

April 25, 1982

Dear Bishop Hansen, P.V. 1st Ward, Children, Grandchildren, etc.!

As I wrote today's date, my heart gave a little leap as my mind told me that today is the 152nd anniversary of the founding of the Church. I am eternally grateful, and I'm sure that you are too, to Joseph Smith and the faithful men and women of that time who sacrificed so much to bequeath to us our LDS heritage. One appreciates it so much when he is 15,000 miles from that "rock" known as the Wasatch Front. If you could only be here to lend your strength to the frail beginnings of an L.D.S. heritage for the black people of this land! It seems an impossible task for the eight of us who serve as missionaries here in Salisbury and the four who serve in Bulawayo. Only twelve missionaries to serve seven million Zimbabweans!

President Wood (of this mission) stayed at our home here for two days (he is headquartered in Johannesburg) as he conducted a mission conference for the eight missionaries here. He is an astute gospel scholar and excellent speaker. We held the meetings in our home and Ida Rose prepared a super ("super" is the local number one adjective) roast beef dinner for us. It is very easy to become frustrated and dejected here but President Wood's visit gave us new vision and determination.

As you may know, there is an exodus of whites from this land. I think there are only 180,000 left and there are over 30 black people to each white person. I would say that 90% of the whites that we have talked to are trying to figure out a way to leave and find a place to go. It is difficult for whites to leave because they must leave their possessions, land, house, business, etc. behind. A family can only take \$500.00/family when they leave! Consequently they must rely on the generosity of persons outside the country to help them "escape" and start over again. The exodus has decimated the formerly all-white Salisbury Branch. In fact, the Zimbabwe District and the Branch are almost in chaos because of this exodus. At the moment, the future of the church in this land rests with the blacks. Highfield is an african township about 20 km south and west from our home. We have only two melchizedec priesthood holders, a priest, and a couple of deacons. Most of the members are women and children. Black attendance is about 30 persons at Sacrament Meeting. We hold Primary, Relief Society, Priesthood, and Sacrament Meeting only (no Sunday School) at the present time. We meet in the Highfield Secondary School for which we pay \$20.00 per month rent. This is equivalent to about \$28.00 U.S. dollars. (The exchange rate is artificially set. U.S. dollars, in reality, are worth much more than Zimbabwean dollars. Consequently, the artificial exchange makes this an expensive mission, particularly for couples. On the black market one can get up to 3 Zimbabwean dollars for 1 U.S. dollar or 1 South African Rand. But the penalty for being caught in such an exchange is very stiff and both the Church and the U.S. Embassy have warned us to not participate in this. We arrive at the Highfield School at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday with our brooms and spend one hour cleaning up before church starts at 9:30 a.m. You would never believe the filthy condition of the school! As yet most Africans do not appreciate sanitation, cleanliness, and orderliness. Body odor is also strong. In spite of this, Ida Rose and I have overcome these obstacles and are able to put our arms around them and show our love for them.

In the traditional black culture here, women do all the work, tend the kids, grow the vegetables, and do crochet work, etc. to earn some cash. She also serves and waits on her husband. The husband, meanwhile, drinks beer and sleeps around. Women have no rights at all. Neither do female children who, to this day, are sold, bartered, or used to pay for a crime, such as murder, committed by the husband. Polygamy is common; witch doctors abound. The government is working to change all this as well as to eliminate lobolo but these traditions die hard. I think the above will give you an idea as to why we do not have, as yet, many melchizedec priesthood holders in the Highfield Branch. Incidentally, today's paper said that 11,500 persons in the small town of Gwelo were treated for venereal disease in the first three months of 1982. That's about half the people in the town! The health ministry held 62 lectures in the town on "sexually transmitted diseases" to try to stem the tide.

News will appear next week - my
typewriter broke -

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Well, this is a backward country. For instance: (1) the steering wheel is on the wrong side of the car and they drive on the wrong side of the road. They even pass on the wrong side. Not only that, but they put the turn signal on backwards. (2) Their calendars are backwards. They run the days of the week (Mon, Tues, Weds...) and the dates (1,2,3,...) in vertical columns instead of horizontal columns. (3) January is in the middle of summer and July is in the middle of winter. (4) There isn't even a "big dipper" in the night sky.

You know, many people worry about this country being taken over by the communists, but I tell you there is a bigger worry. The country is being taken over by ants. That's right--ants. I have conservatively estimated that there are 98,642,185,948,701,966,374,323,301 ants in Zimbabwe. The bible says that Abraham's posterity will be more numerous than the sands on the sea shores. I say, "that's nothing compared to Ant's posterity." They have anthills in Zimbabwe as big as a car. There are many varieties of ants here. I have seen an anthill built around a tree to a height of about four feet. These ants were in the process of eating the tree. It won't take long to do it either! They can not use wood telephone poles or build wood frame houses in this part of the world. Ants (or ant-like termites) will eat them up. So they build only with stone, concrete, brick, tile and steel. Most telephone poles are made of concrete although some are of steel. As you know, ants are "social" insects. They have workers, soldiers, nurses, etc. plus one queen. Ants are also very smart. In this hot climate, they build expertly crafted ventilation tunnels and chimneys to cool the anthill so they all will not get cooked. If one can kill the queen, the anthill colony will perish. The queen is usually located below ground level where it is cooler and she does nothing but lay eggs by the billions upon billions. You see there is as much ant colony (or more) below ground as above in the ant hill. The hill is built from the grains of sand removed from below ground where they make the tunnels and living quarters in that portion of the complex. Of course they also built tunnels, nurseries, food storage areas, etc. in the hill portion of the complex. I had not seen a queen ant before, so I offered our yard boy, Alphonse Borrairi, a dollar if he would dig one out for me from a new anthill starting in our yard. He got her for me--she was not a very large one, about one inch. As you know, ants have a head, thorax, and body. In the queen the body turns yellow and grows very large--sometimes as large as a banana. The head and thorax remain rather normal. The large body becomes an egg laying factory. The queen in this condition cannot move. Feeding ants feed and feed her and she lays and lays.

Well, as I said in the beginning, ants are everywhere including inside the house. They are in your cupboards and your clothing. They attack anything warm. One night when I was showing a film strip, they attacked the warm projector. On another occasion I went outside after dark in my stocking feet to get something out of the car which was parked in the driveway. I swear, it could not have been more than 10 seconds before they had climbed up to my kneew on both legs. By the time I got in the house they were up to my neck. By this time, I had had it with ants UP TO HERE! So, planning a counter attack, I bought \$30 worth of 30% Chlordane liquid and put it around the foundation of the house (all the way). I also poured it in all the cracks in our clothes closets. Miraculously, ants have disappeared from our house--that is until today when we found an army of them attacking the glue on a postage stamp on a table in the dining room!

I have to tell you a little bit about our most interesting investigator, Beverly Mhlanga, a R.C. turned "Apostolic-saved," from Detroit. She loves scriptures and knows the bible quite well. Incidentally she is "colored" and married to a black Zimbabwean. She does not yet believe in Joseph Smith or the B. of Mormon, but she surely believes in the bible. We gave Beverly and her friend Filomena Fernandex (a R.C.) an "I" discussion at our home. I turned it into a testimony meeting where we all bore testimony concerning Jesus Christ and his mission. It went very well. At the end, I asked Beverly to offer the closing prayer. It started pretty much like an LDS prayer but then crescendoed into a chorus of hallelujahs and amens. I'm sure the neighbors could hear it.

Love, Tracy (and Ida Rose) alias Dad and Mom
alias Grandpa and Grandma