



Newsletter: February 2007 Douglas McFalls

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Tembo drives a taxi in Dar es Salaam. He's now my driver of choice. I call him Tembo (elephant in Swahili) because he wears an ivory ring with a carved elephant, plus he says he is as strong as an elephant, a claim I remind him of when I have heavy packages or a computer to transport. He wears current US fashion that he acquires in the second-hand clothing stalls, in contrast to the standard taxi driver uniform of a white shirt and dark trousers. Without fail, he sports a rugged leather pendent and bracelet featuring the American eagle as seen on the one-dollar bill. He drives his car six days a week, using his one room out-of-town apartment just one or two nights a week. Monday - Saturday he's found sleeping in the back seat of his taxi. He showers at the downtown YWMC. Upon arriving to collect me early one morning, he opened the hood and pulled his undershorts from on top of the engine. "They dry in just 10 minutes," he says. I appreciate his resourcefulness! Tembo aims to begin his secondary school next year. He is saving and working all he can for that end (except for funds he must send to his father with his 4 wives in the village– or for a night out of dancing). If you are coming to Dar, I recommend him highly!

But before I get lost in the details of my transition and activities here in East Africa and people I've met, I want to first express my profoundest thanks to everyone who made my stay in Seattle wonderful. I had a blessed time with my parents, who, I thank God, are in stable health. While in Seattle I profited greatly from the council, encouragement and support of many of you as it relates to my work in Africa (and life in general), and enjoyed new and rekindled friendships involving music, design and faith. And I could not imagine a more glorious finale to my stay than the 2nd Glance concert, reuniting me with my dear friends Brian, Darin and Erik for an amazing evening of music and such generous financial support from the enthusiastic audience. Also, my longtime friend Liz Bell blessed me with a visit from Chicago. Many thanks to all who attended the concert or other events, and have supported me and my work in East Africa. I was reminded how truly blessed and loved I am.

Before landing in Tanzania, I spent a few days in Holland visiting several friends who recently returned from working in Mtwara, Tanzania – and especially Karuanga Emil, a Tanzania friend who succeeded in securing a position in an international governance and rural development program in Enschede, Holland. I visited him to encourage him and to ask him to consider if he would be interested in working with ADEA following his graduation.

When I finally arrived in Tanzania on February 2, the transition back was a bigger shock than I had expected. I had been so spoiled by the cool temperatures and efficiencies of Seattle, that I forgot the measure of patience required in Tanzania; whether the challenge be bargaining, communication, crowded buses, dust or limited resources.

I was happy to spend my first 4 days back on Zanzibar to transition and be with Daudi Makiwa, a young parentless Tanzanian I have taken under my wing to support him through secondary school. We visited Zanzibar so that he could gain a better understanding of his culture and country. The theme of the trip was “Ask questions” (to counter the trend of East African cultures to discourage inquisitiveness.) He learned about spices and their many uses and the history of the Arab colonization and the slave trade. Also, as we walked the beach by moonlight where I explained (as best I could) about the awesome reality of the stars, the solar system, the earth's rotation around the sun, the moon's reflection of the sun and its tidal pull. It was exciting to see his mind open and his view of the world expand!

In Dar es Salaam we met Tipape Loomu, the director of the Boma School project in Lemong'o, Kenya. We arranged several meetings, and purchased a computer for the school office before traveling north to the eastern face of Kilimanjaro. For those of you who may not know about Tipape, he is a bright young Maasai man who is directing the Boma schoolhouse project for his community where there is currently no local schooling available. Boarding school is the only option – which is an expense out of reach of the majority of people in Lemong'o. Since the Maasai do not live in villages, but in great communities of bomas (building compounds centered around a central stall for the animals) spread out in the way small farming communities were traditionally in America.

I spent one week in the “bush” at Tipape's home, during which the project came together wonderfully, rewarding Tipape's efforts to get the school organized with my support and coaching. The first meeting with the Lemong'o education committee lasted 3 hours and was amazing. I took some video of us sitting under trees in the red dirt, the majority of us in Maasai robes and beads – discussing issues of school fees, teachers compensation, uniforms, curriculum, buildings, cultural heritage and the business of supporting a school. The same week we received a contribution of curriculum for 20 preschool students to begin the primary school. We also selected the fabric for the Maasai inspired uniforms for the students, teachers, and directors (that includes me). And we set the date of March 5th to begin our first class in the community church building – using the benches as tables (we decided it is best to get things started even if we can't meet all our budgetary and facility wishes). This will be our “trial term” for the teachers, students, parents, and everyone involved. After 2 weeks Tipape will make an evaluation involving all parties concerned. Evaluations will then occur after each month. This is a time to learn, make mistakes and iron things out. All involved are very enthusiastic. AND, on top of all this, two classrooms will be contributed to the school from the Amref water project – to be completed in July!



After Rombo, Tipape and I went to Nairobi to collect supplies for the school, and visit Peter Kinyanjui, the talented horn worker I work with; things there took an unexpected twist. Three days prior to our arrival, Peter had been accosted, leaving him with a head wound. By the time he came to visit me, he was severely weakened and delirious, to the point that we decided to visit the hospital emergency room at 4 a.m. Peter was admitted for an infected head injury. I thank God for his timing that allowed us to be together at his hour of greatest need. Peter spent the next four days in the hospital not only recovering, but also, together, we considered his future. Nairobi is a difficult place, and it can be discouraging. Peter is much like me; though he loves his production work, working alone can be very lonely. Realizing this, and the advantages of a vacation from Nairobi, I contacted a friend who founded

an orphanage – Light in Africa- in Moshi, Tanzania. I encouraged him to go there for a break, and to have the chance to care for people whose life is even more difficult than his own. Now he is in Moshi. If all goes well, Peter will open up a horn workshop there, training the orphans and managing their gift shop. He will continue the work he enjoys while encouraging and mentoring the kids.

After Nairobi, Moshi and Dar es Salaam I traveled to Mtwara – but I’ll save that for the next newsletter.

Small Facts and Life tips:

- If an elephant is chasing you, take off your bright colored clothes and throw it away from you – the elephant will follow the color. [Maasai life tips]
- If you are having trouble weaning your child off of breast-feeding, try chilly powder or cow manure on your nipple. [Maasai practical advise]
- If you get lost or are looking for something, spit in your hand, slap the spittle puddle with a finger, then follow the direction of the greatest amount of spittle splash. [Maasai lore]
- Palm Trees are not actually trees but grass.

On a spiritual note: Do what you can for others when they need it, even if the price hurts. I briefly hesitated to take my friend Peter into the hospital, as I feared the cost – Praise God I didn’t in the end. True love and friendship sometimes cost us – sometimes a lot (consider how far Christ went to show his faithfulness). I learned a good saying in church last fall, “People are like a tea bag, their true flavor comes out in hot water.” We must always seek out the best tealeaves to fill our bags, and purge the foul – so we like what our tea tastes like in the hot water times of life.

Thanks for all you support: With funds from the concert, so far I have been able to bring Tipape to travel with me various places and spend a week with him in the bush, buy a computer, supplies and uniforms for the school, buy supplies for ADEA skills training workshops, pay Tipape’s wages, help get Peter settled in Moshi, and (not to mention) allow me to be here myself! Also, thanks to UPC’s World Markets who have offered funds to do skills training workshops in Mtwara.

Enough! Blessings to you all – Kwa Heri,

Douglas – Kupikita



Measuring for uniforms – Student Documentation Pictures - Tipape w/school committee leaders – me in uniform