

the way to salvation. We must not fail them. We will not."

The next morning we left Port Harcourt, traveling about 250 miles by air to Enugu, capital of Nigeria's Anambra State. There we met with two white member families from Utah—the A. Bruce Knudsens and David N. Bowns. Brothers Knudsen and Bown held doctoral degrees in biology and were employed by the United Nations World Health Organization to help combat malaria, a disease that takes one million human lives each year. Both families were outstanding Latter-day Saints, becoming a source of great aid and comfort from the onset.

At the advice of Brother Bown, we decided to hold our baptismal service with Anthony Obinna and his people as early the following day as possible. That way, we hoped, we could return to Enugu before dark and thus minimize the very real danger of robbery, even threat to life itself. Rather recently Nigeria had experienced a tragic civil war between the north and the south, which the south had lost. Many of the surrendering soldiers, however, had hidden their weapons in the forests and were now using them to relieve unwary travelers of all they possessed, automobiles included. The area surrounding our destination, in fact, was said to be one of the most dangerous in Nigeria.

Our first day in Enugu was filled with planning, and in anticipation of the great record-keeping demands to come, I asked Sister Janath Russell Cannon to serve as mission clerk. Sister Cannon accepted without hesitation, was promptly set apart, and fulfilled her calling with great dedication and efficiency from that time forward.

A cock was crowing just before daylight the following morning, and we arose early, full of excitement. November 21, 1978: Although the events of that day may never be recorded for the world at large, it was to become a great landmark in the history of the Church and among the peoples of Black Africa.

We left Enugu with the Knudsens and Bowns in the Knudsen family bus at 7:30 A.M., expecting to arrive at our destination, Umuelem Enyigugu, by 9:00 A.M. This time, though, we were approaching the village from an opposite

direction and again experienced problems finding our way over difficult roads. As a result, we arrived an hour and a half late to find the villagers both elated and anxious. They were all waiting and had sent a truck out in search of us. Several local officials had even been on hand as a welcoming committee but had eventually returned to their work a few miles away.

Our first order of business, therefore, was to visit those men in their offices. There we offered apologies for arriving late, extended greetings from President Kimball and the Council of the Twelve, and were treated much like visiting royalty. "We have heard very good things about your religion," the commissioner informed us, "and we want you to know that you are welcome. Our area government will be happy to assist you in becoming established here." He went on to praise Anthony Obinna as an outstanding member of the community, and again we were filled with wonderment. How often on missions to other countries we had felt maligned and rejected, or at best merely tolerated! How long and how hard we had scraped and struggled to find a single open-minded listener. And now this—actual assistance from the government itself?. Was it only a dream after all?

No—no dream. Only a short while later we were back at the village discussing Church procedures and interviewing the nineteen adults whose names Anthony had provided. Many others desired baptism, he explained, but these were the strong ones, our foundation stones.

Meanwhile, Sister Knudsen had been teaching a number of women and children one of the Church's all-time musical favorites, "I Am a Child of God." Her listeners learned quickly and within short order were marching together throughout the village compound singing the words with great enthusiasm and harmony. "I am a child of God, and he has sent me here, has given me an earthly home with parents kind and dear". How does one describe the depth of emotion at hearing those voices? They rose spontaneously and rapturously among the trees and rooftops of that little village. "Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, help me find the way. Teach me all that I must

*Story of the Dawning  
of the Gospel in Black Africa*  
by one who was there in the beginning

AN  
**AFRICAN  
LEGACY**

*Brother to Brother Revisited*

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*Twenty Years of Glory*

. . . an insightful look back, a grateful glance forward

by

**Rendell N. Mabey**

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