



January 28, 2010

“Out of Africa” Part One

The twenty two foot motorized canoe dipped, tossed and rolled as we returned late in the day from Mfangano Island. The hum of the 35 horsepower engine was interrupted every few moments as the pilot of the canoe would attempt to negotiate the changing wave patterns while the choppy waters of Lake Victoria did their best to consume our small craft. Water seeped through the seams and threatened to crest the gunwales of our boat. At times the swells seemed to rise above my head, other times I rose above them. We were miles from the shore and further to our destination as the sun sank into the west and the sky turned multiple shades of yellow, orange, blue and purple. It was just dark as we pulled into the small fishing port and docked our vessel on the sand beach. My thoughts of capsizing did not frighten me as I was sure I could make shore, it was the shore that gave rise to caution. Several months before, just east of our position two six grade children had been killed by hippos. I could make landfall but was not likely to get past this popular spot for hippos.

The day had been particularly exhausting. We were finishing five hours of canoe travel sitting on a hard slab of wood. I could not get comfortable and I thought my back was going to break. I could not change minor positions on the seat without the others shifting their position to keep the canoe from rolling left or right. The trip to and around this island was bearable only because it was broken up by disembarking at four different locations where we would begin a journey into the jungle bush of a remote island that had yet to complete a dirt ring road around its twenty mile circumference. No cars or rushing motorcycles here. The trail was steep, rocky and thoughts of my many hikes in the Grand Canyon returned vividly. The furthest interior location for erecting a church building was only two miles in but required almost a thousand foot elevation change. The air was steamy in the shade and the heat unbearable in the direct sun. Monkeys, birds of all color and monitor lizards were lurking near the trail. A welcome waterfall and clear stream on the return warranted a fifteen minute break by the mzungu. I insisted that all of the pastors stop and join me in removing our shoes and put our feet in the water to get refreshed. They thought I was crazy when I removed my shirt and soaked it in the cool water and put it back on soaking wet.

With the exception of the replacement of grass roofs by metal roofs, there seemed to be a time warp of a hundred years. The village was small, only a few huts, but within the jungle lived hundreds of people. At the Lwanda location there was a church membership of over 100 in attendance each Sabbath. This village was like most I had visited in the past five days in search for locations to erect the One-Day Church buildings. Most of the groups met under trees or in deteriorating mud buildings. I would be met by some of the local church members and they would look at me intently and break into clapping and amens as they would hear of the news of a building to worship in coming soon. Even though most had never heard of Maranatha Volunteers International, ASI, or Living Waters, they knew about the East African Union Division of Seventh-day Adventists and the regional Kenya Lake Field Conference of which they were part. Their gratitude to the above organizations for partnering together to bring churches to this area was overwhelming. Old women shed tears of praise, old men with missing teeth displayed wide grins and the younger adults eyes shone with hope and warmth in their hearts.

East African Union is the largest Division of Seventh-day Adventists in the world. We were covering one conference which extended approximately 60 miles by 20 miles and has 511 church congregations and 268 companies, most meeting weekly under a tree. In five days we identified 35 locations with most of the required information gathered for the supporting sponsors. I traveled over two hundred miles on roads so rough the average speed was 5 miles per hour. It took sixty hours of which less than 15 were spent at the locations speaking to the groups. I believe there are more rocks and ruts in this small area of Kenya than there is in all of Arizona. Not a single mile of pavement, not a single moment lacked jostling and jolting. In Arizona people do this for recreation in their jeeps to test their skills and vehicle worthiness. In this part of Kenya this is a typical cross country rural road. At times the bush seemed to consume our vehicle as we would inch through areas so tight the windows had to be rolled up to keep the thorny vegetation from attacking through the windows. We would drive to where we could go no further and then often hike a mile to the site.

I could not help but marvel at the early missionaries who braved these conditions without the help of four wheel drive vehicles and motorized canoes, and I was elated that I could experience this remote interior section of Africa. I was even more thrilled to be part of a large group of people that has a mission to spread the good news of Jesus and is willing to give of their resources to build a place where people can worship God. I am so privileged to be a representative of these

organizations and have the experience of bring this good news. It gave me a taste of how the early missionaries must have felt when they first entered Africa and brought Christianity into the bush. I regret that each person and family member I know could not experience this. It is beyond what my words can convey. I do offer the challenge and opportunity to those who would like to help erect the churches in these locations. The hard, heavy labor is provided by the local church members, but help with the oversight of the erection of the buildings is what is desperately needed. If you are interested in joining me sometime between April and the end of July please let me know. If you are interested in helping but cannot personally go, many resources are needed. Please feel free to email me at doft@LivingWatersIntl.org to discuss your interest.

I was very pleased to visit the feeding center and find everything in good order. I met with all of the children and was greeted with extremely happy faces and very good reports on the children. They treated me to a drama that they had been practicing depicting the hard days before the feeding center took them in then scene two was on how happy and content and how well they were doing in school since being cared for. Then four children recited very special poems they had written and delivered in front of 135 children, staff and me. It was so touching. Each of you deserves to hear the gratitude from these children.

Oskar is a total orphan who recently graduated from eighth grade with the top academic scores in the district. When asked what he contributed his success to he immediately without hesitation thanked God for how the feeding program had changed his life. He stated that he no longer thought about how hungry he was or when he would eat again and therefore was able to totally apply himself to his studies. Oh, how I know I take regular food for granted as probably most of us do.

The solar pump is pumping six gallons a minute for about nine hours/day. This is providing plenty of water for the garden and feeding center. The gardens are growing well despite a hard long drought which is finally letting up. There was an excess of tomatoes and cowpeas so the manager has sold some to the local community and helped offset some of the expenses this month. The corn and bean supply is getting low so more is needed to be purchased. This always puts a drain on the finances, as we buy it two times/year and spend about \$4000. each time. Maureen, the young girl who had the terrible leg infection for ten years has finally completed treatments and the leg appears completely healed with some severe scarring. She is happy and smiling and walks with a slight limp.

Through donations from ASI (Adventist Laymen's Services Industries) and Maranatha International, and an independent donor, we are in the process of erecting a structure at the feeding center that will serve as an administration/medical office and also have a small guest room. This will provide me a place to stay without paying high fees for accommodations when I or Living Waters team members are on-site. Those donations have also provided financial assistance for a projector, DVD player and PA sound system to hold a variety of health and bible seminars. We hope to provide 20-30 benches for the children to sit on while eating their lunch from any remaining funds.

There are still six full time paid staff and several volunteers. Oskar, the boy mentioned above is a full time volunteer as he is no longer was eligible for the feeding program after graduating from eighth grade. He is a hard and honest worker.

I traveled to the east coast to an area called Watumu Beach to finalize a water purification project that the East African Union had negotiated for last year. New experiences never end in Kenya. When I was ready to leave for the Malindi airport I paid my driver and exited the tok tok. I walked 500 feet to a meeting and realized my wallet which contained my passport, credit cards, my valuable contact information and all of my money in both shillings and US dollars was missing. Needless to say I fought panic and experienced what it is like to be without any of the above in a foreign country and the process of getting through such an experience. I'll spare the details, but let it be known that God led me through the process and even though I fought panic for 30 hours, He kept me calm. Mary Jo was a jewel and got the credit cards cancelled and contacted the Travel insurance (never leave home without it). I had wonderful contacts in Kenya that helped arrange my necessary transportation and have arrived back in Nairobi where I will go to the US embassy and make application for an emergency passport. I have been able to draw funds to continue my work while here and hope I am not delayed by more than two days. It was a very sobering and anxiety-filled experience and something that for some reason I feel God needed me to learn.

I hope to arrive home to Mary Jo one week from today. This is a very active and blessed ministry and I am only a vehicle that God is using to implement it. He has impressed each of the donors to give and I take that responsibility fully with complete disclosure of all funds to the Living Waters Board of Directors. Thankfully, no donated money for Living Waters was lost in this unfortunate event.

I want to thank each of you for however you support Living Waters. Prayer, finances and encouragement are all part of the big picture in taking care of 135 orphan children. Thank you and may God bless you and your homes for your sacrificial giving.

Daryl

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