

[Trying something new: I have attached some photographs for those able to view them]

Dear Friends and Family,

Douglas McFalls' Newsletter – March/April 2006

How many of you have seen the Far Side cartoon of a man speaking to his dog? Picture one: What the man hears, “Good dog! I am so proud of you”. Picture two: What the dog hears, “Blah, Blah, Blah, Blah”. I am now convinced that this is the nature of my conversation with the majority of the Tanzanians I work with! I am only kidding myself when I believe my sentences are coherent!

Tonight is hot and the air is thick and still. Not a leaf rustles outside; only crickets perform tonight. Normally a fan keeps me cool on these warm heavy nights, but tonight I have a guest to whom I have sacrificed my bed and my fan. So I am staying up late until my body begs for sleep more than it begs for comfort.

On April 6th ADEA completed artisans workshops which were possible thanks to a few generous donors. This is ADEA's fourth such series: The tailors developed pajama bottoms using local fabrics, and a new shoulder bag using scraps of batik. The painters were given drills to animate their TingaTinga paintings with more movement and graceful lines, and one day I gave them a still life drawing assignment to help them be better aware of shadow and light. I taught the welders mechanical drawing (drafting), and the carvers focused on Christmas ornaments working with Christian and non-religious themes. After seminars we focus on one-on-one training to test their ability to reproduce in quantity.

ADEA's notoriety is expanding, even among the shoppers of Dar es Salaam. We now sell to two vendors there and a third is interested. We have also been invited to returning to the Tanzhanda one-day market in June – sponsored by the Canadian Embassy. The challenge we currently face with increased demand is this: When an artist has many orders, he or she has more cash in their pocket. The more money they find in their pockets, the less urgent work seems to be, and thus production slows down – the very opposite of what is needed. This month we have initiated a new payment policy: 20% bonus for orders complete on time and adequately finished; 30% reduction for sloppiness and late delivery. In a country where good work is rarely rewarded, we hope this will succeed.

On April 16 we were approved to receive 4000 Euro from the German Ambassador's Fund to substantially upgrade our sewing facilities. Our ceiling-less ill fitted sewing room will ultimately contain a proper working table, stools, electric machines (for higher quality stitching), and a button hole machine, not to mention a fan, glass in the window, better lighting and a ceiling. ADEA's director's challenge is to how to make sure that the tailors respect and take care for this gift from “wazugu heaven” (a name I have for gifts given from foreigners for which the locals made no effort to acquire). As the German Embassy was only interested to give material aid, we accepted what they had to offer.

We were not, however, selected to receive funds for a second year from MFUKO (the Tanzanian Cultural fund) to fund our August skills training workshops nor our upcoming dance festival. This was discouraging, as they seemed so enthusiastic about our project – but these are normal setbacks for a non-profit. Unfortunately for us, many of the international funding agencies are focusing their efforts on HIV/AIDS, and looking less to economic development.

In my last letter I mentioned to you about Tipape, the Maasai living with me to help him gain greater understanding of international professionalism; the mind, ways, and patterns of Westerners (or at least Americans); and develop our school project for his home region of Rombo, Kenya. His bright mind and eagerness to learn gave me much hope and I was greatly encouraged. The Boma School (one room school house model) project took excellent form listing out the: Goal, Purpose, Outcomes and Activities. A stream of reasons why small schools located within walking distance of the Maasai Bomas (family cluster of

houses and animal corrals) is desirable emerged: Children will be able help at home and remain within their familiar community as they mature (mentally and physically), they will not loose connection and sense of place within their culturally rich community, education will not be viewed as an “out there” development, modern education offered within the Maasai community will allow the culture to evolve verses deteriorate; children will not be prioritized, one over another (boys over girls), as to who will and will not receive education due to cost; and more. Tipape and I will found this project “Boma Schools of Rombo” with the hope of establishing the first school by Jan 2007. He will return home in early May to do further research within the community to confirm that this is something that they still want, and are willing to support and manage. If thing work out, Tipape will serve as the managing director for a minimum of two year, and I as an advisor. The project is in the early stages and requires research on legal issues, hard costs, seed money, surveys and studies, among other things. We are very enthusiastic!

It was unfortunate that the notorious immigration department of Mtwara cause great suffering and frustration for Tipape and me in their bold efforts to seek out bribes. Falsely accusing him of working – they instructed him to leave the country. Only though good friends in Dar es Salaam, and a good deal of expense – including his traveling to Dar & returning - he was able to receive a working visa, which allowed him to stay. But immigration were relentless and it was infuriating. Sadly, low pay and past models keep these practices alive. They are doing as they were shown they could – and too often better-endowed foreign agencies give into these practices in the name of “bigger fish to fry”. Many salaried people here work for the money, with little concern for their quality of their work – I thank God for every exception.

Wine stops: about six month ago ADEA introduced carved wine stops in our shop. These are miniature Makonde carvings in African Blackwood (Ebony). Who would have guessed these are our new hot item!! These are selling like crazy. This wonderful, not only because of the sales, but also, because of the steady work for a growing number of carvers. The production and stock of this item will be a major focus of 2006.

This is the rainy season in Tanzania – and Mtwara has been blessed with ample rains while some parts of the northern Tanzania and eastern Kenya are suffering greatly from droughts. Though the rains began late, the town and countryside are lush and green with maize and other vegetables flourishing. The only prayer now is that they stop soon enough for the corn to dry for harvesting. But the rains can be intense:

(April 15) Tonight the rains fell so heavily I was almost afraid, and I wished for a big blanket under which I could hide to protect me from the roar on the roof above. I wanted to feel warmer and cozier as I lay in my bed. I thought of my many friends living under more permeable roofs of palm or grass, and their walls of mud that would melt away if confronted with water. Instead of seeking to feel cozier, they would surely be scampering about trying to make sure their things inside remained dry and their roofs remained in tact. It caused me reflect how my life really is quite comfortable.

I asked a friend why they didn't build homes of stone or cement. He replied, “why go to all that trouble and expense when I can build a new home every 5 years over the course of a week?” He had a point. Unlike what I saw in Thailand, where many Thai carried on their travels in the soaking rains, Tanzanians seek shelter and wait and wait and wait until there is a break in the weather. Only the greatest urgency would push a Tanzanian into the rain, and very few activities fall under the category of “greatest urgency”.

Spiritual dimension: Small victories at a cost of the big picture: By choosing to respond emotionally and dramatically to minor issues I saw I was gaining small trivial victories at the cost of more important overlying goals. Not a good development nor relationship strategy.

The day to day:

- Have you every heard there are places in the world where you can cut a branch from a bush or tree, stick it in the ground and it will grow! Mtwara is one of them! It's true! I did it myself. It is quite amazing (and rewarding).
- Last year I told you I planted a banana plant. This last week I finished my last bunch of bananas. Technically we would call these plantains. They are cooking banana, not sweet. They are delicious

fried! You cannot imagine how quickly a banana plant grows. It takes about 8 months to grow from nothing to a 12 foot plant producing a bunch of bananas. (Note: They are banana plants not trees). They also reproduce enthusiastically – five new stalks in one year!

- Mtwara generally has the highest prices in Tanzania due to its isolation and lack of competition. At this time of year prices always rise as it is just before the new harvest, and people's personal stores are low or finished. This year the prices are higher than they have ever been. This week tomatoes, which are normally around 700 Tanzanian shillings (~\$.60) a kilo, reached 2000 Tsh. And at my departure – eggs were reached 200 Tshillings (~\$.16.5) each. Rice, onions, beans are all up. Day labor is usually less than 2000 Tsh a day IF you are of the lucky few to find work. Only oranges are coming down in price, as the market will soon be flooded with them. In three weeks the price has gone from 100 Tsh each to 40. Soon they will reach 10.
- I was having lunch with Tipape – we had a beef chop at a local restaurant. When we had finished I looked at his plate. It was empty – THERE WAS NO BONE! I was informed, “the only bone of a cow that a Maasai doesn't eat is the knee.”
- Tips on killing a mosquito: If you cup your hands like you are trying to catch an insect, then pressing your palms together firmly (verses clapping your hand), you will find it an affective way of eliminating the persistent mosquitoes that penetrate your mosquito net. I used to say that there are no more mosquitoes here than other places, but that they are just more lethal. Perhaps that's true if you are from Minnesota, but I have no previous memory of the nightly stings, nor the disturbingly large pools of blood that stains your palm after you succeed to kill one. The worst evenings are the nights without electricity. Along with the heat and humidity, one is helpless in the thick darkness to seek out and destroy your tormentor.

In wrapping up this letter I am informing you of a change my plans. Last Christmas, my father was taken to the hospital due to a cardiac arrest. His condition has fluctuated enough to merit my return to the US to be with my parents and also to sort out personal business in the event they move from Seattle. I am happy to be able to serve my parents (a family model common in Tanzania); and in truth, I believe this will be a good move for ADEA. After the visit of one of our board members (Justin Stokes) in March, it became clear that we had some housecleaning to do. Also with increased orders, systems for managing what we are producing need to fine tuned and promotion material improved. My departure will allow us to focus on our weaker spots and choose our battle more selectively. I will still continue to manage the project and advance various programs from Seattle (the wonders of modern communication). My return date to Tanzania is unknown.

I can be reached at 206.227.0087 as of April 27th.

Thanks for reading through this – I know there is so much to read on our emails boxes.

Kwa Heri – and with warmest regards - Douglas / Kupikita