

HELPING THE PEOPLE OF ANGOLA SINCE 1971

ANGOLA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND



AMSF NEWSLETTER

A Personal Visit to Angola *by Etta Snow and Jean Burgess*

(Etta is AMSF Corresponding Secretary and former President,
Jean is Newsletter Editor and incoming President)



*Etta and Jean receive wraps from
IECA Women's Society Leaders.*

In May 2009 we had the joyous privilege of a personal 4 week tour to Angola, home to us many years ago. Etta worked as a missionary with the Evangelical Congregational Church of Angola (IECA) for 22 years (1953-1975). Jean's parent's, Dr George and Phyllis Burgess, were Etta's missionary colleagues. Jean lived in Dondi Mission as a child. We were stirred and inspired to witness the enormous challenges and opportunities facing IECA in postwar Angola.

AMSF funds the Formation School work of the Evangelical Congregational Church of Angola (IECA). Leaders of the IECA Women's Society, who administer the Formation School program, hosted us. They arranged visits with staff and students in 9 Formation Schools in southern Angola and in Luanda. The president of the women's association Rev. Lucia Chitula devoted over 2 weeks out of her heavy schedule to accompany us. Everywhere local leaders and members welcomed us warmly with traditional songs, hymns and speeches. We reciprocated, bringing greetings from former missionaries, our church families and you, our donors. Throughout this tour we were deeply impressed by the quality of women's leadership and the well-conceived programming. Signs of battle, such as the bullet-pocked walls of the Bailundu Formation School, were silent

reminders of the deep suffering from which these women are rising. We have returned convinced that the Formation Schools use the scarce resources available to them to great effect and with integrity. AMSF funding is a critical factor in past successes and future possibilities.

Each Formation school has its unique strengths and challenges. The Formation School in the southern city of Lubango is housed in a substantial building constructed by the social development department of the Angola government. The program is challenged by the need to pay teachers with nothing but affordably low student fees. The coordinator has created an innovative arrangement with a local tailor. He set up shop in one room of the building, in exchange for offering tailoring lessons and exposure to his business.

Formation schools in the cities of Benguela, Huambo Lobito, and Sumbe offer classes in computers, administration and English which are popular with government and business employees. Their fees make it possible to pay teachers, **(continued on page 2)**

Thank-you from Scholarship Recipient

by Sebastiao Quitumba Vinte e Cinco

In 2004 I started university. My family, with so many daily expenses, saved whatever they could to help out with paying my fees. Then they realized there was no other solution but to cancel my registration. My father Gabriel Vinte e Cinco, did not stop his efforts to avoid this. This led him to our church, which recommended me for an AMSF scholarship. The scholarship supported expenses of continuing my degree. I recently graduated in law and have decided to embrace advocacy. For all that the AMSF has done for me and my family I am eternally deeply and sincerely thankful. I wish you success in your daily activity and that God's blessing continue to illuminate your institution. Finally, I offer my availability to help in any situation.

who then volunteer teaching time with women students who cannot afford fees. Teachers in all the programs volunteer many hours—a generous and hopeful effort but not sustainable over the long term. The Formation School leadership is committed to developing sustainable, innovative programs. To that end they have been investing in financial and administrative training of staff and volunteers.



Dona Leontina demonstrating knitting technique to young women students.

In Dondi we spent time with Etta's former colleague Dona Leontina. Leontina was one of the teachers who worked with Etta when she was Director of the Vocational School in Lutamo on the outskirts of Dondi. Dona Leontina became the school director, when Etta was asked to develop a Christian education program at the regional Huambo level. Dona Leontina trains teenagers and young women in courses such as sewing, cooking, knitting, health education, family planning, nutrition, and in the leading of worship services. These young women become effective household managers, acquire income generating skills and develop social leadership capacities.

Etta has a personal passion for the reconstruction of the Lutamo Vocational School. We met with local leaders about this rehabilitation project and toured the school. Etta had donated personal funds for the first step of putting a roof back on the building, which was accomplished just prior to our arrival.

We were delighted to visit the new Emmanuel Seminary in Bela Vista, to which AMSF has contributed start-up funds. It provides a rounded education, including the practical aspects of living in community and conducting church affairs. For instance, the Director of the seminary, Rev Adelaide Tomas, gave us

a tour of the extensive gardens the students have developed. They use the produce to feed themselves and to sell for Seminary expenses.

A major IECA event coincided with our visit, the 125th Jubilee of the founding of the Camundongo mission. We were invited to join the hundreds of people gathered for this triumphant event. It was a celebration of renewal and reconciliation. The governor of Bie province participated in the inauguration of the new Camundongo hospital, built with government funds. The national Minister of Culture honoured the educational work of mission stations, acknowledging their role in the formation of many of the country's present elite.

For Etta returning to Camundongo was an emotional homecoming after 34 years. It was here that she was given the Umbundu name of *Ondembeleki* (*the Comforter*). In the 1960s when many church leaders were taken prisoner or disappeared, or were detained by Portuguese authorities, mission people looked forward to her monthly comforting visits. Upon arriving at the Jubilee, Etta was invited to give the sermon at the next morning's service. The prophet Isaiah and St Paul came to her rescue and even surprised her with how much Umbundu she remembered. In fact Etta spoke in Umbundu at every gathering we attended. Young and old were moved and amazed by her fluency in their mother tongue. Many young Angolans have not had an opportunity to learn their own language. Recently the national government has included indigenous language instruction in the elementary school curriculum.

IECA is in a time of explosive membership growth. Churches are bursting at the seams and church construction is a high priority. Attendance by children and young people is high and music plays a central role in ensuring participation by all age groups. Church leaders are stretched to capacity. Teachers are in such short supply that many pastors are teaching full time on top of their pastoral work. The challenge of church leaders is to balance attention to the internal demands of rapidly growing congregations and the external realities of the social-economic transformation surrounding them. We were particularly struck by how women leaders are raising issues of justice, such as family violence and the problems of families fragmented by war.

The Formation school work of IECA and other projects of the IECA's social development arm, DASEP, are making powerful contributions to the well being of Angolan communities. AMSF donors can take satisfaction in their part of this work. For us personally, this trip was an opportunity to renew and increase bonds of friendship. We observed how our brothers and sisters in faith are witnesses to God's love of justice and peace. How blessed we are.

Why We Support AMSF

by Robin Markham & Rio Alden,
AMSF Regional Representatives



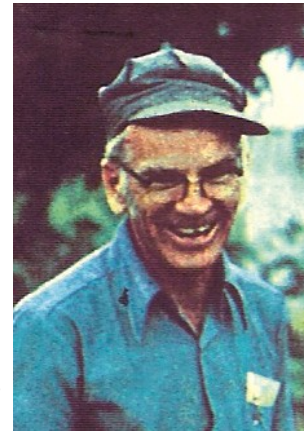
Jim Klein & Rio Alden and Fran & Robin Markham

Robin Markham: Background: In 1954 Fran and I with our baby daughters, Viki and Rio, went to teach at Currie Institute for Men in Dondi, location of the central institutions of the 4 Canadian mission stations and the 4 American ones. (I, Robin, till 10 years old, lived in Dondi where my parents built the central hospital and started the nursing school.) On our arrival we were overwhelmed by the people's embrace of our little family saying, "Our son has returned!" Soon our twin girls, Jamba and Chela, were born under the gifted hands of Dr. Strangway and nurse Edith Brown, who both, incidentally, saw to my delivery in Lisbon 30 years before. The war for independence cut short our work there in 1963, but our hearts never left Angola. We continued to teach in Zimbabwe for 5 years (So. Rhodesia then) and later another 8 years in rural development in Zambia after our 4 daughters had each left our "Robin's nest". Even in Zambia we reconnected with many of our Angolan brothers and sisters in the Maheba Refugee camp that we often visited. As refugees with a "temporary" mindset they still were great examples to the surrounding community, building from scratch, comfortable homes of adobe bricks with thatched roofs, farming and selling produce in the Copper Belt, growing soy beans both for their nutritional values and good crop rotation, all learned from the work of Dr. Al Knight through the 50's and 60's in Dondi. On retirement in the mid 80's we still had contacts with refugees displaced by the civil war, studying and working in hopes of returning to Angola soon. We never ceased to be impressed by their dedication and drive always with a dream of returning. "Next year in Angola!" was their constant prayer. I was privileged in 2000 to accompany a delegation to the IECA Annual Meeting and saw again that same

spirit that I remembered so well—accepting responsibility "for the least of these" in health, in food, in education, in spirit, their inheritance from the early founding of their church. AMSF allows us to channel support to the people we lived and worked with, appreciated and loved, for so many years.

Rio Alden: I am Rio Alden, the second daughter of Robin and Fran Markham. Having lived the first seven years or so of my life in Dondi Mission in Angola, I have many warm memories of friends of the family, and of the beauty of the land. It was my home, and continues to be so in some part of me. In 1994 I married Jim Klein, who became acquainted with Angola through the family stories. Through AMSF newsletters, we were able to get "up close and personal" through stories and pictures, with people in Angola who were making a difference in rebuilding systems of health and education. It was also inspiring to know that our financial support was going to and through people who are serving the Angolan people directly. The grassroots nature of the projects is reassuring in this day and age. We are grateful that AMSF exists so that we may be a part of it in this way.

Eleanor Knight received heartwarming news of a memorial service held on July 5 in Angola for her husband **Dr. Allen Knight**, former Angola agricultural missionary. Pastors from Elende, Huambo, Caala, Bailundu, Bie and Dondi were present. *Dr. Allen Knight was an AMSF officer and lifetime member.*



AMSF has received donations in memory of Phyllis Burgess, Dr Gladwyn & Margaret Childs, Pastor Jesse Chipenda, Rev. Ralph & Jean Gurd Collins, Carl & Lois Dille, Bishop Ralph Dodge, The Gilchrists, Pastor Paulino Gonga, Dr. Harland Hastings, Larry & Ki Henderson, Warren Jackson, Dr. Allen Knight, Mary MacDougall, Murray and Innis MacInnis, Henry Curtis McDowell, Dona Sofia Liahuka, Nancy Tolley, James Van Laan. **AMSF has also received donations in honour of** Dr Elizabeth Bridgeman and her many years of service, Frances Walbridge on her 98th birthday.

ANGOLA REVISITED: July 2009 by Andre DaCosta

(Andre is a board member and former Vice-President of AMSF. He is an Angolan who moved to the U.S. over forty years ago, as a student refugee.)



Andre DaCosta and grandson Matthew present a gift of pajamas to Methodist church orphanage Director Rita Gregorio and resident girls.

I have been absent from Angola for 46 years, returning on my own only for business and religious mission visits. Recently my youngest brother Bastos, who lives in Angola, organized a family reunion. My wife Aggie, our daughter Alicia, son-in-law Andy and their two sons, Matthew and Gabriel, ages 3-1/2 years and 11 months, joined me in going to this event. We flew to the capital city of Luanda for the reunion which was attended by more than 90 blood relatives. Afterwards we took road trips to Malange, Quessua, Kalandula Falls (Duque de Braganca) and Pungu-a-Ndongu.

While in Luanda, Malange and Quessua, I met with some Methodist church leaders, administrators and teachers. I delivered a box of school supplies to Pastor Jose Veloso L. Kaxala who is the Administrative Director at East Conference Center. The supplies were a gift from Renee Sanchez of Butte, Montana, who visited Lau not far from Malange in 2005. Opportunities for education in the villages are still a challenge. The acute need for teachers is felt all over the country. Most educated people are in the big cities.

I also met with orphan girls and the orphanage director Rita Gregorio at the Methodist East Conference Center in Malange. I handed over 32 pairs of pajamas sent to them by Marsha Stanley, a member of my church in Hillsborough, North Carolina.

Clearly, the surprise was the pace of rebuilding of infrastructure in the former Methodist mission of Quessua. Many residences that were in ruins in 2005 are now rebuilt, some with funds from the Angolan Government. Former residents who had left Quessua and the nearby city of Malange, during the colonial and civil wars, are now returning. The road from Malange to Quessua was being graded for asphaltting at the time of our visit. Those of you who have not been to Angola in the past 4 years would be pleasantly surprised to find paved roads from one city to the other, thus eliminating long hours on dusty roads.

Before our arrival in Luanda, I recalled some memorable moments with my parents, both of whom are now deceased. I must have been about 8 when Mrs. Silva asked the question in Sunday School: "Who thinks he/she is going to heaven?" After some hesitation, I raised my hand and said that I was going to heaven. Mrs. Silva asked me why I thought I was going to heaven and I said, "Because my father is the pastor of this church!" Mrs. Silva paused briefly and said that no, I had to accept Jesus in my heart in order to go to heaven. I was silent but I was not convinced that she was right. My dad, I thought, would prove her wrong. So I asked my father and he said Mrs. Silva was right. I still say my father is, at least indirectly, responsible for when I go to heaven.

I often think back to all those who richly influenced my Christian life: the bishops, missionaries, teachers and pastors in Quessua, Malange and Luanda. I hope and pray for growth of the Christian people and churches in Angola. May God richly bless all those committed to His work.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION RE DONATIONS! Cheques to be made out to Angola Memorial Scholarship Fund or AMSF. Donations may be sent to your AMSF Regional Representative. If you do not have a regional representative, donations may be sent to the AMSF Treasurer Eleanor Ellins, 2016-1333 Bloor Street, Mississauga, ON L4Y 3T6. Donations may also be made on line at www.angolamsf.org.

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