
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

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The People are Tanzania

Arriving in Manow would be my first true interaction with the people of Tanzania. When you see them walking home from the market or just strolling from one place to another, you may think of them as sort of stoic. But greet them with *ugonili* and a sudden change comes over them. A sincere reply follows, and even though at first you struggle, they understand your plight. Some will stop to shake your hand and help you correct your mistaken Nyakusa without ever making you feel uncomfortable. They will be patient until the right response with their help is given. *Ugonili, ndaga, trombombo, tununu, ndaga, ndaga, nne*, eventually flow smoothly out of our mouths, sometimes to the smiling and laughing of people who are surprised you know the proper greeting. And when this greeting is given that stoic appearance changes to a sincere smiling face.

Greetings are only one aspect of these friendly, courteous people. They are extremely generous, and they appreciate of what is given to them no matter how small. Here is just one small example of this appreciation. Nancy, Jani, and I were honored to be invited to the house of one of our truly helpful people in Manow, Joshua, a teacher. Following the meal Nancy gave gifts to the host and his wife as is the custom here. When they opened their gifts a sincere look of amazement overcame Joshua's face, and his wife appeared shy and humble as to express the feeling of I do not deserve such a gift. I realized at that moment how I sometimes take small gifts for granted. I want to become more like our hosts in appreciation. I feel very humble that I have taken any gifts, even the most insignificant, for granted.

These are but two small examples of how the people of Tanzania are one of the most welcoming and gracious people you will ever know. Not once since I have been here have I not

felt welcomed and part of this community. All I have met would be welcomed to my table at my home as an honored guest. Tanzania did not make the people the way they are. The people made Tanzania the way it is. *Ernie Malick*

My First Impressions

In the morning we usually have peanut butter on a piece of wheat bread that a woman down the road bakes special for us. Sometimes Ernie eats papaya. We scurry to wash up what we can, depending on whether we have water. We fill our water bottles and grab our teaching tools and walk the 150 yards to the schoolroom. Sometimes Elininsia runs up to carry my bags, sometimes she doesn't. Once in the room, the students calm down and all day long Ernie and I alternate lessons.

The level of ability in the 40-student class varies widely. But all of them stand and say, "Good morning teacher." That's the last moment of verbal tidiness. It is a total emersion English class. Some have had English basics before and some have not. Or they have totally forgotten. We use words they haven't learned yet in order to teach other words. It can't be helped. We pantomime. If someone walked by and looked in they might wonder about our sanity. There's a whole lot of surmising going on. The kids have to surmise what we're saying and we have to surmise what their faces are telling us. Sometimes in the beginning we get some blank stares.

Ernie, who taught for 36 years, describes it as much like teaching special education. -- But forty special education students who are brilliant in their own language of Kiswahili or Nyakusa. I have new respect for teachers. They are always ON. They have to talk all day. They have the power to make kids happy or sad.

But success here is measured differently. Success is whether we made it easier for a student to succeed in secondary school. Did the little bit of English

make the difference between “getting it” and “not getting it” when they take their biology course which is taught in English? We hope so!

Jani Gilbert

Ndembo

I have taken on an additional 12 students this year. We are meeting in a not quite finished community center in the village of Ndembo, about 2 miles from Manow. Use of the community center offers an opportunity to expand the number of students we reach and to determine whether we can feasibly conduct a second class with the same set of resources.

I am living about a mile away from the classroom in the nanny’s house to a German family who has moved back home. The morning walk to the community center is brisk. Even with my polar fleece jacket on, I need to walk fast to stay warm. The night dew still weighs heavily on the vegetation, which hugs the foot path only wide enough for one set of feet. Purple blue asters line the path in parts. In the long morning shadows, birds sing and flit about. Passing a grove of young avocado trees, I hope I will be around in a few more years when they bear their creamy fruit. I pass men and women already hoeing the fields with their heavy *pangas* (hoes) and greet them with an “*ugonili*” then empathize with their heavy workload (*pole na kazi*). The air is fresh with the scent of eucalyptus, cedar, and fresh hoed earth. Life feels joyous in this earth-bound society. I reach the community center and am greeted by 12 enthusiastic students bursting with “Good morning, Mama Nancy.” Ahh, life is good!

Nancy Winters

Send mail!!

We would love to hear from you. We can get into email about once a week (sometimes more if we are lucky and if all things go well). Please do not send large pictures or other documents as it takes forever to download (think dialup modem and triple the wait time). Our email addresses are:

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