Hospital since he would be needed for emergencies.

Only eternity will reveal the good done by those who have mercy for the poor, sick and needy. If even a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple shall not lose its reward, surely the great good accomplished by God’s servants who go out in his name to help relieve suffering humanity among the poor of this earth will be rewarded.

The family of Dr. Farrar now lives in Lebanon, Tennessee, where he still serves as a physician both there and in Carthage, a nearby city. But he still has not forgot-

ten his first love, the Nigerian Christian Hospital.

This would be a good place to give honor to Dr. Robert Whitaker, a native of Wales, England. He has spent many long years working at the Nigerian Christian Hospital. He spent one tour of duty, then went back home to Wales to further qualify himself. He is a quiet-natured and gentlemanly Christian. I have worked with him on numerous occasions on short trips to Nigeria, and have observed the good work he does with patients and with the church. A chapel building has been built on the Hospital grounds, and a congregation meets there every Lord's day. It is my understanding that he will soon be married to a young lady he met at Chimala Hospital in Southeast Africa, when he was working there on a short tour.

The Bloody Tumor

Doctors are like the rest of us in that they cannot win them all. In telling this, I want you to know that there were thousands of cases in which our doctors and nurses succeeded in saving lives. But often the people would wait until the patient was nearly dead before bringing him to the Hospital. That is why the morgue is next to the Hospital. We often would see people bringing a crude wooden casket to pick up their dead loved ones from the morgue, where they would be placed after their death in the Hospital.

All doctors can relate to you cases in which they were unable to save the patient for one reason or another. Perhaps if we had better facilities we could have saved this young woman which I am telling about. The doctor did all he could, but she died a few hours later. The case is very familiar to me since I was in the operating room with the doctor and nurses. I was witnessing the operation, with mask over mouth and nose as usual, for the sake of hygiene. This young lady was the wife of one of our students. She had a raised place on her back which she urged the doctor to remove. He said it wasn't necessary to remove it, since he thought it was a lipoma, a very simple operation, since such would "peel off." She said that she wanted it removed since it marred her beauty. He agreed

to remove it, and when he cut into it, he was shocked to find it a mass of veins, which began immediately to spurt blood like a fountain. We had no cauterizer at our hospital, but he did all possible to staunch it, packing it with pads. It was so sad that I had the task of telling Norbert Akpan that evening of the death of his wife. I defended the doctor and nurses, since they did all they could with what they had.

The doctor later told me he had read of such tumors, but had never seen a bloody tumor before. He did not suspect such, or he would have left it alone.

When another doctor came over with equipment for us to give general anesthesia, he taught a nurse how to use it. She gave the patient a tube in the wrong place and the patient died with an overdose of nitrous oxide. These were exceptions to the rule. Such can be expected in situations where there are inadequate equipment facilities. Everyone did the best he could with what he had.

Felix and the Church at Nsukka

I had preached at the church in Nsukka a few times. It was 200 miles from where we lived, so I didn't get there often. It was located in the same town as one of the great Universities of Nigeria. Nnamdi Azikiwe, former President and hero of the Ibos, had used his influence to have this State University placed there. Several of the church members either worked at the University or were students there. Thomas and Lazarus, faithful members, worked at the University.

One day, while attending our lectureship at Onicha Ngwa, Thomas and Lazarus approached me and asked whom I would recommend to come to Nsukka and serve as their preacher. They were impressed with some of the students who had attended our school. Felix Orinku had been one of our best students. He took his work seriously. He had graduated the year before and had done good work at a village church near Aba. It was my opinion, and I told them so, that Felix was intelligent, and had made good grades in my classes. I had taught a post-graduate course for preachers interested during the holidays, and Felix attended, showing his continued interest in improving his learning and talents. He made a perfect score on a test in Christian Evidences, which I considered a very difficult test. They were impressed with the qualifications of Felix,

so they asked him to move up to Nsukka, 200 miles away, to work with them.

Dr. Maurice Hood was working with our Hospital at that time. He had been an elder at the Highland Village church in Austin, Texas. He asked that church to help Felix with his salary at Nsukka. They responded favorably and Felix did a fine work there for about five years. One sad day, we heard the news that Felix had been killed on his motorcycle, which had been purchased for him by the church in Austin so that he could improve the mission outreach in the area of Nsukka, which was 44 miles from the capitol of Enugu, population, one million. He was killed on one of those roads he travelled to spread the gospel.

I learned early in life of the danger of motorcycles when some of my friends were either killed or maimed for life by riding on them. Any vehicle is dangerous but they are more so due to their speed and lack of balance. Preachers need a proper balance, or they may wreck on the roads of hobbyism, liberalism, or other extremes.

A Woman's Most Important Mission Field (by Gerry Nicks)

One of the greatest blessings of living on the foreign mission field was our family togetherness. In fact, it was 24-hour togetherness most of the time we were there. We had more time for devotionals and teaching opportunities with our own children which all of us look back on with gratitude and joy. I believe our children felt very much a part of the work and they were helpers in so



Christmas dinner, Onicha Ngwa, 1959. Glenn Martins, Wendell Brooms, John Featherstones, Jim Masseys and Bill Nickses.

many ways. Besides adding spiritual strength, living in a different culture was in itself a great blessing because it was a great learning experience.

Besides our own children, the missionary wives found many opportunities to teach the Nigerian children. I especially remember the years after the Biafran War when Grace Farrar and I worked together. Plans were made with the churches in the two villages closest to our compound to invite the neighborhood children on Sunday afternoon at two o'clock. Grace went to Nlugu and I went to Onicha Ngwa. We each had over a hundred children of all ages, which was more than we could handle. So we changed our strategy and asked them to come to the school building near us and to leave the small babies at home. We still had



Home devotionals on the porch at Onicha Ngwa.

almost as many in attendance as at both villages, so we divided them into two classes, older and younger, and kept on teaching. Two young men served as our interpreters and were great helpers. In later years, when there were more teachers, the classes were divided into smaller groups, which made the teaching more effective.

Our big problem was finding visual aids or the material to make them. What a great blessing it was when Crieve Hall in Nashville began sending us bundles of materials that were just what we needed. Every week we spent many hours cutting out and putting together enough handouts for all the children as well as the visuals for teaching the lessons. They were accustomed to learning by rote in their



Bill, Jeanie, Sue, Becky and Gerry Nicks.

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schools so they quickly learned individual characters of the Bible, as well as lists, such as the twelve tribes, the fifteen judges, the eight writers of the New Testament, the twelve apostles, etc. It was a real joy to hear them repeating in unison these names that we hoped they would remember the rest of their lives.

Just like our children, they love to sing! So we took some of our choruses that we had used in Vacation Bible School and Bible Camp and had them translated into Ibo, then taught them how to sing them. We chose songs that would teach important lessons as well as sound good. What a joy it was to sing with that group as they sang both in Ibo and English!

If we want the church to be strong in the future, we must do a better job of teaching our children. Christian women have a great opportunity and responsibility to influence many young lives here at home and on the mission fields of the world.

**“Some Day I Come Eat You”
(by Gerry Nicks)**

In Iboland, we lived in a village called Onicha Ngwa. The Bible Training College was also located there. The land where our houses and the school buildings were built had to be leased from the village since foreigners were not allowed to buy property. The fifteen acres that they allowed us to use were owned by several people who answered to Thomas Ebere, the chief of our village. All of these were our landowners and we tried to keep a good relationship with them.

One day Bill and I decided to invite them all to our house for a meal to show appreciation to them. We found out what they liked to eat and how they liked it cooked, so we had soup and foo-foo made from cassava, pounded yams and beef and vegetables in the soup, which we knew they would enjoy. They did enjoy it and we did too because we could tell by the way they ate that they were pleased. A few days afterwards, I heard a loud clapping at the front door. When I answered, there stood Chief Ebere, all smiles, to tell me how much they liked their visit with us. Then as he was turning to leave he said, “Some day I come eat you,” in his broken English. If that had been my first day in Nigeria, I would have been planning to catch the next plane back to the States. Fortunately, I could



Chief Thomas Ebere and seven of his eight wives, with brother and six of his 35 children.

translate that into: “on another day, I will come back to eat with you again!”

Several times when the chief came for a visit, I would serve him some homemade cookies with a pot of tea. They were served on a little table by his chair. We didn't have to wonder whether or not he enjoyed them. As he left, he would invariably pick up the plate and slide the remaining cookies into his pocket.

One time when Bill went to Chief Ebere's house to pay the yearly rent, he took his camera and asked the chief to let him take a picture of his family. He agreed, but went back into the house for a few moments. While he was gone, Bill asked his brother, who lived in the compound, “I see only seven wives, doesn't the chief have eight wives?” The brother of the chief replied, “Yes, but the other one refused to come. She is angry because the chief didn't buy

her cloth for the New Year!" This just demonstrates in a small way one of the disadvantages of polygamy. It is very hard for one man to keep many wives happy in one household. Some of our missionaries would say, "Think of all those mothers-in-law!" Near the time for us to come back home, Chief Ebere was asked, as a representative of the landowners, to say a few words on a special day at the school. During his speech he said, "The church of Christ has been here so long and taught so much about polygamy that I have almost decided to give up five of my eight wives!" As yet he has never done that, and he is pretty old now.

Polygamy is one of the biggest problems in the work of the Lord in Nigeria. It is very hard for the older ones to give it up even though they learn the truth. The only hope is for the younger ones to learn the beauty of the home as God would have it and refuse the traditional systems of their forefathers. This will be the salvation of future generations.



"Dash" from church for preaching: chicken, yams, fruit.

The Black Market

In the early 1970's after the Civil War, the merchants in the Eastern region wanted American dollars for trading with foreign businesses. Their own money was worthless outside Nigeria, so they were eager to buy American dollars on the black market. It was illegal to do so, but many did it anyway. Some of our missionaries felt they were justified in selling their dollars for twice as much as they could get at the bank. I felt it was unwise to do so, and did not do it, since the government had made it illegal, and to engage in it would risk trouble, even deportation. I was later glad that I made this decision.

Several of the checks which we were to receive in the mail were being stolen by, we later learned, a clerk in the Aba Post Office. He would open our mail and take out the checks, then sell them to some of the merchants in Aba. At one time, a check in the amount of \$5,000.00, sent to the Nigerian Christian Hospital, was stolen. I had come into Nigeria after the war as Consultant to the Administrator of the Hospital, since the government was not allowing missionaries to enter. Some of the Roman Catholics had aided and abetted the Biafran rebellion, so no missionaries were allowed at that time. I did work with the Hospital by handling financial affairs, helping in purchases, such as medicines, nitrous oxide and other things essential to the ongo-

ing of the Hospital. At the same time I taught in the Bible College, and filled many preaching appointments, working with preachers as I had done before the war. Gerry helped Henry Farrar in the operating room as a "floating nurse."

When we lost so much money by the thievery of American checks, I wrote to those sending it to xerox the returned checks so we could ascertain the cause of the thefts. On one occasion, Hal Frazier, who was at that time sending checks from World Radio from West Monroe, Louisiana, sent a letter to his Post Office informing them of the trouble, and in turn, they sent a letter to the Lagos Postal authorities in Nigeria. Lagos, in turn, sent a detective who camped on my doorstep for three days. He sus-



Dr. Farrar and Gerry in operating theatre.

pected that I was the thief. I had documented proof that I was not. I showed him my bank statements and a letter I had written to the manager of Barclay's Bank in Aba.

A certain clerk had been taking my checks which I deposited out in town, selling them on the black market, then depositing cash instead of checks, after raking the "cream" off of the top. When I complained to the manager by letter, I went in to see him personally. He said, "Go ahead and deposit your check with the same clerk and I will watch him after you leave." I did and he did and sure enough the clerk left the bank immediately, then came back and deposited cash, not my check. When he did, the bank manager summarily dismissed him from his job. The clerk drove out to my house the next day with his wife. They begged me to talk to the manager and ask him to give the



New B.W.A., Aba.

job back to him. I went in to talk to him and he said, "If I don't fire him and my superiors find out about it, they will fire me. No, I can't take him back." It was unfortunate for the man, but I had not asked him to cash the checks on the black market. He was not robbing me, since he was depositing the legal amount. The only way I found out about it several months after he had started doing this was in my bank statements. I finally noticed that the statements showed "CS" (cash) and not "CQ" (check). I knew that I had deposited checks, and that is when I wrote the Bank Manager in protest to these clandestine dealings with my checks. If I had wanted to deal in the black market, I could easily have gotten much more for my checks than the bank would give.

When these things were known to the detective, he said, "I can see you are not the one responsible, but we will



Old Post Office, Aba, Nigeria.

catch him. What has been done is very bad!" As I have said, the man who was eventually found out was a Postal clerk. Chuku Ogwuru, one of our preachers who received a check from a church in the States, was missing his also. One day he was in a store in Aba, and saw his check in the possession of a merchant. He asked the merchant who sold that check to him. The merchant told him who it was, and Chuku went to the police. When they went to the Post Office after the man, he ran away and was never caught. But that solved our problem. Other Postal clerks feared the loss of their jobs and a long sentence in prison. We recovered the loss of our checks from Bank insurance in the States.

When we were visiting Nigeria in December of 1988, the government was giving six naira per dollar. No doubt, they did this to stem the tide of black market dealings. They evidently found that so many were involved in it, they would make it profitable for people to deal legally and get more naira for the dollar. Even now, some merchants will probably offer more for dollars on the black market, but it won't be as profitable as in former days.

Good and Bad News From Home Folks

“As cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a far country” (Prov. 25:25, NKJV). Living in a country thousands of miles from home helps one understand this verse more vividly. We would hang on to every letter, or every telegram from home, and treasure each package sent in love to encourage us.

Sometimes the news would be good. In fact, most often the news was of the normal activities of life, such as people getting married, babies being born, people being baptized into Christ, the church growing and sending out more missionaries. This was good news and when we heard it, our hearts would be glad. But “into every life some rain must fall.” We knew that every day could not be sunshine and smiles. Therefore, before coming to the foreign fields of West Africa, we had to face the decision to go in spite of the fact that some of our very own loved ones might die while we were gone, perhaps some of us might even pass away on the foreign field. Gerry and I spoke a few times about this possibility. We both agreed that if either of us should pass away, which we hoped would not happen and did not happen, that the other would bury the one who might precede the other in a wooden casket, such as others in Nigeria. We preferred to be buried in our



Joy! Package from home.

school compound, perhaps in our back yard.

We had heard that Bill Walker, in one of his trips to India, had taken his wife, Oza Mae. While there, Oza Mae had a heart attack and died. Bill told me that he had much difficulty going through the governing authorities to get permission to ship his wife's body back to the States for burial.

We had been in Nigeria only about six months when we had a telegram from home that my father had been killed in a car accident near Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Ironically, that is where I had been preaching before coming, and he was killed in the car he bought from me. An Oak Ridge K-25 plant worker had blacked out on the way

home from work and ran into Dad's car head on. He was trapped between a ditch and a line of traffic. This was my lowest point, since the telegram had been missent to Itu, an old address, instead of Abak, near Ukpom, where we lived at the time. When it arrived, he had been buried for three or four days. To miss the comfort I could have been to Mother at that time left an empty feeling. After some tears, I decided he would not want me to quit and come home. The next day, I kept an appointment, but the people forgot about it. When I arrived with no one to speak to, that was the emptiest feeling!

Another time there was bad news was when we heard that one of the elders of the East Side church in Sheffield,



Children in Nigeria opening packages from home.

Alabama, our supporting congregation in the period of 1969-74, had been killed in his private twin BeechCraft plane. Along with Robert Ford was his wife, his son, Bob, and Bob's wife. This tragedy shocked the East Side church (now Cox Boulevard), as well as us. We had received such hospitality at the Ford home each time we would come home. They would give us their door key and say, "Come and go as you please, and feel at home." To lose such wonderful people as that is a double loss, and to hear about it when one is miles away from home days after it has happened is depressing. But that is what we had thought of before coming, that there was always the possibility of such things happening. We cannot stop the Lord's work because of these tragic incidents. There was persecution in the early church, but they did not quit because they were beaten, thrown into prison with feet fast in the stocks (Acts 16:25), but instead were heard to be praying and singing. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41). Instead of being defeated and quitting, they that were scattered abroad by the persecution "*went everywhere preaching the word*" (Acts 8 :4).

No doubt other missionaries have suffered similar losses of those who were dear to them. Betty Broom, wife of Wendell Broom, lost her father while she was working in the Nigerian field. Sometimes we would hear of some we dearly loved who had departed from the faith. This would be even worse news to us than of physical death, for such a loss meant spiritual death. Nothing can be worse than to think of those whom we love facing the end of life with no eternal hope.

Summary of Our Trip to Nigeria (by Bill Walker)

Brother Bill Nicks and I left New York on November 23, 1988 for Nigeria on Sabena, a Belgian Air Line. We arrived in Brussels on November 24 around 7:00 a.m. Our flight plan called for us to have a 14 hour layover in Brussels. We had already made reservations for hotel accomodations. After some very welcome sleep we managed to get in touch with Don and Nancy Files. Don is a building contractor who sold his business and dedicated his talents to helping churches in mission areas with their building needs. We offered to take Don and Nancy out to eat so we could visit with them. Don picked us up and gave us a quick tour of Brussels and a visit to their church building. When we arrived at their apartment Nancy had fixed something for us to eat there. Since it was Thanksgiving day we had turkey sandwiches and pumpkin pie. It was one of the highlights of our trip to spend Thanksgiving with this lovely couple.

We left Brussels around midnight and arrived in Lagos, Nigeria early Friday morning. It was there, to my dismay, that I learned my suitcases had not made the proper connections. I learned in the ensuing week that one can go to Nigeria without any suitcases. I will travel a lot lighter the next time. My suitcases did arrive in Lagos in time for me



Ibo Lectureship, Onicha Ngwa, 1959. Note: sitting next to Rees Bryant, extreme left, is David Ibekwe, who was killed during the Biafran war, 1967-70.

Those in the picture were speakers on the lectureship.

to pick them up as we were leaving Nigeria (about two weeks later). We flew from Lagos to Port Harcourt where we were met by Stephen and Daphne Okoronkwo. We drove from there to Aba. Stephen and Daphne wanted us to stay with them on our visit, but we thought it best for several reasons to stay in one of the residences at the Nigerian Christian Hospital which is about 11 miles from Aba. We spent the day Saturday making plans, receiving visitors and trying to rest up from our trip. Stephen picked us up early Sunday morning and we preached in three different locations that Sunday.

One of the primary purposes of our trip was to help

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with some problems which had arisen concerning the Nigerian Christian Seminary. As many of you know, this school was established in 1957 by Bill Nicks, who was supported by Procter Street at the time. Brother Nicks negotiated a 30 year lease for some 15 acres of land near the village of Onicha Ngwa for approximately \$30 per year. Stephen had begun efforts toward the end of 1987 to negotiate a new lease. This was complicated by a conflict between the chief of the village and members of his family, each of them claimed to own the land. While efforts were going on to negotiate a lease, a very tragic incident happened at the school on March 2, 1988. A gang of terrorists from a bordering village made an attack on the school, shooting automatic weapons. They killed two students and also Stephen's sister, who was deaf and dumb, and his nephew who was doing some building at the school. They vandalized Stephen's house and carried away most of his household goods. Stephen and his family, along with several students, had barricaded themselves in one of the bedrooms and were fortunate to have escaped.

Believing it was no longer safe to operate the school in that location, Stephen was able to rent some school property in Aba and continue the operation of the school. His quick action enabled the students to complete the school year. Otherwise they would have lost a year's work. All of these events focused a lot of attention on the school, causing brethren to wonder by whose authority the school had been moved, who was responsible for the school, would the move from Onicha Ngwa be permanent, how were the school funds raised and dispersed, etc. Letters from brethren indicated that these questions were disturbing the

peace of the churches in Imo State. To this end, we made our journey and met with some 61 preachers and elders on Monday for several hours. Brother Nicks and I feel that we answered their questions and hopefully brought about a better understanding and feeling of good will.

There are a number of weighty decisions which must be made regarding the school. (1) There is the problem of a lease on the land at Onicha Ngwa. (2) Even if we could renew the lease, there is the question of safety. The school property adjoins a strip of land on the border between Imo and Cross River (now Akwa Ibom) states. There is about a four mile strip of this land which has been in dispute between two villages for a number of years. Since 1978 this dispute has escalated into acts of terrorism on both sides. This is what brought about the attack on the school. Since this dispute has been going on so long, it is not likely it will be settled any time soon. Although the school is not involved in the conflict and has not been attacked before, how much danger is there of a repeat attack? (3) If the school is moved, there will be the loss of many fine buildings. Efforts are being made to recover part of this loss. How successful they will be is not presently known. (4) The school is now operating in temporary facilities. Should we look for a permanent location? Where? How would such be financed? Not any of these decisions will be easy. If you have any wisdom or advice it will be welcome.

The annual lectureship was held at the school while we were there. This is an important event for the brethren in Imo State and throughout Nigeria, particularly among Ibo people. Some entire congregations attend. We estimate

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there were over 2,000 present on Thursday and more were expected to come Friday. Many people who are not members attend. Thirty-two were baptized on Thursday. Since we had to leave on Friday morning we do not have information about the final day.

In the short time we were in Nigeria we were deeply impressed with the opportunities for the gospel in that land. We went with Stephen to Owerri, the state capitol, for the radio program sponsored by World Radio. This program reaches out all over Nigeria and much good is being done.



Daphne and Stephen Okoronkwo, Bill, and granddaughter, Kim Langford at compound of Eze Mbaronye, elder of the church at Itungwa.

World Bible School is having a tremendous impact in Nigeria. Churches are forming evangelistic teams and going into many areas to preach. Nigeria is truly one of the ripest fields in all the world today.

It was a pleasure for me to travel with Bill Nicks. He is a great man with a great love for the mission fields of the world. The people of Nigeria and Liberia regard him as an African. Both of us express our gratitude to the elders and members of Procter Street for sending us on this journey. We believe the Lord's church in Nigeria and Liberia was greatly encouraged by the fact that you cared enough to send us. We will discuss the Liberian part of our journey later.

Part Two

Liberia

Our Visit to Liberia – December 1988 (by Bill Walker)

As you know, brother Bill Nicks and I made a brief stop in Liberia on our way home from Nigeria. Brother Nicks was the first resident missionary for the churches of Christ in that country, living and working there for about three years. He has made several visits back and it seemed appropriate to stop there since it was on our way to and from Nigeria.

We arrived rather late on Friday evening, December 2, 1988. In spite of the late hour a good number of brethren were on hand to joyfully greet us when we landed at Roberts Field. The airport is about 40 miles from Monrovia, the capital of Liberia. The brethren at the Gayetown church in Monrovia have fixed a room in their building to accommodate guests. It was a nice place to stay and we are grateful for all their hospitality. We got some supplies and were able to eat most of our meals in our room, which helped keep down the cost of our trip. We spent most of our time on Saturday getting supplies, visiting brethren, surveying the work, looking at property the brethren had purchased for future building purposes and resting a little from our trip. Saturday evening the brethren had a worship service designed mostly for students at the Bible College and young people. Brother Nicks spoke. We

worshipped on Sunday with the Gayetown church. Brother Nicks taught the adult Bible class at the morning service and I preached at worship. Brother Nicks preached at the evening service. Attendance was very good at both services. They are averaging around 175 in their morning worship.

There is some division in the work in Liberia brought about primarily by one brother who seems to want to play the part of Diotrophes. We had a meeting Monday with both parties. Whether we did any good remains to be seen. The problems are of long-standing and will not be easily resolved. More than likely, the best solution is going to be for the two groups to go their separate ways like Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15, and seek to be at peace with each other.

In spite of such problems, the brethren in the Gayetown congregation are not letting it deter them from a strong program of work. They established two new congregations in 1988 as a result of some 88 baptisms in these two places. In addition they baptized 61 people at Gayetown and 75 people as a result of World Bible School follow-up. This makes a total of 233 baptisms for the year. There were also a number of restorations. They also operate a Bible Training College at their building to train young men to preach (Note: they now have 28 students. B.N.). There are some extremely talented and dedicated men who are leading in the work in Liberia. Among them are Collins Wesley, Ken Kessee, Emmanuel Mayanga and Paul Guey. Brother Wesley and brother Kessee are both graduates of Christian schools in America (I.B.C. and F.H.C.). They all work together in a splendid way. In addition to this, broth-

er Kent Hayhurst and family from Elk City, Oklahoma will move to Liberia this year, primarily to work on W.B.S. follow-up. He will give much encouragement to the overall work. There was a front page article in November, 1988, *Action* by brother Hayhurst.

I know it was a special delight and encouragement to brother Nicks to see the work in which he pioneered doing so well and going forward in evangelizing Liberia. The work still needs lots of help and encouragement from brethren in America. The opportunities are great. The brethren are dedicated and faithful. We would encourage churches anywhere to consider supporting this work.

Brother Nicks and I are deeply grateful for the blessings you have brought to our lives as we renewed our friendship which began years ago at Freed-Hardeman College and enabled us to visit, encourage and be encouraged by some of the greatest people and greatest fields of evangelism in the world today.

Difficulties of Entering a New Country

Gerry and I were the first resident missionaries to work in the country of Liberia. Others had preached there before 1969, but they had returned home after a week or two. On our way back from Nigeria, we had made a survey of Liberia and reported it as a ripe mission field, having no thought at that time of entering ourselves (1963).

Upon entering the country, we had to go through the Department of Education, the agency passing on missionaries for Immigration. The woman in charge of our entrance was Mrs. Evelyn Scott, assistant to the Secretary of Education, whose name I do not recall, but before whom we eventually had to appear and swear before him that we would uphold the good of Liberia in our mission work, including education work. Mrs. Scott said, "In former days, we allowed missionaries to come in with a third grade education, but no more; we now require both the missionary and his wife to have a college degree, or its equivalent." I had enough College hours for a B.D. degree, but Gerry had only a Junior College degree, plus some extra hours toward her B.S. However, Mrs. Scott said she would accept her in view of the fact she had worked as a school teacher for several years. Gerry had taught not only in Chester County during the war (1943-44) in Tennessee,

but had taught our daughters for five years in Nigeria as they studied under the Calvert system of correspondence. I had not brought any of my credentials with me, so it was necessary that we write to our colleges, where we had done our work, for transcripts. Mrs. Scott said, "You can't even sit down until these papers arrive, which prove you are eligible to enter Liberia as a missionary." This exaggerated statement meant we could not officially begin our work until she had passed on our educational qualifications. Two weeks later, when they came in, she was satisfied and gave us legal standing; even befriending us in some ways. Meantime during those two weeks, we purchased a used German Taunus Ford, a car that became very useful to us.

One day while driving in downtown Monrovia, a policeman stopped me. He said, "This is a one-way street and you are going the wrong way." There was no sign indicating such, and when I told him I saw no sign, he replied, "Didn't your friends tell you?" I replied, "I have no friends here since I have just entered the country as a new missionary." He was willing to excuse my ignorance if I would turn around and go the right way. Often the police would stop us for trivial reasons in order to obtain a bribe. It was my feeling we should give them none, but just to go ahead and let them ride around with us. Even though they were hopeful to frighten us with threat of being taken to court in order to receive a bribe, we still would not give them any money. In frustration, they would usually say, "I will get out here." If they gave back our driver's license, we could feel safe, knowing we had not violated any law seriously. Not all police were this unethical, though some were.

One day I was parked in the wrong place unknowingly. When I returned, one back tire had been deflated and one front tire. I had to take both tires off, roll them to a service station to be pumped up, and roll them back and put them on again. This was their way of warning us not to park there again. I would much rather have paid a parking ticket.

What I have told here is typical of problems which most any foreigner might have in an African country. Since there are few of us, and they are third world countries, knowing we come from America they assume all of us are wealthy. In a sense we are, comparatively. This was made clear to us when national people would come, when we lived in the bush, to our garbage dump and take things we had thrown away, such as tin cans, old clothing, etc. They were proud to have tin cans to use as cups, and old socks with holes, which they could mend and wear. How thankful we should be to have economic prosperity far above most countries of the world! We have more than kings and princes of former days.

The “John Joseph” Church of Christ

The founder of the John Joseph church was a man by the name of John Joseph. Unlike Paul who would not allow people to be called after him (1 Corinthians 1: 10-13), thus dividing the body of Christ into sects and parties, this man named the church after himself. He was an unlearned Liberian who believed in God’s speaking to him and his followers in dreams. The story was told that in one of their annual conventions, he told his members that he dreamed that the church bought him a new car. This was his way of begging them to buy him one. But one of the sisters foiled his plan. She arose and said, “I had a dream also. God told me in this dream that we bought you a car and you had a wreck and were killed. So, we won’t buy you a car.”

This was the kind of church in Monrovia when I first came there in 1969. A black American preacher had supposedly “converted” them and I told this preacher, who seemed jealous that I was going to work in Liberia with his newly established church, that I was not going to take over that church but to help nurture them, but also try to establish others. I even invited him to go with me and that we would work together. He made excuses that he had to remain in the states to fight for “social justice.” This was



Philip Whymah, Kim, Charlie Paegar.

at the height of the racial problems of the sixties. I felt that preaching the gospel to the lost was much more important, and I was proving my love for peoples of other races by going to help them learn of the Lord and His ways.

The preacher for this small congregation was named Robert Gibson. He

was small of stature and worked for an American couple as a house boy for them. I did much teaching to the effect that we were not to trust in our dreams or any other authority than the word of God. But it is so difficult for people to give up old ways they have practiced for years. Robert Gibson, nor most of the John Joseph members, ever gave

up their old ways. One night, Thomas, one of the members, arose and said, "I had a dream that Sister Nicks was sowing pumpkin seeds around, and they sprang up in many pumpkins." We kidded Gerry by calling her "Gerry pumpkin seed" for a while. One man was baptized the first Sunday I preached at this church. He was Charles Paegar, who to this day is a faithful member at the Gayetown church in Monrovia. He came to the small school we started, meeting at Center and Benson in Monrovia in a second story of a building which had a store on the first floor. Eventually, Robert Gibson ended association with the church of Christ, taking his members with him back to the John Joseph church, and they built another structure, mov-



Amos Wesseh, Bill and Charlie Paegar boarding plane for mission trip in up-country Liberia among Bassa tribe.

ing away from the one on his own compound, which has now been torn down. In 1982, 86 and 88, on visits to Monrovia I went to see Robert Gibson, and he was cordial, even came to hear me preach on Sunday night, but it is doubtful if any of the seeds of those early days in 1969-71 have taken root. He still preaches his dreams. Other churches were planted with the gospel truth. When we left in 1971 to go back to Nigeria after their war, we had planted 15 churches, some of which did not remain faithful after we left. But the church in the meantime has thrived in spite of difficulties of coups in the country of Liberia. At this time, 1989, there are some 46 churches, according to reports from the Gayetown congregation, the hardest working church in Liberia.

For the Lack of a Leader

This story reminds me of the adage, “for the want of a nail, the horse was lost” and eventually, the battle and the nation were lost. Leaders in a church make a big difference. If a preacher is sound, and he has the backing of godly elders, the members are not reluctant to follow them. Sometimes members will follow apostate leaders also, but in such cases, these leaders will be held responsible for the flock they have led astray (Hebrews 13:17).

It was our aim to develop good leaders among the Liberian men, for we knew if they were strong, they would have a wholesome influence on their people. If churches with good leaders are developed, the American missionary can go home feeling good about the future of the church in the land he has served.

This is the story of one of my failures, but not because we did not try. Moses Weah was a denominational preacher in a suburban area of Monrovia. He had contacted P.T. Menefee, who lived and worked with the churches in Sierra Leone, and later Gambia. On a visit to Monrovia, before we went there in 1969, somehow Moses had learned of the church of Christ and wanted an affiliation, probably to enhance his support. P.T. later told me that on his first visit there, he noticed that they had drums in the church and that he tried to teach them that such were not accord-



Drummer calling village to lecture.

ing to God's plan of worship. But the next time he visited them, they still had the drums. He said, "I picked them up and took them and laid them outside the building. Then I came back in and told the people if they continued to use them they were violating God's law."

When Moses came to my house, he was cordial and invited me to come and speak for the church, and that he was interested in it becoming a church of Christ. When I arrived, he introduced me with a flowery introduction, telling the people, "We are more than satisfied to have Brother J.W. Nicks with us tonight." If Moses had shown his sincerity by fully accepting the truths presented, his introduction would have been appreciated. However, in all the visits I made later to this place, I saw no sign that any members had been led to the truth by him, nor did he show



Kim Langford, Gerry, Charlie Paegar, Moses and Collins Wesley in front of Diana's restaurant, Monrovia.

any desire to attend our school and develop himself into a faithful preacher. He was another example of a "con man" who was more interested in feathering his nest than in promoting Biblical truth. Probably out of respect for brother P.T. Menefee, they did not use the drums in my presence, but who knows what they did when we were not there? Eventually, they drifted back to the old sectarian ways. Moses Weah could be described, as an old Indian did a preacher, "big thunder, no rain!"

A Herald of Truth Contact Follow-Up

The Herald of Truth broadcast is heard over some African stations, as well as many in the States. Henry Hill, a Liberian, heard a message and sent for some literature. They in turn from Abilene sent me his name as a contact. He lived at a village called "Backbush." You can tell by the name it was way back in the country (bush). I had a nice visit with Henry, and later he and his wife visited our house in Monrovia for a meal, and they reciprocated by inviting us to their house for a meal. He invited me to speak for the church, a denominational, perhaps a Baptist, congregation.

At this point, let me describe the most popular radio station in Africa, ELWA, which stands for Eternal Love Winning Africa. It is an instrument of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). This organization is supported by a conglomeration of denominations. We had stopped at their rest house in Lagos on Montgomery Street (pronounced by the Nigerians, MONT-GO-MERRY). It is a place that welcomes all missionaries, and one is treated nicely, and the cost is very reasonable. They support a nice Hospital, as well as the radio station, in Monrovia. In the Hospital are good American doctors, where one of my grandchildren was born. In spite of all the good done by them, they

foster sectarianism, and would not allow undenominational Christianity to be presented over their station. Obviously not, since their support comes from a divided Christendom.

When Gerry and I went to Backbush, there was a good crowd assembled. They met in a mud building, but had wooden benches placed on the dirt floor. Henry introduced me as a visitor from the States.

While I was speaking, two of the women in the congregation "got the Spirit," and started rolling on the floor. Both of them rolled past Gerry, who was sitting on the back bench. This was our first experience to witness a real "holy roller." The two women came back into the building, after rolling a distance down the street. They shook hands with everyone, saying, "Thank God, thank God." Evidently, this is what Henry had taught them was the way the Holy Spirit operated, and they were carried away with the occasion.

After that, I tried to teach Henry of the true manner in which the Spirit operated, through the teaching of God's word and our acceptance of it in obedience in a more quiet and sensible way. But I saw no evidence that he was convinced of the truth of God's plan of salvation. In spite of this, he offered us land on which to build, but he would retain control of the property. We could not afford to risk having a school or church under such conditions. Obviously, this man wished to have some "civilization" in his village, and he had the ordinary attitude of ELWA, that one church is as good as another. He never seemed to catch the spirit of pure, undenominational Christianity.

Later, when Houston Ezell, elder at Vultee in Nashville, and along with him Roger Church, Vance

Witherspoon, Harvey Floyd and Bob Stone were all visiting us in Monrovia, we told them about the Backbush experience. They wanted to see the place and the land, and to meet Henry Hill, but after meeting him they felt as I did namely, that there was no interest in pure New Testament Christianity. Houston and Roger have especially shown an interest in the spread of the gospel in Western African nations. After they returned home, Bob Stone and the wife of Vance Weatherspoon were killed in a tragic automobile accident in the States.

A Man of Action: Jimmy Lovell

Although some brethren did not admire the doctrinal stance of brother Jimmy Lovell, no one can accuse this deceased brother of a lack of zeal for evangelism. With his "miss-a-meal" program advertised through his paper, *Action* (formerly *California Christian*), he raised a tremendous amount of money for the mission fields. This story is to let you know of my personal experience with him, and to tell of the great help he was to us.

I first met brother Lovell in 1970, when I was quite discouraged with some of the disappointments in Liberia. He came to visit us with no suitcase, only a knapsack on his back. He was going on a world-wide missionary tour. Each night he would wash out the day's clothing worn each night. This is how he managed to take so little with him. I was having a problem with one of the Liberian brethren, which I related to brother Jimmy. He immediately said, "let me go with you to meet this brother, so we can kneel together and pray over this matter." I believe this is the solution to many of our problems. We forget to take them to the Lord in prayer. But when we do, we usually can not only have better relations with our brethren, but can patiently face the problem with more sensible ways to resolve them. We would have solved the problem with this brother had it not been for interference with some other



Jimmy Lovell during his visit to Liberia

brethren from the States. But that is a long story which I do not think it wise to relate. I only hope in time all involved will pray over the matter, forgive and live and work together as brethren.

After I went back to Nigeria following their Civil War (1971), brother Lovell wrote to me saying, "I am going

to send you \$1,000 which I want you to use for an advertisement as many times as the money will afford for World Bible School." I ran it in the *Daily Times* for two or three times. Then he sent me \$1,000 on two other occasions which were used for the papers in Enugu, a city of one million, and in the Lagos paper, *Daily Times*, which goes out all over Nigeria. Due to these announcements for World Bible School, brother Lovell was so overwhelmed with Nigerians wanting the courses that he had to ask help of churches throughout the United States. Perhaps some of you still grade correspondence courses and maintain con-

tact for World Bible School. It is a fine means of making contacts, which must be followed up by missionaries. I know of two who are doing this in Nigeria, and others in Liberia and Ghana. So far as I know, these three countries are the most prolific respondents to the World Bible School. Ralph Perry and Monday John Akpakpan are following up contacts in Nigeria. Kent Hayhurst is doing so in Liberia. Others are doing the same in Ghana. May these efforts bring forth much fruit.

It is often difficult to know what to do in response to letters begging for Bibles, bride prices and motorcycles. Let me encourage all engaged in this work to exercise caution. Don't pander too much to their material desires. Some are poor spiritually, as well as physically, and will use the materials sent for the wrong purposes. If a missionary is nearby and can recommend such a person to you, it is safer to respond with help. We want our money to be spent in such a way as to glorify God and lead to salvation of souls.

Two other blessings received from brother Jimmy Lovell for the Nigerian work were the gift of 10,000 Ibo Bibles immediately after the Civil War in 1971, and also the gift of a printing press, which was sent via the African Christian Schools to Ukpom, Abak Nigeria, where it is still in operation, located near Uyo on the road to Oron.

Chiefs Die, Too!

When we considered moving up country, the reason for our choice of place was the church which we had established at Felleh Lar. It began when William Sidifor, one of our students in our school in Monrovia, said that he would like for me to go with him to his home village to preach. He first took me to Chief Winneh, the chief of his village. Chief Winneh was a very heavy-set man, perhaps weighing 275 pounds. He was not very tall, so the weight was way too much for him. I saw him on several occasions drink whiskey which was offered him. I surmised that he was greedy and would turn nothing down



John and Ellen, children of Chief Winneh.

that was free, even if it was not good for him.

On my first visit, the Chief was dressed beautifully in an African dashiki, a loose fitting garment worn by many Africans, often embroidered beautifully. His was expensively embellished. Also, I noticed a sweet smell of perfume on him. He was trying to impress me so that we would move to his village. He said it would be an honor for them to have me. Of course, he looked on it as an economic advantage, not that he was at all interested in the gospel. But it meant something to have the approval of the Chief. That was the only time he ever came to church, that is, on the day we first came. They had decorated the passage way to the church building (meeting in a school) with palm fronds wound around sticks stuck in the ground, both on the sides of the walkway and overhead. This was their way of making one feel welcome.



Soldiers, Masons and Honorables at Chief Winneh's funeral at Felleh Lar.

When we started meeting, two of the Chief's children, John and Ellen, came to church and both were baptized into Christ. I knew the Chief was a polygamist, but I did not realize how steeped he was into the practice until the Chief died. I was asked to preach his funeral. Of course, many Masons were there, too, and did their own rituals, but I had a chance to get in a word for our Lord. I was amazed to see about 30 wives lined up all in black dresses to mourn their dead husband, the Chief. About half of them were pregnant. Some Africans feel they are big men if they can have many wives, a large compound of children, and an upstairs concrete house.

How different this worldly attitude is from the humble manner of life our Lord taught us (Matthew 20:20-28)! *"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"* (Matthew 16:26).



Chief Winneh's widows at his funeral.

Working Up Country in Liberia

After making a few visits to Felleh Lar, we decided to move up country to this village, which was near President Tubman's Farm. This President was a Methodist and a Mason. He had been President for about 25 years when he died. He had befriended the U. S. during World War II, allowing planes to land at Roberts Field on the way to battles in North Africa. His Vice-President was William Tolbert, a Baptist who was killed, along with all of his cabinet, in the coup in the late 70's. Tubman died a natural death about 1972. He was President during our stay in Liberia from 1969-71. We would often see his convoy of secret service men taking him to the Farm on weekends.

While working with the church at Felleh Lar, we started a church at the President's Farm. I had been teaching the Bible at a chapel service at the school for several months. I used flannel graphs to illustrate Bible Lesson, which not only the students liked, but also the teachers. I told the teachers I would like to start a church in the President's Farm. One of them said, "Why not? Old man likes God-palaver." He was referring to President Tubman, whom all respectfully called "old man." In fact, I was known by many as "old man" since I was in my fifties while there. We had about 300 students to teach at the school, but when we began church services, we had only

about 25 or 30 to attend. But we baptized a few people as a result. After I left for home, then back to Nigeria in 1971, those few attended at the church in Felleh Lar, five miles away.

Gerry and I would try to keep physically fit, so we ran a mile each day. We ran from our house a half mile to the rubber processing building and back. We can still remember the sweet smell of rubber tree blooms. The workers would tap the trees to obtain the latex, let it harden at the processing room, then take it to Firestone at Harbel to go into rubber tires, etc. Harbel was about 50 miles away. The foreman of the rubber plantation workers in Felleh Lar was Sammy Turkolay. He lived near us, and he and I got along well together. He was baptized after a short time. When we visited back there in 1986, he came to see me. I had been told he had quit coming to church, and that he



Christians bidding us goodbye at the Felleh Lar Rubber Farm.

had taken a second wife. I talked to him about the importance of the church in his life, asking him to repent of taking a second wife. He made a confession at church that night of his sorrow that he had neglected the church and that he was determined to try to do better. I don't know if Sammy is now faithful, nor if he has given up wife number two. The devil is no respecter of nations or persons. It is my prayer he will have the courage to do right.

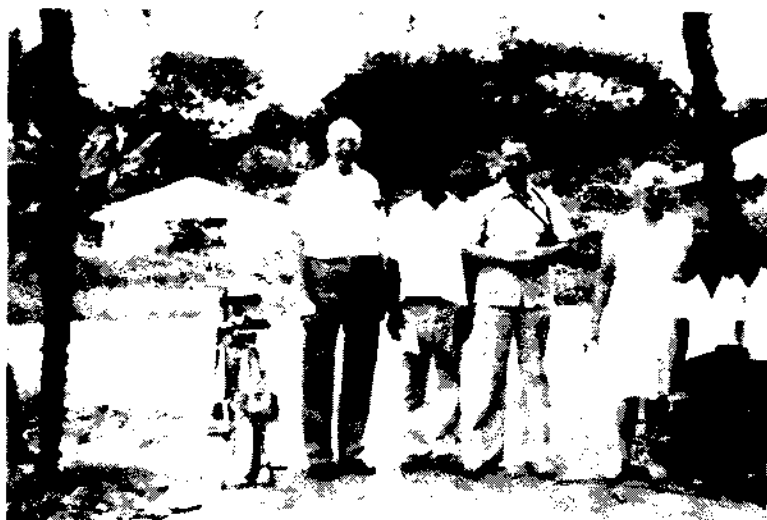


Bill with Sammy Turkolay, foreman of workers on Rubber Farm.

Chief Sinatua and the Country Devil

After we moved to Felleh Lar, 75 miles up country from Monrovia, we found it to be a strange world, different from any place we had ever lived. The people were of the Kpelle tribe. Dr. Tom Drinnen, his wife, Nita, and their two children, Susan and Tommy, were the only white neighbors we had. Gerry and I (our children were grown and married by this time) lived on a rubber plantation, renting a house, a former hotel and bar, owned by and next door to the summer house of General and Mrs. Brewer. He was a retired General of the Liberian army, and they were congenial landlords. Tom and Nita rented from Mrs. Stewart, a native lady who lived elsewhere, renting her house to the Drinnens.

When we started a school, we had about seven or eight students. One came from Bueata (pronounced **Bway-Uh-Tah**), six miles away, whose name was George Tokpah. To distinguish him from another George who lived in Felleh Lar, also a student, we called them Little George and Big George. George Tokpah, little George, turned out to be a valuable man. He is now head of the clinic. Dr. Drinnen trained him and Amos Wesseh to help the sick in that area after he left, but Amos did not prove to be steady. Little George is faithful in the clinic and in the church. He came to Monrovia to visit me in December of 1988 and we had a



Harold and Della Duncan and Big George as we were welcomed to Felleh Lar, 1982

good visit.

Another who came to study with us in our classes was Chief Sinatua, chief of little George's village of Bueata. The chief was leader of the John Joseph church, described in another chapter, in Felleh Lar. They had a nice building, better than the mud building we had erected as our first effort to have a place of worship and a clinic. The chief seemed to be a man of intelligence and participated in our question and answer periods when we studied the Bible. It was rumored that Chief Sinatua was the "country devil," someone who made weird sounds at night after people had gone to bed. We often heard them from our bedroom window. People who were superstitious were frightened, and children were made to fear the "country devil." After we

left Liberia in 1971, we heard Chief Sinatua had obeyed the gospel and that there was a church started in his village of Bueata. Little George deserves credit for helping the chief to learn the truth. The Chief died about 1975.

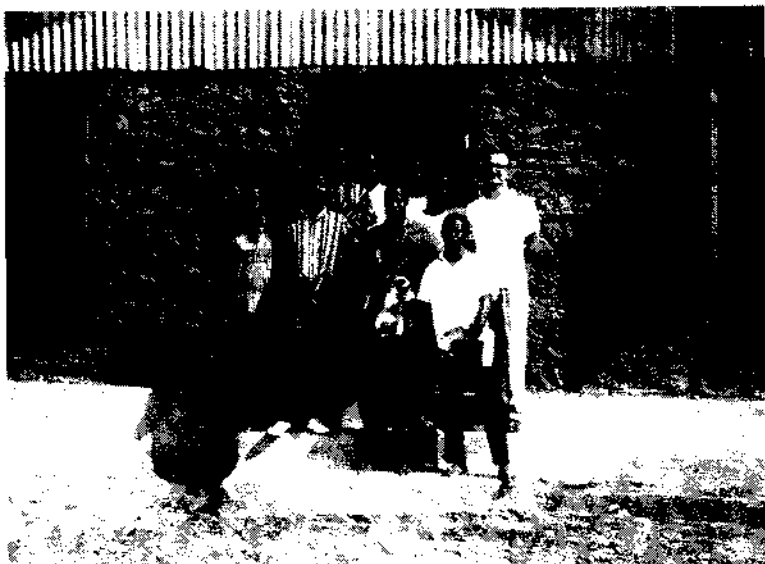
We don't have a country devil, but we have a living devil, who is a real live being, not human, but he seeks to destroy us by corrupting our minds (2 Corinthians.11:3). We must fear God who is able to destroy soul and body in hell (Matthew10:28). Jesus is superior to the devil and will deliver us from Satan's power (1 John 4:4).



The Country Devil.

The Man Bitten By a Cobra

A cobra bite is well known as one of the most deadly of all snakebites. It affects the nervous system, and one dies in a short time without some anti-toxin to counter its effects. One day while we were living in Felleh Lar (Liberians call it **Flay-La**), a man came, or rather was brought to me, who had been bitten by a cobra. They seemed nonchalant for such a serious ailment. I soon found out why. The man who was bitten claimed to be a snake charmer. Like Simon the sorcerer, he had put out that he was a great one, and that if a snake should bite him, the snake would die. The cobra had bitten him on the finger, and they thought the snake would die, but the man would live. They who brought him believed what the man calling himself a snake charmer had taught them. The fact that he was not doing so well did not seem to disturb them since they were gullible. They brought him to me at 1 p.m., and I asked when he had been bitten, to which they replied it was 10 a.m. I asked why they did not get him here sooner, but they said they were not worried since the man had said the snake would die, but he would live. Immediately, I took him to Dr. Tom Drinnen, who lived close by. He could do nothing, but offered to take the man in his car to Phoebe Hospital, located about 40 miles away. The doctors there admitted the man, gave him an anti-toxin, but it



Dr. Tom Drinnen and members at Felleh Lar in front of first church-clinic building.

was too late. The man died at 7 p.m.

Tom told me that the men still had the snake with them in the car they came in. On returning from the Hospital, Tom took them to the Paramount Chief, who told them he wanted to see the snake. The men who had brought the snake charmer to us said, "We will show it to you, but the snake is dead. Here it is in this sack." The Chief demanded they open the sack. They did, and out crawled the cobra, alive and well, but the man who was bitten was dead by that time, unawares to them. The Chief cried out, "Kill that thing." They quickly cut off the snake's head.

It doesn't pay to fool around with poisonous snakes. Paul was spared from a venomous bite (Acts 28:3-6), but

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he was an apostle, and promised such power by the Lord (Mark 16:17-20). These signs do not follow us (speaking in tongues, handling serpents, or drinking deadly poison), because the word has been confirmed. Only apostles had power to confer such power to men (Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-6). We have no apostles living, therefore such powers have ceased. Besides the word has been confirmed; once confirmed, it is forever confirmed. We have a greater power, the gospel, which saves our souls (Romans.1:16). Our faith is in the written miracles contained in our Bible (John 20:30).

“Some of Us Did That Just Last Night”

After we had established the church in Felleh Lar, in up-country, we built a part mud, part concrete building in which to meet and to hold daily clinic sessions. Dr. Tom Drinnen and I and our families were living in this village.

One Lord's day I was teaching a Bible class and the text being studied was 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, which included the verse, *“and this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; that each of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor.”* I pointed out that any act of sex outside one-wife marriage was not lawful in God's sight because it was against the will of God who taught us that, since we were saved from sin by the blood of Christ, we are now sanctified, or set apart into God's family, which meant we are to control our vessels, or our bodies.

One of the men in the class was touched by this teaching. John Carr was a good man, but he yielded to the temptation to take a second wife. He had an older wife who was very unattractive, but was a good woman by the name of Delia. They grew rice on their farm and had a hired hand living in another house on their farm. This hired hand died and left a young and more attractive wife, whom John married.

When I explained what constituted fornication, John arose from his seat and said, "Brother Nicks, some of us just did that last night!" I told him I was sorry, but that even though it was a common practice I must still warn against the danger of violating God's will in the matter. In our country, it is unlawful for a man to commit bigamy, but it is such a common practice in West Africa that the laws are more lax. This indicates that the civilization which is brought to a nation has not permeated Africa as it has some other places. When the Bible is taught in its simplicity and purity, it will not only change the laws of the country, but will permeate every home in the private sectors, and bring morality to the lives of the people. There are many young Africans who are trained in Christian principles, and will never be polygamists like their forefathers. This will make a tremendous difference in the nation in its advancement toward better living. But above all, it will make an eternal difference in the lives of those who live according to Biblical instruction.

A Man Called "Cup" (By Gerry Nicks)

Hiring a "watchnight" was a necessity when we moved up country in Liberia, especially in view of the fact that we lived on the main road between Monrovia and the President's Farm. The one who got the job was a former Corporal in the Liberian army. According to their manner of leaving off the last of words, his rank of Corporal became "Cup", and that was the only name we had for him. He called us "Boss Man" and "Missy." Cup was quite a character! He came a little before dark each evening and set up his "office" on our front porch from which he made his rounds to see that everything was well. His only weapon was a bow and arrow but he could kill scorpions on the first try.

It was a well-known fact that watchnights slept on the job but we felt some sense of security because he was there. Of course, the night thieves brought a truck and took many things from our house when we were gone. Cup was evidently on vacation.

There was one night when I wished he had been asleep. I was having one of my nightmares and Bill woke me up as I was crying out. The first thing I heard was Cup's footsteps running from the porch to our bedroom window. He was saying, "What wrong, Missy? What wrong, Missy?"

over and over again. Bill finally made him understand that I was just having a bad dream. When Cup was out of earshot, my complaint was, "I can't even have a bad dream in private!"

There were many times when we felt that our privacy was invaded, since there were so many people around all the time. Then we remembered that our business there was to get to know these people, gain their confidence, and teach them God's word. How could we do that if we were isolated from them?



"Missy" and "Cup".

Snakes Alive!

Africa is known as the land of snakes and wild animals. We lived in the rain forest area of West Africa where the population was the heaviest in all of Africa. The people killed wild animals for food, so for that reason we did not see many wild animals, but we saw plenty of snakes. When people often ask me what wild animals I saw, my usual reply is: "The wildest animal I saw was the



Twelve foot Liberian Boa with eggs.

mosquito." They were in abundance, forcing us to sleep under mosquito nets at nights. A new missionary noticing this feature said the next morning, "I heard mosquitoes singing around my net all night." Someone asked, "What were they singing?" He said, "I believe it was 'There is a Fountain Filled With Blood'."

Often on bush roads, I would run over boa constrictors. They are not poisonous, but if given leverage can crush their prey. They have been known to curl around small animals, like goats and swallow them. On display in Monrovia one day was a boa which had swallowed a goat. Someone had captured the snake just after he had swallowed the goat. Of course, he was so large he was immobile, and couldn't slither away. The snake ejects the bones in such cases.

When we lived up country in Liberia at Felleh Lar, Sammy Turkolay was making a big commotion in his house. Hearing it, I ran up to see if I could help. He said, "There was a big snake in my ceiling and I shot it." It was a long one, about ten feet, that looked like a garden snake. There were also green mambas and black mambas in Liberia. This is a venomous snake allied to the cobra, but with no hood. In fact it is often called cobra, or tree cobra. The largest snake that I saw in length was a spitting cobra. It was 13 1/2 feet in length and was unearthed when we were building our first dormitory at Ukpom, a mud dormitory. I have a slide showing this snake with the man who killed it with a stick. Ituen, one of our students, showed courage in killing it, because the danger of a spitting cobra is his range to spit his venom at his prey. If it happens to land in an eye, or on some wound, it can kill in a short

time.

Our adversary, the devil, is pictured in the Bible as a serpent. Obviously, he was upright, but after man's fall, he was cursed to crawl on his belly. But the devil is a live being roaming the earth, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). We should fear his subtlety, even more than our fear of snakes. He corrupts our minds from Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).

Some Lessons Learned From African Women (by Gerry Nicks)

Teaching in a foreign field often works like a boomerang — the students became our teachers. I saw the meaning of many things as I had never learned the meaning before. Parts of the Bible became very real to me because of the African women. I saw them “rise while it was still night,” “plant their farms,” and “deliver their produce to the merchants” as in Proverbs 31. They came to the stream or the well with their waterpots like the woman in John 4. Their lamps were trimmed and filled with oil as in Matthew 25.

These women taught me the real value of “things.” They showed me that they could be happy without many of the things that American women take for granted. I also learned I could live without many things I thought I needed when the thieves came and took them away from me. But it was the women who taught me to appreciate what I had and to share with those less fortunate the wonderful gifts God bestowed on me.

Perhaps the most important lesson of all was learning to depend on God. Many times in our lives, we come to a place where there is no one else to whom to turn, and we need to know that we can go to Him. They talked to Him daily in their morning and evening prayers. When they



Gerry with Mary James.

came in to any service, they sat down quietly and bowed their heads. When asked, "How are you?" some of them would answer, "I thank God!" At times when we would do something to help them, they would say, "I have nothing to give you, but God will pay you." It seemed so easy for them to talk about God and talk to Him as well.

In so many areas of the work in West Africa, even though I might have been called teacher, I can freely say, "I learned more than they did."

Our Serendipity (by Gerry Nicks)

We believe the five years that our three girls spent with us in Nigeria were good for them in many ways. They were as healthy there, or healthier, than any time in their lives. They didn't suffer any scholastically from having school at home through five grades. They became more creative in their recreation time without television and other attractions to fill their minds. They learned to sing well together and were able to bring joy to others through that talent. Certainly their spiritual growth was enhanced because they, with us, had the feeling of being on the firing line and in the thick of battle. They were involved in the work, not just marking time. We had to adjust to the difference when we went back to West Africa without them.

When our last daughter married, we handled our empty-nest syndrome by moving to Liberia as that country's first resident missionaries of the church. Our serendipity came after we had been in Liberia for almost five months. A letter came from our oldest daughter, Becky Gross, that her husband had received his orders for Viet Nam and that she and their seven or eight month daughter would be coming to work with us while he was gone. Before they came, I had been teaching in a small school where I was permitted to teach Bible every day

along with the other subjects. Becky willingly accepted that job, riding a bicycle several miles each day, while I stayed home with Melody and kept house. They stayed with us for about eight months and were able to help a lot in the work as well as keep us from being so lonely.

About four months after Becky and Melody came, according to plans made a year before, our second daughter, Jeanie Langford, moved to Liberia with her husband and small daughter Kim. We were fellow-workers with them for about a year and a half and had some very enjoyable times together. We have also visited them later on when they were missionaries in Kingston, Jamaica and



Missionaries in Liberia with us in 1971:
Langfords, Drinnens, Sarah Young and Underwoods.

Maui, Hawaii. Jeanie taught ladies' classes, as well as children's classes, wherever they were. She also handled correspondence courses and whatever she could do without neglecting her two little girls.

Another added blessing came after we had gone back to Nigeria to work. As soon as the Biafran War was over, we left Jeanie and her family in Liberia and went back to help in restoring the work in Onicha Ngwa and surrounding areas. In January of 1972, I flew back to Liberia to be there when Jeanie's second daughter was born. Of our five, Dawn is the only grandchild of whom I can say, "I heard her first cry." Were it not for the fact that we were on the same continent, that would not have been possible.

We can't but hope that the continued interest in mission work was sparked by our children being involved with us in their early years. We shouldn't be afraid to take our small children to the mission fields of the world with us. It is a double blessing, both to them and to us.

How Is Your Sense of Humor? (by Gerry Nicks)

After living several months in our borrowed District Officer's house, we moved into our newly constructed concrete block house. The floors were also cement and for several reasons carpets were out of the question. As we visited some houses in Aba township, we saw that they had painted their cement floors with red paint and used red wax to give a nice, smooth shine. We decided that would be just the thing to give our house a more attractive look, and make it easier to sweep.

We learned in our first and second tries that the cement had not dried enough, and so the paint also refused to dry. This meant that we had to remove it all and wait a longer time for our "beautiful" floors. When we were ready to try again, we found a special floor paint that was supposed to be the one that would really work. We painted the living room at night so we could paint ourselves into our bedroom, and give the floor a chance to dry overnight. We went to sleep with the feeling of a job well done, looking forward to being able to walk on our nice dry floor in the morning.

We were awakened in the middle of the night by one of West Africa's hard storms with a lot of lightning, loud thunder and heavy rain. As usual, our first thought was to

rush to get the windows closed in other parts of the house. Without a second thought, Bill ran from our bedroom into the living room where his feet slipped out from under him and he slid across the floor in a puddle of water and wet red paint. It turned out that the only leak in our new "aluminium" roof was over the living room.

Being completely unaware of what had happened, I followed in my husband's footsteps, lost my footing, went sliding across the floor and wound up sitting in the puddle right beside him. With the illumination of the lightning, we looked at each other and started giggling. The peals of laughter got loud enough that our girls came running out of their bedroom to see what in the world had happened to us. They joined in the fun as soon as they saw our plight and that we were not hurt. We finally got ourselves settled down, changed our wet paint-covered pajamas, put a bucket under the leak and went back to bed for a few more hours' sleep. The next day we had to take up that wet paint again. A few months later, Bill had the floor covered with a coat of red Colorcrete which dried nicely, and we had our shiny red, waxed floors.

On the mission field, a good sense of humor is a necessity. We only hurt ourselves when we become frustrated and depressed over things that don't turn out just the way we want them to. Solomon said, "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine*" (Proverbs 17:22) Since it has no side effects, it is better than medicine.

Pidgin English: "What Ting Be Dis?"

One feature of West Africa we will long remember is pidgin English. Those who are born in the Ibo, Efik, Yoruba or Hausa tongues speak English as their second language. Many of them have not had the opportunity to go to school and, as they would say it, "savvy book." So their communication to English speaking people has to be in broken English, called "pidgin." It is quite humorous to those who speak proper English to hear a conversation in pidgin. Instead of "let's go," it is, "make we come." A nurse will say to the patient, "I will fix your medicine for you to take," but speaking to the patient who cannot converse in proper English, she would say, "I go fixum; you go takum." Instead of "God exists," it becomes, "God dey." "Trust God" becomes, "Leafum for God." Food is "chop."

A rendering of John 3:16 goes like this: "Papa God, he done love we too much. He go send Him only pekin to die for we so we no get lost." Below is the story of the creation and fall of Genesis in pidgin:

"An de Laud, He done go work hard for make dis ting dey call um Earth. For six day de Lawd He work an He done make all ting — every-t'ing He go put for Earth. Plenty beef, plenty cassava, plenty banana, plenty guinea corn, plenty mango, plenty groundnut — everyt'ing. An

for de wata He put plenty fish, an for de air He put plenty kinda bird. After six day de Lawd He done go sleep. An when He sleep, plenty palaver start for dis place dey call um Heaven. Dis Heaven be place where we go live after we done die, if we no been so-so bad for dis Earth . . . De headman of dem angels, dey call um Gabriel. When dis palaver start for Heaven there be plenty humbug by bad angel, dey call um Lucifer. An Gabriel done catch Lucifer an go beat um. An palaver stop, one time.

An de Lawd tell Gabriel he be good man too much an He go dash Gabriel one trumpet . . . An Lucifer go for hell fire where he be headman now. After, de Lawd done go look um dis ting dey call um Earth an He savvy dat no man be for seat. So de Lawd take small piece earth an He go breathe, an man dey. An de Lawd He go call dis man Hadam.

An Hadam He say, "Yessah, Lawd, I savvy." . . . Den de Lawd dun come back for Earth an He go call Hadam. But Hadam he no be for seat. He go fear de Lawd and done go for bush, one time. Again de Lawd call: "Hadam!" An Hadam he say with small voice, "Yessah, Lawd." An de Lawd He say, "Close me, Hadam, close me." An Hadam he close de Lawd.

De Lawd say: "Wassa matta, Hadam, why go for bush?" An Hadam say: "I no get cloth Lawd, so I no want dat you dun see me naked." An de Lawd He be vex too much. He say "Ah-ha." He say: "I no chop um Lawd. Dem woman you dun make for me, she go put um for groundnut stew."

Den de Lawd He make plenty palaver an He dun drove Hadam and Heva from paradise."

Perhaps in days to come pidgin will be a thing of the past, for Africans are becoming more and more educated. They are not so amused at pidgin; like ju-ju, pidgin is a symbol of the past, and they are now in a period of transition during which they are advancing rapidly into the future world where they can proudly take their place among other nations.

Nigeria has truly made rapid strides since obtaining their independence from Britain in 1960. They have devised their own decimal system of money: naira and Kobo. They have tried universal free primary education, and, although it failed at first, they will one day succeed. They have introduced the metric system of weights and measures. While we lived there, they went from driving on the left side to the right side of the road.

They have also modified their form of government and are fast becoming a civilian-controlled democracy. They are truly to be admired for their advancement. Hopefully, one day polygamy will also be a thing of the past. Liberia, Ghana and Sierra Leone, other English speaking nations of West Africa, are also making great progress.

We truly do treasure the years we spent working among the people of West Africa. We believe there are to be found some of the finest people of the world there. And we believe some of the finest Christian people of the world are West Africans. After life's labors are ended, we earnestly look forward to seeing fellow-workers in the kingdom here in the eternal kingdom. We will know no color bar there, even as we have tried to eliminate it from our lives below.