



# Newsletter

Second Term, 2008



*The marimba band at the Maun Carnival*

## **Update, August 2008**

Second term is always a busy, and cold affair. Being winter the temperatures can drop down to freezing which makes it difficult to get out of bed in the morning, in the absence of central heating. And it is also the most popular term for visitors from abroad. Before getting to the visitors, let me talk about the above photo and one of the founding fathers of live entertainment in Maun, Desmond Green. Physically formidable and full of energy, Des revived the Maun Carnival in 2008, something he started in the 90's with another Maun legend, Andrew Dooley. They were in cahoots at a local hangout, the Power Station, and succeeded in making it one of the most entertaining places to go in the evenings. When Des

changed employment the Carnival died a natural death. Upon its revival he designated us as the recipients of the proceeds from the event. The Carnival consisted of a parade in the morning, followed by a craft fair with the stalls set up around a stage for entertainment of all kinds. There were also games for the children, food stalls, face painting, and a general good time, Maun style. We even managed to coerce Mr. Dooley to fly up from Cape Town for the event. When he arrived at the venue 2 days before it started it was like throwing a pig in a mud puddle. He immediately started rooting around, doing what had to be done, just like the good old days. And while more organised bands were featured, there was a slot for him, Steve Stockhall, Helene Sandenburgh, and Lebs, all local yocals, to play some excellent rock and roll. Cheers for that, guys. As the recipients of the proceeds, and, in my unbiased opinion, having one of the best marimba bands around, we also played for the crowd. When it was all said and done Des had raised over P27,000 for the School. But as important as the money is the fun the people of Maun had. On behalf of the School and the entire community I would like to thank him for his unending dedication to making people happy.

As for the visitors from abroad, it was quite hectic around here in June and July with 3 groups coming, one after the other, each spending about a week lending a hand. For the boys it is always a high point of the year since they get a lot of attention, are able to impress the visitors with their skills and, inevitably, many of them fall in love. Some of the love letters they write are too cute, as are our boys when there are pretty young girls around. For us staff it can be a bit strenuous, but at least the boys are always on their best behaviour and in top form. One of the groups was from the United States, led by Bill Burns, an ex-Peace Corps Volunteer who taught in this area. He's an adventure-seeker and tries his best to encourage youngsters and adults to come with him. This year he came with 6 adults after a previous trip with high school students. He's an old friend of mine who is always welcome here.

The second group was led by another old friend of mine from Gaborone, Mike Main. He is always with me in spirit and runs more of a leadership training type of trip for kids through an organisation called Fulcrum in the UK. The best part of their visit was that Mike had organised the money needed to pay for their project, a shaded area in our garden. At 10 x 35 metres, it was a substantial undertaking and has made a world of difference in the production of our garden. Before



they arrived our garden was more like a giant bird feeder. I could walk past it and see grey louries, with big smiles on their faces, plucking seedlings out of the ground as if they were sweets. That, I am happy to report, is a thing of the past. The last night of their visit we had a talent show which was a scream. One of the boys from the UK played a guitar in a way I had never seen before. If you'd like to see him playing during our talent show click here: [Haaziq Farook In Botswana](#) It's a You Tube clip posted by one of the Fulcrum kids. There is another clip with less crowd noise entitled Haaziq Jammin By The Fire which is very good. And if you type 'Bana ba Metsi' in the You Tube search box you can find quite a few clips of our marimba band. Speaking of which, the band also played during the talent show, there was also some singing, and one visitor who did a rap which sounded like a variety of burps and hiccups. Not to be outdone, Nicolas, one of our bushman boys, did a very pleasant sounding rap which made all 75 of us crowd around tightly. He has a very soft voice. All in all it was a fitting end to a

good week. We would like to sincerely thank Mike, his wife Kerstin, and all the people from Fulcrum for their assistance.

The last group was from a UK organisation called World Challenge which has sent groups to us for many years. You'd be hard pressed to find a high school student anywhere in the world who knows much about building, but they are usually very good at painting, and quite creative to boot when it comes to murals. I had an idea that rather than paint village scenes or impressionistic wild animals, how about some educational diagrams. They took the ball and ran with it. Now we've got the eyeball, the ear, the human skeleton and lots of mathematical diagrams adorning our walls. A very good effort.

When people ask me what it's like having teenagers from overseas visiting I like to tell them a true story. We had a group here many years ago and I suggested they help us put in the garden fence. There's always a leader or 2 for the day and they are supposed to get the rest of the group moving and decide what they are going to do. They were busy working when the girls who were the leaders came to ask me for a hacksaw. No problem there. I gave it to them and off they went. Five minutes later they returned to say they didn't know how to use it. Since it was a hacksaw, and not something more complicated like a table saw, I didn't really know what to say. Push, pull, repeat.

Speaking of tools, here's a cute story about our generator operator, Omaatla, one of our Stanard 7 students. Our boys have a fair amount of freedom at the workshop, but they don't always know exactly what they are doing, which isn't much different from the way I was in my father's workshop when I was a kid. Live and learn. On this occasion Omaatla didn't get that far however, because Mr. Bodington, our resident engineer, just happened to show up when he was about to connect a wire in his radio with the arc welder. For those of you who don't know anything about welding, all he would have succeeded in doing is burning a big hole in his radio, and quite possibly could have set the whole thing on fire. Mr. Bodington then gave him a lesson on the purpose and operation of a soldering iron.

Hike

Keys on the marimba

## Success As We See It



I would like to start by talking about a very important man, Boitumelo Sekwababe, the Country Chairman of Shell Botswana. He has, very generously, supplied the School with its fuel needs for many years now. And another person I would like to acknowledge is Benjamin Ntaba, who owns the small filling station in Shakawe where we get our fuel. In 2008, the talk around the pumps was the price of fuel, which was going through the roof. I was filling up the drums with diesel for our generator when a man I know from Shakawe pulled up. We both commented on the price as he put P30 worth of fuel in his ancient car. As he pulled away he shouted, "money is becoming very expensive", quite insightful, I thought, for a man from a small village in Africa. Getting back to Boitumelo and Benjamin, we at Bana ba Metsi School would like to thank both of them for their cooperation in providing us with this very generous donation which amounts to more than P100,000 a year.

Last year the Ministry of Education started providing the School with an annual grant to cover our education-related expenses. This year the grant amounted to P500,000 which took a very big load off my mind.

On the corporate front, Prefsure Botswana continued to contribute P25,000 annually. This, for a small company, is quite admirable.

We are fortunate to have a small army of private individuals who regularly donate what they can to the School. A friend of mine, Martin Flattery, popped out P10,000, something he does whenever he is doing well. Another friend, Anders Lavik, runs an earth moving company and always passes something on to us when he gets a good contract. This year he sent us another P5000. Mike Bullock is another regular donor and once again sent us P3000. A Spanish volunteer who was working in Seronga came up with P4000 from her aunt. John and Rosemary Cox, our most faithful supporters, sent £300 the raised at a private fund-raising. Norman Hardie, a long-time supporter sent us \$1000 and Art Bruestle sent us \$200. Dorothy Graham, the mother of an ex-volunteer continued to send £50 every year and Dries Krause gave us P500.

In August, 2008, I celebrated my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and asked people to donate to the School rather than buy a present. My friends rose to the occasion and gave what they could afford. Jenny Egner, the Executive Secretary of our Trust gave us P4000 which comes on top of the P6000 she gave us last year. My old friend, Tjangu Gulubane, a district administrator, kicked in P500. Fellow Poles (my mother is Kowalski) Piotr and Beata Wolska contributed another P500, as did Birgit Kohler, and Ann Golifer, a famous artist, popped out P300. The total was thus P5800. And Desmond Greene was there, the guy who, as I mentioned above, scavenged over P27,000 for us at the Maun Carnival. The School also got a very nice drum from Yvonne Ward-Smith and Marc Barr which the band appreciated very much. To all of you, from the bottom of my heart, a big thank you and a mushy kiss the next time I see you. (Hmm. The guy'll do anything for a donation, huh?)

Desmond, P27,358  
Okavango House Boats, P500  
Fulcrum, P2700  
Blue School, P3,522

Meindert Roozendaal, P7,548  
Lady Khama Charitable Trust, P15,000

## **And in Conclusion . . .**

Fuzz growing out of my ears, my eyesight has deteriorated to the point of making the telephone directory unreadable, my knees are just ever so slightly wrinkled and I have one rogue hair in my right eyebrow. I'd cut it so it doesn't flap in the wind when I ride my motorcycle but I understand that is the beginning of the end. It will, I firmly believe, soon come back with a vengeance, twice as long and three times the diameter. Better to leave well enough alone, right?

I get tired of feeling like a juggling octopus, but I will persevere with these Newsletters and, I'm afraid to admit, I am SO stubborn that I am going to do it in chronological order. Oh, but I did make a decision recently. The Newsletters will expire after 10 years.

While working here does have its challenges, it also has moments that keep you going. One day a boy asked me what the word 'nigger' means. I think I did a good job of explaining to him why it was a very bad word that should never be used. I had a bit of a problem, however, when he asked me why, if it's such a bad word, black musicians use it in rap songs. I suggested that he ask a university professor. Another day a boy came and asked me what 'constipation' is. Comparatively speaking, that one was easy. I often go up to the dorms to see what's going on and one night there was a bit of a commotion, more laughing than anything else. When I asked what was going on, Kenosi, the Deputy Headboy said, "this boy said my eyes look like a coffin". I didn't know what to make of it and couldn't get anymore information from them because they were all laughing so hard. I could still hear them laughing when I got back to my house. One afternoon I went to check something at the generator house and found two boys standing in front of the radiator of our bigger generator with something in their hands. I was getting all set to give them a tongue lashing for whatever it was they were doing when I noticed they were holding a small table they had made. It turns out they wanted the paint (water-based and non-sniffable) to dry faster and were holding the table in front of the hot air blowing out. All I could do was compliment them for using their heads.

With that, I believe you can understand how much fun it is to work here. Are you looking for a challenge and a change of scenery? I am compiling a list of people who are interested in taking over from me. Seriously! Of course, I have no intention of going anywhere yet, but for the sake of forward planning and preparedness, I'd love to hear from the willing. I don't think the list will be long, so even if you have never had a job, send me your name and you can tell people you were on a short list!

Steven Harpt  
**Director.**

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