

Dear Everybody

Hello again from Zambia. I am actually writing this in Durban in South Africa where I am attending a big Travel Fair, trying to sell trips to Zambia. It is very interesting to see so many different countries represented. The rest of the family are safely back in Lusaka, and I am looking forward to getting back on Wednesday. All this travelling is NOT at all glamorous.

I have been nagged by so many of you about this newsletter so I guess I better get started on it. Part of the problem is that so much happens on a daily basis with the boys that it would be almost impossible to record everything. And then of course we have our day jobs as well which take up a lot of time.

So what has been happening since I wrote in January? Well, the boys have all made a lot of progress. We have taken in an additional 2 lads and set up a sponsorship programme to educate the younger children at boarding school. We have also decided to stop our little school at our house as it was simply proving too difficult to manage it.

First of all our old boys. Some of these lads have now been with us for 18 months, and they have really changed from the lost boys who came to us for help. In this category we have 7 guys at present: Joseph, Ephraim, Charles, Iwell, David, Richard and Smart.

Joseph and Ephraim are not street kids, but from poor families, and both work for us doing gardening and guarding at night, and have been very helpful in managing the other boys in the first days after they join us. The work they do has enabled them to finish school, and Ephraim is now training to be a mechanic. He is due to finish his course in June. Joseph is in his last year in school, and is doing very well at present. He wants to study engineering when he finishes, and sits his leaving exam in November.

Charles has now passed his driving test, and he and Iwell are training as welders. They are having a great time doing this, and are learning a useful skill. The course is provided by a local American missionary couple, who have taken a great interest in our boys? they are the family who provided the presents at Christmas. The first part of the course involved a very useful section on running your own business, and when the boys completed it they were awarded a certificate. Iwell, the boy who has been in prison, came to see me that same night after I came from work and shyly said he wanted to show me his certificate. He said ?Bwana, this is the first thing I?ve ever had?. He was so proud of himself, and so keen for me to approve, I found it really moving. Moments like that make the effort worthwhile.

David and Richard are both training at a local trade school learning carpentry. They are producing some really beautiful furniture, including dining chairs, and we are very hopeful that they will soon be able to set up a small workshop of their own, if we can provide them with tools and some start up capital. Smart is working hard at driving lessons and will sit his test in the next month. All these boys have missed

out on formal education and have difficulty with reading and writing. They are aged between 17 and 22. Giving them a skill restores a degree of self-esteem, and we have noticed that they are all now very eager to do adult literacy classes, so we have a teacher who comes a couple of days a week to help with that. So far they are also making good progress in reading English, and they have practices writing little stories or letters. One of Smart's recent efforts included the sentence 'My mother is very strict?' he later admitted he meant Christine!

Mulenga, Gift, Martin, Matthias and Romeo are our younger boys. Matthias is 13, Mulenga 14, Gift and Romeo 15, and Martin is 17. Martin and Gift are the 2 new boys we have taken on since my last letter. As they are recent additions, they are in the rehabilitation stage, and we are taking time to get to know them and observe their characters before we see what the next stage is for them. All of these boys are school age and this week Mulenga and Matthias will start at boarding school with Nicholas. They are both clever but have had no opportunity to be educated, so will start on Primary 6. They are so excited about going to a proper school, and have been busy over the past few months doing extra lessons with Mr. Simbeye to get them ready to go. Last week they proudly accompanied Christine to buy all the things they needed for boarding, and I will go and visit them next weekend to see how they are settling in. Lucky, the 11 year old orphan boy from the family of 5 we have been supporting, is already at this school with Nico, and enjoying it immensely. As well as the 4 boys, we will also send Memory, Lucky's 7 year old sister to the same school to be with her brother, who really cares for her, and whom she adores, so we will have 5 'MacDonalds' there! The cost of sending Matthias, Lucky, Mulenga and Memory has been very kindly met by sponsors from amongst you, and the youngsters cannot really believe that people they have never met would be kind enough to help them. On their behalf I say thanks you, and God bless you.

This just leaves Romeo. Poor Romeo is unlikely ever to achieve great things academically, but he is a lovely youngster, and we are hoping that when he turns 16 we will be able to get him onto a vocational programme like the bigger boys.

During the weekends we try to have an outing once a month and the rest of the time the boys are busy with housekeeping, including washing of clothes which then get draped over every available surface to dry. This has led to some friction with 'Madam' i.e. Christine, as they inevitably 'borrow' the clothes pegs off our washing line, and do not return them. Every now and then, Christine will go on a mission to recover the pegs and give them all a telling off which they take in good part and look duly chastened for at least 4 minutes.

We also have some very young children, from 5 years old to 10, who have been coming on a daily basis for free schooling from Mr. Simbeye. This has now reached a difficult stage, as the authorities have begun to question what facilities and standards we have. We have decided that we cannot run a school on the premises as we would need classrooms, books, chairs, desks and teachers. Also Mr. Simbeye feels he is unable to continue the work, so we have decided we must stop. This is quite sad as most of the youngsters were not attending school

due to shortage of funds at home. We have managed to secure places in local government day schools for most of them, and they will still be able to visit on a daily basis for at least one meal a day, so hopefully we can still keep in contact with them.

Our own little family are doing well. Christine was in Scotland in April, visiting her Mum. She took Sarah and Rachel with her, and they came back with Granny who spent a month with us, but has gone home today. They all had a good time, and Nicholas and I had a week at home doing 'boy' things which was nice. Sarah and Rachel are getting on well at school, and it's hard to believe that Sarah will start secondary school in August. Nicholas continues to do well at boarding and did very well in his end of term exams.

One other highlight to mention was Christine's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday on 1 March. She and I managed to have a very luxurious night away together, and when we came back she told all the boys that they had to cook supper for her for a change. So they did. We had a barbeque, which was nice, and some accompaniments which are better not mentioned. The highlight of the evening was when Joseph and Ephraim disappeared into their house and emerged carrying small square package between them, all wrapped in silver paper. They ceremoniously presented this to Christine as a present from all her boys. She opened it to find a pack of ?? 48 clothes pegs. As she said afterwards, it was worth as much as any of the other more expensive gifts she got.

May God be near you all.

All our love

Don, Christine, Sarah, Rachel and Nicholas