

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview **William John Barnett (CN 248, T10)** for the Billy Graham Center Archives. No spoken words which were recorded are omitted. In a very few cases, the transcribers could not understand what was said, in which case [unclear] was inserted. Also, grunts and verbal hesitations such as “ah” or “um” are usually omitted. Readers of this transcript should remember that this is a transcript of spoken English, which follows a different rhythm and even rule than written English.

. . . Three dots indicate an interruption or break in the train of thought within the sentence of the speaker.

. . . . Four dots indicate what the transcriber believes to be the end of an incomplete sentence.

( ) Word in parentheses are asides made by the speaker.

[ ] Words in brackets are comments made by the transcriber.

This transcript was created by Bob Shuster and Paul Bartow and was completed November 2013.

**Please note:** This oral history interview expresses the personal memories and opinions of the interviewee and does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Billy Graham Center Archives or Wheaton College.



**Collection 248, Tape 10. Oral history interview with William John Barnett by Robert Shuster on June 7, 2007.**

**SHUSTER:** If you'd just like to say a few words first to make sure we're picking up okay. What's the weather like today?

**BARNETT:** It's windy! Very windy. I was surprised to find so much wind. I asked Bev "How come it's blowing like this? Is it always blowing like this? Out there in California we got these San Anna winds periodically that come when it really blows. And I didn't expect to have wind here which he says is simply the cold air rising and the hot air coming in.

**SHUSTER:** Well sometimes on the plains out here it gets pretty windy. Particularly around Chicago and the Lake. Well this is an interview with Dr. William John Barnett by Bob Shuster for the Billy Graham Center Archives. It took place on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at 9:30 AM at the home of Dr. Barnett's son in Peoria, Illinois. Dr. Barnett, last time we were talking about the Kijabe medical center and your involvement with that over the years and its development and growth. And I was wondering if we could start off today before going on to the Comoro Islands talking just about some of your general impressions about Africa and African Christianity during your many years of involvement there. How...how would you describe what you see as the major changes in Africa during your lifetime?

**BARNETT:** Well obviously I have the advantage of having been born in Africa and raised in Africa with the hiatus of coming home to the United States and getting my education here on through medical school and then serving in the American...US Army for a period of time in the war period. But...also we had the big advantage of going back as missionaries in the medical work out there where we served for forty years. But at the same time, my main...interests and strengths were in the medical side of the work where we worked as a doctor. My wife as a nurse and an anesthetist. So I'll have to say this, that there have been massive changes that have taken place in Africa from the time that I was born out there. When we first...began to know things out there among the Maasai people. There was very little in the way of what we would call civilization. And there was no church for several years. But we have seen tremendous changes where the Lord has worked in the hearts of the people of Kenya. You know, we were out there last year before a bit of a change to celebrate the centenary of the arrival of my dad and mother in Africa. They arrived out there in 1907 and started work there. And we had our reunion, our family reunion up there at Eldama Ravine which is the township in which I was born [in 1917]. At that time, it was just a few tin shacks and a government post that had been set up there.

**SHUSTER:** How many Barnetts were at the reunion?

**BARNETT:** Well, we had a total of I think it was thirty two that were there. That...a fair number of ones that were not there that couldn't make it. But that doesn't mean your direct family...there were also numbers of grandchildren and spouses and so on that were there. There were actually I think two friends that were not related to the family that were there. And one of the privileges we had there was the presence of ex president Daniel Arap Moi. He came to attend our family reunion. On one day. And it was just a real privilege. You know there have been people that have wondered

as to whether Daniel was a real Christian or not. But I assure you that Daniel Moi was an out and out Christian. He loved the Lord and he still does. And we were able to have real Christian fellowship together with our family and he felt as though he was part of our family because he, actually as a boy, was raised as one of the workers in a mission home, a family. And as he grew up, he attended the schools that the missions started out there. And eventually, when my older brother Eric went out as a worker, he was the one who baptized President Moi. And later on he was the one who married the Moises.

**SHUSTER:** So his main...President Moi's main relationship had been with your brother Eric or with your father?

**BARNETT:** Both of them and also my brother Paul who was general worker out there and spent most of his missionary life working at Eldama Ravine out from Eldama Ravine. And still had many contacts, and he was the one very handy person, Paul was. He did a lot of building and he drew up the plans for one of Moi's homes he had up there and helped build the home for him out there. And so, Moi, during his presidency, saw to it that Paul, who was given a ten acre plot of land just outside of Eldama Ravine, and that's where we met for our family reunion. And that plot is being used as a sort of a rest place where missionaries can come in any time and find a nice cottage there and a place where they can just relax and rest for a few days at a time.

**SHUSTER:** And that's where Paul lives?

**BARNETT:** That's where Paul was. Paul went to be with the Lord. Paul and Dorothy both lived for many years out there but went to be with the Lord about three years ago or so now. So...really the only ones left of the immediate family are my brother Arthur and myself now. All the rest of the family have gone home to be with the Lord. But...I know that Moi took a lot of criticism because of the corruption that was going on and still goes on in Kenya during his presidency. But there are explanations for that. Moi had a very difficult time. People who do criticize fail to realize the problems of tribalism in these developing countries like this.

**SHUSTER:** And we talked about that in our last interview a little bit about his...

**BARNETT:** That's right. So the country does have division. And really, it's quite miraculous that they do have a unified government with a Parliament and so on that does actually rule there.

**SHUSTER:** Well with the strong tribal divisions, why do they have a unified government? What are the forces for unity in the country?

**BARNETT:** Well of course the government is headquartered in Nairobi and that's where the capitol city is. But the first...I'll say this, that the...with all the criticisms that have come against the very colonial governments during the colonial period, the impressions are that the British were probably the best as colonialists.

**SHUSTER:** Best in what sense?

**BARNETT:** And worked towards education for the people. They were slow at it. Very slow at it. Felt that the time was not in essence at that time. But they also had a purpose of developing education for the people. And things of that sort have been what have helped to bring the country together. And the British of course had a very strong government and care of the people. Medical care was pretty slow also among them. But one of these strong points was things like Eric, my brother, who took over education for the mission. Now that was a major, major change in the mission. You talk...asking what the changes are. One of the big changes that I've seen take place is education in the country. And the mission and I don't think they're very different from the other, particularly the faith missions, had as their primary purpose an aim, goal - evangelization and strengthening of any church that builds there. To strengthen. That's the purpose of the mission. Nothing else. And that's the way it grew. And so education was at a very low key in the missions. Teach them enough to read the Bible. That's it. And so...

**SHUSTER:** Would Bible translation also be a...?

**BARNETT:** Bible translation...

**SHUSTER:** And literacy training?

**BARNETT:** ...that started of course very, very early. With the earliest of the converts that came to help translate the Bible into the local languages and so on. But...Eric was the first of our family to go return as a missionary. (By the way, all five of our family, children, are all...did return to become missionaries in Africa one way or another), but Eric was very strong in education. And he felt very strongly that the future of the country was not only evangelization but was teaching them, because the day was coming and it looked as though it would not be very far out that these countries would become independent. And they needed to know how to...to govern themselves and to be educated to really take care of their countries.

**SHUSTER:** So this was not just seminary education...

**BARNETT:** That's right.

**SHUSTER:** ...or Bible training, but general education from...

**BARNETT:** This is getting up their primary schools and up through secondary school education. And even that was a great thing that they just didn't have out there was particularly...they made some progress in primary school education, but secondary schools, there was practically no secondary schools yet that had developed. The mission had nothing at all in that way. So Eric pushed for that and he ran into a great deal of opposition within the mission on it. Because many people felt that that was not the purpose of the mission. But, you know Eric went back to Kenya for a visit for his retirement there in Florida about three years ago now. And he...there was a reunion they had there at Eldama Ravine when he went out. And Daniel Moi attended that reunion. Subsequent to that, he invited him to go with him, or to go down and visit him at his home, which is a place called Kabarak not too far. It is on the floor of the...of the Rift Valley. But not too far away from Nairobi. Up north in Nairobi. And he...had had his home there on a nice piece of

property, but he had also taken the initiative to go ahead and build a high school known as the Kabarak High School.

**SHUSTER:** Moi of course, president Moi did that.

**BARNETT:** That is president Moi. And it rates as the best high school in the country. It's done at a beautiful standard. But anyway, Eric....

**SHUSTER:** Is that a public school?

**BARNETT:** It's public.

**SHUSTER:** In the US sense?

**BARNETT:** Well it's not a state school from that standpoint. In a sense it's a private school, but it's open to anybody who is able to make the standards and apply for admission to the school. But...

**SHUSTER:** Is it on a fee basis or is it...?

**BARNETT:** I think that there is some fee basis on it. But I'm not sure about what it is. But when Eric arrived at the gate of the high school, he was met by the headmaster of the school who had been appointed to bring him to Moi's home which was about a mile away. So when he arrived with Eric at the home, Moi came out to meet them there. And as he met them, he turned to the headmaster and said "I want to introduce to you the man who brought education to our country of Kenya." So that is the standing that Eric had there in the country. Now, subsequent to that, while we were out there this time, plans were already going forward for the enlargement of that high school and actually the steps towards building it up to a university. There in Kenya. Now, Moi had already established a...university and medical school at the town of Eldoret. In the northern part.

**SHUSTER:** Is that called Eldoret University?

**BARNETT:** Now, that's the second medical school in the country. Down in Nairobi there is a university. These are state schools now with a medical school there.

**SHUSTER:** Is the school in Eldoret called Eldoret University or...?

**BARNETT:** It's...I think it's called the Moi...the Moi university there. I think that that's the name of it...that they call it.

**SHUSTER:** And what's the name of the high school...?

**BARNETT:** And the medical school is...I'm not sure if it's Eldoret Medical school or Moi, but I would guess it's Moi too.

**SHUSTER:** What is the name of the high school he built?



**BARNETT:** The high school he built is the Kabarak.

**SHUSTER:** How do you spell...?

**BARNETT:** K-A-B-A-R-A-K. Kabarak High School. And just letting you in on the changes that have taken place in Kenya up to the present time today. It's a vastly different country from what it was.

**SHUSTER:** Just one question about that, you mentioned your brother Eric. President Moi introduced him as the man who brought education to Kenya. Did he do all his work within the mission or had he ever worked for the government as an inspector or...?

**BARNETT:** He did it within the mission. But of course he...the government by then was establishing standards for education. It was based largely on the British system of education. So he was constantly in touch with government for confirmation of the ways to go. The mission today has several high schools besides the ones that Eric worked to establish. I think one of the last ones I heard was establishing of a girls' high school up in this northern part in the area that you would say was Moi's home area up there. And that is a mission high school for girls. So that's a tremendous change in these countries. They have something where they're really emphasizing education for the girls too.

**SHUSTER:** And a girl there would receive vocational training or liberal arts training?

**BARNETT:** Liberal arts as well as vocational. Both. So...these are the changes that I had seen in education. Which definitely you speak of "what helps to unify a country?" For one thing, it's the establishing of a set language for the country. I think that is one of the biggest unifying things. Going back to Tanzania. Tanzania has had relatively little tribal trouble there. It's been one of the quietest countries politically in its development. And the...the big feeling on that is that immediately, they established Swahili as the official language of the country. Not English. But Swahili. And we were amazed there when we went back to see the Sukuma people among who we worked. Who only spoke Sukuma. The women particularly. Here we went back and visited some villages, and all those people, women, children, were conversing in Swahili. Not in Sukuma anymore [car loud by microphone].

**SHUSTER:** So is...Sukuma...is it called Sukuma?

**BARNETT:** Kisukuma is the language that...the major language...

**SHUSTER:** Is that being replaced? Is that...if Swahili is becoming the language of everyday conversation?

**BARNETT:** Yes. But that's in Tanzania. Or in.... But in Kenya, Swahili was made the main language that they are using but Ken...English has been retained in Kenya as the official language for government and it's officially used in the schools and so on. And that...I'm not sure whether that's the best. They're all speaking Swahili but you can go almost anywhere in Kenya now and use

English. People will understand it too. Except up in the northern frontier there, there's still some pretty primitive people.

**SHUSTER:** Why...you say you're not sure if that's the best or not to have English as the official language. Why is that?

**BARNETT:** Well, it's just the comparison of what has happened between Kenya and Tanzania. Kenya has had some pretty rough periods. They have not had...broken out any outward war between the tribes. But there have been some pretty harsh words pass between them. And that is what Moi had to deal with all the time. So there was this conflict within the government itself. That he had to try and maintain unity and peace in his country. And...it resulted in some things that probably were questionable in people's minds. And so on. But...it has its advantages, English does, and its disadvantages. For instance, in Tanzania, in all the schools and universities it's Swahili. Well, Swahili does not have all the terms and words and languages that science demands for the teaching in the schools and universities particularly. Whereas in Kenya, English is spoken in Parliament. And in the schools and so on. At least in the higher schools.

**SHUSTER:** And in the scientific laboratories?

**BARNETT:** And in the scientific laboratories and so on. Things like that are...there are advantages.

**SHUSTER:** What about as a literary language? Say poetry or plays or stories? Is Swahili...?

**BARNETT:** Well all I know is that in that, there are more and more indigenous plays that are coming into being. We heard that and actually heard some of them in the churches that there are more and more songs, hymns that are being sung now. Instead of using the old words of hymns that we have in our hymn books that was taught to them by the missionaries, "What Happy Friend," "We Have Jesus," "Oh Happy Day," all those things were translations from the English into their language. But now they're coming out with their own hymns. And frequently with their own tunes to them now too. So there is that in a way of changes that you're seeing in the churches as well. As far as church changes, what have we seen, well I think that I've already indicated to you that when my dad...Mother went out there first, there were no Christians virtually, no churches. And my dad went for seven years without seeing a single convert come to the Lord. And...

**SHUSTER:** That was among the Maasai people? Was it not?

**BARNETT:** That was among the Maasai people primarily. And then when the Lord really worked in his heart and his attitudes changed, he began to see people coming to the Lord slowly. But steadily. And then the government moved the Maasai people out of the whole area and confined them down to their present locations. Which were...there are the great plains and game country, but the big advantage there was that the Maasai are a cattle people and they needed grazing land.

**SHUSTER:** Now when you say the government, this was the colonial government?

**BARNETT:** That's the colonial government.

**SHUSTER:** Yeah.

**BARNETT:** They did that because following.... The settlers were already coming into the colony, Kenya colony, following the war. The First World War. And the British government paid off many of their officers, military officers with land grants there in Kenya. And so you had the white highlands, where all the area in which my dad and mother started their work, among the Maasai people now became the white highlands with huge farms run by that. And now that may sound terrible, but from the standpoint of the missionary work, it was a tremendous blessing.

**SHUSTER:** Why is that?

**BARNETT:** Because these farmers needed help. They needed workers. And so they brought in thousands of people from all the surrounding tribes. The Luo were there, the Kikuyu were in there, the Kalenjins were in there, some Maasai were in there, all of them working on these farms. Keep the farms going. And this is where my dad began to do much of his evangelistic work. Was out into these farms and people would begin to come to the Lord in the farms. My dad would see the farmers and ask them if they would have any objection to his building a church on their farm. And they were usually very happy for it because they saw the changes that were in the lives of these Africans. That they were far easier to control and work with as Christians than as non-Christians. And so they backed...the building of the churches. And some of those farmers actually came to the Lord through this effort that building church brought.

**SHUSTER:** You had mentioned that your father had seven years without a convert and the Lord then spoke to him and he had changed his attitude. What was the change in his attitude?

**BARNETT:** Well if you really want me to tell that story I'll tell it to you because it goes back really to his...in a sense, conversion or at least dedication to the Lord. Which he was. He had been a[n] Australian who had immigrated to the States in Sacramento there at California in the hardware business. And one night as he finished work and he was going back to his room, he said (this is a story he told me, by the way not too long before he died and I had never heard it before. He had never...as far, even my brothers, had never heard it before. And he told me the story sitting on the bed there in his retirement home down there in Florida). And he said that he was walking home and there was this light coming out through the door of one of the city buildings there. And there was singing. He heard singing and it stopped him and he didn't know what it was. But looked up and saw that he was standing in front of the Sacramento Rescue Mission. And he said it was as though something pulled him in. He walked in and he sat on the back pew of that mission. The place was filled with the bums off the street. The drunks and so on. And he said that night there was a missionary speaking from he thought it was either China or India, he couldn't remember which. But he said that he couldn't remember much of anything that man said that night except at the end of it, he pointed out over the crowd that was there and said "Perhaps in this room tonight, there is just one man to whom God is speaking who he wants to completely, totally, without any reserve, turn his life over to him to do whatever he wants to do." And Papa said that in that moment, he heard a very distinct voice speaking to him on that back bench, saying "You are that man."

**SHUSTER:** Thou art the man.

**BARNETT:** Yeah. And he got up from his bench and he got up and walked to his room, got on his knees and turned his life over to the Lord. And said "Here I am. Do with me whatever you want. I'm ready." And he said he went back to his boss the next day and said "I'm quitting." The boss was upset and said "Why, aren't you content with the work?" and so on. And he said "The work has been great. You've been treating me fine. But I met the Lord last night. And he wants me to serve Him. And I don't know how to do it. So I want to go to Bible school and learn how to serve Him." He says "I am going to Moody Bible Institute." So he went there and he spent two years at the Moody Bible Institute at the end of that time, he was on a boat with a group of about seven heading for Africa. Not for India or China. And my mother joined him on that boat from Sweden there. By the time that got to Mombasa on that long boat ride, they were engaged to be married. And he said they worked among the Maasai for seven years and he tracked that country day after day after day.

**SHUSTER:** And he was there as a worker for AIM?

**BARNETT:** For AIM. He was a...minister. He had been ordained by then to be a minister.

**SHUSTER:** But what...?

**BARNETT:** But he was a very handy man.

**SHUSTER:** What denomination was he ordained in? Do you recall?

**BARNETT:** Well I...I...I...he was...attended the Moody Bible Institute there and Moody Church, so I guess that was probably where he was...where he was ordained. But as far as....

**SHUSTER:** But you were saying he was a very handy man?

**BARNETT:** ...the mission is concerned, he told me that when he was in Australia, he was...belonged to a Methodist church. But he was just what you called a nominal Christian. It didn't mean very much to him. But he had never made very much of his religious life until he met the Lord that night.

**SHUSTER:** But you were saying he was a very handy man?

**BARNETT:** He was very handy because he said he was a miller by trade in Australia. He ran a grain mill, flour mill, that was powered by a water wheel. And a stream there. The two big stones rotated, one on the other. And he said that was his main business, but that's when he got tired of that and immigrated to the [United] States. But he was the one, as I grew up, that could do almost anything. He made his own oxcart, made the wheels for that oxcart, he made his own plow, harrow, he broke his own oxen in. I watched him breaking oxen in. He had to castrate them first of all, and then would tie two oxen together with ropes and let them run together with the...for weeks, to gradually learn to work together for a yield. And I used to follow along behind him while he was running that plow with the oxen pulling it. He made his own furniture, he built the...our home out

there, and made everything. He could do that sort of work. And he built the churches out there and got the people to help him. But he had tramped that country right up into the northern part, clean up around Lake Rudolph...

**SHUSTER:** Uh-huh.

**BARNETT:** ...up towards the Sudan border. All those tribes that were absolutely heathen tribes. Giving out the word. But he said "You know...I did that year after year after seven years. And not a single soul came to the Lord." And he said "At the end of that time, I was so discouraged that I felt I was a complete failure and I was ready to go home as a failure." And he said "One morning, early, before the sun came up, I took my Bible and I went outside of the house and I sat on the side of the hill out there to have it out with God." And he said "I sat there and I said 'Look, you must have made a mistake back there in Sacramento. You must have meant somebody else, not me when you said you're the man.'" He said "I've been here trying to change these people's lives. And a total failure. And I'm ready to go home and you better send out the man you intended to be here. Not me." And he said in that moment, it was as if the whole world around him came to light. And he was surprised what it was. But he looked across and he saw the sun just beginning to come up above the horizon. And he said that sun was shining into the millions of little dew drops around him where he was sitting on the grass on the leaves. And everything came to light to the little tinkling dew drops. And said in that moment, he heard that same voice that spoke to him in Sacramento saying "I didn't ask you to be an apostle Paul. I didn't ask you to be a D.L. Moody or a Sankey. All I asked of you was that you be willing to be just one little dewdrop. And let me do the shining. And you be the reflector." Papa said "In that moment, I caught the message. I've been trying to turn Africa upside down in my own strength." He said "I went back to work after that seeking to just let the Lord do his work and to be just his servant. Not trying to do everything myself." And he said it was only a couple of weeks after that that the first Maasai woman came to the Lord. And from then on, the people now...the changes in the churches. When we were out last year, we drove through the Eldama Ravine down to Kijabe. 110 miles. From the highlands across the Rift Valley down to Kijabe. You wouldn't be able to recognize the country anymore. Along the way, church after church after church. Many of those churches built by my dad's own hands. Clean across the valley to Maruti, where he started his work, on down to Kijabe. Thousands and thousands and thousands of people who today call themselves Christians. Kenya now has (in the Africa Inland Church alone, not counting the other missions and churches, over 3 million adherents in Kenya alone.) In the Africa Inland Church.

**SHUSTER:** Would you say that Kenya is a Christian country in a sense?

**BARNETT:** Well it's called a Christian country. They...some statistics have come out where they say they are 85% of Kenya is now Christian. So they call it a Christian country. But of course, one of the other big things that you see is a tremendous number of new missions and groups and sects that have rushed into Kenya since the last war. And Kenya seems to be kind of the headquarters of growing mission work. Which spreads out even to the other countries from Kenya. And it has its goods and its bads to it. But there it is. Changes. And as far as the growth of the Africa Inland Church is concerned, the AIM was one of the first of the missions that started work into Kenya. But...so it's one of the oldest churches out there, too. [Truck noise gradually louder] We lived and

worked through the period of independence to these countries. We...Tanzania was the first of the three countries that made up British East Africa to become independent. It was the first of the Africa Inland Church...AIM churches that became independent. This was a tremendous growing thing on the part of the mission. They had to learn. There were a lot of differences of opinion. I sat on the board there in Tanzania. And heard a lot of the arguments for and against.

**SHUSTER:** For and against?

**BARNETT:** But a....

**SHUSTER:** For and against independence of the church?

**BARNETT:** For and against independence of the church that they weren't ready and so on like that. Didn't have the leadership. Didn't understand what it was to really...or are they just looking for independence to just get away from the white people or do they...have they really reached it spiritually to know what they're doing and knowing that they really want to go forward. But there were a lot of arguments. But AIM and Tanzania took that first step [truck noise] to give the church basically its independence. To go ahead and take up their own management and care. And then what are they going to do with the missionaries? That's the point. What is the mission going to do? Because you know that in the mission, both Tanzania as well as Kenya (Kenya perhaps even more so than others), there were those who felt that the mission has finished its work. It's time for the mission to move out. And let the Lord go ahead. But there were...the majority who felt strongly that the mission still had plenty of work and the church is still very young and needs the support. Needs the help. The main thing is whether we can be humble enough ourselves to be the helpers instead of the directors [Shuster sneezes].

**SHUSTER:** Excuse me.

**BARNETT:** And so on. And I think that in many a sense, that still is a struggle within the mission. But steadily, steadily, the church is becoming stronger and stronger with good leaders. It's amazing to find how deeply spiritual and capable many of the leaders are that have come out of this independence. Giving them the freedom to start developing themselves. We saw that first in Tanzania. One of the things that was very tough for some of us to take as a nondenominational or interdenominational mission you know, to find that the first thing that they wanted was to establish bishops.

**SHUSTER:** What is the name of the first bishop of Tanzania?

**BARNETT:** I'm trying to think of the name of...but he was a very strong, very great missionary church leader.

**SHUSTER:** What made him great?

**BARNETT:** Because he really knew God's Word. You'd just listen to him when he got up to preach. He was...he was as great a preacher as some of the best that we've had here at home. He

could really speak the Word and humble before the Lord.

**SHUSTER:** Was that...?

**BARNETT:** And ready to work along and to seek advice in advance. And so on. Those were the things...

**SHUSTER:** And he would preach in Swahili? Or in English....?

**BARNETT:** Well when they started depended on where they were. There's the main language of the other part was Sukuma and you'd frequently hear them preaching in Sukuma but then they went over to Swahili. And the main language that they're preaching in now is always Swahili. Even in the well remote areas of the country. In Kenya, you know very shortly after independence up there, we were asked to move to Kijabe in Kenya. And to take over the hospital there. So we did see some of the things that were taking place there. I was...actually went with my brother, Eric, to the inauguration service...ceremony of Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya in 1963. And we sat there and I still remember the British flag being pulled down and the Kenya flag being raised. And everybody thought "Boy this was..." a lot of fears, particularly of whites, that this man is going to really take it out on the British, because the British had him in prison for seven years during the Mau Mau Rebellion [1952-1960] out there. And...I think everybody was amazed and surprisingly amazed how he called for peace and unity and working together.

**SHUSTER:** Looking at the Africa Inland Church, doe the AIC in Tanzania and in Kenya and in Uganda and elsewhere, is that one church or are they four different churches?

**BARNETT:** No, they all are all AIC churches and they follow all the same general format in the church. But they are not...they are not under, as a single church all together.

**SHUSTER:** So there's no transnational denomination?

**BARNETT:** As far as I know there is no.... Oh they have....

**SHUSTER:** Do they have a relationship with each other or?

**BARNETT:** Oh yes, they get together every now and then for certain things that they do. One of the...you speak of evidences of change and advance and so on. One of the main things that I have seen (and we saw when we were out there too again) is establishing of a missionary training college for the nationals. And it's taken...the mission took the initiative to get this going up at Eldoret and...we actually visited up there and spent some time visiting in the past. But it's taken the church time to begin to see missionary service as a responsibility of the church, of getting the Gospel out to the unreached areas of their country. And it's taken time, but at the same time, individuals [truck noise in background] within the church have received the call to become some of the biggest missionaries, greatest missionaries, that you could put right alongside Peter Cameron Scott and others.

**SHUSTER:** Who are some of those individuals?

**BARNETT:** One of them, I'm trying to think of his name right now, but he came from the Kamba tribe down there south of Nairobi. And I can't remember his name right off the bat. But he went as a missionary up to the Pokot Turkana people in the north of Kenya where there were no missionaries yet at that time.

**SHUSTER:** What that Peter or...?

**BARNETT:** P-O-K-O-T is the name of the tribe.

**SHUSTER:** But was his name Peter? I'd heard...

**BARNETT:** Peter...Peter...Peter...oh, it'll come back.

**SHUSTER:** Yeah I can't remember.

**BARNETT:** I can't think of it right now. Yeah. But he was a great one as a missionary. And [laughs] the enthusiasm that man had of outreach for the Lord, that is our work: to reach the unreached for the Lord. And he went up there and learned their language, Turkata, and lived among them with his wife. And served.... But now, the church is beginning to really...assume some of the responsibility but this school for...for...missionaries, couples that's in Eldoret, they have the principal of it is an outstanding Christian from among the Kalenjin tribes.

**SHUSTER:** What's his name, do you recall?

**BARNETT:** There again, I...don't remember his name. But he is the...someday I'll get it.

**SHUSTER:** Does the school have a name? Or is it the Eldoret Missionary Training?

**BARNETT:** Missionary Training College.

**SHUSTER:** Missionary Training College.

**BARNETT:** And it's the AIC. It's under their name. And they have already...what they bring in are couples. Husband and wife, their families. And they go through this. The whole rigmarole of determining whether they have a real calling. To go out and want to go out to these unreached areas of Kenya as well as the surrounding countries. And they have had I think now, what is it thirty or forty missionary couples that have gone out. They go through a period of training first there at the school, and they take them out on an intern sort of a period of several months. Living among the people to see what's it like and confirm their calling. Come back for further training. And then the...getting support and so on from the church. Not looking to America or Europe for their support. But from their churches. There and so on. And this is a tremendous advance. And you know they're doing a tremendous work for the Lord.



**SHUSTER:** Is that part of their strategy only to send couples?

**BARNETT:** It is, it's part of their strategy. Because I think that they feel that some of these places are extremely lonely. They're right out with, you know, total strangers and people that are still running around with no clothes on. And very hostile people. And it's still going on up there among the Pokot Turkana. But the church is growing up there. The Lord is using it. So you've seen...I talk about the wonderful leadership that has come up in the churches. But I have to say that among them, there has been at least one or two who have reached a high position of leadership in the church there, but have done it apparently just for their own...their own welfare.

**SHUSTER:** Well you talked last time about the man who had been an opponent of your brother, Eric's, and he had been an opponent of taking control...

**BARNETT:** That's right.

**SHUSTER:** ...of the property of several areas in his own name.

**BARNETT:** That's right. That's the man called [Wellington] Mulwa.

**SHUSTER:** Mola. Is that M-O-L-A?

**BARNETT:** M-U-L-W-A. Mulwa.

**SHUSTER:** Let me ask you: one thing that I've read about Christianity in Africa is that it's very wide but very shallow. That's to say that there's little...because it's grown so rapidly, there hasn't really been a good deal of Christian nurture or training. Does that strike you as true or fair?

**BARNETT:** You know, you're speaking of this missionary organization. And you've said that.

**SHUSTER:** Not missionary organizations so much, just in general in Africa. That there have been multitudes of converts, but that there really hasn't been enough people...

**BARNETT:** Well that's true...because some of these missions that have gone out, as I've said, our job is to see people converted. But they don't see the need to see them established in their work. And we have some of the mission workers who are out there now (not at AIM because that's definitely not an AIM policy), but I've seen that among some of the other missions. Where it's...they can come home and say how many people they've won to the Lord you know. And that's good...good money gathering system here in the churches and so on. But it's true, that if you don't see these people really taught in the Word of God, they're wide open to all the other sects that come in. That was so in...what's happening in the Comoros right now. I mean the word has worked in the Comoros, and we've got on one of the islands well over 100 Christians now and in Grand Comore, there are probably eighty that are professing Christians there now. It's an underground church, but here this French guy comes in from an island of Reunion who has this teaching of Jesus Only. And he spread that. He sneaked in among the Christians. He doesn't go in and try to win any converts...other the converts, but he's going in among the Christians that are there. And telling

them that the true teaching is that there is no Trinity. That Jesus himself is God and there is no Godhead. No Father, no Holy Spirit. Jesus is everything. And for some reason or other, there's quite a number of our professing Christians. Some of our oldest and strongest ones who have taken it on. And it's a ...great disappointment to our workers who are there right now. But...the last time he came in, he brought [coughs] one of the Americans who has other work [coughs] and estates.

**SHUSTER:** Who writes up the Jesus only?

**BARNETT:** And I've heard that they not only try to spread their teaching but they enforce it by giving out gifts to the people who...money and scooters and things like that.

**SHUSTER:** Like Rice Christians?

**BARNETT:** [Coughs] That's right. So it does bring up a real question you know, of how to reach out to these people that are very difficult to reach. You take the Muslim people, there is no question that is a tough, tough nut to go and work among them. But there are those who try to get close to them by...helping, say, with their physical needs. That's one thing. They're hungry. They can't get such and such thing and so on. So they start passing out finances and things like that to them. And...they get converts. We've had...that happen in the Comoros with one of our workers. But he...had so many coming to the Lord that way that he had them constantly in his home feeding them and giving them what they needed to do this and that. And this finally got back to the religious leaders and they were just buying the people. Christianity is being sold to them. And they were just on the point of being kicked out of the country.

**SHUSTER:** Kicked out of the Comoro Islands?

**BARNETT:** Of the Comoros. When they saw it was coming and have moved elsewhere now. But it does raise the question of the care that you have to have and what sort of principles you have in reaching the people for the Lord. I mean, there are those that definitely need help that are hungry and can't get the food and so on. And need help. And particularly now, after they make a profession of faith for Christ, they are ostracized and persecuted and...and it's more and more difficult for them to live. So they do need help. But...

**SHUSTER:** Looking at...

**BARNETT:** ...how far can you go? And that is the question the missionaries are faced with.

**SHUSTER:** Well, and I suppose it's also a question just for the African churches too.

**BARNETT:** Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes it is.

**SHUSTER:** How...?

**BARNETT:** But...



**SHUSTER:** How...?

**BARNETT:** ...at the same time, the African churches have had a hard time coming to the supporting, what it means to support a pastor. And now to support the missionaries that are going out. And to help them through their school. Training program and so on. And numbers of the applicants to go through the missionary training college have been accepted, come up almost to the day of starting but didn't have the money. So they were not taken in. "You go back and get the money first from your churches and then come back to school." But he said, interestingly, most of them do get it. And so they're learning. They're learning. And it's going forward. This other big one that I was talking about, the missionary movement among them is , again, I don't know what the name of the organization is...

**SHUSTER:** Is this the Nigerian...?

**BARNETT:** Nigeria. But it spread through much of Africa by now. They have set up from that organization in Kenya. And it's strictly, strictly African. [Perhaps referring to the Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association]

**SHUSTER:** Yeah. We talked a little about that last time. The Nigerian missionary movement.

**BARNETT:** Yes. And they're not looking to foreigners or countries for support to keep them going. And apparently, they're growing. I haven't heard much about them lately. But apparently they are a growing concern.

**SHUSTER:** Well maybe...I had mean to do this at the beginning and forgot. Taking pause just for a second here just for a word of prayer and ask God to bless this interview....

**BARNETT:** Yes.

**SHUSTER:** ...and Lord, we thank you for our being here together. We thank you for the chance to talk with Dr. Barnett and hear his memories of the church in Africa. Lord, we ask you to bless this interview. Let it go where you would have it go. And we ask Lord that you would bless its use. Let it go where you would have it go in the sense of those who listen to it and the effect that it has on them Lord, we commit it to you. Help us to have...help our memories, help our wisdom as we do the interview Lord, and bless its use from here on, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**BARNETT:** Amen. Now as far as the...the...efforts in medical work itself and what part medicine has played in the purpose of the mission, the...the main purpose of the mission has been expressed over and over again and still has come out. Our main purpose for existence is to reach out to the unreached peoples with the Gospel message. That is clearly stated as the...currently now again. Reaching out the Gospel message to the unreached peoples of Africa. And to strengthen and support the churches that are being established, so they can get on their own feet and survive. And so, now, how does medicine and hospitals and medical work fit into that? And I mean, we have been in it now and seen the development of it. And we've seen the attitude of different medical workers that have come out. And many of our mission nurses that have come from America and



Europe...our hospital there at Kijabe...served frequently where these nurses were appointed there for a period of orientation in the medical work. And we had them there. And of course I was trying to build up the strength of our hospital too. And...but I had contact with all of these dear nurses. And they were good, good, very capable people. And most of them had an eye... "I want to get out to one of these dispensaries that's out among the people. And preferably into the northern frontier where the people still have not been reached with the Gospel." And interestingly I just...two of those nurses who have now retired came to visit us up there when we were in New York the other day. And...both of them very dear workers and they did a tremendous job up there in the NFD [Northern Frontier District].

**SHUSTER:** Do you recall their names?

**BARNETT:** One is...I need my wife here now [Shuster laughs]. She's got the memory and remembers all these names. And...

**SHUSTER:** Well that's okay.

**BARNETT:** It'll come to me. Anyway...but in medical work, when I...when we started both in Tanzania and then back into Kenya, neither hospitals, with the doctors that they had had (very fine doctors, Dr. Maynard there in Tanzania and Dr. Davis there in Kijabe) started the work, medical work, none of them had any idea of doing any sort of formal education for them. They had their medical workers and helpers and so on who simply learned by what they saw. And helped to do certain tasks in the hospital and so on. So this...I did not feel was right. I felt very strongly that we needed to start teaching [coughs] these people what nursing is and the care of their own people. As I said, these countries are going to be independent.

**SHUSTER:** We have talked some last time about how [Barnett coughs loudly] the nursing program was started at Kijabe and its development there. Let me ask you about how some of the different traditions, Christian traditions in Africa and how they're relating. Pentecostalism of course and the charismatic movement has been...strung the world over. Particularly in Africa. It seems. Do you think that's true?

**BARNETT:** Well you know, again, this is getting a little beyond my own field. But I've had the occasional contact with it. You know, interestingly, my mother and father, neither of them ever talked about denomination and so on like that. But I knew that my mother was in her normal life and I had heard also that she had been Pentecostal in background in Sweden. Raised as a Pentecostal. Her church. Never heard anything about Pentecostalism, didn't know what Pentecostalism was even as I grew up. But Mama always, when we were praying....somebody else, we were hearing quietly "Jesus. Jesus. Jesus." And I have often wondered a little bit about that. But that was her background.

**SHUSTER:** So you would murmur Jesus' name as you were praying?

**BARNETT:** That's right. That's right. And we've seen for instance in Nairobi, while we were there working at Kijabe, the build up of a very large Pentecostal church right there in Nairobi. And

it was built very close to the Baptist church which was a general church which most of the people...missionaries and so on that were assigned to the Nairobi area attended the Baptist church there. Which had some very good speakers in it. Pastors [clears throat]. But my goodness, this Pentecostal church grew like wild fire. And there were thousands of people attending that church there in...in Nairobi. And I don't know much more than that, except to make my own assessment that knowing the nature of the African people and their upbringing and their [pauses] readiness to...to accept anything that's unusual, miracles and so on like that. And something like speaking in tongues and so on. Something that the witch doctors would do. Speaking in a garbled sort of language, well this was their...one way in which they got the attention of the people. And get them. But I said, "I can understand that it would not be very difficult for people to be attracted to the Pentecostal movement and church in that way." And you...but at the same time, I know there's a very...they're true to the Gospel, they teach the Word of God, how to be...what it is to be saved, and sinners, and the Lord blesses the work. So I never felt that I could stand...any criticism to it, but the mission itself had to take a stand. That because it's...it's something that could bring division between workers and so on in a mission. And the mission did take a stand years ago about this. I remember that Claudon Stauffacher who was the old Stauffacher the pioneer family, and he was one of the boys that was a close friend of ours. We worked with the Stauffachers, grew up with them. But he married. He was out under the AIM and worked with the AIM for years and years. I think he was up in Congo. He still works up there or CAR [Central African Republic].

**SHUSTER:** We have the....

**BARNETT:** He married a Pentecostal girl who was a strong Pentecostal lady. But that raised a lot of questions for a time. But she agreed, herself, to soft step that and to not....

**SHUSTER:** Well, I mean looking outside the mission, from what you've seen of the church in Africa today, do Pentecostals and other more main line denomination Christians, do they fellowship together easily and mingle easily or are they just kind of distinct from each other?

**BARNETT:** Well I don't see anything from the standpoint of churches. Let's see. Working together, I just don't see that. I haven't been close enough really to see it. But...I know that there are individuals where these...within these different groups that are good, close friends. Work together and there's nothing that's breaking their fellowship. "Let's work together." I mean, the main ones that I've had contact with are the Southern Baptists, you see. Because the Southern Baptists have no work in East Africa for, I can still remember when they're still doing their first investigations about moving in East Africa when I was at Kola Ndoto working at the hospital. But they had the decency at least to come to visit us at Kola Ndoto and to inquire about places where it was possible for them to work in without stepping on other people's toes and so on like that. And they have become very, very strong in East Africa now. They have moved in and there could be dissensions between them but I have heard anyway, is that they tend to move in where there is already existing....

**SHUSTER:** These would be Pentecostals you mean?

**BARNETT:** No, this is the Southern Baptists....



**SHUSTER:** Southern Baptists tend to move in where there's already existing....

**BARNETT:** Where there are others who have started and already been working for some time. And...but...things like that. The Catholic church has become very strong down there.

**SHUSTER:** Yes, I wanted to ask you too about the relations between Protestants and then Catholics.

**BARNETT:** I've never heard of Catholics when I was growing up . But as we worked out there, we found that the Catholics have moved in. In practically all the areas which the AIM has worked. For years and years. And have become strong. That's a...competitors...they shouldn't be competitors at all [laughs] but...in certain areas I know they have been antagonistic. Very antagonistic.

**SHUSTER:** So you would say that the reality has been more competition than fellowship?

**BARNETT:** Yes . Definitely that. But I've also heard in certain places, so much depends on individuals within the churches. That there is...getting together at least and...you could socialize. But as far as really spiritual fellowship and so on, you had to be careful of that. It's interesting in the Comoros. We've often said that there was no other churches in the Comoros. But actually, the Catholics have had a convent there probably from the time that the French moved in there [about 1841]. But they have not been there as a mission organization among the people.

**SHUSTER:** Are the sisters at the convent from outside the islands? Or are they...?

**BARNETT:** From outside the islands, they are. And actually, we worked along with them in some ways. And one of our doctors that was over there actually worked in their clinic that they had for the people and got along fine with him. But I...I remember [truck noise] speaking to one of their priests one day and I simply said "You've been here a good many years, you must have quite a number of converts by now among the people." [Truck noise, pauses]. And his response was "Not one." He says "The quickest way we'll have to be kicked out of the country would have been to try winning any converts among the Comorian people." The French government had established a policy of not having missions in and interfering with the Catholic or the...

**SHUSTER:** Local religion?

**BARNETT:** Yeah. Mohammad. Muslim religion.

**SHUSTER:** So what did the Catholic....?

**BARNETT:** So we worked. They knew why we were there. I didn't tell the priest that right at that time we had three or four who had come to the Lord among the people.

**SHUSTER:** So how did the Catholic missionaries in Comoro see their work then if it wasn't to make converts?

**BARNETT:** They were there doing medical work. Of course the main thing they were there for before the French moved out was catering...to take care of the French.

**SHUSTER:** I see.

**BARNETT:** Who were there. But they're still there and I wouldn't be surprised if there are some among the people there who are adherents to it. But interesting, Dr. Godfrey Coutinho who is trained at Makerere University there in Uganda is a doctor, but unfortunately he...he...the...you know...Idi Amin killed most of the professors and leading people in the university there. But he was in the last class that the British medical hierarchy accepted for that the training that he got.

**SHUSTER:** What was his name again? I'm sorry.

**BARNETT:** Coutinho. Godfrey Coutinho.

**SHUSTER:** That's K-O-...?

**BARNETT:** C...Godfrey is G-O-D-F-R-E-Y and C-O-U-T-I-N-H-O. Coutinho. His father was a...was a...from Goa in India.

**SHUSTER:** And he became a....

**BARNETT:** His mother was an African.

**SHUSTER:** And he became a missionary...a medical missionary to Comoro?

**BARNETT:** He didn't come over as a missionary, but he had married a Comorian girl who was in Uganda. So they came over at the end because he couldn't get...his life was in jeopardy from Idi Amin and...but he had had no postgraduate training. But he was Catholic and so on. So I took him in and I...I let him work right along with me in the hospital there in Grand Comore. And eventually, I helped get him into...into postgraduate training in Johannesburg in South Africa in the the best surgical training programs that is available in South Africa. He came out of it eventually as a FRCS [Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons] man. The best trained, he came back to the Comoros.

**SHUSTER:** A FRCS?

**BARNETT:** ...He was a professing Christian but he's gone very, very left...what I'm trying to say is that when they first came over to the Comoros, he (and his wife went on with him) to the Catholic church to attend mass there. And he...[laughs] he was very promptly approached by the priest there. And told sorry, that, "This church only ministers to..."

**SHUSTER:** To Europeans?

**BARNETT:** "...to European whites."



**SHUSTER:** Well, when he said he came...?

**BARNETT:** You can see what that did to him right away. Here he was supposed to be a practicing Catholic, but he did start coming then to a little Marrakeshian [?] church and came to our Bible studies all the time and so on. Anyway, that was the attitude though. What we have seen of the Catholics in different places. But we've had some good friends among the Catholics. The church and so on. But the...Kenya just filled with all these different sects today. And some of the tribes, particularly, are just very easily led astray by these sects. The Luo particularly up there.

**SHUSTER:** The who?

**BARNETT:** Luo people up there, the tribes.

**SHUSTER:** L-U-O?

**BARNETT:** Yeah. L-U-O. These are the people up around Lake Victoria. Very subject to that.

**SHUSTER:** Now Walter John and Clara Guilding worked among the Luo people didn't they?

**BARNETT:** What was that again?

**SHUSTER:** Walter John Guilding. G-U-I-L....

**BARNETT:** Guilding?

**SHUSTER:** Guilding. And Walter John and Clara Guilding. They were AIM missionaries. Does that name sound familiar?

**BARNETT:** They were? I don't know which ones your speaking of. But the Guildings were old time pioneer workers. The Guildings.

**SHUSTER:** Yeah. Did you know them at all?

**BARNETT:** Yeah. I was a boy.

**SHUSTER:** Uh-huh.

**BARNETT:** Growing up, I can still see my dad walking along on the road. And I'd be trailing along behind them. And the two deeply discussing some theological subject or so [laughs] which was all new to me. But there was that closeness, I know with the fellowship with the Guildings.

**SHUSTER:** What kind of man was Walter Guilding? Walter John?

**BARNETT:** My own recollection is that he must have been a very strong Bible teacher. And he worked, I believe, primarily among the Kamba people in the Kamba country, that was the...where



Peter Cameron Scott started the mission [in 1895], among the Kamba people. But I'm not sure if they had some work among the Kikuyu people, which...Kijabe is the center of the work with the Kikuyu. But, I would guess (this is just guessing) but he may well have had something to do with the starting of the Bible school in the mission and establishing them, he was a Bible teacher.

**SHUSTER:** Do you have, yourself, any personal recollections of him?

**BARNETT:** I have nothing more than that.

**SHUSTER:** I just asked because we've been gathering a lot of material recently about the sinking of the *Zamzam* [in 1941] and he was...one of the passengers on that, I know.

**BARNETT:** Really?

**SHUSTER:** Yeah. And as a matter of fact, he spent four years in a camp in Germany afterwards.

**BARNETT:** Oh, now, now it's coming back to me. Now it's coming back to me. That is so. Because I'm sure Arthur [Barnett told you that he was on the *Zamzam*. He and Peggy were on the *Zamzam*. And the Guilding was...they were returning to the field with the Guildings at the same time. And he was prisoner, kept prisoner, [truck noise] I think the reason was I think he was Canadian.

**SHUSTER:** He had a British passport, he was from the British Empire.

**BARNETT:** He had a British passport, that was the reason. Well, all the Americans were freed because we weren't in the conflict yet at the time of the *Zamzam*.

**SHUSTER:** But I was just wondering if you had any....

**BARNETT:** But he...he became the chaplain in the prison camp...

**SHUSTER:** Uh-huh.

**BARNETT:** there in Germany to the prisoners.

**SHUSTER:** And we have some of his...we have some of his letters and post cards that he wrote...we have some of the letters and post cards that he wrote from prison camp...

**BARNETT:** Yeah.

**SHUSTER:** We have those in the archives. Dorris Young, who was another AIM missionary, Fred and Dorris Young on the *Zamzam*. She had said that she always...Guilding always reminded her of the Apostle Paul. So I was just wondering if you had any memories or impressions of him.

**BARNETT:** Well, as I said, my impressions. I never knew them from the time that we went out as

a missionary. Because I don't know that they ever returned after they...after the war there. After he was freed from prison. Maybe he did. But I don't know. It may be that because I was in Tanzania that he went back in Kamba country probably. But...he had to be a...an elderly man by then, really. Because he was among the pioneers that...my dad's generation. That sort of thing.

**SHUSTER:** We talked...we started to touch a little bit about your work in the Comoro Islands.

**BARNETT:** Yeah.

**SHUSTER:** How did you first become involved there?

**BARNETT:** Okay, there's the interesting story on that. Of course we had been working in Kijabe now, pretty close to fifteen, sixteen years at the time. And the work there had gone forward. The Lord was blessing it. The new hospital addition was going up and the plans were well underway to establish our nurses...nursing school which was the vision we had. Netty Sinclair, a lovely, Scottish young nurse, well trained, had taken over the division of the nursing school. And the building was making good progress. Up to 130 bed hospital in order to accommodate for nurses training. And the Lord had sent off so by then, some of the doctors. I wasn't alone at it anymore. And then...some of them were real good leaders. Administrators. So at conference time, that would have been in 19....

**SHUSTER:** '76?

**BARNETT:** '75...1975 the conference was there in December there at Kijabe. Dick Anderson who then was the field director for AIM in Kenya, got up and said, gave us a little story that there was a...a traveling missionary to the islands there in the Indian Ocean from South Africa who had spoken to him. He had just been to the Comoro Islands. And...you know [horn in background] most of us didn't even know anything about the Comoros at all. I had vague recollection of having read something in geography when I was a kid about the Comoros. But I didn't know what they were. And he said they had been to the Comoros and that there was one man who had come to know the Lord, the Savior. This was Ali Sougou. And....

**SHUSTER:** Ali Salu?

**BARNETT:** Ali Sougou. He was one of the first converts of the Comoro Islands. And he said that the plans were there and the French had been there, I think 120 years, were moving out. They were giving independence to the country that...these islands of the Comoros. And this was in...'75 that they were moving out. And the [laughs] country was being left with no help. And he felt that this was an ideal time for some responsible mission to step in. And had its opportunity to move in to a Muslim country and get started. Well [helicopter]....

**SHUSTER:** Which AIM had not really done at that time right? Not in an exclusively Muslim area?

**BARNETT:** That's right. AIM never had any work in an exclusive Muslim area before. And of

course, they had been under French government, but now they would be under their own government and they had already chosen their first president. They had for the place. It was Ahmed Abdallah, Ahmed Abdallah was the first president. And he thought that maybe AIM would be interested and would be the best mission because of its proximity to the Comoros. We were not far from being opposite to the Comoros. They were off the Indian Ocean, off the Tanzania coast really.

**SHUSTER:** Is that where most of the trade from the Comoros come? Into the East coast of Africa back and forth? Is that where trade is?

**BARNETT:** Well as far as we know...I knew nothing about any trading between them before. But obviously there had been a time certainly when the Arabs were dominant. Years ago. They are the ones that developed the coastal areas of East Africa before the British and Germans moved in. And they also must have been across to the Comoros as well. And helped work there. So there is that contact with the Comoros. And a strong influence, the Arab influence, and they were undoubtedly the ones who took the Muslim religion over there. Got it started. Because the dominant...among the people is Bantu from East Africa. And how they really got started there, well it was just through fishing trade, so on like that, and largely through the slave trade that they...Arabs really carried on.

**SHUSTER:** So they took slaves from the Comoros? Islands?

**BARNETT:** Not from the Comoros, but from East Africa. And Africa to the Comoros.

**SHUSTER:** I see.

**BARNETT:** As part of the population. Because the population over there is a very mixed one. It's theirs, and a lot of Arab among them, there's a dominance of Bantu backs from Africa, and there's Indonesian from the islands of the Pacific that are there among them. There's a lot of Indian from India among them. And of course there's French blood mixed in it all too. Anyway, so Dick got up and said that this was a challenge that was being presented to the AIM at that time. And he was asking if there were those among the...that would be willing to serve as volunteers that would be willing to go on an exploratory term to the Comoros to test it out and see whether this is where AIM should start a work out there too [sic]. If they were accepted and so on. So the response was good. And you know, almost immediately I heard that...I had begun to have a bitter restlessness in my own heart. About being...continuing to work in Kijabe. I had been there now that long, and I was finding that with the new doctors that I had coming in, they were having a difficult time because the people coming in as patients all wanted to see me. They knew me.

**SHUSTER:** You were their doctor.

**BARNETT:** I was their doctor. And the same thing had happened in Tanzania really. And I never saw that as a good thing. I've said it, I've had an increasing feeling that maybe the Lord wanted us to move on.

**SHUSTER:** Why didn't you see it as a good thing?

**BARNETT:** Because I didn't think it was a strengthening thing for work. I know that there are those doctors who become virtually a god in our own situation. I never wanted that to happen to me. And I felt perhaps the Lord wants us to move on. And this work here at Kijabe is on its feet and going forward and he has others to really develop it. And maybe he wants us to get into another field. And I grew up in Africa and I loved the people, and I loved the primitive side of work too. Something that was new. And I felt "Well maybe the Lord wants us in the Comoros." So we got leave from Kijabe for a while, and we went over with the initial group that went. And among that group, we were very careful in the selection of who went. We had to have French speaking people. I was not French speaking, but Laura is French speaking. And the...our first leader was Peter Brashler who was the field director for many years up in the Congo. Knew French very well and was very well experienced with the African people and the mission. And Dick Bransford well he came over a little bit later because he's a doctor. But Jim Probst who was our old pioneer missionary doctor in Kenya and has helped open numbers of mission stations and the work of that sort is good. And a real thinker. He went along. And we had several nurses. All with experienced background. And we had...

**SHUSTER:** Including of course, Laura, who was a nurse.

**BARNETT:** Who?

**SHUSTER:** Laura was also a nurse, correct? Your wife?

**BARNETT:** My wife?

**SHUSTER:** Yeah.

**BARNETT:** My wife, yes, she's a nurse. But I trained her as an anesthetist. Because I had no other anesthetist. I had done anesthesia training. I completed an anesthesia residency after I had become a missionary doctor. But...so we had...we were careful to assume that we could not go in as a mission. Into this, of course, we were sort of tender ourselves. How are we going to get along in a solid, Muslim country? You don't know how to act.

**SHUSTER:** Can I just ask you quickly, had you first suggested to Laura that you go?

**BARNETT:** Oh yes.

**SHUSTER:** Or had she...how did she react?

**BARNETT:** She was ready to go along too. She's been a wonderful, wonderful person. I'll tell you, the best wife you could ever have. She...I was just saying to her the other day "You know, I've never heard you complain in our missionary work." And she comes from a totally different background than mine. I come from a poor missionary family. That's the way I was raised. That was natural for me. To have a family that had...it was daily trusting in the Lord for the supply of



our needs. Whereas she came from a family there that had moved to Wheaton from Switzerland. And they were a well off family. And she moved from that into a relationship with me and into the mission field. And you would have never known that that was her background. And never complained. Anytime. Ready to go along. She's just been a wonderful person and wife. Anyway, she...we had teachers, some teachers. And one of the key couples that we had on it (and now don't ask me the name because I cannot remember the name again) was a Haitian, black Haitian couple from Haiti that had been in Bible school in Canada and they were outstanding Christians. And he was a lab technician. A well trained lab technician. So we went into the Comoros there....

**SHUSTER:** You said you had several teachers. Were they teachers of medical subjects or just...?

**BARNETT:** No, just the regular...

**SHUSTER:** General education.

**BARNETT:** High school teaching. And middle school teaching and so on. Teachers. And so we figured that probably the only way that we would appeal to them over there would be on the professional basis. Because we assumed that this is where they were going to need their help. And we were certainly right on that. Because when we got over there, that was in '40...'76. January of '76. Our group went over. And I can still remember. We were looked on with a great deal of suspicion. Where we went, people looked at us very cross eyed and were totally silent and went by. And they discovered that they thought we were French [Shuster laughs]. And it took a while for them to realize that we were not French.

**SHUSTER:** Didn't you have to have some kind of invitation from the government or from some institution to come?

**BARNETT:** Yes. We had that and had been approached. We had one...a...committee that went over there first. Dick Anderson went over with two or three others. And made contact with the government. The new government, brand new government. To see if there would be a desire for help in some of these things. So we were accepted, but it was certainly very, very different. And [laughs] we spent, Laura and I spent six months there. Working in their El-maarouf Hospital in Moroni. And Dick Anderson who was our director, as a doctor went over to the island of Mohéli during this period. He wasn't there as long as we were. It's because of his responsibilities in Kenya. But...the situation as far as the medical work was concerned, it was appalling. Absolutely appalling. But...I can...it was a big, big hospital that was over 300 beds there in that hospital. It was the main referral hospital in the islands. And here they were, struggling along with three Comorian doctors. All of them classified as family practitioners, trained under the French system. Not a single surgeon in the place. One of those three was doing the surgery with very, very minimal surgical training. And the...all the nurses were gone. They didn't have a single, trained RN in the place. All the ones were there were lesser medical aides and so on. They did have one fellow who was trained in anesthesia in Madagascar. He was a Comorian. And he was, amazingly, quite good in the anesthesia that he did. But they had no supplies. No...they had a tiny little bit of oxygen, but none of the other gases for giving anesthesia. A bit of ether. And very little else to be able to do the surgical work. I remember the French had left them with a couple very modest sterilizers. So we



had the assurance that instruments and so on that came out of them were sterile. But...the drapes they had were old and full of holes. They would drape a patient and overlap them to try to cover the holes. They had no gloves to wear and that sort of a thing. The...we walked into that operating room, just Laura and I, and watched them do an operation. And here was this doctor, Dr. Turkei [?] was his name, and he was...welcomed us and so on. But we just stood there and watched what went on. And we couldn't believe it. This anesthetist came in and he...he had...a cap on just hanging on one ear. He had a cigarette in his mouth [Shuster laughs] smoking a cigarette. And he came in and they had some intravenous fluids because the French had left them with a room full of intravenous bottles. And that's one thing they did have was intravenous fluids.

**SHUSTER:** And you said the anesthesiologist actually had had training in Madagascar, right?

**BARNETT:** Yes, yes. In anesthesia.

**SHUSTER:** In anesthesia.

**BARNETT:** But he obviously had been working under the French. And [laughs] he walks in...he does not set up an intravenous. Here's this patient that's going to have some major surgery, abdominal surgery, and he puts no blood pressure cuff on the patient. No way of keeping track of the blood pressure. No intravenous running to support the circulation or anything. He simply comes in and he wacks in intravenous from a...the syringe the sodium pentathol. The patient goes off to sleep like that and stops breathing. He takes an old endotracheal tube and very slick...with a laryngoscope slips that tube down into the trachea and hooks it up to an oxygen machine there with a bit of oxygen coming out. And...tapes it in with his cigarette in his mouth all the time [Shuster laughs]. And dripping...ash down into the patient's face. And gets the patient established and walks out of the room. And the patient is not breathing.

**SHUSTER:** He doesn't stay during the operation.

**BARNETT:** Laura...Laura couldn't take that very well. Because after he was still in the room, Laura backs up to the machine and behind her back starts squeezing the bag [both laugh] on the machine to get the patient breathing. Well it starts him breathing. But then he walks out of the room [laughs]. But the doctor goes ahead and makes his incision, does his major operation whether it's a hysterectomy or something like that. But when he's finished, the patient just taken off and put into the bed. They have absolutely no drugs for pain. Not even an aspirin. Nothing for pain. And we saw major work on bones, fractures, compound fractures and so on that went through there. But they would do an operation and then the next patient...they had no swabs or gauze or anything like that to mop with properly, so they were just using cotton wool. And the patient would be taken off the patient...of the bed and they would just wipe the bed...the table down with a piece of cotton. And then they'd bring in a patient with a great big abscess. An abscess of the buttock or the arm or so, somebody would give an injection with the dirty needle and started that infection going. And he would open up this abscess on the operating table. A bucket would be here on the floor, and the pus would run out over the edge of the table down into the bucket there. And the bucket would half fill up. And just wipe the thing off and send the patient off. And...no effort to wash the table, clean it off with any antiseptic (they didn't have any proper antiseptics anyway). And they just wiped the

thing with the cotton and throw it down on the bucket and bring in another patient. For another major operation on that same table. Maybe a fractured leg or something like that. They'd work on that. And then they'd follow that with another abscess that would come in. And we were standing there watching this all the time. And they didn't empty the bucket until it was plum full. Then they'd take it out into the sterilizing room where they had one of these big fifty gallon steel drums where all the waste from the operating room there was thrown into that, and they dumped the bucket into that thing [laughing]. And that container wouldn't be emptied for a week. It was sitting there....

**SHUSTER:** And where did they dump it?

**BARNETT:** All the specimens...and it would be dumped off into the ocean or some whole somewhere that they dug. And this went on...it was just appalling to me. Well you know, you felt like saying something, but this is where we just had to watch and see. And we knew that here's a country that is just newly independent. They're glad to get rid of the French and they're going to prove their own abilities to do this and that. So what are you going to do? How are you going to approach it? 100% of the operations became infected. And right and left they were dying as a result of their infections. That was what was going on. That's what we had to face when we got there. So the point was how to raise the standards without losing your people or losing our staff? So it was a question of just showing kindness to them and beginning to do things in a different way. Starting to operate. You mentioned in your...in your topic about getting help from Samaritan's Purse and so on. At that time, we did not get any help from Samaritan's Purse. The organization that helped us was MAP.

**SHUSTER:** Medical Assistance Program.

**BARNETT:** Medical Assistance Program out of Wheaton. They were originally part of a Christian Medical society. They eventually became their own group. But they're the ones that heard about us and sent out a full container load of equipment and medicines and supplies for us.

**SHUSTER:** And they did that regularly or was that a one time...?

**BARNETT:** They did it a couples of times, we got that way [sic]. And the longer we stayed there, the more people became aware and we began to get assistance from other sources as well. But it's as we got...just like gowns. Gowns were all just big holes in them and all their drapes. We had to replace their drapes. And get gloves. To operate with gloves. But we had to take over one of the rooms in the place that had lock and key in it to put all of our stuff into that room and keep it as our own storage place. Otherwise it would all disappear. The first day Laura and I made rounds on the wards, we saw all these patients just groaning in bed in pain. After operations. And dying. I said "At least we can give them some aspirin for it." There was nothing at nursing station. Completely bare. Nothing in it. No medicines in the cupboard at all. So we brought up one bottle....

**SHUSTER:** And as you say its....

**BARNETT:** ...aspirin and put it there. Next morning we arrive and the whole thing is gone. The

bottle and everything gone.

**SHUSTER:** And as you said there were no nurses either besides being at the nursing station.

**BARNETT:** Well they were just the aides. That's what they were, they were there to help. And...anyway, we learned quick there, because obviously the government didn't have the money to pay its people. They went for months and months without any returns to their teachers, or to their medical workers and so on. And every now and then, everybody would quit working and go on strike. Teachers would all walk out and we would lose our medical workers and so on. Have to keep on doing it ourselves. But they obviously...the aspirin disappeared because of their need for money. So they were taking my aspirin and selling it outside that way. But slowly, slowly with the change and beginning to get some antibiotics in and slowly changing the standards in the operating room...

**SHUSTER:** Did you meet resistance?

**BARNETT:** ...they had the...all the water that they had in there came from cisterns under the floor of rainwater that was caught. And their pumps weren't working. And we had buckets of water there to try and wash your hands. No soap! No soap, no brushes to scrub. I finally found one brush on the floor underneath the sink there. And then I'd send a helper across the street to one of the stores to buy me a bar of soap so I could wash my hands before surgery. And [laughs] I remember one day, the...I had a long list of surgery to do and I'd go through two or three operations and scrubbing my hands between operations and so on. And came back and I couldn't find my soap anywhere. [Shuster laughs] Hunted and hunted and hunted for that soap and it simply disappeared. I finally said to Ahmed Ali, our anesthetist there who had to learn a few lessons about walking in with a cigarette in his mouth and putting a pressure cuff on an arm and maybe starting an IV properly. He was sort of the leader in the operating room. I said "Ali, either that soap comes back or we will do no surgery on this day. And if it isn't back by tomorrow, there will be no surgery tomorrow either." So he started scurrying around there. And finally he got a hold of the floor sweeper in the place. Kept the floors clean. And the three of us were lead out into the...into the sterilizing room and back into that big fifty gallon drum which was two thirds full of all this terrible muck. And our fellow disappears hidden everything down into that thing. And grubbing down around underneath all that stuff comes out with my bar of soap.

**SHUSTER:** So it hadn't been stolen obviously, somebody thought it was trash or thought it was....?

**BARNETT:** No, he had hidden it there.

**SHUSTER:** Ahh, ahh.

**BARNETT:** That's where he had hidden it until the end of the day when he could retrieve it and take it out to sell it. And get something. He was working on his *grande marriage*. Their custom of sometime during their live, they carry out a *grande marriage* for their favorite wife. And that is a great show. Because they've got to have thousands of dollars to carry out that *grande marriage*. So

they're collecting money in any way they can. This was a poor guy that had to pull around this marriage that...a big show that lasted at least a week feeding everybody in the village and new clothes and everything else. Well anyway, I got my soap back and they never tried that on me again [both laugh].

**SHUSTER:** Did you meet resistance in other ways to the things you wanted to...?

**BARNETT:** Not really resistance, in fact increasingly we got nothing but support and appreciation. And they were learning. Because as we cared for the patients, the death rate reduced to what it would be in the same percentage right here at the hospitals in our own home. Post op [operation] death rates. And the people before that knew that when they were going to the hospital it was tantamount to signing a death warrant, that's all, going to the hospital. But now they realized that it was a place for life. And the other thing was that...we never did an operation without praying first. At the table. Before the anesthesia was given. Either I would pray in English and Laura would translate it to French or she would pray. And that was...that went all over the country. And...so the Lord blessed the people. You know, we would finish a list of surgery that may be six or eight operations. Many of them major. And we would start in about 7:30 in the morning. We would come to the hospital walking by our office outside, sitting, waiting there outside our office would be up to 200 people waiting to see us in the office. And yet we had to go through this long list of surgery. And tired, walked out and head for the office and have to pass through this one room that was counted as our emergency room. And there almost invariably, would be sitting anywhere between four to eight or ten fracture cases. Waiting to see us to have their fractures reduced and so on. And I'd have to stop there. When we first went there, they had no means (all the plaster of Paris was gone, they had no plaster) and practically nothing in the way of splints or anything like that to be able to split and immobilize these fractures that they had. So we had to make things ourselves and just improvise various ways of immobilizing these fractures. And during the mango season, when the mangoes were ripe, that was a real hay day for the fractures. Because the kids would climb these mango trees and there were mangoes growing out on the periphery of the branches. And they would climb out on the branches reaching out for the mangoes. Just at a critical time the branch would break and they would go down head first with outstretched hands like this hitting the ground. And the force of it would go right through the wrist and right up the elbows here. And would shear the elbow off. And two or three fractures around the elbow. And quite frequently, also one around the wrist. But it was so common, you don't seem them back here very much. But I called it the mango fracture. Because you....

**SHUSTER:** Why don't you see them back here? Don't kids fall out of trees?

**BARNETT:** Well they don't do it the way they do there [laughs]. The professionals take care of getting all the fruit to the markets here.

**SHUSTER:** That's true.

**BARNETT:** But there, it's nothing doing and the other fracture that was fairly common was the fellows that would climb the coconut trees. And here the high things, they would slip halfway up and some would come sailing down that long tree and land either on their feet or on their bottom,

their buttocks there on the bottom. And you had bad fractures of the hips and legs and the spine that way.

**SHUSTER:** So a real need for surgeons.

**BARNETT:** Well...I...fortunate, I was very, very grateful for the training that I'd had at Fort Bragg in orthopedics. While still in the army on my way to Korea. That I was assigned to Fort Bragg the first year and was in that orthopedic ward with one of the best orthopedic surgeons left in the army, and in the country really, because it was the end of the war. Then all the other doctors were getting out of the military and back into their private practices. And this one fellow was retained by the army because of the 82<sup>nd</sup> airborne there. Over the 82<sup>nd</sup> airborne. And I...we would stand there and watch through the window when these young recruits were doing their first jumps and so on. And we got pretty good [laughs] at predicting how many fractures we were going to get [Shuster laughs] that day. And what kind of fractures they were going to be. And under the guidance of that orthopedic man, we got the top notch residency for a full year in orthopedics.

**SHUSTER:** Do you happen to recall his name?

**BARNETT:** That, I don't remember the name of the surgeon. But that was at Fort Bragg. And incidentally, the...one of the two nearest things I ever came to being famous was having General Eisenhower walk through our wards on inspection of the hospital.

**SHUSTER:** In Fort Bragg?

**BARNETT:** And he shook my hand [laughs].

**SHUSTER:** Did he say anything or ask any questions or...?

**BARNETT:** No, he just basically was commending us. A very gracious man, he saw the care of the people and so on. Of course the other thing that came close to being famous was that I was Billy Graham's...barber [Shuster laughs] in Wheaton College. When he was in Wheaton, he was in Wheaton at the same time I was [1940-1943]. So I cut his hair. [Both laugh]. Anyway, this is where that orthopedic training really came in....when we were there in the Comoros, all the fractures we had.

**SHUSTER:** Now how long was your first...term of service here in the Comoros? You went in '76 here on a temporary basis, right?

**BARNETT:** Six months.

**SHUSTER:** Six months?

**BARNETT:** I was there six months. And that was getting the work established there. And the people getting to know us. And beginning to appreciate what we were. We could never preach. We could never hand out any Christian literature to the people. But you could answer their questions.

And you could live among them. And that...we found to be our witness to the people.

**SHUSTER:** Did people ask you questions?

**BARNETT:** The people would ask questions. One of the main ones they asked "What makes you so different from the French who were here?" He said "The French doctors would come in here, they'd arrive at work about 10 o'clock in the morning. They would announce when they came in 'We're going to take care of this many patients' maybe ten, ten fifteen patients that's all we're going to see. By one o'clock they left." And he said "Here you come in at 7, 7:30 in the morning and you don't leave until everything is finished. Maybe eight o'clock at night." Because when we finished at the orthopedic work, we had to go to the office hoping and praying that those people had gotten tired waiting and lo and behold, not only them but there would be more added to them. And we had to go through a good 200 patients out there. And...our helpers, I think we went through two or three relays of helpers each day. When it came...it came to their time and they got tired and walked out and left it to the next ones to carry out with us.

**SHUSTER:** So when they asked you, how...why you are so different from the French, what did you say?

**BARNETT:** Well, we would give them stories that our...our...we have...a...a...motive behind us for living that the French probably didn't have. I said "We believe in the Lord, we believe in God, and we're here to serve him. We're not serving ourselves. We are here to serve the Lord."

**SHUSTER:** And what kind of reaction did people have when you would say that? Or what did they ask?

**BARNETT:** Well they would...begin to understand what it is let's say. And for some of them it went on from that to where you could begin to give them the gospel message. And people would be...there was a number that did come to the Lord during the time we were there. But it was all very quiet.

**SHUSTER:** You had mentioned that...

**BARNETT:** But now...

**SHUSTER:** You had mentioned that Ali Sougou was the first convert. Was that before your time, before you arrived?

**BARNETT:** He became a Christian under the...ministry of this South African....

**SHUSTER:** South Africans. This was before you had arrived.

**BARNETT:** ...reached him to the Lord. But he...he was our...and he was a great support to us when we came to the islands and helped. And he never hid his Christianity. They all knew that he was a Christian.

**SHUSTER:** That was Ali?

**BARNETT:** That was Ali.

**SHUSTER:** And he also went to the hospital?

**BARNETT:** ...he was still at that time, when he came, they were still under the French. So he didn't get the same persecution that others got later on. But...he was ostracized. But he was a very open personality.

**SHUSTER:** Did he work at the hospital?

**BARNETT:** He prayed and...getting a laugh with all his people and converse with them and so on.

**SHUSTER:** Did he work at the hospital?

**BARNETT:** Well he did. In the sense, he was not a medically trained person and so on, but he frequently came in and helped me with translation work and so on. And when we moved to Mitsamiouli, he came and did a lot of the...the...just...I had to install a power plan there. I had to work in plumbing. I had to dig a well. And so on. And he was the one who came and helped me do those things and get helpers to come along and help build them. So no, he was a big help to me. We were very close Ali and me.

**SHUSTER:** How...you mentioned his last name, his last name was Suku?

**BARNETT:** Sougu. S-O-U-G-O-U. Sougou. Now, one thing that we should mention was about our...our Haitian couple that were there. This man was a top notch lab technician. So he took over the lab there in El-maarouf because that's where we were. And we had no lab workers except for him. But he was a very open, fearless, witness of the Lord. And...he...this is now in the earlier days. That first six months that we were there. And it turned out that...people began to come to him at night time to hear the witness. And this man would...would give them the Gospel just like Nicodemus. [Gospel of John, Chapter 3]

**SHUSTER:** Who came to see Jesus at night?

**BARNETT:** That's right. At night time. And several of the religious leaders came at night time. And he was giving them the gospel message. And apparently there were some that did come to the Lord through that man's testimony. And this was spreading. And...you know, in the first [sirens] days that we went over there, this may be worthwhile telling, the president at that time was Ali Soilih . He had deposed the first president which was Ahmed Abdallah. Ahmed Abdallah had gone into exile in France. And Ali Soilih had taken over the presidency when we were there [coughs loudly]. He was the president. And we didn't know much about him at that time. And we were on tender hooks how we were going to be received to work there. We were in the first two or three days that we were there, we were interviewed by the man who was serving as the minister of health. He was a Comorian doctor who had as far as I know was not doing any medical work. But



he was appointed as the minister of health in their new government. And he...asked us a few questions and so on. At...after a while he said "I'd be interested to know what stimulated you to come over here? Why are you here?" Well Pete Brashler who was our leader, spoke. Excellent French. And gave him the reasons that we'd heard about their needs over here when the French moved out. And they were left without technical helpers. And we were connected with an organization that had been serving in Africa for years. And helping the people with various things. Education. Medical work. And engineering. We had some people that were engineers. Jim Probst was a top notch engineer although he was an MD as well. And he was there. And....

**SHUSTER:** Well you didn't say anything directly connecting your motivation with Christian faith or Christian...?

**BARNETT:** Well just a minute and I'll tell you. Because he was steering clear of that as the reason for what we were there. Because we didn't have any idea what their reaction would be if that was said. Well the doctor finally said "Well thank you very much. We appreciate that. We appreciate your coming like that." And he would say a few words, but then he would say "Why are you here?" And Pete would go through the whole thing again and add a few more words and so on of...of knowing about your needs with this and that and what our capabilities were and so on. And each time at the end of it, he would say "Thank you very much, but why are you here?" That went on for about three or four times with Pete enlarging on it and speaking in French. Well I got a little restless on that. And when everything went quiet and he again came out and said "Why are you here," I finally spoke up and had to speak through Pete who was doing the French. And I had to speak in English, but I said "I'm not going to speak for our group. Mr. Brahsler is our spokesman for the group. I'm going to speak only for myself and why I am here." I said, "You know, I was born in Africa. And I...love the people of Africa. And along the way of life, I know that you people believe in God. You even believe in Jesus. It's in your Koran. But along the way somewhere, I met God. And he became my savior, my friend." I said "Ever since then, I've had one desire in life. That is to serve Him and to live for Him." I said, as I went on and education and training, "I believe that the biggest way that I could help mankind would be to become a doctor and serve Him that way. So I became a doctor. I've taken the best training that I know how. I've become a surgeon. That's my prime interest is surgery." And I said "I've never had at any time any interest in doing my work for any self gain . I have no desire to...serve for money. That's not why we're here. Not looking for that. I'm here because I see your needs and I've heard that you have a need. You need help. And you need help medically. And we're here to try to help you. Not just because of you, but because for my love for the one whom I truly serve. That's the God up there in Heaven." I said "That's why I'm here. I have no other motive to be here than to serve Him. And to show that He is a God of love and is concerned for you Comorian people as well." Boy, everything went silent in that room [chuckles]. I could see our fellow men shifting their feet around. And. wondering what was going to come. Everything was quiet and finally, the doctor spoke up and said "Bon."

**SHUSTER:** Bah?

**BARNETT:** French for "good."

**SHUSTER:** *Bon.*

**BARNETT:** That's what I wanted to hear. That's what I wanted to hear. That was the end of it. And we thought "Well, what's going to come of it?" Because we had an appointment the next morning with the president, next morning. And the next day, we knew that this minister would be making his report to the president. And so we went there, the four of us again. And sat waiting in his living room in his quarters. He finally turned up, came walking in. Kind of very casually said hello to us and sat down to his desk and everything was totally silent and quiet. And we thought "Well, we're in for our work...walking papers now" [laughs]. And when he spoke up he said "You know, I couldn't sleep last night, thinking about you people. And I have come to the conclusion," this is his introductory words now, "I have come to the conclusion that you should have as much time on our national radio to discuss your beliefs and so on with our people as our own religious leaders have on the national radio. And from now on, I am going to see to it that you have the time on the radio."

**SHUSTER:** And I assume that the president was a Muslim?

**BARNETT:** That was the president. Well, we didn't know exactly what was going on. He was supposed to be a solid Muslim and proving himself to be a Muslim. It was later that we came to this conclusion . Because we found out that he had been in training in France with two or three other radicals, such as Pol Pot of Cambodia...

**SHUSTER:** Cambodia.

**BARNETT:** ...who had carried on these terrible killings there in Bangkok [actually Cambodia]. And this man had been in the same training group as with him. And it turned out that he was a solid communist. And he was posing as a very good Muslim. And he was obviously slowly trying to win over that country. He knew that he was up against all of the religious leaders in that country who were very strong. And the Comoros were sort of a diamond in the crown of the Muslim world. They were known well by Saudi Arabia and Iran and these other big countries. And they were sort of keeping an eye on the Comoros.

**SHUSTER:** So he was trying to undermine Islam?

**BARNETT:** I'm sure. It was later on that we figured out that what he was doing was using us to undermine Muslims. But it was a wonderful opportunity because we actually had an hour a week on their radio. And he was very careful not to speak through the New Testament. He always drew his messages from the Old Testament. But he started out with some lovely music on the...on his program from choirs. African choirs from churches there in Kenya and Tanzania. Very nice choir pieces and so on. Singing Christian hymns and so on. And then he would give a message drawn from the Old Testament. Abraham and so on like that. And he'd invariably gradually get up getting to the points of his message. But...the people would stop us on the streets after one of these programs and they say "My, what a wonderful program you're putting on there. We love it! Especially the singing!" You know they don't...their music is terrible [both laugh]. This kind of music was something new to them. They said "We love it!" And one day, Pete walks in and he talks with the head of the radio department. And he said "What did you think of the program last night?" And he said "Well you did very well. You did okay. But from now on, we're not going to

have any music [Shuster laughs]. It's just going to be you talking." So okay [laughs]. Pete was talking from then on. And after a time, Pete asked him again "What did you think of the program?" He says "Yeah, well you did well. But...but, we've sort of changed our minds. And from now on, it's not going to be a monologue like you've been doing, it's going to be a dialogue. We're going to have somebody appointed who is going to ask you questions and you answer those questions." Okay, poor Petey's on...because they gave him no idea what these questions were going to be. But the first night, the first program that came on was this young fellow who started asking him questions. And what were they? "Does the New Testament actually say that Jesus was born as a miracle without a father?" So Pete answers, reads directly from the New Testament to him, naturally. "Well, but does it say that he really did the miracles that you talk about and so on?" So Pete answers that reading the New Testament about the miracles [chuckles]. But then he goes on "Did he really die on the cross? Did he really die?" Pete just reads the Bible to him. "Yeah, but does the New Testament say that he really rose from the dead? Resurrects?" It was just one question after another like that. We couldn't believe it because we'd all been praying like mad for Pete for the first time. But anyway, the next day Pete speaks to the head of the department again. And he said "Well, what did you think of that program?" "Mr. Brashler, there's nobody that could have answered those questions better and weller [sic] than you did. You did wonderfully in the way that you answered those questions." "But," he said "as for the young man who asked you those questions, that's something else." And the young man was promptly put in prison.

**SHUSTER:** Because he had given such a great opportunity...

**BARNETT:** That's right.

**SHUSTER:** ...to give the Gospel?

**BARNETT:** That's right. Anyway, they appointed other people to ask questions after that. But invariably, Pete managed to get in some word about...and through that program, there were several that came to the Lord. That came to his own home after. A young fellow, [unclear] was the first one that came to his home. A high school boy. He said "I was listening to your program." And he said "I believe you are right. And I want to know more about it." And Pete led him to the Lord right there. Through that program. So those things happened. And those were in the early days. But later on, you see, by 1977, the end of '77, we had gone back (Laura and I) for another three month period in '77. And the...

**SHUSTER:** Gone back to the Comoro Island?

**BARNETT:** Back to the Comoros. And we had just gotten leave from Kijabe for another three months. And went to the...the government said "We want you to move to the other island, Anjouan [coughs loudly] and so we moved over there. And by then, Dick Bransford had taken my place in the medical work. And Laura and I just went to Anjouan and made arrangement for them to live and so on. And so they got started in Anjouan and the government brought in some Italian doctors to work in

**SHUSTER:** Well these were all government hospitals? That you were working at?



**BARNETT:** These were working hospitals, yes. Well the work was going on and we were back in Kijabe then. And the...then we went on furlough. And we happened to be actually...we were in Kenya is where we were. And we happened to be up in Congo visiting our daughter who was up in Congo. And that was in January of '78. And we heard on the radio that our group had all been kicked out of the country. The Comoros. And we heard that the reason was that these young fellows were the police force under Ali Soilih. He had banished...been carrying out the whole project of turning his country into a communist country. And these young fellows came to the home of this Haitian couple. In Anjouan and said "You're under arrest." And he said, "Under arrest, what for?" And they said "You've been passing out Christian literature." And he answered, he said "Well, your president personally told me that the people are free to read whatever they want." And they answered "Yes, that is true." "Well, what are you arresting me for then?" "Well, because the people are not only reading what you have been giving, but they are beginning to believe it." So they were taken off and put into prison back in Moroni. And the next day or so, our leader, Weiss, John Weiss (the other one had left and John Weiss was now the leader). He was called in. And the minister that spoke to him said that "You know, we're on good speaking terms with you people here. But I think the time has come that in order to preserve our friendship in speaking terms, it's probably best for you to leave." So they...our group left at that time. And it wasn't until the next... '79 really that Laura and I were on leave here in the country. When...we got a telegram. From one of the ministers there in the Comoros.

**SHUSTER:** Government minister.

**BARNETT:** Government minister. And asking whether we would be willing, the two of us to come back and help with a surgery there. The Italian doctors were leaving. And they had no replacements for them. And they would like to have us back. So that's when we went back. In November of '79.

**SHUSTER:** Well that might be a good point for us to stop today.

**BARNETT:** Yeah.

**SHUSTER:** We've been going for about two and a half hours now. But before we stop, is there anything else that you wanted to add or...?

**BARNETT:** Well, there's plenty more I could say about the Comoros. But this at least gives the background of how we got back there and started our longer period which took us up through twelve years. A total of twelve years.

**SHUSTER:** And perhaps someday we can have another interview on your return.

**BARNETT:** And we had many, many, many interesting things that occurred and one of them, the thing that happened last year when we went to visit them, we were there for five days back in the Comoros and they gave us a royal welcome. And when we arrived there, Laura went to pay for our visa in the place there and the visa looked at us and said "You have nothing to pay. You folks are already Comorians."

**SHUSTER:** You were already...oh Comorians.

**BARNETT:** You are already Comorians. That was their attitude towards us and we were treated that way all the time we were there. But when we were met by the Marrakesh [Moroccan] Consul to the Comoros at the plane, and when we left, he and his wife invited us to their home for a farewell meal. And while we were there, he had in several Comorian people also just as visitors. And while we were waiting for the meal to be served, I was sitting there beside one of the Comorians who had been one of the ministers back at the time that we were there, and he was retired and so on. But he spoke up and he said "Dr. Barnett, while you were here, you performed many miracles on our people. Many miracles." And I said "Sir, I never performed any miracles. None. But I will tell you this. That there were many of your people that came in that should have died. Normally should have died. But they didn't." I said "You know, I never performed a miracle...a...a...a operation here in the Comoros without first praying for that patient that we would operate on, that He would bring that patient through safely." I said I never did. I'd...I'd meant that there were many times that I didn't know what to do. "But I received special guidance and help and strength to carry through on doing what needed to be done. But it's the one there [pointed upward to heaven] that performed the miracles, not me." That is what happened.

**SHUSTER:** Amen.

**BARNETT:** That is what happened. He went completely silent [Shuster laughs]. He didn't know quite what to answer. He didn't expect that. But that was my story in the Comoros.

**SHUSTER:** Well hopefully maybe someday, if you're willing, we can pick up from this time and talk about the other.

**BARNETT :** Yes. Well unless you come to California again.

**SHUSTER:** Well that might be sometime in the future.

**BARNETT:** You'll have to keep in touch and we probably will be back out here again this summer.

**SHUSTER:** Sure.

**BARNETT:** Try it. As long as we're capable of traveling. I just had my 90th...

**SHUSTER:** I know.

**BARNETT:** And so...

**SHUSTER:** But yeah, I'd be happy to travel out to California or down here again as convenient. But I want to thank you for this interview. And...

**BARNETT:** Thanks for your trust and help. We just trust that somehow it will be used to the Lord.



**SHUSTER:** Indeed well...

**BARNETT:** Reach some people.

**END OF TAPE**

