

January 23, 2003

Hello Nhimbe Friends;

As I began this writing Tuesday from Harare, the rain was coming! It had rained Monday in Mhondoro - they said if it rained like that again, the crop might be salvaged. We don't know now, if it has rained there or not, but here in Harare it began puddling up. It also rained yesterday here in the city bringing much hope. We came into town for a couple of days and had many things on our list to accomplish before returning. We are staying very busy on a constant move towards our goals for this month.

MEDICAL

We brought Joshua into town for his second hip-fracture pinning surgery. The 1.5-hour ride in the back of the truck went smooth. We admitted him to the hospital for a day of preparation, with the surgery expected on Wednesday. We managed to get him on the "theatre" list for surgery on Wednesday, which is the only day his surgeon can use the facilities. We came at the end of the day and found he had not had his surgery. There were many stories about why. One was that there was no coal coming from Hwange to use in the steam machine, for sterilization I'm guessing. This may have been a problem as of late, but it turned out that the true reason for not proceeding, was that they had no blood of his type for surgery. He has been rescheduled for next Wednesday the 29th. They expect to have blood then. I was encouraging the family to donate but it didn't sound like a viable option to them, although they also know about the Red Cross here. He will remain in the hospital for this week. It costs \$3,000 Zim a day for the bedding and food, after his admittance fee of \$22,000. His spirits are high, considering the way things are going, as we all are expecting a much better outcome this time, once he gets out of the queue.

In my last email, I mentioned how the hospitals here are primarily service, but not product oriented organizations. We saw the face of that, on Joshua's first day in the hospital, as he arrived at 10:30 a.m. We returned for visiting hours between 5 and 6 p.m. and he had just had dinner, but had had no lunch, nor anything to eat since we left him. He had also had no pain medicine. I had given him a couple of Ibuprofen before leaving in the morning, thinking this would not interfere with any meds they might give him....guess I didn't need to worry about interfering. Luckily, we had brought him some of his favorite foods to snack on...turns out it will hold him through the night. He says that the food helps when the pain gets too much. I asked the family why we don't go to the nurse's station and ask about him missing his lunch and the pain meds...I was told that we mustn't do that because they will cause him problems in the future, and he will receive even less attention. He has been having sadza and cabbage for his evening meals since then, and hasn't missed any other meals since that first day. We continue to bring supplementary fruits, beverages, and meat. He remains in good spirits despite these experiences and was showing off for us as he lifted himself on the bar above his bed, doing a chin up. Got a great picture of this!

Using the NMT (see neuromodulationtechnique.com), he has had remarkable improvements. Before we left Mhondoro, he was crossing his ankles and wiggling his toes around with wild abandon. Prior to the treatments he was in great pain and unable to move these extremities at all. The pain reduction provided by the treatments is short of miraculous in my opinion. Now, we hold the intent for perfect work by the surgeons and staff at the hospital, so all will continue on this new path of recovery.

As a follow-up on the village eye infection treatments, when I returned last week, they had disappeared. The one small child has had many eye problems since infancy, and so will need a follow-up treatment. The rheumatoid arthritis treatments for mom are going well, as pain continues to decrease. As a side benefit, she remarked that the pneumonia feelings in her chest have now left since the first NMT treatment. I've noticed this kind of thing before. The effect of clearing infection in one area can help reduce or eliminate symptoms

in another part of the body. Quite amazing!

Gratefully, NMT is now a possibility here, and elsewhere in the world. Ideally, we could train a person or two from here, but at this point, the Visa restrictions are so great, its unlikely that anyone can come to the US – our government is not allowing people from here to enter without much complexity. So we will count on visiting practitioners from the states that have a desire to help serve here for 3-4 weeks, for example. There is such an immense need! And the wonder of it all is that no medicines or electricity are required for treatments; this is ideal in the rural village setting!

COMMUNICATIONS

The phone lines here are up and down as usual. What I've noticed this trip is primarily from a visit to the Internet cafe last week. I spent 15 minutes online. In that time, I was able to get into my yahoo account, write 1 short e-mail and send it (and I'm a fast typist). I couldn't even read my mail since response time was so slow. I don't know if it was modem speed at that cafe, or bogged down lines particularly on that day, but it appears that using my yahoo account will not be much of an option this trip. If you have written and wonder what happened to my response, this explains it.

I borrow a cell phone from my sister here when I need one. Buying phone cards recharges these phones. You can buy \$250, \$500 or \$750 cards. Her phone calls cost around \$110 per minute. Other companies cost \$50-60 or so. Next time I think I will purchase a phone in the states, since they are less expensive there, and then buy a line here for Nhimbe with the best company, so to be able to do more phone research reasonably. Cosmas handles most Nhimbe phoning at this point. He also has a landline at his home, so this in another option. This is how he is able to connect to send email.

Where he is living now is his new place, a rental near many of the family, so connecting up with each other is much easier, and transport time and cost is less. Because he is one of the few in the family with a vehicle, he ends up dropping people at their homes often. Now, most all the family members (brothers, sisters and their children) have moved to rentals near our place here, where Nhimbe has its office, at a house belonging to Joshua.

NHIMBE EXPORTS

The cooperative women are very happy with more work! They plan to give priority to making the Nhimbe export products during the next couple of weeks, so the items can return in my suitcases. We are focusing on potholders, some place mats, and some caftan style dresses with embroidery. We won't have too many place mats or dresses, with a desire to see how people respond to them, but are doing more potholders since they are easy for them and a less expensive item. They are out of some great African style fabrics. You might check your kitchen and see if maybe you don't need a replacement or two!

The women who are knitting the finger puppets continue to make more animals as well! Some are new animals, and some are the same. We are trying to find the correct, more indigenous, colors of the animals, but colors choices are extremely limited, as the dyes are unavailable to industry. Try to imagine going to store after store and having maybe 4 colors there to buy. Not always the same 4 colors either, so you can coordinate or plan a theme. It's just what is left on the shelves. They are mastering their art and we can see such an improvement in their technique as they continue to develop this project. I thought they did great last year, so to see even a better product is wonderful!

We met with the sculptors twice so far. There was some problem with the toilet building for their village. They are expected to dig the hole for the pit style toilet and find the bricks, ferrying them to the location, and then we provide the builder and cement, since this is the most expensive part. There were complications in finding bricks, digging the hole large enough, as well as a suggested change of location for their selling by the government. Now things are on track and we hope to get this done! Understanding how things can not

move forward is a stretch for me. In general, the carvers are doing quite well and are exporting to many locations around the world, but having a toilet hasn't been a priority. Our plan is to finish the toilet while I'm still here.

We picked some of our sculpture order. My plan is to hire some help in weighing and labeling here, rather than looking to volunteers in the states to do this. In the past we've handled this in Lacombe where I live, and although it's kind of fun and feels like Christmas (unwrapping and wrapping) it's just another volunteer effort to organize, so we'll be looking to buy a scale that will give us our weights. Everything here is in kg's so we'll need to convert to pounds before identifying the items with our inventory codes.

MONEY

Part of our work is always to "make things happen" while I'm here. Our goal is to focus as much effort as possible during these stays, since the record keeping and money management is much easier for us both in that way. We literally carry a briefcase, bags, and/or backpacks with money to transact some business...it's like an odd dream from which I never wake. The government exchange remains at 55 and we hear that the parallel street market is at around 1350 and on the increase. A loaf of bread is \$200; that is close to \$4 for the average person. Potato chips are \$300-\$400. A bottle of beer is \$250 to 300. I paid \$40 for a mango; because of the lack of rain there isn't much harvest. Salt is \$50 for 1 kg. Tomatoes \$50 each. People, with money to convert, paint a different picture as they can buy anything they want that they can find. In any case, counting stacks of \$500 bills is like some fantasy out of a movie...I appreciate having the feeling of prosperity that comes from handling a lot of money, but this is not grounded in reality. The ordinary person cannot respond to the inflation. It is heartbreaking to be in the midst of the spiral, where family members, friends of family, and JQP can't get a grip of anything solid because it moves almost daily.

MEETINGS

We continually are meeting with different people for a variety of reasons - the sewing and knitting women, the Medical Station Aide, the Chairman of the Village Representatives, the Headmasters, the carvers, the Nhimbe Preschool teachers and children, the Tsotso Stove women. We also always need to meet the people in official capacities. This week it included meeting the new Chief responsible for the region. The last chief was temporarily assigned, and appreciated our work since it helped his area, thereby making him look better, but now, a new permanent chief is being installed, so we are starting over with our overtures. The chief is our elder, as any business in the area, even police business, goes through him. We also met the local police with a focus on CIA type of work. The intention was to have everyone in communication. Cosmas also wants me to feel safe and secure walking around the locale, as well as having a transparent operation. All of these meetings required multiple visits of an official nature, so that everyone is in the picture as to what we are doing with our project.

FOOD RELIEF

We are working on our order with Paul Fernandes from Afri-Link. We expect that he will be providing us with supplies for the preschool to include wheat, salt, sugar for the bread making, peanut butter and Mahewu, as well as Mahewu for all of the village children under 12. The US donations received have been enough to provide each child under 12 (just over 400 of them in our villages) with ½ liter of Mahewu daily through July. Additionally, the preschool fundraising is providing the preschool children ½ liter in the morning also. This is such a critical age. We are very blessed to see them getting the food during these developmental years. Since Catholic Relief Services (CRS) are providing minimal staples to the needy, this was our best plan. If further funding can be found in the next few months, we will increase the Mahewu for the 400 children. We also want to follow up on the CRS distribution to make sure all is happening as expected.

TIME IN THE CITY

Its almost time to leave for Mhondoro and very little has been accomplished in some ways...our list is very long. And we must be patient as we are trying to forge new ground. We need to locate items for the project but it will have to wait until next trip into town. We want to find a scale to be used for sculpture weighing and food distribution. We need checkout cards for the library and paper for the Health Station Aide to make envelopes for providing Ibuprofen. We need shelves, cabinets, and tables for the Library/Storage hut and the Preschool (the man we hired to build these last year, absconded with the deposit cash of \$40 USD, so we are having to restart that effort.) These seem like simple enough items, but the wheels here are not greased for ease of business transactions. There is always a great amount of time spent waiting...its just part of the territory. Cosmas has been having truck work done, visiting Baba has been regular, and the heat of the Zimbabwean sun with lack of food and drink makes us move slower too.

TOO MUCH EXCITEMENT

We were leaving the hospital on Tuesday after the 5 o'clock visiting hour, heading home; it was shortly after 6 p.m. Cosmas got a call on his cell phone, so he was slowing down to answer and turn the corner at the same time. There was a military officer standing there at the T intersection, who began yelling at us, shaking his gun. Later I found out that we were driving past the head of this country's home, which is not allowed after 6 p.m. They translated him saying, "Why do you slow down here? Proceed or I will shoot!". Unfortunately we didn't know the rules, or we wouldn't have been there at the wrong time of day...we were just casually leaving the hospital.

On Wednesday, we heard that it was a day of "stay aways" meaning that they were encouraging people to not go to work, thereby boycotting businesses to close wanting to send a message. We stayed home in the a.m. instead of going to town for business. We have many items to locate in the city and so this delay, even though somewhat typical of the normal challenges, continues to demand changes to our schedule. Cosmas was concerned that stones might be thrown, so wanted to wait.

During this same morning there was a group of people gathering at the shops near his home. Tear gas was used to disturb the gathering; they could smell it from their home. We, a few blocks away, didn't know about this until we were told later in the day.

CONCLUSION

We are leaving for Mhondoro soon, after the city marathon of activity. I will stay there for a few days, but Cosmas needs to return tomorrow to buy petrol. You have to respond when the petrol is available. Now he is buying black market so it is much better. Before, he was doing what everyone else is doing – parking the truck in the queue and having one of the young men sleeping there for a day or two...this was the only way. With great optimism for this developing project-child, and much tenacity, we continue to hold a vision. With those 3 elements we continually collaborate to revise, re-project and form a solid basis from which to work, even during these times of quick sand. We have much gratitude to you for your interest, thoughtful concern and prayers for us here.

Blessings to you all!

Jaiien