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**EXCERPTS from a MEDICAL  
MISSIONARY JOURNEY  
to BURKINA FASO**

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*But the fruit of the Spirit is  
love, joy, peace, patience,  
kindness, faithfulness,  
gentleness and self-control.  
Galatians 5:22*

Mrs. Gloria Lie, wife of Dr. Robert Lie, has shared her diary with me. To give you an insiders daily view of how God moves on a daily basis I want to share with you excerpts from her diary.

(Franklin Spotts, Director of French speaking Ministries, Youth for Christ International.)

## INTRODUCTION

By LARRY LIE

This journal records the everyday life of a short-term medical missionary to Africa. The brevity of the trip led to high impact activities that would be different from the established practicing physician or the long term missionary. The care for people who are sick and hurting, however, though multiplied by sheer magnitude and circumstances, remains the same. It is this care, in which the medical team effectively demonstrated the heart of the Christian gospel, that characterized this trip. There is no doubt that the men and women who went, and Dr. and Mrs. Lie themselves, spoke with more than mere words as they cared for such staggering numbers of people. Unfortunately, in Burkina Faso there is no established modern medical practice to serve the villages they visited. What would be a minor injury here in America are literally matters of life and death in Africa. The people suffer further from primitive medicine and superstitious beliefs. The answer must be both physical and spiritual.

As Gloria Lie shares candid observations of the people of these countries, we hope you will gain an appreciation for a culture very different than ours in the West. Surely on such a trip the differences are magnified. Even the perspective of the observer is distinctly American. Yet the similarities are evident as well. These people are not so unlike us. The very nature of this trip speaks powerfully to issues of race and racism. But as the observations are simple and brief, speaking just as often of the life of a stranger in a foreign land, we will leave the interpretation to the reader. Welcome to the villages of Burkina Faso and the experiences of a medical team.

In April 1996, the construction of a health care facility, the Good Shepard Dispensary was begun on a site adjoining our Youth for Christ International School, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

**DAY 1** - The journey begins today. Bright and early, our son, Larry, drove us to the airport. Our first stop was at the office, where we met Alice and Jon Longley. All thirteen of the Army duffel bags packed with medicine were loaded in their pickup truck. They followed us to the church, where we picked up Barb and Mike Hickey. We pulled in at Detroit Metro airport around 9:00 AM. As we waited, team members began arriving from around the metropolitan area.

The airlines told us the additional bags would cost \$750.00 to send, a sum no one had to spare. And how were we to decide which bags were not important? Larry, Alice and I immediately took it to God in a special prayer, asking God for favor with the airlines personnel. Finally, Northwest Orient said they would take the bags to Chicago for no charge, but it was up Sabena Airline, our transatlantic carrier, to determine what they would do from Chicago. That in itself was an answer to prayer, and as we all held hands and prayed for our safety, we also prayed for favor in Chicago. Already it seemed the Lord was with us.

At 1:30 PM we arrived in Chicago and checked in to Sabena Airlines. Sure enough, God answered prayer in a dramatic way and Sabena let the bags through without any additional charge. We grabbed a fast lunch and got on board around 4:30 PM. We are now airborne and on our way to Brussels.

**DAY 2** - Everyone is anxious to land in Brussels and do some walking. Going through customs was a trip in itself. They checked each one of the carry-on bags. At one point the customs officials had a fit because one of the ladies was carrying a can of Raid. After much talking, they finally resolved the incident and put our bags in the holding area. On the way through, however, one of the women was stopped by an officer and had her passport taken. The Belgium officials had to call the US to get clearance.

We finally landed in Ouagadougou at 9:30 in the evening. Everyone was there to meet us, including Pastor Michel and all the church people. The heat, even at night, was around 95 degrees. It really struck us hard. Everyone hugged us and helped us with our bags. A little later we were settled into our

living quarters. We are really in a much better house than last year.

**DAY 3** - Breakfast was at 8:00 AM. Hilda and Ray Clendenan and the other Gloria on the trip are doing a super job of cooking. We retrieved the medicine bags later in the afternoon and started to unpack them outside the school in the heat. But soon everyone was sweaty and tired. We went to the pool for about an hour and had a late supper around 7:00 PM.

**DAY 4** - Today was the first day of clinic. We were up at 4:30 AM, but had no hot water. The water needs to be pumped fresh every day. The bus picked us up at 5:00 AM and we had breakfast at 5:30 AM. We split up the team in order to serve more people. In our group we had Robert and I, 2 RN's, 2 interpreters, and 2 helpers for medicine. The clinics were held in 2 churches. Our group went to Pastor Tapsoba's church. There were already 20-30 people waiting when we arrived. We first rearranged the wooden benches and sorted the medicine. Then the deacon of the church lined everyone up and called the names for me. The 2 RN's were soon promoted to Doctors because of the type of illnesses we saw and in order to see more people.

We started at 7:00 AM, and as the day wore on the line got bigger and bigger. The first day we saw 90 adult patients and 40 children. The church was cinder block with a tin roof, and seemed like an oven. We kept getting hotter and hotter. Yet even while we were sweating, we kept going. The people motivated you to keep going. They were so loving and cheerful. Every window was full of people looking in to watch what we were doing. Robert worked on two large abscesses today. We finally stopped at 1:00 PM and had to turn 30 people away.

**DAY 5** - We woke up and had no water to flush the toilets. The Sunday service was at Boula. All of us piled in the small bus. The church in the village was small and packed. They have no electricity, but the Spirit of the Lord was really evident. They are such a joyful people. The ladies sang, the children sang, and the children also said their Bible verses from Sunday School. The song service was very jubilant,

with some songs the same as ours, except sung in More, the native tongue. It was quite a sight, some singing in English, some in French, and some in More. But the Lord knows, and we were all together from different parts of the world worshipping him together in Africa. In that tiny church that night were 100 people plus our team of 20 and 5 interpreters.

**DAY 6** - The clinic for Monday through Wednesday will be in Boula. All the sick from the surrounding villages walk in. There was 30-40 people already waiting when we arrived. These villages have no electricity or running water. The church has no bathroom either. We sorted medicines, rearranged benches, and finally started around 7:30 AM.

We started our first day great, even with the heat. We treated hernias, toothaches, worms, eye problems, headaches, dizziness, and muscle and throat pains. There was 1 doctor and 2 RN's from the team plus a national doctor that joined us. People walked in bare feet from the nearby villages and waited in the heat. Every hour the group outside grew bigger. Some came just to look, while others came to see what color medicines we had. As they saw us work, though, every one praised God for sending us. We are so spoiled in the States. Water, which we take for granted, is not plentiful here. So they just don't wash. That in itself causes much of the illness. The doctors saw everything.

Note: The Youth for Christ school will have 2,000 enrolled this September. Half of them, praise God, are Muslim children. Remember that this is a Muslim nation that has only recently opened its doors as a result of the kindness and love displayed by Christian workers. What a testimony the school is to the families. The children will get a better education at the YFC school than in the public schools.

**DAY 7** - Today we had Barb's DOC because we had taken 40 pairs of glasses. (DOC is a well known chain of opticians in Detroit.) The yard of the church was very crowded with people when we arrived, so we had to move fast. The church pastor had his building all set up for us, with 4 doctors stations and chairs. They are so glad to have a doctor to see them.

Barb's DOC patients lined up inside like a waiting room, with a whole village full outside. They don't care if the glasses are men's or women's as long as they can see. The people were so excited about getting glasses that it didn't matter if some of them were sunglasses.

Some of the real old people are classic National Geographic covers. The oldest person is 89 years old. We also have a national doctor working with us. He is really getting his eyes opened. But he is not used to American medicine either. We saw 125 adults and 100 children. A lot of them had skin abscesses.

**DAY 8** - Dr. Gale operated on a 4-yr. old boy, and the boy never even cried. Some people have crippled feet, others have large cracks in their skin but still manage. Skin infections are a way of life. But some are infected beyond what you could imagine, with the infection actually eating the skin away.

The two village chiefs came out to meet us. One is 70 years old and the other is 72 years old. This is ancient for Africa. They saw the doctors, got their eyes washed, and found glasses to wear. They were so excited to see better that it made everyone excited. We all had pictures taken with them. Before we left, Eli preached to them. Then we took more pictures with the people and Pastor Marcel. The 100cfa (20c American) per person we collected before we left was given back to the pastor for his church and village. They were so happy. We also left them with 3 large bags of clothes. Some of these people never wash, and wear the same clothes for weeks. Then the Pastor presented the team with his prize goat for our services, that was a real sacrifice for him. But we had to accept it or hurt his heart. So on the bus it went. Everyone back at the house (Pastor Michel's) laughed. It was thrilling.

**DAY 9** - This was the first time our team (Dr. Gale, one RN, Robert and I) were at the school for clinic. There were hundreds of people waiting. After getting all the tables set up we started the clinic at 7:00 AM. We were all inside one classroom and it was hot. But we are here to serve. So you start on the line, set up a system of keeping everyone busy, have a small

waiting area, and let the rest of the people wait outside. Around 11:30 AM it started getting really dark. The winds started blowing hard. Then the lights went off and the rains poured and the roof leaked. After 10 minutes of using flashlights the lights went back on. We continued until 1:00 PM. Altogether we saw 190 people today, with a national medical student helping us.

**DAY 10** - We are all out of worm medicines, and have to purchase the native kind, including some for malaria. We are cutting up any paper we can find to wrap the medicines in. Believe it or not, we even have to explain to people how to wash themselves. We saw about 250 people today at the school.

We had lunch and then went to the American club. We need this time to get away from the world. Our group of 10 decided we wanted to eat at the Catholic Restaurant. It was a meal of chicken and fries. Barb did an imitation of Robert at the office. It was good to laugh and have a good time. We also did some shopping in their store because the money would help them. The Lord is keeping us all healthy.

A note of difference: If a Muslim women has twins it is taken to mean that she has been cursed by an evil spirit. The twins must be either taught to beg on the streets or put to death. They have no future.

**DAY 11** - Today the teams changed places because we had 2 doctors and the need is greatest in the bush. Our destination was the village of Borzo. Our journey still took us down cow paths and such. As we approached the village you could see a huge mob of people waiting, some 600-700 people. Some had waited all night. Some had walked a long time. It was overwhelming. You had to call people from 3 lines - senior men, senior women, and families. We had to hold the clinic outside because there were no lights. We also had problems with the heat and lack of enough interpreters.

The people kept crowding us and wanting to watch. The temp. was about 105 , it kept getting hotter as we worked directly in the sun, sweating and getting irritable. We looked like we had been hit by Mack trucks. The 2 doctors and 1 RN saw 513 patients in 6



hours and one of our ladies who was doing only dressing changes saw 125 people alone. We had lunch on the way home. The poverty in this village was the most severe we had ever seen. The children are wearing the same torn and dirty clothes, literal rags, both day and night.

**DAY 12** - Church was at Pastor Tapsoba's church. It started with several songs at 9:30 AM. One lady gave a testimony about being helped last year by our *(American)* doctors when she was in extreme pain. The doctors gave her American medicine that saved her life. We received a thank you from her entire family. And we said, "Thank you Lord, for bringing us to Burkina."

Here are some notes from church service: There was a young man who ushered that was wearing a three-piece suit in the 95 degree weather. The service started with several congregational songs. The men are on one side, the ladies on the other, and the children are in the middle. The ladies choir sang "Holy, Holy, Holy" to only a drum beat. The ladies sing while holding their babies. Then all the ladies sang "Stepping in the Power of Love," "Day by Day," and "Come What May." Then the men's choir also sang 2 songs, the first in English and the second in French.

The offertory was an instrumental piece with the sound effects of drums, whistles and loud clickers played with the thumb and forefinger of each hand. The first offering is for tithes, then another offering is taken for loose change. The offering basket is passed on a long stick. After prayer there was another congregational song, "Lead Me to Calvary." Then there was more prayer, with everyone praying out loud at the same time. Following that, we all sang the chorus "Hallelujah." A lady then prayed.

Pastor Tapsoba spoke in More and Mrs. Tapsoba spoke in English so we could understand. He introduced our group, and we sang "Amazing Grace" for the church. Then Ray was introduced to speak. Mrs. Tapsoba continued translating. Ray spoke from Ezekiel 34 on leadership. His introductory comment said that a leader was not to have a wagging tongue, and went on to make the following points: 1) Leaders strengthen the weak. 2) Leaders heal the sick. 3) Leaders bind up the wounded. 4) Leaders bring back the lost. 5)

Leaders do not rule with force. 6) Leaders care well. 7) Leaders eat well. 8) Leaders sleep well. The sheep need a leader because they are weak and are prone to wasting or shoving others aside in their selfishness. After Ray spoke there was an invitation and prayer.

**DAY 13** - Today's village clinic was in Forestier Dassouri at Pastor Pierre's church. After getting supplies from the school we arrived at the village. It was empty. The pastor thought we were coming Tuesday only. So we unloaded the medicines and decided to go down to the Grand Marche. "Marche" means "market." First, though Pastor Boniface took us on a tour of the new section of the school. They are building on the radio station at the school, plus adding 3 more classrooms. After lunch, and relaxing at the pool, I went inside to calculate the first week of clinic. The total number of patients for the one week in the two clinics was 2,700.

Here in Burkina Faso, Youth for Christ has purchased the Jesus film in French to use in evangelism. Eli, a 23 year old Bible student, along with other school staff, have taken the film to 60 villages in 6 months and have had 700 decisions for Christ. Thank you, Lord.

**DAY 14** - Morning temperature - 98 degrees. The alarm always goes off at 4:15 AM. We know that today will be busy because we had no clinic yesterday. We arrived at the clinic village and it was very organized. Some people had put a pan or stone on the ground to keep their place in line. There must have already been 200-300 people there. The village was very poor so we did not charge at all. We held the clinic outside under 2 large shade trees. By 10:00 AM, the crowd had grown to 400-500 people. There were many unique people. The village king sent his messenger to get his medicine. We asked if we could visit him and take his picture. We took several pictures. We stopped for lunch from 11:45 to 12:15, instead of working straight through. We worked until 2:45 PM, and of course we were dead tired. But before we left we shook hands with the pastor and gave him a Bible, he gave us 2 dozen eggs. We saw 538 patients.

**DAY 15** - Today we were at Pastor Isidor's church for the clinic. We have 2 doctors, 2 RNs, a lot of help and a lot of medicine. There was a lot of light and even fans. Eli gave me my 1st ride on a motorcycle to go back to Pastor Michel's for Robert's black bag. By 6:30 we had already seen 65 patients, by 11:00 AM the count was near 200. The total at the end of the day was 391.

We had church at Pastor Isidor's, they sang 8-9 songs, and I played 4-5 songs, then they had the message, and then a healing service. My closing number was "Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb", and since they knew the song, the drums joined in, then the guitars joined in, and we sang and jammed for at least 10 verses.

**DAY 16** - Today we really traveled cow paths and winding paths to Pastor Jean-Charles'es church. We went to a new subdivision, new mud huts with thatched roofs, but the people were very poor. We saw 530 patients and 10 million flies. Robert saw his first case of leprosy today. One women complained of getting sick when she ate food so she just started eating dirt. At noon Pastor Jean-Charles brought us cold cokes, the temp. was 105 . Some of the people never wash, and the mothers just keep having babies. Some of the families have so many children that even the small ones are carrying babies on their backs.

Tonight we are having a severe rain storm, and believe it or not there is hail.

**DAY 17** - Both medical teams are working together today at the military temple. Here's an interesting item: Basil, the YFC school caretaker, who is now a Christian, comes from a family of 44 brothers and sisters, because his father is Muslim and has fourteen wives.

We had lunch with Pastor Paul and his wife and saw the private school his wife is starting. Then we went on to their house, which was very beautiful. We went back to the house to pack all our things and tabulate the clinic amounts.

The final count for two weeks of clinic was 5,480 people.