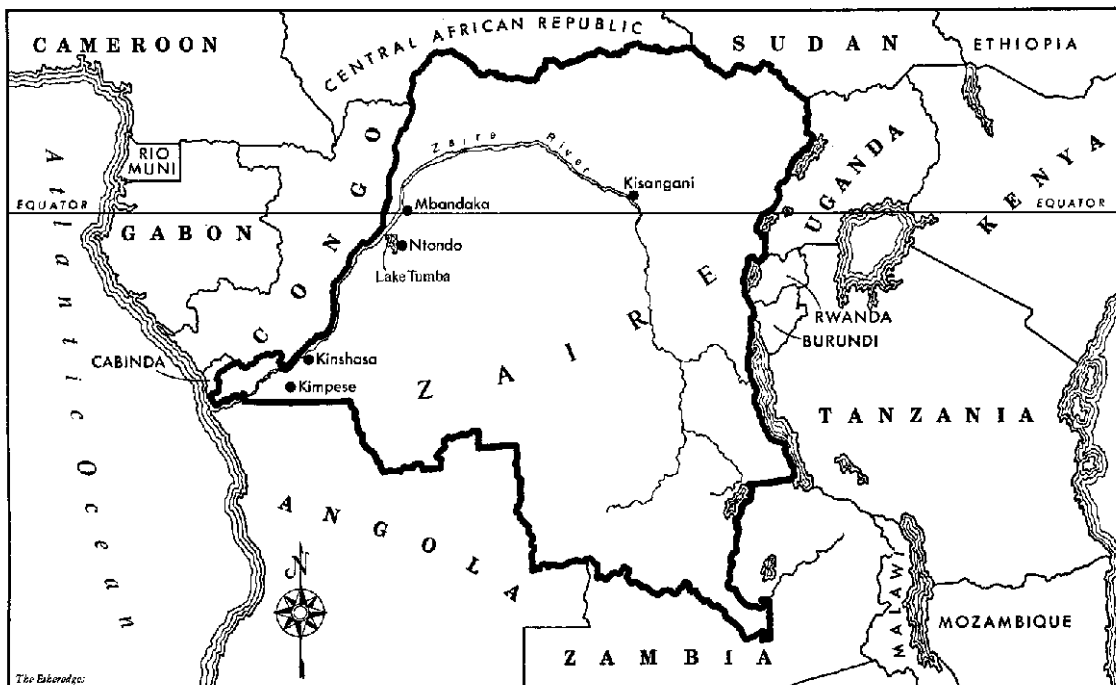


BOKOTOLA

The Story of Millard Fuller and The Beginning of Habitat for Humanity



BEGINNINGS: BOKOTOLA

I suppose my interest in providing decent housing for poor people could be traced to Montgomery, Alabama, when I was in business there. We had a janitor in the company who spoke to me repeatedly about his need for a decent house for his family. I liked Lessie and looked for some way to help him. When our company bought a new office building, I discovered there was on the same lot an adjacent dwelling that had to be moved. I located a lot suitable for a residence a few miles out of town, engaged a house-moving gang, and we jacked that house up, put it on a truck, and rolled off down the road. Within a few days we had painted the house, repaired the little damage done in moving, and Lessie and his young family moved in. I recall vividly what a great joy it was to see them happily living in a decent place.

A couple of years later, cataclysmic changes occurred in my life, precipitated by a crisis in my marriage. The upshot was that my wife Linda and I decided together to change our lives from a business, success, get-richer orientation to one of seeking to serve in Christ's name.

I had been involved in the world of commerce since I was six years old, when my dad, who ran a small grocery store on the edge of the cotton-mill town of Lanett, Alabama, had bought me a pig. My instructions were to fatten him up, sell him, and make myself some money. That I did—and I enjoyed the experience of being a successful businessman. More pigs followed; then chickens and rabbits; and a small enterprise in firecrackers.

When I was about twelve years old, my father bought a farm. I decided to sell my assets and invest in cattle. Until my senior year in high school I was in the cattle business, and that income paid my way through college at nearby Auburn University.

Later, as a law student at the University of Alabama, I launched a series of business ventures with a fellow student, Morris Dees. Our enterprises included student apartment-house rentals, fancy birthday cakes, student telephone directories and desk blotters, and a mail-order business offering products such as holly wreaths, door mats and trash-can holders to youth groups throughout the country for fund raising. The businesses blossomed, and by Commencement Day we were making \$50,000 a year—and we questioned the wisdom of graduating!

Morris and I moved to Montgomery and opened our law practice, continuing to launch new business ventures as The Fuller and Dees

Marketing Group, Inc. The Group eventually included a dozen subsidiary corporations. The University-related deals were dropped, but we expanded mail-order selling to youth groups. Tractor cushions were sold to Future Farmers of America chapters for fund raising. Five new Ford tractors were offered as prizes to the top selling groups, and within three months we had sold 20 freight-car loads of cushions at \$70,000 net profit.

Next, we published a cookbook and offered it to Future Homemakers of America chapters for fund raising. Within a few months we were selling cookbooks by the thousands and making a handsome profit. In two years our company had published cookbooks as fund raisers for many organizations and we found ourselves the largest publisher of cookbooks in the world. Next came toothbrushes and candy, and other kinds of publishing ventures.

Eight years after our first undertaking at the University, we owned a plush, modern office building in Montgomery with our names emblazoned across the top of it; we employed 150 people, including a battery of secretaries; and our sales were over three million dollars a year. As president of the company, my annual salary was \$100,000.

One day in 1964, I was sitting in my office when the treasurer of our companies came bounding in and tossed a stack of papers on my desk.

“Congratulations,” she exclaimed. “You are a millionaire!”

“A millionaire? Le me see those papers!”

It was true. Financial statements had just been completed on all the corporations in the Fuller and Dees Marketing Group as well as personal statements for me and my partner. We had reached the goal so many strive for; a million-dollar financial statement for each of us.

I looked up at the treasurer, a bright, pretty young woman who had started working with us right after our graduation from law school. She had watched from the inside the rapid rise of our enterprises, and she took a great personal interest in the company.

“Congratulations, Millard.” She said it again as she stood there beaming at me from the other side of the desk. “What is your next goal?”

“My next goal? Why, ten million! Why not?”

“Okay,” she replied. “Why not?”

“Good. Since we agree, get back out there and go to work on it. Time’s a-wastin’!”

With that, she shuffled the statements together, bundled them up in her arms, and hurried out of the office.

I pushed my chair back from the desk and spent a few minutes thinking over the past. In a very short time, I had amassed a fortune, with all the trimmings. We lived in a beautiful house in the Cloverdale section of Montgomery; plans were already being drawn for a \$100,000 mansion to be built on a 20-acre lot I had recently bought at the edge of the city. I was driving a brand-new Lincoln Continental; on nearby Lake Jordan we had a lovely week-end home, complete with two speedboats. Out in the country, my partner and I owned three farms, totaling 2,000 acres, with hundreds of cattle, saddle horses, and numerous fishing lakes. And of course there was the business, making money at an ever-increasing rate. I had much to be proud of—possessions, prestige, and prospects for more of the same.

But my life was a thunderstorm about to break. Although I was less than thirty years old, I could not breathe properly. The pressures were so great that several times a day I would grasp the arms of my chair, pushing myself up and gasping desperately for breath. A big sore had developed on my left ankle and would not heal—doctors told me it was nervousness. The close and loving relationship I enjoyed with Linda had cooled to the point where we shared very little except our king-sized bed. We had everything — successful business, cattle ranch, cabin on the lake, speedboats, expensive clothes, Lincoln Continental, big house, and plans for a mansion. But deep in the recesses of my mind I was beginning to wonder: Is more and more of this to be the sum total of my life? Am I really devoting myself to the things God intended for me?

I had been raised in a Christian family and had been taught from earliest childhood the precepts of the Christian faith. I had embraced it. Accepted it. Was baptized. “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all else shall be added.” I believed that, and tried to live by it.

In high school and college, I had been active in youth affairs of our church. I was elected president of the youth organization of the Southeast Conference of Congregational Christian Churches—United Churches of Christ (this included churches in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Florida), and I had served in that capacity for three years. I participated in national youth conferences at Yale University, Doane College in Crete, Nebraska, and Catawba College in Salisbury, North Carolina. At Doane Confernece I had been a candidate for national president of the Youth Group.

In more recent years, I had remained active in the church. In Montgomery, I had organized a new church in our home. I became president of the laymen's organization for the same Southeast Conference I had served as youth president a few years previously.

But, as business demanded more and more of my time, I sensed that my interest in the church was declining. One day in 1964, not long after receiving the million-dollar financial statement from our company treasurer, I received a letter from the national Stewardship Council of the church. They wanted me to visit a number of African missions, studying them from a layman's point of view, and then return to the States as a resource person to interpret the work to congregations and conferences.

My first impulse was to accept, but as I reflected more I decided I couldn't afford to. The business was growing rapidly. My whole mind was wrapped up in it. Could I step out of the action completely for a month or two and go traipsing all over Africa visiting missionaries? I took out a pad and pencil and did a bit of quick figuring on the cost of such a jaunt. Not the cost of airplane tickets, food, lodging, etc.—all that was nothing. I figured the cost of being away from the business, the loss of potential income and profits. That expense, I calculated, was too high. I said No.

“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all else shall be added.” Was I abandoning that fundamental precept of Christian life? The nagging question kept returning. A Christian is not to count the cost of following Christ, but I had counted the cost, and it was too high. All that can come later, I reasoned, *after* I've secured my fortune. Now is the time to make it, and store it up. Later, I'll have more time and money to give and then I'll put the Kingdom first. With all my strength I pushed questions of conscience back into the deepest, darkest corners of my mind. Still, I couldn't completely smother them.

In November of 1965, Linda brought the whole matter to the crisis point when she suddenly and firmly announced one evening that she had decided to go to New York to think about the future of our marriage. When she had gone, leaving me with our two young children, Christ and Kim, the rumbling thunderstorm within me began to boil. I was in agony. Never before or since have I suffered as I did during those days. Everything else—business, sales, profits, prestige, everything which had seemed so important—paled into total meaninglessness.

I began to examine my life and to ask what it was all about. An image came into my mind of the day I would stand before the Judge of History and

have Him ask me what I had done with my life. I could hear myself squeaking, “Lord, sold a hell of a lot of cookbooks.” In the presence of God that sounded so ridiculous I could only cringe.

After a week of misery I could sit still no longer. I asked a pilot in our company to arrange for an airplane to go on a trip.

“Where to?” he inquired.

“I think I’ll go to Niagara Falls,” I replied.

“But why?”

“Because I’ve never been there!”

“Okay. It’s your money!”

As we were coming into the Niagara Falls airport in the early evening, we went into a cloud bank. We lost radio contact with the tower, and the wings were icing up. The plane began to lose altitude. Just at that moment the radio crackled and we heard the tower yelling, “Look out! Look out! Plane coming right under you!”

We thought we were done for. Suddenly we broke out of the cloud and saw the lights of the city of Niagara Falls spread out like a fairyland below us. We sailed in for a smooth, uneventful landing, but the whole episode was not exactly soothing to my already shaken psyche.

We took a taxi and drove to the Canadian side to find a hotel for the night. As we dressed for dinner in our room, Jim, the pilot, flipped on the television set. The program, just starting, featured a young woman who had gone to China as a missionary. After a few years there she fell in love with a young Chinese military officer. He loved her and wanted to marry her, but he knew it would probably mean the end of his military career. He went to an old village leader—a mandarin—to ask for advice. The old man thought for a moment, and then replied, “A planned life can only be *endured*.”

Those words penetrated my innermost being. “A planned life.” That’s what I’m living, I thought. And I’m enduring it and suffering. My plan was simply to get richer and richer, to make the company bigger and bigger, to acquire more and more things. Finally I would be buried in the rich section of the Montgomery cemetery.

“A planned life can only be *endured*.”

With those words ringing in my ears, I phoned Linda and persuaded her to let me come to New York to talk to her. The following day Jim flew me to

Watervliet, New York, to see one of our suppliers of tooth brushes, and from there to La Guardia airport in New York City. Jim then took the plane back to Montgomery, leaving me to go to Linda.

She had been counseling with Dr. Lawrence Durgin, pastor of the Broadway United Church of Christ. We had both met Dr. Durgin a couple of years earlier when we had lived briefly in New York City. Linda had been impressed with him and had decided to seek his advice rather than that of someone in our home area. As we talked, Linda described her counseling sessions, but confessed that she had not arrived at a decision about our marriage.

That evening we decided to go to Radio City Music Hall. The movie was entitled “Never Too Late.” What a prophetic title, I thought! It is never too late to come back from a wrong turn, to correct a broken relationship with another person, or with God. But how?

After the movie (which was, incidentally, a very funny comedy about a woman who got pregnant after she thought it was too late!), we sent downstairs for refreshments while we waited for the stage show. As we were sipping orange juice, Linda suddenly broke down and began crying. I couldn’t get her to stop. Finally, in exasperation, I grabbed our coats and we stumbled out into the cold November night, leaving the stage show, the orange juice, and an umbrella!

We walked around for a while just holding on to each other while Linda’s sobs subsided. We sat down on the front steps of St. Patrick’s Cathedral and talked. Then we walked some more, eventually ending up in the doorway of a shop just off Fifth Avenue. There it happened. Linda faced me and bared her soul. She confessed the ways in which she had betrayed our relationship. I poured out my own agony and regret for ways I had betrayed her. The wall was broken down, and love rushed in like a mighty flood. We grabbed each other and held on as the tears flowed down our cheeks.

After a long while we took a taxi and returned to our hotel. We stayed up all night talking, singing, and praying. The song that come to us was “We’re Marching to Zion.” That tune absolutely filled my heart and soul. I couldn’t stop singing it. (We were still singing it three days later, on the plane to Montgomery, cheerfully ignoring the stares of our fellow passengers!)

We’re marching to Zion,
Beautiful, beautiful Zion;

We're marching upward to Zion
The beautiful city of God.

Come, we that love the Lord,
And let our joys be known,
Join in a song with sweet accord,
Join in a song with sweet accord,
And thus surround the throne,
And thus surround the throne.

We both felt a strong sense of God's presence as we talked about the future. We felt that God was calling us out of this situation to a new life, a new way of walking. To prepare for this new thing—whatever it was—we felt it necessary to leave the business, sell our interest in it, and give away all the proceeds.

The following morning we left our room and went downstairs to go somewhere—I've forgotten where. I hailed a taxi, and we crawled in. But the driver didn't drive off. Instead, he turned around to us with a big smile on his face.

“Congratulations!”

“Congratulations? For what?” I asked.

“This is a brand-new taxi. You are my first passengers!”

I turned to Linda. She was already crying.

“Driver,” I said, “take us on a drive through Central Park. I've got a story to tell you.”

As we wound our way through the park I leaned my arms on the back of the driver's seat and shared with him what we had experienced the night before and how we had decided to change our lives and serve God. He was deeply moved, and felt, as we did, that his picking us up that morning was a sign from God that we had made the right decision.

Two days later we experienced another powerful and moving sign. We were at Kennedy airport waiting to take the plane to Montgomery. As we sat in the waiting area, a young African in long, flowing robes took a seat near us. Linda and I had already been talking about the possibility of going to Africa to see how we might relate to needs there, so we were interested in this young man.

I whispered to Linda, “I'd like to talk to him.”

“Well,” she said, “go over and introduce yourself and start talking!”

Suiting action to words, I walked over and tried a tentative “Hello.”

“Hell,” he responded, in crisp British English.

I introduced myself and we began to chat. He told me he had just arrived from Nigeria, that he was on his way to Birmingham, Alabama, to study at Miles College there, and that I was the first American to greet and talk to him. His name was Daniel Offiong.

Meanwhile, the flight was announced, and we all scrambled to board the plane. Inside we had assigned seats. When everyone had been seated, we turned to discover that my new friend was right behind us. There were two empty seats beside him, so when the plane was airborne we moved back and continued our conversation.

Daniel told us many things about himself and his aspirations. He was the first young man from his tribe to go beyond high school, and everyone back home was putting their hopes on him. He did not want to disappoint them—especially his family, who had sacrificed so much to further his education. He explained that his mission church had obtained a tuition scholarship for him at Miles College, but that he would be responsible for getting the money for other expenses.

I asked him how much money he had. He pulled out a packet of traveler’s checks and handed them to me.

“Here’s my money,” he said. “Is it much?”

I counted it. There were eight \$10 traveler’s checks.

“Is that all?” I asked.

“Yes, that’s all.”

Realizing that he didn’t know anything about the value of American money, I gave him a short course on nickels, dimes, quarters, half dollars, and dollars, and the value of each in terms of purchasing power. It began to dawn on him that he had very little money! I asked if he had warm clothing for the winter. That morning it had been only nine degrees above zero in New York.

“No,” he replied, “I only have clothing such as we wear in Nigeria.”

I turned to Linda and asked if she had a checkbook in her purse. When she replied that she did, I told her to write out a \$50 check for Daniel. At least he could get himself a decent coat when he arrived in Birmingham. I

handed the check to him and explained that Linda and I wanted to give it to him as a gesture of help and encouragement and specifically to buy himself a coat when he arrived in Birmingham. He accepted the check and gazed at it for a long moment. Then tears welled up in his eyes. He unbuckled his seat belt, stood up, and bowed deeply to both of us. Then he sat down again, continuing to gaze at the check.

“I’d like to tell you a story,” he said. “Yesterday, before going to the airport, I went to say goodbye to my pastor. When I arrived at his house he was with a group of Christians in a prayer meeting. They asked me to kneel and all of them laid hands on me and asked God’s blessings on me. When the prayer ended I stood up and the pastor put his arms around me and said, ‘Daniel, I have a prophecy to make. When you reach America tomorrow, you will meet a good Samaritan who will help you and see you through your needs there.’” Daniel looked at us and said through his tears, “Now this prophecy has come true.”

A few months later I told this story in Marble Collegiate Church in New York City. A young woman, a native of Mississippi, was in the audience. After the service she came up and told me how much she was moved, and that she wanted to help. As a result of her efforts, a Daniel Offiong Scholarship was established at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi. (Daniel had transferred to Tougaloo, a small, predominantly black school related to the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church [Disciples of Christ]. This scholarship provided for his needs during his college years and continues to provide \$1,000 a year there for some needy student. Daniel had a brilliant college career, eventually receiving his doctorate degree.)

In the weeks that followed we sold our business interests and properties; set in motion the process of giving away our assets; spent a month at Koinonia Farm in Georgia, talking, thinking, and praying about the future God had for us; and contracted the United Church Board for World Ministries about the trip through Africa that had been suggested a year earlier.

That trip took place in the summer of 1966. Linda and I spent two months visiting schools, hospitals, self-help projects, and refugee programs of many denominations in Ghana, Tanzania, Rhodesia, South Africa, and Zaire (then known as Democratic Republic of Congo).

When we came to Mbandaka, the capital city of Equator Region in Zaire, Disciples missionaries showed us various kinds of ministries. One was a Block and Sand Project just purchased from a Belgian businessman who had

fled the country at independence in 1960. The missionaries were excited about what they might accomplish with this operation. The housing situation was critical because of the flood of people coming into the city following repeal of the “influx control” laws that had prohibited large-scale migration to the cities in colonial days. As we drove around the dusty streets of Mbandaka looking at thousands of mud shacks and incredible living conditions, I wondered what we could do to help.

We didn’t do much right away, except to give money for a new dump truck for the Block and Sand Project, but we couldn’t get the need and the opportunity out of our heads.

For nearly two years after our African trip I traveled extensively throughout the United States speaking to churches, conferences, schools, and retreats, trying to awaken and sensitize people to the tremendous needs in countries like Tanzania, Ghana, and Zaire. Also, at this time I opened an office in New York City to launch a \$10 million fund drive for Tougaloo College.

Soon after I had established this New York office, I decided to call an old business and party buddy, Gene Gilbert, and arrange a visit. I had formerly had an office in his suite in the Pfizer Building near the United Nations, on 42nd Street. We had wheeled and dealt during the day and then lived it up at night. He lived in a fashionable apartment on the East Side, on 72nd Street. One night he threw a big party complete with Arabian belly dancers and top musician Herbie Mann. Even though his apartment was on the top floor—a penthouse—we made so much noise that the police were called to calm the place down.

I liked Gene. We had made money together and we raised Cain together, but that was the extent of our relationship. I had never once shared anything with him about my Christian faith. Now I wanted to see him again. But what in the world would I tell him? What would he think of me, out of business, working for a Negro college, and talking about the Lord? For days I hesitated. Then, late one Friday afternoon, I had such a tremendous urge to contact him that I could not resist it. I phoned him. His office was still in the Pfizer Building, while mine was on Broadway and 56th, in the Old Broadway Church pastured by our friend Dr. Durgin.

“Hello, Gene.”

“Millard Fuller! Where are you?”

“I’m in New York, man.”

“Well, get over here right now.”

I hesitated again, pleading that it was too late in the day. Tomorrow, I said...or next week. But he insisted that *Come right that minute!*

I rode over on the subway, wondering what I was going to say to him. I knew he would ask a hundred questions—about business, about how much money I was making, about what kinds of new deals I had going. I kept praying, “Lord, fill me with your words.”

When I got to his office, sure enough, Gene started right in asking about the company, profits and so on. He fired questions so fast I couldn’t answer them. Finally, he paused, and I leaned forward: “Gene,” I said, “I’m no longer in business and I want to talk to you about it.”

He was shocked. “What deal went wrong?”

“No business deal went wrong,” I replied, “but there were a lot of other things that were wrong.”

He sensed I had something serious to say, and he settled back in his chair. For perhaps thirty minutes I poured out my heart to him, telling him of my personal problems and of the decision Linda and I had made right there in New York to give up the business and our possessions, and to devote our lives to serving Christ.

When I finished speaking, he leaned forward and looked me straight in the eyes. “Millard,” he said, “you don’t know what today is, do you?”

“No,” I answered. “What do you mean?”

“Today is my fortieth birthday, and I want you to know that you have just given me the best birthday present of my life.”

Later, he drove me back to my apartment, asking, probing, and yearning to know everything I had experienced. As he stopped his car in front of our building, he told me he wanted me to come to his place and share what I had told him with his wife. Although he had not been married when I had last seen him, I happened to know the girl he married.

A couple of nights later Linda and I went to their apartment for dinner. Gene’s wife, Nancy, met us at the door. “What have you been telling my husband?” she blurted out, as soon as the door opened.

“Why, hello, Nancy. What do you mean?”

“What have you been telling my husband, Millard Fuller? I’m afraid he is going to give our money away!”

She was smiling and friendly, but we could sense a note of concern in her voice, too. She ushered us into their luxurious living room. Another invited guest was already there, an executive of a large corporation.

As we took our seats, Gene burst into the room in his usual exuberant way.

“Millard, tell them what you told me the other day. I want Nancy and my friend to hear that story.”

I turned to them and started to speak, but Gene interrupted me before I had completed the first sentence.

“No, wait,” he said, “I’ll tell them.”

And he began recounting exactly what I had told him. He remembered everything. I was amazed. He concluded by saying that he had never been so moved by anything, and that he felt he must now take some action in response, but he didn’t yet know what he should do.

The reaction of his listeners was instant and totally negative. “Millard, you’ve gone nuts,” they chimed together.

“No,” Gene responded. “He has not gone nuts. *We* are nuts.”

But they wouldn’t be moved. Nancy was a secular woman with no association with any religious group or organization. The man was a nominal Catholic. Both were content with their lives and saw no need for a religion that made demands on them. Gene, like his wife, had been a totally secular person, but now he saw something else, and he felt compelled from within to deal with his new awakening.

Every day after that Gene called me to talk, to ask questions, to seek. He wanted to get together again and talk some more. We set a date, but he called back to say that he had to go to Washington and couldn’t make it.

The following Sunday Linda and I went to church. When we walked back into the lobby of our apartment building, the boy on the desk called to me with a telephone message. I was from Nancy, Gene’s wife.

I went upstairs and phoned her. When she picked up the phone and I spoke to her, she started crying.

“Nancy,” I inquired anxiously, “what is wrong?”

“Millard, come over here as quickly as you can.”

“Yes, I will, but why?”

“Just a few minutes ago Gene dropped dead. A heart attack.”

I ran downstairs and hailed a taxi. All the way over I kept thinking about what this meant. Gene had been the picture of health and energy, deeply tanned from a recent cruise in the Caribbean, the president of a successful corporation. Now he was dead.

As soon as I reached the apartment Nancy called me into a side room where she sat down. “Millard, tell me, why has this happened? We have many friends, but you are the only one who ever talks about religion.”

In the long minutes that followed, I shared with her, as I had earlier with Gene, my personal experiences with the Lord. Among other things, I told her that I believed God had sent me to Gene to talk to him about God. His heart had been open and he had gladly received the message. I told her there were many mysteries in life that could not be fully understood, but that we should simply accept the fact of God, and of His love. We know that this love is constantly available, and we should desire it, seek after it. Gene, I said, was now in God’s care, and, knowing that He is love, we should not worry.

On the day of Gene’s funeral, I gave Nancy a Bible in which I had written about the feelings Gene and I had shared just days before his sudden death. She gladly accepted the Bible and said she would always treasure it. It was the only one she had.

I have lost track of Nancy in the years since then, and I have often wondered about her. I do know, however, that at that time, she and Gene, like Daniel Offion and the taxi driver, contributed valuable pieces to the jumbled puzzle of my life which God was gradually helping me to put together.¹

ABOUT BOKOTOLA:

I had already decided on the site that I hoped was available. It was in almost the geographic center of the city—a large open tract covered with scrub bushes, palm trees...and twenty-foot high anthills! It was bordered on one side by the grounds of the General Hospital of Mbandaka and on another by the *Avenue de la Révolution*; across the avenue stood the largest and most beautiful Protestant church in the city. And it was close enough to the block-making plant to make hauling supplies convenient. There were only two questions in my mind about this land. First, it seemed low, and I feared we

¹ Millard Fuller, *Bokotola* (Association Press: Chicago, 1977), pp. 3-15.

might have problems with drainage. And second, I wondered why such a large section of land remained undeveloped right in the heart of the city.²

People in the area had told me the name of our property was “Bokotola,” which meant “man who does not care for others.” I wondered why it had been given this name, and why the site had never been developed. All the land around it was covered with houses, a hospital, markets, schools, and other buildings. At first I had thought it was because our section was low and swampy. But then I realized that all the surrounding land was equally low, and that it was easily drainable. I kept wondering about this for weeks.³

Millard Fuller asked Dr. Bokeleale, the president of the Church of Christ of Zaire and a native of Mbandaka, about the history of Bokotola and why it had never been developed. Dr. Bokeleale replied...

...that strip of land was the dividing section between the Africans and the whites in colonial days. ...Africans were restricted to one side, while the Belgians and other whites lived on the other side. It was absolutely illegal for an African to live on the Belgians’ side.⁴

In the name of Christ, the one who cares the most for others, we were covering Bokotola with houses for people in need. In the name of Christ, the one who came to break down walls of separation between man and man, and man and God, we were going to eliminate forever this old segregation barrier by covering it with a sparkling Christian community.⁵

When Millard Fuller left, Pastor Lokoni said,

YEARS ago, when the missionaries came, the first thing they did was build nice houses for themselves. Next, they built nice houses for God. But they didn’t help the people build houses.

Later they built schools and clinics, and that was good. We needed those things, but we needed houses too.

But finally God sent Mr. Fuller to help us with our problem of housing. ... Look around you at these new houses. People are living like human beings. This is God’s work—to help the poor people with their needs, not only spiritual ones, but human,

² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

physical ones. One of our biggest needs in Mbandaka is housing. People are living like animals. They don't have anywhere to live and they don't have the money to build with. Ask anybody. They will tell you that housing is our biggest need, and it's right that the church is helping the people by building the new community of Bokotola here in the center of the city.⁶

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 94.