

Timeline Liberia – March 14th through March 30th

It is my hope that these notes will help you feel a little of what I felt in Africa and to also visualize to some extent what I saw and experienced during our visit to the capitol city of Monrovia and our trip to Karmo Town in Sinoe county, Liberia.

Sunday, March 14th:

After the Sunday morning service, I ate lunch with Cathy and Ben and then we said our goodbyes. I was naturally excited about the trip but sad at the thought of being away from my family for so long. Butch and Lynn Tharpe carried me to the airport in Jacksonville and everything for the rest of the day was pretty routine. A flight to Charlotte, change planes and on to Baltimore. I met Donald Hurst and my brother Rod at the hotel at 10:30 P.M. and we were in bed by eleven.

Monday, March 15th:

We were up and getting ready by 4:30 A.M. We got a bite of breakfast in the hotel dining room and were off to the airport to get checked in. We were told to be there five hours early to check in for overseas flights. Our flight was scheduled for 11:30 A.M. take-off. We soon learned that “schedule” in America does not mean the same thing it does in Africa. We were flying Ghana airlines and we boarded the plane at 5:00 P.M. that afternoon. This would not be our last delay on the trip.

As I was waiting in line to board the plane, I began to feel sick at my stomach. I found out when I got back home that Ben had the same thing. Before we ever left the ground, I had a new seat assignment. It was in the bathroom at the back of the plane. We flew a DC-10 which had four bathrooms in the rear and more up front. I’m sure the other passengers were glad because I personally inhabited one of them all the way to Africa. Everything in me came up. I was “green” sick.

Tuesday, March 16th:

Tuesday came and I was still sick. Now I was dehydrated and weak. What a way to start the trip. At our stop in Banjul, Gambia, the rear door caught on something as they were closing it and broke something off. I figured that it would blow off at 30,000 feet and suck me out of the plane but I really didn’t care right then.

By the time we arrived in Accra, Ghana (4 hrs. late), the plane we were suppose to take to Monrovia, Liberia was loaded and preparing to leave. When the plane left us all standing there in the terminal, I thought that there was going to be a riot! Everyone was hot, tired, and now hollering screaming. The terminal employees told us not to worry. They said that there would be another flight to Monrovia on Thursday at 3:00 P.M. (probably). After all, that was just a little over two days away. Again, schedule means very little to people in Africa.

A military man had us to fill out visa cards for Ghana and charged us \$20.00 each and told us that we could stay in a motel until another plane came for us. We found out later that we didn't have to give him the money. Donald tried to get the money back but to no avail. They told us that we would have to stay in a motel for two days or until another flight was available.

It is now 11:00 A.M. on Tuesday and I was beginning to see a very small light at the end of the tunnel where my stomach was concerned. I was about ready to spend two days in a bed somewhere to regain strength.

People in the terminal were still hollering and carrying on about the delay. Another man came and began to make phone calls. I don't know how he heard anything with all the noise. My head was beginning to hurt by now and the noise just got louder!

He finally said that he was trying to get us a flight and would know something within the hour. He finally got word that we would fly and everyone went crazy with excitement. The "villain" was now the "hero." He said that the plane would leave at 3:00 P.M.

It is now 7:10 P.M. and we are still in the terminal. They did finally bring some fried rice and baked chicken. I was certainly not willing to chance eating anything so I gave mine to one of the ladies working there. She later took our passports and went downstairs and got our \$20.00 back for us. The Lord blesses in every circumstance.

At around 10:30 P.M. they put us on a plane and carried us to Monrovia. There were only twelve of us and we all sat in first class. I discovered that even first class is not good when you are sick. They served us a meal but I wasn't interested in that either.

Wednesday, March 17th:

We landed at the Monrovia airport at 12:01 A.M. and there were almost no lights to be seen anywhere. I was glad that they had enough to land us with. Shadrach was waiting for us and I was sure glad. There is absolutely nothing around the airport. Nothing! I don't know what we would have done. There is no electricity or running water anywhere in Liberia but there is an abundance of bullet holes. Every where you look, the walls are full of holes. The whole place looks like a war zone. We had to check in through Immigrations and let them go through our belongings. We were then met on the outside by a group of young men wanting money. They followed us all the way to the car. We let Shadrach do all the talking as he was the only one of us that understood them. They looked like the type that would have given you the opportunity to give them money before they took it from you.

The airport is 35 miles from Monrovia and there is "nothing" between there and the airport. No shuttles, no taxis, no nothing! The road to Monrovia was dark and full of pot-holes. It hasn't been repaired since the civil war was started in the late 80's.

Monrovia looked bad even in the dark. The only time you see any lights is where someone has the money to afford a generator. Those places are always fenced with razor wire around the top to prevent intruders. The rest of the city is dark and destroyed. Once in a while there would be a hotel or government building with a generator for lights.

We traveled through many streets and turns and finally turned off the street and started down what looked like a foot path, to the house. There were people living along the path. Our place was fenced by a concrete wall with steel gates and broken glass embedded in the top to prevent unwanted guest. The gate was open and people were up when we arrived. Some of the people stayed there all the time. Some of them were there to catch a ride to Sinoe County. The people waiting for a ride were sleeping in the yard.

We laid down and slept for about four hours. It was the first time we'd laid down to sleep since Sunday night. It really felt good. Shadrach gave us his room and bed. There was one bed for the three of us so we lay sideways across the bed. It wasn't too bad for my short legs but my brother really suffered. Being short does have its advantages. We awoke early and they brought us a bucket of water to shave and bathe with. There was a bathroom but no water. You pour water into the toilet to flush it. You get in the tub and "spit" bathe. It doesn't take long with well water. The well is in the front yard. The people are very hospitable. They want to help you do everything.

After a while, we were called to breakfast. They called us onto the front porch where a small table sat with a bowl of eggs and onions sat along with a bowl of bread. This was covered with a net to keep the bugs out. There were people all over the porch and yard. It wasn't comfortable eating knowing that they were not. About two bites of eggs and a piece of bread was all I could swallow. It was good but I felt guilty eating in front of them. They didn't know it, but I hadn't eaten in two days either.

Shadrach took us to town to check us through immigration and the embassy. Words or even pictures cannot describe what we saw. I have never seen anything like it in my life! The people in the U.S. should be on their knees every day praying that God never allows this to happen to us.

Here are a few of the things that we saw on our first trip to Monrovia:

1. Poor people everywhere – some dressed fair but most in ragged clothes.
2. Trash and junk all up and down the roads. (there must be no garbage cans in Liberia)
3. No traffic control or signs – "One hand on the steering wheel, one on the horn, and drive as fast as you can!" The only thing that I saw police do was to direct traffic at the major intersections and hardly anyone paid them any attention.
4. Wheel barrows everywhere – they used them to make money carrying things for people.
5. Piles of scrap metal and car bodies – it belongs to someone we are told.
6. Meat market – live and butchered cows and goats. Meat was hung up with no refrigeration. I don't know how long it hangs out in the hot temperature.
7. Vendors everywhere selling fish and other items. (flies would be swarming over some of the food trays and on the food.
8. A smell between a dump and a sewer was very often present.

9. Lots of cars, vans, and jeeps. The only new ones belong to the U.N. Peace Keepers. Everything else is beat up and bent up. The Yellow Taxis have been bent, beat out, bent again, painted with a brush and on it goes.
10. Stores look nothing like ours. The grocery store was similar to an old country store.
11. Mini vans were used a lot for taxis. They can pack 20 people into a mini van, 6 on top, and up to 4 will ride on the back bumper. (we counted several to make sure)
12. The only guns we saw in Monrovia were carried by Peace Keepers.
13. Everything and everywhere is Hot!
14. I felt packed with six in our car but others would have ten and more.
15. There really isn't much glass left in Monrovia. All windows have been shot out, bullet holes are everywhere, and there are more shell casings along the roads than rocks.

That was my first sights and impressions of the capitol city of Liberia. When we got back to the house, Shadrach decided to make the trip to Sinoe County that day (Wed.).

We began the trip to Karmø Town on Wednesday afternoon, at 4:00 P.M. and we arrived at the Village on Thursday at 4:00 P.M. Bad roads, bad bridges, rebels, flat tires, and many other things (excepting eating) cost us valuable time. The trip was supposed to take about twelve hours.

We carried the big truck, the jeep, and the car. All were loaded with people. We had six in our car and we were the "least" crowded. The jeep had 15 people inside, a huge stack of supplies and a spare tire on the top, and four people that stood on the back bumper and held on during the entire trip. I didn't count the people in the back of the big truck but there were many.

It took us four hours to get out of Monrovia as we were stopping for last minute supplies and other things. We went through the Firestone rubber plantation and that was our first stop. We had to get out and walk through the check point. People were out by the road cooking and selling all sorts of things to eat. I recognized the fish but that was about all. The road from the check point to Buchanan was paved but treacherous. I have never seen a road in such bad shape. The bumpers on the car were scraping all the time. I was sure the car would fall apart before we got to Buchanan. There were small bamboo houses with thatch roofs in little groups along the way. Most would have a fire outside and people would be sitting around visiting.

We turned out into the "bush" country just before we reached Buchanan and passed our last U.N. check point.

Thursday, March 18th:

It is now 12:01 A.M. and everything beyond this is Rebel country as the U.N. has yet to take this part of the country. There is no law except rebel law.

We traveled for a long time seeing little villages along the way. Every now and then we would see someone walking along the road. Shadrach said they were probably returning home after a day or so of visiting a friend or relative.

We came upon a rather large bridge that had washed out. We had to get out and move timbers around so the vehicles could cross. That was quite an ordeal to say the least. One slip and a vehicle could have been gone. We managed the bridge and started on down the road. The roads were all dirt after we turned off at Buchanan. They were washed bad by years of the rainy seasons with no maintenance.

Our next excitement was at what we came to call "Check Point Charlie." We rounded a curve and there were barrels in the road to stop traffic. A few fires were placed around so they could see. Shadrach told us that it was a rebel village and for us not to get out of the car or say anything. When we stopped, they came up to the car and began talking to Shadrach. I couldn't understand much of what was being said but I knew they were not asking to join the choir for the revival. They got louder and louder and finally Shadrach got out of the car and went with them. I'm going to be real honest right now. My prayer life intensified! All I could think about was the Burnham's ordeal in the Philippines and I knew that I did not want to become a hostage. I'm not sure how long Shadrach was gone but I was sure glad when he came back. We were able to leave by giving them some food. At the time I thought that was a pretty good deal. We had traveled several miles down the road before any of us uttered a word. I think that the realization of our vulnerability really hit home at that moment. There was no one to turn to for help except the Lord. Later, (much later), when we could talk freely about the situation, there was a slight glimmer of humor in the ordeal. In the back seat of the car sat a deacon, a preacher, and an accountant (CPA). Here's what was going on: The preacher (Fred) was praying for safety, the CPA (Rod) was hiding his money in his socks, and I'm not sure what the deacon was doing. He never said.

The next challenge came when the left rear tire on the jeep went flat. I'm surprised that all four tires didn't burst from the weight of 19 passengers and all the "stuff" that was tied on top. We took the spare tire from the top and proceeded to change the tire. We had passed two ladies and a child back down the road and now they were passing us. We had waved at them and now they waved at us. With the tire changed we were once again on the road. It was daylight now and we could see the country. It was beautiful even in the dry and hot season that was coming to a close. The rainy season was only a month away but you wouldn't know it by the dust and heat.

A few miles down the road, the tire that we had replaced went flat. This was more serious. Now we had to take one of the flat tires and try to patch the tube. We had one tire tool, a make-shift hammer, and a jack that was not made for that vehicle. It was a major chore just getting the tire off but then the real work began. They had a can of glue and an old tube that should have been thrown away. They used a hack saw to scrape the tube clean and then cut some of the old tube to patch the one in the tire. That tube was so full of patches that you had to remove patches to put new ones on. They finally got the patch on the tube and pulled out the air pump to air up the tire. It did not have the end on

the hose to connect to the valve stem. They removed the valve stem and held the hose over the opening to the valve stem and began to pump. My initial thought was, “they’ll never get enough air in the tire to hold it up.” After a lot of pumping by several of the guys, they did manage to get air in the tire and we put it back on the jeep. By the way, the two ladies and the child passed us while we were stopped and waved as they went by.

We got everyone and everything loaded back up and off we went. We passed the two ladies down the road and waved. Not long after, the same tire went flat again! Same routine, same two ladies passed and waved, and on the story goes. That tire went flat at least six times and every time we passed and were passed by the two ladies. On the sixth flat, I stopped them and asked if I might take their picture. They agreed and thought the whole episode was very funny. I asked them how much farther they had to go and they pointed to a little village just up the road. It was an eight hour race between a motorcade and two little ladies and a child and the ladies won! We finally had to give up on the tire and drive it the last thirty miles on the rim. It was a slow go but we arrived at the village at 4:00 P.M. on Thursday afternoon. We were hot, tired, and dusty.

As we reached Karmo Town and turned into the road leading to the village, many of the children came running up to the car shouting and singing, “Hey Shadrach – We love you Shadrach!” They were hopping up on the car and crowding all around.

We got settled into our quarters and went out for a “look-see.” The building we stayed in was the one being built for an orphan dormitory. We had one double bed in our room and we all three slept on it. Once again, we had to sleep side-ways across the bed. It wasn’t too bad for someone short like me, but Rodney’s legs hung off a good bit. He said that they were sore the next morning.

Someone had brought in some monkeys late that afternoon and the cooks were preparing them for supper. After dark, Rod and I were nosing around the cook fires to see how the different foods were prepared. One of the cooks was actually reaching into the hot coals and turning some meat that she had placed there. Rod made the mistake of asking her what she was doing. She said that she was cooking monkey and reached into the fire and got him a piece out to taste. She then said that she would get me some and I quickly offered to eat part of Rod’s piece. I don’t see how she put her hand into the fire without getting burned but she did. The next morning we had meat and gravy with our rice. It was exactly what I thought it was. I wasn’t all that hungry any way.

Friday, March 19th:

We got our first good nights sleep on Thursday night. We went to bed before 8:00 P.M. and didn’t get up until around 5:00 A.M. We were going to start the crusade at 6:00 A.M. and I was scheduled to open it with devotion but several delays (including us) forced Shadrach to push the time out. We finally got started at 10:00 P.M. and I brought the message at 11:00 P.M.

We killed the first cow this morning and it was quite an experience. I don't think anyone there had ever been involved in butchering a cow before. I guess they did pretty good considering. No one that I talked to from Karmo Town had ever eaten beef before. Everyone seemed to really enjoy the food and the amount that they received.

We bathed out of a bucket today while balancing on a concrete block to keep from standing on the ground. It was cold but boy did it feel good to be clean. We did our shaving at the well. I did not see my face for a week as there were no mirrors so we had to guess as to how we looked. (Probably not so good!)

We saw our first rice field today. It didn't look like I had thought it would. Farming is sure different over here. Bro. Donald Hurst had a lot of ideas to improve things but I'm not sure anything will change very much very soon. They seem to have their own way of doing things and I guess it works fairly well for them.

The food distribution on the first day was less than good. The effort was great but there were wrinkles to be ironed out. I really felt that I might have instigated a real problem area in the crusade with the idea of feeding all those people.

Saturday, March 20th:

We finally got to bed at 2:00 A.M. this morning and we went to sleep in a thick smoke. The cooks had moved the cooking over near us and all the smoke filtered up and over the windows and walls right into our room. We woke up the first time at 3:00 A.M. to the crowing of a rooster. He roosted in the rafters of the building we were in. I felt like a smoked sausage when we got up at 5:00 A.M. By the second night, I was wishing that the rooster was being smoked! One time he even came down to our room and leaned over our bed and crowed until we ran him off.

After such a late night I figured that no one would show up before lunch but I was wrong. They were back at 6:00 A.M.! They were singing and praising and waiting on the preachers. The services went well that day and the feeding also. Shadrach got everything organized and all was well. We finished up about 11:00 P.M. that night. Rodney brought one of the messages in the morning and I brought one in the afternoon. Rev. Harrington brought the message that night. He was a visiting pastor from Monrovia. Everyone wants to sit as close to the front as possible. (I decided not to tell them how we Baptist thought on that matter) There would be 11 to 15 people squeezed onto a single bench. Those folks never get tired of church. They were there from before daylight until well into the night singing and praying and preaching. It was the biggest item going in the bush country and everybody came.

We have been eating all we wanted. Most of it was good. Sometimes I knew what I was eating and sometimes I was glad that I didn't. We tried to eat what everyone else was eating as much as possible. Some of the foods we had to avoid because they would make us sick and I surly didn't want to go through that again.

Sunday, March 21st:

I got up at 4:30 A.M. this morning to the crowing of “ole faithful.” I wish that he would get a clock! My first thought was of Rob’s birthday (my oldest son). I was wishing that I could at least call and talk to him but that was out of the question. I stepped outside to find three young men catching bugs and putting them in large bowls. I found out that the rain that we had gotten for the past three days had caused the giant termites to come up out of the ground by the thousands. I could think of only one reason that they would be working so hard to catch bugs in the middle of the night and my guess was unfortunately correct. They love to eat them! They pull the wings off, salt them, put them in a pan and parch them like we do peanuts. They were all excited about getting to eat parched termites. Believe me, they are “not” all they make them out to be!

The first thing on the agenda this morning was to meet with about 200 pastors and lay leaders to teach them how to use the Evangecube. The meeting went well and everyone caught on quite well. Bro. Donald Hurst and Rodney Edwards helped me demonstrate how to work through the E-Cube and present the plan of salvation with it. I was real pleased with the results of this meeting. The recipients of the E-Cubes threw their plastic bags on the ground (as they do everything else). The kids later grabbed them up and used them to collect termites in. I’ll have to share that with the Evangecube team. Nothing wasted!

It was Sunday and the final day of the crusade. Everyone wore their very best. I really don’t know how some of them stood the heat in the dresses and suits that they wore. Sweat was literally pouring off them (as it was this tenderfoot). The main preaching started at 12:51 P.M. after much singing, praising God, reading the Bible, and testimonies. Shadrach brought the final message and did a great job. God definitely has the right man for the job. At 2:00 P.M. we finished the service.

The total registration was 1825 people. Most of who were preachers, lay leaders, and choir members. We recorded 350 professions of faith during the crusade. Not bad for the group that was there.

The next order of business was eating the last meal and then distributing the clothes that everyone sent over in the container. Pictures do not adequately describe the crowd of people that were there for the clothes. It was a mass of folks. I don’t know how Shadrach kept it all in order but he managed it somehow. It took hours to get the clothes handed out to everyone. Everyone seemed to be very happy with what they got. It really feels good to help people.

As the crowds began to disperse, we also relaxed somewhat and enjoyed the company and conversation of the folks who came with us and of those who lived at the village full time. We turned in early and got as much rest as three men can on a double bed.

Monday, March 22nd

We woke up to much less confusion this morning as most of the people had began their journey home. Some of the men were changing the front tire on the big truck so they could carry some people to Greenville (about a three hour drive on a good day with no problems).

Shadrach led us on a visit to the clinic and school. The school is made of bamboo, thatch, and some tarpaulin. The floors are dirt and there are no lights. There were eighty children in the K-1 class room which was a 12'x 24' room. There was one teacher and all the children were seated and orderly. We took a group picture and they enjoyed that.

We visited the clinic where there were four people waiting for treatment. The clinic has a waiting room and six individual rooms. It is made of bamboo/mud walls and a thatch roof.

The church was 30' wide x75' long with 52 benches approx. 14 feet long. The benches are made of rough cut 2'x4' and 2'x6' boards with no back rest. While we were there they needed more room so they built a 10'x48' addition and 18 more benches in less than a day without a business meeting or a fund raiser! (And we want to improve on that?)

Afterwards we walked into the village to see the homes and meet some of the people. We got to see firsthand the living and cooking arrangements of the bush people. We visited an elderly lady who was very sick. If she were in America, it would probably be minor but we were told that she would die soon. Our clinic is just not equipped for such. Maybe one day. We spoke with a man dying with Malaria or something. There is just no medicine with which to treat people.

We made a trip into the bush (jungle) to see the lumber process again today. It is amazing what they can do with so little.

Today seems to be a day of relaxation. Even the cooks are moving slow today. Rod just walked by "Baby Girl" at the cook pot and she told him that she was cooking some "bush" meat for us for supper. That could be monkey, raccoon, or anything moving! Oh well, I wasn't all that hungry anyway. The heat does have a way of taking the hunger out of a person.

We walked down to the well and found some of the ladies taking care of our laundry. They washed everything by hand and laid it out any and every where to dry. We left most of our clothes with them when we left. These people have been so good to us. They just can't seem to do enough for you.

In the afternoon "Baby Girl" made some coconut candy for us. She took some sugar that we brought and cooked it to a liquid and then added chopped coconut and stirred it down into a candy. It was delicious!

A new preacher showed up today and Shadrach asked me to teach him how to use the Evangecube. After the training session we gave him one to take with him. Shadrach then

questioned him very thoroughly about his beliefs and about his church. Shadrach is very determined to thoroughly train the pastors in correct doctrine.

Tuesday, March 23rd

After a good night's rest we were up early with the rooster and ready to go. Shadrach decided that we would start for Monrovia today so we got our few belongings together that we would need for the trip home and were ready to go by 7:00 a.m. As they were loading the big truck I was praying that we wouldn't have a flat because we now had no spare tire for it. We had to leave the jeep as they could not find a tire in Greenville. It is amazing to me that in one of the largest cities in Liberia, you cannot find many of the basic needs for an automobile. If you are not prepared when you enter the "bush" country, you are literally placing your life in jeopardy.

We left the village at 11:00 a.m. (late as usual), after saying all our good-byes and taking one last look around, wondering if we would ever see the people again or even the country. We stopped at the main road to meet the big truck and all the village people came out to say good-bye. Even the sheriff came out. He was a lot of fun during our stay. At 12:00 noon we started our trip back to the city, praying for a safe, twelve hour trip. Liberia has the worst roads I have ever ridden on. There are ruts and wash-outs that will almost turn a vehicle over.

My excitement of getting back to Monrovia was equally dreaded by three major obstacles that we were to face during the first six hours of the trip. If we could get past these, there was hope of arriving safely back to Monrovia. They were as follows:

- (1) A bad wash-out in the road at the bottom of a ravine. The truck had problems crossing earlier and it has rained each day since.
- (2) A high bridge that has partially washed away that we had to patch to get over on the trip in.
- (3) The Rebel Checkpoint ("Check Point Charley")

All along the way we stopped and picked up "riders" and their goods that they were carrying into town to sell. We did this in order to collect money for gas in Buchanan. We didn't have enough to make it all the way home. Our first stop (friendly checkpoint) was about twenty miles into the trip. As soon as we stopped, everyone came running out from everywhere with all types of food to sell. There were raw and fried bananas, nut bread, and things we didn't recognize. It was here that I first saw the cab of the truck go up and I immediately knew that we were in trouble. We fought air in the fuel line for the next several hours every time we stopped.

Obstacle #1:

We made it through the bad wash-out. The truck bounced all over the place but it eventually bounced out on the other side. Every time we stopped, everyone unloaded and then we had to reload before we could move on.

Obstacle #2:

We crossed the bad bridge. The tires on Shadrach's car were half on and half off the bridge runners. If a tire had slipped or a board had moved we would have been in real trouble. We had to reposition the runner boards for the truck. It made it across but the boards were kicking up and shifting as the truck bounced around and exited the other side. I don't know how the bridge can last much longer without repair.

Obstacle #3:

We arrived at "Check Point Charley" at exactly 5 p.m. That's 12:00 noon Suwannee Baptist time and people had agreed to pray for us at that time each day. This didn't occur to me until we were one our way. I had already prayed and placed my trust in Jesus as there was nothing that I could do. No one had said much about this stop but it had been on my mind ever since our stop on the way in. I was very much dreading this moment. My prayer had been for an uneventful, momentary, delay but such was not to be the case. We were met by the spokesman for the rebels and he demanded 4000 Liberian dollars to let us pass. Within a minute or two, people were coming from everywhere and all of them were hollering and carrying on about many things that I didn't understand. After a few minutes, they let us pull a few yards past the check point but kept the truck behind the barricade. Some of the rebels were about drunk and all of them were talking loud. They would get around the car and say things to us and laugh. Some didn't laugh and they worried me the most. After a while a young man came out of the camp carrying a shoulder mounted rocket launcher and waved it around to help us decide on the price of safe passage. In the mean time, the truck had broken down again (of all places!). After an hour and a half or so, those of us in the car were allowed to move. We went approx. 300 yards around a curve and there was another barricade! We blew the horn and out came another young man carrying an AK-47 rifle. Once again the issue was money (and power). Shadrach got out and talked to him. Some time later he let us go a little farther down the road to wait on the truck to crank. By the way, Shadrach got to witness to the man with the AK-47 rifle. My old "Marine Corps" training was surfacing and I had to ask God to help me suppress my thoughts as they were as kind as probably they should have been. I would have a hard time dealing with these situations. Shadrach did a much better job than I would have.

Shadrach parked the car right next to a trail that led into the bush. It was getting close to dark by this time and people started coming out of the trail in the cooler part of the day. There must have been a rebel camp down the trail as everyone coming out was carrying an Army knife, machete, or gun! One of them spied Rod's camera and got him to take his picture. This was unusual as most rebels don't want their identities known.

We finally heard the truck coming and got ready to move on. As I look back, I am truly glad that our folks were praying for us at that time. We didn't go one mile before the truck broke down again and it was to "bleed" the fuel lines again. Another hour gone!

I think every little village on the way back to Buchanan had a "check point" set up and was trying to get money from us. Some we gave a little and to some we gave nothing.

Buchanan and the U.N. checkpoints were a blessed sight. We stopped to fuel the truck and were on our way toward Firestone and Monrovia. I don't know what the stress level was that day but it was high for sure. We lived on bananas and "soda crackers" for the entire trip.

Wednesday, March 24th

We arrived at the Monrovia house at 3:30 a.m. The trip back took 15 hours and 15 minutes; a marked improvement over the 24 hour trip out to the village. We lay down and slept for four hours and got back up again. We shaved and bathed and boy did it ever feel good to be clean again. They brought us hot tea, scrambled eggs and onions, and bread for breakfast. That was a fine meal. Once again the ladies are doing everything for you. It makes you feel bad but that is their way of showing appreciation for you being over there to help them.

We spent the morning just sitting around and relaxing after the trip from the bush. My back-side was about wrecked and really needed the rest. It was Ben's, my youngest son, birthday now and I was wishing that I was home to give him a hug. He was fourteen.

Later in the day Shadrach carried us into town to visit a patient in the hospital. There were approx. eight people to a room with no A/C, no clean bed clothes, and it was hot! You could get sick just being there. A person would have to be bad off to want to stay there.

We later went to visit a relative of Shadrach's outside Monrovia. They were also gracious to us. A young boy climbed a coconut tree with a machete and threw down a coconut for each of us. The father proceeded to peel them with his machete and cut the top out so we could drink the juice. It had been a long and tiring day and I was in the sack by 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 25th

At 4:00 a.m. I was up with a back ache. Not to uncommon with the sleeping conditions. I went out onto the porch and waited for daylight when I could see to read my Bible. Rod happened to be up also and we spent three hours discussing the ministry and the business that would support it here in Monrovia. There seemed to be someone stirring around all hours of the day and night. Of course there were always the guards around to see that nothing was "misplaced" or tampered with. They were all friendly and we enjoyed a somewhat understandable conversation.

Daylight came with a scurry of people coming to buy ice water to re-sale on the streets going to town. Shadrach took us to town later to shop for a tire for the jeep. We bought a tire and two tubes and got the blinker fixed on his car. We all exhausted our expertise and decided that the blinker relay was the problem.

Rod and I took Shadrach to lunch where we could discuss the business end of the ministry and we also discussed setting up record keeping and accountability that help us keep up with things back in the U.S. Rod worked the last two days that we were in Liberia to set up records and tracking of the business in Monrovia. This was the first time that we had felt air conditioning since we left the U.S. Boy was it nice. It was almost worth the high price of the meal just to enjoy the cool air.

As I laid down that night I thought of how much I missed my family. Cathy and Ben had gone to Texas with her mother to welcome a nephew home from Iraq and were probably on their way home. I was sure looking forward to seeing them again.

Friday, March 26th

We were to go into town with Skipper and Gertrude early on the last morning but at 9:45 a.m. the car is jacked up and getting a "lift" kit to help with the pot holes in the roads. Oh well, there was really no hurry. By this time we were getting accustomed to delays.

Rod and I passed on breakfast this morning. It was pretty hot and we just didn't feel hungry. They served cassava with gravy today. The rest of the day was spent discussing the business and working on the computer program that would help Shadrach see profit and loss and also to project and adjust the business. These last two days were mostly leisure days for Donald and me. Rod did most of the work with the business. We enjoyed the time with the people and we learned a lot about how they survived the war and what they hoped to see happen in the future of Liberia. None seemed to have selfish desires, just a dream of peace and prosperity in their country again.

Saturday, March 27th

It was Saturday morning, 11:00 a.m. and we were told that we would go into town as we didn't get to go the day before. At 1:00 p.m. we finally went to town to buy souvenirs to carry home. It was a madhouse! The streets were packed with thousands of people, some selling, some buying. I think we were the only three white people in Monrovia and everyone wanted to sell us their merchandise. It was hard telling Shadrach, Gertrude, and Skipper what we were looking for but we decided on something made in Liberia and ended up with dresses, sandals, and leather goods. I was glad when we left town and went back to the house. Shopping at the Oaks Mall in Gainesville is a pleasure compared to downtown Monrovia.

We arrived at the house a 5:00 p.m. and began packing for the trip home. I was anxious to board the plane. We decided to skip supper, as we did lunch, because we were too tired and hot to be hungry. We did share an ear of roasted corn on the way home from town.

Rod spent the evening with Shadrach going over the business while I talked with Skipper about the names and numbers for the conference. There were more people there than I had imagined. In order to receive clothes and food at the revival, the people had to

register so everyone was glad to comply and it gave us an accurate count. There were over 1800 people who registered.

We went to bed at 9:30 p.m. to get a good nights rest before leaving the next day.

Sunday, March 28th

We were up at 5:00 a.m. getting everything ready to go to the airport. As we did in the village, we left everything that we didn't think we would need for the trip home. Gertrude served us eggs, bread, and coffee for our last meal. As soon as we finished we were ready to go. We arrived at the airport at 8:00 a.m.; the Ghana airline personal showed up sometime after 10:00 a.m. We had to wait outside under a tree. There were benches but you had to dodge the bird droppings! As we were finally herded through the terminal, we were charged two different fees just to be able to leave Liberia. We were down to having to pool money together but our motto by this time was, "whatever it takes!" Our plane left at 2:00 p.m. and all looked well until we landed in Accra, Ghana. We found out that our flight had been canceled and would leave instead at 8:00 a.m. the next morning. They wanted us to pay \$20.00 to stay in Ghana overnight but everyone refused so we did too. We spent the night in the terminal and bought water to drink. As before there was no running water.

After awhile, the hollering and fusing started as is was when we came through the first time. People ran out of water and the tempers flared. Around 8:00 p.m. the terminal personal took everyone with passports (other than Americans) to a hotel to spend the night. We foreigners got to stay in the terminal waiting room. They did bring us water and a meal around 9:30 that night. Rod found a man with a cell phone that agreed to let me make a "short" call home for \$8.00 so I called Cathy to let her know that we were still in Africa. I couldn't talk much but it was good just to hear her say "hey." We lay down for about four and a half hours of "terminal" rest.

Monday, March 29th

At 4:00 a.m. we were up and waiting for the plane. We didn't want to take any chance of missing our flight as the next one could be days away. Some lady woke up at 5:00 a.m. and started chanting some ritual. She sang for awhile and then recited something or maybe she was preaching. I didn't understand much either way. We finally left Ghana at 9:00 a.m.; "Thank You Jesus!"

We landed in Gambia at 11:40 a.m. and had to debark and go through immigrations one last time before entering the U.S. At least they didn't make us pay this time. This was the first time that I had trouble with my film. I was carrying several disposable cameras and they were not familiar with them and decided that they needed to go through the X-ray machine. We had quite a discussion going about what they were and whether or not the X-ray would harm them. I'm sure they were concerned about explosives. Finally, a young man came and asked me to go with him. He had never seen a disposable camera either. I explained what they were to him and he seemed very interested. We discovered

that I had one camera left that was still in the wrapper and he suggested that I might want to give that one to him. When I said that I thought it was a good idea, he walked me the rest of the way through security and personally put me on the bus to the plane. They never did check to see if it was explosives!

We finally left the African continent and were on our way to Baltimore. Upon arriving we went to U.S. Air and pled our case. We had missed our flights and needed to make new arrangements. The attendant laughed when he heard that we were on Ghana airlines and helped us get new tickets. Rod made a quick connection and started home. Donald and I were no so lucky. Our flight was late which made us miss our connection in Charlotte. I couldn't catch Cathy in time so she went to Jacksonville airport only to find out that I wouldn't be there on that day. The only good thing at that time was the "running" water. I was washing my hands every few minutes just because I could do it with running water. America is great!

Tuesday, March 30th

After a night of mostly running around in terminals and a few hours sleep in a motel, we made it to Jacksonville and I got to see my wife. She was a welcome sight. We stopped for lunch with Butch and Lynn Tharpe who were nice enough to let me bath and shave at their house.

This was a trip that I will never forget. My story here is with the hope of portraying to others what I felt and experienced during my travel and stay in Liberia, Africa. There is a completely different story of the, mission opportunity, humanitarian needs, devastation, and other areas that I could share but that will be another day. I will always be grateful to those who made it possible for me to experience the conditions and lifestyle of the people that we have committed ourselves to help both economically and spiritually. I especially thank God for His guidance, grace, and protection during our journey.