

Joan Mellor speaks at Emmanuel

Mission worker describes poverty in Chad

By Roy Downs
Mission worker Joan Mellor, formerly of Milton, returned to Emmanuel Baptist Church recently to tell church friends about her work in the Republic of Chad, central Africa, and the people with whom she worked for over two years.

In a slide show and talk Sunday evening, Feb. 27 she told of the poverty that rules the lives of Chadians, the religious conflicts and spiritual ignorance that exist and how missionaries from The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) are working to bring Africans out of the darkness and into God's light.

"Many are still living in darkness in Chad tonight," she said, a note of sadness creeping into her voice.

Miss Mellor worked in Milton for three and a half years and was office manager for the Campbell-Reese Evangelistic Association when she finally fulfilled a life-long dream and was chosen to go work in the Chad. She was accepted as a bookkeeper, handling the financial end of the TEAM work in Moundou and in two outlying mission posts—one in the capital city of Bebanne and one at Koutou. TEAM has about 1,000 missionary workers spread through 24 areas of the world and the mission in Chad, established in 1920, has 32 field workers.

She left Milton in March 1972 and had to spend 22 months in France, learning to speak fluent French before completing her journey to

central Africa. She returned home last May, taking an earlier than usual furlough to avoid a staffing problem after illness struck many of the mission workers and furlough schedules had to be juggled. She also spoke at Emmanuel late last year. While in Milton, Miss Mellor was director of the church choir.

She opened her talk with a vivid explanation of how Chad is underdeveloped. She told of the life of a Chadian woman, who would not know what to do with most of the things affluent Canadians have in their homes. Chad is poor, has no ports or railroads or roads usable year 'round, and few natural resources. The northern half of the country is desert; below that a small

strip which gets a little rain, then the southern part which has annual rains and where some crops can be grown. Chad recently experienced six years of drought and the desert advanced.

Homes are usually round (Chadians fear square homes as they feel evil spirits hide in the corners) and the walls and roof are made of millet stalks. Beds are mats on the bare ground. Millet, the basic food, is eaten once a day "if there is enough." Millet is rationed by the church, a bowlful at a time. One mission distributes instant breakfast, which is mixed with water.

"Chadians cannot comprehend us being fat," Miss Mellor smiled. They have no TV, no

newspapers, no books and no refrigerators. Most have no education, so cannot read. They speak the Ngambi language but those who are educated are taught in French so they switch to that language.

The life expectancy is 31 years. Infant mortality rate is high, especially in the one to two and a half year area. Children are nursed by their mothers until 12 to 18 months, then abruptly weaned without being taught the proper method of eating. Many die of starvation or disease, as a result. Mission nurses are giving mothers courses in child-rearing, to combat this.

Cars and trucks are scarce and many mission workers travel by moped or bicycle. Transportation is a problem, as the roads are not the best—even worse in the rainy season. She showed a picture of a river ferry, which consisted of five dugout boats with a wooden platform across the top. It was poled across the river, by prisoners.

Other pictures showed herds of hippopotamuses which wallow in the river by day and sleep on the banks at night. Hippos sing and when they all sing at one time, "it's quite a choir".

Cows are used to pull the plows in the cotton fields. Wives and children all pitch in to harvest the cotton, Chad's biggest export. Other crops are lettuce and cauliflower and they also serve a delicious fish known as "captain". Grain for meals is still pounded with a pestle.

The staple dish for nationals is boule, which Miss Mellor describes as "gritty and tasteless". The porridge-like dish is dressed up with a vegetable or meat sauce and all eat from a common dish. Shoes are a prestige item, the nationals go barefoot most of the time. Arranged

marriages are still in vogue, although those who become Christians refuse to participate. Often girls are promised to older men with several other wives, in order to obtain a dowry.

The unChristianized boys still go through initiation rites, where they head into the bush for a month upon reaching puberty, to worship idols and spirits and emerge as men.

Many of the Chadians are being trained for mission work and Miss Mellor told of one boy who showed promise, was sent to France for his education, and returned as a pastor to head up one church in the capital.

In 1960 Chad won its independence and the anniversary is celebrated every year.

When she left last May to return home on furlough, Miss Mellor reports the temperature outside her home was 120 degrees. And that was in the shade!

Chad is in the central part of Africa and in Moundou, where she was stationed, is

just 10 degrees north of the equator. She describes its size as equal to the states of Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas combined.



BACK FROM CHAD, AFRICA, mission bookkeeper Joan Mellor of Milton spoke and showed slides of her work at Emmanuel Baptist Church recently. She's pictured chatting after

the service with Emmanuel pastor Rev. Dr. J. R. Armstrong. Miss Mellor may return to Chad but feels called to Australia as well.

On her heart and mind

Next mission: Australia?

When Joan Mellor returns to the mission field later this year, she may not be going back to Chad, Africa to continue her work of bookkeeping service to three mission stations.

Australia is beckoning her, she told an audience at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Milton at the conclusion of a talk on her life and work in Chad.

"When I came home last May, I did not have peace in my heart about returning to Chad," she admitted. Late last year she found Australia on her heart and on her mind and wondered if The Lord was directing her there. "I am willing to go back to Chad, but I want to have peace in my mind first."

Last December she met the general director of TEAM (The Evangelical Alliance Mission) and he said there was an opening for a bookkeeper in Hombush, near Sydney, and she was being considered for the post. She won't have a definite answer for another six or eight weeks.

"This was of the Lord," she said. "I have a real sense of the Lord's leading to Australia."

While she is home on furlough, Miss Mellor is resting and studying and has many speaking engagements in churches around Ontario. She said her schedule is fairly busy until the end of May, but she wants to spread the word of the mission in Chad and may be able to accept more speaking engagements if interested parties contact her.

While home, she is also attempting to raise enough money to partly finance her next tour of duty overseas. Costs are rising and while it took \$276 per month to keep a mission worker in the field when she first left Milton in 1972, it now costs \$428 per month. Some of the money comes from TEAM headquarters in USA but some has to be raised by the mission worker themselves.

The cost includes transportation, housing, salary, medical coverage and all incidental expenses. Only \$185 of the \$428 is for her monthly salary.

During her talks, Miss Mellor is appealing for prayers for the missionaries in Chad, who have been hard hit by illnesses. Many have been sent home recently with typhoid fever or tuberculosis, and one key worker was recently stricken with cancer.

It is as if Satan was attacking their bodies, she said. The political situation has not been the best, either. The president of Chad was killed in April of 1975, a coup which ended a long series of Christian harassment and religious strife. According to a newsletter from TEAM headquarters in Chad, the coup "ended the persecution of Chadian Christians but left the church with many problems."

During the cultural revolution of the previous two years, Chadians had been ordered to undergo traditional initiation rites. This involved contacts with the spirits of their ancestors

and "dying" to their past, including their faith in Christ. Many of the Christians in Chad gave their lives, rather than compromise their faith. Others weakened, and went to initiation rites.

At one point the government was threatening to bury alive any pastor who advised Christians to resist initiation. Atrocities were reported.

Unfortunately, some of the top church leaders weakened under pressure and advised believers to do as the government ordered, if disobeying would endanger their lives. Others stood firm. The church was split over the issue and as a result the president of the church has resigned, humbly confessing his failure to withstand the tribulation. The TEAM bulletin says the church today is "on the road to repentance and renewal...already it is stronger than ever before."

Miss Mellor was reticent to discuss the political situation during her term in Chad, for fear of reprisals against missionaries.

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