

Kapteyn Chronicle

A Newsletter from Ray and Ann Kapteyn serving Wycliffe Bible Translators in Cameroon

MARCH 2008

Do You LIKE Furlough?

A young child wearing a dark blue winter jacket with red and yellow accents and a black beanie is playing in a snowy field. The child is looking down at something in their hands. The background shows snow-covered evergreen trees.

Having fun in the snow

We're asked this question a lot, and the answer is a bit complicated.

For the most part, furlough is fabulous! We bask in the warmth (and the love) of our parents' homes. We have uproarious reunions with friends. I run into people at the grocery store that I've known as long as I've been alive. There are people here who recognize me on the street because "I look exactly like my mother". This is sure a change after being a foreigner all these years! No one yells, "Hey! A White!" when I walk down the street. And no one EVER asks for money. In fact, instead of being seen as unimaginably rich, now we're seen as people who definitely need some hand-me-downs. I really like going to the grocery store and filling up the cart without feeling guilty or greedy. And I love all the lectures, books, magazines, radio shows, and other ways to learn and be stimulated.



But sometimes I find myself at loose ends. I pace around the living room mindlessly shoving popcorn into my mouth. What shall I cook for dinner? After all, the things that are cheap in Cameroon—filet mignon, pineapples, papayas—are expensive here. And the luxuries there—milk, cheese, a can of tuna—are plain old food here. I have to rethink how to cook economically. And how should we spend our money? In Cameroon there was really nothing to spend our money on except groceries, gas for the truck, and endless patterns of colorful fabric. And the delectable French restaurants, of course. Here my wish list is getting alarmingly long—every walk through a store suggests more things I'd probably really like to have—now that I know they exist. But then I think of my friend Dominique in Cameroon with her 5 children who have barely enough to eat and not enough money for their school fees, and my wish list stays just wishes—it's too hard to spend the money on nonessentials.

I guess the key to enjoying furlough is learning how to step easily between two worlds. You have to change the way you eat, the way you dress, the way you spend your time and money, but somehow make sure you stay the same person. For now I'm trying not to analyze it all too deeply, but just enjoy the get-togethers with my brothers, the library across the street, and of course, the Cadbury Easter Eggs.



Ray spent two weeks in Indianapolis learning how to maintain a Rolls Royce turbine engine. On March 30 he will be going to North Carolina for a course on the Pratt and Whitney turbine engine.

What Do You Do on Furlough?

The other question to ask about furlough is what we actually do all day long? Sometimes lurking behind such a question is a suspicion that furlough is really a 6-month-long vacation. There are lots of benefits to being a missionary, like world travel and exciting work, but 6-month-long vacations are not among them.

Here are some examples of what we are doing on this furlough:

Ray—Learning how to fix two different kinds of turbine engines (two different courses, one in Indiana and one in North Carolina)

Ann—Learning about Wycliffe's new textbook for teaching translation principles (this will be a two week course in Dallas, TX).

Ray—Getting a CFI (Certified Flight Instructor's Rating).

Both—Taking care of a sick child for 8 weeks now.

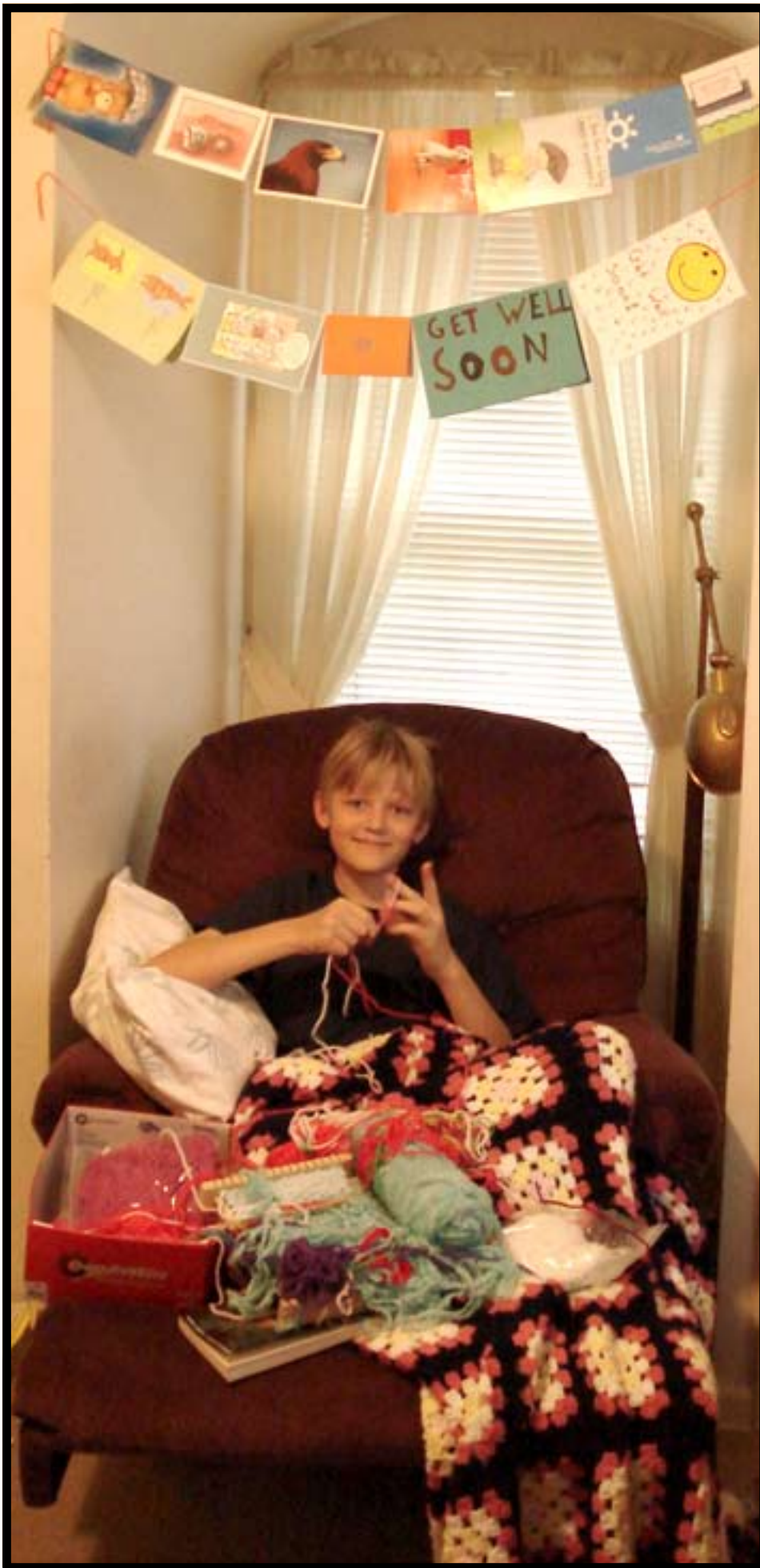
Both—Speaking in churches almost every Sunday.

Both—Shopping! We need a new computer, new tires for our truck, clothes for our growing children—(and extra clothes for the next couple years).

Both—Meeting with people interested in joining Wycliffe, meeting with our supporters.

Sledding with cousin David Plantinga





Not What We Imagined

So far this furlough is not going the way we imagined it would. The first month went fine, as we adjusted to life in Michigan and the winter weather. But then we all got sick with the flu in early February. The rest of us recovered, but Peter, our 10-year-old son, never did recover. He got better for a couple days, then sick again—and this happened repeatedly. At first we thought he was just experiencing the lingering effects of the flu, or perhaps another virus. But as the weeks progressed, we began to get worried. He saw the pediatrician many times and a tropical medicine specialist too. Finally, he was admitted to the hospital last week to undergo a series of tests to diagnose what he had. After CT scans, x-rays, blood tests, and many other tests, all the doctors could say is that he has mono, caused by the Epstein Barr virus. He also has unexplained stomach pain and has lost lots of weight.

Peter has been sick for almost eight weeks now, and we are praying fervently for his healing so he can go back to school and we can all resume life-as-usual.

Peter has spent much of the last eight weeks sitting in this chair, reading, drawing, weaving, watching movies, and waiting to get better. He enjoys checking the mail every day to see if he got a get-well card.

News From Cameroon

We've received lots of exciting news from Cameroon while we've been gone. First of all, we heard

about a general strike of all transportation workers in Cameroon, which touched off demonstrations and even some civil unrest. During this time our colleagues were told to remain close to home and to avoid the areas of demonstrations. After about a week, everything calmed down.

We're thankful for the peace that Cameroon has enjoyed for many years, and we're glad that this disturbance didn't spread into something more serious.

In other news from Cameroon, we hear that someone is building a house right in front of our house in Yaounde. The funny thing is that they are building that house on what we thought was a road! The dirt road in front of our house dead ends just past our house and then picks up again later on. I guess that dead-end looked like a good place for a new house. Various friends in Cameroon are checking on whether or not this is really a road or actually a buildable lot. We're just hoping that if the building continues we'll still be able to drive into our driveway! The latest update is that the building has now stopped because there is a cement shortage in all of Cameroon.

HIV/AIDS Was Speaking My Mother Tongue

Wycliffe/ SIL doesn't only translate the Bible; we do other translations and linguistic work that communities want. In Cameroon many communities want AIDS brochures in their languages to try to stop the rise in the AIDS infection rate in Cameroon. Here's a testimony from a man who received an AIDS brochure in his language:

"Some years ago my elder brother passed on after a long illness. According to tradition, his immediate follower (younger brother) inherited his wife. He too passed away. Later on the wife was accused of witchcraft, and then she died too. The three individuals presented the same symptoms before their deaths. In the community, people said it was the result of AIDS. I could not believe such a thing. Actually, we were defining AIDS as 'American Intervention to Discourage Sex'. For me, sex was utopia. Until one day, a man in our local church gave me a brochure on HIV/AIDS. This brochure in our mother tongue was developed by SIL Cameroon. That day, reading through it, the message was so clear and spoke directly to my heart. I understood that HIV/AIDS was speaking my mother tongue. That meant it was a member of our community and present in our village. I wish I had read this brochure before; I would have saved at least one of my brothers' lives."

Such testimonies on the impact of the translation of SIL are common in the 34 language communities that have this AIDS brochure. In fact, translation is an area of applied linguistics in which SIL assists Cameroonians to address their need for translated documents, like Scripture portions, health materials, and agricultural booklets.



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