

Our Mission
One of the Most Spiritual Times of Our Life
Tracy Hall

On April 19, 1853, Elders Jesse Haven, Leonard I. Smith, and William Holmes Walker climbed Lion's Head Mountain overlooking Cape Town and dedicated South Africa to the preaching of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. These missionaries had been called to serve by Brigham Young at a special conference of the elders of the Church held in the old Salt Lake City Tabernacle in 1852. Interestingly, at that same conference, 57 elders were called to serve in Europe and 14 to serve in Asia.

On September 15, 1852, the three South African elders said farewell to their families and traveled by wagon to New York City with another 103 missionaries called to serve in other various parts of the world. All the missionaries traveled without purse or script. Haven, Smith, and Walker arrived at Cape Town via England on April 18, 1853, *seven months* after leaving Salt Lake City.

As they commenced their proselytizing efforts, they met immediate opposition from the local clergy and press but succeeded in baptizing 45 persons within the next six months. Before they left in 1855, 176 people had been baptized.

We are not that successful today. There were, in 1981-1983 about 120 missionaries in South Africa and eight in Zimbabwe. The yearly harvest is about 440 converts. By calculation, it seems that Haven, Smith, and Walker were eight times more effective in their efforts as those of us who served in these areas in the early 80's.

Most of the converts coming into the Church in Africa today are nonwhites. It is difficult to convert white people living in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

I made a comment concerning this in my missionary journal dated April 1, 1983 (we were in South Africa at this time): "Our mission zone held a braai (barbecue) today at Brother Nichol's home, high on the mountain side at St. James, overlooking Kalk Bay. The view was, well fantastic! You could see Cape Point, False Bay, distant mountains (The Drackenbergs), the sandy and the rocky beaches, the surf and the colorful wind surfboard sails, swimmers, sunbathers, white clouds, distant horizons, and exquisitely lovely homes and gardens blending into the hillsides.

I know why missionary work is so slow here. They think that they are already in Heaven. And they are. Physically the Cape is a Garden of Eden.

Incidentally, as we drove our yellow Toyota automobile out of Zimbabwe to our assigned destination in South Africa, we traveled along the African shoreline of the beautiful, blue Indian Ocean. We went miles and miles through wondrous beauty causing Ida-Rose to comment, "This is truly a Garden of Eden!" Just then, we rounded a bend and beheld a sign. It said, "Welcome to the Garden of Eden."

There are four main groups of people in South Africa.

1. The Whites (more commonly called Europeans) 17%
2. The Indians from India 4%
3. The Bantus (native Blacks) 70%
4. The Colourds (ranging from nearly white to nearly black) 9%

The total population of all South Africans is approximately 30 million persons.

It was our privilege to spend 13 months in Zimbabwe working with native Blacks (primarily from the Shona Tribe but also with some Ndebeles). Then we were privileged to

spend our remaining five months working with the Colourds (sometimes called the Cape Colourds because most of them live in the Cape) in an area called Mitchell's Plains, a relatively new, planned city of nearly 200,000 people. Mitchell's Plains is located about 27 kilometers (23 miles) southeast of the center of Cape Town and about 27 kilometers (16 miles) from our Serengeti apartment in Mowbray.

Mitchell's Plains has many miles of sandy beach fronting False Bay with nice recreational facilities. The city is well planned. It has six-lane, divided, paved access roads, six-lane main city roads, and well-paved four-lane and two-lane lesser roads. All roads have sidewalks and curbs on both sides of the street. All streets are well lit. All electrical power is underground. Most homes have three bedrooms, a kitchen, dining room, and living room. They have flush toilets, hot and cold running water, refrigerators and electric stoves. While the lots are small, there is room to park a car, have a small lawn and flowers in the front yard, and a vegetable garden in back.

The government subsidizes the purchase of the homes, which cost only \$12,000.00 in U.S. money. The residents, in general, keep the homes and grounds looking nice. Most homes have expensive stereos, color TV's and other amenities.

Tracting in Mitchell's Plains was initiated by Frank and Maurine Hoyle, a missionary couple from Rochdale, Lancaster, England. Incidentally, their son, Frank Hoyle, Jr. is the Bishop in this area of England and had 250 converts in his ward in 1981. Elder and Sister Hoyle GQ'd (asked the golden questions) of people at the "Golden Arches" Shopping mall in Cape Town about June of 1982 and obtained an appointment for a first discussion with Malvern and Beryl Cedras and their six-year-old daughter Marisa who lived in Mitchell's Plains. The Cedrus family was converted.

The Hoyles thought that Mitchell's Plains would be a good area to tract and obtained permission from the mission president to work there. A pair of young elders was assigned to the area. The area is too dangerous for sisters so none were assigned. There are about 30 murders every week in Mitchell's Plains according to a Mr. James Green, who took all of our discussions. Interestingly, he is a member of *The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Rain*. That's right, it's the same kind that comes out of the skies. This church also has temples and the women can only clothe themselves in blue. We couldn't learn anything about the purpose of their temples and did not get a chance to see one. Mr. Green said that the Colourds are a passionate, jealous, hard-drinking, crime-prone people. It seems to be true.

The Hoyles later converted Edmund and Irene Brown who had three children (Natalie, Bernard, and Carmen). We took over from the Hoyles January 1, 1983 and continued the work along with two young elders until the middle of May of 1983. Neither the elders nor Sister Hall and I were successful in bringing any more Colourds into the fold. We shortly left for home and President G. Phillip Margetts, upon our leaving, closed Mitchell's Plains for tracting.

Well, we're sorry that we did not have any baptisms. We only hope that we planted some seeds that someday will bear fruit.

Tracting in Mitchell's Plains was easy. For example, our tracting record for the week of Sunday, January 23, 1983 through Saturday, January 29, 1983 indicates the following:

Number of doors knocked on: 42

Homes in which a discussion was given: 12

Families receiving a discussion (often two or three families in the same home): 23
Persons receiving discussion: 100
Families not at home: 9
Families who turned us away: 10
Busy, but gave us a future appointment: 4
Families who did not keep a previously arranged appointment: 4

We spent most of our time on Mitchell's Plains tracting on Cambridge Street in the area known as New Portlands, although referrals took us to homes in most of the other Mitchell's Plains areas. Everyone on Cambridge Street now knows something about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Day after day we were there distributing tracts, Book of Mormons, giving discussions, showing filmstrips, and praying with families. We and our yellow Toyota were as familiar as the ice cream man. The children followed us around as though we were pried pipers of Hamlin.

We came to love the people on Cambridge Street and many came to love us.

We placed 130 copies of the Book of Mormon in the Cape. Earlier, we had placed 50 Book of Mormons in Zimbabwe.

Although almost all of the copies of the Book of Mormon that we placed were purchased by us personally, we did appreciate the few that we received that contained personal family photographs and testimonies. These personalized books are much more valuable to the missionaries. You may be interested in how we use the personalized copies. We give the book at any stage in the conversion process as the Spirit directs. It might be even given as a door approach. For example, "Mr. Brown, we are missionaries from America representing The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have a book to give you. It is called the Book of Mormon and is a gift from Mr. John Doe, a neighbor of ours in America. He and his family have enclosed a photograph of themselves with a greeting to you and a message concerning this book. Let me read what they say,

Dear Friends, We send you greetings and our best wishes from America. Please accept this book as a gift from us. The Book of Mormon is a very important part of our family's life. It is the foundation of our faith and a collaborating testimony with the Bible to the divinity and mission of Jesus Christ. One of our favorite scriptures is in the book of 3rd Nephi (especially Chapter 17), which records the visit of Jesus Christ after his resurrection to His people in ancient America. We know that this book is true, and that you too can know this for yourself.

Sincerely,

John Doe Family
Stadium Avenue
Provo, Utah 84604
USA

May we come in and tell you more about this book? This door approach worked almost every time, even at Muslim homes.

At least a dozen Colourds heard all of the discussions, believed that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that the Book of Mormon was true. But they believed that their church was also true. That statement often shattered our hopes.

We were the prime beneficiaries of our mission. For the first time in our lives, we shared each other 24 hours a day for 578 consecutive days in the same sacred endeavor. Our love increased. So did our testimonies. I saw no heavenly beings but several times heard my name, just as surely as Joseph heard his in the Sacred Grove, and received affirmation that I was doing the right thing in the right place at the right time and that the Church was true.

Our Father in Heaven lives, Jesus Christ is the Messiah, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is directed by modern day prophets holding keys to priesthood authority from heaven and I testify of this in Jesus' name, Amen...HTH