

## July 2016

This time, instead of two or three stories, I'd like to try to paint a word picture of some of this month at Bongolo.

-The month started with a 20 year old guy who came because what he thought was bad skin allergies weren't getting better. It wasn't getting better because it was leprosy. That was unexpected news for him. The medicines came from 2 hours away by bush taxi on July 1st.

-We had a 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration at the Hofmans (pictured) with red, white and blue food like blueberry pie.



-When I'm in America, lots of people invite me for a meal to get to speak with the missionary. Adeline (right) is one of the missionaries I support. She and her husband Jairus, were previously nurses at Bongolo, and are now missionaries at Hope Clinic in Guinea. Since she was visiting, this was my chance to get to invite her for a meal.



-The end of Ramadan was July 6th. So everyone came to work, found out it was an official holiday and most people went home. It amazes me that holidays can be based on the phase of the moon, so that we aren't sure the day before if the next day is a holiday or not.

-One of the lab workers came to my office very concerned about a problem of rats in the lab. Palm rats here can be 2 feet long, like the rodents of unusual size from the *Princess Bride*, so I was initially imagining the rats backing the other lab workers into a corner. No, they were smaller, mice really. I breathed a sigh of relief. What would you like me to do? Bring my cats? Oh no! I suggested she refer the problem to the maintenance team, thinking they'd use traps or poison. The lab worker responded with an exclamation of horror, "No! Not the Maintenance Team!" I can only imagine she was thinking they'd hit the mice and maybe lab equipment with hammers. Since then, I haven't had any more reports of problems with mice in the lab.

-One morning on rounds, the MDR TB patient told me about how he had been sleeping in the same bed as his 8 month old baby before coming to the hospital, and the baby "breathes really fast like a cat." The baby could have resistant TB as well. Oh no. The next steps were to contact the special lab at Lambaréné and the World Health Organization. (So, far the baby is receiving regular antibiotics at Lambaréné.)

-I received a call at home in the evening as Medical Director that there was an disturbed, psychotic person at the hospital. (Add Hospital Security to my list of responsibilities.) When I arrived, she had gone down to the river to look for genies. We called the local police who came after the end of the televised Euro soccer final match.

-At the end of morning staff devotions on July 13<sup>th</sup>, there was an announcement to tidy up your workstations because the President's wife was visiting tomorrow. I thought, the wife of Pasteur Victor, the President of the Church. It's nice to see her, but we don't usually tidy up the whole hospital for her, so I asked, Which President?

The President of Gabon. Oh. Then a few hours later we were told the President himself was coming. The Administrative Director of the Hospital was in Libreville, so two of the surgeons and I met with regional political officials to plan the presidential visit. I told one of my Gabonese colleagues, at no time ever do the President and First Lady of the US show up at my workplace with one day notice. The Director came back with a gift for me to wrap for the First Lady. I could only imagine presenting an unknown wrapped gift to the First Lady in the US. It would be blown up immediately. The soldiers and security detail came. We prepared and waited in a receiving line of



over 100 people. A truck of young men throwing water on the road to keep the dust down came. The President was only 3 miles away, and did not come the rest of the way because it got too late.

-Dr. Mechelle, a visiting doctor, and I drove 3 hours north into the rainforest to encourage the little church in Etéké on Sunday July 17<sup>th</sup>. I preached the from the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

-I saw a Portuguese former rugby player and 76 year old former French soldier who fought in Algeria on 7/22.

-Thursday, Abu who drives the taxi van every day from Mouila asked for an Arabic Bible. I found one for him and he showed it proudly to Seko who drives the taxi van from Tchibanga, who wanted one too. We looked through it together, and tried to locate the gospel of John. When I went to find another for Seko, I observed Abu showing his to 3 more men who were openly admiring it. Seko immediately showed his to 2 other guys next to his taxi van. Who knew Arabic Bibles were so incredibly popular?

-The government Public Health Worker from Lébamba confirmed my suspicions that the child I saw the other day probably does have measles, although the test is not back yet. I'm praying against an epidemic. With very little information he had tracked down the mother of a very infectious patient who had fled.

While that was happening I was caring for patients.

-Honorine is an 80 year old woman with a stroke who couldn't move her left arm when she came, and started seizing in front of me in the ER, but walked out smiling after a week.



-A one month old baby who has malaria and probably AIDS is here with his 16 year old, mentally challenged mother with HIV. As I write, they are abandoned here as her family lives in another town and did not leave any food or money. I gave the nurses \$10 this morning so she could have something to eat for the weekend. So, very sad.

-Paul (left) is named after two famous Gabonese men with the same name, one a doctor, the other for whom the local school is named. He was in the hospital this month after changing medicines because the standard HIV medicines had failed. I told him he has to take his new medicines and do well in school so he can be the third famous Gabonese man with that name, knowing it is incredibly unlikely, but hoping all the same. Pray for him.

#### **Praises and Answers to Prayers**

-We had a miraculous answer to prayer! The big, yearly container of medicines and supplies for the hospital had arrived in port in Libreville. An official at the Direction of Medicament et la Pharmacie (like the Gabonese FDA) refused authorization for the container to enter into Gabon. Dr. Deb Walker and Pasteur Sangoye met with her for several hours, and she was very angry. We prayed. Pasteur Serge met with her a week later for 3 hours. Something had changed, and she will allow the container enter. We thank God!

-We currently have some HIV medicines from the national program. We still lack the liquid medicine for the newborn babies to help prevent them from catching it from their mothers. The last I heard, our special order of HIV medicines for pregnant women, babies and children had been blocked. This is very disappointing.

#### **Prayer Requests**

-The current wiring at the hospital can't support the load of electricity, especially while using the generator. We will need to replace the wiring before turning on electricity to the new Eye Care building. This will cost around \$300,000. While we don't know where this is coming from, God does and it's not too much for him.

-The Gabon Presidential election is August 27<sup>th</sup>. Gabon is a stable country, but elections in Africa can be a time of unpleasantness. Pray for a peaceful election.

- Continue to pray for another long-term primary care doctor.

Thank you for praying.

Blessings,

Renée



**The Christian & Missionary Alliance, 8595 Explorer Dr, Colorado Springs, CO 80920** [www.cmalliance.org](http://www.cmalliance.org)  
**Hôpital de Bongolo, BP 49, Lébamba, Gabon AFRICA** [www.bongolohospital.org](http://www.bongolohospital.org)

Thank you for contributing to the CMA's **Great Commission Fund**. Your gifts to the **GCF** make it possible for the Alliance to send me to Bongolo and to show God's love around the world. Here are some ways you could designate a gift: **Support of Renée Valach**- goes to the Great Commission Fund toward allowance, etc. **Work of Renée Valach**- for special work projects related to my ministry **Bongolo Hospital HIV/AIDS Treatment**- toward HIV treatment, particularly the pediatric patients

Home Assignment Schedule: This is my speaking schedule so far. There will be more later.

October 7-9 Arbuckle Alliance

October 15-16 Allegheny Center Alliance Church

October 21-23 Norwin Alliance

October 28-30 Belle Vernon Gospel Alliance

November 4-6 Murryville Alliance

November 29 Combined Pediatric Internal Medicine Grand Rounds Penn State University Hospital Hershey