

Africa
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herdsmen who prodded their livestock away from the traffic. The sun was intense and the sky was cloudless. The worst drought in forty years had settled upon the dusty plain.

The RAV 4 van drew up to the gray brick flat that I was to call home and I lifted my luggage onto the sidewalk beside my door. Packed away in two of the three large suitcases I wheeled up to my veranda was about \$2,000 worth of biology equipment. Most had been donated by Wards Natural Science of Rochester, New York. This generous company had responded to my request to help set up a biology lab for the dry land agriculture program that had been approved for the university. The Education Commission of Kenya was scheduled to inspect the university's science department to determine if it was fully prepared to begin the program and all that Ward's had donated would be needed for this approval. Some equally generous biology alumni, my colleagues and students at RWC, many of my friends and family members had joined to contribute about \$4,000. With these funds I was to purchase laboratory equipment and supplies to complete the new biology lab. In the end, I was also able to purchase about 30 new books for the library, specifically designated for use in the dry lands agriculture program. Graduates of this program will be qualified to teach the farming communities of Africa how to best use their lands and natural resources to sustain their nation.



For the next three and one half months, my life intersected with the lives of twenty-six young African women and men. They attended my biology class twice a week from 1:40 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday until 3:20, and I grew to love them. The nearly one thousand students at ANU converge on this 123 acre campus for three trimesters during the year. They arrive from all over Africa: Ghana, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Most of them major in business or communication or theology. I was privileged to teach twenty-six of them in the Pre University Program (PUP).

In Kenya, when a student graduates from high school, he/she takes an exam which determines if he/she qualifies for admission to any University. If a student scores well, his/her life takes one direction and the privileges of higher education are available. If they do not score well, they cannot be admitted to any certified university. These exams become a critical focus of young Kenyans, and there is great anxiety and intense preparation associated with them. About half of all students who take the exam pass. ANU offers a second chance to those who do not score well. If their high school grades are high enough, they can be admitted to the Pre-University Program during which students are required to take general education courses for one year. If their grades for these courses remain at an acceptable level, they can be admitted to ANU. One consequence of this scenario is that the "PUP's" are unusually motivated. They understand to some extent that their future is genuinely and precariously in the balance. Failure at this point means there are no further higher educational opportunities. Most of them are hungry for education.



During the first day of class I announced that there would be an optional lab for the course. No lab had been previously scheduled, and since I had packages of new equipment, I offered them the privilege of learning to use all that I had brought.

"This is an optional lab. It will not affect your grade. You do not need to come, but we will have fun learning about biology," I offered, almost hoping that the response would be modest. There was only

so much I could pack into my suitcases, and I had not had time to purchase the remaining equipment to supplement what I had brought. Having too many students would present some logistical problems.

I set up a small room with two tables and enough equipment for about eight to ten students and was amazed as twenty-two of my twenty-six showed up for the first lab every lab thereafter. The labs were scheduled to last one hour, but most stayed for up to two hours. As long as I talked, they stayed and listened intently. Sometimes I would have to usher them out so I could get lunch.

On week ends my excitement would mount as friends and I would roll out onto the rutted back roads of Kenya to visit museums and game preserves, arboretums and markets. Here are a few of my most memorable experiences:

- The **Masai market** where bargaining with the vendors was as delightfully challenging as any game I have ever played
- The **Afew Giraffe Center** where feeding giraffes brings them up close and very personal
- The **Elephant Orphanage** with its herd of tiny elephants and Shida, the orphaned black rhino **Lake Nakuru National Park** where literally millions of flamingo stripe the alkaline waters of the lake with bands of pink

- The great expanse of the **Masai Mara** with its prides of lions, herds of giraffes, cape buffalos, zebras, hyenas, vultures, elephants and its treeless brown savannah
- The **Masai village** where huts of mud and cow dung house families of brilliantly decorated men and women
- The **Safari walk at Nairobi National Park** where I had the incredible experience of petting a cheetah
- The worship experiences at **Dandora and Nairobi Central churches** when music is not just sung it is felt in every movable place of one's body
- The **Kibera slum** and the tiny buildings which held 500 children in the Woodley Church of the Nazarene Day School
- The **Saint Paul's Children's Rescue Center** where I met Moses who had been left wrapped in newspaper in the trash

It was my distinct privilege to watch, fascinated, as the hand of God moved all the events of this adventure into place. I do not have the space to relay to you the incredible providence of God that I witnessed. From the moment I decided to spend half of my sabbatical at ANU until this very week the powerful currents of the Divine have kept me in awe. As a result, I am not the same person who left the USA in December. I have seen a special grace from God, and have been surprised by His power so often that I live with new expectations for each day.

I stood at the doorway of my flat in early April and watched a rain storm sweep in and pour its fury across the campus. The waters gathered on the orange tile roofs and ran down splattering onto the broad-leafed philodendrons. It puddled on the ground and swept over the sidewalk. It filled the drainage ditches and flowed swiftly into the ravine south of the campus. I watched fascinated and grateful. Before I left in mid-April, nine inches of rain had fallen and there was great hope that the drought had been swept away in the currents of these waters. Yesterday I saw rain in the weather forecast for the week and I was filled with gratitude. God is good, and Kenya is now green again.

These few scraps of memories are miniscule in the spreading quilt of my African reflections. Stop me some time when you have the occasion and I shall fill in the other pieces.