

- I: What did he do on that first visit? Did he come and see you?
- W: Yes. He came down and they were there one day, weren't they?
- NW: We had set up all those appointments for him, where several groups would come together.
- W: He went to Ndia on one occasion, and then we had the conference in Etinan.
- NW: Yes, the big conference.
- W: And then he went back again.
- NW: They came on a Friday, I think, that first time, and stayed till Sunday night and went back Monday.
- I: Then he returned home and came back on July 1st, more or less?
- W: Well, I don't know when he arrived. I didn't keep any record of when he came back. They were there in April, and gave us instructions, and then he was back here for the mission presidents' seminar in June. So he was back out there I'm quite certain around the 1st of July. He didn't come down to where we were, though, until August, wasn't it?
- NW: I don't know. We went up there for conference in August.
- W: He came down into our area maybe twice after that while we were there.
- I: Now you say that when he came on that first trip in April of '80 that he had some instructions to give you?
- W: Yes. He informed us that he was the mission president, and I think it was at that time that he told us that we were not to perform any baptisms, that we were just to teach and kind of strengthen the base of missionary work--that is, the branches that we had.
- NW: He was kept so busy in Lagos with so many problems. He had it hard. He worked hard.
- I: Now why did he tell you not to do any more baptisms?
- W: Well, I guess there had been some mass baptisms, when they felt the missionaries had just gone in and baptized people. They wanted people taught, and I believe the Brethren had said, "We'd better firm up the base."
- I: Consolidate.
- W: And strengthen it and not to go out proselyting. Our instruction and our call from President Kimball was to teach the members and

strengthen the members and to teach the gospel to those who were interested.

When we first arrived, there had been the policy of baptizing those who wanted to be baptized. There were a number of groups who had been requesting baptism, and Elder Martin said, "Now this group over here is to be taken care of, and this group, so you go take care of it." So Elder and Sister Bartholomew and Nyal and I went out to those groups, like the Ikot Esighe and Ikwe groups. We baptized maybe twenty, twenty-five, thirty on each occasion and brought the groups in and organized them and got them set up under Ime [Eduok], who was the district president. He was there and he would select the branch presidents and counselors, with our supervision, and we set up these particular groups.

Now this is the thing that they wanted to put a stop to. But we got over there in February, and that was before President Espenschied came into the picture, or maybe after he had been called to be the president but before he came over.

It was a great concern to us that we were not to do any more of this sort of thing. This had been the policy for the year previous with those who had been over there, to get these groups in who wanted to come and who had been promised that they could come into the Church. Now, of course, President Espenschied and the Brethren were greatly concerned about this, and it was a matter of being caught between two fires. Here these people had been promised and it had been done and there had been a precedent set, and all of a sudden we weren't doing it any more, and it was quite difficult for the natives to understand why they couldn't be baptized when they wanted to be baptized.

NW: They didn't understand, and it was rather sad.

I: Did President Espenschied make any other changes? Did his coming make any further difference in your work?

W: No, except this policy. It's hard to go out on a mission and say you can't baptize. When you go out and teach people and they ask for baptism and you feel they're worthy . . .

NW: There were so many that really were taught well.

W: And then to stall them and say, "No, you can't be baptized," was difficult. Each time we'd go to a branch, they'd have some who they had worked with, members of the family, like a wife and children, who hadn't been baptized previously, and they kept asking why. They wanted to be in the Church. They believed and they wanted to be a part of it, and it was quite hard to explain to them why we couldn't do it. "Well, why can't you?" they'd say. It was a frustrating situation for a missionary.

I: Did that policy continue in effect through the rest of your mission?

W: Yes. We were told to just teach.

Since I knew the lessons and the missionary procedure over the years and had developed the flannelboard, I got busy. I took some calendars and some kits with us and gathered some manuals and cut out pages. So I prepared a flannelboard presentation on the Godhead, the apostasy and restoration, the Book of Mormon, the plan of salvation, the requirements for baptism, which is the essential information that people should have in the Church, whether you're going to be baptized and be a member or not. And we taught them over and over and over again. Since we were going every day, we'd teach from one to three groups a day--mostly one or two groups--seven days a week. By the time we had gone around and visited them for several months and taught these lessons--and that's all we taught--they knew it pretty well. We went right in and for two hours we'd meet with them. We'd have a song, we'd have some song practice, and then I'd go right into one of these lessons, with a translator. We'd teach it in English and in Efik to all who would listen. And then we'd go back again.

This is the schedule we kept. [showing appointment book] Right here it shows in Dungofiong "baptisms." In this particular case there were baptisms. This was just prior to when we were leaving. Finally we were told by President Espenshied, "Well, you've been teaching for several months. Why don't you wind up your mission?" In fact, I got, I thought, reprimanded at one time because I hadn't baptized them. When I went back at Christmastime, he said, "I thought I told you to take care of these baptisms."

NW: He thought we would have at least fifty.

W: So then we went out and we really got in trouble for doing it. Because the policy was kind of . . . Well, you didn't know exactly where you stood. You wanted to please and you didn't want to get in trouble, but you were in trouble whether you did or whether you didn't for a while.

I: It's kind of an odd situation, because you'd been a mission president and he's been a mission president. In Louisiana I'm sure you didn't tell your missionaries to pull back on the reins.

W: No. I'd have a zone leader over here and I'd authorize him to be responsible, and the district leader would be responsible to the zone leader. The two missionaries doing the teaching could not baptize anyone without him being interviewed by the district leader. I had to trust those with that authority to interview and made certain that they were worthy to be baptized. And I knew this procedure. I'd also been a stake mission president for four years and I knew the procedure.

Then here you were in a situation where you taught people for six or eight months and you felt they were worthy and that they understood the fundamental principles of the gospel and you couldn't see any reason why they shouldn't be baptized, so you went ahead and baptized