

African venture a journey of enlightenment

By ANDREW ISAAK
Herald Special

I have been home in Canada for more than a month now. I'm back at the University of Waterloo; knee deep in the grind of school with the exams and assignments quickly piling up. It's hard to believe that a couple of months ago I was across the world in Zaire, putting together a water pump system for a remote hospital along the Sudan border. A personal journal, five rolls of film and a well used Tilley Hat are reminders of my time there.

The solar project I had worked on was in its final stages by the middle of August. The much needed parts, ordered in early June, had still not arrived. The old gasoline powered water pump was still pathetically chugging away but would not last much longer, especially since our gasoline supply was very low and there was no replacement drive belts for the motor ... ie. it was now or never.

The scaffolding built for the solar panels was pretty much completed. We had to ration the use of cement because of limited supplies, however, we had to be sure that the five meter high structure would still be secure. With a week-and-a-half left, all 28 solar panels were brought down to the site for a day of installation. However, the African rain came down and put a damper on the solar panel installation that day. A valuable day was gone with not much visible progress. I have to admit that I was frustrated, the day had not gone as planned when we were so close to our goal. With renewed hope the next day, and a little more sunshine, we were able to put up seven solar panels. Problems for that day included finding out the manufacturer had drilled the holes incorrectly in the support bars and the "special" screwdriver for the electrical connections was not to be found with the panels. These problems delayed us, but didn't stop us. We modified and made do with what we had. The remainder of the 28 solar panels were up in a couple of days. The solar panels were

placed at an angle of 20 degrees to the horizontal to allow dust to be washed off by the rain, while still allowing for good exposure to the bright African sun.

The next five days were the most critical and rather exciting. We had to make some final electrical wiring arrangements for the solar panels, dismantle the old pump system, inspect the state of the down pipe in the well and then install the new submersible pump. At this point of taking apart the old pump, there could be no water pumped to the water tank for a few days. (Note: The existing water system supplied water to five of the missionary homes on the mission station. The reliability of the existing pump and the amount of possible water store prevented the hospital from being put onto the existing water system. This new solar powered pump system and the construction of a hospital water tank to supply the hospital's water needs were the objective of this project). Everyone using the water system, had to be extra conservative with their water use.

We were concerned with problems inside the well because there was reason to believe something was lodged down the well that could impede us putting down the new submersible pump system. (Note: This new submersible pump required more room in the well than the old pump did).

To check the well, we did some tests with the down pipe and a metal can attached to the bottom. This can was the approximately diameter of the new pump. We were pleased to find that there seemed to be no problems down the hole.

The day (Saturday) arrived to attach the submersible pump to the down pipe. Imagine what those guys look like when they're drilling for oil on those Petro-Canada commercials - a couple of workers guiding a pipe down into a drill hole ... looks easy, eh? Well, we had a 15 meter down pipe which we had to put down the well. On the bottom of this pipe, we were going to screw on a fairly heavy submersible pump.



Andrew Isaak, a resident of Georgetown, currently studying at Waterloo University, recently returned from a Christian mission in Zaire where he was involved with a hospital water project. Pictured above, Andrew poses with (left) student Isoki and right, local farmer, Madraka.

In addition, as we lowered this pump down the hole, we had to tie on to the down pipe, the electrical cable and a security cable. It didn't take too long before this got very heavy, even with three men holding it up while another two men helped tie up the cables. In the midst of this experience, my contact lens decided to jump out of my left eye! I quickly tried to find it and put it in a safe place while the other guys "patiently" waited for me. We were thrilled when the pump and down pipe were safely in the well hole.

The clouds had rolled in when we tried our first solar pump that day. The results did not look promising ... a little stream of water came out of the pipe, but nothing too significant and it certainly would not fill up our new water tank very quickly. The day was over and I was not happy with what looked like the end results of my time there. I was hoping it was not anything more than the lack of sunshine that had slowed the pump down.

The following day was Sunday with church starting at 10 a.m. It was my last full day in Aba, Zaire, and the sun was up and shining ... a perfect day to solar pump. I turned the solar panel switch and gave the pump another try ... Wow did it pump.

We quickly had one of our water tanks filled up. The project was a success.

I left Aba the next day, on a small six seater Cessna. I thought I was ready to leave. It had been a long summer. I had seen and experienced a plethora of things but I also missed my parents and my friends. As the plane took off from the grass airstrip, I had a lump in my throat as I had my last look at the people I had worked beside, who had taught me many things about their culture and language, who had welcomed me into their homes and fed me, who repeatedly thanked me for the work I was doing. I found the prospect of starting the journey home difficult.

These people, who are living in one of the poorest countries in the world, had provided me with a life-changing summer and a new perspective of Africa. They may have been poor with respect to economics, but they were some of the most gracious and caring people I had ever known.

During the last month, the country of Zaire has been in the news. It's in turmoil after the

soldiers and the citizens were getting fed-up with food shortages and inflation topping 1,000 per cent. In the capital city, soldiers led mobs in rioting and looting. The small town of Aba is on the other side of the country to the capital, Kinshasa. However, while I was there, I sensed the problems that were developing in the country. There were no celebrations or parades on Zaire Day, as there had been other years. I heard of soldiers taking food from local villagers because they were not paid enough money to feed themselves. The value of my Zaire dollars had gone from \$0.0025 to \$0.0008 American dollars during the three months I was there.

To me, Zaire was no longer another African country in turmoil that was briefly glanced at in the newspaper. Now, this country was real to me. I'd been there; met the people; worked with them; learned from them; seen their problems and tried to help as best as I could. I now have an understanding of Africa and would love to go back there sometime.

A Royal treat

W.I. members attend special day

By RUTH KRANENDONK
Public Relations Officer
H.D.W.I.

Halton District Women's Institutes were treated to "Royalty at The Royal". Many W.I. members from Halton were thrilled to be in attendance when The Duchess of York officially opened the Royal Horse Show November 7. Cameras flashed as Her Royal Highness entered the Coliseum in a beautiful horse driven carriage. After the ceremony was over and The Duchess took her seat, the crowd cheered on as they watched Ian Miller ride Big Ben to victory in the \$100,000 Crown Royal Cup Final.

These Women's Institute members were in attendance for the first ever "Women's Day" at the Royal which was hosted by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. Peggy Knapp approached the executive of "The Royal" and convinced them this would be a very worthwhile day which proved to be very successful. A luncheon at the Cafe Royale welcomed 240 guests.

A very special "Erland Lee Award" was presented to Wally Knapp for his lifelong encouragement to the Women's Institute organization. Guest speaker was

Mavis Wilson former Member of Parliament and Minister in charge of Women's Issues. Mrs. Wilson spoke on "Issues Facing Women In The 90's".

Halton was invited to put its best foot forward by presenting a fashion show with clothing provided by "The Casual Way" in Toronto. Also new this year is a hands-on craft exhibit and demonstrations, co-ordinated by the Women's Institutes with more than 12 different artisans including rug braiding, jewelry making, knitting and quilting and more.

A very special event is taking place in November at the Nassagaweya Community Centre in Brookville. A celebration of 90 years of success for Halton District will take place this Sunday at 1:00 p.m. All former District Presidents and Secretaries have been invited as special guests. A luncheon will be catered by Dublin Branch. Anyone is welcome to join the festivities. For more information, contact Maisie Lasby (519)856-4436.

"Wardrobe Wizardry" is a new course being offered by many Women's Institute Branches in Halton. A successful workshop for leaders presented by "Pass It

On". Leaders will be teaching their groups how to dye silk scarves and to make jewellery from friendly plastic, as well as scarf tying and flattering figure lines. If you haven't already signed up, contact your nearest branch to inquire about space available. A combined Halton/Wellington Achievement program is planned for March, 1992.

How about a Retreat? A four-day "Personal Growth and Development" program is a new venture planned by Ontario Women's Institutes for February 10-14, 1992 at Crieff Hills Retreat and Conference Centre. You may choose either "More Pleasure in Music" or "Battenburg Lace" as the emphasis for your well-deserved, getaway. For more information, contact Jane Croft 416-854-2789 or Donna Russett 613-395-3643.

Christmas at "The Lee" - A visit to the Erland Lee Museum Home in Stoney Creek on December 4 will guarantee a real "Old Fashioned Christmas". This beautiful home is decorated in traditional style with popcorn and cranberry strings and boughs of pine and cedar to give it a feeling of stepping back to a simpler Christmas.

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