

Appendix 53:

Wheel Chair Ministry

Danny McCain

**University of Jos
And**

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Kansas, USA**

Prof. D. McCain of Unijos---14 Nov/2006

The summary is that Ayuba is a person who was struck by polio as a child and now literally walks on all fours, primarily on his hands. He is an outstanding person whom God is really using to minister to handicapped people (and the rest of us as well).

NOTE FROM BOER: The story below are excerpts from a longer story about Ayuba's wedding. Only the wheelchair parts of the story are copied here.

Ayuba Gufwan has been an important part of our lives for the last five or six years. I first met Ayuba, which means "Job" in Hausa, when he attended a workshop for teachers of Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) in the public schools of Nigeria. We were conducting a training workshop for our CRK teacher's manuals at the Education Resource Centre in Jos. As I was teaching I noticed that a young man dressed up in a coat and tie, walked into the workshop on what appeared to be "all fours." He appeared to stand on his legs but was bent over at the waist and also supported himself on his hands which were holding some small wooden blocks with handles on them. His hips were higher than his shoulders and he moved in a rather awkward looking but quite efficient manner. His arms appeared to be carrying most of the weight and his legs were being lifted and moved behind him. His legs could hold his weight when he squatted down but apparently the muscles were so weak that he could not stand. When this young man got into the

classroom and sat in a chair, you could not tell that he was any different from anyone else. During a break in the workshop, I met him and learned that his name was Ayuba Gufwan.

Ron Rice was with me that day, helping to conduct parts of the workshop. When we went outside that day, we discovered that Ayuba had come to the workshop in a three-wheeled wheelchair. It was actually big tricycle made out of bicycle parts. The pedaling mechanism is reversed and the tricycle is normally pedaled with the hands, though the one Ayuba had, was actually pedaled with one hand rather than two. When we went out for a break, we discovered that Ayuba's wheelchair had a flat tire. Ron is a very compassionate person and when he found out that it would cost less than five dollars to buy Ayuba another tire for his wheelchair, Ron gave him the money for a new tire.

A couple of weeks later, Ron and I went to Gombe for the annual meeting of the National Association of Bible Knowledge Teachers (NABKTN). Interestingly Ayuba was there with this three-wheeled wheelchair. We were able to talk a bit more with him. Ron was especially intrigued by his initiative—to travel by public transportation with this wheelchair somehow tied onto the vehicle—took a lot of courage and determination.

Responding to a Need

After this meeting, Ron reflected a good bit on Ayuba and his wheelchair. The wheelchair he had at that time actually had only one pedal so Ayuba used only his right arm to pedal himself. He then used the left hand to steer it. It would obviously be less tiring being able to use two arms to pedal so Ron began inquiring about the possibility of getting this wheelchair modified so it could be pedaled with both hands. Thomas, one of our drivers, suggested it might just be easier to get a new wheelchair, one that was made to be pedaled with both hands. He thought we could get one from Relevant Technology, a workshop that is somehow associated with the government and helps to train handicapped people. Ron asked Thomas to go check on this.

A couple of days before Ron and Sharon were to leave to return to Seattle that year, Ayuba came pedaling his wheelchair up to our house to say "thank you" to Ron for his earlier assistance. Ron had been wanting to see him and

felt that it was a minor miracle that Ayuba just showed up at the house. Because of Thomas' research, Ron was able to purchase a new two-handed wheelchair from Relevant Technology and presented it to Ayuba. In addition to getting a new wheelchair, Ron found out that it was hard for Ayuba to reach the blackboard while teaching so Ron had a portable blackboard made for him as well.

During this trip, we obviously learned a lot more about Ayuba. He had gotten polio as a child. When he reached school age, his father sent him to a rehabilitation school near Mangu, hoping that they could teach him how to walk. However, after three years, it became obvious that that was not going to happen. Therefore, Ayuba was withdrawn from school in the third grade and became an apprentice to a blacksmith. Eventually, when he was 19 years old, his uncle gave him the old one-handed wheelchair and he was able to go back to primary school. He completed primary school and applied to the university. Although he was well qualified to go to the university, he was passed over two different years so eventually enrolled in the Nasarawa State College of Education in Akwanga, where the IICS family John and Char Lotzgesell are now teaching. He majored in Christian Religious Education (CRE) and after three years, earned the National Certificate of Education (NCE), the basic teaching qualification in Nigeria. He came to Jos and was employed by the Ministry of Education to teach CRK. He was assigned to a secondary school in Jos North Local Government. On the first day he reported to work, the principal told him, "Today, there is a workshop for CRK teachers at the Education Resource Centre (ERC). You should go to it." So, on his first day on the job, Ayuba pedaled himself across Jos to the ERC and that is where we met him. After that, he enrolled in the evening law programme at the University of Jos and eventually completed his law degree.

The Beautiful Gate Initiative

During that second year after we had met Ayuba, we gave three or four wheelchairs to needy people, arranged by Ayuba. Ron took more video footage and went back to Seattle and showed it to his church and others. More people came forward that time to offer to pay \$100 for a wheelchair that would change a child's life. So the next year, we gave 15 or 20 more wheelchairs to children who had been afflicted with polio. At first we would invite all the recipients to my house for a dedication ceremony. Later, we started taking these wheelchairs out to the various local governments (like

counties). It was now obvious that this was growing into something more than just one person helping a couple of handicapped people. This had grown into the "wheelchair ministry." At first it was named the "Good Shepherd Ministry" but apparently there was some conflict with that name so the name was eventually changed to the "Beautiful Gate Initiative," in honor of the lame man in Acts 3 who was healed at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple.

This ministry has grown from that humble beginning. We have now given out over 1250 wheelchairs. In addition, Ron and Ayuba have been interested in helping people with other handicaps as well. Ron has been able to buy folding white canes for about \$15 apiece. He has brought over several hundred of those and given them away to blind students. We have also used a little bit of the "wheelchair" money to help two or three people have surgeries that would correct a handicap enough to enable them to walk or walk better.

About three years ago, Ayuba had a vision of starting our own shop so we could not only make the wheelchairs a little cheaper but we could also provide jobs and training for handicapped people. I knew that this would be the eventual outcome but was afraid that we were a little premature in this project. However, Ayuba was very enthusiastic so we supported him. Someone gave a piece of land that already had some sheds on it. Ron eventually got some money to help Ayuba build the wall around it and get all the necessary equipment including welding machines, pipe benders, saws, and other equipment needed to run such a shop. We also eventually bought a big diesel generator because the electricity is so unstable we cannot count on it. Another major purchase was a van to use for getting the parts that are used in building the wheelchairs and also for hauling the completed wheelchairs to their various destinations. We joined in with IICS on a 50-50 arrangement to buy and maintain the van.



Report from Prof. Danny McCain of Unijos—27 Apr/2008 xxxx

My former student, Apollos, came by the house this afternoon and gave me a report of the 15 wheelchairs that went to Tella in Taraba State last October, shortly after you left Nigeria.

You probably will remember Apollos. He is one of the graduates of our Diploma in Christian Studies program here at the University of Jos. He came to me about four years telling me about an evangelistic ministry he was planning among a pagan group of people in Taraba State. I gave him a little money to help him. He has repeated this attempt every year around Christmas time since and I have tried to support him each time. He finished the Diploma program about two years ago and has moved over to Taraba State as a missionary. He is a very serious-minded person, almost intense.

Two years ago, Apollos managed to get four wheelchairs from Ayuba to give away in Tella, which is on the main road between Wukari and Jalingo. To get there you go to Ebe and cross the Benue River on an old-fashioned barge that has been turned into a ferry. Last year, Apollos convinced Ayuba, with some support from me, to provide 15 more wheelchairs for the Tella area. Thomas left here early one morning to take them to the place and managed to get back quite late that evening. When Thomas reported the next day, he said, "Ogah, it is a long way." Apollos came this afternoon to give me a report of those wheelchairs.

He said in preparing for this distribution, he deliberately chose to give some to Muslims. In fact, he gave 7 to Muslims and 8 to Christians. He had apparently gone around and investigated who needed these the most and had also met with the traditional rulers in that area. In early November they invited the recipients to come to Tella the day before they were to be given. Apollos spent some time with them and their relatives explaining how to take care of the wheelchair and explaining a little bit of the gospel.

A few weeks later some of the Muslims began complaining about the sign that is painted on the back of them. They had painted "Jesus Cares For You" in Hausa on the back of each. Some of the radical Muslims started complaining to the parents of the children who had received the wheelchair that they should not have the name of Jesus on anything they owned. They wanted to remove the name of Jesus from them. This complaint was eventually carried to the village head who is a Muslim. He called the parties who were complaining and said, "Jesus is the one who brought these wheelchairs here. If you want to clean the name of Jesus off of them, Jesus might come back and take these away from us. Jesus is mentioned in the Qur'an and no one has cleaned his name out of the Qur'an." He then asked the people, "Do you want your children to start crawling around on the ground again?" They replied, "Oh no." He then encouraged them to stop complaining. He called Apollos and told him the issue was settled and they would be happy to have Jesus bring any more wheelchairs to them.

Apollos said that this whole thing has caused quite a stir in the Muslim communities. He says that he is receiving many reports of people sitting around under the mango trees talking about why and how this Jesus would do something so wonderful for them. In the past, they have thought of Christians as drunkards and immoral and violent people and have not really seen this side of Christianity before. They are now being forced to rethink their views about who Jesus is.

Apollos also reported to me that the district head, the Muslim chief over many chiefs in that area, called him recently to talk about the wheel chairs. He was not able to personally come to the wheel chair presentation because of another function but had sent a representative. And apparently he was very pleased with what had been reported to him. He asked Apollos if the ministry had a headquarters building in Tella. Of course, Apollos had to say no. The chief said, "You know when white people are involved, they like to see things done properly. It would be shameful for the white man to come and there not be a proper place to receive him." Therefore, he promised that he would give whatever land was needed for Apollos' ministry to build a headquarters building in the area. He told him to go back to Tella and select any land he wanted and come and report back to him. Apollos did so. The chief sent a letter to the local government headquarters telling them that they should deed this piece of land over to them. He also told him that he would make a contribution toward the building whenever they started erected it.

Apollos is planning another wheelchair dedication toward the end of the year. I encouraged him to make it around the middle of October and you would be here and be able to attend. I also told him when he was leaving to greet the village head and tell him that we had received the report and were happy that they had accepted the wheelchairs in the name of Jesus. I also told him to tell him that all of the children who had received them had to go to school and the adults should be encouraged and supported in the petty work they were doing.

The second part of the report was about Apollos' ongoing attempts to reach these pagan people called the Kamachi people. It is quite a large tribe (I am guessing somewhere between 50,000 to 100,000). They are still pagan and, in some places, almost aboriginal. There is not a single church or mosque in their land. In some of the villages, they still do not wear clothes. Their king only takes a bath once per year. And when he does, a male child that is born that month is sacrificed and the blood of the child is mixed with water to bath the king. In addition, the king must be blind. When the last king died, they took his son and put him in a cave and filled the cave with smoke until he went blind.

Apollos has had several quite successful trips to this group over the last three of four years. He has gotten three converts so far. In February, he took a large group into this area to do some evangelism. However, the people would not allow them to set up their PA equipment this time because the masquerade (the pagan god) was not happy. They said that the masquerade had told them they were to have nothing to do with these people. If they converted to the God of these foreigners or even if they allowed their children to go to the schools these people were wanting to start, they would stop offering sacrifices to the gods and the land would stop yielding its crops.

Because of this problem, Apollos decided that they should go right to the central village and try to see the king to see if they could get him to override the ruling of the lower group. So, for the first time, he went to this village with about 20 of the evangelists who had gone with him. They requested to see the king but the people got angry and started shouting and threatening to kill them. They had one convert from that tribe with them who was translating for them. The local people tried to grab him and kill him. They were

shouting that he was the one who was bringing these foreigners into the land and it was his fault that their masquerade was angry with them. They tried to get to this man but the 20 evangelists surrounded him, trying to protect him. They kept throwing stones. They brought out their big machetes and seriously tried to kill their tribesman. Apollos kept pleading with them, "We have not come here to fight; we have come here for peace; we have come here to help you not fight you."

They had brought one motorcycle with them to carry a large bundle of clothes that they had brought to give to the people. At one point, when the local people were scattered a bit, they plotted together. The man riding the motorcycle quickly started it, the local convert rushed out and jumped on the motorcycle and they went roaring out of the village. The people chased after them a bit but the motorcycle quickly got away. So they were successful in getting the local person away from the angry mob but when he left, they lost their translator and so there was much confusion in the crowd. Finally, the local people found someone who could speak Hausa and he came and became the interpreter. The local people said that because they had helped to local person escape, they were not going to release them. In fact, they threatened to kill them all.

Finally someone suggested that they consult the king. So someone went to see the blind king and narrated to him what had happened. He listened and finally instructed that the local people should release the people. Because they had come for peaceful purposes, they should not be harmed. However, the king sent word to them that because the gods were angry, they should not come back to that land until they were invited. So with that word from the king, Apollos and his people were released to go.

Apollos does not know exactly how to proceed but is not willing to give up on these people. In fact, he is planning to go back into the area in the next three or four weeks. He will go with only one other person. He is convinced that it was the large crowd that spooked the people. They had all been quite friendly before and he is convinced that they will accept him next time he goes.

So that is the report from Apollos, the Tella missionary, on this Sunday afternoon.

Danny

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July 30, 2007

Professor Danny McCain of UJ tells a story about the ongoing Wheel Chair Ministry in which he is involved. His story begins at a time he had just returned from abroad.

We were happy that Ayuba came to see us within a day or so of our arrival. He continues directing the Wheelchair Ministry in a very exemplary manner. He reported to me about one of the projects that I really hated to miss this summer. Here is the background. In early May, we were supposed to do an AIDS project¹ in Maiduguri but it got postponed at the last minute. While we were going to be in Maiduguri, which is the big city in the northeast corner of Nigeria, we were going to dedicate 100 wheelchairs during that week. However, because the AIDS project fell through, I could not justify the time to go up to Maiduguri for this ceremony. Since this is a 96 percent Muslim area, I decided to send one of my Muslim colleagues, Umar Farouk, to ride up with Ayuba for the dedication. Umar is very close to us and very comfortable around Christians. I thought it would be helpful for Ayuba to have him along on this trip. They got along wonderfully well.

On the trip, Ayuba mentioned something to him that has been frustrating to us. We do not discriminate against the Muslims in giving wheelchairs. However, we make the same requirements of them that we make for others.

1) The recipients have to go to school, if they are of school age and to some kind of technical training if they are above school age and 2) they have to refrain from begging. We believe that street begging demeans these people and we want to encourage work. We have had good results with our Christian young people keeping these rules.

However, Ayuba has been very discouraged by the Muslim recipients. Invariably, a few days after receiving their wheelchairs, they are back on the street begging. Therefore, Ayuba raised this issue with Umar on their long trip to Maiduguri.

As they brainstormed together, they decided to develop something of a pilot project. They decided they would give 30 wheelchairs to Muslim recipients at the Central Mosque in Jos. They would screen the 30 recipients and require each of them to have a sponsor who would make sure they went back to school. In addition to the general ceremony when they gave the wheelchairs, they would have an all-day workshop for these recipients to try to better prepare them to live as handicapped people in their society. I really wanted to go to the Central Mosque and dedicate these things and make a speech about the love of Jesus to all these Muslim leaders but I missed that

¹McCain is involved in many social projects, another one being an interfaith AIDS programme. This report was hastily written. I left it largely in its original shape.

opportunity. Fortunately, they did have the meeting and it went just as they had anticipated. In addition, Ayuba was able to meet some of the top Muslim leaders in the state (two emirs actually attended the ceremony) and challenged them to do more for their own handicapped people. From his report, the project was a very big success and helped to build on the good relationships we have attempted to build with Muslims here in the Jos area. I am not exactly sure where we go from here but I am sure that God will open some more doors for us to continue demonstrating the love of Christ to many Muslims who do not have a very positive impression of Christianity.

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Prof. Danny McCain, Unijos

Sunday afternoon 27 April 2008

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WHEELCHAIRS FROM JESUS – CHAPTER TWO

Dr. Ron Rice

October 27, 2008

NOTE FROM BOER: Ron Rice is an American friend to McCain who comes occasionally to help out with the wheelchair ministry and work together with Ayuba.

The plan was to meet my partner in the wheelchair ministry, Ayuba Gufwan, about halfway. Andrew and Reuben would return to Jos, and Ayuba and I would travel east to a rather remote part of Taraba State for a presentation of 30 wheelchairs on Saturday morning. This was to be the next installment in the account reported by Danny McCain (see attachment) and written up in the July-August issue of *Mission Frontiers* entitled "Wheelchairs from Jesus." (See www.wheelchairsforNigeria.org for a link.)

Ayuba, who walks on his hands from polio, had not charged the air conditioner in his Honda minivan with hand controls, so the long trip was

hot and miserable. This road was good, but it gets dark at 6:00 in Nigeria, and driving at night is nerve-wracking. People walking along the highway in the dark, along with bicycles and motorcycles without lights, are a constant worry, to say nothing of the occasional armed robbers blockading the road. But God answered our prayers and we safely pulled into Tella about 8:45, exhausted. Apollos met us on his motorcycle and led us to the “VIP Guest House” on the outskirts of town. Accommodations were basic: a large bed and a fan, a tiny bathroom with a toilet, large container of water, plastic dish for pouring water over you, and a drain in the floor. It was wonderful to take a “shower” but with the oppressive heat, I was sweaty again in a few minutes.

Apollos then led us to a church where there were about 40 people waiting patiently for us in a small room. This was the mission team that Apollos has assembled from 8-10 area churches to do evangelism in the tribe described in Danny McCain’s report, and to develop a ministry to the disabled, both Christians and Muslims.

In the morning one of the ladies brought us breakfast and we drove to the venue for the 10:00 program. It was held in a school yard instead of a church, since about half the beneficiaries would be Muslim. Many disabled and their families were already on the long covered veranda of the school, a band was playing Christian songs, a couple hundred plastic chairs were covered with canopies to shade from the hot sun, and in the center were the 30 wheelchairs, neatly lined up in rows, with ribbons around the whole group. Nobody expects these programs to start on time, but by 11:00 over 500 had gathered, including many curious children, attracted by the crowds, the loud music, and the presence of a white man, a rarity in these parts.

Apollos had everything well organized and arranged, including the presence of several traditional rulers and community leaders, a video photographer from the state capital, and the Special Advisor to the Taraba State Governor on Youth and the Disabled, who arrived in a shiny new Camry. When he told me he was a barrister (law school graduate), I said, “Let me introduce you to another barrister, my partner Ayuba Gufwan.” I think he was a little taken aback. He said he had no idea this was going to be such a big event, and if he had known, he would have brought some others, and a video camera, to give a better report to the governor. When I told him we were from Jos, he asked if we were from Relevant Technology, a tiny vocational

training place that makes a few wheelchairs a year. “For every wheelchair they make at Relevant Technology, we make 100,” I told him.

I also told the Special Advisor that the governor’s wife of Zamfara State was arranging with Ayuba to build 550 wheelchairs and was paying the full cost, 16,000 naira each. Since several hundred disabled folks had staged a protest at the governor’s office in Jalingo, Taraba’s capital, several days before, I suggested he go back to the governor and try to get him to donate several hundred wheelchairs to the disabled of Jalingo. Ayuba gave him a copy of the Nigerian version of our wheelchair video to show to the governor.

In my talk to the crowd, which was translated into Hausa, I told the story of Jesus healing the paralytic, and that even the Qur’an tells about Jesus giving sight to the blind, healing the leper and raising the dead. I told them that these wheelchairs are being given to both Christians and Muslims in the love of Jesus. I always tell Ayuba’s story, how his father told him after the 3rd grade that it was a waste to spend any more money on school fees for a boy who walked on his hands, that it wasn’t until he was 19 that his uncle built him a wheelchair and he went back to the 4th grade, that he is now the only university graduate in the history of his village, and that 1500 came to his wedding in his remote village two years ago. I also tell the story of Franklin Roosevelt, the only president in US history elected 4 times, that he had polio, and that he ruled America from a wheelchair. I tell these stories to inspire the beneficiaries and to try to change attitudes, that just because you are disabled doesn’t mean you can’t amount to something.

When it came time for the presentations, the Special Advisor cut the ribbons around the wheelchairs, the names were read, and one-by-one the children and adults crawled from the veranda on hands and knees to their wheelchair. I knelt down so I could video each one at eye level. Ayuba says they will remember this day the rest of their life.

As the last several names were being read, two beautifully dressed Muslim girls, about 12 or 14 years old, crawled out from the veranda. Obviously their names were not on the list, and they sat in vain as the last wheelchair was claimed. Then a small boy on homemade crutches came out and also stood in vain. It was heartbreaking. I didn’t want to know how many others were still on the veranda, their hopes crushed. I got the microphone and the translator and stood before them and told them how heartbroken I was. I told

them I would be back again next year, and I hoped that this time we would have enough wheelchairs for everyone.

Before he left, I told the Special Advisor that I was counting on him to get the governor to donate a lot of wheelchairs. "I'll be back next October," I told him, "so that is your deadline. I want to be in Jalingo next year to help give out a minimum of 100 wheelchairs." He assured me he would do even better. We'll see if I am able to write Chapter Three next year.

NOW BACK IN JOS AT THE MCCAIN HOME:

Danny told me the story of his meeting with this very same governor of Taraba several weeks before. He and his team were in Jalingo to conduct an AIDS Awareness workshop for area pastors. While there he attended a Nigerian Independence Day service, also attended by the governor. Several of the speakers were criticizing the corruption and other ills of Nigerian society. The governor in his speech continued in this vein, attributing Nigeria's problems to greed. About three minutes into his speech, he said, "Our special guest today, Professor McCain, from the University of Jos, is a good example for us to follow. He goes all over Nigeria conducting AIDS workshops and speaking at conferences, and he never charges one naira for his services." He then turned and looked directly at Danny, "I've been to your country and I've seen how Americans live and how generous and unselfish they are. They do not look at social problems as opportunities to enrich themselves. Americans go all over the world, helping people and giving unselfishly. That's what has made America so great and that is why God has blessed them so." Danny said he went on for about six or eight minutes praising and thanking him and America, until it got a little embarrassing. So it certainly won't hurt when the Taraba governor finds out our wheelchair project is also connected to Professor McCain!

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Dear friends,

An exciting new page has been added to our Wheelchairs for Nigeria website, giving the story of Ayuba's speech at the World Health Organization's polio conference in Geneva last June. It has the special video produced by the Gates Foundation that was shown on the giant screen introducing Ayuba to all the delegates, and the video of his actual speech.

Go to www.WheelchairsforNigeria.org and click on the "WHO" tab. There are also some new photos on the photo page.

Cordially,

Ron Rice

Dr. Ronald and Sharon Rice

1542 Palm Ave. SW

Seattle, WA 98116

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www.WheelchairsforNigeria.org