April 21, 1983
Umuzike Village, Orlu
Nigeria

Dear Carol, John, Eunice, Phil and Bob:

Three months have passed since we met; where does the time go? It has been an eventful time, not always as we anticipated and full of unexpected turns. Communications remain a problem, so we must take more occasions to share by letter. Most of our sharing comes under the category of internal life, though we do have some significant external events to report.

When we returned to Nigeria the 24 January we found some surprised colleagues. Though Owo, Elina and Charles tried to hide their shock, it was pretty obvious that they had decided to settle in at Ikorodu and be the Nigerian ICA, mostly working with the IERD steering committee. As a House we had weekly ritual and wrote a GOR then Lynn and I travelled to Orlu, knowing we must return to Lagos February 5 for the inaugurational meeting of the NSC. Our colleagues travelled to Orlu Feb. 14, supposedly for two weeks but stayed only 3 days because Charles had family business on Saturday. We were able to work out a plan for Qtr III & IV which had the Bells returning to Lagos monthly for the National Steering Committee meeting(fourth Saturdays) and development and the rest of the team travelling to Orlu or on the road for 2-3 weeks of each month initiating program, development and the Izombe project here in the East and renewing authorization and framing in the East and North and following up IERD across the Nation. We were able to finish our time line and write a proposal for Ashland Oil to fund the Izombe project.

Our colleague's second trip to Orlu March 11 was expected to be a 14 day working time fulfilling our plans for the East. It didn't happen. Owo and Elina were both ill; Lynn and Charles initiated some IERD in Owerri and found extremely favorable responses. March 17 they decided to go back to Lagos. Many heretofore unsaid opinions surfaced all of a sudden. In some ways it was a very "Nigerian" meeting in which the Bells discovered that our colleagues had been and were operating out of very different presuppositions than our own but had not expressed these at the corporate table at discussion or planning over the past 8 months. We discovered several things:

1) They do not agree that the Lagos House should move East, but only that Jim had a job in the East and would be working at Nigerpharm.
2) They think the Lagos House is located in Ikorodu and the focus of our work is still Ijede and Lagos.
3) They do not intend to do any work in Izombe unless it is funded by Ashland Oil and they are provided with transport and a house in Izombe by Ashland.
4) They do not intend to live in Orlu and do not believe that Chief Unadike will provide adequate house for them here.
5) They are convinced that ICA in Nigeria is a special case and ought to have a Nigerian "director" and run their own affairs - that the "global" ICA has failed in Ijede, in Kenya, in Zambia and everywhere else and that a group of white westerners called global priors are running everything and keeping this massive global failure a secret from the rest of the Order. (Hence the necessity for a "secret" priors meeting in Brussels.)
6) They are not sure that this IERD thing isn't just another manuever to put on a big show to cover up our massive failure in Ijede and all our other HDP's. (It's almost like they'd read the Paul Clements' anti-paper. If they did, they chose to hide the fact by resealing the envelope before giving us the mail when we came to Lagos. Feb.4.)

Well, all of this we should have had the sense to know was brewing if we had listened to our intuitions and read the signs. Hindsight is always painfully clear. Anyway,

"yes" was said to this plan at our February 14 planning time; the same time we made plans for Olatunjis to attend Academy and to go Nairobi via Zambia. (Our oldest son and his "wife" want a ceremony performed by Jim as soon as we could get back to the States....they're presenting us with a grandbaby in May!)

Now, dear friends, relative to your visit to Africa: We do very much want you to come, and think that your presence would be very helpful as we continue to create a common vision and to struggle with strategy and trust. Chief Unadike is anxious to meet you and is looking forward to hosting you here at Nigerpharm. Before we get into the summer, it would be very good to have some other global eyes and ears in our situation to help us not become victimized or paranoid by our blindness.

It would be difficult I think to have you here after the Olatunjis leave June 1st; we need them to be part of the discussions bofore they begin their 3 month journey out....Assuming that you are coming for the Nairobi GRA. of course, you would have opportunity to visit with them there...but again, we need, if possible, to have a conversation with at least both families represented. As yet we see no way to get one of us to Nairobi....June will be a horrendous month getting ready for the IERD July 1st deadline; again we're counting heavily on being able to recruit some time from our NSC members - as yet most have only given the monthly Sat.meeting and then one or two sub-committee sessions....basically Owo and Lynn have done the "visiting and liaison".

Feb 23 –
We have just completed a fine steering committee meeting with our 5 House members all present. Charles and Owo have been actively working this past week – Owo getting the IERD bank account open and Charles travelling to Ibadan to see the man we chose to address the Rural Dev. Symposium. We have a plan to do House Church & planning tomorrow morning at Ikorodu – Owo & Elvia have moved back, tho' Charles lives in Ijede. From all we've been able to discuss Academy is definite in the planning & probably GRA/Nairobi via Zambia – developing money may be an issue. (

Presently Bells & Olatunjis are celebrating Elvia's 23 birthday at the swimming pool – D & Peace
Jim & Mary Lou

the outcome of this outburst was Owo's taking the Order cross and the House/ICA/EI plaque, forcibly and angrily, and their leaving promptly for Lagos---leaving the Bells licking eheir wounds in Orlu and saying to ourselves, "You knew, you knew.." As we reviewed our journey from Aug 23 arrival to here, we discovered that startling fact of ,perhaps, one reason for such a split context was that total days spent as a house from Nov. 22(when we left to Abidjan for Visas) to March 17 numbered 22,and some of these either or both Jim or Charles were absent....Lynn usually stays in Lagos 4 to 6 days after Jim doing work with the House and NSC.

Meanwhile the the Lord of History was acting out His own scenario, quite apart from our mundane concerns. Shortly after returning to Lagos(Mar.17) Owo's Father died(Mar.19) in Ijede. This turns out to be quite a primordial intrusion for Owo is the first-born son and is thrust immediately into caring for his father's three wives and handling all the arrangements. This could prove to be a very heavy burden. (We didn't know at the time but Jim's father had died in Texas March 11.) Not knowing of either death we travelled to Lagos for the NSC meeting March 26 (my 50th Birthday) and were not sure what we would encounter, only to discover everyone at Ijede with Owo's family. Over the next few days we did not have much opportunity to talk with them, though Owo did come to the NSC meeting and we visited them at his family residence in Ijede.

It seems to us that the Olatunjis still want to work with us, but we don't know yet whether they will travel back to Orlu or just stay in Ikorodu and work out of there. Sanlola is in a big pout and, though we visited him in Ijede, we're not sure what he will decide to do. He talks about "leaving the Order" but we doubt he really means it because he's got too good a thing going. (Stipend and food money for himself and four children...also health and care money). We do know the Academy was quite an address because he will not talk about it. Regardless of how Owo and Elina may feel about moving East, they both still want to go to the GRA in Nairobi and to the Academy in Brussels. We're encouraging them in this direction. Also Elina has not been "home" to Zambia for a couple of years and they are anxious to take their nine month old son to meet his grandmother. If Owo does not get completely tied down with family reqponsibilities, we want them to travel to Zambia June 1st, on to Nairobi June 13 and to Academy July 3. If all this happened we might have been able to create a new context by September and be ready to move together again as a team. (Regardless of what Sanlola decides.)

Meanwhile, Lynn and I are finding ways to be the Order as a two-person house in Orlu. Even without transport we're beginning to contact the churches and the social structures relative to IERD. We are recruiting participants for the Rural Dev. Symposium in Lagos May 12 and 13. This weekend we'll travel back to Lagos for the NSC and sub-committee meetings. May should be a big month for project visitation; hopefully we can organize teams of the NSC to cover the nation with us. We've begun to invite people into our house for roundtable discussions and meals and are continuing to look for ways to relate to Umuzike Village.

The work with Nigerpharm is going well. Chief Unadike is pleased with the contacts we are establishing with pharmaceutical companies in Europe and America and we are hoping to open the factory on a small scale by September. Foreign exchange and letters of credit will continue to be difficult to arrange. Meanwhile other aspects of his enterprise(ie hospitals and poultry farm) are providing us avenue for practical planning and service. Chief is open to Jim's traveling to America and Europe this summer on business and to his attending the July Council. If Lynn uses Prior travel to attend the council, that leaves us with no Nigerian presence at Council which worries us and will surely be an irritant to our Nigerian colleagues, though