



Newsletter

Third Term, 2003



Leaving the Nest: Saying goodbye to the Standard 7 students.

Update, December 2003

Those of you who received the last Newsletter, heard how criminals had made my life very difficult by stealing my computer, digital camera and some important School documents. I am happy to report that I have recovered from this unfortunate incident and my life is now back to normal. I used the "no sense in crying over spilled milk" theory to try to forget about what was lost. What's gone is gone, right? I did realise however, that there was an omission in the Newsletter. I had made the unbelievable claim in the First Term Newsletter that in June I had taken my Shakawe marimba band, Shakarimba, to London for Prince William's birthday

party and promised evidence. The omission was the evidence. Herewith I include a photo I salvaged. I am **not** the tall guy in the middle. By the way, Prince William is a great guy.



With that all out of the way, let me get down to the update. Third term is usually one of the easiest as all the students know the rules, the Standard 7's are writing their national exams and are thus a bit more serious than usual, and, after they leave in the middle of October we are down to a much smaller student body. True to form, everything went as expected, and I am happy to report that the results on the Exam were much better than in the previous year. We had a total of 15 students writing the Exam and 9 of them passed. Of the 6 who failed, 3 had serious learning disabilities and didn't stand a chance, 1 was our most clever student, which seemed a bit strange, and the remaining 2 didn't give a hoot. All of them have gone on to secondary school since promotion from primary to secondary is automatic.

There was one long weekend during the third term and, having resurrected my house boat that sank in 2002, we loaded it up and took a trip to a nearby island. Lots of eating, swimming, fishing and lounging was partaken of and everyone seemed to enjoy the trip. I had wanted to include a photo of the trip but electronic equipment and I haven't been getting along. The new digital camera I had just bought had a bit of internal memory but needed a card to allow you to take more than 7 pictures. I acquired the card and everything seemed to be functioning properly until I tried to download the 60 pictures saved on the card. The rest you can imagine.

As for the developments, the pool was finally installed after getting some professional advice. It has been a *Godsend* as we now have more recreational activities to offer the students. And denying them access to the pool as a punishment has proven incredibly effective. The first time we tried it the 3 boys concerned came to me the next day to apologise for what they had done. I couldn't believe my ears. In addition to the pool, we finished the slab for the classroom block, continued to raise and slaughter chickens for sale, and substantial progress was made on one staff house.

Tackling Mom's Comments

I asked for it, and I got it. In the cover letter to the last e-mail edition of the Newsletter I asked for comments and suggestions. Life being what life is I thought it appropriate that the most lengthy comments came from my Mother, and very constructive comments I might add. In true American fashion I am going to put on my helmet and tackle them now.

The basic subjects we teach are Setswana, English, Science, Mathematics and Social Studies. We also offer Agriculture, Moral Education and Computer Studies, although they are not examined on the Primary School Leaving Exam. There is no formal religious training, but we do start the day off with a prayer and a song during assembly. The students get a report after every term with their subject marks and comments from the Class Teacher and Social

Worker. We also include a letter to the parents. Most of the students come from female-headed or dysfunctional families. Parents are free to visit the School although few of them do, partly due to the cost of travelling to the School which is 450 km's from Maun. Three quarters of our students come from Maun. A meeting with parents is held in Maun at the end of every term, although it is poorly attended. As I can see several of you nodding your head happily, now that you know these things, let's give Mom a round of applause.

Words of Wisdom from the Boys

Every year we choose a new Headboy, who is the senior prefect in the school. Whenever we have positions open we get the interested students to write application letters to help prepare them for the real world. Below are 2 letters I received. I am reproducing them as they were written. One of the boys started out by trying to impress us with his language ability. I suspect that what you are about to read will bring a smile to your face.

Dear Sir,

Thank you sir for giving me an opportunity for writing letter. I am Kesego. I'm 18 years old.

I'm apply to be a had boy of this school because I didn't do bad things like going to Ngarange at night. But I have did some problem there and there but I have improve that. I have stop going out of school without permechen to hide for girls and I set down and thinck what I will be in life. I'm a friendly boy. When I arrived here I was a lazy boy going at Ngarange at night. But now if they chase me away from school again what I am going to do I will just be like a dog if my behaviour is like something else like a paper. So I will try to do my best that is that I have sir.

*From,
Kesego.*

Editor's Note: Ngarange is a village 10 km's away from the School which has never been too far for the boys to walk when they are up to no good. Kesego was eventually chosen as the Deputy Headboy.

Dear Mr. Harpt,

As you know that greetings are the grammatically words that can grammar the grammatile to be grammatised. I'm very well cause of thinking that you will allow me to be the headboy.

I am a boy of sixteen years old. I am applying for a job to be a headboy. I have passed my standard five first and second term. I want to be a headboy because there are some boys who like to go out without permission but these boys I know them very much. So I want to stop them by marking their names because is my

job. I think you know that I'm the one of the quality education. I promise you that I will do what you want.

I hope my application will be conseded. Thank you.

*From,
Thusego.*

Fubu: Bana ba Metsi vs. Elephant United

This short impromptu football match took place while our boys were conducting one of their daily practices at the school football pitch. Elephant United took the field unannounced. One wouldn't have thought a one-elephant team could instil such fear in the Bana ba Metsi side, but it did. A few players ran off the field while the rest stood their ground, albeit motionless. After a few minutes, EU decided it was not up to the tusk and lumbered off the field, much to the relief of our boys. It's not often you have to share your football pitch with an elephant, but the team was all smiles when they returned from the "match". Just the kind of spirit I like in a human being.

Focus on Funding

Without too much blabbering let me get right down to mentioning the kind souls who contributed during 3rd term. The biggest single donation came from the American Ambassador's Self-Help Fund, which agreed to fund the thatched roof for our classroom block. The estimated total was around P40,000. After receiving the good news, and attending a signing ceremony at the Embassy, we set out to begin purchasing the thatching grass from the people living in the small community next to the village. What I liked about this project was that a substantial amount of the money was going to the people who cut the grass. By world standards, they are dirt poor, and I suspect it was the first time that P18,000 had been distributed to them, with almost every family getting something. Thanks go to the Ambassador, Joseph Huggins, and the Coordinator of the Fund, Douglas Blackburn.

Kate Meehan from Industrial Agencies in Gaborone sent us the kind of present I like: air, fuel and oil filters for our generators, lots of them, in a big box. It would have felt like Christmas if it hadn't been 42° C (108° F) and bone dry. She followed this up by giving us a starter crank for our Lister generator. Reggie at Maxiprest arranged for us to get 2 big tyres for our 5-tonne truck. For those of you who drive a small vehicle, be advised that you can almost buy a slightly running car for the price of 2 truck tyres, so, given our financial situation, it was a welcome donation.

Crocodile Camp once again held their annual Tree of Light Christmas event in support of the School. The total amount raised exceeded P4,000. I would like to thank the many people who contributed to the success of the event, especially Angie and Hennie Rawlinson who popped out P1,000, their second donation to the School. Thanks also go to the entire Crocodile Camp team, especially Isabelle Baar who treated us all to a champagne shower, and to Karl-Heinz

Gimpel who, after paying P580 for the Formula One-sized bottle at the raffle, didn't bat an eyelash when she sprayed it on us. I got a taste of the champagne by licking the end of my nose. It was the highlight of the evening!

Those who received the last Newsletter will have heard that one of our most faithful contributors, Sir Peter Fawcus, passed away in June. Sir Peter's son Bill forwarded an additional £300 cheque from the memorial fund. Our sympathies go out to the Fawcus family. The UK/Botswana Society passed along 2 cheques recently totalling £406. This included donations from Michael and Anne Williams, and Willie and Gina Angus in memory of Sir Peter. My thanks go to all the members of the UK/Botswana Society for their continuing support. John and Rosemary Cox once again provided the School with a Christmas present of £200. This is in addition to the private fundraising they do for the School. If all goes well I should finally be able to meet these 2 angels as they are planning to visit us in July. That is a summary of what could be called our "UK Connection". Jolly good show!

From the United States, my relatives continued to do what they could to keep us afloat. Two of my uncles, Gerry and Roger Harpt, each contributed \$300. An ex-Peace Corps colleague, who I served with from 1980 to 1983, sent us \$150. And my sister-in-law's father, Jim Marshall, once again gave us \$100. Here in Botswana, Anne Uren from Audi Camp, made another of her annual P3,000 donations. She is always willing to do whatever she can to help us. Bruce Page-Wood from the Grand Palm Hotel donated 3 sacks of used sheets, which we are now able to issue to the students. Some of the boys have never owned a sheet. And, my best friends Dave and Jasmin Back, came up with P1500. Considering how much they do for us here at the School, I felt guilty taking the money. They are camp managers who spend their monthly allocation of free days here at the School helping out. Thanks to all of you.

There was a time when donations were rolling in, but it seems the honeymoon is over. In terms of available cash, the situation was looking rather bleak by the end of the year. To give you an idea of the thread we are hanging onto, we bottomed out at a total of P70,000 (Pula), which was enough for the next term. Converted to green backs, it's about \$14,000 and the number gets even more depressing if you convert it to pounds sterling, at £7,900. Since starting this School I have gone from someone who was considered relatively self-sufficient to a panhandler on a street corner with a big metal cup. "Hey buddy, can you spare a dime?" I hate it, but I have no choice. And I guess telling you this is my way of rattling my cup.

And in Conclusion . . .

At the right is the Director as a youngster. The slash across my face is a crack in the old photo. It was taken a year or two before the optometrist said to me, "Boy, you're gonna need some mighty thick glasses by the time you grow up!" Even at that moment I could sort of see what he meant. When I was in secondary school I launched my 2 year theatrical career as a "crowd member" in Jesus Christ Superstar. At a certain point in the play we had to panic and drop what we were carrying. I had a carved wooden mug. After Jesus had calmed the situation down we were **supposed** to pick up our objects and run off the stage. The only



problem was that those of us with suspect eyesight weren't allowed to wear our spectacles. I did an extra lap around the stage looking for the mug after everyone else had left, and never did find it. I'm sure even the guy in the back row could see it, and no doubt it was obvious what my problem was. I eventually settled on the theatre of life and left the stage to those who could see or wore contacts.

This is the first version of this Newsletter which will be distributed exclusively by e-mail. Many of you have been receiving it in this way for a couple of years, but considering the cost of printing and posting, I have no choice but to make the change. After sending out the last Newsletter my ego was seriously injured when I received a reply from the computer of my second cousin, Shawn Quirk, saying that my e-mail had been deleted by his spambuster. I thought that was cute!

To my friends and acquaintances, and all who are helping to keep this school in operation,
CHEERS!

Steven Harpt
Director.

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