

February 6, 2003

Hello Nhimbe Friends!

This final report was written during the flight home...which was empty with plenty of sleeping space, and smooth without any Custom's issues. I have returned with good strong energy, a little jet lag, and quite replenished for our work together here. After a month with family there, it's hard to leave, without missing them greatly right way. I hear them in my mind, their phrasing and accents. I see them too, with their distinct features and deep loving energy. I look for them in the crowds, but they are not there. I do feel them with me, and know that leaving is really only happening in body, but not spirit, and that is consoling.

It's also so very good to be home, on US soil, with all the amenities, which that brings. My family here, my friends, and community, all bring great pleasure – just like our fresh well water, hot showers, and my own garden with familiar tastes. Even when I don't agree with things here, I can voice it. When things are not the way I think they should be, I only need to compare. We have so very much to be in gratitude about.

MEDICAL & JOSHUA

Baba's new surgery date came and went with no actions. A week later they said there was still no blood available of his type. I began wondering if they were planning to just let him lie there. My impulsive instincts started flaring with a determination to go around the mountain, since I tried to go over and through it. It seemed to me that the English, Europeans and wealthy Zimbabweans have their own quality of health care, so I asked the name of the hospital that they would take me to, if there was ever an emergency. I called there, asking to talk to the department in charge of blood transfusions. When the receptionist answered, I told her that I was calling from the U.S. (whoops!) about a patient needing blood type O Positive. She immediately referred me to the department manager, Levi.

Levi and I talked as I explained that there was an urgent need for blood so that a surgery could be performed at the other hospital. He said they had the blood type in normal quantity. I asked him how many US dollars it would take to buy it (thinking maybe it was like other unavailable things and there was just a price); he said it would just go through the normal hospital accounts. He said the doctor just needed to call him with the details to obtain it. He then asked, "Where are you calling from?" I replied that I was calling from Harare, but am from the U.S., (the receptionist must have mentioned my "slip-up"). So we contacted the doctor who followed up that day, and surgery occurred 2 days later on Friday.

Surgery went well as far as we can tell. Joshua was resting and getting fed, primarily supplemented by what family and friends bring. When I was saying good-bye on the way to the airport on Tuesday, he commented that no one had changed his bandage since the surgery (5 days). We asked the nurse and she said that was the policy; the surgeon didn't want the bandage opened until he had seen it for the first time. This doctor visit was supposed to take place on that very day.

Previously, I had told Cosmas that the information I had on these kinds of surgeries, said that people stay in the hospital 7-10 days to be monitored. We expected the doctor to discharge him upon this visit, which would be only 4 days. I had read that hospitals in the US usually wait until a person can move the leg enough to do therapy and begin getting up a little, but Joshua couldn't move his leg yet. Considering that the fracture was in the 1st week of December, it has probably mended by now since its been 8 weeks (and he had been able to use the Calcium supplements

that I had brought), so the real healing involved at this point is primarily the surgery, and whatever other damage occurred in this long, traumatic, and frightful process. Due to the lack of care there and no therapy expected, we thought it might be better to be at home, where people really are nurturing him. I emphasized the importance of the therapy and have left a document explaining exercises for his home helpers to insist on. I left Zimbabwe feeling that he is in good hands now with his family soon in charge. We all can keep sending him energy – thanks!

MEDICAL PROGRAM

We also were able to locate medicine on this trip for Bilharzia (Schistosomiasis). This is primarily something affecting children who pass through contaminated water on the way to school, but some adults are also affected. It costs approximately \$2.50 USD per person, depending on weight to treat. Our goal is to see all people treated. It can really deplete a person's life. One symptom is that they can't concentrate and live with clouded thinking – this treatment will help the children immensely. One of the first to be treated was an adult who is the shopkeeper at Cosmas' store. Cosmas didn't know that he had the condition. I had wondered what was going on for him since there was something I couldn't put my finger on. I'm so glad we finally managed to conquer this one on our list!

We found that Ibuprofen can be purchased in town, although this was new information to Cosmas. It isn't commonly available, but we found it at the Wholesale Pharmacy where we can get the Bilharzia medicine. This is excellent news, since I have regularly been requested to bring pain killers from the States. Not only does that cost more, but it takes up much needed suitcase room and needs repacking, because they rattle a lot and attract attention at Customs there. So now we are setup at the Wholesalers and Cosmas can continue to purchase there. We repeatedly emphasize the educational piece to the Health Station Aide who dispenses these: drink more water, take with food and without alcohol. We just hope people are following the directions.

There were glasses donated, which were from an optometrist's office. I finally decided not to take them without finding their prescription first. I did take some basic "readers", but even that became very complicated because the need is so great, even among the adults. There are a variety of eye problems which need assessing professionally, and that is a program all of its own, unfortunately.

MEDICAL - NMT

The visitor's quarters have been laid out on paper, with the builder beginning the foundation this last week and the ordered doors and windows ready to be picked up. I'm mentioning this in the Medical Section of this report, instead of Building, as our original intent has always been to have a "home away from home" place for medical practitioners who come to help. With NMT clearly being an easy and direct way to help with the village health program, we decided to forge ahead. The US cost is minor and the potential impact here is great. Time will reveal all as this new opportunity unfolds.

Briefly, I want to mention my own success with NMT, since it affected my trip drastically, and empowerment to accomplish things. By last summer, I was in so much continual pain with a hip injury that I began feeling that if the next 40 years were going to be like this, I didn't want to be here – I was clear about that. I had tried every alternative known to me, as well as a regular allopathic approach. The injury was my wake up call that I needed to be doing something else, beside our Nhimbe and the music which feeds my soul - I needed to put my foot back on the "healer" path with gusto, since I had tried to keep it on the back burner from years before. As soon as I realized that, within days NMT was put on my doorstep. I immediately found relief from the pain and healing has continued. I was also treated for allergies which I noticed gave me an entire level of strength to endure environmental irritants. Normally the dust from the rural roof thatching

or city asbestos tiles, the diesel smoke in the city or wood smoke in the huts, and also pollens there any time of year would keep me in continual itchy-scratchy mode. This time there was no irritation of any sort...what a blessing to have that peace again! Our health is one form of our prosperity and I am so happy to be able to share a path towards that goal with everyone – both in Mhondoro and the US.

FOOD

We successfully distributed the first month of Mahewu, after our final village meeting for January. We had the survey count of children under 13, and it turned out that 1.5 kg feeds one child ½ liter per day for one month. There is a huge cup they call a jug and that cup full of Mahewu powder equals 1.5 kg. We formulized the distribution so that each village head knew exactly what they would receive. For example, for 22 children, they need 33 kgs: 1 bag (25 kg) plus 1 jug (1½ kg), plus 1 cup (½ kg) plus 1 bucket (6 kg) to feed the children, in his village for the month. So everyone knows who is to get what. It is the headman's job to fairly keep peace in his village. This will be distributed for another 6 months taking them through July, when whatever maize they planted, will be ready for harvest.

The bigger question came as I jokingly suggested that we know that adults like Mahewu also, but we hope they understand how important it is for the child's mental and physical development to have enough to eat. This brought a lot of chuckling and laughter which kept me wondering. After all, the adults are still hungry.

We have no more information on the Catholic Relief Services food staple plan, as my phone calls resulted without contact, but I hope to learn more by calling from here now that I'm home. If something isn't done soon, we could implement a plan to do something on an emergency short term basis of a month, but do not have enough funds to manage for the expected need of 6 months, unless something changes in our budget. It would cost around \$5,000 USD to feed the families in our villages for a month. Let's hope CRS comes through soon.

The government-run program, which uses the Grain Marketing Board to make food available, occurred in our area in November. They brought a month's supply of maize and each village head could pick up the quantity allocated for their village, but at a cost. This means that the poorest families in the village are still not able to receive food. And November was a long time ago. We also heard about a food-for-work program where villagers can pick up stones for road work, thereby giving everyone some opportunity. Some of our villagers were working to earn some food on our road to the Center where the rains cause bad mud ruts.

An odd thing I noticed was that there were products available in normal stores downtown that weren't there a year or two ago. Like Cere's 100% fruit juice imported from South Africa and Minute Maid. This was so great to see! I used to look and look but only find sugar based fruit juices. It's so ironic that while things are so difficult in some ways, there are improvements in others. This shows that we can make a difference with vision, determination and money!

THE CHIEF: MEDICAL & FOOD

Another development occurred when we were meeting with the new-to-be-installed Chief of the area. His area includes our villages (except the sculptors to the east) and other villages to the west. He explained that the hospitals discharge AID's patients whose rural home is in his area, and bring them to him to look after. The families volunteer to cook for and clean them, and their homes, but now with the drought, there is no food for these people and it has become a burden for him to furnish. We found that 50kg sacks of maize, to which he has access from the government, costs the Chief \$560 Zim.

We gave him \$50 USD to provide more than enough for all of the AIDs patients for the entire year. Many may not survive the year, but we trust the money will be directed to the future crisis. He seems to be a fair-spirited man. He comes from the humble means of the common poor there, but has lineage, giving him this honored assignment by the government.

He interviewed us at length at this meeting as well, to know the detailed specifics of what has been done in his area (huts built, school fees paid, preschool program, tsotso stoves, etc.) He was very pleased with our help and referred to us as another branch on the tree. The hut, which we built for his family, to recognize the importance of his and our relationship as well as his meager means, was being completed as I left.

PETROL

Again the petrol shortage deserves mentioning. Getting black market petrol continues to be the best way when wanting to keep things moving, but does have some drawbacks. One is that it comes in containers that may contain debris. Cosmas has had the truck in the shop on each and every trip to town. One of the problems has been the fuel filters. I told him to go buy some women's nylons for filtering before pouring. We all had a good laugh over that one...seeing him buying nylons.

One night coming into Harare, the tank was getting low (so very low) and it was dark as we entered the edge of town, where it is not a good place to be stopped along the road side. We stopped to get petrol at a Service Station having none available. A young man joined us in our car, and we drove ¼ mile or so to where they had some in containers in a back building. The road was pitch-black and we all waited while one of our young men followed the stranger with the money. That night it went for \$1000 Zim per liter. We were grateful to get home safely. Cosmas is conservative and takes a lot of precautions, so he was very relieved when it was all resolved and we were safely on our way again.

MONEY

The exchange rates didn't change while I was there, either at the bank or the parallel market, but money availability did. There was a continued shortage of money at the bank. One of our last exchanges we ended up with 100's instead of 500's. We heard that this ludicrous situation was due to a shortage of paper to print the 500's. We drug around a duffel bag wherever we needed to do business, often spending as much time counting the bills as trying to find the items that we wanted.

There was also an incredible amount of new coins being produced which were bright and shiny, really making you think you had something. We were figuring it out (multiple times, not quite believing it) looking at the flashy freshly-minted \$5 coin. It was worth .0037, a little over 1/3 of a US cent, if you use the current street rate to calculate.

EXPORT

We purchased over eight hundred finger puppets with seven happy women benefiting. They came up with an amount to charge; I suggested doubling it since they had really stayed too low on a suggested sale price. It was hardly more than last year and costs have considerably risen for them although the yarn cost itself is minimal. We really want this to be a viable opportunity for them, although they don't expect to do the knitting as a "job". They just do a little in between cooking and other chores and only when I come. If we could only find a sales outlet in the preschools and grade schools of America, I'm sure we could keep them working all year around.

We also purchased a great deal of hota (the seeds used in hosho to make that clear sharp rattle sound) from our villagers. Please e-mail if you are interested. Last year's price of \$5 per set of hosho is still good. Thank you for your support!

We successfully implemented the plan to hire a few people to weigh and label the sculpture too. The shipment should be sent shortly. This will help immensely once it arrives in Lacomb, and also generates more jobs there!

EXPORT – NEW IDEAS

We completed our transactions with the Tendai's for the stone sculpture, taking 3 visits. One of the women there has taken up beautiful wood carving. We arranged to connect with her on my last night in town to pick up more of her items on hand, mainly salad sets and lidded containers. She had waited from about 4 pm until after 9, when we finally arrived after car trouble, possibly due to timing settings. She ended up staying until 12:30 a.m. to be able to get a ride home when the party broke up, enjoying the last supper with us.

Also on that last evening, we had picked up a woman needing a ride somewhere along the way. She was riding in the back under the canopy with most everyone else (an average load of 6 including luggage) and they told her of the project. When we stopped for a road break, she came up to talk with me to tell me of her work to empower women. She stayed for the meal and a ride home afterwards also, as we discussed further on this rare opportunity.

Her work in town is with the City of Harare. Her specialty is working with women to empower them in arts and crafts. She knows how to make the sadza or wax batik. She goes to the villages to teach, with the goal that they continue to teach each other. She also raises oyster mushrooms and is interested in promoting this because meat is so expensive. How Spirit puts people in front of us is always amazing! These sound like potentials for great projects, but will take researching and making arrangements from the US. The great thing is getting the .14/min phone card that has opened the doors for me to look into things from here...what a tremendous advantage!

The last surprise along the export lines was the man sitting near me, extending himself to help me with my bags, on the flight to Atlanta. He is the marketing and design manager for a shoe and purse manufacturing company from South Africa. They export to the US among other places. The interesting piece is that they are working with villages in self-help projects (but not as a charitable organization). They provide a preschool for the children of the women who can show up to work pieces, instead of requiring a 5-day work week. They make "Tsonga" shoes (you can find them on the web) and are experimenting with purses too. They have a village base for the hand sewing of the shoes which give an indigenous appeal; there is also a city base for the finishing.

He said it would take around \$20,000 USD to start a small operation to regularly employ about 20 people, based in the village and town. The hardest part is getting the continued commitment of steady work to fill orders since there needs to be a quick turnaround on the orders they receive. He said something like this could be set up in Zimbabwe if the organizational pieces could be put in place. Making purses are less expensive to set up – not stocking all the sizes for one thing. By getting scraps pre-cut from shoe makers, the women could punch and hand-stitch them together, making a nice looking and ethnic product.

Another unique part of their developing program which that want to implement, is a plan so that people can make an inexpensive non-exported shoe for their own family and local school children. The idea is to generate some capital for the school as a by-product of the parents making shoes

for the families. The most touching thing is to see the kids on the way to school sharing one pair of shoes or socks, and then switching feet when they've gone a ways.

SCHOOLS

We paid the school fees for 190 children in total, for the primary and secondary schools. Again we looked for the highest achievers to award them with a book or pencils. There wasn't time to give these while there but Cosmas and assistants will be following up on this.

A tutor showed up on the scene this year whose rural home is there in our villages, but he had been spending time in Harare. He used to be a teacher and for many years has been a tutor for children who are having trouble passing their exams. We have informally contracted with him to tutor all of the children needing help on the weekends. He will be able to use the Community Center Library hut to help these children. His main concern was that our investment in these children's lives be utilized well. He didn't want to see us paying their fees and then them not able to pass their exams. I'm grateful this has come together, since it was part of the original vision and we were waiting for things to happen.

The preschool is jelling. The teachers have a system down and the kids are catching on! The children from our preschool, who graduated this last year, showed good signs as they entered 1st grade. Those who were sponsored as Nhimbe school children, were able to draw pictures and copy some letters of their name, which is so different from the other children coming in who have never seen a pencil or crayon! Most of their food has been delivered for this term so there will be easier consistency for their snack time. Wheat is still hard to get, so Cosmas needs to locate it for the bread, or contract with a nearby town for our loaves. Paul, our food contact, has no license to import from South Africa since none of the relief organizations want wheat. The bread truck has discontinued coming out to Cosmas' store, so the teachers usually buy in the stores near where they live. The children sit quietly on their mats, play gregariously in the field, and are enjoying their new learning materials! Again, gratitude for Karen Barton's spark to share the Sundborn Children's House prosperity with our villages!

We did buy fabric for the preschool children to have an over-the-shoulders blue apron. The parents and teachers will be making these. Considering it cost us a total of \$35 USD for this and gives the children a moral boost as well as some hygienic help, we felt it was an excellent investment.

UNIFORMS & TEXTILE COOPERATIVE

We haven't heard whether the fabric substitutes will be acceptable to the school parent committee at the four schools, but are hoping. During times like these, it seems obvious to us from the outside, that uniform fabric is a formality that needs flexibility, but people are still people and attachment to priorities only shifts when the time has come for that. Cosmas and helpers will be following up on this to finish purchasing the allocated meters.

One of the leaders of the Uniform Cooperative has ended up in the hospital, possibly with meningitis (a form resulting from malaria), so the other women are working to reorganize themselves. It has turned out that there are really 6 main women (out of 14) who meet the standards after much internal training. So it's better for them to be 6 strong, than too many and weak.

They managed to make African fabric placemats, potholders and some embroidered dresses during my stay, so we'll be looking forward to having these available for sale – nice gifts with a good message, as well as taking care of your personal needs!

BUILDING

Besides the visitor's space being built, we also took on painting the huts and the Community Center toilet due to donor's generosity for the Community Center. This will help the brick and mud to hold better under the plaster. Also, there is a young fellow, 14 years old, who is a budding artist. He has worked up a design for the lower couple of feet around the preschool hut including pictures of children, tomato plants, a dog, butterfly and flowers, books, alphabet, numbers and a soccer ball. We are buying brushes and paint for him to express his talent and make the mural a unique landmark.

The carpenter is hard at work on the shelves/cabinets/table job, but we found out that right after he started on our project, his family had a funeral to attend to, so it wasn't easy to get very far. (This is so incredibly commonplace that someone is gone due to a death in the family. More than once a week I heard of this and I hardly know anyone.) We also located the carpenter from last year who had disappeared. He wants another chance to finish the order, so if he delivers, we are covered for items for the visitor space for sure!

TOILETS

Last year, cement was very hard to come by and petrol costs and time to transport was feeling excessive. At the end of that trip, we managed to locate cement in a large quantity delivered, with inspiration to finish building projects, as well as undertake toilet building.

We found that we had been misinformed about villagers being able to contribute significantly to building toilets (providing labor and bricks), and additionally the drought and food shortage compounded that problem. The result was that the cement is being used for the building projects as usual, and only 2 toilets were nearly completed with a 3rd on the way. One is at the Community Center primarily for daily preschool use. The other was for where I stay in the Magaya village. The goal there was twofold – one to learn more about the logistics of building toilets (this one still wasn't completely finished as I left, a year after inception), and secondly to provide adequate facilities (during my last trip, rains had caused overflows more than once since the existing toilet is very old). The 3rd toilet at the sculptor's village is still being worked on.

We learned that the need for toilets is so very great throughout the villages for health reasons (diarrhea, eye infections, etc.), with very few toilets available in homes. It would take less than \$20,000 USD (varying depending on the economy) to build one toilet per family. So this is still on our agenda for the future. (Clean water is also, but at least one can boil water).

FUNDING

Some of you have asked how Nhimbe can continue without funding specifically for operating expenses – after all, we've been accomplishing a great deal for a while now. It would serve to clarify this point. In late 1999 when Nhimbe began, I received (a token) \$10 per month to run the Music Program (covering 3 locations in the mid-Willamette Valley, not including teaching) of Ancient Ways, a 501(c)3 organization. Sometime during 2001, I began receiving \$50 per month from Ancient Ways to run the Music Program and Nhimbe for Progress. As of 2002, after we raised over \$25,000 the previous year, the Board of Directors doubled that, so now its \$100 per month. My godfather, Clarence John Pare Jr. has supported me since Ancient Ways beginnings in 1993 to work in this capacity without normal compensation, as part of my late godmother's legacy; indeed, she is my "pay forward" person (when you can't pay someone back, you pay forward).

At that time in 2002, the Board of Directors also created a Burn-out Prevention fund giving me the power to use 8% to hire help, to assist in selling sculpture, managing files, and handling correspondence. So far, at different times, 3 different people have been hired. On a School Program donation, for instance, that amounts to \$2.40 that goes to Burnout Prevention out of the \$35, or on a \$20 sculpture sale, it is \$1.60. For normal tasks, it amounts to close to minimum wage, but only when supported by many hours of volunteers. My devotion is to the service aspect of what we are doing here, patience, and optimism, for all good comes to those who wait.

The sale of exports from the village continues to cover airfare, other transportation costs there during the year, as well as limited compensation for the 9 key Zimbabweans working on the project (not counting the preschool program personnel). Without your purchases, Nhimbe wouldn't be empowered to handle these expenses without using donations. Additionally, the empowerment of the people whose items are purchased is great from the standpoint of income, as well as self worth.

We continue to look for funding that might help create regular part-time jobs for those in the thick of it, although we expect there will always be volunteers, simply due to the nature of this community non-profit project – it starts and ends in our hearts. Do let me know if you have any serious ideas for funding sources (please don't ask me to author a grant – there is no time) – all donations are fully tax deductible!

CONCLUSION

Again, another trip has been an amazing adventure. And thanks to your contributions to the cause, we've been able to accomplish many, many things. Cosmas and I are so very grateful to your faith and confidence in us to carry out your desires, your goodwill in reaching out to these people that you don't know, and your hopefulness that helps feed our momentum. Please always feel free to direct questions and comments to me at zimbabwe@ancient-ways.org; I'm not always able to rapidly reply but will do my best. Additionally if you have any ideas for volunteering in any way, just get my attention and we can discuss them.

It's looking pretty certain that I will need an Executive Assistant by the next trip; it's really too much to do alone. Application information will be sent out soon, since a period of training would be starting up once the Ancient Ways Board of Directors has chosen someone. The last thing we need is more work to do there, so anyone coming to help needs to be deep into the logistics ahead of time. Third world travel experience is almost a necessity, as well as no pay, endurance of long hours, and being able to work independently with little glory. Sounds grueling from one perspective – but is the perfect thing for the right person. I've only found this work to be rewarding.

On my way home, I was reflecting on how I lose a couple of pounds each trip from the hustle-bustle, but nothing that really ends up mattering. What really is significant are the other things that I "lose". Over the last few years, somewhere over the Atlantic, all grief from loss of family and friends, any self-pity or blame for my life circumstances, and many assumptions, preconceived ideas and other ungrounded beliefs have been lifted from my heart, mind and soul, as part of a continuing paradigm shift. Thank you for your part in all that, by participating in Nhimbe for Progress in whatever way that you do!

Until next time...yours gratefully,

Jaiaen