

MALAWIAN Memories



*Elizabeth Smith
with Cliff Patterson, left
and workers at
riverside in Africa.*

by
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A REACTION ONE OFTEN HAS to a profound experience is to try to share it as extensively as possible, and this is what I hope to do in this article describing a recent visit to ADRA (Adventist Development & Relief Agency)—supported development projects in Malawi, and Southern Africa. In January, I had the privilege of accompanying Pastor John Howard, Executive Director of ADRA, Canada and his wife, Millie to this tiny country, considered the eighth poorest in the world. Cliff Patterson (an Albertan), the Director of ADRA's East Africa program, also accompanied us, being our trusty driver and go-between!

This visit comprised part of my work at the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), where I had responsibilities for the ADRA program in the context of the partnership relationship that we share in attempting to improve the lot of the poor in developing countries. This is a relationship that we have enjoyed since 1980, and from my observations

it has been both productive and effective.

Malawi is a landlocked country, neighbored by Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania. The country is 900 kilometres long and 150 kilometres wide, yet has a population of seven million people which is growing on average, by about three percent each year.

About 85 percent of the population are farmers, but in this overcrowded country the average farmer's land holding is small, usually about three acres. Wages average 40 cents per day, and people work long and hard to achieve this. The country is considered self-sufficient in food, but there are other areas left neglected.

For instance, there is only one doctor for every 52,960 people which is a serious situation where many suffer chronically from malaria, diarrhea, tuberculosis, malnutrition and other such debilitating conditions. Little wonder, therefore, that Malawi has the fourth highest child death rate in the world, according to the United Nations, where 275 children out of every 1,000 are dead before the age of five.

Although the schooling that the government provides is of a reasonable quality, it is only meeting about 50 percent of the needs of the population. Between 1973 and 1983, the percentage of children who moved on from primary to secondary school only amounted to seven per cent.

This, at least, is the picture as presented in statistics. Arriving in the country, one could be deceived by first impressions. The scenery is spectacular, with rolling hillsides clothed in green (it was rainy season) and Lake Malawi shimmering like a jewel along the eastern length of the country. One can understand how David Livingstone felt "at home" away from his native Scotland!

From the roadside, you can see the villages comprised of mud huts, outside which women industriously sweep up debris and sustain the tidiness of their homestead with fierce pride. The two major cities, Lilongwe and Blantyre have the outer appearance of bustling, modern cities. However, we spent the major part of our visit in the rural areas, visiting clinics and agricultural projects supported by ADRA, and the picture in these parts is a little different.

In the Northern region, where poverty is prevalent, people, especially children, were literally dressed in rags not fit for a scarecrow. Many had the listless looks you come to recognize in these countries as belonging to illness-sufferers, invariably malaria.

It is on account of these conditions that ADRA is so active in Malawi. After all, their slogan is "Where there is a need, ADRA is there". ADRA has an extensive network of clinics, schools and agriculture programs stretching the extent of the country. I was advised by a Canadian aid worker from another agency working in Malawi that the government only meets 50 per cent of the country's health and education needs, and the

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other 50 per cent is seen to be missions from different churches, among which the Adventist church ranks very highly.

The services that ADRA provides, particularly in the health field, are practical, affordable and because there is a training element combined, long lasting. For instance, in the health program, ably directed by Dr. Tony Rockwell, preventive health care is a major component, along with the treatment of illnesses. The "Under Five" program deals with the health

concerns of children. Malawian women are employed as extension workers, working in villages and teaching mothers about nutrition, hygiene and the use of simple cures for childhood complaints. For instance, the dehydrating effects of diarrhea can be countered by giving the child a simple mix of water, sugar and salt. The imaginative Dr. Rockwell has made this solution even more accessible by advising the use of that pervasive measuring unit—the Coke bottle! Classes are provided at the clinics or hospitals for those women who are within access of them.

As with ADRA school programs all over the world, the education provided is both academic and practical. We visited schools where vocational training is provided in agricultural skills, carpentry, construction and home economics. Both boys and girls take agriculture classes, and this training proves to be a practical background which helps assure some future security. We were advised by one of the school principals that his graduates had a good rate of success in finding work after graduation. I was curious to know whether admittance to schools is restricted to Adventists, or only those able to pay the fees. However, we met students of other faiths, including Moslems and I was assured that those students not able to pay the fees have the option of being able to contribute through offering their services in part-time work duties.

ADRA has also provided wells at many of the project sites, using a locally manufactured pump which has proved to be very effective and is sold at a reasonable cost. Villagers expressed their appreciation in having the precious commodity of water and one of the doctors recounted that a woman expressed surprise when she discovered that water is clear! She had known only brown water. The same doctor said that there has been a noted decrease in certain illnesses where the community has access to a good water source.

A key factor in the success of these projects is that they are not merely devised in North America and then imposed on the people. Through ADRA's special structure, the villagers themselves are part of the process of project selection and they, themselves, are trained in maintenance procedures

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Blessings From Heaven

God is calling His people, and people like Sherry and Ami Peer and their family are responding. It would be hard to reject the love God has shown them.

In the summer of last year Sherry, Ami, and their three children, Joshua, 4, Ashley, 2, and Mikhail, 1, were living in Red Deer. At the beginning of August Ami became very ill of an aneurysm within the skull and was hospitalized at the University of Alberta for treatment and surgery. This resulted in the whole family moving to Edmonton to be close to their father and husband.

It was in Edmonton where Sherry met Audie and Kathleen Benson, whom she had met once before. The Bensons had shown the true character of Christ by giving the Peers a great deal of support along with prayer and fasting for Ami. Sherry says, "They were so sincere and genuine." The Bensons asked the pastor from the Edmonton West Church and some others to pray and anoint Ami.

In mid-November Ami went for his third surgery and was given only a 5% chance of surviving the surgery. This surgery was different than the other two for God was leading. The previous surgeries failed because blood clots within the skull were blocking the view of the aneurysm. This time the one that was blocking the view of the aneurysm had disappeared, which allowed the operation to be successful. The doctors said it would take a year for Ami to rehabilitate; however, Ami is now back to work with only a husky voice to remind him of his illness. Praise the Lord!!!

The story does not end there. After the successful operation in November, God continued to work through the Bensons and others to show His love. Sherry thought that now that this miracle had occurred she and Ami would be getting religion forced upon them. This was not the case. The Bensons continued to be good friends and offered Sherry two books, "What I Like About..." and the "National Sunday Law," and a Bible. After reading the books, Sherry inquired about attending the church and went with the Bensons to the South Edmonton Church. There she saw an atmosphere of care for one another.

Sherry then filled in a form asking for further studies, which were given by Pastor Heimo Heghesan. By the grace of God Sherry was baptized on March 8 and her husband Ami on April 11. What joy it brings to behold the saving power of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.



Left to right: Back row: Eugene Eliuk, Pastor H.H. Heghesan. Front: Audie Benson, Kathleen Benson, Ami Peer, Sherry Peer.



On April 18 three people were baptized into the church at Edmonton South: Fran Hastings, her sister Donna Hastings, and Robbie Minoque. All three had been attending Evangelist Verne Snow's meetings. Three others were baptized on April 11 at the Edmonton Central Church: Tom Carne, Ami Peer and Peter Skapinyecz. May God bless each of them in their walk with Him. Back row: Peter Skapinyecz, Pastor H.H. Heghesan, Ami Peer. Front row: Tom Carne, Robbie Minoque, Donna Hastings, and Fran Hastings.

A Breath of Fresh Air



A varied group of 57 people attended a "Breathe Free-Five-Day Plan" sponsored by caring members of the South Edmonton Church. Enn Kong Liew was one of a team who successfully encouraged all but two of the group to quit the tobacco habit. Most of those attending requested classes in good nutrition, weight control and stress management. This was a first for the members of Edmonton South.

Vegreville Homecoming Announced

We, the members of the Vegreville Seventh-day Adventist church, are planning a 25th Anniversary and Homecoming on Sabbath, August 22, 1987.

The former ministers who served our church, former members and friends who worshipped with us, and the Alberta Conference and Canadian Union Conference personnel who served in this area during this period are invited to be present. We would be pleased to hear from them.

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related to different projects. Another element, which cannot be measured, but clearly contributes to the quality of these projects, is the personnel, both national and expatriate. In the face of challenging circumstances and a job that seems never-ending, ADRA staff and volunteers bring a commitment and enthusiasm that was a joy to experience.

I left Malawi wondering, as I'm sure others do, where the country is going. It is in the precarious position of being officially allied with the South African government, to the distress of its other neighbours, who consequently bring strong pressure to bear on the Malawian Government. The political strife within Mozambique, its neighbour to the South and East, is having direct detrimental effects on Malawi in that refugees are streaming over the borders and putting further pressures on the already limited resources of this country. And yet I felt encouragement that on the small, but certainly significant scale, accomplishments are being made to help people attain healthier lives with some prospects for a sustainable future. I would wish that more Adventist church members could witness the type of work being done with their support, and I would urge them to find out more about overseas projects from their nearest ADRA contact. But in the meantime, take it from me—in Malawi, where there is a need, ADRA is *effectively* there. ☼