



Swaziland and the Pan African Conference

We arrived in Ezulwini Valley which has a history of being a resort for South Africa. We drove through Mbabane and toward Manzini, the capitol . The major airport is there. Swaziland is ruled by a king. Our hotel is one of a chain of Sun hotels. It is very adequate but we don't have good chairs or good lighting. We were put into another Sun hotel because a large number of white Americans were in town with group planting vegetable gardens. We unpacked, organized

dirty clothes and changed to go find registration. Jim is staying at a cheaper hotel about 5 km. away. Ken went over to register with some other women from the conference. Yetta waited for Jim to return. We picked Ken up and went to Jim's hotel for a buffet supper. We returned to our hotel, watched t.v., wrote the diary and went to bed.

We ran into people who we knew or knew us from the other Pan African, World Reading or Applied Linguistics conferences or by reputation.

Monday, August 22,

We had breakfast (included with hotel rate). Then we went over to the Conference Center about 8:00 a.m. with a shuttle bus to get there early enough to get name tags and meal tickets. We get lunch with the conference fee. There was little listed on the program for this day. There was an opening address by Alan Brody, the UNICEF country representative to Swaziland. He spoke about the wonders of literature and books he has written for African children to deal with problems like HIV - AIDS. He also appreciates story telling.

Lunch was served to 800 people in an hour at the Royal Swazi. It was a full buffet with dessert and good food. We noticed a number of African people with their plates piled high and wondered whether this was their only meal for the day. There are many Swazi teachers at this conference.



The King of Swaziland was to open the conference after lunch. We were asked to be ready in the auditorium at 1:00 but the king didn't arrive til almost 3:00. There was stalls set aside in the men's and women's bathrooms with a sign that said it was reserved. There was also a guard standing to make sure that no one used the stall. The King was accompanied by family members, Cabinet officials and members of congress. Many conference dignitaries addressed the king, bowed their heads and gave him gifts. He spoke in response. There was also entertainment by children dancing, singing, poetry recitation and drama much of it dealing with HIV AIDS.

We went back to the hotel for a rest and to organize the laundry to send off. Then we went n back to the Conference



Center for a reception where there was enough food for dinner. We had a drink back at our hotel and went to bed. We had many informal conversations with Americans, Europeans and black and white Africans. We spoke with Alis Hedlam and her husband Gerry. We interacted with a British educator working in Scotland by the name of George Hunt. We talked to Dick Allington who came to the conference in time to have chicken wings with the King. Dick and Anne were stuck on a bus that broke down on the way from Mozambique to Ezulwini, Swaziland.



Tuesday, August 23, Swaziland and Conference

Breakfast buffet at the hotel. Went to set up for Yetta's presentation first thing in the a.m. Jim and Ken tried to get the power point to work and it finally did. The program organization is very confusing. So Yetta didn't start presenting more than an hour after the stated starting time. The audience was quite full. The presentation was well received. There were three other presentations that followed in the overall session. They all were

related in different ways to early literacy.

We had lunch buffet. The lunch is at the hotel next to the conference center. They set it up in different areas including outside and were able to get everyone fed within an hour. Very well organized. Buffet was very adequate.

After lunch we went looking for an internet café and crafts with Jim. The internet café computer was too slow so we left there and went looking for a crafts place. We were sent on a wild goose chase but it gave us time to see the richness of the Ezulwini valley. There are pineapple fields, sugar cane, avocado trees, and other trees and plantings. We stopped at a outdoor crafts market strip along the main road. There were dozens of stalls with dirt floors in one long strip. Since most of the crafts were similar to what we would see in Johannesburg, we decided not to buy. When people park a car, someone seems to appear to watch over it for a tip they will receive at the end.

Ken was tired of buffets so we had ala carte dinner at our hotel with Jim and George. It was a pleasant evening with good talk and the food was good too.

Wednesday, August 24, Swaziland and Conference

Breakfast and we went over to the conference after Ken worked on his presentation and I worked on other things. We did some email at the conference and went to a presentation by Wits faculty members. We had lunch and did email at the conference again. We looked for the meeting that Jim Wile asked us to attend and it was in a room behind the Casino. The meeting was related to a project that IRA and Anne Francin are doing in Tanzania and two other African nations. They are helping them build diagnosis into their literacy programs.

We went back to our hotel and Jim picked us up and we went to dinner at the Calabash Restaurant (Swiss owned) which has a very continental menu. Mostly Viennese. The food was well prepared and served. The restaurant has been in business for over 20 years. We then went to the Casino at the Sun hotel. It was not a very satisfactory casino experience. The machine kept misfiring and Jim lost his money because he didn't realize he was at a machine that took R25 at each turn. Yetta made about R200. Ken lost his.

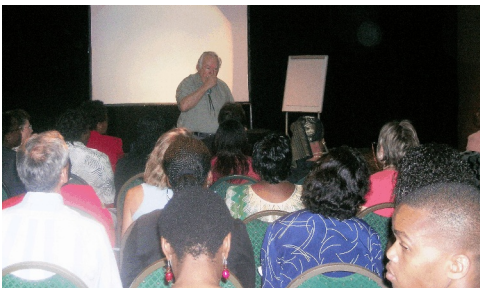
General Impressions of Swaziland and the Pan African Conference

There were rich sources of revenue visible on our trips through Swaziland. There was industrial timber farms, pineapple, sugar cane, bananas and other agricultural products. The focus on tourism was evident especially in Ezulwini valley. There were advertisements about game parks. This country is headed by the last absolute monarch on the continent. He has 11 wives and probably will have more. There is a special festival held yearly where the virgins present themselves to society and the king might choose one as a bride. HIV-AIDS is a big problem and is aggravated by the problems and practices of bigamy and the subservience of women of in the culture. We saw many building projects especially of roads and houses.

The Pan African Conference was not well organized, the program was hard to read and contained numerous mistakes. Meetings didn't start on time and some meetings were postponed or set up spontaneously. Sessions were double booked in the same room, equipment was lacking. In general the participants were good humored and found the sessions worth while. We found a number of sessions worth while. We met people who remembered us and vice versa from our last visit to Africa, from the AIA conference in Wisconsin and from other previous conferences in the US, UK, and other world reading congresses. The venue was beautiful and the hotels were well organized in feeding the large group of people.

Thursday, August 25, Swaziland, Conference and Trip to Johannesburg

We got over to the convention center to hear Dick Allington talk about what he believes are the important aspects of the teaching of reading.



Ken's presentation was full with many participants sitting on the floor. It was very well received. The man who followed Ken spoke about listening and didn't realize he was in a different paradigm than Ken although he kept referring to Ken's presentation. We left Ezulwini right after lunch and drove with Jim back to Johannesburg. It was an interesting ride and we have seen a portion of both Swaziland and South Africa by air and by car. There were places where it looked like the American mid west with large scale farming that uses irrigation. We passed a number of informal housing communities, too. Like Swaziland, South Africa also has large timber farms.

We got lost as we came into Johannesburg and therefore didn't arrive at Cynthia Hugo's house until 7:30. Cynthia is co director of the Read Foundation. Jim stayed at Cynthia's and Thomas, one of the Read's drivers, drove us to the home of Irene Manell. Irene is a unique woman. She is knowledgeable on a wide range of subjects. She is an important social and political leader in Johannesburg. She is a wonderful hostess. We had chicken for dinner served by Phineas, the butler and caretaker. We have a suite to ourselves that includes a large bedroom sitting room and a bathroom. We are closed off from the rest of this lovely older but comfortable house.