



Newsletter: September 2009 Douglas McFalls

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Can it truly be that four+ months have passed since my last newsletter!? OK, it's time for me to get something out to you. The challenge is that there are so many things to share since my last newsletter. So I have decided to save some details of the past for future emails, and included more pressing or "hot off the press" activities now.

AMERICA IN JUNE

As I mentioned in my last email, I did travel to America for the month of June, and part of July. Beginning with a short 10 days in Seattle, I then made a cross-country trip on an Amtrak fifteen-day pass. I saw mountains, canyons, rivers, plains, and the backyards, train yards and downtowns of Martinez (outside of San Francisco), Sacramento, Denver, Chicago, NYC, Boston and New Hampshire (and hundreds of small towns in between) ending up in beautiful Vermont at our family cottage for my father's memorial and a week long family reunion. THE TRIP WAS FANTASTIC! I enjoyed nearly every moment of the visits with dear friends and family and the quiet times alone in the observation car of the railroad. It all seemed so beautiful to me – the flower gardens, the orderly wheat fields, the fine food, the stylish restaurants with competent staff, the tidy drive-ins, the running water, the tiled bathrooms, the customer service, the accurate schedules and so much more. Imagine disembarking in Seattle SeaTac airport and waiting at the bus stop/smoking area that's designed like a Japanese Rock Garden! Best of all was time with friends (many of you), and the chance to learn about what they are up to, and to explain what I'm still doing in Africa.

The trip was almost too glorious, I'm afraid. I suffered from a staggering impact of culture shock when I returned to Africa. I won't go into the details, but I had to remind myself that I was going from one of the most developed and educated countries in the world to one of the least.

Mask Exhibition At the Alliance Francaise: Landing in Dar es Salaam at 7:45 a.m. on July 9th. [After enjoying $\frac{3}{4}$ of the new musical – Sister Act on my London layover on the 8th], I hit the ground running. I had 36 hours to get an exhibit organized and assembled at the Alliance Francaise (the French Library). This event allowed us to share with the people of Dar es Salaam (the main city of Tanzania) about our MaKuYa festival and the work of ADEA with artisans. The highlight was our special exhibit related to the masks of the Makonde and Makua tribes. The exhibit included masks, photographs of the masks in use, and a DVD of village performances. The exhibit was very well received not only by the expatriates living in Dar es Salaam, but also the Tanzanians who felt a strong connection to the dances and wanted to learn more.

[More details in the next Newsletter]



MaKuYa 2009! Well, it happened, and though on the office side it was more than a bit challenging, from the public side it was a great success – which at the end of the day is the most crucial – Si ndiyo? (= n'est-ce pas?). There were lots of congratulations, the most important coming from our major donors – the Swiss and the Finnish Ambassadors, who were special guests at the opening ceremony. This year we increased to 20 troops involving 430 performers!

[more to come in the next newsletter]

MAKU YA 2009 – AUGUST 14, 15 & 16

*Not so many great pictures as last year,
but honestly it looked just the same.*



Big Changes and foreseen shift of home base in Africa: Over the past five years I have been living primarily in Mtwara, Tanzania working closely with the artisans (along with Philipo Lulale my co-director) helping them establish greater income-generating opportunities through expanded product design, improved quality, business and sales training and greater market access. We now have a strong core team of producers, and a large product line that we sell in Mtwara, throughout Tanzania and occasionally internationally.

I am happy to say that the artisans project is fully self-sustaining when it comes to using proceeds from sales to fund running cost, production, an accountant, office and grounds cleaner and office upkeep. External funding is only needed for special training workshops (and the directors). We are very happy for this success, and it is a great relief knowing it can go on without external support.



In 2008 we expanded to increase work to include culture and the performing arts by launching the MaKuYa festival. I will continue in this work a few more years and possibly be involved in establishment of a museum. Already our hallway serves as a museum for our mask collection.

Now, it seems that the time has come to flip the coin and change my home base. This decision has been reached as Mtwara artisans have become well established in the production of high quality craft. It feels like the right time to let them stand on their own. Also, I see a bit of lazy dependency settling in with some producers. I know after five years that if they can't fly now, they will never be able to. Philipo will still be close enough, and I won't be completely gone, as we thoughtfully push them from the nest.

A new life with the Maasai: Since 2005 I have worked very closely with a community of Maasai in Kenya where I, along with Tipape Loomu, the community and the support of several of you established two schools. The directing of these schools has been left primarily to Tipape whom I mentor, and support financially.



As the plan stands now, I will set up home in Rombo, Kenya, initially renting a room at the Catholic Mission there – to give me some space, running water and electricity – and a second room at Tipape's family home to be closer to my gracious friends and their family.

I will mention briefly on what I will focus and elaborate in my next Newsletter:

In the past you heard of ADEA's work establishing two schools: schools that are accessible, affordable, flexible, superior and culturally Maasai. After 2.5 years we have proven the viability of our somehow unique school structure for these Maasai.

Now is the time to solidify and expand (if possible) to five neighboring communities asking for schools. Work at hand:

- Continue to shape and expand our 2 existing schools
- Consider how to set up schools for other Maasai communities who have requested schools
- Consider future buildings and campus planning (ever heard of a yurt?)
- Set up a visiting teacher program
- Secure more funds for these schools and teachers

Perhaps you have heard of the drought that is decimating Kenya. These Maasai are also suffering terribly. Animals are dying by the hundreds further reducing their meager herds, the school children are crying in class for lack of food. The threat of starvation is more real than ever. Crops completely failed this year, though their debt for the purchase of seed remains. The need for economic development is greater than ever. I believe my work in Tanzania will put me in a good place to help with this.



Pictures from Tipape

Though I am best equipped to work on economic development issues; issues of food, water, and health cannot be ignored. How to approach these, I do not yet know. I must step out in faith. Work to be done:

- Consider economic needs and nutritional needs
- Explore any alternative income generating activity possible: gift items, [jewelry*](#), horn products, leather, honey, ostrich farms, hospitality...anything.
- Try to secure food aid for the students and possibly families
- Keep remaining cattle alive and healthy.
- Work with them to find a solution to the water crisis
- Keep families together, instead of men migrating to cities in search of work, and children running away from home because of lack of education and opportunities.

In all this I am working closely with Tipape Loomu, Tumaina and others directors of Pillar of Maasai Development (PMD), a local committee committed to addressing problems facing their community.



Though I feel blessed to be a part of helping such a wonderful people, I am also a bit nervous, as their situation has become much more dire since my May visit, and my own standard of living will take a big step down.

This new focus is much larger than what I tackled in Tanzania, and much more vital as it may mean the survival of a community. I'll be looking to some of you for ideas, connections and even resources. I would be grateful for support to help me in this time of moving and re-setting up house (I may need to invest in a motor bike!), but more importantly, making sure the schools can keep running. We've never failed to pay teachers and leadership, but things can be tight.

***Maasai Jewelry Capacity and Feasibility Project !!:** Recently I was connected to a wonderful team of jewelry designers: Natalie Everett in Seattle, and Alison Nagasue and Ivy Chang in New York City. Together we have put together a project with the aim of testing the feasibility of introducing small scale mass-production of Maasai jewelry for the global market while maintaining a healthy community identity. These women have seen the jewelry work of the Maasai of Rombo, are very excited about the designs and believe there is a place for their products beyond East Africa, which is already saturated with Maasai jewelry. With their understanding of the designs, quality and market demands, and my understanding of cultural sensibility, experience training cross-culturally we are a dynamic team proposing a project that will have a major impact on helping to restore hope and economic independence of the Maasai of Rombo. This is a program of ADEA, and we are looking for \$250,000 to make it happen. If you would like to support this project or know of organizations that might support such a venture, we'd be grateful for the contact. I will attach a copy of the proposal in my next newsletter. Let me know if you'd like to see it sooner.



I will wind up now. Good things are happening. Challenging things too. Life has its seasons, but may we not be mastered by the season, but hold on to long-term reasons for living.

Spiritual note: Upon returning to Tanzania in July, I learned that one of our MaKuYa team members accepted an invitation to chaperone a troop of performers to a festival in North Africa – completely ignoring his responsibilities and leaving us with his incomplete work. My first instinct was to fire him – and how I wish I could have without making my plight even worse, but he had knowledge of the performers and villages and without him we would have failed. So I kept him on, and I and the rest of the team focused with him on his tasks of transport and accommodation of performers. Still, I had my sour attitude. However, though I seethed with resentment at being unable to spend my time refining the festival as I'd planned, I realized that if I treated him with the bitterness I felt, he would likely shut down, so I did the opposite. I smiled and encouraged him. This worked so well that after the festival – he said “I know you like working with me!”. From this I learned the importance of focusing on the desired result instead of personal grievances and carelessly expressing feelings. But the story goes on – my grief was so great that one Sunday I ask my church members to pray for me for deliverance from resentment and anger. And what was so pathetic is that when I experienced God's miraculous provision of peace, I RESISTED IT! – perversely wanting to harbor a grudge. Thankfully, I got over that.

Lot's more I could share, but I'll leave you with this!

Douglas

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