

THE
BERGEN

blip

OCTOBER
2009



Up and looking
around again:
Ruthie with mom

Ruthie's Rainbow

Little Ruthie Coulibaly was in trouble. What at first appeared to be a normal reaction to a vaccination had quickly turned into a life-threatening case of malaria. She was now seriously dehydrated, and the nurses at the N'Dorola clinic were unable to find a vein. Her red blood cells were so depleted by the malaria parasite that there was no certainty that oral drugs could help in time. Ruthie couldn't keep anything down anyway. The nurses were considering transferring her to Bobo.

Ruthie's dad, Karim, has been a friend of ours since helping us build our house back in '94-5. His wife, Franceline, is part of our church community. Soon after we heard the news, Phil inquired at the clinic to see if there was anything we could do. He let Karim know that we'd drive to town if need be.

Phil's heart was warmed seeing Pastor Madou in action at the

clinic. He radiated hope as he spoke with the parents, calmly reminding them that sicknesses come and go and that God is able to heal. He prayed for Ruthie. While the nurses finished their other consultations and re-evaluated Ruthie's condition, Phil and I packed overnight bags just in case.

At 3:00 p.m., Madou stopped by to say that they had found a vein! Unaware of her red blood cell count, we assumed that they could now give her liquids and the needed medicines without needing to send her to Bobo.

But at 4:30 p.m., Madou called saying that she needed to be evacuated to Bobo right away. Finding the vein actually made them decide to send her—without an IV she would have had less chance of surviving the trip.

Phil had gone to Madou's for their afternoon Bible study. But since Madou was at the clinic, he

hadn't found him at home. Where had Phil gone from there?

upcoming travels

MBMSI retreat & consultation, Salzburg,
Austria October 21-28

Alsace, France (chez Solomiacs)
October 30 to November 2

Vacation in California!!!!
December 8 to January 5

I rode my bike through town looking for him. I stopped by the chief's and asked if he'd seen him. No one had.

Madou found Phil next door at Abu's. Abu is also a long-time friend of ours. After greeting, Abu surprised Phil by asking, "How can people have peace with God?"

Phil began retelling the Bible story that Abu had already heard, but seemed to have forgotten. Long ago, both he and Karim had listened to the scripture tapes for evangelism in Nanerige. They'd enjoyed the stories, but were not ready for the change that turning to Christ would bring. So we keep praying. Abu's question greatly encouraged us! As Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for a right relationship with God. They will be satisfied."

No time for a complete answer then, however. Within minutes, Phil and I were down at the clinic waiting for Karim's brother, Adama, who was to accompany Ruthie and her mom to Bobo.

While we were waiting, we called a private clinic in Bobo to see if that was the best place to take Ruthie. "No, take her to the pediatric ward at the main hospital," was the reply. After tying Ruthie's IV to the grab-handle above the window with a bandana, off we went.

Rainy season is winding down, but the sky looked dark in front of us as we headed towards the tar road. Then a rainbow appeared. A really impressive one, 180 degrees. We drove right towards its center for about 30 minutes as we headed east. *Ruth's rainbow*. It provoked a battle of the wills within me. Mine versus God's.

You see, it was the week of the second anniversary of the home going of Ruth Bergen, Phil's brother's wife. Eleven months earlier when Franceline had asked me for a name for her new baby, Ruth's name naturally came to mind.

Franceline wasn't sure about the name to start with, because my French pronunciation, "root," sounded awkward to her Julaphone ears. But the Jula equivalent, "Uruti," was just fine. She hadn't heard the biblical story of Ruth yet, but a Bible name seemed a good idea.

Ruth Bergen carried with her a beautiful story of a rainbow appearing in the sky when she stepped outside the doctor's office the day she checked for what she feared might be the same cancer that killed her mother. It was a beautiful reassurance that God was with her, a "God-thing" she called it. Of course we all had wanted to read more into that rainbow--we had wanted it to be a

promise from above that Ruth would not perish in the flood of cancer cells that might soon overwhelm her. But because that rainbow had disappointed me, this new "Ruth's rainbow" left me uneasy!

I sat battling the conflicting feelings within me. I knew from experience that this rainbow was no promise from God that little Ruthie would even survive the day. I found myself angry that a full lifespan is not one of our inalienable rights, along with "liberty and the pursuit of happiness," like in the U.S. Constitution. Hasn't our Creator endowed us with the right to life? No. He has gifted us with the chance to live.

As a Christian, shouldn't it be enough just to know that Jesus is with us, even in the Valley of the Shadow of Death? I felt again the need to surrender my "rights" to my Maker and be thankful for every life that touches mine, no matter how much time we may have together.

Days later I was comforted when I thought of the distress Jesus himself felt before the cross. Facing death just has a way of shaking people up. Even Jesus experienced this. Our struggle against suffering and death is a painful, yet inevitable part of the human condition.

"Please, God, let little Ruthie get help in time," we prayed silently as Phil drove. Over rough roads, he explored the limits of "reasonable haste," and we arrived shortly after dark.

Plenty of stories circulate about the bad service at the main hospital in Bobo, but this is not one of them! As we were guided to the pediatrics ward, the bright light from its spacious windows welcomed us. Within minutes, our letter of reference was in the hands of a friendly male nurse. Blood was drawn and tests were under way. Within an hour or so, lab results were back, the doctor had been by, and Ruthie was receiving the blood transfusion that most likely saved her life.

This happened last Tuesday. By Sunday, Ruthie was back in N'Dorola, playing and laughing, back in church even. We praise God for sparing her life. We were so glad to be able to help!

Thanks for your prayers. Please pray that Karim, Abu and Sirigi might meet Jesus. Sirigi has started an onion field, so pray that he'll find the time and

energy to continue listening to the scripture tapes with Phil that they started several weeks ago.

This comes to you with love, from a country far away,

Carol and Phil

p.s. We were privileged to have a visit from a dear friend, Mariam Entz, this past week. Mariam grew up here in Burkina. She just participated in an MBMSI Action trip to the Congo and is visiting family and friends in Mali, Burkina and France on her way back to Winnipeg.



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Phil and Carol partner with North American churches thru MBMSI to bring the gospel to the Nanerige in Burkina Faso.

MBMSI Project # C0011

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p.p.s. The little boy below is a delightful new addition to our congregation. His mother, Maria, is the sister of Drissa and Tene's daughter-in-law. Maria accepted Christ a couple weeks ago and has been faithfully attending church meetings since then.



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