

Africa Calling

A REPORT FROM THE NEAR EAST

By NELS ANDERSON

(Written December 11, 1966)

Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year come from the Anderson family in Africa!

It is that time of year already and while it doesn't seem "Christmasy" here, the calendar says it is. It also reminds us that it has been a long time since we have written "Africa Calling" column, and if you will bear with me, I'll relate some of the happenings since I wrote last.

I might say this inspiration came from our first Christmas cards from home that have been arriving lately — the first one from the Frank Hamlin's — with a nice newsy letter from Hazel that we thoroughly enjoyed.

After a short month of vacation in July and August, visiting eleven European countries, which we enjoyed much, we returned to the regular "grind" again. My six method-result demonstrations were harvested and exceeded my fondest wishes. I worked hard on them, visiting the six 90 times in seeding, cultivating, fertilizing and applying insecticides before harvest. These were all planted in straight rows, unheard of in this country, to be able to cultivate them with animal-drawn cultivators.

Yields Over Twice Average

By proper spacing, cultivation by donkey and horse-drawn sweeps and cultivators, fertilizing and applying insecticides, my yields were from two to 2½ times the normal yields. While average yields of check plots were 1000 to 1200 pounds per acre, mine ranged from a high of 3140 to a low of 2360 pounds per acre. My cooperators, who had no experience with any of the several practices (modern!) I used, were quite impressed with the yield. While they don't know what an acre or a hectare is, they still know what the yield has been on each field over the years.

Now all I have to do is sit back and wait to see how many follow these methods next year! One thing I can say — I had a lot better turnout at my demonstrations here than I ever had in Morrow county. It was not uncommon to have 125 men, women and boys (naked) out to the field each time I came. I think I can compare it to the old thought I always expressed, though, that people come out when a new agent comes to the county to see what he looks like and how he acts. I was the first white man a lot of these people had ever seen. Anyway, even though it was real discouraging at times I felt real good at harvest time when the farmers of each of the villages I worked in came with gifts ranging from a big sheep buck down to chickens, guinea and eggs.

Work Changes

My work changed abruptly quite soon after returning from Europe when I was put in charge of a young farmers' training center which was scheduled to be built about 25 kilometers out of Niamey in the Niger River Valley. This project, the second to be built in this country through the cooperative efforts of the Niger government and USAID, is aimed at enrolling young unmarried farmers in a practical farming experience at the center. These young farmers come from their farms, staying at the center for one crop season learning to use animals and animal-drawn equipment, and otherwise following improved farming practices suitable to their farms. At their "graduation" they are given credit to purchase a team of oxen, a tool bar with plow, sweeps and lister type attachments, yoke and cart which they will use on their farms, paying for it in five yearly installments.

The first of these training centers has been in operation for almost four years and is quite successful. It is located across country from Niamey and has the Hausa farm boys enrolled, real farmers compared to the Djerna which are the tribe of Western Niger.

200 Acres in Center

The training center consists of 200 acres of dryland and irrigated cropland, about evenly divided. The land was condemned by the government and put together from small private fields. Since taking over, I have had an average of 45 laborers at work building fences, dormitories for the young farmers, kitchen, housing for the staff, and the digging of a well for a water supply. We have poured over 1500 reinforced concrete fence posts, 50,000 concrete blocks for eight 30x15 foot dormitories, a kitchen-storeroom, a two apartment county agent's home, a house for six Peace Corps volunteers, put up almost five miles of boundary and cross fences (woven with two barb wires), etc. and etc.

Luckily our 200 acres are on the headgate of the main irrigation canal so we have first use of the water and are free of drainage water problems from the neighbors. The largest field is five acres so we have a lot of "piddling" to do and as soon as possible will rearrange the whole system to make it more efficient. We have dug

main canals, cleaned and developed leader and laterals, poured concrete headgates and are now in the process of plowing, leveling and getting our first crops in. This is a long, slow process by oxen.

Must Haul Water

We are training oxen and now have six pairs that are "broke" to pull the plows, sweeps, harrows and the float I built for land leveling. We have to haul all our water about 1 mile by oxen cart and two 55 gallon barrels.

Originally a well was started at "headquarters" but after 60 feet of digging and concreting up through mostly solid rock, it was abandoned. Since August, we have drilled 16 four-inch holes and finally found a source of supply about 2000 feet from the buildings. We drilled four holes and are pumping from all four holes (each 18 feet deep) with a windmill in the center. We have to pump it up a 56-foot elevation so will install a second windmill to take it by steps.

We hope soon to have water into the buildings for the students and the three houses we are building for housing the American director, and two Nigerian counterparts. Our house will be done in a couple more months and we can move out from town. It is a real nicely planned three bedroom ranch-style home. Right now I have to go out every morning at 6:30 and don't get home until six or seven at night, but I have an "office" set up so I can do a lot of my business right there.

To Train 65 Per Year

The first 20 of 65 young farmers we will train each year came on November 1, so we have finished our first month of "school." We will eventually have the 65 when everything gets finished, and especially after we have a water system. They will stay a whole year as we have both irrigated and dryland crops, the irrigation season from November through March, and the dryland from May through October. We hope to be ready for the rest of the farmers by the time we start getting our land prepared for the dryland crops, millet, sorghum, peanuts and green manure rotations. We have planted now broom corn, corn, rice, wheat and manioc. We have an orchard of pineapple, coconuts, dates, cashew nuts, papaya, grapefruit, lemons and limes, as well as gardens for each student. We will spend most of this season just plowing and leveling the rest of the irrigated land.

Helping me are six Peace Corps volunteers, five of whom have never seen a farm before coming here. One is an architect, one an artist, one a graduate of philosophy, one a traveler, one a Reed College student, one unknown background, the other an Indiana farm boy. I think they take more of my time than the 20 students, but they are good workers and try hard. One is catching on quite well as an oxen trainer, one has taken charge of the orchard-garden and goes about with a book of gardening in his hand all day. The architect is becoming quite a mason and builder, two are well diggers and one operates a welder and is a fix-it man. So we do all right. Four of the six were trained to dig wells so will be leaving soon after the first of the year when their supplies for well digging get here from the states.

Patience Needed

I will train three extension agents as we go along and they will have the main responsibility of working with the young farmers. It is a real interesting experience, and if I can just be patient with the slowness of everything, I think it will come forward to putting some of the techniques I learned this summer into practice on the 120 acres of dryland crops we will have next summer.

This is the cool season. It is real comfortable all day and gets chilly at night. I believe the temperature has gone down into the low fifties already some nights. It is hard to get the students out of their warm beds these cold mornings. We have moved into a new house and are enjoying the neighborhood. It is next to the ambassador's house and near more Americans. Rick has six or seven boys his age to play with now so he is happy. The American community has more than doubled since we came to Niamey as well as the Peace Corps being a third larger. People come and go so we are now "old timers" with only three families here now that were here when we arrived.

Go on Giraffe Hunt

With the busy schedule of getting the farm center opened, it has been impossible to spend much time doing other things. We enjoyed a Sunday outing a few weeks ago with "Mr. and Mrs. Ambassador" and two other couples on a giraffe hunting trip and a picnic. We saw 22 giraffes, the largest ever seen in Niger. Hope our pictures come out good. One old bull looked like he would weigh two tons. We have been to the camel and livestock market. I al-



MRS. NELSON C. ANDERSON (center), wife of Near East Foundation agricultural advisor and formerly of Heppner, together with Mrs. Robert J. Ryan (right), wife of the U. S. ambassador to Niger, Africa, and hospital attendant (left), are shown at Niamey, Niger, with two native children attired in new kimona type hospital gowns. Sixty of the gowns were made and donated to the Niamey hospital by the American Women's group there. Crib sheets and covers were also given to the pediatrics ward. Children were extremely pleased with their "robes", probably the first they had ever worn, as most children of Niger are naked. Although healthy looking, both are suffering from nephritis, an incurable kidney disease, and their "plumpness" is actually a swollen condition from the poison in their systems. Hospital attendants informed the ladies that both are expected to die in a few weeks. The necklace on the little boy is an African good health charm called "gri-gri". In his case it has not proven lucky. Mrs. Anderson's husband, formerly Morrow county agent, is extension advisor and team leader employed by the Near East Foundation, a non-profit or amission devoting its efforts to "helping people to help themselves" overseas. He tells more about his work in "Africa Calling" appearing on this page.

ways enjoy seeing the bartering for cattle, donkeys, camels, etc. by the Tuaregs and Bouzas. We want to get out to some other markets while the weather is cool and hope things let up a bit during the holidays for this. The Niger Independence Day is December 18 and is a real colorful event. Last year it was combined with the International Fair, a 10-day affair, but this year it will be celebrated for the three day week-end. They are having drills and other activities every night so I think they have some big events up their sleeves.

Did you get out once to shoot a wild pig. The millet fields were full of them, doing much damage, so got a special permit to shoot some to protect my millet demonstration. Got a real nice gilt that was the best eating pork I have ever tasted. Some of us would like to get after some more, but the country is real gun shy and doesn't allow any hunting except on special occasion. Hope we can convince some of the powers-that-be that it is necessary for our work. Maybe they will come in and start rooting up my rice so I can have an excuse!

Last G-T's Arrive Sept. 15

Well, I guess I have rambled on long enough. Hope all of our friends are well and have a good Christmas. We don't get the Gazette-Times too promptly. We are now up to September 15, but hear some of the news from the kids. They all got together for Thanksgiving at Connie's in Milwaukee and seemed to enjoy the visit and getting acquainted with the new additions. Esther can hardly wait until school is out so she and Rick can get back to

see our new granddaughters and catch up on all of her visiting with friends in Oregon and Washington.

By the way, did you know that: Africa is the world's second largest continent and the only continent that lies in both temperate zones as well as the tropic zone? Africa has the longest river, the Nile, and also the largest desert, the Sahara, of any continent? Africa's Lake Victoria is the world's second largest fresh water lake, and it's tallest mountain, Kilimanjaro, rises 19,564 feet above sea level? Africa numbers nearly 320 million people and Nigeria with 56 million has the biggest population of any African country? Africa now has more independent nations than any other continent? Africa produces 80 percent of the world's cocoa and 75 percent of its palm oil and palm kernels? Africa ranks as the leading exporter of peanuts and the second largest exporter of oranges and tangerines? Africa mines over 90 percent of the world's diamonds?

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Rockhound Corner

By RUBY MILLER

Just eleven years ago a group of rockhounds got together at the Heppner Hotel to organize the Morrow County Gem and Mineral Society. Of that group, only four have remained members throughout: Mr. and Mrs. Walt Edger, George Miller and Paul Miller.

At first, the monthly meetings were held in the hotel, then in John Newman's garage, and later in the homes of the members. Now, for the past six years, the old library building has been the meeting place.

Walter Edger was the first president. Succeeding him were John Newman, Hubert Wilson, Randall Peterson, Ruby Miller and Edmond Gonty. Avery Taylor has been elected to serve this coming year.

Each year the club has had a display booth at the county fair. Other displays for the public enjoyment were in Peterson's Jewelers and at the courthouse. The club has participated at every Sidewalk Bazaar in Heppner.

The club is working on two projects: 1. saving and turning in Betty Crocker coupons which may be redeemed for 5¢ each, to be applied to a scholarship fund for any eligible young person studying earth science, 2. saving and turning in cancelled postage stamps for food for hungry children.

Every year the members gather at a Christmas banquet and exchange rock gifts. This year we met at the Wagon Wheel on December 17. At a short meeting some unfinished business was taken care of, and officers were elected for the coming year.

Besides the new president, Avery Taylor, they include Eleanor Gonty, vice president, and Johanna Taylor, secretary-treasurer.

Typing Paper, Mimeograph paper and other office supplies for sale at the Gazette-Times office.

Sheriff Asks Care From Motorists

"The tragic death of a seven-year-old school boy in southern Oregon is a grim reminder to all Oregon motorists to be extra alert for children along our highways," Morrow County Sheriff C. J. D. Bauman said last week.

The youngster was hit by a truck as he waited in front of his home for the school bus. Sheriff Bauman urged Morrow county residents to caution their children to wait for school buses a safe distance from the highway.

He reminded drivers that children don't drive, so they don't know the dangers involved in stopping a car in time to save a life.

"The responsibility is yours—as parents and motorists," said Sheriff Bauman.

"Drive carefully during the holidays," he added.

BOWLING

BLUE MOUNTAIN	
Team	W L
Crisp	40 22
MCGG	38 22
Rietmann's	32 28
Gar	31 29
Central	30 30
Mel's	26 34
Gardner's	22 38
Peppi	21 39

High Ind. Game—Al Fetsch, Art Dyck, Don Ball, 212; High Ind. Series—Art Dyck, 591; High Team Game—Rietmann's, 1014; High Team Series—Rietmann's, 2905.

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Boardman News

By MARY LEE MARLOW

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Donovan and daughter Sharon visited Sunday in Pendleton at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dan Bell.

Mr. and Mrs. Harley Hand and children Cynthia and Harley, Jr. of Centerville, Wash. were Saturday visitors at the home of Mrs. Leo Root.

Mr. and Mrs. Truman Messenger of The Dalles visited Sunday at the home of Mrs. Messenger's brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Zearl Gillespie. They also visited with another brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Ball.

Happy
New Year
As we enter into the New Year
1967... May each of us in our own
individual way so rededicate our
lives that brotherhood of man will
become a reality, and that the true
meaning of Christmas will be felt
everywhere and for all time to
come.
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