

THE GAMBIA

BLESSED ARE YOU WHO HELPS SOMEONE ELSE, FOR YOU ARE ALSO HELPING YOURSELF

May 26, 2005 5:25pm

After much preparation we are finally on the plane headed to The Gambia, Africa. God has smiled on us because the sun is out today as we head to Brussels. All team members are on board as well as our supplies. As the plane begins to take off I pray for our team members, safe travels, families and friends whom we have left behind and for our Brothers and Sisters of The Gambia as they wait our arrival. God is the pilot of this plane and he will guide us over the many miles that we have to travel.

6:05 pm The plane is up and finally we are on our way. Some with a longing to return to Africa to see old friends and other, wondering where this journey will take them.

May 27, 2005

7:30 am Arrival in Brussels. The sun continues to shine and God is truly lighting our way. We had prayer in the Chapel at the Brussels airport and learned a new song to sing at church services on Sundays. One lyric is "WE are small but WE are strong". We had a 5 hour delay at the airport but it gave us a chance to fellowship, grab some lunch, or sleep.

BLESSED IS HE WHO MAKES THE WORLD A LITTLE BETTER PLACE TO BE, AFTER ALL THAT'S WHAT WE'RE HERE FOR.

6:30 pm. We arrived at the Banjul airport and we're greeted by Pastor Han. We were able to pass thru customs without any problems. God has truly been good to us during this journey as the sun continues to shine. This is my first glimpse of Africa, a place that I never thought that I would visit. The airport at Banjul was quite different than the airports in the USA. Ceiling fans are their air conditioning and tables serve as counters as we experienced the first day of hot humid weather standing in line to get our luggage. After loading our luggage into the dump truck and boarding the bus to take us to the West Africa Mission Center in Brikama, I felt a sudden rush of emotions over take me. While sitting on the bus waiting to take off, a woman stood beside my window with two small children begging for money to feed her children. Seeing the little children standing beside the bus brought tears to my eyes. WE are so blessed with so many things and these children have to learn to survive day to day. Seeing men, women, and children sitting or walking along the roads among animals walking freely among them in such a dry desert left me in such bewilderment. God please give me the strength to keep my heart and mind open and to do the work that you have sent me to do.

Upon arriving at the mission center and departing the bus at Brikama we were greeted by many children. I know now why God sent us to do his work so far away as the children

held our hands or just reached out to touch us and called us friend. After unloading our luggage and supplies from the dump truck we headed off to dinner at Pastor Han's home.

We were greeted with a warm reception by Pastor Han and his family. We were introduced to everyone and in return we introduced ourselves. We fellowshiped and had dinner, such great hospitality. We had a short prayer service with the children at the camp then retired early due to our long day of travels.

Tonight us ladies fellowshiped and prayed in our quarters with personal testimonies before retiring to bed.

My thought was of meeting Dandang for I believe God has sent me here especially for him.

LET TODAY BE SO WONDROUS THAT IT CHANGES EVERYTHING FROM NOW ON

May 28, 2005, Saturday

6am Morning Prayer service. What a blessing to see so many Brothers and Sisters up for early morning worship service. After breakfast we practiced our song again that we were to sing tomorrow at Sunday morning worship service.

Finally, my first meeting with Dandang. His smile and mannerism are very contagious. Such a handsome boy, I pray that we can make a difference in his life the time we are here. After Dr. Kim and I assessed his wounds they did not appear as bad as we thought. With training and encouragement I felt that the areas would heal.

We unpacked and sorted out our supplies that were shipped through the container and started to prepare for the village of Kwinella. I continue to pray: Lord, please keep our minds open and give us strength to do your work.

After, we had orientation by Pastor Han on West African Culture and History.

Today we had our first meal with our brothers and sisters at Brikama. We sat on a bench in a circle and ate rice out of the same bowl. The brothers and sisters ate with their hands while the team from the USA ate with spoons. The thoughts I had about the food had left my mind. Actually, the food was delicious. I must confess that I had packed a suitcase of food to bring.

Afterward, we boarded the bus and visited downtown Banjul. I was still amazed that it appeared that all the people sat or walked along side of the road as if they had no where to go or nothing to do. It would take me several days into this journey to understand the people and culture of this country. A highlight of the downtown tour was seeing the only traffic light in Gambia and a goats walk thru the gas station.

After dinner and a meeting we retired. We (ladies) shared our thoughts of the journey, followed by prayer. After we headed to bed; sleeping inside the mosquito nets made the rooms appear hotter so some of us stayed up to talk.

May 29, 2005, Sunday. The Blessed Day.

6am. We started the day with morning prayer and I gave my first Testimony. I shared the blessing that God has given me through my struggles to get to the where I am today. Because of my testimony I can openly witness about the love of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”*

8am Breakfast at Pastor Han’s house.

Afterwards we practiced our song to sing for our brother and sisters of Gambia.

PRAY TO GIVE THANKS AS WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN MUCH

The children from outside the village of Brikama are allowed to come and go during the day but not stay there. The need to be touched and be around us is heart breaking at times. The children surround us and beg for our empty water bottles so they can have something to carry their water in. Something we take for granted and throw away is a treasure to another.

9 am. At church service it was such a blessing to witness the love of the Lord that the children of the village had. They worshipped and praised His name when they had so little compared to us. We were greeted and introduced warmly by Pastor Han to our brothers and sisters of Brikama. Then we sang, *“Lord We Have Come”* as an offering.

After lunch we began to pack and head to our first village, Kwinella.

After a 4 hour long hot bumpy drive in which some slept, some sang and other feared for their lives on a mostly unpaved road we arrived in Kwinella. There we witnessed the poverty of this county as we drove along. We had to stop once along side of the road to reinforce the supplies that we were carried in the dump truck. During the stop some children ran out to greet us and stared at us in wonderment. To witness the poverty of these children by their worn torn clothes reminded me now how blessed I have been. Along the road a young boy came driving by in a cart driven by two oxen as this was his form of transportation.

Kwinella, The third mission center is up. Praise God as his Kingdom is moving forward in building mission centers for his children to worship.

We arrived at The Tendaba Hotel which was along the Gambia River. This would be our home for the next two nights. After getting our room assignments we headed to our rooms to rest and unpack.

8pm Dinner and a group meeting for our first medical mission tomorrow. Afterwards we all sat around and talked.

May 30, 2005, Monday. Memorial Day.

It was so beautiful to sit and pray as the sun came up over the Gambia River. After our morning meeting, prayer and breakfast we headed to Kwinella. Along the way children and adults waved to use as we passed by. Our non air conditioned bus held up to 20 plus people consisting of our team and anyone that was walking on their way to the Kwinella.

Each station unpacked and eagerly awaited their first patient. The Internal medicine, Pediatric, and dressing changes were together under one gazebo. After prayer by Dr. Lee our first patient arrived. Most patients (except for two) were not critically sick but we gave each one of them attention for they had walked many miles and waited to see us. Many complained about foot pain, back pain, chest pain, rashes, stomach aches, dry skin, and worms. The teenagers translated for us and I was amazed to see their eagerness to learn. As I looked into each person's eyes I began to feel their struggle of survival and their patience waiting for a change to come over their land.

IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL...THE LOVE IN ONE'S HEART.

Each station went well except for some minor adjustments, like extra help or more translators. It was an honor to see a 97 year old walk such a long distance and witness his good health. So many children and their cleverness of getting extra vitamins or a water bottle.

12: 30 Lunch with our Gambian brothers and sisters.

1:30pm We started seeing patients again. It seemed our sickest patient was the last as he had traveled many miles and sat in the hot sun and waited to be seen. We felt helpless because we were limited as to what we could do for him, just antibiotics and Tylenol. So many children everywhere some with no shoe and worn clothing. Today I witness a woman coming to the village door and said she was hungry, and I openly sat and cried because I felt so helpless just hearing this.

On our way back to the Tendaba Hotel we gave some school children a ride back to the camp. After talking to one of them, I found out that they walk an hour each way to school starting a 6am. As I observed their clothes which were torn and worn, I thought of home. We have free education and a bus to pick our children up and some of them will not even go. After a short meeting and dinner we sat and reflected on our day. The day was long and hot but we did God's work.

May 31, 2005. Tuesday.

As I sat and prayed for the people of Gambia, (especially for the children) that this country so rich in heritage could live in peace and prosper. We had prayer in front in the Gambia River before breakfast this morning before heading back to Kwinella. As our bus approached we could already see people in line waiting to be seen. This morning we marched into the camp site as a team and shook hands with the brothers and sisters of Kwinella. After singing it was explained how we would proceed today and then everyone was off to their different stations. Each patient appeared to have the same illness as yesterday. We were able to give out vitamins to the adults and children to last for 30 days Tylenol or Advil was given out for headaches and body aches. With the medications that we bought we were able to treat skin infections, ear aches, fungal skin infections, worms, acute respiratory illness, acne, and give wound care. We were unable to treat long term illness so most time we asked if they would like to go to prayer station so we could pray for them.

Our pharmacy station seemed to be busiest station of all. Our day was long and hot, but by the grace of God we were able to see everyone. The cultures here are so different, the women openly sit and breast feed and the men here have the seniority over the women. I feel that everyone that we saw today just needed to feel that we had something to give so we tried to touch or give a smile and let them know that we were praying for them.

We were entertained in the evening with dancing at the school by the women to show their appreciation to us. Almost all of our team members were pulled from their seats to dance. Followed was a skit done on prevention of HIV. Amazing to see that the men and women do not dance together or act in plays together. I fondly remember Abe who was the center of our dance team.

One disappointment was when I came back to the bus and found that my sneakers had been taken. A little disappointment but I prayed that whoever took them needed them more than I did.

Our day ended with dinner and fellowship. My thought today was that God had put an awesome team together.

IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL...THE LOVE IN ONE'S HEART.

June 1, 2005, Wednesday.

Today was a day of rest due to the fact that we would be working the next five days in unbearable hot conditions. We were treated to a boat ride down the Gambia River. Along the way we saw many different kinds of birds and even a large lizard high in a tree. Dr. Lee was searching for his famous green monkeys. Even after multiple attempts by the men with sticks and rocks they were unable to get it to move. Today we had a chance to wash out our clothes by hand and hang them up to dry.

When we arrived back from our boat trip we were treated to soda. I had forgotten how good a soda tasted!

On our return we packed to leave and had lunch. Afterwards some of us were so exhausted we all took naps. This will be our last night at the Tendaba Hotel which wasn't so bad except for the lights and water didn't work at times.

After dinner we all sat around in groups to reflect on our day. We said goodbye to Pastor Park and his wife, with their prayers that we would return next year.

June 2, 2005, Thursday.

The morning began at 6am with prayer, a meeting and then breakfast. After loading up we headed to Pakalinding which was about an hour away. The road continued to be about $\frac{3}{4}$ unpaved with huge pot holes. Sometimes I felt that we were on an amusement ride and we were being tossed back and forth.

As we approached Pakalinding, people had already gathered, lined up, and were waiting for our arrival. After prayer and singing we set up the clinic in 30-45 minutes. Today was not as busy as yesterday so we were able to sit and talk with our patients and translators a little more about life in Africa and their customs.

Tonight, our hotel reservations were cancelled so we had to sleep at a Catholic Mission site. As we opened the door to the girls dorm the heat inside was unbearable. We had to transport water from Pakalinding in order to take a shower. Also in our dorm we slept on bunk beds with no sheets in which we did not need due to the heat. While we were there we encountered some young boys who were standing at the fence watching us. I walked over to talk with them and gave them all water bottles which was heart breaking for me because that was all I had to give them.

After resting we boarded the bus to take us back to Pakalinding mission center for dinner, which was served outside. Tonight our main course was goat meat and yes, another soda.

As darkness approached we boarded the bus and head back to the Catholic Mission site. It was so hot that some of us stayed up until 1pm. The stars appeared so clear in the sky that it felt that you could reach out and touch one. Some members of our team slept outside on their mattress due to the heat inside.

June 3, 2005, Friday.

After a long hot night we arrived back at Pakalinding for our second day of medical mission. The crowd as we arrived was twice as long as yesterday. After breakfast and a brief meeting, we set up our stations and began to work. Our translators at Pakalinding were teenagers from the Red Cross who were thirsty for knowledge. We stopped clinic at 2pm so we could not see everyone.

After lunch we finished packing and headed back to Brikama which was a 5 hour ride. Along the way we stopped and visited a family's house along the roadside. Some of their houses were just one room with a straw hut. This man had three wives with lots of children. Donkeys, a cow with ribs showing, and chickens were roaming freely among the camp site. The poverty that we witnessed here was heart breaking. Children with torn clothing, no shoes, stood staring at us. A young girl was drawing water up from a well surrounded by bees. The people of Africa know how to survive in the conditions that surround them.

After stopping and touring a medical clinic we headed back to Brikama. As I toured the medical clinic my thoughts were WE AS AMERICANS HAVE NOTHING TO COMPLAIN ABOUT.

As we approached the gates of Brikama, the children started shouting and clapping overjoyed that we had returned. As we got off the bus the children gathered around us holding our hands and calling us friend. After dinner and a meeting we each unpacked and all agreed we were glad to be back. Today made me especially happy because I was told Dandang asked when we would be returning.

June 4, 2005, Saturday.

Our morning started at 8 am with breakfast a Pastor's Hans's house. The entire team looked well rested and glad to be back. We loaded up the vehicles and headed to Bonto, our third mission site. As we reached Bonto my first thought was so many children without parents as they followed our bus. After we unload the truck that carried our supplies, we had prayer and sang two songs to our awaiting patients. This location is prominently Muslim so the response was not as great.

Today we treated a man that was 110 years old with a strong heartbeat. To reach that age is quite unusual for this country. There were so many children to treat which made it hard because their parents were not available. Our treatment consists primarily of the same things we had treated at the other two mission sites. We worked until 2pm today and lunch was brought in from Brikama which was prepared by our brothers and sisters. Today's lunch consist of rice with beef.

After lunch we worked until 2pm and headed back to Brikama.

Tonight we visited and had dinner at a Korean Mission Center run by June Hong. We had American food for dinner, Spaghetti and meat balls. After some of us watched TV (something that we hadn't seen since we had been in Africa), we were able to catch up on the news from home especially the war in Iraq. After dinner we boarded the bus and headed back to Brikama. After a short meeting we headed to bed.

June 5, 2005, Sunday. The Lord's Day.

We started at 6am with early morning worship service in which Abe gave his testimony. The children of Brikama sang songs of praise, which energized everyone that morning. Following we had breakfast at Pastor's Hans house

The group was divided into two groups half staying in Brikama and the other half worshiped at another mission center. The message today was brought by Young K. Kim who spoke of his early prejudices against black people due to being beat up by them at a young age. With prayer and asking God to forgive him he was able to overcome those feelings and he also spoke about getting into heaven. Two of the young men that helped us translate came to church that morning to hear Dr. Kim's sermon. They were two young men of Muslim faith but today was their first day coming to the church at Brikama. Praise God!

Three of our team members began to feel fatigued, nauseated and had some diarrhea so Dr. Kim and I had to go to the hotel and start IV's on them. After lunch on the beach we headed back to Brikama. To my surprise along the beach I noticed a cow walking by which I thought was very strange, but after all this is Africa.

Sunday was a peaceful day. Time to rest and regroup.

Today Dandang was presented with an electric wheel chair during a short service. Dr. Lee spoke about the accident in which Dandang was paralyzed and how this has affected everyone. He spoke of how Dandang should continue his studies and remain strong in his faith with God. He was shown how to use the wheelchair and how to maneuver it around the mission center.

June 6, 2005, Monday.

The morning started with 6am worship service then breakfast.

The crowd has started to form at 8am After singing two songs and prayer we began our day. After changing Dandang dressing he was informed by me and given no options that he would be my translator today. The day went as routine except for one case that stood out was when a young mother's one month old child would not nurse. Upon examining the child he appeared to be lethargic and very small. She had tried to give him milk by using a spoon since baby bottles and formula are not used in Africa. The child was sent directly to a clinic and we were informed later that it was hydrated by IV's and was doing better. The day was continuously busy and we stopped at 5pm. We saw over 1000 patients with rumors that we would see twice as many tomorrow. Today seemed like the longest day with me having bouts of fatigue due to the many patients that we saw and the heat.

After lunch we had the first rainfall of the year. It seemed as if the clouds opened up suddenly and gave this dry land a drink. After a 15-20 minute shower it appeared to be more humid and hotter than before.

After the clinic we all rested and had dinner at Pastor's Han house in which Dr. Lee gave us praise for a job well done. Dandang's wounds appeared to be healing with us changing them twice a day. I have been teaching this brother how to change the dressings and stressed that they must be changed twice a day in order for them to continue to heal.

June 7, 2005, Tuesday.

At 6am Eugene gave his testimony and after worship we headed to breakfast. The crowd had started to form at 6am and had grown to twice the size by 8am. Today was the busiest day finally ending a 5:30pm. We treated so many patients with the same illness today with each looking for an instant cure. Maybe it was the fatigue but it seemed that sometimes that I treated the same patients twice. It seemed that the staff was starting to wear down and were ready to go home. Dandang's wounds continue to heal and his spirits were up. I continued to pray daily for him and that he would find his way back to God.

June 8 2005, Wednesday.

At the 6am early morning worship, Chris gave her testimony. After breakfast we headed to the Island of Juffure and James Island. During the boat ride down the Gambia River we were able to relax, rest, and enjoy the sunshine. Juffure is the home of Kunta Kinte, who was shipped to American and sold as a slave.

Juffure and James Island is rich with history because of the association of slavery. People still live on this island which only can be reached by boat. This island was especially interesting for me because this is where it all began with my ancestors. We visited a museum which still had the original slave shackles and a book with original names of slaves that were sold. The quietness and emotions that were showed by the group was overwhelming and some had tears in their eyes to think this is where it all began, SLAVERY.

During our tour we met the 7th generation of Kunta Kinte and we were told of the history of this family. After taking pictures with her we walked back to the boat and were over taken by very insistent people selling items made by the people living on the island. By selling these items they are able to support themselves and their families because the island relies on tourist.

After boarding the boat we headed to James Island. This island was used to hold slaves until they were sold and taken to America. The ruin of this island is breathtaking, with so much history here. The island is slowly being washed away which brings sadness because so much history of Africa will be lost.

We had lunch aboard the boat and headed back to port.

On our way back to Brikama we stopped at an open market. So many people were packed into this open market selling various items. The hardest part was not knowing how to bargain and not knowing the language. It seems as if everywhere you turned people were pulling your arm to come to look at their merchandize.

On returning to Brikama we rested before dinner. Tonight would be our last night at the mission center. It was very emotional because we were at the end of our journey in Africa.

During our last ceremony with the brothers and sisters of Brikama, we were told how much they appreciated us coming and we in return spoke of what this journey to Africa meant to us. Following we had candy and soda with hugs as we said our goodbyes with hopes of coming next year.

June 9, 2005, Thursday.

Leaving Africa was a day with mixed emotions. I learned that the people of Africa are a special group of people with great pride and content in their lifestyles. They know how to survive with so much less than us Americans who sometimes forget how blessed we are. Our day started at 6am with the sharing of a testimony by Yvonne. Following breakfast we went shopping at another open market. Such craftsmanship of the craved wood was breathtaking but again not knowing how to bargain created a problem. Pastor Han was very helpful in helping us to get a fair price for the carved items and the drums we purchased to take home. Again we were followed through to the market with each person calling us to come over to see their merchandize. After two hours we headed back to the mission center to pack for our journey that would take us home.

I tried to spend as much time as I could with Dandang going over how to dress his wounds, making sure he had enough supplies, and organizing the supplies for him. The emotions that I felt were so overwhelming. I knew that this would be my last time with him, so I prayed that our team had made a difference in his life. After lunch, we cleaned and packed up our dorm; a place we called home for two weeks and spent as much time as we could with our brothers and sister at Brikama.

Following dinner, we packed the truck and loaded onto the bus and headed for the airport to fly to Brussels. All the pastors and helpers at the centers were at the airport to bid us farewell with hugs, tears, and hopes of seeing us next year. At 8:30pm our plane lifted off the grounds of Africa as we head towards home.

June 10, and 11, 2005, Friday and Saturday. DEBRIEFING IN EUROPE.

7am arrival at Brussels, Belgium. On departing the plane in Brussels the weather was so different than Africa we were actually cold. After going through customs we boarded a bus that would take us on a 5 hr ride to Paris.

After picking up our tour guide we started to tour Paris stopping at times to learn of Paris's history. We were able to visit an open art market and do some shopping.

After lunch we arrived at our hotel and we were overjoyed to be able to take a shower with warm water, air conditioning in our rooms with no mosquito nets, change clothes, and watch TV. We ended the evening with a boat ride with views of Paris at night.

7am after breakfast we boarded the bus with more sight seeing of Paris. Our first stop was the Effie Tower. Paris is so compact and crowded with so many building being built in the 1800 century. The beauties of these building are breathtaking with so much detail. We visited a museum and saw the Mona Lisa. We also visited Norte Dame and were amazed at the stain glass. Lunch was at a French restaurant and dinner at a Korean restaurant. We were able to some shopping for souvenirs to take back home but soon realized that things in Paris are very expensive.

At 6pm we boarded the bus to take us back to Brussels. It seemed as soon as the bus took off we all fell asleep.

June 12, 2005 Sunday

Today we worship at the Korean Church of Brussels. We were introduced to the congregation and sang one song before them. Following we fellowshipped with the congregation and boarded a bus for a tour of Brussels. Brussels is also rich in history with many historical building. The weather here is cold and rainy.

Dinner was at a Chinese restaurant and after we boarded the bus to take us back to our hotel for a 5 hr. debriefing. Each member discussed the impact the mission trip had made on them, areas of improvement and whether or not they would return next year.

June 13, 2005, Monday. Going Home!

As we sat and ate breakfast each one anticipated their arrival home. In time, each one of us will reflect on this mission trip to Africa and, on this own experience and how this trip will impact their lives.

3pm **HOME!** We were greeted at the airport by our families and many friends. **IT IS GOOD TO BE HOME. PRAISE GOD!**

Written by Linda Allen