

**TWO MAASAI NATIVES** will be among those with whom Dick Weber (center) will be working as a missionary.



## Couple ready to go to work in Tanzania

By MARY LOU OLSON

Dick and Linda Weber, former residents of Decatur County, will embark on a new adventure this fall when they become career missionaries in Galai, Tanzania, in East Africa, with the Church of God.

After five trips to Africa, Mr. Weber said he is pretty excited about God calling them to live among the Maasai people.

Mrs. Weber was born and reared in Oberlin, the eighth child of Goldie and Clara (Allacher) Scott. She said that as a child, she longed to be taken, not sent, to Sunday School. She hungered for the spiritual nurture and she accepted Christ at the age of 11.

Her husband said his early life was far removed from church or Christianity. He and his older half brother, Randy, were adopted by Alfred "Shorty" and Printha (Kennedy) Weber when they were 10 and 8. They had no church upbringing, he said, but their adoptive parents provided them with the necessities of life and taught them the value of hard work.

The couple began dating when they were in high school and were married on June 8, 1966. They had three daughters, Lisa, Brenda and Anita. After their marriage, Mr. Weber worked for Gene Leitner on a farm northwest of Traer before moving to Oberlin, where he worked at Hamilton's Service Station, for the city, as a policeman and at Don's Super Market.

In 1976, the family moved to Casper, Wyo., where he worked for Took Engineering in the oil fields, at a "Pay N Pack" Store, then was head custodian for the Natrona County Schools before resigning to take a job as custodian at Highland Park Community Church.

"Two years after our move to Casper, our oldest daughter, Lisa, was diagnosed with leukemia," Mr. Weber said. "Nine months after the diagnosis, she died in my arms. It was a very dark and difficult time for all of us, yet God brought some good from it as I came to Christ the day Lisa died. That was the beginning of finding God's love for me."

"The mission trips I have participated in have been life changing for me," he said, "and each

time I have gone to Africa, I have left a portion of my heart there.

"I have been drawn back time and again. My heart is really with the Maasai people, who are open to spiritual truth. So for the last three years, I have been taking Bible and theology classes to learn more myself, so God might use me in the future."

Mrs. Weber said that at the national convention of the Church of God in Anderson, Ind., in 2002, Don Riley, regional director for Africa, asked her husband to tell what effect his work camp trips had on his life. At the close of his response, he read Isaiah 6:8. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send: And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

She said that when her husband read those words, she knew he was willing to go to Africa, but she wasn't.

"My world was on this side of the ocean," she said.

However, Mrs. Weber said she decided to accompany her husband on his fourth trip and see what had captured his heart. She said it was a wonderful experience and she felt that God had opened a door of opportunity for them to serve there.

She said the hardest part of moving will be leaving their two daughters and their families, Brenda Eason, Megan and Devan, Gillette, Wyo., and Anita and Spencer Ketterl and daughter, Shawn Elizabeth, Oberlin.

Mr. Weber said that they applied to the Church of God for consideration last July. They flew to Anderson in December, where they went through extensive interviews and psychological examinations and were approved by the Missions Board as "missionaries elect."

They recently completed a five-week training course at Missionary Training International at Palmer Lake, Colo., which included three weeks of learning spiritual and personal lifestyles and interpersonal relationship, cultural endurance and enjoyment. They had two weeks training on how to learn another language. They will be required to learn two languages after they get to Tanzania — Swahili and

Maasai.

They have sent letters to potential supporting churches and have been speaking to those congregations. They spoke recently at the Oberlin United Methodist Church and Prairie Chapel. After raising all the money they'll need, they will be sent overseas. Currently, they are at 73 percent of that total and still have to raise about \$18,000.

"We are hoping and praying that the end of August will be our date of departure," he said. "God's timing and funding will be the determining factors."

"Our first term will be for three years in Galai. I will help in leadership training and my wife will have Bible study classes with the Maasai women and children. We are not going over to change their way of life, but rather to give them hope of an eternal life and let them know there is a God who loves them."

The Maasai live in cow-dung and mud huts, Mrs. Weber said, and are mostly nomadic herders of cattle, goats and donkeys. They believe God gave them the cattle, so they will not eat them. They are mostly vegetarians and have no modern conveniences.

However, the Webers will live in a ranch-style house built for missionaries in 1993. It has a solar-powered refrigerator and a gas stove, but no hot water. Mrs. Weber will have to wear long dresses while her husband can wear colorful wrap-around sheets. Their home will be northwest of the town of Arusha.

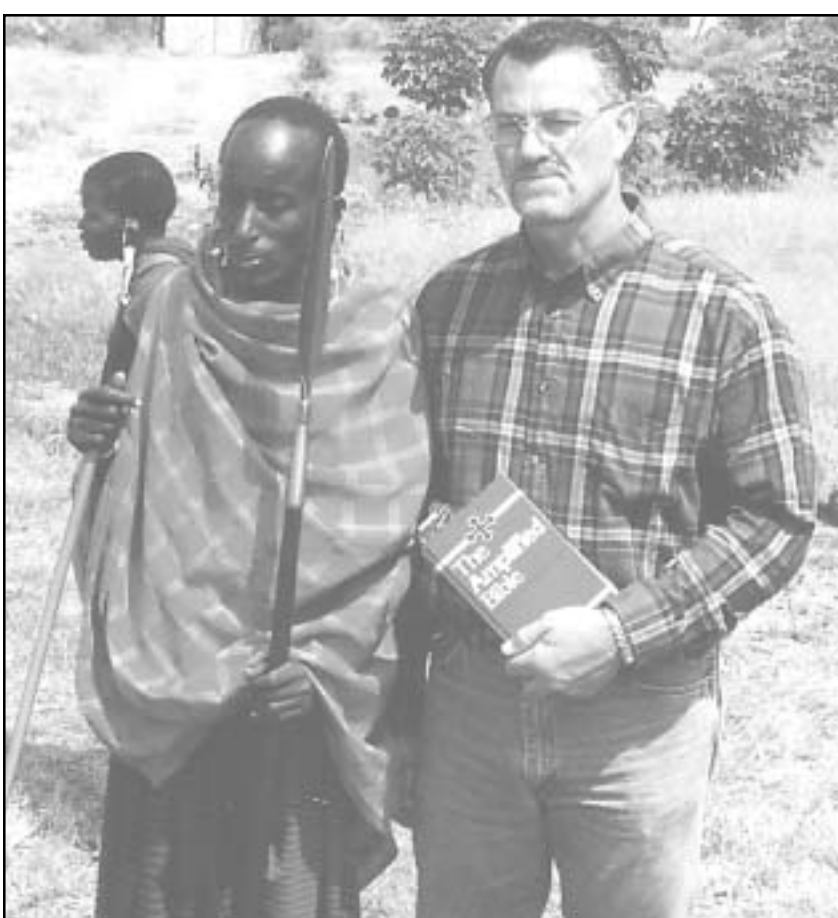
"We are not great theologians or ministers," said Mrs. Weber. "We are ordinary people obeying our God. We do not feel qualified, but we trust our God and His word. There is a saying, 'God does not call the equipped; God equips the called.'"

The couple left Oberlin for Gothenburg, Neb., for a state camp meeting on Aug. 13, then will be in Anderson from Aug. 18-27. They said they are willing to speak anywhere.

To contact them, call (800) 848-2464, extension 2129; fax (765) 642-4279; or e-mail CPower@chog.org, or write Global Missions, Box 2420, Anderson, Ind., 46018-2420.



**LINDA (SCOTT) WEBER** (left) gathered with other missionaries and natives following church services in the Maasai region of Africa.



**WITH BIBLE IN HAND**, Dick Weber prepared to share the word of God with a native in Tanzania, East Africa.