

September 2003



Greetings!

I just returned from Ethiopia and I want to share with you the story of the day we received twenty new children, the largest group of children to come into our care at one time.

Samson, our attorney, and I went to the Kidene Mihret orphanage to see some new kids they wanted us to place. While we were there, the social worker gave us a list of children who he said were staying in another place. He wanted me to see them and to try to place them for adoption. We made an appointment to return later in the week to meet them.

When we went back to Kidene Mihret the room where I usually take videos was full of children. The woman who had brought them said that they were all orphans, all available for adoption and for me to please take all that I could.

I spent the next couple of hours taking video, getting names and ages, identifying sibling groups, and so forth. Then Samson and I had a "phone" meeting with Gail regarding just how many additional children we could accommodate at Layla House. Three were older boys, ten or so, and I regretfully said we could not take them, we already have so many older boys. But we agreed to take the 15 younger ones. The youngest was a three year old boy with a six year old brother. There was a flurry of phone calls regarding getting transportation for them back to Layla House, making sure they were fed before they made the trip, and so forth.

The children were basically healthy looking and clean. There were no lice or scabies. Few had shoes but otherwise they were quite well dressed. There were five sets of siblings.

I was not at Layla House when they arrived, but I can imagine what it must have been like. We had also agreed to move two children from another orphanage to

Layla that day and three children from AHOPE/Enat who had tested negative for HIV, making a total of 20 new kids in one day. John immediately ordered new bunk beds and they scrambled for more bedding.

John said that the new kids ate huge quantities of food that night and the next day the kids were saying that they liked Layla House because they could eat as much as they wanted.

The day I left, Samson and I visited the woman who had sent the new children to us. There we saw that the children had been staying in three shipping containers into which doors had been cut. There was a small house in the corner of the small property and inside, in the living area, were perhaps 15 more children, most of them younger than those we had taken. This woman has cared for children in the area whose parents have died, and has provided for them as best she could. She said she had given us the older children because they need to go to school, but she said the younger ones are also available and when we had space we could take more. She showed me files she had made for each child, with a photo of the child, the story of their arrival and stay, and photos of birth family if they were available. I was very impressed with what she was doing and left a donation for her work.

We did find that two of the fifteen are HIV positive. The saddest story is of two sisters whose parents died just a few days ago. Now they have to be separated as one goes to live at AHOPE. Gail decided to wait until next week when our new social worker begins work, to have her help the girls deal with this new grief in their lives. There is a lot of pain and sadness in this work.

Fortunately we had the financial resources to move quickly to rent a new home for the babies and younger children. Gail reported the arrival of two more new babies yesterday. We will take possession of the second house September 15. This will, of course, be temporary until the new Layla House can be financed and built.

Today the three families who were at the guest house when I was there are on their way home with their new kids. Over the weekend two families will be flying over there to begin the process for their children's visas next week. And so it goes!

Gail has made a list of items that are needed for the baby house and office. If you would like to make a donation for something specific we would be grateful. Of course there are kids who don't even have shipping containers to sleep in, but we are doing what we can, with your help.

5 small bunk beds \$50 ea	1 sofa \$70	11 mattresses \$30 ea
20 small chairs \$ 7 ea	2 tables \$20 ea	5 additional cribs \$40 ea
20 blankets \$ 5 ea	Kitchen items \$60	fridge \$350
small stove \$ 40	Gas cylinder for stove \$20	2 office desks

Sixteen cases passed the court after I wrote to you two months ago so we will have a steady stream of families and escorts traveling to bring children home. We are so grateful that adoption processing is going smoothly again. Thank you for your support.

Merrily and Ted