

## AFRICAN ANECDOTES

Dear friends

I thank God for the purposeful busyness of our days, and I also thank Him for the breathing spaces in between – such as this one in which I can write to you. During our 7-week trip we had two two-day breathing spaces: one in Etosha National Park, Namibia where we once went with my mother when our children were young, and another day and a half just “chilling” at our favourite campground on the Western Cape coast. Some of the pictures below come from those four days.

*“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season...”* (Ps.1:2-3) In Africa, rivers and streams don’t stop flowing in the dry season – they just flow underground! And so these towering trees are sustaining their lives by reaching down deeply into the soil. When I look around at the things happening in the world, even among Christians, I get the impression that right now we are living in a dry season! Well, I guess that means we are just going to have to send our roots down extra deep! Many Christians in Africa don’t own Bibles: I am so privileged to have easy access to the water of life. So I need to USE it -- not just for my own benefit, but to bear “fruit.” The “fruit” of this tree is actually its distinctively visible bark – a beautiful bark with a frightening message, “Danger!” This tree was named the Fever tree because it grows where malaria is present. Issuing warnings is maybe not the nicest role – who wouldn’t rather shout, “Great job!”? But the early settlers of Africa were certainly thankful for it! God also gives each of us different roles to play at different times in our lives: sometimes beautifully exhilarating, sometimes unpleasant, but necessary – no matter how much I want to shirk the unpleasant ones!



Along the “road” to Vallev, Southern Zimbabwe



*“Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle.”* (Ps.144:1) David was full of praise for his God-given abilities, and I am thankful beyond measure for Les’s God-given abilities. It was 100 degrees and there we were alone, on a remote road, with no cell phone reception. The violent jarring of the camper on the “road” to Valley had caused two screws on the bottom of the radiator to slowly work loose – and we suddenly heard “Kaplunk-plunk-plunk” as the radiator came loose and hit the engine fan, breaking two of its seven blades. Les has been given the name “African McGiver” and it certainly fits. Not only could he figure out what actually happened, but he could “make a plan” to fix it. The Lord has helped us in many similar situations, and we are thankful!

*“Be angry and do not sin...Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearer...Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, **clamor**, and evil speaking be put away from you....”* (Eph.4:26,29,31) “Clamor” – krauge -- “an onomatopoeic word, imitating the raven’s cry...” (Vine’s). Well, this bird is actually a pied crow – but it makes a sound like *krauge*, as well! Sad to say, my family can testify that I also know how to make that sound! For years I never realized that “clamor” = “shouting.” I thought the purpose of shouting was to let my children know that if they didn’t shape up, a spanking was imminent! Raising one’s voice when angry is a hard habit to break. God helps me overcome my anger by telling me to concentrate on replacing words that tear down with edifying words that impart grace [unmerited favour! ;-)] to the hearer.





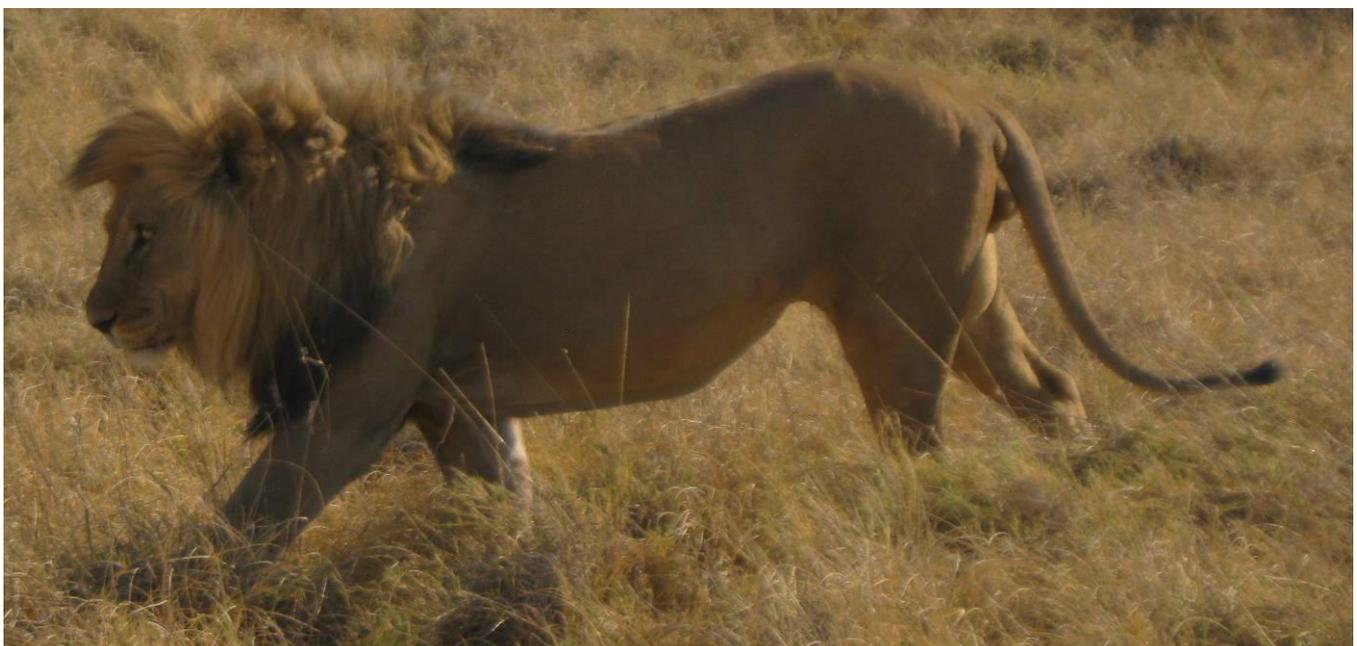
*“As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him.” (Ps.103:13).* In my 35 years in Africa I have seen 407 different species of birds. The Namaqua sandgrouse is my 404<sup>th</sup> bird: I saw it for the first time on this trip. I apologise for the poor quality photo, but I think you will enjoy hearing about this amazing bird which inhabits the thirstlands of South Africa and Namibia. When nesting, the mother (on the left) spends every moment of the day on the

nest, puffing up her feathers to insulate her eggs from the heat – which is at times is literally hot enough to cook the eggs! At night, the father sits on the nest while the mother has her turn to go in search of food and water – flying up to thirty miles in one direction! It is once the chicks hatch, however, that the TLC of the father is even more clearly seen. Each morning, he flies to the nearest waterhole and dips his belly feathers in the water... and the water-logged father is still able to fly in scorching heat up to thirty miles to deliver his precious cargo to the thirsty chicks! God has put in this small creature a wonderful demonstration of His character! And so, if this small creature, out of pity for his children, can go to so much effort on their behalf, how much more, being motivated by the same Father, should we pity the precious souls of our children enough to make every sacrifice necessary to provide their spiritual needs!



*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Ps.46:1)* On our second morning in Etosha, we got up before dawn in order to arrive at a waterhole shortly after sunrise. At first we were disappointed to see that there was no game around the waterhole, but as we carefully scanned the grass, we discovered why: a pride of about 20 lions lay replete in the grass, soaking up the morning sun. As the day got warmer, we expected the lions to come out into the open to seek shade, so I fixed breakfast and we prepared to wait. Sure enough, one by one, the lions began to make their way to some trees...but there was a road full of tourists’ cars (including ours) between the water hole and those trees! The lionesses were used to cars and were not worried to cross between them, but you could see that the small cubs were

worried. That’s when their father entered the picture! Standing strong, he made his presence known and watched carefully to make sure every lion in the pride reached the safety of the trees before leisurely strolling across the road. Because the cubs were so short, and the grass was so long, they probably couldn’t see him – but he was “present,” – and everyone knew it! In all our worries we must never forget that, even though we can’t see Him, our Father is also “our strength...a very present help.”



*“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Mt.5:16)*

On the way from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth, we camped one night at Mossel (Dutch for mussel) Bay. The town got its name from a Dutch sailor who stopped there in 1601, hoping for provisions but only finding mussels! The indentation under the cliff is actually a small cave which was used by bushmen for thousands of years and full of.... mussel shells of course! The lighthouse has been operational



Cape St Blaize Lighthouse, Mossel Bay, S Africa

since 1864 – and there is no telling how many wrecks were averted because of it. Until the late 1970’s, the lens was turned by a system that required a person to “rewind” it every three hours! What dedication to saving lives! Well, good works take dedication too. I wonder what would happen if each of us did a good deed every three hours?

*“Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me. Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever.” Psalm 131.* This little snail, about the size of my fingernail, frantically scrambles around the beach in search of yummy micro-organisms as soon as each wave recedes. It then digs itself into the sand to keep from being washed away by the next wave, emerging again as soon as it recedes. Normally these snails go around in circles, but this one made a big question mark -- don’t we all question sometimes? When an infant is hungry, he will be satisfied with *anyone* who supplies milk, but a weaned child seeks his *mother* when he has emotional needs, when he can’t make sense of life. He knows she can “make it better.” The child is incapable of understanding why life happened the way it did, so his mother doesn’t explain, she just comforts – and he is happy. And so God we run to God our Comforter. He doesn’t always explain “why” to us either, He just gives us hope. I know some of you have faced some really difficult trials during the past year – and I try to consistently pray for those I know are suffering, including my African sisters. May you find calmness and inner peace in knowing that God is in control. Like a weaned child, we may not know “why,” but we do know “Who”!



I have a list of folks I know, all written in a book;  
And every year at New Year’s time, I get it out to look.  
That’s when I realize (again), these names are all a part,  
Not of the book they’re written in, but of my very heart.  
Each name: it stands for someone who has crossed my path sometime;  
And in the meeting they’ve become the rhythm of the rhyme.  
Although it may sound quite unreal for me to make this claim,  
I really feel that I’m composed of each remembered name.  
For while you may be unaware of any special link,  
The fact is that you’ve shaped my life in more ways than you think.  
So when I send a message that has been addressed to you,  
It means that you are one of those that I’m indebted to.  
So whether I have known you, for many years or few,  
In some way you have had a part in shaping things I do.  
And every year when New Year’s comes, I realize anew,  
The special gift that life can give, is knowing folks like you. – Anon.



Verna Hadfield is a widow in her 80’s whose husband used to preach in Zimbabwe. Every month she publishes an 8-page booklet of encouragement. (Don’t we all hope we can still be bearing fruit like this in

old age?!) Appropriately, this poem was in the latest issue. It really sums up how I feel about each of you, especially those whom I hardly ever get to see. Your lives have been such a gift: teaching us, encouraging

us, praying for us, supporting us, showing hospitality to us – loving us! THANK YOU – and may God bless all of us to be a “gift” to people around us every day so that our lights always point to the Light of the world and glorify Him.

With love, Linda Maydell.