

JOURNALS POSTED ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2018

Disaster Rejuvenates Hope in Kikongo



GLEN & RITA CHAPMAN



SUPPORT PLEDGED





The night was dark and stormy. August is still the dry season, but a tropical electrical storm accompanied by lots of wind was bearing down on Kikongo. Glen was in Kinshasa, so Rita was by herself to close the windows and put the barrels out under the water spouts to catch the precious water after months of no rainfall.

In the midst of the storm, there was a tremendous earth-shaking crash. A tree had fallen close by, but where? Soon, she heard a panicked voice at the door. While we were in the US, we let our neighbor boys use our outdoor storage shed as a bedroom. The agreement was that we would help them out with school fees if they provided a presence around our house and yard. Our neighbors have so many relatives that we had been reluctant to send the boys back to their own home. The shed was a convenient bedroom for our neighbor's overflow.

When Rita opened the door and saw that it was our neighbor, she quickly let him in and learned that the tree had fallen on the shed and he didn't know where his roommate was. Pretty soon, a couple of brothers showed up along with the roommate, attracted to the light on at our house. The parents heard the crash and discovered that the fallen tree now blocked our yard from theirs. They were much relieved to discover the boys alive and well in our house.

In the morning everyone could assess the damage. The tree had fallen right on the corner of the shed. A couple weeks before, I had taken the Wood-Mizer lumber mill carriage (LT-25) off of our porch, where it had sat for about 8 years, and moved it right next to the shed. It seems that the Wood-Mizer part helped block the tree from doing more damage to the house. The boys were under a mosquito net too that helped absorb the weight of the bricks

as the wall came crashing down on them. They got out with bruises but nothing worse. The Wood-Mizer carriage resolutely took the brunt of the crash.

Everyone who came by to look at the site walked away in wonder that two boys had survived such a near disaster. Most people continue to comment that "God truly exists."

Not only did the two boys come close to getting smashed by a tree, but it could have been the end of our time at Kikongo, and the end of UNIBAC (Universite Baptiste au Congo). With so much belief in sorcery, people think that humans have to get sacrificed for projects to succeed. If the two boys who were among the recent UNIBAC graduates would have died in the University Vice-Rector's yard, there would have been much interpretation given to the disaster. I would have been the sorcerer who sacrificed two promising lives so that the university would succeed. No one would want to attend a university where not even a month after graduation, people must die. God not only exists, but He is merciful.

Last year, another tree fell on a house. It was an old palm tree. After our recent incident, people are spooked—wanting to cut all the big trees down next to houses. I was in Kinshasa when I heard about the big tree down, so I bought a chainsaw back to Kikongo. It gives us the opportunity to talk about taking out the old and replacing with the new. Along with Rita's nursery of fruit trees, people can decide what sorts of new trees we want around.

For a couple of years, we have not run the Wood-Mizer lumber mill because it was too complicated and expensive to get government authorization for cutting trees. As I explained to the police a few days ago, we didn't chop down a tree, we had a tree fall on its own. No infraction there.

Since we were provided with a good tree trunk for lumber, and we have construction needs, we decided to put the newer lumber mill (LT-15) back in service. I am not able to use my old crew, so we are learning once again how to fit the engine to the machine, and how to make adjustments to the mill. Now having sawed three logs, we are feeling pretty good about our skills, and excited to have lumber again.

The logs have barely been turned into boards and this evening as I write, people are here to search for lumber. There is a death at the next village and there is no lumber to build a coffin. The needs are great around us. Our reason for producing lumber is to build desks and tables for new classrooms for UNIBAC. We also are building a women's dorm and we need all sorts of wood for concrete forms, doors, windows, and roofing.

So, thanks to the Wood-Mizer lumber mill, which churches in the States helped us purchase, we averted disaster, and have the unexpected blessing of jump starting the old lumber project.

[This video](#) tells some of the story of the Wood-Mizer saw mill. May it be used again to bless the lives of the people of Kikongo and the work of the University in the years ahead.