

Africa Update
03 April 2008



Dear All,

Greetings from Zambia once again! I trust you are all well. Amongst other things, my first month back from Australia has been dominated by wedding preparations. Towards the end of last year, a Zambian friend announced his intention to marry and asked if I would be part of the line-up (wedding party). Why not? I thought. It would be fun to take part in a Zambian wedding. In January, I was called to a wedding committee meeting. From then onwards I began to learn how different it would be to be a groomsman at this wedding.

As the weeks went by, the wedding preparation process unraveled and the expectations on the wedding party became clear. First of all, all the wedding party members were automatically members of the wedding committee. It was the wedding committee's responsibility to organize the wedding in conjunction with the bride and groom and to assist in financing it. The wedding committee began to meet every Sunday afternoon. These meetings became very drawn out as most people arrived up to 2 hours late. Then the meetings would begin and take a further 2-3 hours. After this, I usually spent about another 30-45 minutes ferrying people along dreadful roads to their various houses before I was finally able to head for home.

In late January, the wedding committee began to talk about extra meetings for dance rehearsals. "What dance rehearsals?" I asked. It was explained to me that the wedding party would be learning a number of African dances. These would be performed at key stages of the wedding including entering and exiting the church, the registry area and the reception hall. I questioned the groom as to my ability to perform these multiple African dances and suggested that I might be replaced in the line-up by an African. I could become the wedding photographer instead. "Oh no", he said, "You'll be fine. They are not really dances, just majestic walking. You will be able to learn the dances and catch up to the others on your return from Australia in March". Not really convinced but not wanting to offend, I agreed to stay in the line-up. The Africans were saying that a muzungu (white man) would add spice to the wedding party. Hmm.

On my return from Australia, the committee/rehearsal meetings were running on both Saturday and Sunday afternoons. These quickly overflowed to week nights and in the week leading up to the wedding, they spilled over to every night. These meetings each took 4-6 hours and, along with some other wedding party members, I began to look forward to the end so that I could have my life back. I must have attended approximately 20 long meetings leading into this wedding.



The senior line-up forming a dancing line of honour for the bride and groom at the wedding reception

Most of these 20 meetings were taken up with dancing lessons. At first this seemed straight forward as each one of us learnt our particular steps. Then in the last week, the wedding matron said that now that we had learnt the steps we also needed to dance. I had thought that we were dancing but apparently we were just doing the steps. After that the Africans began to move like Africans and I felt very inadequate and self-conscious. This was no “majestic walking!” The Africans took special care to mention how well I was progressing but this seemed to only further highlight how different and un-African my dancing attempts probably looked. They also said that the wedding guests would all be particularly watching me to see if the white man could dance. Fine!

The matron wanted the whole wedding party to stay over at one house on the night before the wedding to avoid lateness on the day. However we men declined with a promise to be punctual and we were able to skip the mass sleepover. The women proceeded with the sleepover and got very little sleep. On the wedding day, I danced the best I could and when I periodically looked out at the wedding guests, most of them were watching me as I had been warned. The emcee made a couple of references to the white man dancing like an African which added to the white spice they were looking for. As it turned out, the guests seemed to enjoy the fact that I just had a go and I didn’t need to worry about the different sense (or lack) of rhythm that I have as a muzungu.

Here are some interesting facts about the wedding:

LibertyAfrica Ministries is the African Division of Liberty Ministries International
Write to: Michael Carew PO Box 21939 Kitwe Zambia Africa
Email: libertyafrica@gmail.com
Cell Phone: +260 966 391622

- ◇ The wedding was a hybrid of western and eastern traditions. The photos included in this update give you a glimpse of the western influence.
- ◇ The wedding party was made up of 26 people including two matrons, 6 senior line-up couples, 4 junior line-up couples, a flower girl, a small boy and the bride and groom. The matrons taught everybody the dances which were numerous and varied.
- ◇ The wedding started 1½ hours late and most of the invited guests skipped the church service and came for the food and celebrations at the reception. No body was bothered by this.
- ◇ All the food for the 300+ reception guests was prepared outdoors on open charcoal fires. This included crumbed chicken, fried rice, chips, beef casserole and accompanying salad.
- ◇ At the cutting of the cake, the ‘knife-boy” entered the reception hall at one end and danced with the knife down the length of the hall to where the bride and groom were waiting with the cake. Others jumped up and danced part of the way down the hall with the knife boy.
- ◇ The wedding cake was not actually one cake but many. Part of the cake cutting ceremony involved the bride and groom presenting separate cakes to the oldest living member of both families. In doing this, the bride and groom knelt before the relative who was seated specially for this purpose.



*The bride, groom and senior line-up greet all the guests
at the end of the reception.*



The **Children of Destiny Project** was the main focus of my recent February trip to Australia. During this trip, I was able to launch the project within the local community in Melbourne and to appeal for funds. This led to many generous financial donations. These gifts have enabled me to return to Zambia with the necessary resources to begin building. My heartfelt thanks goes to all those who contributed and have enabled the concept of this project to become a reality. A very big thanks goes to Catherine Ellis for coordinating my fundraising program in Australia and for organizing some of the major events. A special thanks also goes to Pat and Helen La Manna for hosting a charity auction which alone raised AUD \$35,000.00. To the many others who gave of their time, talents and resources, I also thank you.

My plan is to begin the project by developing the commercial fish ponds. The concept is to start with a business venture that will begin to generate income towards the other project components. (For those of you who are unfamiliar with the project, I have attached a flyer that gives the project profile). At present, I am waiting for the rainy season to completely finish in order to partially dam the small river bordering my property. This will be followed by pond digging. The rains should be completely finished by the end of April. I am also waiting for a water rights permit from the Department of Water Affairs. Obtaining this essential permit has become quite tricky as the application requirements for the permit have changed since I first applied three months ago. I now need to resubmit my application.

In times past, businesses and individuals dammed rivers at will with little regard for the local environment. As a result, some of these dams have contributed to the severe flooding that Zambia has been experiencing during it's annual rainy seasons. Roads have flooded, bridges have being washed away and people have lost their lives. A "Water Rights Bill" has just been passed through Zambian Parliament. This bill stipulates that any application to adjust a Zambian waterway must clearly establish that there will be no environmental harm caused if the alteration proceeds.

I am now in the process of having a map drawn for my property which clearly shows the layout of the land and stream including accurate, detailed contour lines that graduate the slopes and indicate all potential water run-offs. Getting the necessary equipment and expertise to produce this map at a reasonable price has been quite an ordeal. Being a new requirement, very few people have any experience in producing these maps and the few with the equipment and expertise are being quite opportunistic with their prices. After weeks of frustrating meetings and unrealistic offers to do the job, I seem to have finally reached an agreement with two men who will complete the task at a very reasonable price. Hopefully this will happen in the next few weeks.

Amongst other tasks, I'm going to Malawi this month to begin the arrangements for a women's conference there later in the year. For those of you who received my updates last year, the fleas are biting again and I'll be resuming "Operation Flea Control". In fact, I've received quite a few bites and stings since I returned from Australia. These include a dive-bomb hornet sting after I unintentionally stirred up a nest, flea-bites and ant-bites. One night, I had to march a column of soldier ants out of the kitchen after they filed in under the back door. It's insect madness here at the moment. Two nights ago a homeless teenage girl appeared on my doorstep and I fed her before she left again. The next morning as I went to walk the dogs, I found her in my driveway. She had slept the night on the ground there; not all that uncommon here. Well, that's about it for this month.

Stay well,

Mike

