

scattered seeds.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

April 2020



BEVERLY
HEIGHTS
EDITION

WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE

RICK, JILL, TOM & LOUISE?



Between February 26, when Rick Wolling departed for Thailand, and March 19, when Louise and Tom O'Boyle and Jill Whitecap returned from Uganda, the foursome together traveled about 67,000 air miles, or roughly three times around the globe. Rick's destination was northern Thailand, to celebrate completion of the Prai Bible, while Louise, Tom and Jill visited water wells this church has drilled in western Uganda. They dodged thunderstorms and the coronavirus. Their reports can be found inside. Praise be to God for their safe return, for the work being done in His name and for your sponsorship of missions locally and globally.



THE PRAI BIBLE

THREE VIGNETTES

1

A grand celebration needs a big finish.

Twenty-five representatives of Prai villages were on stage facing family and friends.

For these shy people such a public demonstration was outside their comfort zone. But up they came, timid and nervous, holding a possession of inestimable value.

It was a copy of the verse they had chosen to read aloud from God's word in their own language. Before Dave and Fran began their ministry, Prai was only a spoken language. There was no alphabet, no grammar, no lexicon.

The populace of 40,000, in northern Thailand, was mostly illiterate then. Now, because of God's grace and the faithfulness of the Jordans, they could read their favorite passage of scripture.

Dave's eyes became misty as the first readers took the microphone and spoke God's word in the Prai language.

By the time the last person read, the mist overflowed into great tears of joy. Said Dave: "This was the most exciting day of my entire life."

2

Financially supporting foreign missions has been a challenge since the time of the Apostle Paul.

Missionaries depend upon individuals and church budgets for support and that will certainly continue. But are there other ways to fund the Lord's work? Entrepreneurship is one answer.

Kaleb Jordan, Dave and Fran's son, was a barista in his church's coffee bar with a talent for roasting beans.

Kaleb thought one way to finance ministry and economic development for the Prai people was through coffee growing in small family-farming operations.

With help from the Thai government, thousands of coffee tree seedlings were planted in Prai villages. These trees now produce coffee which Kaleb's company, Gem Forest Coffee, roasts and sells to coffee shops throughout Thailand.

The profits generate personal income and fund Prai development projects. At the same time, Kaleb is able to do evangelism among employees and discipleship training.

Beverly Heights helped Kaleb purchase his first of four coffee roasters.



Dave and Fran Jordan

3

It was a privilege to represent Beverly Heights and to speak to those who gathered on that great day, March 1. Here is some of what I said:

"This is a day to celebrate not only the completion of the Prai translation project but also the faithfulness that made it possible.

"Faithfulness involves giving and keeping one's word. In 1978, Dave and Fran Jordan gave their word that they would offer their lives for the salvation of the Prai people and the completion of the Prai Bible celebrates the Jordan's faithfulness.

"In 1983, Beverly Heights Church gave its word that we would support the work of the Jordans to the Prai people and the completion of the Prai Bible celebrates the faithfulness of the church and its people.

"Most importantly today, we celebrate the faithfulness of God. God sent Jesus, the Word of God in bodily form, to rescue us from sin and death.

"Today we celebrate God's faithfulness in making the Word of God in written form available so that by reading this Bible, you will hear the hope of the gospel in your own language."

Timeline: Prai Work in Northern Thailand

- 1978** David and Fran Jordan assigned to Prai work.
- 1979** Team moves to Prai area to begin language study.
- 1981** Evangelism begins in camp among Prai refugees.
- 1984** Bible lessons written; translation begins of Genesis.
- 1987** Shy is first Prai to believe the gospel. Very slow growth for 10 years; one new believer a year.
- 1992** One couple and five women believe; the couple and one woman turn back.
- 1996** Team invited to teach in Sandy Creek, an hour's drive north.
- 1996** Literacy primers and translation of Creation to Christ lessons published.
- 1997** Village headman asks team not to teach in Sandy Creek; team opts for Knife Creek village.
- 1998** First believers come to faith in Knife Creek.
- 1999** Outreach to Gem Forest village begins and Crystal Creek evangelism.
- 2001** Book of Acts and Philippians published.
- 2005** Church forms in Gem Forest village.
- 2006** Book of Romans, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy published.
- 2009** Luke, 1 Corinthians and Revelation are consultant checked.
- 2010** Some Boot Creek people ask for gospel instruction.
- 2012** Matthew and John are consultant checked and published.
- 2013** Jason and Kari (Jordan) Diller join the team, moving the literacy program ahead.
- 2015** Sandy Creek church grows rapidly.
- 2016** Last New Testament book checked; publication of NT begins.
- 2018** NT published; audio NT released.
- 2019** Audio OT recorded and released. NT and OT sent to printer.
- 2020** Prai Bible delivery delayed until May due to coronavirus (printed in China).
- 2020** Release of Prai Bible dedicated and celebrated.



LIVING WATER

OUR TRIP TO UGANDA

While the 25 people who traveled to Uganda conducted activities in education, sewing, health care and construction, my mission in going was to observe and report on the well-drilling team.

Words cannot convey how grateful I am to have been your representative for that task. I had the unique opportunity to personally meet the children and adults who've received clean water thanks to the generosity of this congregation and other donors. I only wish you could have been there to see firsthand the profound impact clean water has on the communities it touches.

I spent most of my time with two of the most dedicated Christians you'd ever encounter: our own Jill Whitecap, who manages the CEED parent organization from her North Hills office; and her counterpart in Uganda, Herbert Asimwe (which means, appropriately, "praise God" in his native language of Runyoro).

The Christian East African Equatorial Development Trust celebrated the 20th anniversary of its founding last fall, when Herbert visited Pittsburgh and was a guest on our podcast. CEED, as it is known, was founded by British Anglicans and Pittsburgh transplants Rev. John Guest and Eileen and Graham Hodgetts, to spread the gospel by championing income-generating projects in poverty-stricken areas.

Drilling water wells in Uganda, and starting a coffee farm there, has been CEED's focus from the start. Unlike Muslim mosques that drill wells but do not share water with other faiths, the CEED water is open to everyone. Villages must maintain the well and care for it. If not, it will be taken away.

About 400 wells have been drilled. And thanks to Pittsburgh master plumber Jim West, who joined the team last year on the ground in Uganda, about 200 wells have been repaired.

Each of those 600 functioning wells now deliver clean water to about 1,700 persons, on average. That means around 1 million Ugandans now have access to clean water. Previously, filthy streams that humans and livestock defecate in were their only water source.

Considering that 45 million people live in Uganda, this means CEED's activities deliver clean water to more than 2% of the entire population!

Statistics alone, however, do not convey the importance of this ministry. I now realize that without going, I could not comprehend the enormous need. Now, having gone, my prayer is that our experiences might touch and enlighten others.

There were many memorable moments over the 12 days we were there. We visited two (of the four) wells our church drilled. At the first, New Life Presbyterian Church, we were mobbed by about 300 school children. Pastor Francis Kusemererwa greeted us. What a blessing it was to personally convey our care for them, in the name of Christ.

Speaking through an interpreter (Herbert), I said we had drilled the well out of our love for them and Him. They now had clean water but living water comes only from Christ. They shouted out their assent in unison, giving thanks to Jesus and the people of Beverly Heights. It was an incredible moment, one I will never forget. Tears welled up in my eyes.

Then we went to the second Beverly Heights well in a more rural location, the only source of clean water for several thousand people living nearby. An elderly man who had come to draw water explained that he'd lost all of his children and now was the sole caretaker for 10 grandchildren.

Then, in perfect English, he said: "Thank you so much for the water."

We visited many other wells and at each stop, the gratitude of the people was overflowing. It was as effusive as the dancing and singing which greeted us.

Ants ferociously attacked us at one location and roads were nearly impassable traveling to another, but still Herbert and Jill pushed on. They were relentless.

At each stop, jubilant children and townsfolk mobbed us. Jesus was praised and songs were sung. Prayers were lifted and God's name was glorified!

At one village without clean water, the town's elders had just buried two people who'd died from typhoid, a water-borne disease. At another home, we met a father who had nine children, four of whom perished in infancy from malaria.

Poverty and sickness are pervasive in Uganda. Yet rather than seeing despair, we saw the opposite. We witnessed the joy that comes from knowing Christ. There was courage, friendship and love. Ugandans are not terrified. They love God without His blessings of water and health.

This is what I found most remarkable, among many incredible moments on this remarkable journey.

The people were not defeated. They had victory in Jesus Christ, which they proclaimed loudly. They are people of faith who seem to transcend their difficulties. They are content.

At this time of trial in our own land, it was a useful lesson for us all.

You may access the daily blog Tom kept during the trip at: blog.beverlyheights.org.





THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF JOY THAT IS UGANDA

Uganda presents a kaleidoscope for my Western eyes.

Arriving at night, I notice most how dark it is. That and the brilliant canopy above of twinkling stars.

In the morning, eating breakfast on the veranda, I see lush greenery and hibiscus flowers unfurling their blossoms to the bright sun. Just below us, Lake Victoria glistens like a sheet of blue glass.

As we travel on newly paved roads to Hoima, home base for the trip, the modern buildings of the capital, Kampala, give way to rolling hills, trees, thatched-roofed huts, perfectly tilled gardens, and busy markets.

We see stalls of fresh pineapples, huge bunches of bananas, and fly-covered, hanging slabs of raw meat. An occasional monkey or baboon family waits to pilfer unattended packages.

Bicyclists, bodabodas (motorcycle taxis) and people add a frenzy of activity to the kaleidoscope passing before my eyes.

The driver, Haruna, carefully avoids the many axle-scraping speed bumps, referred to as “sleeping policemen.” The main roads to Hoima are paved, but most travel is on dirt roads and red-clay dust covers everything. Except when it rains, which it does regularly.

The rain makes getting around more challenging. The wet clay becomes as slick as ice.

Travel is a seat-grasping, teeth-rattling, eye-shutting, urgent-praying journey. Oncoming traffic consists of oil lorries, construction semis, the ever-present bodabodas, and cars of every vintage. Each vehicle tries to find the best rut to steer in,

regardless of who or what is in their way.

Add plodding pedestrians weighed down by produce or firewood or heavy water cans; mamas with the additional burden of tiny babies swaddled on their backs; and bicyclists, small children, cattle, goats and the occasional camel, all coming within inches of our vehicle. The destination is reached only by God's grace.

I see men, some working but most idle and unemployed. Some are loving dads but others wield power selfishly, treating wives and children as chattel, less important than the cattle they tend.

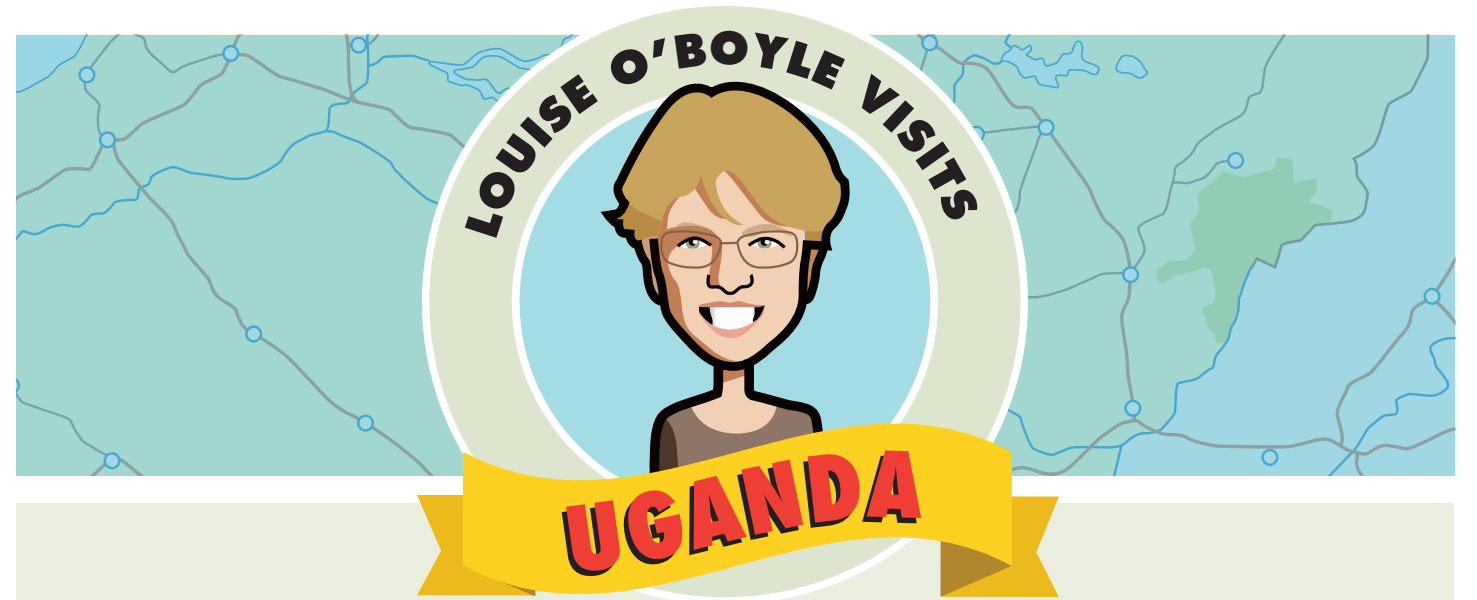
I see women wearing colorful dresses, mismatched to my Western eyes, barefoot or shod with inadequate sandals. They walk gracefully, balancing heavy cargo upon their heads.

I see children everywhere. Those in uniforms on their way to school, others playing with ingenious, homemade toys. The little girls, barely out of babyhood, often carrying younger, swaddled siblings on their backs just like their mamas.

I see need — basic necessities sadly absent, material possessions scarce. If they have clean water in their village, they can figure out the rest. Who am I to say they need anything more?

I see joy. The Ugandans live in hope-crushing poverty, their lives stripped of the conveniences which shield me from harsh reality. They own little or nothing, yet their joy radiates, expressed in song, exuberant dance, constant smiles. I rarely possess that kind of joy.

I start the journey thinking I have much to give and end it having received far more. Joy.



WHY I WENT TO UGANDA

Tom was asked to go to Uganda for the purpose of delivering greetings from our congregation to the recipients of our wells and then to observe, learn and communicate back to the folks at Beverly Heights what Jesus is doing there.

Me? Well, I wasn't sure why I was going. Tom and Jill wanted me to go. I have been drinking the wonderful Ugandan Gold coffee for years. I loved the mission. But, should I go? Wouldn't it be better to send the money to build a well? (The money we spent would just about drill one well.)

No, said Jill. You can't understand Uganda unless you go. No, said Herbert Asiimwe, who said that to go would demonstrate to the people of Uganda that Christ has not forgotten them — that we love them. No, said Tom. Let's do this together — and by the way, there is a safari scheduled in the middle of the trip!

After asking Karen Sourbeer, the preschool director, for the time off — she practically had to tie herself in a knot to cover my absence — I was going!

I spent most of my time there trying to process the whole experience. To process my reactions. To process what I saw before me in Uganda — poverty, poor housing, dirty water and also joy, happiness and a generosity of spirit.

To process my personality and better understand how God has made me. To accept the gifts God has given me to serve Him and to use them gratefully for His kingdom. To see how I fit into God's work in the world.

Without being there, I would not be able to truly understand the living conditions. The poverty of their circumstance. The

abundance of their trust in the Lord. To know that amazingly, the people are full of joy and love even when they have little. Not even clean water to drink! How could I understand?

It is so contrary to my First World thinking. We have everything here — we are the happy ones! No, that's wrong. THEY have little and yet THEY have everything — the joy of the Lord! We are united by our common faith in Jesus. Equal in His eyes.

It is having things and having it easy that make us feel in control. We forget it is all really up to God. It doesn't seem to me that Ugandans are in control of their lives. Their children die. Many of them have no jobs. Life is lived day by day (not unlike what we are experiencing now here). But Ugandans live their faith.

Of course, not everyone in Uganda is a Christian. But the people I met, prayed with and celebrated with were in love with Christ. I found myself learning from them. Taking from them. Seeking Him through them!

God's ways seemed to weave in and out. His blessings were difficult to count and sometimes hard to perceive. But I know that God blessed me mightily on this trip. As Jill said, I could not have this wisdom without going.

And, even more — I have brought these words back to you so that maybe you can understand a bit better, too. You were all along with us — praying for us, and holding us up before God. Through the blog Tom kept, you traveled with us. We could feel your presence and love. Thank you. May God be glorified! (And the safari was amazing!)



UGANDAN PHOTOS

BY PETER MARTIN





A long obedience in the same direction

Harold was giving a fascinating description of the work he was doing along Thailand's border with Laos but my mind kept going to a book I read years ago.

Eugene Petersen defines the process of growth in faith as "a long obedience in the same direction." The progress of the believer's transformation into Christlikeness is often slow and characterized by victories and defeats. The cruciform life doesn't happen overnight; progress on the mission field doesn't either.

As Harold spoke, I wondered about how long it takes to accomplish the building of God's kingdom. I recalled an earlier conversation with Mike, a church planter among the Patai people, who hasn't had a single convert, much less a church, to show for his efforts after 15 years.

How long does it take to see the fruit of one's labor in the mission field? Jesus said that kingdom work involves tilling, sowing and waiting; it takes time. For us gardeners weeks or perhaps months go by but then we have a harvest. It's the wonder of fruit, and the joy of the harvest, that gets us back into the garden next spring.

But what about Mike? What gets him back into the field? When we first met and were trading bits of our personal ministry stories, I asked him, "How's it going?" As I saw him cock his head to the side and cast his eyes downward in what I can only describe as a look of disappointed resignation, I immediately regretted asking him the question.



Celebrating 43 years of faithfulness: Dancers at the Prai Bible translation event which Rick attended March 1 in northern Thailand. The Jordans were in Thailand before our church began sponsoring them in 1979 (Pastor Nate was 3 then, the same age Charlie Webster is now).

"Not real well" was his answer. "No response yet."

How long does it take to make one convert?
How long does it take to establish a church?

I wondered what such fruitlessness does to the people who work year after year without a harvest. And what of the supporters back home who think about return on investment. How long do we pour our resources into an apparently unfruitful effort when there is such great opportunity elsewhere?

Mike and Harold and 40 other ex-pat missionaries gathered to celebrate the completion of the Prai Bible translation led by Dave and Fran Jordan and supported by Beverly Heights since 1979. Every one of those missionaries was filled with joy at what God has done through these two faithful servants.

I heard some of them say to one another: "You're next. We'll be celebrating with you

soon!" Their enthusiasm for God's work knows no bounds.

But when and how long will it take? How long before the language is reduced to an alphabet and a lexicon and a grammar book? How long will it take to translate the most important portions of the scriptures and then teach an illiterate people to read the Bible in their own language?

How long before someone says "Yes" to Jesus Christ? Dave and Fran's answer is 43 years and then some.

One of my traveling companions intruded into my conversation with Harold, wanting to talk about philosophical theology. How does God Who is both inside and outside of time keep track of the time it takes to build His kingdom?

I showed my impatience and waved him off.

Though missionaries like Harold, Mike and the Jordans are perfectly capable of conversing on such lofty levels, what is most appropriate at a celebration of a work well done but not yet completed is to hear from us words of encouragement. And thanks. And admiration. And praise.

And a reminder that God is honored by their faithfulness. That God has not forgotten them. That He is the builder of an eternal kingdom that never fails.

That's the least we can contribute to such noble work.

Rick Wolling is pastor emeritus of Beverly Heights Church.