

# NYLSTROOM SCRAPBOOK

February 2008

Dear friends

First of all, both Les and I wish you a very wonderful new year, filled with spiritual growth and blessings!

Over the holiday time, we were able to spend some quiet time AT HOME. We thought we would get so much done, but unfortunately we had to spend quite a bit of that time fighting to get several things fixed and problems sorted out. I am happy to tell you that 2 days ago, after 5 months of fighting, the telephone was fixed and we were able to talk to our children without shouting over the background sound of "Niagra Falls" and repeating everything over and over! After several visits by technicians over a period of 3 months, the copier now works most of the time – sigh! More unfortunately, our troubles seem to be just a microcosm of South Africa in general. There were several hours of power cuts per day over several days due to the national electricity company (owned by government) running out of power (they lacked foresight to build more power stations). These cuts were without warning and with no schedule (imagine if you were in an elevator - imagine rush hour traffic with no "robots"! ). They cost the economy billions, frightened investors, and caused the rand (SA currency) to lose about 10% of its value. The newly-elected head of the ANC, and thus president-to-be of S.Africa, Jacob Zuma, is facing several criminal charges in court. The sad thing is that the ANC knew all this before the election. As the new head of the ANC, Zuma is trying to get the ANC government to dissolve the Scorpions (the special anti-crime unit that uncovered his fraud) – and crime is so out-of-control already! BUT things are a lot better here than in Zimbabwe where they have electricity (and water) only a few hours per day, and sometimes not for days! Please pray fervently for those brethren, especially for rain.

Namibia was in some ways a pleasant break from South Africa. There is lots of petty crime in Namibia, but virtually no violent crime – and no power cuts! However, the work was intense. The schedule of studies was physically taxing – mornings, afternoons, and evenings – but oh, what a privilege to be with such thirsty souls! If there was no study scheduled during an afternoon, we rushed to buy groceries, repair Darlington's tent, etc. Darlington made the mistake of erecting his tent under a tree – and one day when we were out, the baboons thought it great fun to jump from the tree and land on it! The studies were mentally and emotionally taxing – but also exhilarating! My afternoon/evening ladies were used to university lecturers – and the classes were humming – and a real joy. I taught on the heart: how to overcome sin, especially anger and depression. I had some enjoyable studies with non-Christians, especially one with a girl who has managed to get all the way through high school and still be a virgin (this is rare). How thrilling it would be if she would obey the gospel, remain pure, and make some Christian a wonderful wife! I also had quite a few private studies where Christian women really opened their hearts to me and friendships were forged.

Picture: A picture of Leon's wife and the children at Donkerhoek singing the second verse of the Afrikaans version of "Read Your Bible, Pray Every Day." It goes, "Don't care about your Bible, forget to pray, and you'll "krrrrimp, krrrrimp, krrrrimp!"

My morning ladies had almost no education – and those lessons were the most challenging ever – and stressful. I know I say that every time: it's because the more experience I get, the more vividly I can see how I am lacking to get the message across. The only reason I could teach them at all is a sad one – my translator, Emily, is the 15-year-old daughter of Pius, and she already has a child. She should be back at school but the family cannot afford formula for her to stop breast feeding – and they also want her to look after the child. It breaks my heart that, because of the gospel, she had an opportunity to get out of the miry clay of her background – but she made the wrong choices. I just pray that, as she matures, the word of God will work deeper into her heart and help her to make something good of her life for His glory. Besides Emily, who could sort-of speak English and Afrikaans, there was her mother, who could speak only Nyimba, a Herero woman who was fornicating with Emily's uncle and already had three children by three different men, a Damara woman sleeping with a man a few shacks down and with at least one child out of wedlock, and a Chikwembu woman from a strong Pentecostal background who has amazingly lived with one man for 20 years (there is no common-law marriage in Namibia). She had her own Bible. There is no Bible in the Nyimba language, so we read everything in English, Chikwembu and Kwangali (a language similar to Nyimba). SO...we had seven languages going among just five women! I would say something in English and re-say it in Afrikaans if Emily looked blank. She translated to Nyimba and the other women chipped in with explanations in their own languages. From time to time I stuffed pieces of apple in whining toddlers' mouths. Every few minutes I grabbed the Kwangali Bible and tried to find words that Emily could not translate, like "marriage, leave, cleave, one flesh, divorce, belief, repentance..." (Fortunately all African languages have basically the same structure, so it is not as hard to find words as you might think - even if you've never seen the language before.) It took me two weeks just to teach what is God's plan for salvation and marriage. I also tried to teach them how to decide if a woman should break up with her boyfriend or marry him. Finally, the last day I taught how to approach a boyfriend if you want to marry, based on the principles found in 1 Samuel 25. If you could hear some of the simple questions I asked about the Scriptures we read and the answers the women gave, you would not know whether to laugh or cry. But early on in the first week I happened to read, "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels (motives) of the heart." That verse really convicted me to not look down on or give up on these poor, uneducated, immoral women, but to do my best to help them find God. When I told the ladies it was my last day, the Chikwembu woman literally burst into tears. This was a first! One thing I did to help us feel better about saying good-bye was take pictures of them (as a class/congregation) the first week, get them developed, and then give each (at the hill and at Donkerhoek) a picture with a personal note of encouragement on the back. From an idea I got once from a book, I tried to tie each note to Scripture, knowing the God's word is so much more powerful than anything I could say. It was quite a challenge to come up with so many different Scriptures, knowing they would all share their messages – and they did!

Picture: Four of the women at the class on the hill. The lady in the lavender is wiping away her tears.

At the campground where we stayed, there was a tame kudu – bottle-raised by the farm owner because her mother was killed. While we were there, the kudu gave birth. However, because she had no mother, she has no knowledge or desire to care for her offspring. What a lesson for us! But an even greater lesson is that, thanks be to God, each of us has the power to overcome any deficiencies of our backgrounds by living according to His instructions for our lives.

One night, Leon invited himself to spend the night at the campsite and said he wanted to treat us to a great Herero delicacy: goat head. Fortunately it is a lot better than mopane worms, but, although Leon heroically and half-heartedly offered to let us try the "best" parts (the ears, tongue and eyeballs), we unheroically and whole-heartedly declined to deprive him of his treat and just stuck to one bite of the ordinary thin layer of meat and fat covering the face. It was nicely spiced – not too bad, but I knew we would get sick if we ate much of that spice and fat. Darlington munched away quite happily – but spent the whole night, well.....! According to Leon, Herero families have been known to divide over who gets what of the goat head!

Picture: Leon "eyeballs" the goat head.

I wanted to tell you briefly about the funeral of Glory. Spiritually, she and her husband Edward were pillars in the congregation, and she will be sorely missed. She has twins, aged 22 and a vulnerable, hurting 12-year-old daughter. She was physically of the Venda royal family, and because of that, she was buried in the royal cemetery near the top of a mountain. Her funeral was attended by about 500 people as well as about 10 chiefs and one representative of the king. Her casket was of polished yellowwood – the most expensive and exquisite African wood – a two-toned golden and chocolate-colored wood. The service started at 6 a.m. and lasted 4 ½ hours. First there was a short service at their home. Then we followed the longest limousine I've ever seen for a few miles up to the head of the valley, the chief's home. Two 60-seater buses were provided for those with no cars. At the chief's house, the men stood on one side and the women sat on the grass on the other side. (Venda women are not allowed to physically be equal to or above a man.) When The chief said, "Ndaa," (hello), the men bowed and the women leaned

forward with the palms of their hands together. Some ululated. (Kind of like yodeling.) After his speech (which I gathered was an issuing of instructions), we began the mile or so hike up the mountain to an outdoor amphitheater with a stunning view. (The men sat in the highest rows of the amphitheater and the women below.)

Picture: The crowd climbing the mountain and the view from the amphitheater. (4-wheel drives and pick-ups were the only vehicles that could make it.) The lady in the front center is Jeaneth. Her husband Justice looks after our place when we are away and they stay on our property.

There was what I would call an ordinary funeral service, but then came the graveside service. This lasted nearly 2 hours – and there was no grass so we all had to STAND on the mountain side with our poor feet slanting downhill. (The men mostly stood on “higher ground.”) At funerals in Africa, even among white people, the family themselves bury the casket while hymns are sung. At African funerals, the coffin is usually cemented in to prevent theft. At this funeral, the dirt was trampled down and the tombstone, a huge flat marble slab, was placed immediately. Because it was a royal funeral, there were over a dozen speakers – chiefs, civic organizations, burial society, family members, etc. The most interesting speaker (especially when you can’t understand what is said) was the king’s representative. After every few words he uttered, another man said, “Yes, my king,” or “Yes, O great one,” or something to that effect! And of course there was more bowing and ululating. Towards the end, they sang my favorite Venda hymn with the same sentiments but a different tune to “Blest Be the Tie.” The last verse goes, “When we say goodbye, our hearts feel pain. Our hearts will be together. We will meet again.” And so at least, that part of the funeral had meaning for me. So why did we go, especially such a long distance with Les not feeling well and not being able to understand what was said? Because once we asked an African brother what white people could do that would make African brethren feel loved, and his answer was, “visit them when they are sick and when they are grieving.” And many of our brethren were grieving. Yet, thanks be to God, not grieving as those who have no hope. And thanks to you, dear ones – because with your prayers and support, and the support and prayers of others like you, there are some in Africa who have this hope.

With love, Linda (and Les) Maydell



**view from amphitheatre**



**tame kudu**



**Leon eyeing goat head**



**funeral service**



**Donkerhoek children**



**Ladies class on "the hill"**