

Grand-Bassam, June 2017

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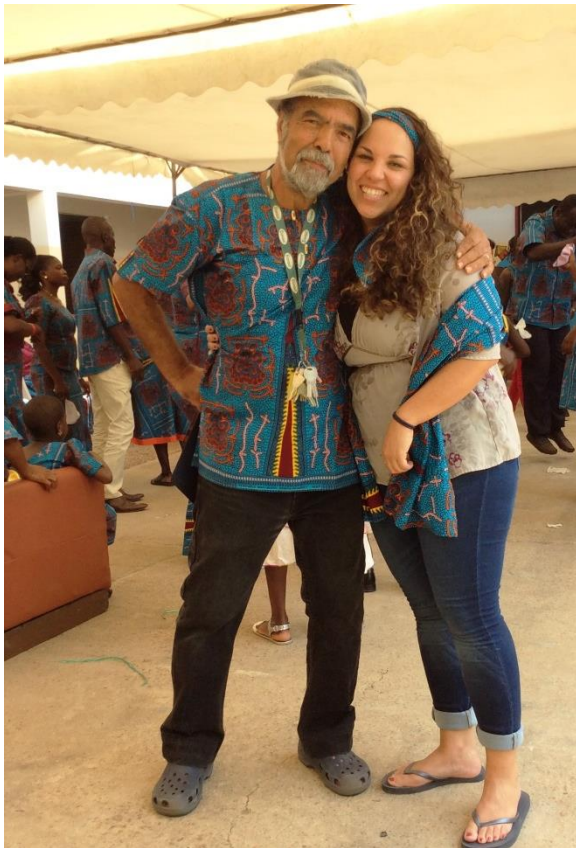
I hope you are all well.

Last few months were quite hectic for us all: the moving to Bassam, the new orphans - whom we could accommodate with us, new Hopes, new Joy, but also renewed tears & pains. What remains is the omnipresent poverty of the people.

We inaugurated our new centre on 14th January with a wonderful ceremony. It was not a coincidence that this was also the 70th Birthday of Aziz. I wanted that this be a day of honour for Aziz, as during the last 18 months he has built up the centre out of ashes under harshest conditions; he cramped every day from early morning to the late evening creating a center more beautiful than dreamt of and at a cost less than planned due to his negotiation skills. These all under the intolerable heat. This 14th January was HIS day. Many guests came including both the kings of Basam and other high ranking personalities, politicians, doctors, friends and acquaintances. It was a nice, simple and very contemplative ceremony with a lot of emotions. My own personal surprise-present to Aziz was the presence of our daughter Sarah; I arranged for her to come from London without his knowing about it. The surprise worked as luckily Aziz has solid heart.

The children and personals rehearsed songs and dances for this memorable day. There were food and drinks and at the end we let hundred white balloons fly while all present sang the national anthem of the Ivory Coast. The ceremony was a time of Peace, Happiness, Gratitude and Sharing. This day will stay in our hearts forever to remember.





In course of our work we are confronted time and again with people and their fates, with patients and their sufferings. This also include dying and death. My firm belief that death is the start of something better, helps me in this situation. Of something nobler - beginning of having no more pain, tears, poverty

and injustice. The death is not the end of something but start of something new - about this I am convinced.

Time and again I have been asked - where do I take the strength to deal with all the sufferings and not to go under, but always to gather new courage. The answer is simple: quite often I withdraw myself in our own in-house small chapel. There I pray for Strength, Health, and Protection of my own family and the one in Grand-Basam. I pray that God always put right words in my mouth to console the patients and also to explain the people dignifiedly about their imminent death and to insure them how much we love them and everything comes as it has to be . As I believe and am convinced that everything find justice at the end.



Photo: Tomas Wüthrich

EDMOND - his destiny

Edmond is with us in our new hospital since beginning of January. He has Aids, but stopped taking his medicines. He was not yet 30, emaciated upto the bones and it seems that he is longing for his death.

“Life is no more worth living for me” he told me. I asked him “Are you absolutely sure about that?” He looked at me long and then smiled and asked me why should he live longer? I should provide him a good reason to show that his life is still worth living.

“Have you still got your parents or siblings?” I asked and he nodded. “Do they love you?”- I wanted to know. “Yes, they love me very much”. Then he looked at me for a long time and said “ I have a daughter and she is three years old”. I smiled. “She alone is the reason for you not to give up and you still have your family, who love you. You have neither cancer nor any other disease. You have only AIDS and nowadays you can live with AIDS. But you want to die, you will no longer take medicines, you want to let everything go and go away. That way, are you not only thinking about yourself first? Are you not forgetting the bereavement of your family, who love you and for them you are important. Are you also not forgetting your daughter?”

I saw that Edmond was already nearer to death than life; realised that he has given up, didn't want anymore and didn't expect anything from life; so I asked him before I left the room after our

conversation how can I can give him some joy. I knew that my words and my will would not convince him enough to part him from his desire to dye. So I had to be accept it; but I wanted at least to do something good for him. To my question he answered, "I see my family rarely as they have no money to come to visit me. That makes me sad. They would like to come, but it is too expensive"

Once again I had to "pack" my heart - this is an African expression, «attraper son coeur». It means "pack up enough courage before it breaks you and you cry out loud". The only thing that could make this young man happy is to see his family and they couldn't come because some miserable pennies were missing to pay for the transport cost. I said spontaneously "that is no problem, we will take the transport cost for all of them". His reaction was very spontaneous. He spread his arms towards me, pulled me towards his chest and started crying. Of course that broke also my heart and we wept together.

The family came and spend some memorable moments with Edmond and few days later he didn't wake up anymore, he passed away peacefully in his sleep. Edmond could have been my own son and I was so happy to have fulfilled his last wish; happy also that my heart could feel his pain. I pray in our little chapel also for that - my heart never gets heartless.



Photo: Tomas Wüthrich

In the same week of Edmond died, other patients also died of Aids and cancer and we were always allowed to help them by fulfilling their last wishes.

Our orphaned children are doing well. In the meantime they are 28 and they have all settled down well in their new home and feel at home. It is the first time that they have a beautiful garden, where they can pluck mangoes, papayas and avocados. Some look after the chicken farm, some the vegetable garden and some others look after our two pussies. The older children take up the role of older brothers and sisters and are quite an example for the younger children and look after them affectionately. And the younger ones admire the older ones. It makes me thankful, wholeheartedly thankful that we were allowed to establish this Family. I am also thankful for my life, my own children, my grandchildren and my husband. And thankful to you all sponsors; thanks for all your help and trust in us. Let God guide you in your life.

Yours,

Lotti Latrous