

A doubting Thomas sees light over Ghana

The biblical doubting Thomas is, indeed, a blood relative. I'm a cynic to the core, distrustful through and through. This is particularly true in one area — support of Third World countries. Why? Because I've heard too many horror stories of how donations, financial and otherwise, never reach their intended source. For this reason, I maintain charity begins at home. I donate generously to causes I believe are legitimate and secure.

Not a cent of my funds will go to greedy gougers whose only desire is to improve their own status, usually at the expense of the poor.

While there are many, here in Whitchurch-Stouffville, who will assail this policy, I say it's my money and I'll do with it as I see fit.

But this hard-line attitude mellowed somewhat after spending an hour with Gene and Laura Paisley of Stouffville Saturday. This uniquely chivalrous couple, assisted by a host of beneficent friends, regularly assemble a container of miscellaneous goods for shipment to Ghana, West Africa, where son-in-law and daughter, Dr. David and Brenda Mensah, render first-hand assistance.



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

This latest mission of mercy occurred July 26 at the farm of Ted Barry, on Bethesda Road. Upwards of 30 people, some from as far as Mt. Albert, Cannington and Sunderland, prepared tons of items for shipment overseas.

It's the fifth such project in the past 15 years. Gary Paisley of Beaverton, Gene and Laura's son, spearheaded the operation, assisted by a contingent of willing workers from the Stouffville Missionary Church and the Uxbridge Baptist Church. Together, over a seven-hour period, they loaded clothing, doors, windows, books, incubators, a rotary mower, solar equipment, even a heart imaging machine, into the 40-foot carrying case.

One of the most difficult pieces to handle was an international seed drill, obtained by Jim Richards of Stouffville. Placing it in the unit was made easier thanks to a cradle constructed by Ron Evans of Sunderland.

A container for the heart imaging machine was built by Harry Schell and Glenn Byer of Schell Lumber. Dr. Norman Musewe of Stouffville will visit Accra, Ghana, shortly and provide first-hand instructions on its operation.

The solar equipment, valued at \$40,000, was designed and donated by Eric Kalmbach also of Stouffville. Jerry Brillinger, of Stouffville, delivered a truckload of 35 bicycles, while a registered nurse from Saintfield provided an assortment of badly needed medicines.

It's absolutely wonderful how people pitched in, Gene said. Ted (Barry) is a tremendous individual, the type of guy who loves to help. A tow motor, loaned by Barry's Welding, assisted greatly in the operation, Gene said.

While most things were donated, all money spent will be matched dollar for dollar by the federal government, Gene explained.

THREE FAMILY MEMBERS DIE

It was a disastrous drought that started it all, says Gene. Three members of his son-in-law's family died from starvation.

The average year-round temperature throughout much of Ghana is 36 C. For the inhabitants, residents must also battle the ever-encroaching Sahara Desert. It advances on their village at a rate of 13 km a year.

The container's already en route, travelling by transport to Montreal and by ship to Ghana. It'll take five weeks to complete the crossing.

Is Gene certain the content will reach its intended destination?

Absolutely, he says. The container is padlocked and sealed. The seal won't be broken until it arrives on site.

Gene admits he, too, has heard horror stories of shipments falling into wrong hands.

This won't happen here, he insists. I've been there, I know the joy and excitement these deliveries create.

He also knows that, in positive and practical terms, it opens up the way for the Christian gospel.

It's so beneficial in so many ways, he says, for providers as well as receivers.

And maybe, just maybe, as the biblical doubting Thomas discovered the error of his ways, so a sibling, two thousand years later, will finally see the light.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 50 years.

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