



Newsletter

Third Term, 2005



The School Engineer.

Update, December 2005

I have decided to start this issue of the Newsletter with a photo which should put a smile on your face. At the end of the third term we held a Christmas party for 119 orphans from our side of the Okavango River. We painted the faces of the kids, and the staff, with water paint. The packet said it was non-toxic, and we took that at face value. Above is Dave Bodington, our resident engineer, with said paint and Scottish cap that plays a traditional Scottish tune. The orphans were aged 5 to 10 years old and the theme of the party was "Bring Back the Smile". Our students organised and supervised games and activities for the visitors. It was quite amazing to see how our students handled the situation. Many of them

arrive here with a "me first" attitude. The party forced them to think about others and it was a fantastic success. In fact, the most helpful and caring boy was the rudest of the new group 9 months earlier. Thanks go to all the staff for the substantial effort they put into the event, and to the Northwest District Council for providing the list of orphans and transporting them to the School. I would also like to thank all the people who donated presents and money to fund the party.



Party Participants

Aside from the Christmas party, it was a very quiet term, which is typical for third term. All of the students have been here long enough to know the rules, the rough edges have been honed off the new students, and the Standard 7's are busy preparing for their national exams. Makes it a bit difficult for me to come up with items of interest for the Newsletter. It was, in fact, our best year in terms of behaviour and it's the shenanigans they get up to that provides me with some of the best material. Now what do I write about?

One of the high points of the term was the arrival of our new generator, kindly paid for by the Gaborone Ladies Circle. The machine was supplied by Radies Rademeyer, a jolly, round Afrikaner from Ngamiland Generator and Diesel Services. He gave us a generous discount in light of the work we do and delivered the generator to us. The best part was we managed to unload it and get it into the generator house without any students losing their toes. I would once again like to thank all of the energetic women of the Ladies Circle, especially Nasreen Essack and Sara Jones, for their donation. You have helped us solve our power problems.

In an attempt to raise some of our own money to cover running expenses, Dave takes on boat repair and building jobs, in addition to repairing the odd vehicle which limps into the school yard. In May, 2005, we agreed with Lawrence Drotsky to take 2 small pontoon boats and turn them into one very large double-decked house boat. It was a mammoth project for us but gave the boys plenty of chances to learn about metal fabrication. Congratulations go to Dave for pulling it off, driving the "ship" up to Shakawe on Christmas day.



Third term is always the time when our marimba band is at its best, at least until the Standard 7's leave in the middle of October. Most of the students learn to play, but the best ones are usually in Standard 7. Makes sense, huh? Practice makes perfect, and our 2005 class had some exciting players. One boy in particular, Keemenao Mapolanka, was a real showman. In September we were invited to play for World Tourism Day in Maun, which we decided to accept. In addition to the Saturday festivities I organised 2 concerts at lodges in Maun. Anne Uren from Audi Camp, in addition to contributing P3000 every year to the School, has

always welcomed us when we had our instruments. It was the first time the Bana ba Metsi band had done a "professional" concert so I was a bit apprehensive, but it went very well. I had to cringe when they started the first song with a couple of very loud clinkers, but after that they didn't miss a beat. At the Tourism celebration the next night the audience went bonkers. The music even moved a group of 10 old ladies to get up and dance along with the rest. Again, at the end of November we were asked to play for an arts and crafts fair which turned out to be another successful concert. Thanks go to Isabel Perrot for inviting us and popping out P1000 for the performance.

Having said good-bye to Thys and James in August we said hello to our two new volunteers, Marc Dawson and Martin MacGregor, in September. Yes, yet another Scotsman, our 4th in five years. We would like to wish them the best of luck. I recently received a letter from Dorothy Graham, the mother of a former volunteer (and Scotsman) who said "his experiences in Botswana helped build his confidence, make him self-reliant, respectful of others, able to turn his hand to what needs to be done next, caring and with a very positive attitude to life. Really great for him. Thank you again." My pleasure.

Success as We See It

I suppose I should start with the results of our 2005 Primary School Leaving Exams, the national exams which all Standard 7 students in Botswana sit for. As I mentioned in the last Newsletter, our results were very good with 5 out of 9 obtaining a B pass. It was the kind of result we may never be able to achieve again. Lets face it, sniffing glue doesn't do anything positive for your intelligence, and it's a common activity for some of our students before they arrive here. But in 2005 we had a group with a higher than normal proportion of professors. They were a joy to teach and performed up to their ability on the Exams. Good job guys.

Also in the last Newsletter I told the story about Onneetse Meshack, who was our Headboy and generator operator, among other things. He came within a whisker of getting an A on his exam. As an update, he is now attending junior secondary school at Motopi CJSS and has been appointed a student leader. We would like to wish him good luck in the future. I am sure the school authorities will be happy to have him around.

Another ex-Headboy, Gabriel Murangi, has secured a job taking care of horses for a safari operation. He then recruited his cousin, Ngova Murangi, who is now working there as well. I recently talked to the owner of the horse safari and she said Gabriel is the only employee she has ever had who she trusts with the keys to her house when she is away. The fact that the boys also know something about building, plumbing, etc. has been beneficial. Hopefully they have now found their niche in life.

Focus on Funding

Where to start? The list is once again, fortunately, quite long, so let me just dive in. The largest cash donation of P24,000 came from the Botswana Development Corporation to sponsor the cost of 2 students. Thanks go to Gaba Gabotswe, the Senior Executive

Secretary of the Corporation for assisting us in getting the money. In his letter he stated that "we usually sponsor developmental projects but we treated your case as a special one." I would be especially happy to entertain you here at the School one day, Gaba. Continuing with our efforts to encourage companies to make annual pledges of support, CA Sales rose to the occasion and agreed to P15,000 per year for 5 years. That's the kind of donation you can bank on, and one of several which is making it easier for us to budget properly. Thanks go to Ian Thomson from CA Sales and Malcolm Thomas, one of our Trustees who did the leg work. Ian, our boat is awaiting your arrival.

Additional cash donations were received from a variety of sources, some old, some new. I will start with the one that touched my heart the most. When I worked in Shakawe I taught with a German man, Stefan Ille, who is now married to Molly, and they have two girls, Lin and Lith. They're the ones in the photograph. The Ille family did what I consider to be something special. They decided that instead of receiving presents for their Christening, the girls would ask people to bring a donation for Bana ba Metsi School. And the adults



also donated by not bringing any special refreshments, if you know what I mean. To the whole Ille family, congratulations for the 860 Euros you raised. Lin and Lith, you are now the youngest donors in the history of Bana ba Metsi School. Friends of Stefan and Molly, Rika and Mike Franken from Fluid Systems in Gaborone, were in Germany at the time and agreed to bring the money to Botswana. And then they added another 140 Euros. That's better than sending it through a bank since it ended up being the opposite of a commission. The Franken's company put in the hydraulic system at the ferry near the School, so they know the area. I am hopeful you will make it up here again so that I can return the favour and show you the School.

The First Lady and Trustee, Barbara Mogae, was once again beating the bushes to see what she could come up with and raised P10,000. This was in the form of 2 donations of P5,000 each from Eve's Club and ESP, two organisations I am, unfortunately, not familiar with. Your efforts are always appreciated Mrs. Mogae and it is an honour to have you on our side. Second-time donors, Linda and Paul Smith, sent us another \$500. It is fortunate for us they are close friends and ex-colleagues of our Board Chairperson, Quill Hermans. (Quill is a very good salesman!) Carole VandenLangenberg, a family friend who often donates, sent us \$300. A donation of £500 was sent by Books for Botswana, a private charity in the UK, for the electrification of the recreation room. Julie and Ross Goldsworthy heard about the School during one of their visits to Botswana. (I'd love to know more about your surname!) I've talked about Art Bruestle in previous Newsletter's. He is a regulator contributor to the School and it seems he passed his generous gene on to his son, Dan, who sent us \$200. Dan spent a few months helping out at the School a couple years ago. Cathy Zerbe, who has also contributed to the School in the past, sent us 500 Aussie dollars. And last but certainly not least, John and Rosemary Cox came through once again with their annual £200 Christmas present to the School. Our sincere thanks go to all of you for helping us keep our noses above the water.

All of those donations are easy to identify from the receipt book, but now comes the tricky part: trying to think of all the people who have given us goods or done something for us. I

will start with Andre Potvin, the Principal of St. Matthew High School, and one of their parents, Helene Cote, who sent us enough of their surplus uniforms to outfit all of our students. The School is located in Ottawa, Canada, which, in a straight line from here, must be directly under my feet. My goodness, how clothes get around these days. We are giving the uniforms to our neediest students which has made them very happy, thanks to Andre and Helene. A very energetic and interesting group of people were brought to the School by Lloyd and Daphne Wilmot. From Norway and led by Axel Bjerkoe, they wanted to see more than the wildlife and natural beauty of Botswana, so they visited the School bearing a gift of 24 basketballs. The teenagers were from a bible group that Axel is involved with and they were very interested in how to get involved in development work. I found the whole thing quite admirable and would like to thank them for their donation. I am now busy preparing Botswana's first Olympic basketball team. Look out "Dream Team".

In terms of books, it was a bumper crop in the third term, especially since all of it was high quality. Vintage 1960's American History books are a dime a tonne, but good books are harder to come by when you're a beggar like me. From Mike and Kirsten Main we got a boxful of travel and nature books which appeared to be new. They were all very beautiful books which the boys really enjoy and they're right up my environmentally-minded alley. Hazel Wilmot (Lloyd and Daphne's sister) gave us 3 large boxes of National Geographic and Reader's Digest magazines which should keep the boys going from now to kingdom come. Another regular supporter, Pam Shelton, gave us 2 boxes of educational books. She has devoted her life to giving out books in Africa and has taken us under her wing. All of these people are friends of mine who have been behind me when times were tough. Thanks guys.

I am going to try making suggestions for ways to donate to the School in the next few issues of this Newsletter. (I believe it's called taking the bull by the horns.) In the last issue I suggested that you donate to the School and consider it a subscription fee for the Newsletter. For this issue, I nominate the Ille family for what they did, making it a learning experience for their children. In some small way it will have a positive influence on their outlook when they grow up. In the next issue you will hear about, who else, John and Rosemary Cox, who are about to embark on one of the most amazing feats of endurance in order to raise money for the School. What is it? I'll tell you in the next issue.

Speaking of donations, I'd like to slip in another request. In case there are any athletic directors out there who want to clean out their storeroom, we are in need of football boots. (To avoid getting a box full of grid iron boots with metal cleats, let me make it clear to all the Americans on the mailing list that I am talking about soccer shoes.) We are more than happy to accept used boots in almost any condition. We will then ensure that they outlive their normal usefulness.

And in Conclusion . . .

People often tell me I must be very proud of what we have accomplished here at Bana ba Metsi School. About 10 years ago I was telling my friends and co-workers in Shakawe, Sarah and Marcus, that I wished the kids took more pride in their work. Marcus, being a very clever chap, pointed out to me that pride is one of the Seven Deadly Sins. I rarely use the

internet but decided to get some information and see if this was true and how I am faring. At the bottom of the list is sloth, the fear of work. I think I'm clean on that one, although it is a beautiful word. Greed? I don't think I suffer from that either. Anger, yes, lust, oh boy, gluttony, can't find a watch small enough to fit my wrists, envy, nope. And there at the top of the list is pride. Since I am already guilty of a couple, the answer to whether I am proud of the School is no. But I would indulge in a little bit of satisfaction since that isn't on the list.

In conclusion, I would once again like to thank all those who have contributed to the School in any way, no matter how small. The staff have gamely dove into an alternative approach to dealing with youth at risk and made the best of it. Quill Hermans, who has literally raised millions of Pula for the School, has the right to think of himself as the co-founder. It was my idea but his wisdom that have gotten us this far. And to the legion of faithful supporters who have continued to provide the necessary financial support, and especially my friends, I take my worn out baseball cap off to you.

Steven Harpt
Director.



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