

### **Funerals, Work, Mosques and Benevolence -- Bob, Dawn and Elizabeth Baird's Journal #3**

**Funerals:** Yesterday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, Brenda and I went downtown shopping. Afterwards, we had lunch of fries and cokes at new shop called "Ali's Kivu Market" which has an outside café-style place to eat on the main street of Bukavu. As we were eating, a funeral went by with more cars than usual and led by one with a siren. This was no usual funeral event. It went down the street, past the police station and other government buildings, used the round-about, and came back down the street in front of us. This time we noticed the people riding in the back of a large truck holding high a picture of the deceased man. Our server explained that this man and his wife had been shot in the head by thieves and the people were protesting because the police do nothing to control this kind of activity.

People were already agitated because just last week the road to the university where I teach was closed (class canceled that day); it had been barricaded by locals protesting against the police. The night before a band of thieves had gone from house to house stealing. The young men of the neighborhood joined forces banging on pots and pans to awaken everyone and managed to catch several of the thieves. One of them turned out to be a policeman.

Back to our day of shopping: After eating and as we traveled home in a taxi we passed another funeral. This one for a soldier who had been shot by a member of the rebel group called the Interhamwe, who still control a portion of Eastern Congo not yet been subdued by the UN. Whoa, boy did the air feel tense as we slowly rode by the soldiers who had congregated together and who were armed with guns and with bands of ammunition slung over their shoulders.

To keep these events in perspective, it is quite likely there were more murders in Chicago last year than in the city of Bukavu. The streets on which the Baird and Buell families live are considered to be safe as long as we have good fences and day and night guards. Still, if Brenda and I had known of the funerals taking place downtown we would have stayed home and gone shopping another day, just to be on the safe side.

#### **Bob's Work: a Sectional Meeting:**



**Picture from the top of the hill and next to the Church School where the below mentioned meeting took place.**

**Right at the bottom of the valley the line of buildings is the gold compound.**

Periodically, designated sections of Churches hold meetings and when the section called Malambi had their last meeting Ed and I were invited. The meeting took place at Burhinyi where six Churches were represented – and don't feel too bad if you can't pronounce that name, I am still trying to get it right. Malambi is located off the main road and up in the hills. It was amazing that when we got off the main road onto the secondary road the difference was like night and day. The main road is a wash board full of holes and nasty to ride on. The secondary road is about as perfect as I have ever seen in the Congo. The reason? This area is gold country and the company processing the gold fixed the roads they especially need to use!!!! It was a there-and-back trip in one day. Yeah, we were tired we got home.

**Mosques:** Like clockwork, we hear the mosque-men, as I refer to them, chanting in the distance. For many years there has only been one mosque in the whole Bukavu area. On this trip Bob took, he was surprised to see another mosque on route to Malambi. The Congolese leadership traveling with Ed and Bob say that many more have been built because of the money and influence of the Pakistanis involved in the UN. On their uniforms, we have noticed, is sewn a patch of the symbol for the Islamic religion. Satan is insidious and will use any manner available to attempt to crush the work of the servants of the living God. Thank God, we are already victorious!

**Benevolence:** This letter is long, but I must tell you of one last incidence that will fill your hearts with joy. Chantal is a woman who does housework for Brenda and I. She works three days a week for me and the other two for Brenda. Then alternates, three for Brenda and two for me, washing cement floors, buying and soaking veges, and other time-consuming work. Chantal is the only **working** member of her family. Her husband is a college graduate who cannot find work. They have five children; three in school.

The rent on their house is \$420.00 / year and is due once a year. Chantal came to us asking for a loan of \$200.00 to cover the rest of the rent due, or the landlord was going to kick them out. Bob and I and Ed and Brenda all knew that it would be impossible for her to pay back a loan of that size, save up the money for next year's loan, and continue to feed and clothe her family and pay for school fees. We decided to give her the \$200.00, \$100.00 from each family, on the condition that every month each family will hold back \$20.00 from her salary to save up for next year's rent.

Although we are, in effect, telling the left hand what the right is doing, we will say that the money we gave Chantal came from the salary we live on, our tithe being long gone. We tell you so that you may also rejoice in this decision since the money we gave Chantal is the money you gave us. Chantal had also told us that out of shame, her husband was going to leave her and the five children to see if he could find work somewhere. This almost always results in the man finding another woman to take care of him, and who also ends up having children by him.

When Chantal's husband heard the news about money for the rent and the plan to save up for next year, he fell at her feet crying and praising her because he would not be forced to leave his family. He is coming to our home to thank us as soon as he can do it without crying – that too would be another shame for him to bear.

For the Lion of Judah,

*Bob, Dawn and Elizabeth Baird*