

Tuesday January 28, 2003

Hello from Harare ~

It's good to be writing to you again! This communication helps me tremendously. It helps to hold my optimism during the many challenges that Cosmas and I face. I thank you for being part of this work here and being an interested recipient in this way, as well as how you often help me in the states with the daily job to pull things together there.

Sometimes when we've failed to accomplish a number of things outside of our control, and I want to understand what I can change in myself to make things go better, I seek Nature to find consolation. Yesterday was a tough day; it was just the one that tilted the scales, in a series of many. I was feeling no movement forward and the pressure of the impending end of my stay. When I looked around outside of myself, the only thing I could find to raise my vibration was a simple and beautiful tree that was blossoming with purple red flowers. That was the start of my shifting. The sky, the birds, the nature of the people who have much endurance, humor, and friendship to share, all stimulated my memories of Well-being. I'm now feeling my normal hopeful self, ready for the next couple of days in town.

#### MEDICAL

The report we received while in Mhondoro was that after we admitted Joshua in the hospital last Tuesday, he had many visitors, which was helping with his waiting for the next week. He has much family and many friends here in town, so the time is not dragging on terribly. We saw him daily until we left on Thursday of last week.

Some of you remember Simon Magaya, from the Soul of Mbira or other performing tours in the states. He was visiting Baba on Saturday. Somehow it came up for him to check the wound. Simon found that the dressing had not been changed since he had been admitted. When there, I had seen nurses doing various duties and made the assumption that this normal type of thing was included, and Joshua never commented differently. Simon was faced with maggots to clean out. He had to leave the hospital to go and buy some medicine for proper dressing. When the doctor and nurses saw this situation they finally began attending to him with regular attention to detail.

We understand that Monday they ran out of Iodine and we'll need to find and buy some so they can change the dressings, which they say should be done twice a day. As horrible as the maggots sound, and as deplorable as this is that this has come about, the positive point here is that the maggots have prevented the onset of gangrene due to rotting flesh. So they have prevented the loss of his limb and that is good.

I do not like the face of this deterioration in society. It is not describable in words as my emotions are not tangible when I reach inside myself...outrage doesn't speak to it...its something else. I understand that at one time, 20 or 30 years ago, Zimbabwe had a model

hospital system, and with standards exceeding the norm in all of Africa. So very much has changed in these years.

We continue to do NMT treatments in the village setting working with a variety of conditions, all having very positive results. Minimal translation is required to just get the ball rolling in all cases. There is such great potential for helping here in this simple, but powerful way, that I have to believe that Spirit has been the large part of this coming at this time in this way. We plan to build a modest space to accommodate visiting practitioners at the Community Center...I'm believing in "build it and they will come".

The way the indigenous people view the NMT treatments is as if it's a form of prayer. The work of the traditional healer here is with herbs and prayer so this is a normal, acceptable idea. Those of you in the states who are familiar with kinesiology, muscle testing and similar alternative techniques understand how these things look much more like prayer, as compared to taking pills for a medical treatment. We have explained that NMT is a unique form of promoting wellness that is neither the allopathic way they receive at the doctors, nor is it the traditional way of the nyanga. We have described how it is a third way that is an alternative to both, which is based in the science of anatomy and physiology but uses intentional focus to direct the healing, and this is why people feel as if they are being prayed for. Additionally, if we have a medical clinic as such, it would not be allowed due to licensing and regulations, so it's just as well that we are seen as just "prayers". The complexity of even registering as an NGO is difficult; I hear many are being refused.

As of Monday there is still no blood of Joshua's type, and surgery is supposed to be on Wednesday. In discussions with many Zimbabweans about donating blood for the supply in the hospitals, I have found that some do not want to be tested for donating because they do not want to know if they are HIV positive. Knowing, is worse here, than not knowing. It brings everything out in the open and this is not what people here want, since everything is so tenuous with just survival from day to day. A spouse doesn't want to know if their love has been unfaithful. It implies too many complicated things due to the familial rules and marriage rituals, which people would have to get into. We have heard that children at schools are being encouraged to donate blood. It's suggested that they are young and strong and many are still free from HIV.

## STOVES

While in Mhondoro I have met a few times with the Tsotso (small) Stove women. There is a core group of women who are pulling it together with a list of over 30 who are interested in having one of these stoves. This is based on the fuel-efficient stove, which Larry Winiarski from Aprovecho in Cottage Grove; OR developed and has carried to other parts of the world. We have not yet had funds to be able to bring him here (Rotary has helped him get to other countries, but Rotary here is not in an active mode here due to politics), but this is our goal. He stays for a month or more and works daily with the people to develop these ideas. With

many years of experience he could make a huge impact if we were able to bring him in the future.

We have only 9 active stoves so far, with more in the works. Marian Grebanier, who was here almost 2 years ago working with the women, gave me interview questions to ask this time to learn how things were going. The predominant answer was that the stove is working very well! They have learned that there is a better source of clay to dig near the Nhimbe sculptor's village for the stove elbow (firebox and chimney). We have plans of helping them with transport this Sunday as we plan to see the sculptor's one last time and so will be in the area.

The following summarizes the stove interviews:

- They like cooking on the stove because its faster, uses less fuel, and produces no smoke compared to cooking over the fires in the center of the hut.
- They consistently use half as much wood, which they are gathering from what (little) forest is here, so they do not have to buy any wood.
- The fire smokes a little when first getting started but then there is no smoke even though there is no chimney pipe. (This is because it consumes the fuel so efficiently.)
- They have no trouble keeping the fire going at the proper level and cooking at the same time.
- Most are missing a few pieces to the stove, primarily "skirts" that go around the pots, which can conserve even more heat.
- They were not all so aware of the importance of the height of the wood ash (insulation) inside the unit under the metal plate, which directs the heat to the second hole and determines the airflow.
- Those with the ashes at the right level are able to cook over the second hole, cooking meat, sauces, and baking bread.
- All but one elbow made has broken or cracked but the stoves are still working well. One of the very first stoves had an elbow made from a different maker and hers had not broken; this is how we decided to try the clay from the other area since its reputed to be very strong.

There are two main factors I have seen which has made the stove development move slowly, considering that we began working on this exploration in March of 2000 on my first trip. One is that buying the metal for the tops and having them cut with holes and reinforced along the sides to prevent warping, requires a truck, material availability, and working tools and resources for the local welders, all of which are not every day items. They really need the tops because without them, the ashes would get blown around the kitchen hut, and Shona women take pride in having very clean homes.

The other challenge is that for the women, although having great incentive and actually having developed a couple of Tsotso stoves from books, which they showed me on my first trip, the concepts required to think through all the processes and move forward without

assistance is foreign. Most have never been out of the general area, or completed school; some can not write their name. Marion's assistance made a great difference to getting things rolling when she came. I keep working to empower the women to move forward with their own leadership, but in some ways, there is not a cultural premise for them to take matters into their own hands.

Thanks to wood stove donations we are able to continue with this research and development part of Nhimbe for Progress! Our women are building the stove themselves with bricks and ashes they provide. We are only providing the more difficult pieces, the metal and the elbow. A Nhimbe villager is being paid to make the elbow. Not only do Tsotso stoves reduce respiratory health issues, and great numbers of eye irritations, it also has the potential of affecting the deforestation of this area by half! The idea too, that if something cooks faster, then that gives a woman and girl children more time to do other things, not associated with the cooking. And also they will be gathering half as much wood, thereby taking half as much time, again freeing them up! This is such a gift to the females in these ways, and the family's health, as well as the Eco-system here...I look forward to further progress.

## SCHOOL PROGRAM

We have been to the schools for our sponsored children. Nothing was moving in our direction. I'm not clear exactly why. There seemed to be a variety of reasons given. It was like we had never been there before and all was a new procedure.

We heard stories from the Headmaster that a couple of children have been found walking to school and then dropping to the ground, fainting from no food. The Headmaster has gone to find them, preparing them some sadza, and then taking them home. It feels that maybe the lack of food in general for everyone here and the intense heat has made thinking and planning for the future out of reach. The schools are in such a desperate way without this additional complication of food.

In any case, we got things moving forward and expect to return to the villages later in the week. This will allow us to take the children's pictures and get the letter they have written to their sponsor. This piece is a very important part of my coming – assisting in the communication between the children and sponsor. Some of you may not care whether you receive the photo and letter, but I know that many of you do. I am often very moved by the letters the children write. They give a feel of their situation much better than anyone can as a third party.

We delivered the letters that the US sponsors wrote to the children. Most children were in attendance at school when we arrived, although some were absent due to the heavy rainfall that morning. Also some children had been transferred due to the resettlement; their relatives are still in the village so they will receive the correspondence but the child can no longer be sponsored. One child had died due to tuberculosis; we gave her letter to her sister, who also

had received a letter, to give to the parents. It felt really great to have that letter to give the family.

I can't tell you what this can mean for these kids. Your letter has given them a direct link to everything that symbolizes prosperity, which can give vision, it gives them a sense that someone cares outside of their immediate scope, and practically, it gives them an English assignment that they will treasure for many years to come. Cosmas recalls how in the 70's he would read and re-read the letters he had from Paul Berliner in America as they were working on research for The Soul of Mbira book. We both want to thank all of you who found the time to write your sponsored child...it made their day, their families day, and much, much, more!

We have found that there is a couple of academically outstanding Nhimbe kids who need help beyond the norm. One is a student graduating from Form 4 and ready to go onto the "A" Levels. He was first in his class and known for his intelligence, but his parents are very poor and elderly. We are looking into the cost to help him with his tuition while the boarding in town will be up to relatives. The other is a girl leaving 7<sup>th</sup> grade to attend Form 1. The Headmaster of the Secondary school provided about half of the tuition himself and the parents the other half, and then he drove the girl to a St. Michael's Mission Boarding school nearby. He did this because of her intelligence and his knowledge of his own school's limitations. We are looking into helping her also since the parents are concerned they cannot continue it for the duration. We are hoping to be able to give that extra to influence these children's lives.

#### FOOD RELIEF

We are continuing our efforts to arrange the food transaction. Nothing moves quickly here and although the way was paved from that moment on the plane, there are many details involved. The delivery we are arranging will include preschool term deliveries (every 3 months) and monthly deliveries for the 12 and under children's Mahewu. The families will be very grateful for this help, and this will mean so much to the mental and physical development of the preschool children.

We heard from the Village Representatives that Catholic Relief Services had set a meeting for today for staple distribution for the needy in our villages, but then it was cancelled, and we have heard no reasons why. Now that we're in town, I called and found all of the CRS emergency food workers out for the day, and my contact out all week. Hopefully, we'll be able to get some insight soon.

This kind of thing really comes as a blow to the hungry individual who is waiting. Finally, after all these months, there was to be help in manifesting food and then disappointment again. This repeated pattern here is also part of why villagers only take us seriously if we are pushing regularly to get their attention for commitment to get involved with our efforts. Otherwise it becomes a wait and see attitude. Even though we have such a progressive and

outstanding record of coming through on our promises, there is still some apathy in some corners due to the reality of normal day to day life.

## CONCLUSION

As I was lying there in the hut I heard the cock crowing which told me it was getting on to 4 o'clock. Then I heard the bell on the mombe that was pulling the scotch cart with the field helper— it must be close to 5. Then the children making the sounds that are greeting the day, beginning their play, and winding into their next 14-hour journey...it must be 6 o'clock. Maybe another hour under the covers will do.

The following day the rains came and it was heavy as if the heavens had opened. This has broken the tension. Sleep was deep for everyone that morning. We all slept past the norm. The winds were blowing hard against and around the buildings and trees...I wondered how the thatching on the huts remains intact as I continued to burrow into my sleep sack.

People who live close to the cycles of nature have patience. It is deeply part of their birthright. They know that things take time, for the simplest of things. The miracle of a seed sprouting takes time. Waiting on nature to drop the rain takes time. Plowing the field with the mombe and iron tools, grinding dovi (peanut butter) with two stones or the huge mortar and pestle, and carrying water to your plants in the distant field, all take time. This patience creates a countenance.

What do you do while you wait, since all of life involves waiting? I see them relaxing with an inner confidence that their waiting will prosper them. I see them giving humor and laughter to one another, sharing formalities of etiquette that show politeness and respect for one another's role in the family or community, as well as discussing the highlights of the common events of the day. They do all of this, interweaving the social structure into every moment, as they move through with patience for the day's outcome.

This same patience if viewed as endurance, is part of what makes the people here very strong, worthy of the fight to survive and win, and hopeful that good will prevail. Without being presumptuous I want to ask, is this same quality possibly undermining them? Maybe it's hard to know when to uproot the plant for some reason, or say "we must do something to change the way things are", if this patient, enduring nature is the predominant human characteristic. I'm sure there are many more culturally complex observations that can be made with far greater comprehension of history, the social fabric here, and nature, than this perspective. I just keep trying to understand the forces at work. Those things that are out of my reach, and those I can influence, are all intertwined so that I'm just a drop in this ocean wanting to fathom it all.

Thanks for being here. Those of you, who have made it all the way through this writing, must know that you are offering incredible help simply by your appreciation of and prayers

for what is being offered here. Your financial support is making the ongoing forging of new paths a possibility, while giving respect of the old.

Remember us at dinnertime when you can randomly select whatever you desire. Remember us when you take the time to breathe deeply and smell the roses. Remember that when you are falling asleep we are beginning our day with freshness, hope and determination to prevail. Please activate within your selves the most positive vibration available to you, and focus in our direction...that is the most desirable...it will uplift our spirits so that when we look at the glass we will see it half full rather than half empty. Tatenda Chaizvo!

Many blessings your way!

Jaiaen