

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

May / June 1992

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Kenya Diary

Christmas Day: Dawn breaks as we fly over Africa—a vast brown wasteland, not a sign of man. Dry watercourses, brown lakes—and now, mountains, plantations, roads, aluminum-roofed buildings and (could it be?) a small herd of giraffes!

We land in Nairobi. Many well-dressed men cluster around every service counter and work-place, as though in charge of things. Are they salaried? Does most of Africa have time on its hands, as does most of South America, India, the Philippines?

Chuck Kinser of the Africa Inland Mission takes us home for dinner with his wife Bobbi and a few other missionaries, salt-of-the-earth types who know nothing about a forty-hour week. We go for a walk. "Don't take your wallet, don't wear a watch," they told us. Wise words. A sudden slap on Lars' back pocket. He whirls, the boy is half a block away, empty-handed. The hotel key had a large square fob which didn't flip out easily as a wallet might have done. In the middle of the sidewalk lies a tiny baby, neatly wrapped, asleep, while throngs walk around him. "Don't worry," says Chuck, "his mother's somewhere around."

December 26. The Ark, a hotel built on the edge of a water hole and salt lick where animals (WILD ones) come. As we sip afternoon tea in the viewing lounge we watch five cape buffalo, Africa's most belligerent animal (they charge for no reason at all), licking the salt. Two hairy bush hogs graze nearby and a dainty bushbuck trots from the bush, pauses, great ears revolving, great soft eyes darting, then steps with queenly grace to the salt, licks, nibbles, warily lifts its head every moment.

And then... and *then!* Just as the sun goes down, in utter silence and mesmerizing slow motion, with "deliberate speed, majestic instancy," five huge elephants loom up from the bush at the edge of the lick, followed by a sweet little baby. It is pure magic. If ever I've found it nearly impossible to believe my eyes it is at this moment. On they come, silently, gracefully,

"pacing along as though they had an appointment at the end of the world" (Isak Dinesen's words). We are not twenty feet away. They kneel on one knee and tusk the ground to dig up the salt, one hind leg lifted straight out behind for balance. The baby shoves up under his mother's "arm," curls back his trunk, and has his afternoon tea (yes, an elephant's tea is served *up front*), then squeezes forward. She stops him with her trunk and *hugs* him. She walks, he walks—walled-in, as it were, with trunk and forelegs. The other two females hover nearby, solicitous of the child. All movement, including blinking, is slow and peaceful. They are anxious for nothing.

O Lord, how marvelous are Thy works. In wisdom hast Thou made them all. The whole earth is full of the majesty of Thy glory (Ps 104:24).

The dinner bell rings at 7:30. Just as we're trooping into the dining room the manager, in the regulation British colonialist uniform—pith helmet, safari shirt, khaki shorts, wool socks, safari boots—booms out, "Rhino just coming in, rhino just coming in." We rush back to the lounge, which is dark now, but floodlights bathe the salt lick. He's right. Huge and slow and silent, a black rhino (the rarest, most endangered) makes his way into the clearing.

Dec. 27. At 1 a.m. a loud bell rings in our room. We have been told we will be wakened if anything interesting happens. To the lounge again. One elephant. Why wake us? But wait—across the clearing, ranging back and forth in the bush, white in the floodlights, are five lionesses. We watch for a long time. Suddenly one moves swiftly across the clearing, flattens herself in the grass, waits, eyes fixed on the forest. A bushbuck moves quietly from the shadows, stepping daintily down the game trail, directly toward the hidden lioness. Everyone fears to breathe. I whisper to Lars, "Can you *believe* what we're about to see?" Closer and closer he comes, head up, eyes sweeping the clearing. The lioness springs—a second or two too soon. The bushbuck wheels and bounds like the wind into the forest, the lioness racing after him. She returns ten minutes later. **MISSED** him!

3 a.m. Bell rings. A mother rhino with her baby.

5 a.m. Bell again. Three huge male lions with luxurious dark manes are pacing just outside our bedroom window.

Evening. We are back in Nairobi, at Kenyatta University, for the African student missionary conference patterned after Inter-Varsity's Urbana. This was the reason we were in Africa. There were 1,800 students from many countries. Such singing! Such praying! Some of the time one leads in prayer, sometimes we form groups of four to pray for a specific country, and sometimes the voice of prayer is a great crescendo as, arms raised, faces heavenward, everyone prays at once. I can never forget that.

Dec. 28. I speak (the whole conference is in English, the only language all know) on Passion and Purity. There is an earnestness about these students that I rarely find in America. They are dignified, respectful, attentive. Many tell me they have read my books. They laugh over the stories of courtship debacles and when I "sock it to 'em" about sexual purity they even cheer and clap.

Dec. 29. Sunday. A little iron-roofed church in the huge slum area of Kibera. The African Children's Choir (ages 7-11) sings, each row swaying in opposite directions, smiling, clapping, dancing. I speak in English to a small group in the early service, by translation into Swahili to a thousand in the later.

Dec. 30. The convention goes on, I give two more seminars and a plenary session. Students come to me to talk privately. One tells me her story of a sinful bondage, later gives me a note: "My heart is filled with joy for what the Lord has done in my heart. I have made a commitment to lay ALL at the feet of Jesus. If you came to Kenya for no one else, God would have sent you for one lady, Janet. I am a transformed person. I trust the Lord to help me to have a holy walk..." (I hesitated over including this testimony. I include it for the encouragement of all of us, especially those who prayed for our Kenya trip. May I never for one second forget: "Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" 1 Cor. 3:7.)

Dec. 31. Valerie's baby due today. Phoned. Baby in lateral position on 26th, doctor recommends Caesarian. "We'll wait," say Val and Walt. Today found to be in breech position. Lord, Thy will, Thy way, Thy best for her.

Jan. 1-3. Trip to the Masai Reserve. Thousands upon thousands of animals. (Mustn't fill the whole Newsletter with those!)

Jan. 4,5. Flight home. No baby so far.

Jan. 10. I fly to California. Valerie's friend Sharon meets me at the airport. "She's in the hospital. Shall I take you there?" I am in the delivery room with Val and Walt. One hour later Theodore Flagg Shepard is born. Walt reads the ancient prayer: "O Almighty God, we give Thee humble thanks for that Thou hast vouchsafed to deliver this woman Thy servant from the great pain and peril of childbirth; Grant, we beseech Thee, most merciful Father, that she through Thy help, may both faithfully live, and walk according to Thy will, in this life present; and also may be partaker of everlasting glory in the life to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Praise For

- Valerie's safe delivery and healthy child.
- Young parents who earnestly desire to rear Christian children. (I hear from many. It seems there is a new awareness of the damage done by the permissive spirit of the past thirty years, and a new determination to do things God's way.)
- A pastor's family who have begun to learn hymns. His wife, Lou Ann Brown, hoped and prayed for this. She writes, "He started teaching one verse of a hymn each night whenever he's home, and has been consistent. He doesn't sing naturally or know how to follow music, but it's been wonderfully successful. Now you hear our five-year-old twin boys in the tub singing 'O Worship the King,' or 'And Can it Be?' or 'O God Our Help in Ages Past.' They don't miss a word and all four boys enthusiastically participate in the services at church. Each week we've learned a new hymn—that's 52 in a year! Our two-year-old daughter knows *all* the words. It's great family fun—we're probably never on key, but we sing for 20-30 minutes after dinner. God is so good!"

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Another Plea to Older Women

(From a listener to Gateway to Joy)

"Please encourage older women to be faithful in their God-given responsibility of teaching us younger women to be loving wives and mothers as a good testimony to the Lord. We really *need* them as examples and teachers of how to do it right. Right now, a friend and I are praying for the Lord to bring some older, godly Christian women into our lives for this purpose. Her mother is with the Lord and mine lives in another town so it is harder to really talk as much. Many women in the church have either gone back to work full time or are just too *busy* and do not feel 'qualified.' None of us is qualified in our own strength, but we can learn...."

And just to refresh your memory, the Bible does tell us the specifics of what to teach: "to love husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to husbands, so *that no one will malign the word of God*" [italics mine] (Titus 2:4,5 NIV). Perhaps the divorce rate and the lack of parental control over children are partly attributable to the disobedience of older women.

Does God leave out the men? No, He doesn't. Titus 2:2 says, "Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance." What a difference it would make in our homes, in churches, and in society at large if everyone who claims to follow Christ *obeyed*. His word is a solemn one, "Why do you call me Lord and do not do the things I say?" The aged John puts it even more strongly in 1 John 2:4, "The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar."



Left: Little Theo and I.

Above: The Shepard family: Valerie with Theodore; Colleen, 5, in front; Evangeline, 3, beside Walt. Back row: Jim, 7; Elisabeth, 12; Christiana, 10; Walter III, 14.

Prayer

"More things are wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
 For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

—Alfred Lord Tennyson

Recommended Reading

Mrs. Child: *The Mother's Book*, a very practical book of wisdom from 1831. Advice on such things as helping a twelve-year-old keep account of money, homemade toys, three qualities necessary in a mate, advice concerning books, manners, dress. Available from your local bookstore or Applewood Books, The Globe Pequot Press, Chester, CT. 1-800-243-0495 (in CT 1-800-962-0973) \$9.95.

Kitchen Prayer

Lord of all pots and pans and things,
since I've not time to be
A saint by doing lovely things
or watching late with Thee,
Or dreaming in the dawn light
or storming heaven's gates,
Make me a saint by getting meals
and washing up the plates.
Although I must have Martha's hands,
I have a Mary mind,
And when I black the boots and shoes,
Thy sandals, Lord, I find.
I think of how they trod the earth,
what time I scrub the floor,
Accept this meditation, Lord—
I haven't time for more.
—Klara Munkres

Household Hint

For stains, even old ones, in white things: Mix (in a small jar, so you can keep it handy for later) one tablespoon of dishwasher powder with two tablespoons of bleach. Drop it onto the stain with a spoon, rub, and *voilà!*

Thanx!!

For all those birthday cards! It never crossed my mind, when I mentioned (in the Nov/Dec Newsletter) reaching "official old age" that dozens of you dear folks would send me CARDS! Lars tells me I should have had better sense. I was chagrined, but very grateful for your thoughtfulness.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Travel Schedule

May - June 1992

May 1 Long Beach, CA; Long Beach Rescue Mission, (213) 591-1292.

May 1-3 Sun Valley, CA; Grace Community Church, Debbie Christopher, (818) 909-5730.

May 11-13 Taping for broadcast.

May 15, 16 Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Sheridan Family Ministries, (305) 583-1552.

May 19 Peabody, MA; West Congregational Church Women's Meeting, (508) 535-4112.

May 23 Providence, RI; North American Catholic Educational Programming Foundation, Inc., (401) 353-4524.

June 8 Rochester, NH; Seacoast Christian School commencement, True Memorial Baptist Church, Roy Reynolds, (207) 384-5757, (207) 384-2504.

June 13 Brockville, Ontario; Grenville College.

Keep in Touch

Are you moving? Getting married? Leaving school? *Don't forget to send us your change of address.* The post office DOES NOT FORWARD third class mail like the Newsletter. *Please remove your address label below and send it with your new address to:* The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, Post Office Box 7711, Ann Arbor, MI 48107.

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