

Harvey Holiday
H I G H L I G H T S
Autumnal Equinox

Dear Friends,

September 23, 1999

Good-bye BONGOLO, Hello IMPFONDO!

Of course these may just be funny looking words to you, but for us the mention of these two African towns brings into focus albums full of wonderful people, pleasant memories, and hope for the future. We have left Gabon, and are now safely back in Congo. As we leaf through the pages of the past two years since our hair-raising hasty departure (evacuation) from Brazzaville, we marvel greatly at God's magnificent plan. Truly He has been in control all along.

Here are some highlights from our past 9 months at the Bongolo Evangelical Hospital in Gabon:

--Developing an HIV/AIDS counseling program with the hospital chaplain.

--Gaining additional practical experience in surgery, tropical medicine, and running a Christian Hospital.

--Meeting & working with pediatrician Deborah Walker, surgery residents Paul Baltazar & Harison Rasamimanana, Dr. David Thompson, and the rest of the hospital staff and short-term workers.

--Living next door to the Harrison family from Madagascar.

--Adding to our family. MK dorm parents, Jim & Shari Timberlake, were leaving Gabon for a new assignment (in Ivory Coast), and offered for us to adopt their dog. Sheba is a beautiful 6 y/o German Short-Hair Pointer, and a practical answer to your prayers for our protection in Congo.

--Working with Jeff Ponke, a medical student from Toronto who spent 2 months with us. Jeff came to do research on Zinc & the prevention of malaria in school children, assist Joe with his hospital duties, and gain clinical experience. We really enjoyed his cheerful, helpful attitude. Jeff plans to be a missionary doctor, and may even join us in Congo once he completes his training. Please pray for him.

--Visiting with Joe's Mom & oldest nephew, Stephen. Stephen seemed to enjoy scrubbing in for surgery, and Mom especially enjoyed the few days we were able to spend at the beach together. When too soon it came time for them to leave, we missed their plane to Libreville, and ended up driving the whole way there so they wouldn't miss their connecting flight to Paris too. In spite of our unplanned travel on rough roads with lack of leg, elbow, shoulder, hip, or any other type of room (7 people plus luggage in a Nissan pickup for 12 hours), and us not having a change of clothes or a roll-on between us, we had a lot of fun together.

--Hundreds of patients and visitors placing their faith in Jesus Christ in response to thoughtful presentations of the Gospel in the context of loving care provided by the hospital staff. It was fun because Joe had the opportunity to help lead someone to Christ almost every week, and was able to pray for healing with many patients daily in the office & on rounds. Praise God!

What, no U-Haul?

One of our greatest problems in Bongolo was trying to figure out how to leave. Our plans called for a July move to Congo, but that ended up being in the middle of the annual field conference in Gabon, when no mission vehicles would be available for our use. We had more than enough luggage & supplies for Congo to fill several 4x4s, so we couldn't figure out what to do. It all worked out at the last minute, and much better than we had planned.

On August 4th, we flew from Libreville to Bangui, Central African Republic, where we met up with Dr. John Look (our mission's director of Health Services) & his adult son Matt. The Looks were on their way home from a critical inquiry for the World Health Organization into the status of the African Sleeping Sickness epidemic in Congo. From Bangui, Congo Field Director, Paul Ohlin, with 8 y/o son Hap, drove us down a private logging road & across the border into Congo. (Again we were 7 people in a pickup for 12 hours, but this time we also had our dog). After spending the night in a Aka (pygmy) camp, we came to the end of the road and loaded everything and everyone into Paul's boat for another long day's journey. We ran right into a severe windstorm, and then the outboard motor conked out. Waves came crashing right over the bow onto Becky and the children. Everyone got soaked. Claire & Isabelle were crying, while Olivia & Hap were laughing. Sheba tried to jump ship. Praise God we didn't drown, and nothing critical was ruined. We spent another night camping out in Dongou, and then made the final leg of our trip to Impfondo, arriving on Sunday, August 22.

Our move isn't over yet, as 27 boxes and trunks containing our household goods and supplies are still in Libreville, Douala, Cotonou, Abidjan, Bangui, or somewhere in-between? We appreciate your prayers.

IMPFONDO

Impfondo is the district capital of the Likouala Region, and boasts a population of 10,000. There is one paved road in town, that runs along the West bank of the Oubangui River. On the other side of the river, which is about a mile wide, lies another country, the Democratic Republic of Congo (the former Zaire, or Belgian Congo). The Christian Evangelical Church of Congo has invited us to come here to help establish a health clinic.

We are living in a 7-room brick house which belongs to the church. We have two solar panels which charge a 12V battery, which runs our 8-watt florescent lights and portable computer. Once a week, we try to send and receive e-mail using a satellite phone. We use a gasoline-powered pump to pump rain water from a cistern to a storage tower for running water in the kitchen and bathroom. We use a kerosene refrigerator. We hire someone to help us wash our clothes by hand, and also have a cook who goes to market for us and helps prepare the noon meal. We eat a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables, and bread. Meat, fish, and poultry is always fresh since it is usually still alive when it comes to our door. We are up at 6am and often in bed by 9pm. We usually take a quiet time for siesta or reading during the hottest part of the day from 2 to 3pm.

Since we live right on the border, we have frequent contact with refugees from the former Zaire and Rwanda. Tears flow easily and our hearts are often squeezed by compassion as we are confronted by needs which surpass our ability to understand or respond. We want you to pray that God will grant us wisdom and discernment, and show us practical things we can do to help with what we have, and that the church's clinic will be open soon so we can start meeting some of the health needs of these long-suffering people.

The girls are doing well. For most children, school is a place they go, but for our children, school is at home, so school is something they do. They also have a great time playing with baby ducklings & kittens; climbing guava trees; dancing & singing with Saku, an African Gray Parrot; playing with the neighbor kids; and getting Sheba to chase lizards and spiders, or pigs out of the garden.

"Ay-LEE-key-ah!"

There is an undeniable need for primary health care in this area. The town elders are very discouraged. The only health center that is open is the government hospital. Since the hospital has very few medicines and next to no supplies, everything the patient needs has to be bought by prescription, which is far too expensive for the average citizen to afford. Many are suffering--indeed many have died--without seeing a doctor, simply because they have no hope of ever having enough money to buy the simple treatments that could save their lives.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? HOPE IN GOD: for I shall yet praise him, [who is] the HEALTH of my countenance, and my God" (Psalm 43:5).

HOPE. That's what we've come to Impfondo for.

HEALTH. That's what Clinic "Elikia" (Lingala for "Hope") seeks to promote.

Please pray with us as we anxiously await approval from the Ministry of Health in the capital, Brazzaville, to open Health Clinic Elikia.

Thank You One & All

We so much appreciate your letters, messages, prayers, and gifts, and wish we could write to thank each one of you individually. However, our access to means of communication is seriously limited. So please accept this letter with our heartfelt personal thanks.

For Hope & Health,

Joseph & Rebecca Harvey

Olivia, Claire & Isabelle

Serving with Global Outreach Mission
in Impfondo, Republic of Congo

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