



African Diary

by Dr. W. H. Mullen

As I write this I have just returned from my first visit to some of the Reformed Baptist Mission territory in South Africa.

From Modderpoort I went by way of historic Lady-smith to Glencoe, where Rev. Eugene Kierstead met me. We drove about 50 miles to Vryheid where brother Kierstead has his lovely home. After a nice evening meal we settled down for an exchange of ideas and reminiscences. I was also "entertained" by having the somewhat doubtful pleasure of hearing myself preach via the tape-recorder. This was the message which I brought at one of the Beulah broadcasts in about 1958. Everyone else sounded very natural except me.

Early the next morning, after a brief look at the town, we drove to Altona, first going in nearly to Hartland, the original R. B. Mission Station founded by Rev. and Mrs. H. C. Sanders. (I hope to get clear in to Hartland on my next trip.) The drive over the hills was very beautiful indeed. As we went along Brother Kierstead gave me a running commentary on people and places and many of his own earlier experiences in this general area: Across a valley was the corrugated iron roof of a little church which his father had established. Back through that pass was the Hartland area, not far in a straight line, but a long way around by car. The road we were now on was just a track a few years ago. Over there was the trail where Bro. Eugene used to travel by bicycle during the war years when gas was hard to get.

Soon we rounded a bend and there below us was the Altona Mission Station, site of the Evangelical Holiness Bible School. The early morning sun made the scene a very beautiful picture. Rev. Glendon Kierstead came out to greet us. It was a pleasure to see him and his wife Betty, also to see Reginald Kierstead and his wife Dawn who were there for a brief visit. I was soon given a conducted tour of the Station: House, classrooms, dormitories, dining room, clinic, office, church, garden plot. The buildings were neat and attractive and in good repair, showing the work and care of the principal and his staff. I was particularly impressed by the church building itself, which, I understand, was made possible largely through the interest of Mr. Wallace Green. In the open space between the buildings were carefully placed shrubs including a row of brilliant red poinsettias. This is the first time that I had seen this beautiful plant growing in the ground. We then visited a class or two, where I met two African staff teachers, Miss Minah Nkosi and Rev. Absalom Sibiya. They gave their instruction in Zulu and appeared to be in "command" of their classes. The students were very respectful, attentive, and responsive.

In the afternoon Brother Glendon took us out to a spot where we could see the Pongola River, which, evidently, was quite a hazard to travelling missionaries in the old days. The scenery was beautiful, and as usual, I took camera shots of everything in sight, including a typical Zulu village with "bee-hive" huts. These huts are shaped like Eskimo igloos. All the huts I have seen up to now have had mud or stone walls with thatched roofs. These

were constructed with "thatch grass" extending over a wooden frame all the way to the ground.

That evening I enjoyed the prayer services with students and staff.

The following day was full of interest. In the morning we drove out to an outpost called Kipunwayo where I met Rev. Amos Mbogazi, an R. B. elder. He seemed to be a conscientious, hard-working pastor. He has two fine young sons at the Bible School. The little church building there is largely the work of Brother Eugene who made the bricks himself and did the bricklaying.

In the afternoon the students, under the direction of Miss Nkosi, put on a special musical program in honor of my visit. I was pleasantly surprised and deeply touched by the presentation to my wife and me of two lovely gifts of Zulu handicraft. Bro. Glendon translated the presentation speeches for me and in turn interpreted for me when I gave them my words of thanks and appreciation.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in the simple enjoyment of the quiet, relaxed atmosphere of the Mission. Among the things I did was to climb a tree, monkey fashion, and pick all the pecans I wanted to eat.

Early the next morning Bro. Glendon drove me to Bethal where I had to catch the train for Jo'burg and "home." On the way we stopped briefly at Ermelo where we had breakfast with Rev. and Mrs. Charles Sanders. It was a pleasure to meet them and their family again.

This first visit to R. B. territory was enjoyable and profitable. Altona Mission Station and E.H.B.S. are no longer just names now, but places with people and significant activity. I feel that I have entered somewhat into the labors of the devoted people who have served in this area. The Sterritt sisters, who spent so much of their time and energy here, also the three generations of Kiersteads, with their faith and hard work.

If all goes well, I hope to spend some time in other R.B. areas. I have very gracious invitations from all the other missionaries in South Africa: Revs. Charles Sanders, Paul Sanders, William Morgan, and Karl Gorman with whom I had a brief but pleasant phone conversation. I also plan now to be back in Altona to attend the Bantu Alliance early in July. If time and other factors permit I may also get a peek in at the work in Northern Rhodesia, although I understand that the Haywoods, who invited me, are now about to leave on furlough.

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RIVERSIDE
CAMP MEETING
ROBINSON, MAINE
AUGUST 10-19
EVANGELISTS AND MUSICIANS
REV. FLETCHER TINK AND FAMILY
OF SKOWHEGAN, MAINE
PLAN TO ATTEND AND PRAY FOR
A GREAT CAMP**