

South Africa / Swaziland Trip
Ken and Yetta Goodman

September 27, 2005

Wednesday August 10th, Tucson - Washington D.C.

Granddaughter Shoshana Castro, visiting from Houston, drove us to the Tucson airport for a 7:30 a.m. flight to Dallas and connecting to Washington Dulles. Yetta read dissertations on the plane. We were met by and had dinner with Prisca and Ray Martens at the Hilton hotel.

Thursday August 11th, Washington - D.C. to Johannesburg

Took a shuttle from the Hotel to Dulles airport for our uneventful South African Airways 8:45 a.m. flight to Johannesburg. Jim Hoffman, our colleague from the University of Texas was on the same flight. We were served four meals plus snacks. The first leg of the trip took us to Accra in Ghana and was almost 10 hours long. More passengers got on there, the plane got much fuller. We had another 5 ½ hour flight from Accra to Johannesburg where we arrived at 7:30 a.m. on August 12th.

Friday August 12th, Johannesburg to Cape Town

At the airport, Jim assisted us in renting a phone and changing money. We forwarded our bags to Cape Town and walked to the domestic terminal. We had a 10:00 a.m. flight on a surprisingly full wide body Airbus 340. We were met by employees of Praesa, an NGO (non government organization) who are our sponsors in Cape Town. They drove us to our residence at All Africa House in the middle campus of the University of Cape Town which is one of three campuses on the side of Table Mountain, the famous prominent feature of Cape Town.

Our residence is opposite the law school and houses international visitors. Our Flat A, Alexandria, has a kitchen, living room, bedroom with a double bed and bathroom. It is on an attractive courtyard with other flats, meeting rooms, a common room where breakfast is served, a laundry and computer room. As in most of Cape Town, there is no central heating. We have a small electric heater in the living room with night time temperatures in the 40's.

We unpacked and had shivery showers. Carole Bloch called and came by for a chat to plan supper and the weekend. Our laptop didn't work wireless but the computer room is right next to our flat and we were able to do our email. Carole Bloch and Neville Alexander, the director of Praesa picked us up for dinner which they call supper.

Carole has a Jewish background. She did her work in England and taught in London for a few years. She became aware of our work there. She started out in secondary and then became interested in early childhood. She writes a lot about that area and multilingual, multicultural education. She knows the work of the London Institute folks too. Her father's family came from Lithuania. Neville is of mixed race and rejects the common label "colored". He graduated from a Catholic mission and had a German language major in college. He spent ten years on Robin Island, in the same island prison that Mandela did. He has written on language policy and is well known in South Africa.



We stopped to take pictures of beautiful pink proteas and erica plants. We saw gulls, sacred cranes, a small troop of a variety of antelope (waterboks) and troops of baboons. A number of the baboons had babies clinging to them. They roamed freely along and across the road. This variety of Chacma baboons eats roots, honey, bulbs, insects and scorpions but at low tide they roam the beaches and eat shell fish. They are aggressive, totally unafraid of people. We saw one snatch food from a child and one came into the Two Ocean restaurant and had to be chased away by the servers.

The restaurant has an amazingly varied menu. Ken had a spicy lamb stir fry, Yetta had minestrone soup and Viv had a curry dish. We began our return trip about 3:00, got closer down to the beach and stopped again for more pictures of baboons. On the way back to Cape Town, we stopped at a Pay and Take super market to buy eggs and cheese and a power point converter. People are very security conscious here, so we left nothing in the car and made sure it was locked. Vivian removed her radio each time we left the car. She played African choral music for us that her husband, Alan, had taped. African music is characterized by many part harmony. We got back to All Africa House about 5:30 and worked on email.

Carole called and took us to dinner at 7:30 at the Africa Café in downtown Cape Town. Reminiscent of Mexico City, at every street parking area there seems to be a self appointed attendant. In this case a man wearing an orange vest directed us to the appropriate parking space. Carole tipped him after the dinner and found out that he is from another African country. The restaurant is quite colorful. We were in a room with Egyptian art on the walls. The menu was in the form of the sail on a boat. It turned out we got everything on the menu as a set dinner. We had more than a dozen different dishes served a few at a time in small colorful bowls by a server in African dress who explained each dish as she brought it. We started the meal with a hand washing ceremony. We had a sweet potato soup to start with, followed by well seasoned dishes to very spicy ones. We had rice, an ostrich stew that tasted beef like, chicken curry, a spinach dish, a dish flavored with coconut, tomato and lentil dish, cornmeal patties. Every dish was from a different part of Africa. The servers were mostly women and came through the restaurant including our room performing African songs and body movement accompanied by African drums. The restaurant was large and very full with colorful clientele. The dessert was a pudding (generic term for dessert). It was a moist cake with runny custard. We went to bed about 10:00 after we watched parts of movies on t.v.

Sunday August 14th, Cape Town

When we got up it was raining. After a long drought, this has been a wet winter. There's been rain every day we've been here but we've managed to dodge the raindrops even though the rain is quite heavy at times. The sun shines through and has given us opportunities to walk about. Ken was up at six and warmed himself near our little radiator. Yetta was up at eight. Ken made an egg and cheese omelet which we ate with toast, oranges, juice, coffee and tea. We spent the morning on email, getting our phone in operation and writing in the journal.

Carole and Neville picked us up at 12:30. I gave her a bag of books: (6 copies of What's Whole in Whole Language, Gretchen and my Kidwatching Book, the new RMI, and 3 Little Overcoat books. We drove through town and through what they described as the gold coast area with expensive, million rand homes along the sea shore. We eventually came to a kind of marina area where there were a number of sea food restaurants doing a brisk Sunday early afternoon business. Yetta, Neville and Carole had sole with butter sauce and Ken had a large plate of prawns, which he had to decapitate although the tails were already split; they came with rice. At the end of the meal the waiter brought a finger bowl for him to clean his hands with. We had South African style Pavlov for dessert which was mixed berries in a meringue shell with whipped cream on top.



We had another wonderful conversation about whole language, multilingualism and our various politics. The Cape Town government is moving toward a policy of encouraging home language literacy and the kinds of programs that Praesa has been promoting. Of course, the government is still looking for ways of testing. Neville indicated that he found himself at odds over education with his former revolutionary colleagues who are now in the government. He agreed with Ken's comparison to the American Civil Rights movement where the leaders believed that once schools were desegregated and there were black teachers and administrators then all educational problems would disappear.

We drove home past the informal settlements, houses built of scrap materials and without permits, much like the Latin American city barrios that we've seen. One difference seems to be that Africans moved in community groups with a head man and seemed to form organized communities. They also showed us some government housing projects which Neville described as much worse and dominated by gangs. We got home about 5:00 did email, journal entries, other reading and had cheese sandwiches for dinner. Watched some t.v. and went to bed.



Monday August 15th, Cape Town

Woke up with phone alarm at 7 :00. Had breakfast in the common room- continental with oranges and biscuits. We prepared for our Praesa afternoon whole language workshop with mostly UCT faculty and students.

We met with Praesa researchers, staff and students to hear what they are doing helping teachers focus on multiple language use. We drove to the presentation venue where we had finger food buffet for lunch. We got very good response from the group of about 70 people. There is a new language law in Western Cape announced in the paper this morning requiring trilingual

education in Xhosa, English and Afrikaans. They are just coming out of a long affair with Outcome Based Education which has been disaster. We talked about that as another one legged model. An applied linguist in the college of education asked about genre and apparently someone here has brought Jim Martin, Fran Christianson, and others from Australia.

Teachers here according to our audience stay close to the required curriculum and make very little use of community, language and culture. Testing issues sound like what has been happening in U.S. We returned to All Africa House about 4:30. Doing email and relaxing. Jim Hoffman called and gave us his cell phone

Trying to get out of Cape Town earlier on Wed. a.m. Praesa secretary is helping us with that. Tonight we had dinner at Vivian and Alan Kenyon's home. They live in a small flat in an area with large apartment buildings. We had a lovely dinner at their home. Viv is quite a cook. She made Malaysian food.. Well seasoned chicken in a sauce, squash and spinach, salad and home made chocolate cake. Alan and Viv have taught in England and South Africa. Carole was there with a publisher who is doing children's books. Alan and Viv have not been able to get jobs in the same institution. She works in Cape Town and he works in another area and comes home on weekends. We talked about British and South African education, politics, South African language, history and culture, children and grandchildren. Their son teaches English in Taiwan

Tuesday, August 16th, Cape Town

Ken made french toast. We were picked up at 7:45 by Carole and Xolisa and drove away to a tertiary institution.

We met with members of the West Cape Provincial School professionals above the teaching level. We met with researchers, language and curriculum advisors, special education advisors, early childhood specialists. Some were heads of their groups. They started by explaining their province to us. The majority are Afrikaans but there are increasing Xhosa speakers. Parents are demanding quality schools. They have been building toward a tri-lingual education policy. Their third graders are assessed at being about two years below grade level. A third of their children are on level. They have a Reading ½ hour strategy and their reading policy is to have a balanced approach. They have placed 100 children's books in every classroom in all three languages. There is a push back to phonics since teachers thought they were to put phonics on the shelf. They need research in the literacy practices in the classroom. The group was quite mixed in color and language background. They all spoke English.

There were about six Praesa staff there who made passionate and intelligent comments. The comments from the rest of the audience indicated different philosophies but whole language was not rejected in any way. There is no doubt that the education is basically transmission model and many seem to want to move on from there. Teachers are not very empowered and teach as they were taught.



We presented on the reading process and early literacy development. The Boat in the Basement was very successful and there was animated discussion about the samples of early literacy that Yetta shared. There is a closing cultural ending to such sessions which we experienced yesterday and today. A member of the group says a thank you sharing some idea that they learned. The head of curriculum engaged everyone in song. As soon as she mentioned the song – an eight part harmony beautiful Xhosa hymn was sung. Jesus was thanked for our visit in the English version..

When we got back to our room, we started packing for our trip tomorrow. We are going to get to the airport by 7:30 a.m. to see if we can stand by for an earlier flight.

At 6:00 p.m. Janet, president of the SARA, one year old, picked us up to go to visit with members of the South African Reading Association and the Colorado tour on their way to Swaziland and the conference there. There are 18 members of the tour. We had a light supper and talked about the development of SARA. Carole and Neville picked us up and took us back to All Africa House. We had a short conversation and they gave us 2000 rand each. We said our goodbyes. We finished packing and went to bed.

Impressions about Cape Town Visit

Cape Town and its setting are very beautiful. People enjoy living there. We have a sense of optimism from those we met about their future in South Africa. Although people are very much aware of the enormity of their problems, their sense of pride in Cape Town especially was very evident. Everybody seems to be aware that they do not want to be another Zimbabwe where blacks drove out the whites and in the process destroyed the economy. A number of people made clear that the white Afrikaners are essential to the New South Africa because they care about their country and have allegiance to no other nation. The new language policy in Western Cape seems to be the result of long hard work by Neville Alexander and his colleagues. The new policy will work toward everyone being tri lingual and whites speaking at least one African language. There is a lot of knowledge about language and pedagogy but the history of transmission model education makes it hard to change toward progressive pedagogy.

There was a strong emphasis influenced by Bill Spady to move toward Outcome Based Education and standards. But they brought in Australians and New Zealanders to implement this so there are many holistic practices in the written curriculum. However, teachers are reluctant to work beyond the textbook and the basal readers. They are focused on educational outcomes. We were especially impressed with the young enthusiastic researchers and students that work with Carol Bloch and Neville Alexander in Praesa. They seem to have a sense of the importance of their present and future contributions .