

Beauty

Jessie Lee Caskey was in my kitchen, giving me a home permanent. Betty, my housemaid, watched with interest and began to giggle. "You white people want your hair to be curly and we black people try to make ours straight."

Betty was right. There are as many ideas about beauty as there are people: from the sophisticated lady with her elegant coiffure to the primitive one with her hair plastered with mud and fat; from the flawless matte complexion of the European lady to the oiled, scar-marked face of the African belle; from the modern city lady with her eye makeup, lipstick and blushers to the lady in the bush, painted with her red ochre – all trying to improve upon Mother Nature.

Many black women merely keep their closely kinked hair cut short and covered with scarves or berets, but the younger generation in South African cities today are changing that long-standing custom. Some let their hair grow longer and rake it out into an "Afro," some have their hair straightened and imitate the hair-do's of white women, while very young girls often have corn-rows of very tightly braided strands that are laid down, row upon row. Today's special makeup for the dark-skinned lady has reached the city shops.

In rural areas, the old-fashioned efforts at beauty can still be seen, some of the painting of faces and bodies having relationship to some ceremony in the life of the

individual. Xhosa boys, during their initiation, are painted white all over. Sometimes one may see people with faces painted white, yellow, or orange, creating a mask-like appearance.

Women's hair may be plastered with red mud, or a combination of mud and grease, and perhaps decorated with beads. Sometimes heads are completely shaved, whether for cleanliness or convenience. Ndebele women may shave a wide strip across the top of the head, from ear to ear, to facilitate the wearing of beaded ornaments. A Swazi man may plaster his hair with a mixture of soap and bleach, allowing it to dry into a cap-like shape, to remain that way for some days, after which he will wash it out and find his hair to be reddish and straight. A Swazi girl may have her hair stiffened with mud, pushed into cap-like shapes, dried, and painted with colorful designs. One of the most unusual hair styles was worn by a man in the eastern Transvaal. His head was shaved except for a small patch over the center of his forehead. That hair had grown three or four inches long and was twisted to a point. When he came out of the water after his immersion, he posed for a picture with a large shimmering drop of water about to fall from the tip of that twist of hair.

Black women who have carried loads on their heads since girlhood have developed a smooth, gliding stride. White women would do well if they could walk as beautifully. Accustomed to walking many miles at a time, they move easily, and walking barefoot, their stride is natural, not crippled by stylish shoes or high heels that throw the entire body out of line.

The wearing of beads has always been popular in the

black tribes. Before traders arrived with their colorful glass beads, the people laboriously fashioned them by hand, one at a time, from sea shells or the shells of ostrich eggs, and from colorful seeds. Once a ready supply of beads became available at trading stores, the making of all sorts of beaded ornaments became easy, and beadwork soon became a popular souvenir item among white visitors. Beads became the symbol of a black woman's wealth. On special occasions, the Ndebele women, for instance, will load themselves down with enormous bead-wrapped circles of straw, from smaller bracelets and anklets to large circles worn all up and down the arms and legs, and even larger circles around neck and waist. In addition, the more affluent among them will have a sort of apron of solid beadwork, and perhaps assorted strips of beadwork fastened to their skirts.

The colors of the beads have come to have meanings, and a girl may tell a story to those who can "read" her beads. To the Zulu, white is for purity and true love, red for intense love, blue for loneliness, green for extreme loneliness or pining, yellow for jealousy, pink for poverty, and black for anger, hurt, or jealousy. A group of white boys went from Benoni to Swaziland where they assisted in the construction of a church building. They were intrigued by the various pieces of beadwork: bracelets, necklaces, and strips of woven beads to pin onto a garment as an ornament, so they bought some of them and put them on. A group of Swazi girls passed by, and when they began to giggle and point, the boys wondered why. The girls refused to tell, but later the boys learned that one of them was wearing a bracelet that announced him to be a

virgin. It reminded me of the lady who laboriously copied some Chinese letters and embroidered them on a blouse, only to find out that she had copied a laundry list. Beads or words, it pays to know what they mean.

Zulu men and women sometimes have large slits in their earlobes into which they can insert wooden discs some two inches in diameter and $3/4$ of an inch thick. With the discs removed, the earlobes hang down and swing back and forth with the person's movements, but with the painted discs in place like large earrings, they are picturesque.

Once when I had been teaching a class of Christian women in Vendaland, one of the ladies had a question. Her people wanted her to have her baby girl marked with scars on her face and abdomen, and she wanted to know if a Christian mother could do this. My first thought was that if it was merely a custom and thought to be marks of beauty which would make the girl more desirable when she grew up, there could be no harm in it. The ladies explained, however, that the problem was not as simple as that. It was custom, to be sure, but it had a significance to the Venda people that would be contrary to Christian teaching. In that case I had to advise the mother to do her best to keep the family from having the baby marked. This may have been difficult advice to follow because aunts and other older relatives would have more to say in the matter than the young mother.

Sights, Sounds, and Smells

On one of our furloughs, I was asked to speak to a ladies class in Ponca City. John had already shown slides and talked about our work, and I wanted to present a new angle on our life in Africa, so I called my talk "The Sights, Sounds, and Smells of Africa." In writing about it now, my thoughts go from city to kraal, from mountains to plains, from areas of the affluent to the shantytowns and slums.

You have already read about the city of Johannesburg with its wintry smog and the smell of the coal smoke, and you have read about the dry, brown countryside we saw from our train windows on the way to Bulawayo. Riding through the open country in South Africa today is not like a scene from "Wild Country" on American TV. It is not like a movie of a safari into the game country of old, that is, not unless your journey takes you to a game reserve like Kruger National Park. What you do see in the rural areas around Johannesburg is miles and miles of rolling hills, much of it grass-covered, some of it stony. Before the spring rains bring new green, the brownness is broken only by large areas of blackened ground, the result of fires started mostly by the "Mr. Nobody's" who like to see it burn, or who believe it is good for the land. Some of the fires are in fact deliberately set so as to produce the earliest green shoots for grazing, but too many fires run wild, burning through the tall blue-gum trees, damaging them just a little bit more each winter.

Some of the land is good for farming, and where there are fertile areas, white farmers have planted large fields. Mealies (corn) is the main crop in many places, but you'll see big fields of sunflowers, another golden resource. And you'll see fields of kaffir corn, tobacco, small grains, and the market gardens with all the vegetables for the people in the cities.

If you go east of Johannesburg toward Kruger Park, you will see citrus groves, and sometimes, along the fences and around farm houses there are poinsettias growing roof high, and bougainvilleas of every hue, some climbing into the tallest tree-tops. In October there are the jakaranda trees in bloom, masses of lavender-blue flowers unlike any other.

If you go north of Johannesburg to Pretoria, when the jakarandas are in bloom, you may feel as I did, that you have left earth and gone to fairyland. Imagine walking along streets that are lined with jakarandas, the leaves yet unopened, the tall trees covered in jakaranda blue. Some of the blossoms have fallen to the ground, partly covering the green grass, the sun filtering softly through the branches. If you were on earth you would be walking on green grass under green trees, so surely this must be fairyland. Fairyland, that is, until heavy rain falls, beating the blossoms into the ground where they begin to rot, giving off a bitter, unpleasant smell. Fallen blossoms can make the streets dangerously slippery, but children love to walk on them because they burst with a popping noise.

Much of the northern Transvaal is bushveld. Flat-topped acacia trees, never very large, and a variety of other thorny bushes are scattered across vast regions of grassy

land, mile after mile. Mostly untilled and unproductive, some of the veld is slashed through with dongas where the torrential seasonal rains continue washing away the soil. Such erosion is a depressing sight that lends to the impression that Africa is an old, worn-down continent. In places there are miniature forests of the naboom, or candelabra euphorbia which resemble some forms of cacti but belong to the spurge family and have a biting, milky juice on the inside. They are actually related to poinsettias but do not resemble them. In the extreme northern part of the Transvaal, and across the river in Zimbabwe, are the unique baobabs with their gigantic, fat trunks and their grotesque, scrawny branches. According to legend, God was angry with his rebellious creation, and planted the baobab upside down.

One can no more describe South Africa as being all the same than an American can say that all of the United States is the same. There are humid areas near the coast, semi-desert areas, mountains, plains, semi-tropics and temperate zone, each with its own flora and fauna. In the Natal Province there are sugar cane and banana plantations, while the Free State and northern Cape Province have vast sheep farms. In Venda and across the north-eastern Transvaal are forests of pine and bluegum or eucalyptus, not indigenous, but set out in plantations, each with its own hue and its own perfume, accented by the smoke rising from the smoldering sawdust heaps by the sawmills.

White South Africans are lovers of flower gardens. The homes of the wealthy are surrounded by large grounds, kept immaculate by black gardeners, lawns

manicured, flower beds like pictures in *Better Homes and Gardens*. Even in smoggy Johannesburg, there are blossoms for every season of the year: Iceland poppies and stocks in winter, ranunculus and anemones and other flowering bulbs in spring, roses in early summer and again in autumn, and literally hundreds of varieties of flowers all summer long. Not only the rich have beautiful lawns and gardens. Many of the small homes are spotlessly kept, and many a zealous home gardener, assisted occasionally by a black gardener hired by the day, can be seen among the flower beds and fruit trees.

For a long time we were puzzled by the fact that the black people seemed to have little interest in planting flowers around their little homes. Sometimes they didn't even notice the flowers — we saw a line of people waiting for treatment at a clinic trampling right across a flower bed because it made a shortcut. After living close to them and working with them, we decided that the reason is that when you are poor, you are interested in planting that which will produce food, not beauty. Some urban blacks now do plant lawn, shrubs, and flowers, and at least one location has had home beautification contests to encourage more of this.

In the cities there are many parks and gardens, such as the wide-spread rose gardens in Emmarentia, Johannesburg, and the famous beds of flowers that spread, terrace below terrace, down the hill from the Union Buildings in Pretoria, to the great lawns that expand all the way to Church Street. People travel from far and wide to visit these gardens, to walk across the lawns, to sit and relax, and breathe deeply of the clean air of early summer when the rains have come, the coal fires have been extinguished,

and the sky on clear days is the bluest of anywhere in the world.

The rainy season in the Transvaal brings spectacular thunder and lightning storms that cause one to wince as the crashing and flashing seem to be everywhere at once. Rain usually blows up quickly and often falls too hard so that much of it rushes away, not having time to soak in. Often the harsh crackle of thunder is accompanied by the roar of hail and perhaps the breaking of windows and the destruction of property. As quickly as the storm arises, it blows itself out, and that brilliant blue sky, all washed and innocent, looks down once again. Once one of those hail storms came crashing down onto the corrugated metal roof of the old church building in Benoni just as Les Massey's sermon came to the part about the plagues in Egypt — the flies, the lice, the hail! The sermon came to a halt, for no one could be heard above the terrible racket of hail on a metal roof, and we waited several minutes for it to subside.

There are some distinctive sights, sounds, and smells about the home in South Africa. Once the Leonard Gray family had just returned after a furlough and they came to visit us for a couple of days in Benoni. They had walked into our house, put their suitcases down, and looked around. Marguerite took a deep breath and said, "Well, this smells like Bessie's house." For an instant, I thought she meant there was something unpleasant but quickly realized that it was the combination of the floor polish, the Sunlight soap, the particular air freshner in the bathrooms — the smell of most white South African homes, not just mine. With the later advent of carpeting, less floor

polish is used, and Sunlight soap has given away to detergents, but in the 50's, this was yet to come.

Often the South African home is filled with the odors of cooking which is distinctive: the curries, the leg of lamb laced with garlic, the mealie pap and boerewors, the large variety of fresh vegetables for dinner times. Fruit salads will contain lots of paw paw (papaya). In season, oranges appear in their orange-colored net sacks or pockets; the children play ball with them until they are soft, then punch a hole and suck out the juice.

Not all of the cooking smells are pleasant to everyone's nostrils. Often the black servants would rather have their own types of food, so my "girl" would cook her own dinner, sometimes on a little Primus in her own room, and sometimes in my kitchen. One girl preferred a sour mealie pap prepared from a fermented "starter." I disliked the smell and sometimes asked her to take it to her room to cook it. Only one thing was worse and that happened only once because I put my foot down and said "never again." The girl had used her meat allowance for the day to purchase some tripe. She failed to clean it properly and the stench was unforgettable, permeating every corner of the house.

A touchy subject is the smell of people. It is accepted as fact that different races smell differently. They are apt to say of each other, "*They stink.*" However, to them, *we* stink. Some blacks have said that white people smell like sheep. I suppose that a freshly bathed person of any race is acceptable to the noses of other races.

Any person doing hard labor is bound to perspire, and we always tried to make allowance for that fact, but we

had a few who worked for us who needed to be told that they must bathe daily and wear cleaner clothes. Telling a servant in so many words that he or she smelled bad was one of the hardest things I ever had to do, and I always softened the task for myself as well as the offending servant by handing over a supply of soap, with the reminder that there was plenty of warm water available for bathing and washing. I've often thought that the air surrounding the white pioneers who toiled across hot, arid regions, not able to bathe for days at the time, must have been pretty rank.

There are other smells that come to mind: the old-fashioned butcher shop where the butcher cuts the meat and lets it hang in the open. The distant drift of wood smoke coming from the cooking fires of black people in their huts. The smell of a newly-laid dung floor in a kraal. The more pleasant smell of a fully dry dung floor in a hut. The sweet perfume of a yesterday-today-and-tomorrow shrub filling the cool night air. The fainter perfume of our lemon tree in bloom. The ink used in the Gestetner duplicating machine. The acrid stench of fumes from the anthracite heater when the door was opened to add fuel. Some good, some bad.

Of all the impressions upon our senses, the sounds of Africa are as memorable as any. In the cities is the usual sound of traffic, though extra noisy because of the shifting of gears of small European cars. When we first went to Johannesburg, there were the old-fashioned trams with their peculiar whine and clatter. Electric busses with hissing brakes replaced the trams — double-deckers going into the northern suburbs, while double-deckers using

petrol served the southern suburbs.

The ground under much of Johannesburg is honey-combed with tunnels and shafts. When the gold ore has been removed, these eventually collapse, sometimes gradually, sometimes suddenly. Often there are "booms" more felt by the ear drums than heard, but sometimes severe enough to rattle doors and windows. A newcomer to the area will always sit up and take notice, but the old-timers just shrug shoulders and go about their business.

There were different sounds associated with the black people. They converse loudly, even when walking down the street side by side. Uninhibited, they call to one another way down the street — one of those things "just not done" by "dignified" white folks. They seem to have been created with more powerful voices than most white people, and according to their customs, they must use those voices. It is considered by some to be bad manners to speak softly!

Just as the speaking voices of the blacks are powerful, so are their singing voices. The women's voices are sometimes shrill and penetrating until a bit of training helps them to be more moderate. How they do love to sing! Harmonizing comes naturally to most and there are few "tin ears" among them. Only among the Xhosa people did we hear a style of singing that was so different that it tended to sound unmelodious to our ears, but when they sang their hymns, they praised God as well as any.

John once attended the funeral of a baby. The procession had gone to the cemetery, and as the men lowered the little casket and began to fill the grave, the women began to sing. This time they sang softly and sweetly. As

John described it, the women were all around him where he stood, and the singing was so beautiful that he almost felt as if he were in heaven, surrounded by a choir of angels.

The city blacks thoroughly enjoyed their holidays and had some customs that were very different from ours. On Boxing Day, the 26th of December, young men and women sometimes exchanged clothes and walked arm in arm along the streets, calling out "Happy, happy!" (pronounced ha-pee-e-e-e-e-e). Anyone who had worked for us in any capacity during the year, be it garbage collectors, delivery boys, gardeners, mail men – all expected their "Christmas box." A knock would come at the door and several young black men would be holding out their hands, saying, "Christmas box, Meddem," and I would have my supply of two-shilling pieces for those numerous trash collectors – far more numerous than we had ever observed working on the trucks. I suspected that at least half of the recipients of the money were "trash boys" only on the 26th of December, but at Christmas time, who worries? They needed a bit of cash anyway.

On our trips into the "bush," we heard the most interesting sounds of all. Many times we would hear drums beating all night long, though we were never certain just what the occasion was. Sometimes it had to do with initiation ceremonies for groups of young boys or girls which we were never permitted to witness. Most of the time, it was likely to be some energetic dancers playing the night away, but sometimes it was connected with a religious group, conducting their all-night "services."

Women in remote areas are very much in the

background. They are wives, mothers, field laborers, and water carriers, but when there is anything going on publicly, it is the men who are in the foreground. At a big ceremony to induct a new chief, we noticed that the only active part taken by women, other than that of cooking huge pots of food, was their peculiar ululations, a wailing sound marked by a quick side-ways movement of the tip of the tongue against the upper lip. We often heard this sound at other times as well.

At the induction of a new headman at a village in Vendaland, we heard the Venda "band." The leader had the horn of a kudu upon which he blew his one note while each of the band members had some sort of gadget which could also produce but one note. Pieces of ordinary garden hose, the cylindrical portions of bicycle pumps, and other things which I cannot remember, made up the instruments. As we were assembling in an open grassy area, the headman-to-be was escorted to his proper place, carrying a walking stick, holding his head abnormally high, and practicing looking haughty and important. The band arrived then with a heavy stomping of feet and rustling of the tall dry grass as they ran, single file into the open area. A pattern of tones was repeated over and over as each man blew his one note in turn. The "instruments" were not tuned to the "do, re, mi" that is familiar to our ears, but they enjoyed it and continued to play it again and again as they ran and danced. What a pity that I can't play a recording of it for you.

Many of these things will disappear with the march of civilization. Maybe that is for the good. I don't know. It is too bad in a way that old tribal activities will gradually

disappear. Today there are many groups of black musicians in the cities, playing and singing their own type of jazz. There are also groups of gospel singers, and there are choirs capable of singing great songs. We once attended the annual presentation of Handel's "Messiah" by a black choir, given in Johannesburg's city hall.

Among the many sounds of Africa, I can close my eyes now and hear the voices of the different black preachers. Samuel Ramagwede in Vendaland is very soft-spoken, yet he speaks with the authority that comes from good Bible knowledge and years of experience. There was a brother Tshivhase who used to interpret in a booming, well-rounded voice. Brethren David Macubu and Jackson Sogoni get so carried away with enthusiasm that they speak louder and louder until you think they will shake heaven and earth. Simon Magagula speaks in a moderate, well-modulated voice with the distinct pronunciation that is part of his meticulousness in all that he does. Old brother Manape, way into his 80's, his voice now having a quaver, still is ready to proclaim the gospel, speaking words of wisdom in old age.

Servants

From about the early 1970's, servants began to become a gradually disappearing class, and by the 80's, so many other work opportunities began to open up to black women as well as men that there has been a big exodus from the back-yard servants' quarters to factory jobs, department stores, grocery stores, offices, and other places. Not many years ago, a black girl could become a teacher or a nurse, but otherwise her only choice was to serve in the home of a white family, or perhaps be the "tea girl" at a place of business. Now, if she qualifies, she can work in a bank or some such situation.

Before the opening up of the job market, a black girl who needed to earn money was given little choice. There were usually so many seeking work as servants that they had to be satisfied with the low rates of pay that they were offered. Some servants therefore worked for a pittance and many were shoddily treated while expected to work twelve or fourteen hours a day. A great many black servants were given fair and kind treatment by their white employers, and some became beloved household members, serving faithfully and dependably for a lifetime. Some servants were lazy, unreliable, and dishonest, never keeping any one job for more than a few weeks at a time, while others could be trusted in every way.

During our first twenty years in South Africa, I found it almost imperative to have a girl to help me in the house. With our expanding family there was much laundry

to be done while my tiny washing machine with its hand-operated wringer was put to hard use. The clothes had to be rinsed by hand and wrung out by hand and carried to the wash line. There was no permanent-press material so there were stacks of ironing. There were few carpets on the floors which required much polishing and rubbing, perhaps on hands and knees. There were verandas with red-polished cement floors and sometimes red-polished walks from house to street. Without a servant to help me, I would have been worn out and unable to become involved in church work.

A full-time servant always lived in servants' quarters at the back of the white man's property. The quality of these quarters varied greatly, from neat, nicely furnished, comfortable little rooms with adequate bathroom facilities to shabby little cubbyholes and only a wash tub or bucket for bathing.

A girl's day usually began an hour or more before the white folks were awake. She would use her back door key to let herself in. The first thing she did was make tea or coffee to serve to the white people in their bedrooms, and while they were slowly waking, she would polish the children's shoes, tidy up the living room, and set the breakfast table. If she was responsible to help with cooking, she would perhaps have put on a pot of porridge to simmer at the same time as she made the tea. After breakfast and the dish washing chores, the girl would clean, make beds, and do the laundry. Perhaps at 10:30 or 11 o'clock she would eat her own breakfast — most preferred to wait that long. After the lunch at noon-day, there were dishes to wash and the ironing to be done,

after which the girl may have a couple of hours to rest and chat with friends. Then there were vegetables to prepare for dinner and the meal to be served, dishes washed and kitchen cleaned. Sometimes the girl assisted in bathing one's small children, and on a winter night, she may be required to build up a fire in the fireplace. Only then was she free to retire to her own room. It was not an easy life. Times off were usually Thursday and Sunday afternoons. For all of this, in 1950, a girl would receive from twelve to twenty or twenty-five dollars a month plus her uniforms, room, food and miscellaneous items such as soaps, non-prescription medicines, etc.

There are still some servants like those just described, but they are much fewer in number and receive many times as much money for their work. Many white housewives are now doing all or most of their own housework — carpeting is replacing polish, and labor-saving appliances are becoming popular while easy-care fabrics have come into their own.

There were some South African housewives who became lazy by having someone do all the work for them, but others who used their time to knit and sew garments for all the family and thus contribute to their welfare. It is easy to become so dependent on a servant that it seems burdensome to have to do her work on her day off.

South African children growing up in households with servants often did not learn to do things for themselves, so we saw to it that our boys polished their own shoes and made their own beds (usually). On the girl's day off, they took turns washing and drying the dishes. As for the gardening which was so often done by a "garden boy,"

we often assigned the mowing, clipping, and weeding jobs to our sons who grumbled that their friends didn't have to do any of those things.

During our family's last twelve years in South Africa, we joined in the general move away from full-time servants. In fact, we had to. So many of the young women, and a few of the older women, were going into other types of employment that there were few reliable girls remaining who would still do housework. We had various ones coming in by the day, once, twice, or three times a week to work from four to six hours. The daily pay, by 1978, amounted to nearly as much as a week's wages in 1950.

Bringing a rural black girl to work in the city created some unusual problems, and a considerable training period was necessary. Such a girl had never had running water in a house, and she had no idea what the sink drain could handle, so she was apt to pour in pot-scrapings, food scraps, and bits of peelings and then wonder why the sink became blocked. She had perhaps always washed her eating utensils in cold water and could not understand the need for hot water, soap, and rinsing of dishes. She had lived in a hut with a mud-and-dung floor, so she did not see lint under the bed as dirt. She had never used any sort of appliance and had a hard time learning how much stress one of them could survive. This was true of "garden boys" as well, and they would break lawn mowers and tools by expecting them to do impossible tasks.

Many of the black servants got themselves into trouble because they helped themselves to the employers' possessions. They were themselves poor and thought the

white people so rich that it would be quite all right to steal from them. It was not uncommon for a girl to take food, not only for herself but for a boy friend or other friends or relatives who might be visiting her. She might be keeping an unauthorized person in the room every night — a boy friend who would slip away before daylight to go to his own job.

Even the city black girls had different standards of living and of behavior. One of the girls who worked for me by the day was also employed at times by the Echols, Hoggs, and Hornes, and we all had some stories to share. This girl could work harder and faster than any other we had ever seen, and when she was done, the whole house would be spotless and gleaming. But! It got that tidy look when she opened a desk drawer and scooped everything from the desk top into it, or stowed the gadgets from a kitchen counter in whatever drawer or shelf was convenient. John had to lay down the law that his desk was to remain untouched, and the children would always complain, "She's been here again." Once Eldred Echols searched everywhere for some very important papers and never found them when he needed them. It was some days later when the family was going somewhere that the papers were found in the baby's diaper bag. One day I went into my kitchen to find the girl with scouring powder and a brush cleaning what she considered to be a dirty little statuette. It was an antiqued bust of the famous "David" by Michelangelo which we had bought in Florence, Italy, a treasured memento that had been made to look as old as its original. Today, my David has one white eye in his antiqued face, so if you come into my living room and find him turned to one side, that

is the reason, and it reminds me of that girl every time I do the dusting.

Trips and Travels, Furloughs and Moves

“THIS IS OUR FATHER’S WORLD”

Part of the reason why missionary work has an aura of glamor about it is that many trips are necessary, and missionaries sometimes get to visit the more interesting parts of the world. Years ago, when steamship was the mode of travel, there were sometimes tales to tell about the voyages themselves. We had no hair-raising experiences such as the Phil Leibrandt family had when severe storms nearly sank the little freighter they were on, the ship eventually limping into port where they were greeted by newsmen and TV cameramen. We did experience a near-collision in the Delaware River, and once we awoke to find our ship’s engines silent, their repair requiring several hours. The only time we had extremely rough weather was on a North Atlantic crossing on the Queen Mary in February – a poor choice of sailing time. That tremendous ship rode the crests and plunged into the valleys for 4 days and nights. She was unable to make the scheduled landing at Cherbourg and had to go directly to Southampton. John was violently ill, and I found I much preferred to lie down. All of our sons except Neal missed some of the meals. In fact, the dining rooms were so empty on that crossing that the shipping company must have enjoyed a big reduction in its food bill.

We made two trips up the east coast of Africa on an Italian ship named “Africa.” We so enjoyed the first one in 1959 that we did it again in 1965. The churches that

supported us paid our fares as of the most direct route, and we discovered that it cost no more to travel on Italian ships on the round-about route. We paid for all the side trips and extras ourselves, using saved-up vacation times for this purpose.

On our east coast voyages, the ship stopped at Beira, Dar es Salaam, Mombasa, Mogadishu, Aden, Port Suez, Port Said, and then to Brindisi and Venice in Italy. At all ports except Mogadishu, we could go ashore, and at Port Suez we took a tour bus to Cairo where the day was spent seeing many of the famous sights while the ship made the slow trip through the canal. Then at Port Said, we reboarded our ship. One cannot see all of Cairo in a day, but the tour was arranged to take us to the pyramids, Sphynx, mosques, the Museum of Antiquities. We had a "dragoman" to take us everywhere and explain things to us — coincidentally, we had the same man both times.

On our first such trip, we had six sons with us, the youngest still in diapers. In addition, Paul Hobby, on his way from Namwianga, Northern Rhodesia, to the U. S. to go to college, was traveling with us. Looking back at this trip from a distance of some 24 years, I am floored at the very thought of what we undertook to do, but the older boys who remember the trip all say that they are glad we gave them the opportunity to see some of Europe.

On the 1959 trip, we landed at Venice where we stayed for a couple of days in the famous Rialto Hotel near the bridge of the same name. Being nearly spring, it was very cool, and several of the boys caught colds, but we got to see many of the famous highlights of Venice

and even rode in a gondola, though the garbage-strewn canals were not the romantic places we had expected.

Funny incident number one in Venice was our attempt to buy disposable diapers from a *pharmacia* where no English was understood. After much gesturing and head-shaking, John eventually found what we needed right in front of us on the shelves. Funny incident number two was when we crossed the concourse of the Venice railway station and a musical and romantic janitor, observing our entourage of 7 youngsters, leaned his broom against a bench, cradled an imaginary infant in his arms, and sang us a lullaby! I was reminded of the Italian sailor who was painting the bulkheads of our ship, lustily singing opera.

From the time of our departure from Durban, Dale, age 3, had carried an imaginary portable record player. He would put on an imaginary record, move the arm into place, and with a fat forefinger, trace the circular movement of a record. On the train from Venice to Zurich, we were cautioned not to sit on the record player, and Dale "held" it carefully on his lap.

Going through the spectacular Alps, we were frequently enjoying the scenery, only to plunge suddenly into the darkness of a tunnel and come out again to a new scene. One of the tunnels is a masterpiece of engineering — we entered it high up and were in total darkness for 20 minutes, sensing only that we were constantly turning, turning, always in the same direction while hearing the tortuous action of the brakes as the iron wheels held to the tracks. Actually, we were spiralling downward all the time, and left the tunnel much lower down than the point of entry. Some of our boys were sure that it was night, and were not

convinced that we were in a tunnel until we emerged at last into broad daylight.

At Zurich, three of the boys had really bad colds, and if it had not been for the Jack McKinney family who kept them, together with their children who also had colds, we could have seen little of Switzerland. The highlight of that country for me was the bus tour which took us to Lake Lucerne. It is beyond any doubt the most beautiful place I have ever seen. We were unable to view distant scenes because of some fog, and for this our guide apologized, "I'm sorry you've missed the scene, but you have seen the mist."

In Paris it was the Hindsleys who helped us to have a wonderful time and we saw the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower, the flea market, and many of the usual sights that tourists visit. In Haarlem and Amsterdam, the Richardson family looked after us, and we were able to see the famous windmills and the Keukenhof Gardens with their tulips and other spring flowers. In Brussels, the Hilton Terrys looked after us and showed us the more interesting sights. In all of these places except Venice, we visited with missionaries and attended one or more services of the church, hearing sermons in German, French, and Dutch. The Dutch sermon came nearest to being understood by me — my Afrikaans lessons came through. I think it was brother Goodheer's first sermon in Dutch, so he probably spoke slowly.

Our visit to Frankfurt came at one of its lower points in the church work. One family was busy getting ready to move back to America, and the Bible school had closed for the holidays. We were invited to stay in the

dormitory quarters and use the kitchen in the basement. Shopping for groceries, I had to point at what I wanted, so our menu was limited. Walking downstairs with a sack in each arm, I failed to notice that one step was considerably narrower than the rest, so I tumbled headlong, scraping all the skin off one shin. In the kitchen, while using the circular bread slicer to cut some hard German bread, I cut a deep gash in a finger. Looking everywhere for a paper towel or something to staunch the flow of blood, I found nothing, so I stuck the finger into my mouth and ran up three flights of stairs for something with which to make a bandage.

One day we left the two little boys with sister Johnson at the dormitory in Frankfurt and went for a boat trip up the famous Rhine to see the castles and the Lorelei. We bought tickets to ride as far as Cologne and were assured that the price we paid included a return trip by train. By the time we had our tickets, we had no time to cash a traveler's check, but we had our lunch of German sausage and brown bread with us, and thought we could manage without cash until our return. Before we boarded, we were told that we had to pay a surcharge of so many francs each. We looked at one another and began to dig in our pockets and eventually came up with enough coins to make it. The day was drizzly and chilly, but it was impressive to see the castles, and we were interested in the way the vineyards were planted on terraces right down to the river. Everything in Europe seems ancient. Its history goes back so many centuries — not like the newer United States or South Africa. We wondered what life must have been like when those castles we were seeing were occupied by rich noblemen.

We ate our salty sausage and rather dry bread, and when we looked for a drink of water, we found there was none on the boat. We were expected to buy bottled drinks, but there we were with no money. When we arrived at Cologne, we walked full speed through the mist to the railway station, only to see our train pulling out. We had a long wait for the next train; there were no seats in the station, and there was no place where we could cash a traveler's check. Neither was there a water fountain. Finally, in desperation, I asked a ticket agent if there might be drinking water somewhere. Taking a key from a nail, he unlocked a door and beckoned for me and the two younger boys, Brian and Neal, to follow him. The three of us had a drink and carried back two glassfuls to be divided among the other four.

At last we were on our train, but when the conductor came to check our tickets, he shook his head and began to speak to us in German. When we told him we spoke only English, he made an effort to oblige, but all he could say was, "You must express some francs each ticket." Express francs? He must have meant that this was an express train and cost more to ride than the one we had missed. John showed him our traveler's checks, but he shook his head. We told him we would get the extra money for him when we got to Frankfurt, so when we arrived at the station, we headed for the bank. Before we had gone more than a few steps, the conductor and a policeman stopped us. The policeman said, "Kom, kom, kom," and followed us every step of the way to the bank, standing over us until the check was cashed and the correct money in his hands. His manner and even the cap he

wore made us feel as if we were in the hands of the Gestapo.

On our second trip via the east coast and through the Suez, we had our five youngest sons, from Don at 17 down to Gary at 7. We disembarked at Brindisi and immediately boarded the train to Rome. There we stayed at the YMCA family quarters, a reasonably priced accommodation, pronounced "Eem-ka" by the Italians. On the day that we were to visit the Vatican, Dale and Gary had a fever, so I stayed with them at "Eem-ka" and missed seeing the Pope at his window. Otherwise, we were all able to walk about a great deal, seeing museums, the Catacombs, the Coliseum, and other places. At the Coliseum, Gary was concerned that we might see the bones of Christians who were eaten by the lions many centuries ago, and he was quite relieved to find no such gruesome remains.

From Rome we went to Florence where we had accommodations in the dormitory facility for students of the Bible school. The richness of the museums in Florence must be seen to be believed. I have never been an art student — I only got "C's" in art in school — but I learned to appreciate some of the great works of Michelangelo and others of his time. John and the boys climbed to the top of the cathedral tower while I rested and looked for a long time at Michelangelo's "Pieta."

From Florence, we took the train to Trieste where we stayed for a day before sailing for America on the *Christoforo Columbo*. The hotel in Trieste had just been redone and looked very clean and comfortable. We went to our rooms where one of the boys perched on the foot of a bed, only to have it collapse. We decided to lock our cases inside a cupboard while we did some sight-seeing,

only to be unable to unlock it afterward, and had to call for help. Later, when we left our room, the door knob came off in John's hand. Thinking we might be asked to leave the hotel for tearing it up, we spoke to the person at the desk and received the greatest of apologies and were offered the use of other rooms.

In Trieste, we visited an old cathedral which has in it a baptistry which was once used for immersion of adults. Yes, the Catholic church once practiced immersion, and it was only after many centuries that infant sprinkling was substituted for it.

We'd had the loveliest of experiences on the Italian ship "Africa," so we expected something as good on the "Christoforo Colombo." All was well on the first day at sea. There were only a few passengers in tourist class. But after that, we made stops at several ports where we picked up Greek and Italian emigrants who were going to Canada. Many of them were uncouth and unclean, and all of them were loud, so we were not comfortable until we got to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they disembarked, and we had a peaceful voyage from there to New York.

One night on the Colombo, there had been a movie in the dining room. Afterward, Dale and Gary, aged 9 and 7, were sent to the cabin to go to bed while the rest of us stayed for a cup of coffee. Less than half an hour later, John and I went to the cabin but could not get in. The boys had locked the door, so we knocked. No answer. We pounded. We called. Afraid of waking other passengers, we called for a steward. He pounded and called. Nothing. The steward called the chief steward who pounded and called in vain. The chief steward called

the ship's carpenter who called and pounded, and eventually had to remove a panel in the lower part of the door and reach up to remove the key which was securely turned sideways. All we had needed was an expert burglar, but when we needed one, there was none around. Dale and Gary had slept soundly through all the racket.

Passenger liners' stewards try to please the passengers, and we had many pleasant experiences with them. The nursemaids in charge of the children's playrooms on the Queen Mary and the Africa were excellent. The dining room steward on the Africa made us feel good when he said we could have our family at the second setting of dinner where children were not usually allowed – he had observed that our boys knew how to sit properly and handle themselves well at meal times. To this end, we had twice taken them to a hotel dining room in Benoni, acquainting them with the numerous courses and the many pieces of silverware. We had not wanted one of them calling out, "Hey, mom, why have I got three spoons? I only need one."

We always traveled tourist class so never did expect the same service the first class travelers received. However, the Queen Mary must have been short of dining room stewards on one of our crossings, for we strongly suspected that the one who waited on us one day had been borrowed from service in the crew's quarters. Serving English style, the waiter must carefully dish food from platters and bowls onto the diners' plates. This one awkwardly but carefully served John and the boys, and by the time he came to me, he must have been tired of all the bother, so he tipped the platter and scraped the remaining food into a pile on my plate, much as one would scrape leftovers into a dog's dish.

This un-British treatment astonished us, and we looked forward to further amusement on the next day. The errant steward, however, must have been observed by the chief dining steward and demoted to some other portion of the ship, for we saw no more of him.

On our return trip to South Africa in 1966, we stopped for several days in Athens and visited our niece, Linda, who had married Jim Willis, a service man stationed in Greece. While there, we visited the Acropolis, old Corinth where Paul had preached, Mars Hill, and other famous places.

In 1971, we flew via South African Airways to Rio and stayed with the Walter Lamm family whom we had met when they lived in Durban. In Rio we visited many of the usual tourist highlights and then flew via Varig to Miami. Varig, the Brazilian airline had a good reputation, but we doubted it somewhat when we took off in a thunderstorm.

In 1978, when John and I were making our permanent return to the states, we traveled via the Bible lands, spending several days in Jordan and several in Israel.

All of these trips would not have been possible if we were not missionaries in transit, for we could never have afforded the fares, so we considered them all as wonderful bonuses.

Not all of our enjoyable trips occurred enroute at furlough times. We saw more of southern Africa than most South Africans. Some of this was accomplished by means of the necessary travel in our work, and in our moves to different places, but some was in the form of some very wonderful vacations. Some of us were in Kruger Park as

many as nine times and never wearied of watching the wild animals. We had one vacation at Amanzimtoti on the beach south of Durban, and another in East London, visiting with the Ivan Uys'. We camped in Rhodesia, traveled all the way to Tanganyika, and sometimes took shorter trips to interesting places nearer our home. Once we were invited to Welkom where John and Brian van der Spuy played a lot of golf, probably discussing church work all the while.

Travels and vacations make wonderful memories to tuck away in the back of the mind and bring out from time to time to relive and enjoy. Our experiences as missionaries gave us many such happy memories.

One year, during the Christmas holidays, we had been in Johannesburg. We had spent the 23rd with the McKissick family, and our children had their gifts around the tree. Because we were to have a youth camp starting soon after Christmas, we had to drive to Port Elizabeth on the 24th and 25th. As usual, John wanted to drive through the Transkei, so we headed in that direction, arriving at Umzimkulu late in the afternoon of the 24th of December. Umzimkulu is a tiny, picturesque little town, consisting of a store, post office, filling station, and a few houses besides the hotel. We had stayed there several times before and found it peaceful and comfortable, with good food. Imagine our delight to arrive and find that the hotel had been completely redecorated and furnished with new beds.

Just as it was getting dark, the power went off, so candles were brought to each of the rooms, and soon we went to eat our Christmas eve supper, served by candle light. The following morning, we ate our breakfast at the

hotel, purchased a tin of "Old Fashioned English Butter Drops," filled up with petrol, and headed south. We knew that things closed up tight on Christmas day in South Africa, but never dreamed that for a whole day we would travel and find not one place where we could get a meal or buy so much as a cracker. We remembered a certain little place run in conjunction with a filling station in Umtata where they had delicious hot beef pies, but even that was closed. The children were famished but survived on butter drops until we reached the Votaw home in East London at about 4:00 in the afternoon. Votaws didn't have food in the house for seven hungry travelers, but luckily they knew a Chinese shopkeeper who was willing to open up and sell us some bread and cheese and canned food. That welcome meal saw us through until we drove the last 200 miles and arrived at home in Port Elizabeth. The moral of the story is, don't travel on Christmas day in South Africa without packing a supply of your own food in the car.

Venda

Venda today is a little independent nation, one of the several tiny satellites created by South Africa and referred to as "Bantustans." During most of the time that we lived in Africa, it was still just one of the "homelands" and was called "Vendaland." It is a tiny nation, tucked up in the northeastern part of South Africa. It borders the Limpopo River and Zimbabwe to the north, and its eastern boundary is not far from Mozambique. Its people speak a language that is not like the other tribal tongues of South Africa. Lutheran missionaries went to the Venda area over 100 years ago but have long since left their churches in the hands of black leaders. There are some members of the Dutch Reformed Church. A good bit of work has been done in the past by the Salvation Army mission, and there are some other efforts by other denominations, particularly the Zionists, but the population groups are still largely "unchurched." How confusing it must be to people living in remote areas to have missionaries of different faiths coming in and teaching different doctrines! How embarrassing to have some perceptive individual observe, "If you have the truth, why weren't some of your people here long ago?"

Much of Vendaland is mountainous, and small as it is, the climate and rainfall differ from one part to another, the eastern portion receiving the rains that blow in from Mozambique, while the western portion remains drier because of the mountains which stop the clouds. There are

some fertile valleys, and there are portions that benefit from small irrigation schemes, but much of the land is unfit for cultivation. Most of Venda's people live in their traditional "kraals" or groups of huts and have a small parcel of ground which they cultivate to raise mealies and vegetables. Some raise peanuts, bananas, mangoes, paw-paws, and avocados, if their ground is suitable. In recent years, tea has become a cash crop, and there are long-established planted forests, but these are of benefit to the general population as means of employment, those crops being owned by large firms. Most people of Venda have chickens and goats, but not everyone has cattle. A great many of the people depend on support from members of the family who go to the cities to work and send home money without which they would suffer greatly.

To go to Venda from our home in Benoni, we had to travel through Pretoria and continue north and slightly east through Warmbaths, Potgietersrus and Pietersburg to Louis Trichardt, about 300 miles. From there it is another hour's drive eastward to tiny Sibasa, capital of Venda. On the first of July, 1967, Brian, Neal, John, and I went to Venda for a 9-day trip. It was school holidays, the month between second and third quarters of the school year.

There were several goals on this trip: a good visit with Venda's only full-time preacher, Philemon Mamafha, a visit with the brethren we knew in the Tshidimbini area; and a visit at some places we had not seen before, especially to meet the Christians in each of them. The church in Marshall, Texas, had been assisting in the support of brother Mamafha and wanted first-hand information about

his progress. I kept a diary during this trip and recorded some things in detail. Life in remote rural areas such as this was full of novelty to me, for in 1967, I had not yet spent a great deal of time in such places.

It was mid-afternoon on Saturday when we arrived in Tshidimbini to make definite plans for the 9-day stay. That accomplished, we went into Sibasa to get settled at the boarding house which was to accommodate us for the entire time. Sibasa had no hotel then, but it was usually possible to get rooms and meals with old Mrs. Viljoen. Mr. Viljoen had been a game ranger before his retirement, and had many interesting tales to tell.

We spent Sunday through Wednesday teaching classes in the mornings and afternoons. Our audiences consisted of a number of school teachers who were also having their holidays, members of the Tshidimbini congregation, some visitors from other congregations, and a number of local visitors. I taught women and children while John held classes for men and older boys. Brother Samuel Ramagwede had built a little meeting house near his own kraal, on part of the land allotted to him as a teacher. The men had the use of the building while the rest of us had to manage outside — pleasant enough except for the chilly wind which not only made us fasten our coats but also blew away the flannelboard teaching aids I was trying to use. Without them, I was handicapped for I had designed my lessons around their use, but we managed. I had some very good ladies to interpret for me. In one class with the women, I tried to point out that part of a Christian wife's duty is to make the best use of the family's income, spending carefully, and keeping clothing in good repair. As an

illustration, I said that I had seen people whose garments were not much use because the buttons were missing and someone was too lazy or too ignorant to replace them. My interpreter seemed embarrassed, and the ladies in the class giggled. Turning to see what was happening, I saw that the interpreter's dress buttons were off. It was my turn to be embarrassed, but by the next day, the buttons had been quietly replaced.

Wednesday evening when we returned to the boarding house, all was in darkness. Although there is no electricity provided throughout Venda, the town of Sibasa was supplied with power from a small dam, and now there had been a power failure. If we'd been depending on a wood stove and old-fashioned lamps, our supper would have been ready, but instead, the food stood half-cooked on a cold electric stove, and our bath water chilled in the electric water heater. Mrs. Viljoen was apologetic and assured us that she had something cooking on a fire outside but it would not be ready until after eight o'clock. We never did tell her that at noon each day at Tshidimbini, we ate a good meal prepared by the ladies there, and sat in the Ramagwede's comfortable little dining rondavel while listening to the noonday news on a battery radio. By the time we sat down for suppers at the boarding house, we were not very hungry.

Until supper was ready that Wednesday, we sat and wrote by candle light. Candles are all that many of our black brethren ever have to light their homes – the more affluent may have an oil lamp or a lantern. One can really do quite a bit by candle light, and it was good for us to do without electricity for a little while. Looking back over

the activities of the four days, we counted 24 hours that had been used in classes.

The people always sat on backless benches, as much as four hours at a stretch. I decided that they had developed a set of back muscles that I had neglected — my back is ready to collapse after half an hour without a back rest. The women often sat on the ground, backs bolt upright, feet straight out in front of them, toes pointing skyward. I tried that too, but found that I don't have muscles for that either. The women often prefer sitting on the ground so they can tend their babies and small children.

In John's classes, particularly, he found that many questions were asked, and most of them revealed that the questioners were intelligent and thoughtful. One has to have a certain amount of Bible knowledge before being able to ask questions of the sort that were heard during those sessions.

In my classes, I had very few questions, perhaps because Venda women are shy, having always had to live in subservience to their husbands to the point of not being allowed to think for themselves. However, I decided to put my own question-asking technique, which I thought I had perfected, to use in bringing out some answers from the children. I had been teaching that God is a God of love. I wanted them to see God as a loving Father whom we can love in return. To this end, I asked what I thought was a leading question, "Why do you obey your father when he tells you to do something?" I expected the pat answer, "Because I love him and want to please him," but received instead a frank, "Because he'll beat me if I don't." The black people who live in their tribal lands have great respect

for older persons. Chiefs, headmen, and heads of families are men of authority, and the younger people must bow to their desires. The grey hair on an older person's head will cause him to be treated with deference and his wisdom will be respected, much more so than among my people where youth is almost idolized. Had I, then, been misled by the "pat" answer a white child may have given to my question — "I obey my father because I love him and want to please him?" Both answers are correct, the black child's being the first reason, the response of love and desire to please increasing with maturity and growth, especially in Christ. A teacher *does* learn more than the students.

NEW PLACES

On Thursday we drove a good many miles over rough roads. In the morning we visited the homes of some of the members of the church, driving most of the way over places where they must walk, mile after weary mile. It is lovely country, unscarred by billboards or junkyards. Footpaths follow the lines of least resistance across the fields, with little streams that can be crossed on stepping stones. On the way to the home of one old lady, our Venda friend paused, picked up a stone, worn smooth from much handling, and tapped several times on a rock which had been hollowed out from much tapping. When we asked the reason for this strange behavior, the reply was, "I don't really know. It is something that the people of this place have always done whenever they pass this way." Some preacher could make a good point for a sermon on religious traditions by using

the story of the tapping stone.

To reach the home of Samuel Ramagwede's aged mother, we had to walk a long way. It was not the time for a meeting of the church, but we sat on the benches in the little thatched hut where about 20 Christians were meeting each week. Some of those folks walked several miles to meet here because Mrs. Ramagwede was unable to walk to some other place for services.

Next we visited a little village that had a small congregation, but at that time on a Thursday, we found only four members with whom to have a little service. As we entered the hut of the Christian lady, I had noticed an interesting geometric design painted around the door, and on the wall inside, just opposite the door where it would catch one's eye upon entering, was a stylized mural of a tree, obviously showing considerable talent in the artist. I thought it a pity that the lady's painting had been applied to a crumbly mud wall instead of a more lasting surface, but at the same time, it struck me that a person whose life consisted mainly of carrying water, hoeing the fields, and bearing children, possessed sensitivity and talent with which to beautify her surroundings. In another time and circumstances, such a person might have had her work hung in some museum.

Eldred Echols once said to me that the reason he spent time and money improving the flower gardens by a rented house was that he wished to leave a place in a better condition than when he found it. This is a good philosophy of life: Eldred applies it in well-known situations, the little Venda lady in her remote and humble village. There is so much untapped talent in the world, and so many heathens would become Christians if they only had the chance.

We were taken, then, to see the gardens in the irrigation scheme, an impressive outlay, though not large. If such schemes could be built for all the Africans in areas such as this, hunger and poverty would become miseries of the past. Here, fruits and vegetables grew abundantly, and our Christian friends gave us a stalk of bananas, two large pawpaws, and some sugar cane.

In the afternoon, we rode out on the opposite side of Sibasa and came to Phiphidi. The road took us up the side of the mountain from which we could look across miles of rolling land, and just below us was the Phiphidi dam which provides Sibasa's power and water supply. At Phiphidi we had a Bible study with seven women who had come to meet us. They had some excellent questions to ask, and when they had been answered, the ladies asked us to remain in our chairs. Soon several women came to us on their knees, bearing trays of big sweet potatoes and a carved wooden spoon and whisk for beating the lumps out of porridge. We learned later that in the old tradition, Venda women must kneel before someone to whom they wish to show respect: a wife even kneels when she speaks to her husband, or a sister in Christ kneels when she speaks to one of the brethren.

There is an old song, "So Peaceful in the Country." It was peaceful for us during our stay in Vendaland. The silences of the open countryside seemed to burst upon us. Each evening at the boarding house, the whole world seemed asleep by eight o'clock. Brian's transistor radio in the next room, though turned very low, seemed to intrude. Each night at about eight, a sound could be heard, a strange sound to us, and as it continued for hours, we

tried to guess what it might be. It sounded like “Clink, clink!” and reminded us of the distant sound of a hammer striking a steel chisel. We decided to call it the “chisel-throated night clinker” until we found out later in the week that the strange voice belonged to a fruit bat that lived in Mrs. Viljoen’s mango tree, his radar beeps being sounded out in his search for food.

On Saturday night I wrote in my diary at 9:15 that Neal had been asleep since 7:00, that Brian was reading his “umpteenth” book, that John was sawing his winter’s supply of cordwood, and that the landlady always went to bed with her little Maltese “Kitty Kat” right after supper. “This,” I wrote, “is no place for an exciting Saturday night.” We had read the daily papers which always arrive a day late in Sibasa, we’d had no phone calls – there was only one line for all of the town – and we’d had no mail, and yet the world was going right along without us. I loved it!

We spent Friday at Tshikombani, the home of Samson Matshivha who was doing a good job of teaching his people the things he had begun to learn when he lived in Pretoria. Christians in Johannesburg had assisted them financially and they themselves had constructed an adequate building of corrugated iron with room to seat 70. The subject that afternoon was eldership – the most requested subject in Vendaland at that time, though none of the congregations were ready to have elders, or rather, there were no men then qualified to become elders.

It is customary at the end of a lesson by a visitor such as John for one or more of the men of the congregation to make little speeches, sometimes in praise of the speaker or

of the things he had spoken. One such man expressed deep regret that he could not qualify scripturally to be an elder, but he explained that he began as early as 1916 to look for the way to heaven. He had recently come into the Lord's church, and now he said he wanted to be sure to learn everything correctly so that he would not lose the way again.

WALKING IN THE BOOK

On Saturday, we had a long, dusty, bumpy ride plus a short walk over a very rough area, taking us to Mavhunga. We were greeted by Lazarus, son of old headman Mavhunga. Several of the men who had been present on the preceding day were there plus some others, and once more, John taught on the eldership. Again, an old man stood up to express his words of thanks to the visitor. He said that John had patiently answered his many questions and that he now understood, and he could see that "Hardini" (as many black people pronounce our name) had just been "walking in the book."

In Saturday afternoon's lesson, John was trying to motivate the people to give of their slight means, just as generously as they possibly could, for this is the means by which the gospel can be spread — money to support the preacher. It is hard for folks like the rural Vendas to visualize large numbers, and in fact, tribal languages do not have words to express millions and billions. So, when John wanted to talk about the numbers of unsaved people in the world, he told the people to think of all the rocks and stones in Vendaland. "That is how many people in the world need the gospel, and that is why we all

need to give to the church for the preaching of the gospel.”

After a brief Sunday morning service at Tshidimbini, we drove to the kraal of acting Chief Mbilu. Members of a Zionist group and a number of Lutherans had also been invited, and together with the 60 members of the church who arrived in a large truck, we had about 150 gathered in the open courtyard. It had been a pleasant winter day in this sub-tropical land, but as we gathered for the service, a damp, chilly wind came in from Mozambique and unfriendly clouds hid the warm sun. I shivered throughout the service despite my sweater and coat, noticing all the while that some of our very thinly clad black friends seemed not to notice the chill at all.

The Zionists are an all-black religious sect with strong political leanings who follow the dictates of a leader who places strong demands on his people, particularly financially. He tells them how much to give, and even if it drains their resources, they give it, not seeming to object to the fact that he enjoys such luxuries as several fine cars and many wives. As far as I know, this was the only time John had opportunity to preach to any of them, for they do not mix with the likes of us white folks. After the service, there were once again those who made short speeches. A leader of a Zionist congregation said this, in essence, “I have never heard this before, but this is all from the Bible. And this man has given us everything, starting from the ground and going all the way up.” What he said was true — John knew he might never again have the opportunity to tell these folks the Bible plan of salvation, so he had indeed given them “everything.”

After the service in Mbilu’s kraal, we made a quick

trip to the stony mountain kraal of the chief who had died a year before when he crashed his brand new Mercedes Benz at a sharp bend in the road. Now the kraal was nearly deserted, there being as yet no replacement for the chief. One of the chief's widows showed us around the grounds and invited us to sit in the main living hut and listen to the battery-operated hi-fi record player. Along a trail to other buildings, we plucked some coffee beans, although coffee is not really a crop there. Alongside the path, the mountain rises straight up, the solid grey rock of it making the natural defense a chief would have needed in the early days of tribal wars.

We needed Monday afternoon for our trip home to Benoni, so we used the morning for last-minute rounds of visits and goodbyes. First we went to the home of Philemon Mamafha. Turning off the main road, we were able to drive along a trail for the first four miles, then had to walk nearly a mile to the neat little two-roomed rectangular house with a corrugated iron roof. In it he had his dining room and bedroom. Another storage hut and a cooking hut were of the traditional round design. After having tea and cake, we went back to Tshidimbini where we all walked about half a mile to see the plot of ground that the government had allotted for a church building. Back at Tshidimbini we had a final farewell service including the singing of "Mudzimu a vhe na nwi hafhu." "God be with you 'til we meet again." Everyone walked with us to the car where the women gave me some embroidered cloths they had made, and a large stalk of bananas and two chickens. Our earthly lives were so different, these women in their kraals in Venda, and I in my

house in Benoni, but we spoke together of “next time we meet,” and tears welled up in our eyes. If ever we had decided to work full time with black people in “the bush,” Vendaland would have been my choice.

Upon our return home, John was able to write an encouraging letter to the church in Marshall, Texas. He explained that Philemon found his youth to be a handicap, because the older people were not prepared to listen to a new message from a young man, but he was handling this well. There was growth and maturity to be seen in Philemon, and he was spending much time in study, so John recommended that his support be continued. The church in Pretoria had given Philemon a bicycle to help him get around, but in mountainous country, one is pushing as much as riding such a vehicle.

Included in the letter to the Marshall church was John’s account of the time the congregation from Tshidimbini had taken a bus to visit the church at Tshikombani, a distance of 29 miles. Heavy rains had made it impossible for the bus to make the return trip, so those brethren walked all the way home. We’d driven those 29 miles, and many of them are far from level!

A LOOK BACK – THE BEGINNING

The Vendaland story goes back to 1954, 13 years before the visit just described. In December of that year, brethren Joe McKissick, Arthur Lovett, John Hardin, Kent Hardin (9 years old), and two black brethren whose names are not available, made the long trip from Johannesburg to Sibasa and beyond, with the express purpose of reaching a government farming scheme called Dzimauli.

The black brethren were to remain and preach to their people the gospel that they had learned in Johannesburg. Torrential rains had fallen, and coming to a low-water bridge which was flooded, the men left the car and proceeded on foot. When it became obvious that the journey was yet far, the white brothers left the black brothers to continue alone, and later learned that it was well into the next day before the two walkers had reached their destination.

Soon after arriving at Dzimauli, the Venda brethren baptized 7, and later a congregation of some 22 members was established near a Salvation Army school and hospital some miles away.

One of the first people contacted at this time was Samuel Ramagwede, one of the teachers at the Salvation Army school. Brother Ramagwede recorded for me the story of his conversation and early experiences. Some of what he wrote follows:

“Personally I came to know (about) Jesus through the Salvation Army . . . I served from 1947 to 1956.

“In 1954 during the month of December, I was transplanting some tubers from the banana stem when someone called me. When I went, I found two fellows standing at the gate to my home. The two were David and Amos Muthali. When the friends left for David Nyamanda’s home, Muthali gave me some ‘Christian Advocates’ which he said I should read when I retired to my hut.

“I was shocked when I read an article written

by brother Don Gardener, in which he talked about water baptism. They made me feel that there was something lacking in me . . . In the same *Christian Advocate*, there was an address for Bible correspondence. So after reading through the *Christian Advocate*, I wrote a letter to East London, Cape. The Bible lessons were then sent to me . . . it was stated that I could send my correspondence lessons to Turffontein, Johannesburg. Before the lessons were completed, a letter was written, in which the fellows in Johannesburg were asked to come to Sibasa and serve baptism on me.

“Instead of coming, a man from Dzimauli, the late brother Simon Phidza was sent to me. Brother Simon explained to me what it meant to be a Christian, and that to be a Christian, I should believe, should confess, and that I should be buried with Jesus in water for the remission of sins.

“From there we went to the river and that was the 31 07 1955. There at Mbwedi, I was buried with the Lord Jesus in baptism for the remission of my sins. From that day till 18 March 1956 I never told anybody except my wife that I was baptized, for fear that the Army may expel me from duty. In 1956 a note was written and sent to the officer of the Army, telling him that I was then a member of the Church of Christ. “The Army was then not at peace with me. However, I started with the Sunday school for the

children of the members of the Church of Christ . . . it was well attended and a start with the Bible study with the teenagers was also instituted.”

Brother Ramagwede does not go into detail as to his relationship with the Salvation Army. What occurred was that he began to share his new-found faith with other teachers at that school, and when a number of them were baptized, his teaching position was placed in jeopardy. Just when he thought he was about to lose his job, the South African government took over all mission schools everywhere in the country, and brother Ramagwede was kept on the staff.

The little congregation at Tshidimbini, lacking a building site, constructed a building of treated poles, planks, and iron roofing on a corner of the plot that had been allotted to the Ramagwede family for their personal use. During Easter and Christmas holidays, and at other times as well, brethren from the Johannesburg and Pretoria areas traveled to Tshidimbini to encourage and teach those Venda brethren. Among them were the late Stephen Mokoka, Amos Muthali, Petrus Mphaphuli, John Hardin, Gene Tope, and others.

Because of these visits by city people, threats were made that Ramagwede would be arrested. This was because of communist activity and other subversive threats against the police and the government. Brethren Phidza and Ramagwede went to Johannesburg to appeal to the white brethren to help them to be recognized as co-workers in the Master's field. Brother Joe McKissick wrote the following testimonial to that end:

“To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that Simon Phidza and Samuel Ramagwede are known to me and to the Church of Christ in South Africa. We have complete faith in their work and integrity. They are conscientious worshipers of God and have no desire to disturb and create divisions in religion or government, but simply are worshiping according to their conscience as they believe the Bible to teach. As the church is against communism, so are they. The church believes that it is our duty to obey the laws of the land, and so do these brethren teach. Wheresoever that it is permissible for them to worship, we are behind them, even though we cannot be with them in person.”

Signed

Joe McKissick

Evangelist for the Church
of Christ (European)

To continue brother Ramagwede’s wording:

“Brother J. T. Hardin by then made regular visits to Tshidimbini. The first visit that he made was the one he came with brother Sogoni and Tope. It was a historical period in my life. I had never accommodated white brethren in my home. I was somewhat embarrassed. What to eat then? Simple porridge with a chicken was served to the visitors. Where to sleep then? A hut in which there were two beds

accommodated the visitors. ‘Don’t worry, the hut is well ventilated,’ said brother Hardin.”

(John’s version of this experience was that the hut was spotlessly clean, including the white bed linens. It was cleaner than some hotels where he had stayed. Later, when the government official learned that two white men had spent the night in the kraal of a black family, he severely reprimanded them. “You will not flaunt the laws of our land!” the official stated brusquely. Always, from then on, white brethren stayed at the boarding house for whites in Sibasa. Later, when we had our tent and trailer, it was possible, with permission, to set up camps nearby the black people we were visiting).

Brother Ramagwede continues:

“The small group of faithful Christians were nourished with the proper stuff of spiritual food. Brother Hardin contributed much to the growth of the Lord’s church at Tshidimbini. Some brethren who came at Tshidimbini for worship were encouraged to start meetings at their homes or places.

“At Tshidimbini we had a good number of teachers, that is, school teachers. We had brother B. T. Tshivhase and his wife and the two are school teachers; brother Netshivambe, brother F. Tshivhase and his wife; brother J. Razwiedani, brother B. R. Manyatshe, only to mention a few. Those brethren served as interpreters when John was delivering the message from the book.” (Ramagwede is also an excellent interpreter, though soft-spoken).

Brother Ramagwede is very humble in his reporting of the history of the church in Vendale. In actual fact, he could well be called one of the founding fathers and pillars of the church in that little country. He translated hymns into the Venda language, making it possible for us to publish several editions of a songbook. With each edition over a period of years, there were newly-translated hymns to be added to the book. He also translated numerous tracts into their language, working with us diligently to make certain of their accuracy, giving us the means with which to spread the gospel through the printed word. He was always "there," helping with plans, organizing, taking the lead among his people. It was with his help that our tent meeting work got off to a good start, (the subject of another chapter), and he played a part in obtaining a separate site where the solid, permanent building of the Tshidimbini church now stands. He was later transferred to Damani School in another area, and immediately went to work with the church there.

There were a number of times when we Hardins considered moving away from Benoni to a place nearer Vendale, the small town of Louis Trichardt being the nearest. The larger town of Pietersburg would have been more suitable for our children's education, but it would still be 70 to 100 miles from the people we wanted to work with. The main reason for not making the move was that we would have then been too far from the black and colored groups with whom we spent much time in the city areas around Johannesburg and Pretoria. If only there had been several men to help in all of these places!

A BIBLE SCHOOL FOR VENDALAND

On July 15, 1967, John and brother Echols held a meeting with black brethren from numerous areas: Dube, Qwa Thema, Daveyton, Atteridgeville, Mamelodi, Mofolo, Meadowlands, Tshiawelo, Diep Kloof, Mzimhlope, and Tokhoza. When asked what they needed most to help them in the churches, their unanimous reply was, "Train our own men to be preachers."

Training black preachers in South Africa presents several problems: there are many different languages used by black people. South Africa is a vast area, and people are poor. Jackson Sogoni reported that there was already a site available in the Transkei, but at that time there were very few members from which to draw prospective students.

Of the 32 men present at that meeting, 17 were from Vendaland, some of them presently living in the city areas, particularly Soweto. Three of those men were members of the chief's council, a body which exists to assist all Venda-speaking people living in the urban area. Present also was Alpheus Lithudza who was supported by the church in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, to preach at Meadowlands, Soweto, a congregation consisting mainly of Venda people. Looking to Vendaland itself, it was observed that among the members there were at least 12 school teachers who formed a nucleus of leaders and potential leaders of the church. It all added up to a strong case for having a preacher training school in Vendaland.

The Venda language is so different from other tribal languages that it tends to isolate the tribe, causing men of

other tribes to hesitate in going to Vendaland for schooling. This could have been overcome by the fact that the teaching would have to be done in English since no missionaries had mastered the Venda language. Even more important is the fact that the books needed in the studies would be in English. For Venda-speaking (or other languages) men to learn English would be far less monumental a task than to translate volumes of Christian literature into tribal languages.

After the meeting with the brethren, we began to work seriously toward the establishment of a Bible training school. On August 7, that year, John wrote the first of many letters to the Bantu authorities, and in December we were visited by brethren Ramagwede, Lithudza, and Matshila when the matter was discussed at some length.

When no satisfaction was forthcoming from correspondence with Bantu authorities, and after a year of writing and waiting, it was in August 1968 that Eldred Echols and John, together with Alpheus Lithudza, traveled to Sibasa to confer personally with the officer in the Bantu Affairs department. They were hoping for a site to be granted, and particularly asked whether it would be possible for a white teacher to live on a portion of such a site. They received no satisfaction whatever from this request.

On the Sunday of that weekend, a service was held in the kraal of Paramount Chief Mphephu. As was the custom, a gift of money was presented to the chief and formal introductions were made. A number of Christians from the church at Tshiawelo in Soweto had traveled by bus to Vendaland for this occasion. Johathan Budeli, a member at Tshikombani, and Petrus Mphaphuli of Soweto

were men of influence in the area. After the sermons by Hardin and Echols, Chief Mphephu spoke briefly and encouraged the preaching of the gospel in every village and kraal in Vendaland, including his own.

That same afternoon, brethren Budeli, Tshivhase, and Mphaphuli accompanied John and Eldred to Headman Legege's village to see a possible site for the Bible school. Legege was not at home, but another man who was there informed our people that the headman had turned down a request from the Dutch Reformed mission so that we could have it. This gave us hope. The fields in Vendaland appeared to be "white unto harvest" and we were impatient to get a Bible school started immediately.

There is an old saying that "The mills of the gods grind slowly." We might add, "And so do the offices of the government." Nothing was forthcoming from the mid-68 correspondence with the Bantu authorities, and the hoped-for promise from Legege's area was equally disappointing. In the meanwhile, training schools had been opened in Swaziland and in Natal, but the establishment of one in Vendaland still seemed to be advisable. In 1971, when Izak Theron, a third-year student at Southern Africa Bible School, expressed interest in establishing a school for Venda brethren, John asked the church in Tulsa, which was supporting us, to support Izak in his final months of studies with the likelihood of their continuing to support him as a full-time teacher.

Surveys were made of the Louis Trichardt area, and eventually, toward the end of 1971, brother Theron found a house on a lovely wooded hill east of the town.

He moved some of his possessions to that house, had some meetings with the prospective students, ordered books that would be needed, and seemingly was on the way. The students could have had classes on the farm property, but plans apparently were not completed. Brother and sister Theron went away then, for a vacation. Somewhere in that interim, there was a change of heart and all the plans fell through. We kept hoping to work things out, but by May of 1972, brother Izak himself stated that he felt he was unsuited to the Vendaland work. Izak is a man of tremendous capability and we were sorely disappointed in this loss, and the Venda brethren were even more disappointed than we.

One of the Tulsa elders, Bill Bequette, and his wife, were visiting us at the time of this termination of Izak's Vendaland association, and thankfully, they had the opportunity of visiting Vendaland with us, seeing first-hand the need for a training school. The Tulsa brethren stayed with the school through many years to come, in spite of this set-back, and in spite of numerous other barriers that arose as time went on.

By August of 1972, a plan for Vendaland Bible School began to take practical shape. It was going to be impossible for a white family to live within the boundaries of Vendaland. The only workable alternative would be to send a white man to live in or near Louis Trichardt, either with daily trips into the homeland to teach the classes or with the students moving into the Louis Trichardt location where the white teacher could go and hold the school. It was this last plan that was put into effect in early 1973.

Allan Kriger went with John and Jerry Hogg for an

extended meeting in Vendaland, and decided that he would very much like to move to the area and teach in the school. Many attempts were made to buy property east of Louis Trichardt, nearer to the border of Vendaland, but Allan had to settle for buying a large house in town. He hoped to be able to use a large enclosed veranda as a class room and even installed blackboards and desks with that in mind. However, the town authorities were opposed to the plan, even though the black students were to have slept at the black location. The next step was to put the blackboards and desks into one of the rooms of the little house that had been rented in the location for the accommodation of the students.

The first five men to go through the three-year course had already been preaching, though without the benefit of formal training. They needed to be with their congregations on the weekends, so the school was to have concentrated teaching from Tuesday through Thursday with the student preachers making the long weekend trips back and forth by bus. The students were already being supported to preach, but extra funds were needed for transportation, books and supplies, and food while at school.

The church at 29th and South Yale in Tulsa took on Allan Kriger's support, and Allan was able to raise some funds from white South African churches.

Venda Bible School's first students were:

1. Philemon Mamafha – had preached several years, supported by Marshall, Texas.
2. Samson Matshivha, forced by changing laws to

leave Saulsville, Pretoria, and return to his homeland. Preaching at Tshikombani. Supported by Turffontein.

3. Philemon Makhado, assisting at Tshidimbini and other places. Had worked for Afrikaans-speaking white men and was more proficient in Afrikaans than English. Supported by Kansas City, Kansas.
4. John Nengwenani, living in Johannesburg but wanting to return to homeland. Baptized by John Hardin in 1955. Supported by Kansas City, Kansas.
5. Samson Ramulumisi, converted by Alpheus Lithudza in Meadowlands, Soweto. Fluent in many languages of the black tribes as well as English and Afrikaans. Supported by Mondeor, Johannesburg.

Formal opening of the Vendaland Bible School, with speeches and ceremony, was held on 27 February 1973. Present in addition to the five students were Alpheus Lithudza from Soweto, the Joe Watsons, the Jerry Hoggs, the John Hardins and the Allan Krigers. Small though the school was to be, in comparison with other schools, this was the culmination of years of hope, prayers, effort, and frustration.

A month after the opening, Eldred Echols had a 3-day seminar at the school, and John held a week's church music classes. Other seminars were conducted, but brother

Kruger carried 99% of the load of teaching and administration.

Since John Hardin had been with the Venda work almost from its beginning, and had known those brethren longer than anyone else among us, Allan looked to him frequently for help and advice. The two developed such a close relationship that Allan called John "Big Daddy."

When the three-year course for the first five students came to an end, it was time to reassess the whole setup. In December 1975, 40 black men met with John and Allan. Since plans were now being formulated for the building of a permanent facility on a site allotted by the authorities within Vendaland, it was necessary to place the school under the control of the black brethren with the white brethren acting only as advisors. There were a few at the meeting who actually opposed the school, but most were in favor while some abstained from expressing an opinion.

The real task ahead, then, was to obtain first of all, moral support, and then the even more elusive financial means for building, maintenance, and student support. The Venda people were poor, it is true. But the problem seemed to be even more deep-seated than poverty — it was a matter of attitude, an attitude which we heard expressed on occasions other than this. Stated briefly, it seems that there was a feeling that preaching the gospel is the preacher's concern and should be financed by him. Not all Venda brethren took this position, but enough to cause a disappointing commitment to a project which sorely needed the full cooperation of all the brethren. Financial problems plagued the school throughout the remaining years of its existence. Perhaps all of us were

“spoiled” by the fact that those first five students had full support so that it was unnecessary to call upon Venda churches to contribute.

Only three Venda men graduated from other classes at the Bible school although there were a number who finished one or two years of the three-year course. Money was the “stumbling block,” if one would call it that. The amount that could be offered to a student as support while studying was miniscule – not enough to support the man himself, to say nothing of his family. The American reader may ask why the black relatives and/or congregations didn’t get together the funds for the education of a worthy student. The answers are really simple: poverty, and the inability to understand this concept of Christian education in an area still relatively untaught. (Looking back with the advantage of hindsight – it could have been God’s way of turning the Venda work back to the way they knew in that land – to the way that suited their culture).

In 1976, a school site had finally been allotted, with the first requirement of the authorities being complete fencing. With measurements of 750 by 150 yards, this meant a lot of expensive materials. One weekend, John and Peter Mostert took our truck to Louis Trichardt to haul the poles to the site. Outside of Sibasa, the tarmac road ends. It was a rainy day, the surface of the dirt road slimy-slick. At a bend in the road, the truck simply slid sideways into the soft shoulder and refused to budge. Lucas Tshivhase happened to come along with a four-wheel drive vehicle and pulled the truck back onto the road, but he also bore the news that the road became much worse a little further on. So the poles were off-loaded and stacked at a

nearby trading store until a later date when Allan could finish the job.

Allan Kriger's whole heart was in the Vendaland Bible School, and so was his wife, Evelyn's. Evelyn even raised chickens one year to make money to support a student. Allan worked very hard, both physically and mentally, for the school and the students. Only one small building was actually constructed. It had three little rooms: one for students' sleeping, one for Allan to sleep over rather than travel the great distance to Louis Trichardt every night, and one for classes. Allan traveled many thousands of miles back and forth from his home to the school, over terribly rough roads, and wore out at least three cars. Often he felt discouraged, but he would not give up. He found a worthwhile work that he could do along with his Bible School teaching trips. At Tshisimani is a government teacher training school which encourages the study of the Bible in the evenings. For a long time, Allan stopped at Tshisimani on Tuesday and Thursday nights, teaching as many as 70 students in a Bible class, and by the middle of 1976 he had baptized 20 of them. There one could see hope for the future in that the teachers, once graduated from the training school, would take the gospel with them to many parts of Vendaland.

In June 1977, Vendaland Bible School held a lecture-ship on the school property with attendances at night as high as 250. Among the outside visitors who assisted were Simon Magagula from Daveyton and Daniel Malatje from Atteridgeville. The most memorable lecture was by John Nengwenani who spoke on what it means for a Venda person to become a Christian. Such a one must turn, he

said, not only from the sins of which he must repent before baptism, but from the strong traditions and customs of the people: the marriage customs, the circumcision rites, the honor to ancestors, the various practices and superstitions that we white people would never have dreamed of. Not only must the Venda Christian leave whatever practices are contrary to the Bible, he must live daily amid the pressures of his relatives and associates who do not subscribe to his new beliefs. This lecture helped us to understand much about the black people that we had never understood before.

The original five graduates had never received certificates to show for their accomplishments, and this public gathering was the ideal occasion for such recognition. Philemon Makhado had worked very hard but had been unable to complete the courses because of his difficulty with the English language. (He is nevertheless, even without that certificate of completion, still working hard for the Lord). The honor was given me to hand out the scrolls to each of the four graduates and shake their hands, one by one. It was a chilly winter evening. The big tent was pitched on a grassy place, and there I stood, wool socks keeping my feet warm, grass more than ankle deep, tears of joy and fulfillment blurring my vision.

During this lectureship, and again during the tent meeting at Lwomondo immediately following, the talent of one of the students shone out for all to enjoy. Herbert Mushoma has exceptional musical talent, and in another time and place, he might have become a famous composer or performer. Without any training except for a few brief lessons in note reading, he could take our English hymn

book and sing any of the four parts of any song. Everywhere Herbert went, he organized singing groups, and his chorus at Lwomondo were invited to sing at other places. Once when Herbert accompanied Allan to a SABS lecture-ship at Benoni, the white brethren were impressed with his knowledge of music. They would ask him if he could sing some unfamiliar song. He would study it for a few moments, sing softly to himself, and then say, "Yes, this is how this one goes," and then lead them in singing it. Herbert believed that there is no better way to preach the gospel or entice people to come and listen than through the medium of singing.

Herbert was able to finish only two years at the Bible School. The three who finished before the school had to be closed down were Obrien Malindi, Abel Khbana, and Solomon Mashohla. The total of 7 who completed all the courses and graduated sounds like a small result for a big effort, but we are reminded of the parable of the mustard seed. Only the future will tell the complete story, and God is the judge.

On the very day of writing this portion of the book, I had occasion to use a paragraph of a letter from Allan Kriger in my ladies' Bible class in Abilene. We had been studying the influence of Christ and His teachings on women of Judaism and women of paganism, and were preparing to study about Jesus' teachings contrasted with communism and modernism. I had previously told the class about the way the African women kept silence — how they took a "back seat," being more followers than leaders, the Venda women even kneeling in obeisance to anyone deemed "superior." Something had happened to bring

about at least a partial change in the women of one Venda congregation. Allan tells in his letter about a certain "anti" preacher arriving uninvited at a certain church. The leader of the congregation, probably afraid to "speak his piece" to a white man and ask him not to return, said nothing when the white preacher announced that he was going to preach there every Sunday for several months. (Before going any further, it is necessary to explain that J. M. is a black "anti" who has raised a lot of controversy, and B. T. is a black man who has tried to push the rightness of polygamy. The white preacher is B.) So to quote from Allan's letter: "The women of that congregation arose as one person and told B. what they thought about his idea . . . They said, 'First it is J. M. who comes here to preach, then it is B. T., then it is some cast-off. Now you too are trying to bring in your cast-off doctrine to us, well, we want you to know now that we don't want you or any other like you. What do you people think this congregation is? Do you think it is a place for all outcasts to come who cannot preach elsewhere?'"

On the day in 1982 that I heard that the Vendaland Bible School was closing down, I felt very sad. I sat down and wrote my feelings. In part, I wrote, ". . . It's known only to God. Maybe it's even in His plan that it is better this way. Maybe something else will open up that I can't see now. Some years ago, when the trouble in the Rhodias caused the closing down of many of the places where our missionaries had carried on successful works, I was similarly distressed. I asked the elderly brother and sister Short who had worked there since 1921 if it caused them to be deeply grieved. In their wisdom and experience, they

said that they had sown the seed, they had labored as they could, and only God would know the real outcome. They left it in His hands.

“On a popular T. V. show, a priest and a doctor in a military medical unit behind the fighting lines were wearily looking back over a hard day’s work. The priest said that doctors could at least see quite soon whether or not their efforts had been successful, but he himself could never be sure that any of his efforts were a success. After thinking for a moment, the doctor said, ‘A professor in medical school once said to us, “God heals the patient and the doctor collects the fee”.’

“That’s how it is. And then I remembered hearing about the ‘unsuccessful’ gospel meeting in which only one little girl was baptized, but she grew up to become the mother of a whole family of gospel preachers.”

Vendaland Bible School closed its doors, but that was far from the end of the church in that land. A directory of black churches that John printed in 1978 listed 26 congregations in Vendaland.

An excerpt from the bulletin of the 29th and Yale congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma follows:

VENDALAND, South Africa

The gospel once entrusted into the hands of dedicated people, continues to bring forth fruit. Our late brother John Hardin before his departure from South Africa left some of his personal funds with various native preachers to continue their work in that country. We receive a monthly memo from a brother Philemon Makhado, Vhufuli, Vendaland, South Africa. He reported on six

churches in Vendaland that had a total of 21 baptisms during September. A note at the close of his report says, "John Hardin, his work is still going on. We are still preaching and baptizing more people."

A monthly report from Philemon Makhado, who struggles with the English language, is quoted exactly as he wrote it and indicates how the work can grow even after missionaries have moved away.

"PREACHING AND VISITING REPORT"

11-6-83 - Mavambe church time 9 A. M.

People 31 Green Farm Church

People 39 Baptist (baptized) 4 at Green

Mamafha and Mabelthe Baptist 3

At Altein Church

11-13-83 - Green Church people 41

Mamafha and Mabelthe

Baptist 6 at Mininginisi Church

11-20-83 - Mavambe Church people 30

Green Church people 45

Mamafha and Mabelthe house to house at Altein

11-27-83 - Green church people 39

Mamafha and Mabelthe

Baptist 2 at Mininginisi

Signed P. Makhado"



42. Part of the Venda band, each player blowing his one note in a piece of pipe or horn.

43. Brother Samson Matshivha makes a point in discussion with brethren.

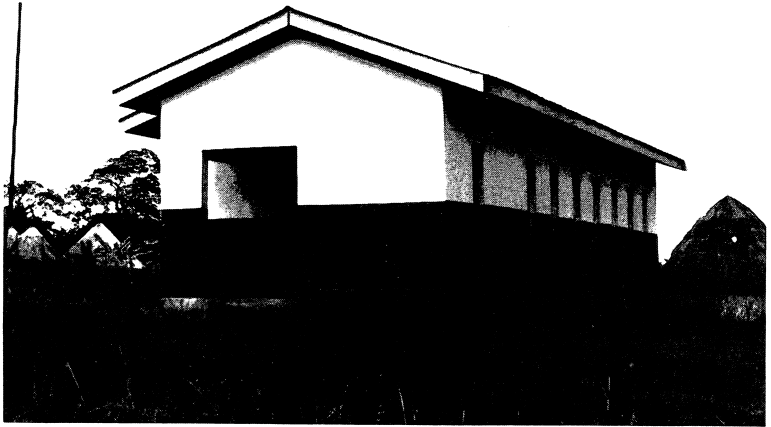




44. A large volume of Venda song books and tracts being delivered to Samuel Ramagwede. Some of the printed material was done on the off-set press by Jerry Hogg, and some on our hand-operated duplicating machine.

45. Sister Ramagwede supplements the family income by making clay pots.





46. The church building at Phiphidi, Venda, where John Nengwenani preaches.

47. Corrugated iron church building at Tshikombani, Venda. Johannesburg Christians assisted with some of the funds.





48. A poor Venda man often seen by the road.

49. All aboard — a group of Christians prepare to go to the kraal of the acting chief for a Sunday afternoon service.

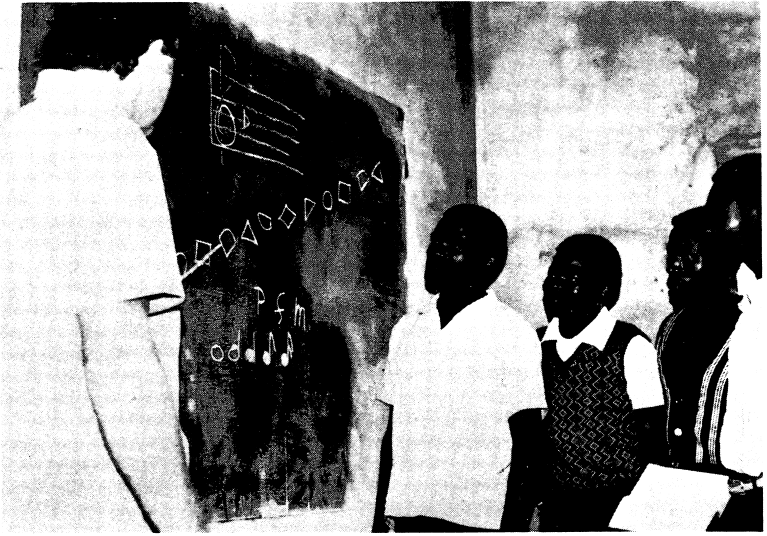




50. The first students at the Venda School of Preaching. Philemon Makhado, Samson Ramulumisi, Allan Kriger (teacher), Samson Matshivha, John Nengwenani, and Philemon Mamafha.

51. Other students of the Vendaleland school.

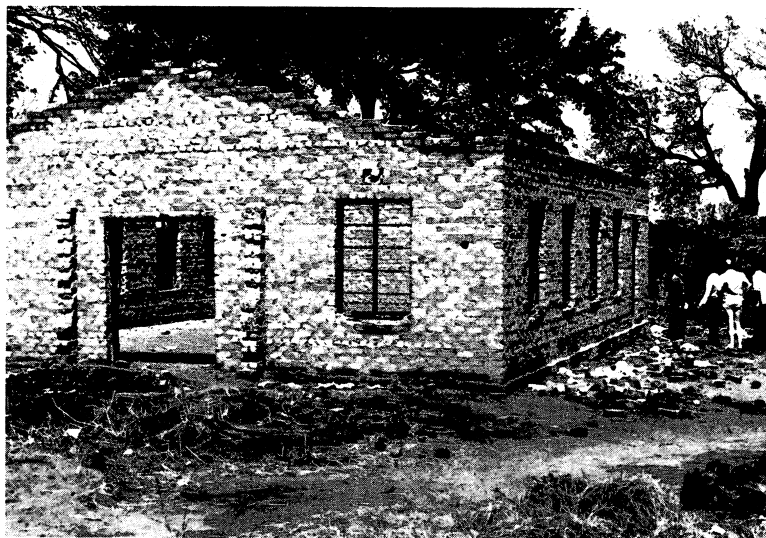




52. John Hardin teaches the Venda Bible students to read shaped notes. Herbert Mashumo, nearest the blackboard, became very proficient.

53. The Venda congregation at Tshidimbini stands on the floor of what will soon be their new church building.

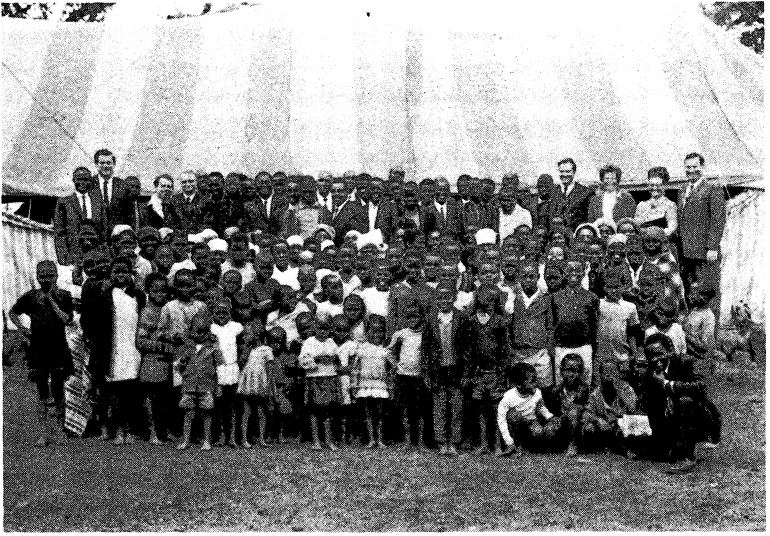




54. The Tshidimbini church building under construction.

55. The completed Tshidimbini building.





56. The first "bush" meeting with the big tent was held at Tshidimbini.

57. Benoni and Johannesburg personnel who taught classes at the Tshidimbini meeting, 1970: John Dunkin, Jerry Hogg, Lester and Wanda Duncan, John and Bessie Hardin, Clive Biggs, and Gordon Uys.





58. Bread is brought from town each day of the tent meeting.

59. How the cooking is done for a crowd.





60. John Hardin and Simon Magagula ready to start out on one of many preaching trips.

61. Lena Ntombeni, largely instrumental in getting the Draaikraal work started, stands by the little building erected there.



Rural Black Work

Students of geography have been declaring for years that the continent of Africa is drying up. The desert is taking over. Famine is real. Drought has always been one of the most feared of nature's phenomena in many parts of the world. In South Africa, even in the best of years, we have the absolutely dry winters. We expect them in the high veld, for that is the normal pattern. Then in late August, when the fruit trees burst into bloom, the wondering begins — what sort of season will we have this year? When will the rains come? Will they come at all? Sometimes a foretaste is given — an appetizer — in the form of early September showers. The clouds go away again and the days grow warm. It is dry. Weeks pass and October comes. Farmers anxiously scan the sky. The wind blows and the dust gets into one's nostrils.

It's a wearying thing, the dust. It makes one restless and uneasy. Some years, the months come and go with no relief, then the tantalizing clouds appear with little more than promise, delivering tiny showers and disappearing again. But in the good years — oh, the wonderful smell of the bountiful showers that cleanse the dusty old world and restore hope to its people! Gone is that burning longing from the hearts that have been fearing yet another year of drought.

I have a memory that haunts me, photographed in my mind as clearly as it would be if recorded by a camera. I do not remember the year. It could have been

any year at all, but was probably in the early 70's. We had driven many miles over a dusty, rutted road that had taken us over a mountain, through a government-owned eucalyptus forest, past hillsides dotted with clusters of thatched huts. All along the road were the usual black folk, most of them on foot: young boys with goats; young girls with water buckets, bundles of firewood, or other loads on their heads; mothers with babies on their backs, some of them working in fields or gardens; all of them eking out a bare existence from a worn-out land reluctant to give up any more of its bounty. Our destination that day was a large village where we were about to begin a series of evangelistic meetings.

As we stopped the car, I noticed a scruffy hen, scratching and clucking busily, teaching her lone chick how to make a living from the barren land. There was a thick layer of fine dust everywhere in this central area of the village, and I wondered how any creature could survive. As I stepped out of the car, a shadow passed swiftly over me, and in less than the twinkling of an eye, the chick was gone. I turned in time to see the tiny victim carried aloft in the talons of a hawk and then I looked at the desolate mother, clucking and searching in vain for her babe.

Somehow, this mental photograph has become to me a symbol of rural Africa. So much of its population has so little, yet clings tenaciously to life, love, home, family, tribe; hoping, ever hoping, for something better — sometimes having the promise for the future as seen in that little chick, only to have it snatched away again by the hawk of misfortune.

DRAAIKRAAL

In 1958, during the first period of time that the Hardins lived in Benoni, a servant named Lena Ntombeni worked for "Auntie Kate" Anderson, who taught her the gospel. Lena was so filled with joy that she wanted to share her knowledge with her people, so she took a leave of absence to go to the community of Draaikraal, 160 miles northeast of Benoni. In November of 1958, Jackson Sogoni was sent to the area for the first of many visits for the purpose of teaching the people, most of whom were farm workers, very poor and uneducated. Lena's grandmother was one of the first converts, and before many months had passed, there was a congregation of about 22.

Mr. Papenfus, a white farmer for whom some of the members worked, assisted the little group who erected a wood and mud structure as a meeting place. On the day of the opening of the little thatched building, there were about 100 present, and it seemed as if all was well for the future of the church in Draaikraal. Brother Sogoni visited them from time to time, and they were also assisted by Jacob Mahlangu of Mpudulle, but there were never the means for sending a preacher to work there on a full-time basis. Only one man among the local members could read, so growth in Bible knowledge was slow among these hard-working laborers.

Early in the 1960's, a seeming blow was struck to the Draaikraal church. The government policy of allocation of the black population to particular areas caused many of the Draaikraal people to be moved in Dlalule and to Mtsibiri near Nebo some distance to the west. A small group thus fragmented could have utterly disappeared,

but in 1983, brother Sogoni reported the existence of six congregations which sprang from Draaikraal: Witport, Rosenkaal, Dlaulale, Mtsibiri, Nebo, and Vlackfontein. It is impossible to predict the future of any congregation, but unless preachers can be sent to aid these little groups, no one can feel good about them. They need to have a teacher who will teach them to read. The field is white unto harvest but the laborers are pitifully few.

John Hardin assisted the Draaikraal work (including the congregations that had sprung from there) as much as he was able. In May of 1977 the big tent was taken to the area for the purpose of holding a gospel campaign, but the weather turned bitterly cold and meetings were held in a larger-than-average hut belonging to Doek Ntombeni. John still had to sleep in his canvas-sided caravan, managing to keep warm by wearing longies, flannel p. j.'s, a sweater, and two pairs of socks. Inside the sleeping bag was a foot-warming hot-water bottle, and over the sleeping bag was a very heavy quilt.

Each night of the campaign, John picked up people from a 24-mile circuit and brought them to the services, returning them once again to their pick-up points afterward. As many as 79 or 80 sometimes crowded into the hut to hear the gospel. In addition to Jackson Sogoni, the meetings were assisted by John and Jacob Mhlangu. On the closing Sunday morning, the entire group walked a mile to the river where 11 souls were baptized into Christ. John wrote, "Upon our return to the kraal, we engaged in the Lord's Supper in an atmosphere of happy Christian fellowship, and one felt that God was truly near."

In an article John wrote about Draaikraal, he

included some impressions: "Ndebeles sing, traditionally, with many slurs and quavers, and I find it almost impossible to harmonize with them. At Draaikraal, brother Koos Buda, the only one with a hymn book (because he is the only one who can read), sings the melody. He sings a phrase and all the men and women come in with their kind of harmony. All Ndebele songs are sung this way.

" . . . these Africans, as well as those in other parts of the country, seem to have a 'singing switch' which is activated as soon as they board a vehicle. One night the first pick-up produced only 3 persons, but they started singing. As they were joined by others, we finally had the full 40 at it."

At the last service, a special collection was taken to help defray the cost of the petrol John had used. Tears came to John's eyes, he said, as he saw person after person walk to the table and place their money — "poorly paid farm workers, all, but they donated R23. My heart was truly touched."

Draaikraal's story is partly the story of Lena Ntombeni. There is more to Lena's story. She was present at Daveyton on the occasion when four women of that congregation demonstrated the teaching of Sunday school classes with visual aids. It was the first time in our experience that black women had not only mastered the use of the flannelboard but had demonstrated its use to people from several congregations. Lena, along with a good many others of her race, had always considered it wrong for women to be teachers, even of children, but now she was convinced that it was right and proper. She went, then, to Auntie Kate and begged from her all the visual aids that

she had accumulated when she had been a teacher. These she packed into her suitcase, took leave of absence once again from the Anderson household, and went home to Draaikraal to teach the children of the community.

Lena could not remain in her homeland — she needed the money she could earn as a maid — but “she did what she could.” What if the same could be said of everyone in the church?

The story of the church in Vendaland has been recorded in some detail. Much of it would be repeated with different names and different places if all the reports were available and complete. “All of the tribal groups are represented on the Reef,” wrote John in one report. “The churches in the various rural African areas started when men in the cities were converted and returned with the gospel to their homelands. Later, white preachers visited some of the places and helped confirm the faith of the new converts. My work carries me out into these various areas and sometimes hundreds of miles will be driven in a weekend of preaching.”

This was John’s special work as he saw it and expressed it in early 1970. It was not a “job” set up by any board, committee, or other group of people, but represented a growing need which he felt able to fill. More than any particular training, it would require mainly his own dedication to the black people, many long hours of driving, weekends away from home, and just plain hard work. Of necessity, due to the vast areas involved, John’s work became centered mostly in the Transvaal Province, but that alone is too great for one man to cover in any way except with an occasional visit.

The apostle John said of his writings about Jesus that all the books would not be able to contain all the works that were done. Neither would this simple volume be able to report all the things that have been done everywhere in the churches in South Africa. Many interesting stories will be left out, either because I am not acquainted with them and have no record of them, or because there just isn't room for them all.

For a long time, before we moved away from South Africa in 1978, John tried to collect information about black churches all over the country. He had put out several editions of a directory of white churches and wanted to publish an accurate listing of black and colored congregations. Because we believe in the autonomy of congregations and have no central headquarters, there is no official listing, and he had to rely on various people to send the necessary information. This was slow in coming and was never all received. Exact mailing addresses were difficult to obtain in some instances, and some of the brethren were, it seemed, reluctant to participate in an effort to make a listing — I'm not sure why. We did hear of one white brother, no longer in the country, who discouraged the black congregations in his area from sending information. He was fearful that such a list could one day fall into the hands of possible conquering communists who would use it to track down and persecute the churches.

The 1978 listing showed 12 black churches in the Cape Province, most of them in the eastern part. At that time, only the Kwazakele church (Port Elizabeth, working with Bentley Nofemela) had a building, and the Mdantsane church (East London, working with Reffie Kotsana) had a

building site.

Forty-two congregations were listed in the Natal Province, for which a very great amount of credit goes to the work done by the Natal School of Preaching — staff, students, and graduates. A revised list by the time of this writing would, of course, show new congregations and perhaps some that no longer exist, but in the main, there would still be a very strong showing. In addition to the 42 in Natal are 25 churches listed in the Transkei, many of which owe their existence to the school of preaching. Before the school's existence, however, Jackson Sogoni and others had worked in the Transkei, particularly in Jackson's home area around Mount Frere, at Lusikisiki, Tabankulu, and Flagstaff.

Lesotho and Swaziland are separate little countries — land-locked islands surrounded by South Africa. The Swaziland black work is reported briefly in the chapter on preacher training schools. There are a number of congregations going about their business in their own quiet way, God giving the increase.

Lesotho, mountainous home of the Basotho people, had for a long time only one small work by one man, George Raseleso, whom John first met in Atteridgeville. I believe he was converted there. Upon his return to his homeland, he started the church at Teyateyaneng, popularly called "T. Y." Since then, a number of American missionaries have been working in Lesotho. Brother Raseleso's son has more recently attended the School of Preaching. John and Jerry conducted a tent meeting in T. Y. in 1974.

Botswana, bordering South Africa on the west, is

large in area but sparsely populated. In 1974, two Sunset School of Preaching graduates, Dean Troyer and Mike Tanaro, went to Gaborones, and were replaced for a while afterward by Ed Scott, followed by the Milton Caraways and the Bill Smiths. Eldred Echols, pioneer in so many other places, is once again pioneering work in the far reaches of Botswana, together with SABS students and others. A team from Abilene Christian University plan to go beyond Maun in 1984 or 1985. It is my sincere hope that Eldred will one day write a book about all of his areas of work which would include many trips to Botswana.

The black nation of Venda, now one of the newly independent areas, was until recently a part of the Transvaal Province. In 1978, there were 26 Venda congregations listed. The Venda work appears in a separate chapter.

The main rural portions of the Transvaal Province showed a total of 25 congregations with the names of preachers (or leaders) and places as follows:

Seshego	Frans Maibelo
Apel	Jack Thobenjane
Dennilton	David Phelane
Derby	Moses Hlope
Draaikraal	Duke Ntombeni
Ekhathazweni	Jan S. Mahlangu
Ga-Matsepe	David Phelane
Ga-Mmamabolo	Isaiah Mehlope
Ga-Phaahla	Cornelius Phahla
Ga-Podile	Robert Moraba
Jane Furse Hospital	Ephraim Mello

Kemp Siding	Jackson Tyingila
Leslie	Solomon Khoza
Mafate	Alfred Selahle
Mbola	Andries Mabuza
Mpudulle	Jacob Mahlangu
Naboomkoppies	Philip Knosi
Namakgale	Philemon Phasha
Ncotshano	Joseph Sibiya
Piet Retief Location (2 Groups)	Paulus Knosi
Pongola	Ernest Ngcobo
Ramakgopa	Jeffrey Ramakgopa
Temba	Johannes Nkuna
Vlesboom	David Phelane

John Hardin probably visited each of these congregations at least once and some of them many times. Often he was the only white man to make these trips, but sometimes he was accompanied by some of his fellow-missionaries, especially Jerry Hogg. Always there had to be a black interpreter such as Jackson Sogoni, John Manape, or Simon Magagula.

SEKHUKHUNILAND

For many years, the Atteridgeville congregation, just outside of the city of Pretoria, could claim the distinction of being the most active, progressive church among the black people. They grew in numbers and in knowledge and were known for their faithfulness and their works. From among them went brother Robert Moraba to go to his homeland and establish the church there, and he went with

not only the blessing of Atteridgeville but with their support – a unique situation in that few black churches had as yet seen the need of preacher support.

For a number of years, brother Moraba carried on through numerous handicaps, building up his home congregation and reaching out to areas beyond his immediate community: Steelpoort, Naboomkoppies, Mafate, Mbola, Apel, Penge Mine. Transportation had to be by bus or on foot. Then the Grand Central church in Vienna, West Virginia, which had been of help in other South African efforts, sent money for a vehicle for Robert. John Hardin, Lester Duncan, and Jerry Hogg worked together to obtain a VW pickup which they delivered to brother Moraba, specifying that it was for the church and not be used in any sort of business or as a taxi. The benefits of the transaction were uncertain – there were severe criticisms and complaints – the vehicle gave a great deal of trouble to an inexperienced car owner and in a comparatively short time had to be given up. God alone knows whether or not the church grew as a result of the car's existence, but John and his co-workers placed more emphasis on giving spiritual rather than material help to the places they visited.

Brother Moraba's work and influence cannot be measured by us except in the above list of the churches he has worked with in his part of the country. His work covers many years, and if the facts were known to me, there would be a book-full about which to write. In addition to his work among the churches, he has done well in seeing that his children have been educated, and when one son received a degree, the family celebrated with feasting and a service of thanksgiving to which he invited a number of white as

well as black brethren.

RAMAKGOPA'S STORY

For several years after we settled in our home in Benoni in 1967, we had frequent visits by an older black man named Jeffrey Ramakgopa. Jeffrey was a truck driver who had worked for a Johannesburg firm for many years. His employer recognized him to be an honest man, a reliable truck driver, and a desirable employee. Jeffrey had worked and saved, worked and saved, out of a salary that could never have been quite sufficient. He sent money home to his wife and family who lived at Ramakgopa's Village, out of Pietersburg. They managed to build a good house by laboring on it for several years, and Jeffrey had bought a truck. At last, at about 70 years of age, Jeffrey retired and came to tell us goodbye. His life-long desire was about to be fulfilled – he could go back home, support himself by driving his own truck, and preach to his people. This had been his subject of conversation every time he visited us. Tragedy struck soon afterward when his wife died, but he was home, and he could preach to his people. This is perhaps another story that has been repeated countless times in as many variations – men going home to tell their people the story of Jesus.

For other incidents concerning rural black churches, the chapter about the Big Tent has some information, for most of the rural areas were served at one time or another by that means.

The Big Tent

It is impossible to separate the work of the “Big Tent,” as it became known, from the stories of various groups and places, but its magnitude warrants a chapter of its own.

The year was 1970. For a long time, we had been wondering what means could be used to hold meetings for large numbers of people in areas where there are no buildings available other than public school class rooms seating less than 100 people. John, Jerry Hogg, and Lester Duncan began making plans for evangelistic campaigns in two areas of Vendaland, and in the process they investigated a certain tent that was offered to them for such use. When they found it to be quite small and in rather poor condition they set out upon what became a long search for a bigger and better one with a reasonable price tag. Eventually they were able to purchase a 30 x 70 foot tent for R1000, or what was then about \$1300. In addition to the tent, we needed a vehicle to transport it, a public address system, a power plant and lights, a portable platform, and a portable baptistry, adding up to a sizable investment. With such a sum considered for two short campaigns, the next logical step in thinking was – “Why not keep the tent and use it all over the country?”

In order to borrow money for part of this equipment, we took a lien on our Benoni house. Our supporting church in Tulsa contributed \$1500, Jerry Hogg raised some money, and some funds came from other sources. A used school

bus was the first vehicle purchased for transporting the tent. Most of the seats were removed, and at the front, a cupboard and small table were built in, making it a camper. When the tent was unloaded from the rear, there was room for two or three folding camp beds.

Lester Duncan had a good bit of experience as a mechanic — a good thing, because the old bus gave lots of trouble, and after enough of that, we bought a Toyota Dyna 2000 truck, also secondhand. The Toyota could carry the load but lacked power, and its springs were particularly non-existent so that our old bones were well shaken on the rough roads. In 1974, during our furlough to the states, John raised funds for a larger truck, and this time we were able to purchase a new vehicle which could carry the entire load of tent and supplies and still give us a comfortable ride.

The tent saw a tremendous amount of service during its first 7 or 8 years, but its canvas sides gradually deteriorated, replacement was expensive, and gradually it seemed as if it was one of those things that had served a good purpose but whose days were about ended. It has had little use since the end of the decade and by this time may be entirely out of service.

In order to gain some experience in handling the tent, as well as to assist some group nearer Benoni, we held a week's meeting at Eldorado Park, a colored area near Johannesburg. During the week, the weather turned bitterly cold and rainy, so attendance was poor, but on Sunday, the sun appeared and there was an audience of 195 with one lady being baptized. It was a good test of the equipment, especially of the lighting plant. The

technique of raising and lowering the tent took a while to master, a minimum of 6 men being needed for the job when the 70 foot length was used.

FIRST BIG TENT CAMPAIGN

Preparation for the first Vendaleland campaigns was tremendous. In addition to all the trips across Johannesburg to obtain the tent and equipment, we put out several thousand advertising brochures, 450 copies of the Venda hymn book, and 1000 copies of each of four tracts. John estimated some 30,000 turns of the hand-operated duplicating machine. Folding and inserting the pages of these publications was done by hand, by members of the Hardin family assisted by the young people of the Benoni church.

During the campaigns, we white people had to stay at the Sibasa boarding house, not far from Tshidimbini, but a long drive each day to Nzhelele. Assisting in these meetings were John and Ruth Dunkin, Lester and Wanda Duncan, Gordon Uys, Izak Theron, Clive Biggs, Eldred Echols, Simon Magagula, Alpheus Lithudza, Jerry Hogg, John and myself. It was winter, and several developed flu and laryngitis, but by helping each other, we got through the weeks. At both places, we held classes during the day, women teaching children, and men teaching adult groups. Ruth Dunkin's children's classes were outstanding, with the children eagerly learning memory verses, turning up early to work on them. In the afternoons, I taught women's classes while some of the men held classes for new converts and others distributed leaflets and preached to small groups in the villages. Florence Manyatshe and Miriam Razwiedani, both studying to become teachers, interpreted for the

childrens' and ladies' classes and also assisted us by washing the baptistry garments. Women carried water from a distant river to fill the portable baptistry.

Attendance during the first week of meetings, at Tshidimbini, averaged 210 each night. The crowds were orderly, the children well behaved. The church had been in existence here for several years. The tent itself was a big attraction in an area that has no electricity, no excitement, no entertainment except what the local people make for themselves. When it was brilliantly lit with numerous bulbs inside and a floodlight outside, the tent could be seen for miles. At Tshidimbini we were far off the main road, in a comparatively sparsely populated area.

At Nzhelele, there were only a few members of the church in a more densely populated region. Children appeared in swarms, most of them unaccompanied by adults, and at the evening sessions, they caused considerable disturbance. Sometimes there were 600 to 800 people in attendance, mostly sitting on the ground, so when children had to make frequent exits, many were disturbed. A few teenagers acted "smart" and deliberately made frequent trips in and out, so after the middle of the week, the adults were seated at the front of the tent, the children at the rear with several teachers assigned to keep order among them. We were in a dilemma. We didn't want to forbid the children to attend, but at the same time, we wondered why they came if they didn't intend to listen.

Evening services were scheduled for 7:00 p.m., and for half an hour before, taped hymns were played over the public address system, and people were invited to come and hear the gospel. Film strips of the book of Acts, and

the Jule Miller (black edition) film strips were shown. After the sermons each evening, question and answer sessions sometimes continued until 10 or 11 o'clock.

Eighteen were baptized at Tshidimbini and 49 at Nzhelele. At Nzhelele, we had some opposition from members of the Lutheran and Zionist groups. Some threatened to burn down our big tent while others threw stones at our members as they rode in the back of a big truck after the services. One good-sized rock hit our car as well. Never would we say that those churches condoned what their members did or threatened to do – we can only believe that they were, in their ignorance, behaving as children. At Tshidimbini we were told that the Salvation Army group, in an effort to keep their people from attending our tent meetings, showed films every night that week.

Our sons, Dale and Gary, were with us during the week at Nzhelele and became good friends of Patrick Magadumisi who was baptized at that time. Our boys were commended by the black brethren because they played with the black children – Gary, age 12, taught several Venda boys how to stand on their heads!

The Venda traditions of hospitality, and the fact that visitors were fed during the Tshidimbini meetings, caused us a problem when we set up meetings at later dates. According to Venda custom, it is unheard of to have visitors come and not offer them food, and so for this first tent effort, we assisted them with funds for the purchase of supplies. This took a huge bite out of our budget, and we soon realized that the number of meetings we could hold with the available funds would be cut by about 50% if we

were to feed all visitors. Many lengthy discussions were held between black and white brethren, and it looked as if there were to be hard feelings as a result. Eventually it had to be made quite clear that the tent existed to bring spiritual food to the people, our reasoning concerning physical food being that the people would eat if they were at home, so they should be asked to bring their food with them if they traveled some distance to come to the tent meetings.

Funding of tent meeting work was a big task. Some assistance kept coming from friends in the states while John and Jerry put much of their personal church contribution directly into the effort, the total work of tent and printing being set aside and given the title of "Evangelism Unlimited." That name was a takeoff on the South African practice of businesses being "So-and-So Ltd." All funds were kept in a separate bank account. SABS bought part interest in the tent so that it could be used for lectureships.

Space does not permit the telling of all of the interesting events connected with the tent during its years of service. There were some of the efforts that were highly successful, others only moderately so, and a few that were downright disappointing. Some went without problems of bad weather or malfunctioning equipment while others were plagued with one or both. Wind was the tent's greatest enemy, a close second being the misuse of it by children who swung on the ropes or pushed against the sides. Nearly every time the tent was brought back to Benoni after being used in the "bush," portions of it had to be taken for repair. Until a better way of tying down the side posts was worked out, the wind would whip them loose and even bend them. Ropes soon wore out and broke. The firm

that took care of all of this was at Roodepoort, on the opposite side of Johannesburg from Benoni, a 76 mile round trip, so many hundreds of miles were driven in that task alone. Probably as many trips were made in keeping the first power plant in a state of repair.

HLUTI AND PIETERMARITZBURG

In August, 1970, the tent was taken to Hluti in Swaziland. Jerry Hogg and Lester Duncan started the meeting while John remained in Benoni for a few days to do some print work on the duplicating machine, joining them later in the week. At the same time, the white church in Pietermaritzburg were sponsoring a teachers' workshop. Almost on the spur of the moment, and unknown to our husbands who were out of reach by telephone, Wanda Duncan, Ann Hogg, and I decided to go to that workshop. Immediately after the Sunday morning service in Benoni, we loaded our baggage into the Duncan's small station wagon, ready to head out. Wanda had arranged for the care of her older children, I had put Brian and Neal in charge of Dale and Gary, and little Kelly Duncan and Ricky Hogg were with us. Before we left our driveway, Brian, looking very concerned, asked us if we really thought we were going to be all right. We assured him that we should reach our destination before dark and drove away.

About 150 miles down the road, we saw the heat indicator on the dash board move over into the red area but made it to a nearby filling station where we filled the radiator. The attendant could see no leak, so we resumed the journey, eager to arrive in time for the Sunday evening service. We kept an eye on the heat indicator, and for a

long time all was well. When again we saw that red warning, our hearts sank. Towns were few and far between, and we were nowhere near a filling station or even a farm place with a well. We stopped and let the engine cool and then emptied the children's drinking water bottle into the radiator, hoping to limp along to a place where we could get help. The car refused to start, even with Ann and me pushing with all our might. Ricky, seeing his mother out in the road, promptly lowered his window and climbed out to be near her. A truck driver taking a load of produce to the Durban market came along and tried for a long time to get us started, but to no avail. Then a car stopped and the driver offered to fetch his neighbor who was a mechanic to come back and assist us, but before they returned, the winter sun was setting and we knew we could never make it to Pietermaritzburg that night. There was some danger of being accosted by unfriendly travelers who might take advantage of women and children, and with the chill of winter night descending on us, we were not happy. At last the two men returned to work on the car, but they had not thought to bring a container of water. Eventually the car started and made the trip of some 10 or 15 miles into Ladysmith, where, just inside the city limits, it gave one last gasp and died. The engine had "seized up."

The "good Samaritan" who had come to our aid by fetching his mechanic neighbor, was a school principal named van Rensburg. He and his wife insisted that we all go to their home, refusing to hear our suggestion that we find a hotel. They prepared a delicious supper for us, made beds for all, and helped us get a phone call through to Tex Williams in Pietermaritzburg. They pushed the

broken car into their back yard until it could be fixed, and gave us a good breakfast in the morning. Tex drove up to fetch us in time for the Monday workshop sessions and also took us back to Benoni a couple of days later. The workshop was a great success, and I had a chance to demonstrate some of the teaching aids I had worked up specifically for black children.

Lester Duncan received word of his car's situation via a call to the Swazi police who found him at the tent site and passed the message to him. The details of what passed between Lester and Wanda for her taking the car on a trip without having it checked over, we never knew, but Lester was not pleased with the cost of repairing his car.

NABOOMKOPPIES

The November 1970 tent meeting was a near disaster. Probably if this had been the first tent meeting ever attempted, it may well have also been the last. It was at Naboomkoppies, in a Sotho area near Lydenburg and Burgersfort. A preliminary trip had been made in order to have everything in order. John, Jerry, Lester, Nic Dekker, and John Manape made the trip with all the equipment, leaving Benoni at 4:00 a. m. on a Sunday. All went well at first: the tent went up, the power plant was in order, and the daytime service was held with some 400 people present. Sunday night, the power plant failed, the film strips that had been advertised had to be cancelled, and the speakers had the light of only one or two lanterns. By Monday night, Nic and Lester had the power plant repaired, but the lights failed for a while because of a short in the wiring. Seven hundred people were present, but John's diary entry

reads, "Crowd very noisy all through the service. Something has to be done."

On Tuesday, the men traveled to Voortrekker Baths for a bath and a swim and felt ready to meet whatever came. But at 6:00 p. m. "a terrific wind and dust storm hit for about 20 minutes, which tore down one side of the big tent, and almost blew the small tent away — JTH being in the small tent. Then a heavy rain came. Enough wind was blowing after we somewhat repaired the tent that we cancelled the meeting. Our nice bath went for nought."

Again on Wednesday, they went for a swim, but had a flat tire on the way. Later, there was a tractor accident in which 2 boys were hurt, so Jerry took them to the hospital. That night the power plant was in good shape, but John had one comment in his diary — "INSECTS!!!"

Thursday at the tent site was routine, but John took time out to go to town and send a cablegram to our son Don and his bride, Dian, who were to be married that Sunday, in Cleveland, Oklahoma.

One desired event was missing from the meeting — there were no baptisms. That fact, together with memories of the problems that had plagued them, caused the men to return to Benoni with faces somewhat downcast.

VENDALAND AGAIN

Whenever the tent was taken to Vendaleland, there was no shortage of men to help, for the five preacher-students were always there. One such occasion was the meeting at Gondeni, near Phiphidi in February 1972. The tent was erected on a Saturday, and except for some trouble in getting the lighting system to work, all went well. But

early on Sunday morning, it started to rain, and that was the beginning of a week of trouble. Izak Theron was along, and the two men slept (?) in what they called the "space age" tent, a rather classy-looking affair with a built-in ground sheet which they expected to protect them from wetness. It turned out, however, to be a water-catcher, for rain blew in through the door and collected rather than draining away. Rain fell every evening with such regularity that before the end of the week, they worked out a system whereby only one went to the big tent to preach while the other remained in the small tent, mopping and repairing, mopping and repairing. Books, film equipment, and sermon notes had to be stored in the truck cab. Several times, when they awoke in the morning, they looked out to see portions of the big tent drooping dismally, pegs out of the rain-soaked ground, ropes sagging uselessly.

Despite the rains, attendance ranged from 300 to 500. Once again, noisy children caused some disruption, but early in the week, they were disciplined by being sent away and not allowed to see the films — a measure only partly successful. One must commend the numbers of people, few of whom owned raincoats or umbrellas, who walked long distances to sit in wet clothes for two to three hours, listening to sermons, watching film strips, and partaking in question and answer sessions. Eleven were baptized that week. There were ten very young boys who went forward together at the invitation, giggling and squirming; the Venda preachers determined by talking to them that they had no idea of the purpose of baptism but thought it would be fun to get into the water in the

portable baptistry, so naturally, they were not immersed.

When the tent was taken down late in the afternoon of the second Sunday, Izak and John returned to Benoni, arriving at 5:00 a. m. Monday, fully appreciative of dry beds. The tents and all of the equipment were very damp, but John's enthusiasm for tent meetings was not dampened one whit.

Because the rainy season is also the warm time of the year, that is when the tent saw the most use. Frequently it was a big job to return home and spread all of the large sections of canvas to dry thoroughly so they would not rot or mildew in storage.

COLORED MEETINGS

Just two weeks after the memorable Gondenai rains, the tent was erected in the Germiston colored location where Abram Jackson was the leader of the church's activities. Here it was possible to hook the lighting system to the electricity supply, and the tent was on firm ground, being mainly a well-packed ash dump. Doug Taylor and Eammon Morgan, SABS students, were active in assisting, and colored people from several communities joined in the effort. On the Sunday, a "combined meeting" was held, with 500 in attendance, and a dinner served at the Turton Hall. Services during the week drew about 200 each night, and two were baptized, one of them a lady who said she was over 100 years old. On the closing day of the meetings, steady rain fell, and when the tent was taken down, it was of necessity let down onto the ash dump, now a gritty, clinging mess. Many hours of hard work went into hosing down and scrubbing the canvas before it could be dried

and stored.

A second colored meeting was held soon afterward, this time in Westcol (Western Colored Townships). A number of SABS students were involved in it, and since the colored people prefer the Afrikaans language, sermons were preached in that tongue by Malan Gerber and Neville Schulz, with Al Horne, Johan Smulders, Allan Kriger, and John speaking in English at other services.

MADONSI

Two days after the completion of the Westcol meetings, the tent was once again on the far side of Vendaleland, at Madonsi, on the edge of Shangaan territory, where there was a small congregation being assisted by Jackson Mabedle, owner of a trading store. This meeting started on a Thursday rather than Sunday. John was the only white man on this trip, as he was on others from time to time. He had chosen this time to camp in a safari tent with a separate ground sheet. Rain was no problem, but he made several entries in his diary which simply said, "FLIES!!!"

During tent meetings in the bush areas, the subject of polygamy was invariably one of the main issues. If it was not the subject of one of the sermons, it would come up during the question and answer sessions, or someone would come by during the day to talk about it. Polygamy is so much a part of bantu custom and tradition that it is going to be a long, slow process to teach, much less to change, the people. Chiefs often have many wives, and other men seek to have at least two. Why? Tradition? Work force? Status symbol? Physical satisfaction? The

first wife grows old and a younger one is more attractive? Sometimes it would be pointed out that “you white people do just about the same thing – only you divorce one before you take another one.” There isn’t much answer to that! The root of the matter is the acceptance and acting upon the Bible principles. The question is, “Do we really believe the Bible?”

At Madonsi, some unusual questions were asked. One was, “Who said we cannot eat snakes and flies?” and another was, “Why do you use bioscopes (film strips and slides) but teach against drums and uniforms (in services)?” The more usual questions popped up again, such as, “Is it all right to eat pork?” “Are there three baptisms, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?” “Where did Cain get his wife?” “Doesn’t Psalm 150 allow us to use dancing and drums in the services?” Then someone took Colossians 3:17, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” to mean that you can do anything and everything you want to do so long as you do it in the name of the Lord. No wonder the questions and answers went on far, far into the night!

There were 14 baptisms in the Madonsi meeting, with attendance ranging from 80 to 600. Several Venda men assisted, but Samson Ramulumisi was the main one because of his knowledge of the language of the Shangaan people.

John wrote in his report to the USA, “One breakthrough accomplished at this meeting was that financial help was received from two different African congregations. We have always asked that the local church that gets the benefit of the tent help to some degree on expenses, regardless of how little it might be. Usually they pay for the

fuel that runs the power plant, and they also help care for the black preachers who accompany us. In July when we held a meeting at Duthuni, where no church existed to do this, when help was asked, they said, 'No, that is the preacher's work. Let them pay' . . . this time the Madonsi church gave R6 and Mavhunga donated R5. These churches are poor but they must be taught their Christian obligations."

About the people in the area, he wrote that there were many Zionists. Besides being a group that will admit no white people, they assess their members for what they must contribute, they practice polygamy, have drums and dancing in their services, immerse three times for baptism, and have as their officers, a bishop, deacons, evangelists, preachers, pray-ers, and door-keepers. These facts account for some of the questions that were asked at the evening tent sessions.

GA-MMAMABOLO

The tent was taken directly from Madonsi to Gammamabolo, the name meaning "the place of Chief Mmamabolo." It is 27 miles east of Pietersburg in a Sotho-speaking area, not far from Turfloop University (black). There, after some difficulty, John found Isaiah Mahlape who was taking the lead for the church in the area. Isaiah had taken two short courses at the Natal School of Preaching in Pietermaritzburg, and was known to be a very enthusiastic young man.

Quoting from John's report: "Isaiah took me to the site he had selected for the tent, between a shop and a school. We put up my safari tent and I settled in for the

night. Saturday morning the wind was blowing a stiff breeze and we had a difficult time erecting the big tent. Usually, the scores of young boys who gang around the operation become nuisances, but this time we put them to work holding the ropes to keep the tent top from blowing and flapping, until we could drive in the stakes and tie down. There are over 40 such ropes which hold the wall poles tight. We managed to do a fair job . . . meantime, while black clouds were gathering, John Manape from Pretoria, who was to interpret for me, arrived by bus, along with four Christians from Pietersburg who had come for the weekend. Brother Frans Maibelo said I was the first white Christian he had seen.

“I took them all to Isaiah’s house, over and around rocks and dongas and returned (to the small tent) to clean up. I was down to socks and underwear when a terrific storm blew up . . . wind . . . rain . . . then hail . . . the rain softened the soil, tent pegs came loose and the windward side of the tent began to collapse, pole by pole, until the whole side . . . was falling in . . . I started pushing against it to avoid a complete collapse . . . I had caught a cold, and this was not going to help the situation . . . the hail began to hammer the palms of my hands as they pushed against the tent wall, and water beat through the canvas. The ground sheet became slick and I began to slip and slide. I was getting tired by this time but could not release my hold or my ‘whole world’ would literally collapse on me and I would find myself in a tangled mass of canvas, poles, lamps (a pressure lamp was burning), bedding, clothes, food, and dishes.

“I began to think of all the strong-man heroes I had

read about and their superhuman efforts they had put out over long periods of time! Then I realized that most of them were half my age of 59, and things got bleak again. I thought about the two-pound hammer I would need to repair my tent . . . it was in the big tent some 100 yards away . . . Finally a lull came and I slipped into my boots and a nylon shirt (why, I'll never know for it did not protect against the rain and cold) and ran to the big tent. I found that the whole side of it had blown down — every single stake on that side pulled out of the ground and piles of hail lay where it had slid off the roof. Couldn't do anything about that by myself, so returned and re-pegged my small tent, got it upright and cleaned up inside. Part of my bedding was soaked, but I managed to snatch a few winks of sleep . . .”

Sunday morning, Isaiah and Robert Moraba who had arrived from Sekhekhuniland and some local men helped redo the big tent, and services were held at noon. The afternoon was spent setting up the power plant and putting up the wiring, but water had blown into the fuel, and evening services were held by gas light.

Monday the power plant had to be taken into Pietersburg, and when assisting in the unloading of that heavy piece of equipment, John tore a fingernail out by the roots. When the plant was finally in operation, only the outside lights would come on, so after the film strips had been shown, the outside lights were brought inside the tent for the rest of the evening. Tuesday was beautiful, and Wednesday began in the same mood, but the wind came up then, worse than ever. When the very existence of the big tent was threatened, and it became obvious that meeting inside

it would be dangerous, the decision was made to abandon the effort for the time and return at a later date. John tried to get a good night's sleep, feeling somewhat relieved and relaxed as a result of the decision, but even that was not to be. The nylon ropes on the safari tent snapped, the food shelves collapsed together with the little cook stove, and the definition of "shambles" came into focus. With that, John grabbed his sleeping bag, blanket, and shaving kit (with blood pressure pills) and spent what little remained of the night trying to sleep in the cab of the truck.

Even the packing up of the tent was difficult, with the wind defying all efforts to spread and fold the large, heavy sections, but eventually it was done. After some trouble in cashing an out-of-town check for petrol for the homeward journey (everything had been spent on power plant repair and doctor's bills for the torn fingernail), the two John's were on their way. By the time John Manape had been left at his home in Atteridgeville and John Hardin made it to Benoni, it was after 6:00 p.m., and the Hardin family were about to leave for the midweek service. John had been known to turn right around and go on to another service even when tired and dirty, but this was one time he stayed home.

The sole diary entry for the following day was, "Purposely did nothing all day. Stayed in bed until 1:00 p.m. Then just laid around. Exhausted physically and mentally." The following morning, both tents were taken to Roodepoort for extensive repairs, and in the afternoon we all had a relaxing time at the Benoni Sunday school picnic. On Sunday the family were all together for worship, and in the afternoon John and the boys watched

part of a cricket match at Willowmoore Park. Even on Monday, John's diary read, "Still exhausted from trip."

Happily, most of the tent meetings occurred when the weather was more kind. One valuable lesson was learned – it is too much for one man to take full responsibility for a meeting in the big tent in the bush, camp in a small tent nearby, do his own cooking, and keep everything running. Jerry Hogg was in the states on furlough during these experiences, and when he returned in January to resume his part of the work, things improved.

THE CHILDREN

But there were the children! Always the children! Where did they all come from at the tent meetings? There were swarms of children, but where were their parents? Outside, they romped and shouted, as do children the world over. At Tshidimbini where there had been a church for several years, they had been taught to behave at services, and they would sit perfectly still – so still that we were amazed. Now the meetings were inundated by great waves of unruly boys and girls. Sometimes they sat on the dusty ground in the tent, wall-to-wall, a restless sea of children. If their clothes had ever been of different colors, they were no longer so, for all were the same color as the earth: old, worn, washed in brown river water if at all. On chilly nights, the children would huddle under earth-colored little pieces of blanket, sometimes falling asleep as time wore on, but always that moving sea of children! At times – often, in fact – we thought these little black youngsters must have weak bladders, for the many times they were in and out, in and out. And in every crowd

there was at least one smart-alec who grinned gleefully each time he made his trip outside.

Oh yes, there were the children. They troubled us in more ways than one. How they needed to watch those films that had been provided for them! How they needed to listen and learn of the One who could change their lives. But how could we reach 200, 300, 400 lively youngsters with one or two busy preachers in the one-week-long gospel campaigns! If we had ever made a list of disappointments with regard to the tent meetings, our inability to reach and help the children would have headed the list. We had to try to reach the parents first, for they had sent their children, or at least permitted them to go to see the excitement of the big tent, but they themselves came to scoff and criticize, and even to stir up dissent. If only we could have had children's classes during the days as we did in the first two Vendaland meetings! But that took a staff of 6 or 8, and we didn't have the people or the money for such projects.

A RUMOR

One day, early in 1973, Jackson Sogoni came bearing the news that "a man" in Soweto had said the tent would no longer be welcome in Vendaland because Hardin did not respect the African. Sogoni knew as well as we that Hardin *did* respect the African, far more than most other white people in the country had ever done, so the only explanation had to be that John taught with regard to custom and tradition that when they were contrary to Biblical principles, custom and tradition would have to be foregone. Bible truths must be above all. Nothing came of the rumor

so perhaps it was just the threat of one man.

It's the storms and the misfortunes that are the stuff of exciting reading, and we have gone into detail about those times. There were many tent meetings that came off "without a hitch," and scores of people were baptized. Churches were strengthened, new congregations sometimes begun, people's lives enriched. The tent campaigns made a good impression on many, despite the criticism of some, and despite occasional open opposition. Several weeks after a successful campaign in Vendaland, one of the brothers wrote in a letter, "The tent is *still* working," or in other words, the things taught in the tent were having their influence.

The chapter on Southern Africa Bible School relates the history of its lectureships over a period of 12 years. Until the new Benoni church building, seating over 600, was completed, the question of lectureship venue was always difficult. At first, the old Benoni building was adequate. Then, when the SABS class room building was completed, it was thought best to have lectureships at the school property. For several years, then, the big tent was pitched near the building and used for the main daytime lectures, with the class rooms being used for smaller groups, and the big night sessions being held in a school assembly hall in town. After the lectureship venue was moved to the new Benoni building, the 30-foot section of the tent was set up nearby for serving teas and lunches.

BANTU YOUTH CAMPS

Next to the evangelistic campaigns and gospel weekends in the tent, its greatest use was for youth camps for

the black people, the first of which was held in January, 1971. Venue was again a great problem, but after an extensive search, with the assistance of John Manape, a small farm belonging to a black man named Mashala was selected. Mrs. Mashala operated a small shop on the property, and there was a small dam and a well on a piece of ground large enough for the big tent and a playground.

Simon Magagula was our master of logistics. He sat down with paper and pen and price lists and figured to the penny what each camper would have to be charged. He arranged for women of the Daveyton congregation to supervise the cooking and chaperone the girls. So, for a week in mid-January, a successful Bantu youth camp was conducted, the first of its kind. Its best recommendation was that the children did not want to go home when Saturday morning came.

The big tent was used for everything except the cooking which was done outside. Curtains divided the tent into three areas: one end for boys and men, one end for girls and women, and a center section used for classes during the day and a no-man's land during the night. Bible classes were held for several hours each day, and there was plenty of time for play. Thorn bushes made a quick end of the soccer ball, but there were other games. The trading store nearby got the benefit of the spending money the children brought along for cool drinks and sweets. On Friday night, there was a talent show with original skits and plenty of musical numbers. Before the children left, they expressed great interest in having a yearly camp, so they were admonished to begin right away to save up their money for the next year.

With a year's experience in camp planning behind him, Simon became the main man to plan for the camps that followed. The second encampment went from December 30, 1972, right through the New Year holiday until January 10. People from Vosloorus, Atteridgeville, Ga-Podile, Mamelodi, Dube, Boekenhoutfontein, and Daveyton worked together and brought the total number of campers to 62. The black brethren took care of much of the teaching and various white Christians drove out by the day and assisted. Fifteen were baptized before the end of the 12 days.

It was during the middle of this youth camp that our son Neal flew out of South Africa to attend Abilene Christian College. He had stayed in Benoni with us for three years after finishing high school and had attended SABS. The nest was emptying, one fledgeling at a time, and it was a sad time at our house. John was back in Benoni that day, struggling with a brake problem on the Toyota truck. Neal's plane was late in departing, and we only returned to the camp site on the following day.

Before the end of this camp, excitement was building to a high pitch at the prospect of camping the next year at the south coast. An area called Umgababa had been set aside for the use of black people and good facilities had been provided. Camping at the coast would be more expensive because of the 400 mile trip via chartered bus, but the children determined that they would get part-time jobs and save money. Most of them had never seen the ocean, and the coming opportunity to do so became the subject of much conversation for an entire year. By camp time, 31 from Daveyton, 13 from Atteridgeville, 11 from

Mamelodi, and other smaller groups had signed up.

John and Jerry armed themselves with the permits they knew they would need – one from Pretoria, and another from the Kwa-Zulu government offices in Pietermaritzburg. John drove the truck with the tent equipment while Jerry drove his Kombi, pulling the caravan for his and John's accommodation. Upon arrival at the camp site, they found that the caretaker had given the spot they had reserved to a Dutch Reformed camping group, but they were able to select another that was almost as good. They proceeded then to set up the caravan with its side tent—the safari and space age tents had now been replaced by this setup – a far more secure piece of equipment. A white man at the railway station across the way called to them saying that they were not allowed to camp there – it was for blacks only. Obviously he reported the matter to the police, for soon a van drove up with one white and one black policeman who asked to see their permits. The white policeman seemed to doubt its validity, so he soon returned with another white policeman wearing civilian clothes. This man scrutinized every word of the permits, found nothing illegal, and said, "Well, have a good stay here."

Three brethren from the Natal School of Preaching assisted with the teaching at Umgababa: Samson Peters, David Nkhatini, and Vincent Ngema. For some of the evening devotions, whites, coloreds, and even one or two Indian Christians visited the camp, promoting inter-racial fellowship of a sort that our young people had not enjoyed before.

Afternoon tours were made to the huge sugar terminal, the aquarium, and a radio station in Durban, and

included in the fun was a boat ride in the Durban harbor. Brethren Nick Nel and Hans Zwart who had a wholesale produce business in Durban donated generous quantities of fresh vegetables and fruits, and one evening Lydia Zwart brought ice cream for everyone. There was fun for all, but serious business too, and 5 young people were baptized.

Umgababa had been an expensive camp, so the next one was held at a farm 30 miles northeast of Pretoria, again timed to include the New Year holiday. We had feared that this would be a let-down after the more exciting time at the sea, but there were 10 baptisms. Only one unpleasant incident occurred, and when all of the young people were warned that anyone else who broke the camp rules would be taken home forthwith, there was no more trouble.

The following year was another Umgababa experience with 8 baptisms. It is impossible to report all that occurred during all of the camps, but it is obvious that much good was accomplished. All of the assistants worked hard, especially the cooks who prepared huge quantities of food in three cast-iron cooking pots over open fires. Aubrey Steyn of Benoni contributed many bags of off-cuts from his woodworking factory to be used as fuel, and Alwyn Hefer made available a large number of reject enamelware plates, mugs, and pots at greatly reduced prices from the factory where he worked.

An early 1984 report from Jackson Sogoni states that a successful youth camp was held (altogether by the black people themselves and without the big tent) in Butterworth with 4 being baptized, and subsequently a new congregation started at Mt. Frere. Plans were already in the

making for another camp at Mfundiswani in Pondoland East.

There were youth camps held for white young people as far back as the 50's when John Maples was in Durban, but only once, when the camp was held at East London, was the big tent called into use, mainly for assemblies.

THE TENT IN CITY LOCATIONS

When the tent was used in city locations, there was always the problem of guarding it against vandals. Guards were hired, some of them with guard dogs, but sometimes they were ineffective against mischievous children who would slide on the roof or swing on the ropes. Nothing serious ever happened, but threats were made at times, and we were always concerned. In addition to the location meetings already mentioned, the tent was taken to Daveyton (several times), Tokhoza, Mafeking, Nancefield, Kimberley, Westcol, Wattville, and perhaps others that have been missed. The greatest portion of the tent work was in "the bush."

Bush meetings continued with varying results. At Mavhunga in April 1974, there were 43 baptisms. There was already a good church at Mavhunga so the new converts would be able to receive further teaching. On the other hand, there were perhaps some of the meetings that should not have been conducted at all. Some who requested that the tent be brought to their areas seemed to regard it as a miracle-working item that would somehow suddenly convert a community, just as there are some churches that seem to think that building a new meeting hall will automatically build a bigger, better congregation. A real effort

was made to hold meetings only where there were members of the church capable of continuing teaching and holding worship services, but obviously this was a variable factor.

In January 1974 we were delighted to receive money from the 29th and Yale church in Tulsa to purchase a new power plant. We had spent more than the price of a new plant in trying to keep the old one going, but until now we had never had the lump sum required to replace it. The new plant was easier to operate and gave little trouble during the four years of its existence. It was stolen from the tent during the night at Ga-Matsepe in May 1978. When the theft was reported to the police of the area, they showed little interest and expressed little hope of its recovery.

Considering that there was no way of locking a tent, there was comparatively little theft, although the baptistry garments and towels disappeared early in the tent's history, numerous small tools seemed to grow legs and walk away, and curious children pilfered little objects such as film strips and a floodlight bulb which could have done them no good. During a tent meeting in Kimberley, John's camera was stolen from under his chair while he was preaching his sermon, and once again, police offered little help and no hope.

One of the better means of reaching some of the people was through film strips: the life of Christ, the book of Acts, and the Jule Miller series on conversion. In addition, John often showed the people slides of themselves and of other groups of Christians similar to them. At the time of the moon explorations, much interest was aroused. Some of the blacks thought perhaps it was a hoax fabricated

by the white people — a sort of Buck Rogers story, so John obtained a set of slides from the Los Angeles observatory to show to them. He also took along the telescope that our son Don had bought for his dad in Japan, and allowed some of the people to look at the moon, or at Venus and Saturn. There were many “Oooh’s” and “Ah’s” and “Hau’s” of amazement at these newly-revealed wonders of creation.

A NEW TRUCK IS INITIATED IN BOTSWANA

When we returned from our 1974 furlough, we had the money for the new truck which we purchased with great joy and thankfulness. A special metal frame was built over the truck bed to support a tarpaulin which would protect the contents, and a strong locker was added for the safe-keeping of projectors, tools, luggage, etc. A trailer hitch was added so that the caravan could be drawn behind the truck. The new equipment had seen some use before November of 1974, but in that month, it received its real initiation, making a trip across Botswana to Maun, some 700 miles northwest of Benoni, over roads that should have been traveled only by Jeeps or Land Rovers. Eldred Echols, Al Horne, Jerry Hogg, Roy Lothian, Evelyn Mundell, Molly Redd and sons Lee, John, and Billy, and John Hardin made this trip, together with Samson Ramulumisi from Vendaland who could interpret the Tswana language better than anyone else who might have been available. Eldred’s “bakkie” had brake trouble before they even got to Pretoria, and it was discovered that the caravan was hitched too close to the truck so that when the truck cornered, the rear of the bed rubbed the corner of the

caravan. A couple of hours were needed to rectify those problems, but they made it through the border post by nightfall and set up camp at Palapye.

Good roads ended at the Botswana border. John's comment was that the average farmer's driveway would look like a super highway by contrast to Botswana roads. All three vehicles had tire trouble. The new truck had three blow-outs, and it was fortunate that replacements were available at Francistown. Heavier-duty tires were purchased. Just out of Palapye, they came across an African man who was also having tire trouble, so they gave him a lift into the village, then had a hard time finding their way out again. "We asked directions from two young men who were standing together," John wrote. "One pointed one way, and the other pointed in exactly the opposite direction. We said 'eenie-meenie-mynie-moe' and headed out on a street which proved to be a dead end. Enough! We camped right there for the night, hoping to do better in the light of a new day."

At Francistown, they could have bought petrol, but all of the vehicles had a fair supply and all decided to wait and purchase refills in Nata, 120 miles away. Imagine their chagrin when they arrived in Nata to find only a dry pump. There had been no petrol for two weeks and the proprietor had no idea when his supply was to arrive! Nata is little more than a village of thatched huts, with only a couple of stores and a police station to give any semblance to a town.

"Not to be defeated," John continued in his diary, "we camped and began to preach. This was Saturday. Preaching from Sunday through Wednesday, we baptized

six people, thus establishing a small new congregation of the Lord's church where there had been none before. Perhaps it was God's will that the petrol pump was dry." There is a congregation in Nata to this day.

On the Tuesday, a man from near Benoni came from Maun in his small pickup, nearly out of petrol. Our people drained all they could out of the three vehicles and gave to him so that he could get to Francistown. Jerry rode with him to purchase another new truck tire and took along all the tins and containers to be filled and returned to Nata. All of our vehicles were ready to be on their way, and our good Samaritan was happy to have been helped when he needed it as well.

Since arrival in Maun was late, the big tent was not erected but film strips were shown on the side of a store and preaching services held for several days at a clinic in the center of town. The seasonal rains had begun, and the winds were strong, so it is just as well that the tent was not subjected to further punishment. Seven were baptized in Maun, and later, Clive Biggs and Les Massey returned and baptized 18 more.

In the years following, there have been many trips made into the interior of Botswana, mostly by Echols and SABS personnel and students. There are missionaries at Gabarones, not far from South Africa, but there need to be many others to go and stay for longer periods of time in the interior. At the time of this writing, there are three young couples from Abilene Christian University planning to go to the Maun area, having in mind an extended program of 10 or 12 years.

A TIME OF LESSER CONSEQUENCE

Perhaps this paragraph should be headed, "A Masterpiece of Misunderstanding." It was on the 9th day of May that Jerry and John arrived at Namakgale, the location at Phalaborwa in the eastern Transvaal. They had been expected on April 15! Determining whose fault the misunderstanding was would have been a fruitless pursuit, so they took it as they found it — there hadn't been much preparation for April 15 anyway, so after discussing the matter with Simon Mashego and Pitius Mametja, the men who took the lead in whatever work was done at that place, they finally decided to have a series of lessons that would be designed to strengthen the little group of 21 or 22 Christians. John and Jerry camped in the caravan at the Phalaborwa tourist camping site, so personally they enjoyed more comfort than usual — hot water, showers, drinking water, etc. The caravan park is near the boundary of Kruger Game Reserve, so they may have very well wondered what they might have seen or heard, since Kruger has no fences. On their second night, they heard lions roaring, but they knew how many impala and zebras and other dinner time favorites of the lions abounded in the reserve, so they were not worried.

Try as they would, the men could never find all the people who were supposed to be members of the congregation at Namakgale, and on Sunday there were only 13 people who held a service in Simon's home. Obviously, services had not been held regularly, and the people had a mixture of different beliefs. Once again there were some who were concerned about whether baptism is one immersion or three. (Zionists and a number of other sects

immerse three times, some of them even more. On a number of occasions, we heard of some pitiful, misguided candidate who had been drowned by an over-zealous baptizer).

A few impromptu gatherings were called in Chief Malatjie's village and in Chief Mashishimali's village, but little interest was expressed. It appeared that much of the indifference could have been a reaction to Simon and Pitius' attempts to preach without having sufficient knowledge to do so. Pitius especially had the idea that the Holy Spirit would give him the words as he spoke – a promise that was given only to Jesus' apostles. The rest of us have to study! Pitius went so far as to claim that the Holy Spirit helped him remember any scripture from Genesis to Revelation. What a good case of wishful thinking!

A NEW LOOK AT BUSH MEETINGS

After all of the Hardin sons had "flown from the nest," it was possible for me to accompany John on a number of extended tent campaigns. The Vendaland lectureship has been described in another chapter. When that lectureship ended, we dismantled the tent and moved it to the village of Lwomondo. There was already a church at another area some 4 or 5 miles away, but Andries Mulaudzi, who did the preaching at that place, asked to have the tent brought to the actual village. Lwomondo village is much larger than most and has some stores and a beer hall. It was mid-July and school break time, so we were given permission to set up the tent and caravan on the school grounds.

This was the home of Patrick Magadumisi who had been baptized during the Nzhelele campaign several years

earlier. John had assisted Patrick's mother to work out a big problem in the life of her family, and all during the week at Lwomondo, she brought gifts to our caravan: pawpaws, bananas, oranges, avocados, sweet potatoes and more produce which grew nearby and was sold at roadside stands. On our last day in the village, she and Patrick invited John and me to visit their home at about one o'clock. No mention was made of a meal, so we ate a bite of lunch before we left the caravan. When we arrived, we were escorted to the best rondavel in the kraal. Inside was a cheery, clean room with a cement floor. The furniture consisted of two single beds, a sofa, and a small table and chairs. After brief conversation, Patrick's sister, dressed in the typical striped wrap-around garment of Venda women, came in with large bowls of canned peaches topped with thick cream. John and I were left alone, as their custom is when entertaining white people, and we decided to regard the peaches as dessert following upon the lunch we had already eaten. But soon we were brought tall glasses of orange drink, and then huge plates of food: chicken, rice, pumpkin, cabbage!!! Not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings, we made a tremendous effort to eat a reasonable portion. Some very scrawny cats were sniffing about, and when nobody was looking, we slipped them the best meal they'd had in a long time. Try as we would, we could eat only about half of what was on our plates, and then we were served tea. Uncomfortable as we were, we were happy to be invited to walk around outside. As we prepared to depart, more gifts were pressed upon us. They wanted to give us a huge bag of at least 50 very large avocados, but we explained that there were just two of us,

and 8 or 10 would be all we could possibly manage to consume before they would spoil. I was also given a pottery bowl and flower pot. The bowl has a design worked on it with ordinary old-fashioned stove polish like our grandmothers used on their wood-burning kitchen stoves. Before we left the kraal, Mrs. Magadumisi apologized because she did not have a goat for us to take home.

Our caravan was parked for the week on the open school grounds, near a fair-sized tree. It was there that I learned what a monkey in a zoo must feel like with children by the hundreds watching them every day. They came in droves and formed a semi-circular cluster, three and four deep at times, watching, watching, watching. The caravan's side tent fastened with a long zipper which we had to keep closed at all times. The mesh-covered "windows" of the side tent were needed for ventilation, but sometimes it was better to close them and be too hot than to leave them open to all the little staring eyes. Often we had our Venda-speaking friends ask the children to go, but they always drifted back. Our white skins and the strange contraption we lived in aroused their curiosity, understandably, but that curiosity was never satisfied.

Each evening, John went with the truck to fetch people from the congregation on "the other side" (of the mountain) as it was always designated. Twenty-five or thirty people could fit into the truck bed without overloading it. At the close of each meeting, the trip had to be made again to take the passengers home. We began to wonder why the return load always outnumbered the arriving load. Here was free transportation! People who had not attended the meetings found out that the truck

was going "to the other side" at about 10:00 each night. Included were some who had spent the evening at the beer hall, but John wanted to be big-hearted and not make a fuss about it even though there was somewhat of an overload. But one night, which happened to be moonless and as black as the abyss, John sensed that the load was heavier than ever. It was only when the truck went through a bit of a dip before going onto the main road and the truck bed scraped the dual rear wheels that he knew it was serious. Stopping the engine, John walked around to the back of the truck and shone a flashlight inside. There was not one cubic inch of space. The people were told that the truck could not possibly take so many, and some would have to wait for a second trip. Nobody budged. John folded his arms and said that nobody was going any place until every one got out of the truck. When they saw that he meant what he said, they began to climb out: 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 of them! If their average weight was 140 pounds (and many of them were heavy), that was close to 5 tons of humanity! The truck itself did not break down, but in the press and push, several of the welds on the frame that supported the tarpaulin were broken. If only those folks had tried as hard to hear the gospel as they did to ride in the truck!

Again the swarms of children disrupted the evening services. The main problem was that they were unaccompanied by adults, and in some cases, we were informed, they had been told by their parents to make trouble for us. Andries appealed to the chief to send a messenger to tell the children that they had better behave, "or else." When the "or else" appeared not to have much sting to it, the

children continued their disruptive behavior.

This was the meeting where Hubert Mashonga and several young men gathered and sang numerous songs from the English song book over the speaker system — a highlight of our week. It was encouraging too to have several young men who came to the caravan from time to time to have private talks with John. John Nengwenani, Philemon Makhado, Allan Kriger, and others associated with the Vendaland Bible School assisted with the Lwomondo campaign. Despite the discipline problems and the truck passenger problems, there were 11 baptized that week.

One night, four came at the invitation, requesting baptism. Since the portable baptistry was no longer in use, it was necessary to go to the river, some distance away. The question and answer session was left in the hands of brother Tshisudi who had preached the sermon of the evening, while John went in the truck with John Nengwenani and the candidates for the baptism. Being emcee for questions and answers requires a lot of Bible knowledge plus the ability to control the audience. The policy at these sessions had always been that the question be asked and the questioner listen quietly during the answering of it. If not satisfied, he may then ask further questions or make some reasonable comments. It was the policy to avoid debate and argument, and if anyone wished to engage in discussion, they were welcome to private talk sessions at other times. However, brother Tshisudi, nor anyone else, for that matter, could have made one young lady cease and desist her ranting. She grabbed one of the two microphones and all but took over the platform. At that stage, John returned, saw what was going on, and literally pulled the plug on the

speaker system, after which the meeting was brought to a close. John wrote in his diary, "It was quite a rumpus!"

John was himself a good one to handle questions and answers. His knowledge of the Bible was broad enough that he was rarely at a loss for a scriptural answer to just about anything. He stood big and tall and had a commanding air about him, but more importantly, he had endless patience to answer some of the same questions over and over again, and his answers were always thorough.

GA-PHAAHLA

After the Lwomondo meeting, we had two weeks in which to return to Benoni, catch up on all that had gone undone in our absence, and prepare for a campaign at Ga-Phaahla, outside of Marble Hall, again in a Sotho-speaking community. Brother John Manape, now growing old and slowing down, stayed for the week, patiently and tirelessly interpreting and teaching. Others from his congregation in Atteridgeville came for the weekend: Ariel Ramusi, Manape's son-in-law, Daniel Malatjie and others. Brother Malatjie drove a van and was always ready and willing to take groups of people to church activities. He was a good man. (He was killed in a car accident just a couple of years later). I called him "brother Smiley." He was just that. A happy Christian.

Cornelius Pahlamohlaka was preaching for the church at Ga-Phaahla, a quiet sort of person who goes about in his own way and gets a lot of things done. For a long time there had been no school in this large community, and on his own time, and without pay, brother Cornelius taught many children to read, write, and do sums, until finally a

government school was established.

Our week in the caravan at this place was pleasant. It was set up inside the fence surrounding Cornelius' property, so we were free of the usual "audience" at our "zoo." Many of the people lived on little fenced properties. Each family had a few goats, some chickens, and a garden spot. Every day the goats were taken out to grasslands for grazing, and at night when they returned to the village, each goat knew its own home place and went directly to it.

The week's effort brought two baptisms, and all things considered, it was a good campaign, though not as great in numbers as some others. Crowds varied from 60 to 256. I taught a ladies' class in which I emphasized such scriptures as "Cast your cares upon him for he careth for you," and "In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." The women were touched by these scriptures, and from conversation that followed, I found that their teaching had been mostly on the fundamentals of the gospel, baptism, obedience, and other doctrines. In the short time I had with them, I wanted them to know that their relationship with God is personal, that God cares about their troubles. As I write this, I am thinking that if ever I have the opportunity to speak to African women again, it is going to be about God in their personal lives on an every day basis. They have been kept in subjection beyond that required by the Lord, and I want them to know that Jesus lifts womankind above the level to which they are accustomed, not to make them rebellious against

their status on earth, but to find spiritual fulfillment.

A REPORT – THE FEMININE INFLUENCE

Missionary wives often get to write a few paragraphs in their husband's reports – the feminine point of view. Some made kind comments about my article called "Life in a Caravan in an African Village," so I shall be bold enough to print some of it here.

"The chilly breeze was blowing down between my shoulder blades so I snuggled another inch or two down into my sleeping bag, almost covering my head. That monotonous drumming and repetitive singing – was it going to go on all night? I turned to look at my watch by flashlight – 4:15 a. m. It did go on! And on. And on. Eventually the rising sun, together with a couple of dozen roosters, announced the dawn. John had stepped outside to observe Venus and Jupiter, which have been hovering in close conjunction just before sunrise, and he saw the six drummers and singers as they came marching past . . .

"For several years, John has been living in the caravan for a week or two at a time while preaching in the villages, but it is only this year, with all the children grown, that we can share the experience as we are doing now . . .

"Picture us in a 3-ton Ford truck pulling an insignificant little trailer, 10½ x 6½ feet by 3½ feet high (in its collapsed state). We leave the main road and go bumping across trails, and sometimes across grassy places where there is no trail. Little black

children appear from everywhere . . .

“Having selected a fairly level spot, we unhitch the caravan and open first one end, then the other, raising the top portion – the fiber glass “lid” which now becomes our roof. Dangling from it are the canvas sides which we zip down and fasten to the floor section, and there is our bedroom, complete with a small wardrobe, cupboards, and drawers. We lift out one cupboard and hang it from the outside of the caravan, set the 2-burner gas stove on it, and there’s our kitchen. This outside area is completely protected by a side tent which opens out to a roomy 10 x 20 feet, with a slick blue ground sheet to complete the setting. At one end of the side tent John has a small desk and his typewriter. A folding table and folding chairs are the main furnishing, and the far end of the tent is a clutter of 5-gallon water bottles, gas cylinders, tools, mop, broom, and boxes of supplies . . .

“The caravan, having seen much use, is showing alarming signs of age. The zipper, one of the century’s greatest contributions to modern living, is also vulnerable. Two of them have broken entirely, so John has substituted a series of battery cable clips – the male way of thinking – while I exercised my feminine thinking by stitching lengths of twill tape which tie the sections of canvas with bows. So there we are, held together in places by battery clips and bows . . .

“After living in a rambling old house with 5 bedrooms, life in a caravan is ‘something else.’ Our house

is too big for two people, but the caravan would be too small for permanent comfort. We do have foam mattresses, gas stove, portable radio, gas lamps, and lots of natural air conditioning. For that matter, we sometimes have our own garbage disposal – or two: one named Nanny and one named Billy. They are silent except for light footsteps and an occasional “baaa.”

“Our way of living fits in with ecology too . . . especially the water. We bring our city water in a number of 5-gallon containers to avoid becoming sick from unsafe water supplies. We only throw it out when it gets too thick to pour. One basin of water serves for washing hands several times. Our dishes are carefully scraped and wiped so a quart of water is sufficient for washing them. After wiping up around table and stove, that quart has to be thrown out. Another quart of boiling water rinses the dishes, and then usually goes into the hand washing basin for further use there. Bath water (we bathe in about 2 quarts each) is used to wash the floor and ground sheet, and because we haven’t thought of anything else to do with it, we throw it out on some thirsty bush.

“It’s rather a relief to have no telephone ringing, no tires screeching at the traffic light on the corner, no real rush to meet deadlines. It is good, for a while, to have the desk so close to the dish pan that John can reach from one to the other and dispose of his empty mid-morning cup. It’s nice, for a while, to have so few dishes that they all fit

into a small drawer. It's a treat to be away from the noise of a vacuum cleaner. It's even rather nice to be wearing flat squashy shoes, comfortable and ugly instead of having to wear 'city' shoes for the sake of fashion.

"I will enjoy going home to my kitchen because I won't have to worry about the cooking spattering onto John's bed. Then, after this town-bred gal has soused the 9 days' accumulation of dirty clothes in the washing machine, I'm going to pack away the chamber pot, go into the bathroom and listen to the water run. I'll sit in that bath water (more than two quarts), and then I'll appreciate it further as I hear it gurgling down the drain. That is, if the telephone doesn't start ringing at the same time as the doorbell, if you can hear them over the noise of the traffic, and the neighbors' dogs doing double duty, barking at whoever is coming up *our* driveway – Hey, John, when's the next tent meeting when we can get away from the city commotion?"

There were a great many other tent meetings held in many places: Masakona, Dlaulale, Mulima, Teyateyaneng in Lesotho, Ramaghopa's Village, Damani, Acornhoek, and others too numerous to add in detail. When 1978 rolled around, and we knew that we would be returning permanently to the states in a few months, John began to hand the tent work over to others so that he would have time to make one last big round of visits to congregations he had helped through the years. It took every weekend for many months, and even then, we didn't get to visit all the places

or say goodbye to all the people.

A LOOK BACK

I once sang under a choral director who told us after a so-so performance, "No post-mortems now!" Sometimes, though, someone somewhere can learn by taking a backward look. So then, what about the tent experience? First of all, it was a big undertaking, involving considerable expense and a whole lot of very hard work. Was it worth it? Who can say? Of the 500 to 600 baptized, there are many who have fallen away. Was it worth it for those who have remained faithful to the Lord? Ask any of them if it was worth it.

Did we make mistakes? You may as well ask if we are human. If it were to be done again, what changes should be made? More preparation in the areas where the meetings are to be held: door-knocking, personal invitations, advertising in every form. More all-out efforts to conduct special classes for children. More people actively involved in the program. More follow-up by the tent personnel in addition to local preachers and leaders. More teaching of the local leaders to make them capable of more effective preliminary and follow-up work. Hopefully, better equipment to avoid the constant hassle of breakdowns and repairs.

In order to carry on a lengthy series of tent meetings in the bush, one doesn't necessarily have to be a lover of camping and of the out-of-doors, but it certainly helps. Lacking that natural love of camping, one does need to have the ability and willingness to adapt to all sorts of living conditions and varying degrees of discomfort and

inconvenience. Couple that with love for the Lord and concern for lost souls, and you have the primary ingredients for success.

On the lighter side – it might help if you buy your tent and have it repaired by someone with an easier name to remember than Shloberbofsky, which was the name of the man we always had to see!

Life in “the Bush”

A favorite route of travel between Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg was “the long way,” through the Transkei. Although the unpaved roads were often deep in white powdery dust, the giant rolling hills sparsely covered with grass that struggled for survival in thin topsoil, and dotted neatly with small clusters of identically decorated thatched huts, created a scenic drive in contrast to the tedium of the flat Free State route. Along the way were the old-fashioned Xhosa women in their blankets, dyed red by the ochre that had been pounded into them. If it were a special occasion, they might be decked out in their sweeping orange-red skirts, banded with rows and rows of black, skirts that moved beautifully with the graceful gliding walk of women who were used to carrying loads on their heads. On a work day, though, they would be there in the mealie patches, loosely wrapped in odds and ends of red blanket, hoeing away at the weeds and puffing on their Xhosa pipes, those typical pipes with long stems and thin little bowls. Unmarried girls could be seen in their leather aprons that were slick-looking, black and greasy from long wear, their hair beautified with red clay and their arms and legs decorated with coiled wire and the rubber rings from canning jars.

We were speaking once with Jackson Sogoni who was born and raised in the Transkei before moving to Johannesburg. John said, “Brother Jackson, the Transkei is a beautiful place,” and Jackson replied, “Ah yes, brother Hardin, but you can’t live on beauty.”

If anyone is inclined to regret that the red blankets have almost disappeared and modern things are gradually taking their place, he must remember that the old "scenic drive" was scenic partly because of the poverty of the people who lived in those picturesque huts and wore those red blankets. Who can now deny their following the trend toward what the rest of the country is doing?

What has been said of the Xhosa can be said of the other tribes, only in differing settings: the Zulus with their beadwork, living in "beehive" huts, clustered in or near the Valley of a Thousand Hills, the Ndebele with their beaded circlets and their fancily painted houses and walls, the Venda women in their typical striped cloth, the people of Lesotho in their cone-shaped hats and their multi-colored blankets. All are part of the passing parade of humankind. Sooner or later, they will eventually blend into the monotonous conformity of the more modern world.

Books could be written about each of the tribes. South African readers will already know more than can be included in this one chapter, so it must suffice for now to include some generalities to help American readers to "get the picture." Each tribe has its own traditions and customs that set it apart from the others, so for now it will be necessary to mention some things more or less common to all.

Perhaps the thing a first-time traveler would notice on driving through a tribal land would be the work done by the women. They are walking at the sides of the roads with all sorts of burdens on their heads: heavy bundles of firewood, loads of thatching grass, laundry going to or from the river, mealie to be ground, supplies from the trading store, basins of dung for paving floors and courtyards, and even such an

awkward thing as a large cast-iron pot. Babies are carried on backs. Women are hoeing fields, carrying water, making clay pots, making mud bricks, cooking food, nursing babies. Never would they think of their lot in life as "picturesque." Their labor is for real, and it is every day. In the past, and to a great extent even today, the rural black woman is thought of by her husband as a worker, and so the man who can have more than one wife feels fortunate in having increased his labor force.

Marriages are still often arranged by the elders in the family. Only through association with western culture has come the idea of choosing one's own mate and marrying for love. In the church, we found it necessary to teach what the Bible means when it says that a man should love his wife as his own body, that he should cherish her and be considerate of her, treating her as the "weaker vessel."

Girls begin at a very early age to help with the carrying of loads. "Big" sisters of six or seven years may already carry baby brothers or sisters on their backs. Young girls must carry water, sometimes for miles if the season is dry. A few prosperous people have built rectangular houses with corrugated roofs from which it is possible to catch rain water to store in a tank. But you can't catch much rain water from a circular thatched roof - and you probably couldn't afford to buy a tank anyway.

Rivers and other water sources become centers of much activity. Wash day is an all-day affair and a chance for women to visit and gossip as the clothes are scrubbed and pounded and spread on the bushes to dry. Bathing often takes place in the river as well. If a city dweller is inclined to criticize the country dweller for a certain lack of

cleanliness, he must try to imagine walking along a dusty trail to the river and bathing in water that is less than clear, only to walk back home along that same dusty trail. It must be difficult to do more than merely exchange one layer of dust for a newer one.

The people who live in little villages and kraals try to raise at least a part of their food, but often their plots of ground are small and the soil is poor. Since mealies are the staple food, everyone tries to raise a good-sized patch of that grain. Pumpkins are the most popular vegetable, the tender young leaves used as a green vegetable (we ate them too - they are better than spinach), and the white-skinned ripe pumpkins stored to last through the winter. A good harvest of pumpkins is cause for rejoicing, and in some places, celebrated with a ceremony of the biting of the pumpkin.

Most people in tribal lands have some cattle and goats which are carefully herded by the young boys. Wealth is still measured in many places by numbers rather than quality of cattle. Chickens are permitted to run in the open, scratching to find whatever food nature provides. Dogs and cats are treated in much the same way, left to scavenge and squabble over odd scraps of food or to hunt for rats and mice. Without veterinary care, they are almost always scrawny, infested with worms.

Often it is necessary for someone in the family to go to a city and work so as to send money back home to help eke out existence on worn-out land. Sometimes such a one finds new associates, even new wives, in the city and fails to send money home as promised, thus plunging the family into worse straits than ever. Others find good jobs and send

money home faithfully, to be reflected in improved houses and better clothing for the families.

Among the poorer folk, children seldom have clothes that are new. They can be seen in adults' cast-offs which are many sizes too large, often ragged, and sometimes hanging in shreds. Whatever color these clothes may once have been, they will have become the color of the soil of the area. Often very small children run stark naked when the weather permits, and when poverty is at its worst, many of all ages are poorly clad against the chilly winter winds.

The blanket plays a big part in the life of an African person in the bush. A pretty new blanket is a status symbol, a sign of prestige. A blanket serves many purposes: it is a coat on a chilly day; it becomes a wrap-around skirt when the day is warm; it holds a baby securely on its mother's back; and when the day is over, it becomes a blanket once again. The Basotho blanket, thicker and more closely woven than some others, is a necessity, for the altitude of Lesotho brings ice and snow and biting wind. But the Basotho blankets are still status symbols with a great variation of color and design.

The typical rural home consists of a cluster of huts, perhaps surrounded by a low wall, all constructed of mud. There is at least one main hut for sleeping, with a cook hut and one or more storage huts. A polygamist will have a separate hut for each wife, and when families grow large, a man may provide other huts if he is able. A prosperous man may well have one or two huts containing modern furniture, but the average family still lives in a simpler state. Prosperity allows some to have cement floors, but many still have dirt floors or a flooring of mixed cow dung and mud

which is spread to dry and is fairly durable and odorless as long as it does not become wet.

Cooking is usually done in cast iron pots over a wood fire. In fine weather, it may be done outside, while on rainy or cold days, a fire is built on the floor in the center of the cook hut. With no chimney, the smoke must filter out through the thatch of the roof, making the hut look as though it is smouldering and ready to burst into flames. Surely it must be hard on the lungs of the cook! A little firewood must go a long way, for wood is scarce and expensive. Sometimes all the woodland is the property of the chief who sells it to the people at a considerable profit.

There is more than one way to build a new hut. Sometimes the women tamp mud into place in a circle, building up the wall bit by bit. Otherwise, they make bricks by packing clay into wooden forms, then gently unmolding the soft bricks to allow them to dry in the sun. When it is time for the roof to be raised, the men arrange poles in the typical conical shape and tie cross braces firmly in place. The entire cone is lifted into place upon the wall and fastened down, and then the thatch, which the women have gathered and carried, is combed and sewn into place with a large wooden "needle" threaded with twine made of twisted bark strips. The hut may be left in its natural earth color or painted in designs typical of the area or tribe. If the builders have enough money, they will have inserted window frames and a good door. Otherwise the only light may have to come from the doorway which is covered at night with burlap, straw matting, or blanket material.

In city locations, government housing projects have

provided houses for blacks to rent at reasonable charges. The houses are often built of concrete blocks with corrugated roofing and metal window frames and doors. They are small compared to the houses of most white areas, and they are lined up in monotonous long rows, their identical construction making them look like match boxes. Yet, the rural black in his hut would see a concrete house as a great step upward on life's ladder.

I had designed a set of Bible class lessons to be used for black children in a city, and was using them to teach a class in a village situation. I had cut pictures of an urban "match-box" house, together with pictures of food, clothing, family groups, and other of God's gifts for which we are thankful. Before long, I had lost my audience. The children were pointing at the poster on which the pictures had been pasted, chattering excitedly. My interpreter explained to me that they were talking about the good house and hoping to go to the city when they grew up so that they could live in that sort of accommodation.

Often, however, as we mixed with these people of uncomplicated background, we sensed a deeper happiness than among a good many of the city folk. Several older rural black brethren expressed to us their firm belief that it was better for them to remain as they were rather than move to the city where crime and moral degeneracy were rampant.

Carrying water buckets on their heads, country girls laugh and have a good time. Children herding cattle wave merrily to people who drive by. Adults have time to sit and talk at leisure. Lacking bright lights and entertainments, they have evenings for conversation which often

goes to Bible subjects which are discussed for long hours. Not rushed by deadlines and appointments, they never seem to mind if a church service continues for hours. They are hungry for more learning, and will ask questions and listen patiently to the answers which sometimes must be lengthy.

Studies conducted among the blacks in their homelands have revealed conclusive evidence of an extremely low rate of heart disease and related ailments. It is fairly certain to be related to diet and low stress. These people do not eat meat often. They live mainly on whole unrefined corn meal and vegetables. They walk long distances, get plenty of sleep and are seldom under pressure of time schedules. Blacks who have moved to busy cities and eat richer foods including larger amounts of meat, show a rate of heart disease nearly equal to that of the white city population.

There have been many years of tragic famine conditions farther north in Africa. Drought conditions sometimes hit the southern part of the continent too, but the drought of 1982-1983 was one of the worst in history. People within South Africa itself are usually, but not always, provided for by local relief measures, but this time, the populace of Botswana have been severely stricken. Food is available in such towns as Francistown and Gaborones, but the people have no money. Eldred Echols found conditions to be tragic at Nata and other places in Botswana, and he made an appeal through which means more than \$125,000 was raised in America before the end of 1983, with more to come. Food is purchased by the ton as money becomes available, and hauled to the famine areas for distribution. Unfortunately, it is usually the children

who suffer first, and not only in times of drought. According to the customs of some, when food is prepared, the men eat first, and often there is no protein available to the children who may then develop a deficiency disease called quashiorkor, characterized by distended tummies, dry patches of skin, and white patches on the scalp. Babies on the breast are safeguarded by the mother's milk, but when they are weaned, they become victims of the protein deficiency. Some blacks give the disease a name which means "that which a little child gets when the next baby is on the way." Education in nutrition has been slow to spread, and poverty hinders the obtaining of better foods, but some progress is being made. Sometimes the simple addition of an egg to the mealie meal porridge works a seeming miracle. (If a person *has* an egg).

In most tribal areas of South Africa, there are hospitals, many of them run by missions. These hospitals have clinics and out-patient departments, and treatment is available, either free or for a very low fee. Yet it is often a walk of many miles to the clinic, and many sick go untreated. Vaccinations are available and fairly widely practiced so that the old dreaded smallpox and other epidemic diseases are held in check. Few rural black people have any dental work done other than the extraction of decayed teeth.

Most doctors and many of the assistants are white, so in black areas, small children fear all whites — they think they are about to receive injections whenever white people approach them. Some dear black friends had twins and asked John and me to give them their English names. We saw them when they were babies, but later we could not visit them because they were afraid of all white people.

Names are an interesting subject. The African people have their own tribal names which are quite unpronounceable and unrememberable by most whites, so many of them have two names: a tribal name and a "white" name. The tribal names have specific meanings, similar to Biblical and American Indian names, so we often had to explain that we choose names simply because we like them. We named the twins Claire and Carol, and then had to search out the meanings in order to satisfy the parents. We told them that Claire means "clear, bright and shining" while Carol is a "happy song." We hadn't thought of it before, but it turned out well.

Biblical names are great favorites, and among our friends there are many Samsons, Philemons, Johns, Marcus', Lucas', Lazarus', Thomas', Peters, Jacobs, Jobs, Timothys, Abrams, Simons, Samuels, and others. There are fewer Bible women, but there are Marthas, Marys, Annas, and others; there are more who have names like Betty, Lizzie, Rosie, Mina, Agnes, or other modern names.

More about life in "the bush" appears in connection with stories of work in bush areas, especially with the big tent.

The Hardin Family

Much of what is in this book is centered around our work as missionaries in the church of Christ with a few personal family highlights sandwiched in between the many activities. There are, however, some Hardin happenings that require space of their own to make the story complete.

War is an unspeakable catastrophe. Scarcely a generation escapes having to give some of its youth to feed that horrendous monster. John and his two brothers had all been drafted in World War II, so their parents knew and shared the agony of giving sons to serve and, perhaps, to die. All three survived the war, and Leon saw further service in the Berlin Airlift and in the Korean conflict. Now it was our turn to face the uncertainties of the Vietnam war. Don enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps in order to have a choice of type of service rather than being drafted into the army and likely being put into the infantry. He saw several years of stateside service during which he had several courses in Avionics. At the end of his term of enlistment, he was offered a generous bonus for signing up for another two years with the proviso that one of those years must be spent in overseas service. The news of his impending departure for Japan and Vietnam struck deep into our hearts, for American boys were giving their lives by the thousands, and some of Don's friends had been numbered with them.

We were busy putting out our family newspaper, "Die Stamboom," when word came. I went into the

bedroom, closed the door, and poured out my heart in a prayer which I wrote down. I showed it to John, saying that it was not for the "Stamboom," but he printed it there anyway. This is what I wrote:

"Dear God, My Heavenly Father, as you look down upon me this day, you alone can know how a mother feels when her much beloved son is being sent to fight a useless war. If all the grief of all the mothers who have thus given their sons today and in all the wars of ages past could be gathered in one place, all eternity could scarcely hold that solemn wail. And so to you my lonely tears could seem insignificant — if you were not so great and mighty that you even know if a sparrow falls. But oh, I need your help, your strength.

"Four sons I yet have beneath the roof of home, young sons who need to see a mother strong enough to bear whatever comes, and need to know that all strength comes from you in heaven above. Let my tears not overcome me. Let my pride in my son who has thus volunteered to go to war be such that it may lift from my shoulders the crushing weight of anxiety and ease the pain in my heart. For in my mother-heart there is place for each of my children. When one is gone, what a sore, bleeding place is there — oh God, You know! I cannot ask to have him back as when he nestled in my arms — a babe. But please, dear God, may his angel keep watch over him. May thy love be in his heart of hearts and may he so live that if we do not meet again upon this war-torn earth,

we can meet in heaven and share eternal rest and peace.

“And Lord, a selfish prayer I would not pray – my husband, too – may he find strength and solace as he always has – in You. A man – staunch and stolid – he cannot find release in the sweet balm of tears, but I know that way down deep, inside that brave exterior, lie feelings that hurt – hurt – hurt. May I, Father, be more of a loving wife than ever before, and may the two of us, hand in hand, go down the road of life together, the better to meet whatever our remaining days hold in store. You have blessed us so bountifully with children, with health and strength, with enough of life’s necessities always, and with opportunities to live a great life in your service. I pray that having Don go to Vietnam will in no way hinder our service to You. May it rather give us more understanding of the griefs and anxieties that others bear and thus enable us to be of better service in your kingdom. We walk but blindly in this life, Father. We know not what even the next moment brings. Hold our hands. We ask in the name of Jesus – the Son You gave.”

Our daily prayers for Don were that he would neither have to kill or be killed. His assignment overseas kept him in Japan most of the time and in Vietnam only a few weeks, his job being maintenance of electronic equipment aboard the U. S. Marine aircraft. Once during his tour of duty, his wife, Dian, visited him in Japan. They visited Hiroshima and were deeply impressed by the existing evidence of the

A-bomb of 1945.

From Japan, Don brought back a camera and a fine telescope for John. The Hoggs brought the camera to us when they returned from a furlough, and Bess and Ernie Shoemaker brought the telescope when they came to visit us in Benoni in 1973. John had long taken an interest in the stars and had wished for a telescope but had never felt able to afford one.

1972 brought the death of John's younger brother, Leon. The winter of '72 was bad for my health too – I went down with bronchitis and was sick all winter. I lost a great deal of weight, and late that year developed a frozen shoulder which had to be manipulated under anesthesia. Neal was going to be finishing up at SABS in December of '72 and leaving for the U. S. in January of '73. With the unhappy events of the year, I found his departure hard to face.

1973 was a year of variety. Neal left in early January, and in June, Brian moved to his own flat in Johannesburg to be more independent and to put an end to the tiring commuting by train. Brian was now 22, Neal 21. We'd had them at home longer than the average which should have made us feel good, but somehow we missed them the more. Now only Dale and Gary remained at home.

The Shoemakers were to be arriving in mid-June, so we began early in the year to anticipate their visit. Dale and Gary said that their dad did everything during those months "before Bess and Ernie get here." We framed and hung pictures, painted, had new cupboards built in the dining room, and even bought a VW Kombi so that we

would have a vehicle large enough to carry us all on the trips we were planning. We'd needed to change cars anyway – the Peugeot had traveled almost a hundred thousand miles and was becoming decrepit – so we traded in both the Datsun and the Peugeot for one VW.

Bess, Ernie and Robin arrived on 17 June. This turned out to be the first of several visits, for they fell in love with South Africa. Ernie loves to hunt, but John had persuaded him to do his hunting with a camera so that the animals could live to see other days. We spent some time showing them various areas of our work and they enjoyed meetings with us in Benoni, Daveyton, Atteridgeville, Mamelodi, Pretoria, Vendaland and SABS. We made two sight-seeing tours: one to Kruger Park and a second to Southern Rhodesia where we visited Victoria Falls, the Motopos Hills, and Bulawayo. At Bulawayo, we visited the W. N. Shorts and the J. C. Shewmakers, our two oldest missionary couples who were at that time living on adjoining properties and the two men were serving as elders in the church.

The Kombi served us well. Designed to carry 10, it carried the seven of us with our luggage, cooking gear, and food supplies with room to spare. On the road to Victoria Falls we had a slight mishap to the rear bumper, and on the homeward journey, we hit an ox in the road, just hard enough to cause the left headlamp to shine crazily off to the far left. John saw the ox and braked hard – it could have been much worse. On our last night in the Motopos Hills, Bess wanted to stay in a quaint little hotel. We did so, but she didn't enjoy it, for she suddenly came down with a severe flu attack. She was still ailing when they flew

home and narrowly escaped having pneumonia.

In August that year, Dale sang in the chorus of the school production of "Iolanthe." Most of the leads were played by teachers and adults from outside the school, while minor roles and chorus were done by students. Dale was enthusiastic about the production and also took part in some one-act plays.

During the staging of "Iolanthe," Gary had a bad experience. He and a friend had pitched a tent near the Benoni Lake, meaning to camp there for one or two nights. They had finished setting up camp, and by the light of a lantern, they had just settled down to enjoy the privacy and quiet of the evening. Their bicycles were concealed in the long grass and they felt no apprehension, but suddenly they were attacked by two black men who robbed them of lantern, radio, boots, and other items. Act I of "Iolanthe" had just ended and the lights had been turned up when Gary came and found us to tell us his sad story. To make matters worse, his friend had fallen on his bike and had numerous abrasions and bruises. All of us left, and the two fathers helped the youngsters take down the tent and gather up the remaining items. We returned the following evening to see the entire production of "Iolanthe."

Dale was rapidly ending the days of his high school career. All South African white boys are drafted for two years of military service immediately upon completion of high school. Each of our South African-born sons held dual citizenship until he rejected South African citizenship and retained only American. Each time, we initiated the process when the son turned 16. Now Dale was nearly 18, and his papers had not gone through, so he received orders

to report for duty at Walvis Bay in January 1974. John moved quickly, made some phone calls, wrote some letters, and made a trip to Pretoria before the record was set straight.

Rejection of South African citizenship did not mean that we hated South Africa. We did, however, think it best in every way to retain our American citizenship, and felt that the whole family should be united in this. There was some chance that one who served in the South African military forces could lose his American citizenship.

When we'd lived in Benoni the first time, between 1957 and 1959, there was already much talk of building a new English-medium high school in Rynfield. In 1974, it finally became reality, but our home was in the zone for the old high school, so even Gary did not receive the benefits of a new school. The old school was renamed "Willowmore" and had a new principal who promised sweeping changes and improvement which never came to be. With high hopes, we attended organizational meetings and PTA meetings, but after the months passed and we saw the realities, we were disappointed in most ways.

Our 1974 furlough was most eventful. When we landed at Tulsa, the drama was almost more than we could stand. There were Don and Dian with little Tara Jean whom we had never seen. At nine months, she was happy and friendly and came right to us. Then there was Neal with a pretty girl whom he introduced to us as "Elaine, my fiancee." (It even surprised Elaine). When we had a chance to recover ourselves and turn to look, we saw several of the elders and members from the 29th and Yale church who had also come to meet us, and we went then to

the apartment that had been arranged for our use.

We made headquarters in Tulsa and traveled to many parts of the country to report to congregations that were assisting us, to visit relatives, and to do some "grand-parenting." It was surprising how many we saw with South African connections: Masseys, Worthingtons, Leonard Grays, Tex Williams, Abe Lincolns, the parents of Donna Horne, Moneys (elder who visited Pretoria in 1962), Bill Humble who once did a seminar at SABS, Frank Pack who was once a featured speaker at a SABS lectureship, and probably others. We saw a baseball game at the Houston Astro-dome, visited Carlsbad Caverns, walked in the petrified forest, saw the Painted Desert, gasped at the vastness of the Grand Canyon, and stood in awe in the midst of the ancient giants of the Sequoia forest.

We had visited little Tara only a few times — not enough to satisfy a grandmother — so I went and stayed one week with her (and her parents, incidentally) while John was doing some fund-raising. The full realization came to me only then — the sacrifice our children's grandparents had made by having us live so far away. Only a grandparent can understand what a wonderful being a grandchild is. Tara was to have her first birthday on the first of September, and our departure flight was on the second. We had an early birthday party for Tara on August 31, a Saturday. On Sunday the church in Tulsa had a special service in honor of our return to the mission field. At the close, John and I stood at the front of the auditorium while everyone in the congregation came past and either shook hands, hugged us, or kissed us in farewell. That same night, Neal, Elaine, and Dale were to drive to Abilene: Neal to enter

his final year of work on a BA, Elaine to continue at secretarial school, and Dale to enter ACC as a freshman. We gathered in our apartment, and after a while, conversation ceased. We just sat looking at one another with tears in our eyes and lumps in our throats. It was almost more than we could bear, but neither Neal nor Dale could initiate the first move to pack the car and drive away, but finally it had to be done.

The next morning – Monday – Don, Dian and Tara came to the airport to see us off. It was the moment I had thought I could never endure. But after the sad partings of Sunday night, I had prayed long and hard that the Lord would give me the strength and courage to do that which I knew I needed to do, and my prayer was answered. I cannot say that I was light-hearted, but my burden was lifted, and after we were on the plane, I actually began to look forward to returning to our home in Benoni. I knew then that heaven is not only a place of rest and of release from pain and tears, but it is a place of no more partings.

In October of '74 we had a visit from old college friends of mine – Otto and Theda Olson. Otto was president of a Lutheran synod in Canada and had, together with some other church leaders, signed some resolutions concerning South Africa's racial policies. The South African Consul in Canada had invited the Olsons to visit South Africa and investigate the situation personally, and during that time, they met a number of dignitaries, business men, professors, and others. They had one free day which they spent with us, and we took them on a tour of a number of places. After their visit to South Africa, they amended their opinions to some degree.

Neal and Elaine were planning to be married in June of '75, then upped the date to February 15. By scraping the bottoms of a couple of barrels, I was able to make the trip to Abilene to attend the wedding. I stayed on for the lectureship, and then visited the other sons and Tara, and made a quick trip to see mother in Minnesota before flying back to South Africa.

My plane landed at Jan Smuts airport at 8:30 on a Sunday morning. John met me, whisked me home to bathe and change clothes before going to the morning service, arriving just in time. The Benoni congregation was in the midst of a big gospel campaign with Ivan Stewart and his group. During the announcements, Al Horne said that everyone was glad to have Bessie back again. John stood up and said, "Amen."

In April of '75, Brian received his certificate for having completed all of the required work and the exams to become a Chartered Accountant. This was not a degree, but represented five years of hard work on the job during the days and attending lectures at night. He passed the exams the first time around, a creditable performance in itself.

On the 21st of June, Brian was married to Elizabeth Steveni, a Johannesburg girl. They lived at first in a flat, then bought a house in Parkhurst, a few blocks from Liz's parents' home, and not very far from the first house we lived in when we moved to Johannesburg in 1950. Brian continued to work for the firm of auditors with which he had done his articles, and was later offered a partnership. It was fun to have them living in Johannesburg, and we visited back and forth frequently.

In October, Gary played the Captain in Gilbert and Sullivan's "H. M. S. Pinafore," and did a fine job of it, probably enjoying it more than he had any other event in his entire school career. It was the first time that an all-student cast had performed such a production in Benoni, and the newspaper reporter commended them highly.

1976 appeared on the calendar. We had lived in our home at 4 Whitehouse for 10 years. We had been a family of 6 in that house, with frequent company, as many as 14 at a lectureship. We had managed with one bathroom. Now that we were three, and soon to be two, we added a second bathroom, some carpeting, a new dining room floor, a new ceiling in the back veranda, and an exterior paint job. We justified the expense by referring to our plans to return to the States in 1978 when we would probably sell the house, and these improvements should be to our advantage price-wise.

In '76, the Shoemakers came for a second visit, but without Robin. Ernie's trigger finger got the better of him and he just had to go hunting in Africa. First, however, they attended the SABS lectureship after which we made a trip to Natal. We visited friends and brethren in Pietermaritzburg, Pinetown, and Durban and enjoyed that lovely part of South Africa. The hunting trip was in the Graaf Riet area where arrangements had been made for Ernie to hunt on a farm. The four of us camped in the caravan by the Melk Rivier — the first ladies ever to camp there were Bess and I — a surprise to the owner of the land. No game was shot, and one day John twisted a foot badly when it was wedged between some rocks, but we had a good time nevertheless.

My bronchitis flared up badly that November so that I nearly had to be hospitalized, but responded to a new powerful anti-biotic. Then on December 4, Gary was in a pretty bad accident. He was riding a motorcycle, and was hit by an ambulance which went through a red light. His helmet probably saved his life, but he had a number of cuts and abrasions and a broken elbow. He had just finished his high school days and had to delay his travels to the U. S. where he hoped to enlist in the Air Force. When finally, after about a year at various jobs in Oklahoma, he was able to enlist, he turned up shortly with bronchial asthma and was given a medical discharge.

Gary had left South Africa in February of 1977. In June, Brian and Elizabeth also departed. They sold their house and most of their furnishings and went to Austin, Texas. Neal was then in his second year of law school, in Austin, and Brian found that to practice his skills in the States, he needed a degree, so he too enrolled at the university. By this time, Kent had been teaching in Nashville for several years, Don was established in a TV business in Stillwater, Oklahoma, and Dale and Gary were trying various types of employment. Our nest was indeed empty. It had to be faced — our children were grown. That was when I began to accompany John on most of his bush trips, described elsewhere in this book.

With some vacation time coming, we decided to visit Lesotho. John had been there a few times, always on church work, but this time we stayed in the Holiday Inn in Maseru, relaxed, and did a good bit of sight-seeing. The majestic mountains of Lesotho make breath-taking scenery, but the Sotho people who live there have a difficult time

eking out a living. They are a colorful people, though, with men and women wearing the typical Basuto blankets and conical straw hats. Many of the men ride horseback and are sometimes called African cowboys. The altitude makes Lesotho bitterly cold in winter, and there is often snow, but we were there in October – Spring.

1978 was almost a whole year of goodbyes. We began very early to make rounds to as many as possible of the churches which John had helped through the years. Nearly every Sunday found us in a different place, and we had to tell our brethren everywhere that we were due to leave South Africa in early November, probably for good. In mid-year, the Echols family sold their house to SABS for a men's dormitory, and moved to the states, working first at Michigan Christian College, and then back in Texas, in close association with mission work everywhere.

Bess and Ernie Shoemaker returned once again for a visit, this time to hunt in Southwest Africa with Greg Wood. Bess and Ernie flew directly to Windhoek while John and I made the long journey by car and met them there. While Ernie and Greg hunted, Bess, John and I did a lot of sight-seeing. Ernie had a successful hunt this time: kudu, springbok, warthog. From Windhoek we drove to Cape Town and saw many of its famous attractions.

In August 1978, we sold our house – for much less than it was worth, because the market was very poor at the time – to a Toweel, a relative of the well-known South African family of boxers. We moved out on September 30 and stayed in the old Echols house until we left for the states. During that time we had the last of the lectureships directed by John – it was the 12th – and enjoyed having

John Bannister and the Joe McKissicks staying with us. The McKissicks and we then spent three days on a trip to Kruger Park – the last one we were to make – we'd been there many times and never tired of it.

On the 9th of November, we flew away from the country that we had all but adopted as our own. Despite the fact that our children were all in America – and the drawing power of that fact was very strong – leaving South Africa was incredibly difficult. Somehow, we kept thinking that we would return some day. En route to the states, we spent about 8 days in Jordan and Israel. It was, we thought, perhaps our only chance to see the Bible lands.

Back in America, we stayed at first in Tulsa. John had hoped that his support might be continued for a few months so that he could write this book, but his request was refused. He was 65, usually considered the age of retirement, but we couldn't afford to retire, so the difficult task of finding a job had to be addressed. John longed to go back to Africa, yet saw that it might be best to stay in America. It was hard to face the fact that many congregations looking for a preacher want a man who is 35 years old and has had 20 years of experience. Numerous doors closed simply because of that age barrier – 65. One door opened – the one at 11th and Willis in Abilene – but John was not sure that it was the door for him. We made several trips to talk to the elders, and to Ian Fair, whom we had known in South Africa for many years and was now doing the preaching at Willis. They were wanting a personal work minister, and Ian knew John to be a self-starter – one who could see for himself what needed to be done and did it. And so, in April 1979, we moved to Abilene.

It took John a long time to settle down and feel satisfied with being anywhere except in Africa. It was only after almost two years that he began to feel that he fit into his job. We were undergoing "reverse culture shock" as it is now known. Research has shown that returning missionaries are likely to suffer more culture shock upon their return to America than they experienced when they went to the countries of their labors.

In early 1981, we began to make plans to visit South Africa for the lectureship and for several weeks afterward. We had set aside the money – in fact we bought our tickets in March to avoid fare increases. We had obtained new passports and had the address necessary for writing to obtain visas. But God had other plans, and on April 29, John had a massive heart attack and died on May 9. Since that time I have remained in Abilene, for I have more friends here than in any one other place in the states, and I have the house we bought in September, 1979. The 11th and Willis church is made up of some of the most loving and caring people anywhere, and just the job I needed came looking for me. Since January 1982, I have been relief house mother at the Christian Home for unwed mothers. It is part-time work and supplements the widow's benefits I receive from Social Security. It is a needed, worthwhile work, sometimes more difficult, sometimes more pleasant. Some of the girls have called me their "House Grandmother," and several have said that I remind them of their own grandmothers.

I did make that trip back to visit South Africa in September - November 1981, and hope to make another visit "back home" some day.