God is amazing! I sure do love to see Him working in people! He draws us close to Himself, synchronizes our hearts with His, then propels us out into the world to spread His love and joy. The propelling part can be a bit challenging though! We can all recognize that it often is easier to stay in our cocoons of comfort and ease, being absorbed into the ebb and flow of life and work, but sometimes God has a bigger purpose for us, a purpose that is beyond ourselves, a purpose designed exactly for the person He has made us to be. In the last year, God has brought to me many wonderful visitors to share in our ministry here in Uganda. We have had a Medical Team living in tents in the bush; Construction teams building onto the vision of the local church; and Discipleship teams drawing the local people deeper and further into God's presence and purposes. We had some Vet teams come out, teaching vet students, treating animals and training local warriors and traditional healers; a Timothy Project team loving on orphans; and even some of my own Family participating in our spiritually-driven adventures! Some have stayed for longer, like our interns over the years: those of Anita, Jessica, Eitan, Denise, Daniel, Jessie, Megan, Adriane and recently, Heidi. Interns are students who stay for 1-10 months, making themselves available to participate and learn in whatever situations God has for them during their stay. As a team, we greatly value the concept of mentoring, walking alongside others in the body of Christ to stir one another on to love, empowering each other and building upon the Lord's work in each other's lives. This Investment into the lives of others can change their futures forever, opening up a new world of spiritual opportunities as we pour ourselves into their hearts and challenging their souls.

As someone who lives out here in the African bush, I can really appreciate the sacrifices and effort that these visitors make in coming to serve God, freely and joyfully offering their hands and hearts to the Lord. They open themselves up to risks: physically – such as sickness, hunger, thirst, potential road accidents and violence; psychologically – with assaults on the psyche through cultural and language challenges; spiritually – trusting God through changing schedules, confusing cross-cultural relationships, attacks of spiritual warfare; and economically – with loss of work time, donations of funds for ministry and compassionate surrender of money to those they find in desperate need. Yet they keep coming... and keep serving... persevering for the sake of sharing the Good News of Jesus, our Messiah. They are our Heroes!

One of the greatest pleasures I have in missions mentoring is helping people overcome their fears and release their grip on earthly comforts, accepting to live a surrendered, simple life. Here are some examples of the experiences that we have been sharing together:

- Flying in on the bush plane over deserts of acacia and cactus and small, remote villages.
- Bouncing down the roads in the rugged Landy (Brutus) and splashin' through the mud holes, then crawling under the disabled Landy with our duct tape and Leathermen in hand.
- Language learning, (being entertainment for the communities), multi-lingual praises and prayers.
- Tromping through the thorny bush in our flowing skirts, while being careful to avoid the steel traps, snakes and human feces, or... remains.
- Carrying a 40 lb jug of water on your head from the spring for bathing, balancing sidesaddle on wobbly, bicycle taxis with a live chicken in your hand, Driving Brutus!
- Leading a witchdoctor to the Lord and burning her fetishes.
- Treating people for worms, scabies, pneumonia, elephantiasis, leprosy. Visiting TB patients and carrying wounded warriors to the hospital, Praying for the sick.
- Eating grasshopper cheese sandwiches and roasting rats, sharing my preference of rumen over large intestine, (we really don't enjoy the natural filling in the intestine), UFOs and FUOs (Unidentified Frying Objects and Foods of Unknown Origin), reprieves for double scoops of ice cream in the city.
- Tying cute, African babies on our backs to carry them around.

- Learning the finer points of culture: Pointing with your lips, discerning which type of rat we are eating by the flavor and texture, drinking juice through carved, wooden straws. Letting people help us. Being a "member". Jokingly negotiating dowry payments with eligible warriors for the single female students.
- Dancing with undulating warriors into the moonlit night. Sleeping on the floor in dusty village huts.
- Awakening to the drum-call and singing of the "morning glory" prayer group.
- Lancing a goat's cup-sized, pus-filled abscesses, splinting the broken leg of a chameleon, catching grasshoppers to feed our wounded birds, treating kicking cows, castrating bulls with US Army dudes.
- Helping with their first injections, seeing the trembling hands of their first surgeries and the joy of the last stitch, conducting a radio talk show on Rabies and TB, demonstrating squealing-pig restraint to villagers. Getting filthy, crusty dirty then bathing with a basin of cold water behind a bush.
- Goat midwifery, hedgehog nutrition, monkey anesthesia, performing complex, cancer surgeries in the villages in the rain, under a leaking stick shelter.
- Testing out herbal medicines and acupuncture on ourselves. "Herbal acupuncture" doesn't work as well: "I think I hit an artery" (as crimson blood gushes from her thorn-impaled foot).
- Learning to respond with contentment to our life situations: "That's quite a workout" (sweating through 4 hour church services with 500 other leaping, rejoicing worshipers), "I'd like to be the vegetarian next time" (after being required to overeat to show appreciation for the villagers' culinary efforts), "Leprosy happens..." (fortunately it didn't!), plucking Thanksgiving dinner together. Living with unknowns, being flexible and not being in control. Teamwork.
- Evangelism cubes and HIV cubes, Jesus film, sharing Jesus to the crowds while standing in a tippy dugout canoe on the lake, bailing continuously and occasionally frantically, on the lake as the water level inches towards the rim of the tippy canoe.
- Building a church, hand in hand and heart in heart with the local believers. Seeing people get saved and grow in faith to serve the Lord.
- Peace Talks with warring tribesmen, developing a vision for the future together with village leaders.
- Discussing together development and dependency, weeping together over the heartaches of poverty and sickness, death, sorrow and suffering. Feeling inadequate. Being inadequate. Trusting Jesus.
- Looooooooonnnnggggg meetings with the CLIDE members.
- Sharing transformational leadership lessons with eager pastors.
- Tossing giggling orphans onto stacks of spongy mattresses.
- Teaching the orphans to "Be bold, Be Strong, for the Lord your God is with You!"
- Climbing mountains to assess spring flow or to share Jesus or to unexpectedly ride a wild boar.
- Growing together, laughing hysterically, collapsing in mutual exhaustion.
- Deep talks on life and destiny, hope and glory. Missing home, no longer feeling "at home" with home.
- Sharing the amazement of watching a billion stars rotate overhead. Praying together. Dreaming dreams. Seeing dreams come true.

This is the spiritual journey that I share with these visitors. I praise our Lord so much for all He is doing in their hearts, and that they have managed to survive our missionary boot camp here! So far, four of them have committed to serving God as CVM fulltime missionaries, and many others continue to serve Him in other ministries around the world. Please pray for these four in their ministries with CVM: **Dr. Barry Schwenk** and his family in Ethiopia, **Dr. Jean Grade-Reed and her husband Tom** in Uganda, **Dr. Denise Ward**, currently in the CVM USA office, **Dr. Daniel Graham and his new wife, Rachel**, soon to come to Uganda to join us. Pray also for our **recent intern, Heidi, and two other recent visitors** as they are all feeling a new pulse of the Lord's heartbeat in their lives, offering themselves to whatever He would like for their future. Maybe God has more for **your future** too. That may be a good prayer as well! God is good! All the time.

Yours in His Palm, Dr. Val

## Friends and Family,

An ancient African legend records that: "The baobab was among the first trees to appear on the land. Next came the slender, graceful palm tree. When the baobab saw the palm tree, it cried out to God that it also wanted to be taller and more majestic. Then the beautiful flame tree appeared with its multitude of red flowers; the baobab was immediately envious of its radiant blossoms and bemoaned its own hidden white blooms that only appear for one night each year, to be pollinated by bats. When the baobab saw the magnificent fig tree, it prayed for tasty fruit as well. God became angry with the tree and pulled it up by its roots, then replanted it upside down to keep it quiet."



Looking at the photo I took in Namibia of the baobab tree, you can see that it is a unique tree; at first glance it can actually look like a tree that has been uprooted and pushed back down in the ground upside-down. The legend tells us that the Baobab was disappointed with its qualities and attributes, continually judging itself against the other trees in creation and finding itself wanting. Often, we humans can belittle our unique qualities as well, often seeing others as more talented, skilful or attractive, more capable, spiritual or resourceful. When in Uganda, I can often feel like I don't have the resources or the ability to stretch myself into the responsibilities and opportunities that the Lord puts on the doorstep of my hut. Usually it is a problem of vision, and not of ability.

Muya was an abandoned two month old baby girl dropped off at our church by her destitute grandmother, after her mother, who was a single parent, died. Everyone at the church gathered around, but no one stepped up to help. Not really feeling the mothering instinct, I also stood back and watched as the grandmother pleaded with the group. I turned away, left the church and walked back to my hut. Sitting on the veranda in my hut I prayed a conflicting prayer about Muya. I prayed for her health, for her grandmother, for someone to step up and help them. I prayed that it didn't have to be me. I blocked it from my mind and went out and worked in my veggie garden, but all the while, the face of little Muya was stuck in my mind. Later, I heard that the grandmother had come and taken the little babe to her village again, although she had no food or milk to feed her. Entering into a needy person's life can be exhausting. It's so easy to look away and disregard their need. Surely someone else will help... I have alot of other responsibilities... I need time for myself... I'm not the baby-type!...

Well eventually, as I was moving through my zucchini patch, God broke through. I could see that I really needed to take time for a prayer of discernment, to seek the Lord's will, rather than pray a prayer of self-protection. "God, please send someone else! I don't know how I can do it...I don't want to take the time to do it..." This self-doubt and self-protection can really damage our willingness to step out to serve God, if we believe the lies of the judgmental voice that disqualifies us or focus only on meeting all of our own needs. When I entertain doubts about myself, I demonstrate the doubt that I have in God. My courage wanes and I

step back from the plate. He could provide the strength for me. He could provide the skills. He could provide others to help me as well. When the grandmother showed up again the next week, with a slightly more frail baby and a more desperate look in her eyes, I agreed to find a place for her to live. She stayed for a couple days with me, and I actually really enjoyed her! At that point, however, a wonderful baby orphanage, run by YWAM (Youth With a Mission) agreed to take her in. Her grandmother may be able to take her back after she gets a little stronger. She may also come up for adoption. God has a plan for her, and in the end, I was glad that I could play my role and be part of her life.

In the closing months of this recent term in Uganda, many challenges came up. Whether it was caring for an abandoned orphan baby, treating over 200 animals affected by the recent Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak, convincing an angry warrior whose brother just got killed to stop raiding, or mending my 3<sup>rd</sup> flat tire in the bush using tree sap, rubber inner-tube straps and duct tape, I often can feel inadequate for the job. I wanted to run from the path of responsibility, close the doors of opportunity, or at least sneak out the window of avoidance! During those trials, I continue to go back to my times of deeper prayer with the Lord, reminding myself of His love and empowerment in my life, and His desire for that love and power to flow through me to others. He "took the cup" and asks me to join Him, and take it as well. Our destiny is woven from the threads of our history. As we take steps, day by day, to stretch ourselves beyond the barriers of our understanding and aptitude, we find ourselves doing the previously impossible. As we approach Christmas and a New Year, I want God to do new things in my life, open up new areas of growth and new opportunities for deepening my love for Him and others. Christ came to earth, knowing the cup that would be put in His hand, His fate was ordained from eternity, but for the joy set before Him, he took the cup and gave thanks. Let us also take the cup that the Lord hands to us, and allow Him to strengthen us with His power, soften us with His grace and enlighten us with His wisdom.

Here are some of the new growth areas that the Lord is providing for us in Uganda, which we really need your prayers for:

- Expansion into the neighbouring communities and tribes (Turkana and Toposa) who have invited us to come help them with livestock interventions and peace building, so as to effectively block the raiding corridors and utilize the fertile, abandoned, adjacent lands.
- Grace from the Lord for two large proposals that we have sent out, to the EU and USAID, which could provide funds to exponentially enlarge our impact in the region and provide necessary resources for expanded operations.
- New team members who bring additional insights and prospects for us as a team to serve together. Pray for harmonious integration, spiritual synergy and good communications.
- Moving forward on Discipleship, Evangelism and Church Planting. We have several new churches that we are trying to get up and running with new believers as local church leaders/pastors. Pray for spread of our Chronological Bible Storying trainings and integration into other church bodies around the region.

If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and power forever and ever. Amen. I Peter 4:11b.

Walking In His Grace, Power and Wisdom,

Dr. Val Shean africavet@yahoo.com

Dear Friends and Family,

We will need your prayers for the people of NE Uganda. Weather patterns have significantly shifted over the last several years, leading to very unpredictable cropping seasons for the farmers in these communities. Many of them lost much of their harvest last year to either drought or floods, which came during the opposite season than they were expected, destroying the harvests. Here is an update from Kodet John Paul, our Peace and Livelihood Coordinator:

## WEATHER CHANGES AFFECT KARAMOJA ROADS AND PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOOD.

Although the rains have reduced for one month, roads are still impassable. Karamoja normally has one seasonal rainfall from March to May. Last year, the rain distribution was especially unusual. Heavy rains caused hazards such as flooding and washing away of the roads, making movement more complicated and damaging vehicles, which were drawn into the flooding seasonal rivers. Roads were blocked and bridges collapsed; traveling became a nightmare. When traders



cannot reach the markets, food and goods get destroyed on the way. Vehicles often get in horrible accidents. This leads to huge financial losses. Even as I travel on my motorcycle to visit the Peace Villages, the mud grabs at my tires and prevents me from proceeding. I often have to walk several miles, pushing the motorcycle through the sticky mud in order to visit the communities.

Even people lost their lives as they were swept away by the floods. The worst was a group of 10 villagers who were trying to cross the floodwaters, holding hands to help each other. One lady slipped, and then as the others tried to hold onto her and help her up, they also slid down in the swirling water. All 10 drowned.

Even as Dr. Val left for the US, we had a horrible flood in the region. She left Karamoja at night, and found unexpectedly that the road had been completely covered with water flowing off of the rain-saturated plains. In the darkness, she could see the road re-emerging from the water almost 100 yards away. Having no other alternative for leaving the region, they drove into the water, only to find it getting deeper and deeper! As her headlights submerged into the floodwaters, and the darkness of the night surrounded them, the water surged up against the sides of the Land Rover. They prayed for God's intervention. Fortunately, they were able to stay on the road and God delivered them on that stormy night.

The flooding also led to many people losing their crops, which may cause them to go hungry in the months ahead. Food rotted and molded in the fields; homes in the rural manyattas looked more like muddy swamps. Crops were affected in farmers' fields, sometimes falling over in the winds, hence

reducing their livelihood investment to 5% of the expected yields. Those in the Peace Villages, fortunately received a better yield. Water- and air-borne diseases increased however; for example malaria and childhood and elderly pneumonia in people, while foot rot and coughing plagued the livestock. Parasites increased in the moist environment, including jiggers infestation in the toes of human beings, and a newly emergent hatch of tsetse flies which brought Nagana to the cattle. Climatic differences have definitely damaged the livelihoods of the people of Karamoja.

When households suffer food shortages, malnutrition and starvation become our greatest fears in the villages, especially for infants and elderly people. The able-bodied youth and school drop outs cope up with the situation by moving out of Karamoja to avoid starvation, providing cheap child labor to the surrounding communities, or resorting to begging on the streets. Whereas the World Food Programme of the UN has been supplying food to the people in the past, they no longer are able to keep up with the global needs. Global food shortages, caused by regional crop failures and increased grain prices due to use of edible grains for biofuels, has greatly decreased the availability of food aid to those who desperately need it.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. The rainwater absorption needs to be improved in the region through larger rainwater catchment systems and drainages. We may need some assistance from friends in the US to help us tame the floodwaters in the region and control the runoff.
- 2. CLIDE should plan for helping those affected by these floods by providing agricultural inputs as few people will have seeds to plant from this season's crops. Alternative livelihoods, such as turkey production, short term crops and processing of food products (meat, fruits and vegetables) should be encouraged.
- 3. Elderly people should be another priority area in terms of economic and social service provision due to their vulnerability.
- 4. People should encourage their governments not to support grain-based biofuels, as this drives up global food prices and decreases food available for the poor.

#### AREAS FOR PRAYER IN THIS CONTEXT:

- Pray for the Karamoja roads to be put in to good shape to enable effective and efficient delivery of services to the vulnerable communities.
- Pray for our elderly, both men and women, to find families who would care for them to improve their welfare.
- Pray for those affected by the recent disasters to develop trust and hope in the Lord.
- Pray for God's mercy on those stranded by the floods and those that lost their homes and livelihoods.

Compiled by Kodet John Paul, Peace and Livelihood Coordinator, CLIDE Consultancy, Napak Office.

Love to you,

*Dr. Val Shean* africavet@yahoo.com

Dear Friends,

Rushing, rushing, rushing. Deadlines, appointments, due dates. My hour hand seemed to be moving as fast as the minute hand used to! It often seems like my world is in fast motion when I'm here in the states. So many things to do, people to see, presentations to organize and places to go. After four months here, I had tried to adjust to the speed of life, but was not finding it satisfying. Something needed to change.

A friend of mine has a tradition in their family. At times when they want to relax on a journey, they engage in what they call "shiny mode". This means that they allow themselves the luxury of not demanding that they meet a specific time schedule, but take time to spontaneously stop along the way at whatever looks like an interesting spot: a café with fresh alligator meat, an historic, old building, a babbling brook with fish jumping, etc. I've been thinking about that during the last couple of months and decided that I want to live my life more in "shiny mode". I've been rushing so much, pressing towards the goals that I have in mind, that the people I meet along the way have often been just a blur of color and motion. I feel that I've been missing some of the purposes that God has set for me.

Here's my verse for the month: "By His power, He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith." II Thessalonians 1:11

For several days, as I was driving to various appointments around Corvallis, I saw an older, scruffy looking African American man standing alongside the road with a crumpled cardboard sign. "Anything can help". I passed by, once, without concern, trying to look the other way as I approached the stop light where he was stationed. The second time, at least I said a short prayer for him, "Lord, help him with his needs, lead him to the right people that can draw him to you", while changing lanes so that I wouldn't stop directly in front of him at the stop light. The third time, I realized that the 'right people' that I had prayed for... actually included Me! I looked him in the eye, immediately connected with his humanity, and saw God's purposes come to light. I pulled into the parking lot and rolled down the window. Having just come from Fred Meyers, I pulled out a box of granola bars to share, while he told me his story. Lawrence is from Alabama, had been a house painter and a cook for a couple restaurants, got in some troubles, then needed to get out of there. Lost his house, didn't want to talk about family, except his mom who he still called to check on her. My mind pondered the direction that I should go. Was a granola bar and "good luck to ya" enough? Probably not. I needed to shift into "shiny mode" and release my obsession with speed and efficiency and step off of the treadmill. God has purposes that he wants to fulfill in me by His power, through my faith in Him.

Now it's a month later, Lawrence cleaned up his scraggly beard; we got him into some low cost housing; and he's been joining our church men in working on home projects for the needy and elderly. He's going to church and has put in several job applications with restaurants in town. He calls me his "big sister"! I saw that the turning point for both he and I was when I looked him in the eye. There was no more denying his need and my ability to step forward. God had a purpose for both him and me to fulfill, and He intersected our lives at that point.

Too often, I haven't embraced life intersections, opting for tangential relationships rather than parallel. I think because of hurts and pains of the past, I can tend to dissociate myself from the deepest needs of others, including friends and family members. My heart sought to be emotionally detached rather than risking involvement. It's time for a shift in perspective, a change in posture, a deepening of presence with people.

I've been in I Peter the last couple months. "...have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart." I Peter 1:22. "...love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." I Peter 4:8-10 I think part of loving deeply lies in offering hospitality in your heart. Allowing others to enter and reside with you in your core being. This is the path that God has me on. Please pray for my commitment and my courage to open the door and to look humanity in the eye. Please also pray for my plans, as I head back to Uganda at the end of May. Thanks!

Love to you,

africavet@yahoo.com



Val in "shiny mode" training her horse Penuche



# Christian Veterinary Mission

## Africa Vet

#### Dear Friends,

Well, the wedding planning is moving along quite nicely, but tons of things to still do! Waffle and I are so excited to see the Lord's hand moving to bring this amazing adventure to a head! My CLIDE team and the community and church members are all coming alongside to help out. We have our Executive Wedding Planning Committee of 8 members in place who are coordinating the various sub-committees, of which there are 18! We are inviting about 600 to attend the 3 day celebrations, but we expect about 4000 to show up! About 30 will be Westerners and the rest will be Ugandans or Kenyans.

Please pray for the members of our Executive Committee as well as the Sub-Committees:

#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

1.	Chair person	Dr.Otim Moses
2.	Vice chair person	Ven. Joseph Aleper
3.	Secretary	Longoli Mathew /Lodim Charles
4.	Treasurer	James Akoko
5.	Other members	Mama Esther Aleper, Anna Orono,
		Judith Lotukei

#### **SUB-COMMITTEES**

J <b>B</b> - (	JB- COMMITTEES			
1.	Liturgy committee	Bishop.Order of service, wedding sermon, communion church service		
2.	Kitchen committee	Mama Esther. Menu planning. Cooking, roasting bulls, washing up. (600 people to feed for 3 days + community members)		
3.	Procurement committee	James Akoko /Kodet. Purchasing food, camping supplies, dowry (cows, goats), etc.		
4.	Water committee	Lodim Charles. Transport and provision of water for drinking, washing and bathing for 600 people		
5.	Store committee	Ochen Martine/Bosco. Maintain and allocate food and stored items appropriately		
6.	Transport committee	Andrew Loucho /Lowok. Transport food, chairs, tables, equipment and people to site and back again. 3 pickups/cars, 2 lorries, 2 service vans. Construct roads as necessary.		
7.	Construction committee	Julius Opolot. Build stage, 3 latrines, 6 bathing shelters, 1 kitchen shelter.		
8.	Accommodation Committee	Kodet/Lotukei Judith. Obtain, set up and assign adequate housing and tents for 600 visitors in Moroto, Kangole, Nakayot		
9.	Entertainment committee	Locheng Zackary. Organize choirs, bands, videos, dancing		
10.	Decoration /cakes	Rose Locham /Rose Mary. Obtain 16 cakes and decorations and set them up on site		
11.	. Photography	Dan and Rachel Graham. Videography and photography		
12.	. Ushering	Anyakun / Christine Otim. Welcome and seat visitors		
13.	First Aid	Jennifer . Provide first aid services to visitors and attendees.		
14.	Culture	Zackary, Mathew, Esther, Rev. Mark, Ven. Joseph. Ensure cultural and spiritual harmonization of the ceremonies.		

15. Serving committee Anna Orono. Organize and monitor serving of food and

refreshments.

16. Sitting /arrangement Rev. Mark. Seat visitors and dignitaries appropriately.
17. Security committee Mohammed. Monitor and ensure security for people,

equipment and livestock during the function.

18. Bride Committee Bride and Groom. Matron, Maid of Honour, other maids,

Flower girls, Best man, peg boy (ring bearer), touring team of man's age-mates. Escort and accompany the bride and

groom during the wedding.

• Please pray for all those who are traveling here for the wedding. Pray for good preparations, safe travels, a peaceful stay in the Peace Villages, and good travels back home.

We praise God for the help that so many have given for the traditional marriage! We have about 12 cows and 30 goats and sheep that were offered by "fellow-clansmen" (friends and family members of Waffle and myself) for the dowry! We are not doing a wedding registry in the US, as we don't need a toaster oven or fine china here in Uganda! The cows and goats from the dowry help to build our relationships with the clans here, and join us with the community. If anyone would still like to help with a cow or goat, you can contact Waffle at Wafflecrm@aol.com or donate online at www.GoFundMe.com/Brideprice4Val. Thanks!!!

After the wedding will be the Mt. Kilimanjaro Trek, as our honeymoon and group adventure! We are busy doing that planning as well - booking lodges, the tour group, guides, organizing food, planning the route up and down the Mountain, training for the climb, vehicle work, and fundraising for goats and turkeys by each of the climbers.

• Pray also for those staying after the wedding for the Mt. Kilimanjaro Trek. It is also a fundraiser to help orphans and widows by providing a goat or a turkey for their family, which can multiply and bring in an income for them.

We are trusting in the verses from Isaiah 55:12-13:

"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; The mountains and hills will burst into song before you, And all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush will grow the pine tree,

And instead of briers the myrtle will grow.

This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign which will not be destroyed".

God is good. We praise Him for all of our wonderful relationships and for the joy we have of sharing this time with all of you.

Love to you in Christ, *Dr. Val* 

Dr. Val Shean PO Box 27 Moroto, UGANDA africavet@yahoo.com

The sun rose over Mt. Moroto today in a new way. Standing alone among an awakening herd of goats, daylight broke around me. As the new sun's rays burst over the forested, rugged horizon, I turned to face the daybreak. In that moment, the light of an awakening revelation beamed down on me in all the Fullness of Truth. I am REALLY getting MARRIED!! Can this be real??? Is this just one of those crazy, pre-dawn dreams which will end with wings sprouting out of my back and me soaring with Prince Charming over beautiful panoramas into the stratosphere? A whole new reality is about to begin. Am I ready? TWO shall soon become ONE. Can I grasp the implications of the imminent surrender of



my individuality, the yielding of my privacy, giving up my personal choices and freedoms? Have I considered the consequences this will result in for future decision making? Am I ready to defer, to negotiate, to compromise and cooperate? What am I getting myself into???

I stood motionless among the bleating goats, as if teetering on the cusp of a precipice, riding on one of those two headed Push-Me/Pull-You's of the Dr. Doolittle era. My questions met Silence. Come on God, how is this thing really going to work out? What will happen to the "real" me? What will be my new identity? The rays of the sun began to engulf me. I stretched my arms out to receive its warmth. There in stillness and quiet, Comfort soothed my fears. My doubts melted into a pool of peace. My tense shoulders relaxed, my quickened heart calmed. He who dropped me at this watershed moment, will carry me through. An end begets a beginning. It's time to leave and cleave. It felt as if I was at the entrance to some portal: into the contraction and expansion of a new Universe. A new reality awaited me.

Laughing to myself, I remembered one time when a frog got stuck in our water system. We had rigged up a pipe that went from the waterfall to our small, water turbine, which provided electricity to our homes. The frog entered at the top of the waterfall, in a pleasant pool which drained into a large pipe. As the pipe descended the hill, it transitioned into smaller and smaller diameters. When our water turbine stopped working, we disconnected the pipe to see why the water was not flowing. After a few minutes, we noticed something poking out from the end of the blocked pipe, some bulging nostrils and protruding eyes. The pressure was building and building behind him, and then, all of the sudden, PWOOOOOHHHH! Out flies the poor frog, like a flying projectile, a comet with a 30 foot stream of water behind him! His contraction and expansion was not so successful! I'd better pray!

Standing on that Alpha and Omega threshold, I turned back towards the sun and looked back on my singleness. I praised God for His provision, protection and peace. I reflected on the upcoming Omegas in my life: my last independent road trip, my last autonomous financial choices, my last meal on my own, my last dark night of aloneness. So many things that will be changing: some with mourning, some with rejoicing. Endings are necessary for new beginnings. As you read this, I will be at my last Christmas as a

single person: a time which often seemed lonely and awkward, with nowhere to go to be part of a nuclear "family". I look forward to new traditions and shared memories, and writing new chapters together with Waffle. Some of the new Alphas in my life will be amazing! I look forward to times to discover and be discovered, to share, to harmonize and to unite. I took a moment in that sun beam to mourn the losses, to disengage and detach from life as I have known it. The time will come shortly to reengage and reattach as an amalgamated couple, joined in purpose and destiny.

Please pray for both Waffle and I in this transition time:

- 1. Pray for our families. That we would have a balance of love for them and keep our hearts united in loving them.
- 2. Pray for our current relationships. That God will preserve and transform them into a joint collection of friends and that we can relate well with one another.
- 3. Pray for Waffle as he moves to Africa and establishes his new ministry here with the Ugandan villagers.
- 4. Pray for me as I try to figure out how to open my life and home up to Waffle. To be the person that the Lord would have me to be in his life.
- 5. Pray for both of us as we surrender the freedoms of singleness and grasp a hold of the new dreams which will be revealed, as we become Two in One. Pray for solidarity, unity, harmony and willingness to sacrifice for one another.
- 6. Pray for the traditional marriage and the wedding!!! We will have three days of celebration with the community and church family in the peace villages here in Karamoja.

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross." Every transition is in some way a cross. It is dying to one realm and resurrecting into another, with a full surrender to the process and the outcome. Only God can unite us fully. Let the spiritual symbiosis begin!

Thanks for praying.

Love to you,

Dr. Val

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