

First sermon exciting for 10-year-old

■ By DAVID CLEAR
for the Chronicle

The music from the African choir and drums has scarcely died down as Joshua Dunagan steps onto a makeshift platform made of wooden planks.

Before him stretches a sea of dark-skinned faces, clad in a rainbow of colors. The people - 10,000 of them at least - wait quietly and intently. Beyond the mass of people is the desert-like prairie of northern Uganda.

Joshua, 10, is about to preach his first sermon. On a mission trip with his parents, Jon and Ann Dunagan of The Dalles, Joshua is about to experience a moment that, until now, he's only been able to dream about. He grips the microphone and lays his Bible and notebook on a small, wooden pulpit.

"I want to tell you about the most important person in the world," Joshua begins, and for the next several minutes this 10-year-old with short-cropped brown hair and a big grin tells his audience about the life of Jesus Christ and the Christian beliefs of salvation and eternity in heaven. His message is interpreted by a native Ugandan woman, and as the words are conveyed in their language, the attentive listeners break into smiles and applause.

It was a moment Joshua doesn't think he'll ever forget.

"I was excited and happy," he says, though he admits he was "a little nervous the first time. They listened so attentively, and I had all the time I wanted."

His first speech was on the life of Jesus. On another night he

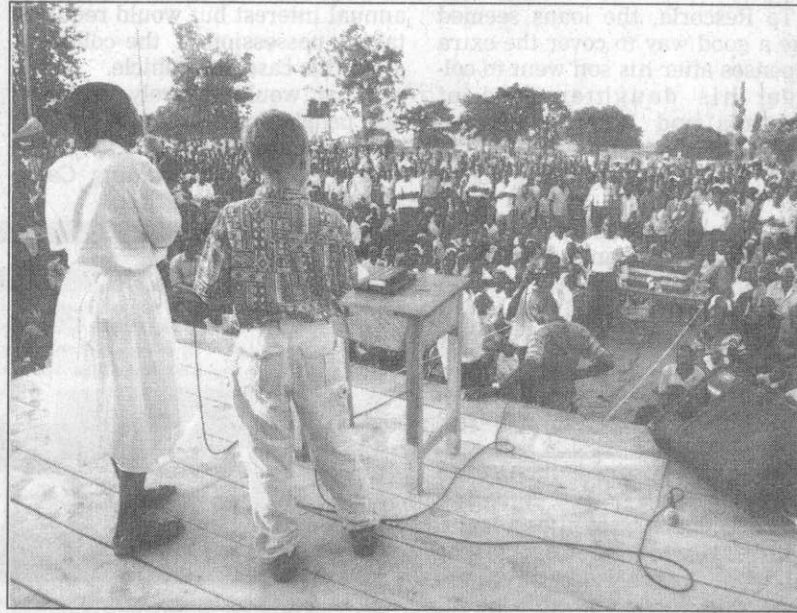
spoke on the life of fiery prophet Elijah, an Old Testament figure known for performing miracles.

All his life Joshua has dreamed of going on a mission trip with his parents. As a small child he traveled with his family to several countries in Asia and Latin America, but the trip to Uganda in November of last year was his official mission trip. "It's something I've dreamed about for years," he says.

He's been influenced by his missionary parents, Jon and Ann Dunagan, founders of Harvest Ministry. Since 1987 the Dunagans have led more than 100 city-wide evangelistic crusades in remote areas overseas. The couple moved their headquarters from Bend to The Dalles last year where they're raising and homeschooling their six children. About four times a year Jon travels to Africa, India, the Philippines or some other part of the world to hold a crusade. When he can, he takes Ann and another member of the family. When they're home the family attends Covenant Christian Community Church.

For Joshua, the mission has been a long time in the making. For years he's viewed pictures and videos of his parents' mission trips, and even met guests from Africa, India and Russia that the Dunagans have hosted in their home. All of this has kindled a flame of desire in Joshua to travel to a foreign country.

When he got the OK from his father to go on the Uganda trip, Joshua immediately began preparing. He outlined several sermons and Bible lessons, or-



HERE HE IS seen in action, preaching his first sermon in the city of Koboko, Uganda.

dered his passport, and visited a doctor to get shots to protect himself from malaria, yellow fever and a host of other diseases prevalent in Uganda.

The three-week adventure began Nov. 12 at SeaTac International Airport in Seattle. The Dunagans flew to London and spent three days in Europe to adjust to the change in time zones. While there they visited popular tourist sites such as Big Ben and Buckingham Palace.

From there they then flew to the metropolitan city of Kampala, Uganda, then squeezed into a single engine Missionary Aviation Fellowship (M.A.F.) bush plane for a two-hour flight to Arua. Then came the final leg, a planned two-hour van ride to Koboko, a remote village near the border of Sudan and Congo that took four hours because of muddy roads.

For five days the Dunagans held crusade meetings in the evenings and adult and children's seminars in the mornings. While more than a thousand adults gathered to hear the morning teachings, Joshua and Ann taught Bible lessons to 300 children under a group of mango trees. Joshua schooled his Ugandan peers on the 10 Commandments and the story of Jesus.

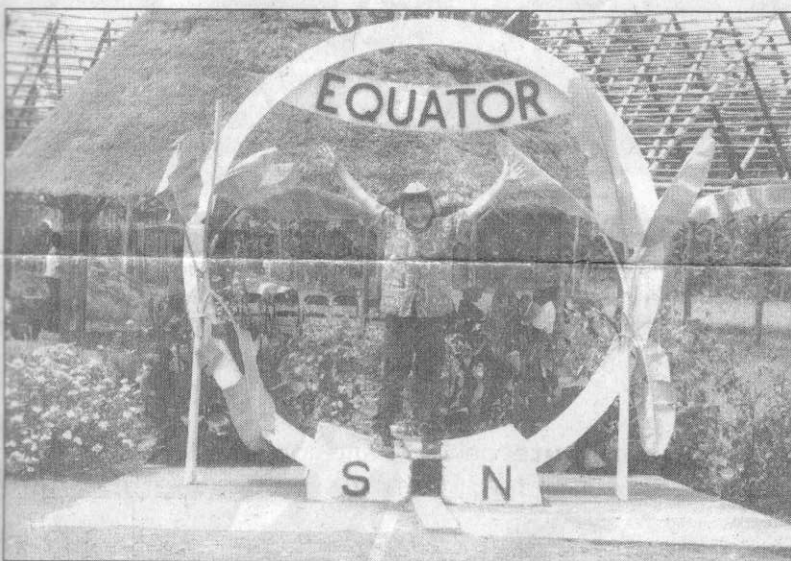
While the work in Uganda was serious and consuming, Joshua found time for fun. He played with Uganda children, and learned the trick of putting chickens to sleep. The team also spent a day on a

wildlife safari to the Queen Elizabeth National Park. "I saw tons of animals," Joshua said, including more than 60 elephants, hundreds of hippos, an alligator, water bucks and African kobs (a type of deer). He also took a 45-minute canoe ride to Bussi Island on Lake Victoria.

But the business of meeting people's spiritual and physical needs was foremost in the mind of this delegation from The Dalles. Like Jesus, Joshua's heart swelled with compassion as he saw multitudes of needy people. Poverty is extreme in northern Uganda. Large families are crammed into 12-foot by 12-foot huts with mud floors. Disease is rampant, and scores of Sudanese refugees who have crossed the border to escape war are ravaged by years of fighting. Hundreds are blind and lame or have distortions and growths on their bodies. The children are dressed in rags.

"I've never seen so many poor and sick people," Joshua said. "Seeing people living in little huts with practically nothing made me a lot more thankful for what I have here in America."

The trip may have imprinted Joshua for life. He wants to return to Africa some day to communicate God's love to the people in any way he can. "I care about the people of the world now. They need God as much as we do. I'm more willing to do whatever God wants me to do with my life."



10-YEAR-OLD Joshua Dunagan is seen at the equator in Uganda in Africa.