

Bryan says faith strong, but return to Africa out 'He put me in a place where I would grow'

By PETE BREWTON
Post Reporter

Kinlra Bryan, the Houston missionary nurse held captive for three months by rebel forces in Mozambique, said Saturday her faith was not shaken by her experience, but she doesn't plan on going back to Africa.

"I asked God, 'Why did you put me in a place to suffer?' But he put me in a place where I would grow," she said.

"The whole time I struggled, the whole time I prayed. It showed me some things about myself I needed to change."

Bryan's comments came during a 30-minute press conference with a large gathering of reporters in the parlor of the mammoth Second Baptist Church, where she is a member. She spent most of it preaching to reporters about God.

She said she has no firm plans for the future, but they probably do not include Africa.

"I don't know if I'll go back. There's a lot to do here," Bryan said, adding that she would go back if "that's what God has for my life."

In the meantime, Bryan said, she wants "to spend time with my friends and family. I guess I will have to get a job sometime. I'd like to finish my master's degree in public health."

Several times Bryan, 27, misunderstood reporter's questions. Asked why she was captured, she replied, "God had a reason and

purpose." When told the question was why the rebels captured her, she said they had a policy of taking civilians.

Asked what advice she had for others who are taken captive, she replied, "To know Jesus Christ personally gives you strength.

"For practical advice? Good question. I guess to cooperate."

Even though she got little chance to be a nurse because she was taken captive four days after arriving at the mission clinic in the interior of Mozambique, she said she felt she had accomplished her purpose "to share the love of Jesus Christ."

"Many of the soldiers responded to what we had to say about Jesus Christ.

"We asked them if they would pray with us. They asked us if they should take their guns off. They kneeled down. They wanted to pray."

She said it was "hard to say" if she had changed the lives of her captors. "The seed was planted."

She said she was never mistreated by the soldiers, who were members of the Mozambique National Resistance, which is fighting the ruling Marxist regime.

"They must be moral people. We never saw any carousing, drinking or women."

She said at times soldiers slept next to her. "I felt very safe. I didn't feel odd."

Bryan, who reportedly sold her belongings to go to Mozambique as a medical missionary with the

International Youth With a Mission organization, said, "I didn't go to Africa because of a guilt trip. I wanted to."

She appeared at the press conference with her mother, stepfather, sister and nephew. About 20 members of her young adult group at the church stood behind her and applauded when she entered the room.

Bryan appeared nervous and tense at the beginning of the press conference, which was scheduled a day after her arrival back in Houston. She began by giving the press a rare pat on the back. "I want to thank the press for its support and help. You guys have been great."

Bryan recounted her bouts with malaria, dysentery and foot worms, saying she lost 20 pounds but had regained five since her release.

"We suffered a lot. I never felt certain I would make it out alive. There were helicopters flying over, bombs, mines. The walking was probably the hardest."

She said her group of six fellow missionaries and a toddler never tried to escape. "We thought about it, but we would have died in the bush."

All the media attention showered on her when she came out of Mozambique was "very difficult" to endure, Bryan said.

"I found out about everything that was going on and I wanted to go back into the bush.

"It's a beautiful country. You should walk through it."