

ArcelorMittal South Africa Solidarity Holidays 2012

Day 3: Wednesday, 28 March 2012

**Fernando makes his bride wait as he builds houses for the poor.
Smiling Aleksandra enjoys Castle Lager from the bottle at a shebeen.**

Rio Matlhaku

Fernando Siqueira, an ArcelorMittal Foundation Solidarity Holiday volunteer from Minas Gerais (approximately 700 kilometres north of Rio de Janeiro), postponed his wedding in order to be part of the ArcelorMittal Solidarity Holiday in South Africa.

Fernando was supposed to get married on Friday, 30 March 2012. He says he and his fiancée have not yet decided on a new date for the nuptials.

Asked about his impression of South Africa, Fernando says “the people here are very kind’ and South Africa is a beautiful country with lovely cities”. The highlight for him during the past few days - he only arrived in South Africa on Saturday, 24 March - has been meeting people.

He says he finds a lot of similarities between South Africa and Brazil. The shacks in Orange Farm remind him of the favelas in Brazil. It is his first Solidarity Holiday. On Monday



Aleksandra Pala and Fernando Siqueira

evening, the ten international volunteers were taken for a tour of Sharpeville, a township nearest to ArcelorMittal’s Vereeniging Works.

The tour included a visit to a local shebeen where the group enjoyed South Africa’s premier home brewed beer, Castle Lager. This was drunk straight out the 750ml bottles, township style. They also visited the Sharpeville Memorial, site of the world famous Sharpeville Massacre where 69 people were shot and killed by the police whilst protesting about Apartheid era pass laws (discriminatory identity documents carried by black people only).

Fernando says he would like ArcelorMittal Foundation to have a similar house building project in Brazil as there is a need for this.

For her part, Polish born and Belgium based Aleksandra Pala says her impression of South Africa is also positive. The visit to the shebeen and the Sharpeville Memorial was special for her. She says host, Peter Mogoere was at pains to make sure that they sampled township life - even outside the hard work of building houses in Orange Farm. Aleksandra laughed when I told her that in SeSotho (a local language) her surname (Pala) is the name of a wind instrument.

On Tuesday evening the volunteers were taken on an evening cruise on the Vaal River. They will be taken to the Orlando Stadium in Soweto to watch the Orlando Pirates vs Free State Stars game tonight. I hope they will survive the sounds of the vuvuzelas blaring throughout the match. They might as well get themselves some vuvuzelas and join the din.