

## **Kanye Hospital A Kindness Returned**

**Allen Fowler July 24, 2001**

Kanye Hospital is located just on the edge of the Kalahari Desert in the country of Botswana in southern Africa.

Cattle ranching is about all that is possible there because the countryside is so arid. It takes many acres to graze one cow (50-75) but that is not a concern because the country is relatively large and has a very small population (1,000,000). The village of Kanye is considered to be the largest traditional African village in Africa.

It has a population of 50,000-60,000 and they live in grass thatched houses. There are no streets and no street signs just tracks that meander around among the huts. Botswana prides itself on never having been colonized.

It was a British protectorate during the British Colonial rule in Africa--but never a colony!

Botswana has a well managed and prosperous economy. Its greatest resource are its diamond fields. The largest diamond mine in the world is located in Botswana just 50 miles from Kanye Hospital.

The story I am about to relate took place in the 1940's or 50's. It was told to me by Dr. Karl Seligman who spent many years as the Medical Director of Kanye Hospital.

A Botswana gentleman by the name of Quette Masire was transporting some agricultural chemicals in his pick-up truck from the capital city of Gaborone to the family ranch in the desert beyond Kanye Hospital. One of the containers of liquid chemicals sprang a small leak and Masire inhaled the fumes leaking from the container during the time he was transporting it to ranch. He was not aware of the dangerous nature of the fumes. He became violently ill and was brought to Kanye Hospital on the verge of death. There was a young American missionary doctor at the hospital at the time. He immediately recognized the serious nature of the poisoning, did emergency first aid and arranged to have Masire transferred to South Africa immediately for dialysis as he was in total kidney failure. Kanye Hospital did not have a dialysis machine.

After they had done what they could to remove the toxins from his system Masire was returned to Kanye Adventist Hospital in Botswana for recuperation. It was anticipated to take some time and they feared that he might yet succumb to the effects of the poisoning. Masire had been betrothed to a lady in his home village of Kanye and fearing that he might still die he was determined to marry her so that she would carry his name.

Arrangements were made and the wedding ceremony was conducted at his bedside. It was a long and difficult recovery but he eventually returned to full health and strength.

When I was at Kanye Hospital in the early 1990's Masire and his wife came to visit the hospital again. He wanted to see one of our old pastors who was in the hospital dying of cancer. After he had finished visiting we set up a small reception for him and his wife in one of the empty patient rooms in the private wing of the hospital. We had cold drinks and I chatted with him about old times. After we had conversed for a while he smiled and said to me " You know this room is very special to me. I was married in this very room". Then he related the story to me. When I had set up the reception I had no knowledge of the previous events. We parted as good friends.

In the late 1980's Kanye Hospital was the recipient of an ADRA grant in excess of US\$1,000,000 to build a new outpatient clinic, operating theatre, doctors offices, laboratory and administration offices. It was a wonderful addition to the hospital. In Botswana all hospital and medical care is

free and the government provides an operating budget to cover the expenses. This provision covers the mission hospitals such as Kanye as well. During the construction of the new Administration block Kanye hospital ran into significant additional operating expenses that were not covered by the budget that was allocated by the government before construction began. The administration at the hospital at the time contacted the Ministry of Health in Gaborone for additional budget to cover the shortfall. They were told by the Ministry that they should continue the operation with a bank overdraft and that when the construction was complete the Ministry would pick up the deficit. As I recall it amounted to the equivalent of US\$100,000+. (PULA 500,000+). When I arrived 5 years later in the early 1990's it still had not been paid and was a significant burden on the hospital finances.

At this same time, Dr. Karl Seligman, the South African doctor who had spent so many years as the Medical Director at Kanye, was now in charge of the Botswana Adventist Medical Clinic in the capital city of Gaborone.

Dr. Seligman had spent almost all his medical career as a missionary in Botswana. He and his wife had come as a young married couple to Kanye Hospital. The Seligmans were now celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary and a big celebration was planned at the Gaborone Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. Dr.

Seligman was familiar with Quette Masire, who was now living in Gaborone, as he had known of him when he was the medical director at the Kanye Hospital. He invited him and his wife to the celebration. They arrived at the celebration and sat down right in the front row of the church. After the celebration at the church a reception and lunch was held for the large crowd over at the Civic Center. Dr. Seligman invited Masire to sit with him at the head table because of their long acquaintance.

During the reception Masire, who was seated next to Dr. Seligman, leaned over and inquired about how Kanye Hospital was doing. Dr. Seligman was familiar with our financial difficulties and told Masire the sad story. It was only an innocent sharing of the facts with an old friend. The conversation then passed on to other subjects.

Within 2 weeks I received a cheque from the government of Botswana for the full amount of the hospital deficit---for you see Dr. Quette Masire was then the president of Botswana. He never forgot the role that Kanye Hospital played in saving his life when he was a young man---long before he had any political ambitions.

"--cast thy bread upon the waters and it shall not return unto thee void--"