
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

Jani Gilbert, Ernie Malick, Nancy Winters

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A Job to Love

Our school is a modest two room building with one classroom larger than the other. The children sit at tables four to a bench without any back support to lean against. Windows surround each room giving enough light so easily see. The blackboard was in very bad shape when we came -- a regular chalk eater. Chalk lasted for a very short time due to the chipped surface of the board. After one week we had the boards re-surfaced., it was like Christmas when we saw that now we and the students would be able to see what was written present. Our chalk is no longer now that it is no longer eaten by the infamous chalk eating blackboard.

The language barrier is a large hurdle to overcome. After the first day only English is spoken to the students. Initially, there is a lot of physical movement and pantomiming to get the points across. Even after three weeks we still pantomime, and that will continue until the end. The more outrageous and creative, the better! It brings out that hidden part of you that you that you never knew you had -- more like Robin Williams than a normal teacher.

Teaching is quite an experience here. We teach a lot of academics in a small amount of time including health and safety, farming, and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/Aids.

In addition to their regular classroom activities, the students are also responsible for cleaning their classroom on Fridays. This consists of cleaning erasers, the blackboard, desks, sweeping and washing the floor, and picking up trash on the property. We are teaching cleanliness as well as respect for the environment.

Throughout the ten –week course, the students take a quiz over the previous day’s lessons. On

Fridays they have a larger exam, and the course will culminate with a final comprehensive exam over all the materials. The exams and the final determine which boy and girl will receive the scholarships to Manow Lutheran Junior Seminary (our sponsoring school).

The entire experience is a very intensive and mind exhausting experience for the students and the teachers. In the end, despite the exhaustion, you see the major improvement as the students begin to write and speak in English. So, any of you who want to raise your teaching creativity level to new heights and help to make a difference in the lives of non- English speaking students, do I have a job for you.

Ernie

Tanzanian Performance Measures

We are now deeply immersed in the first aid which builds upon the personal hygiene unit. We hope to give the students skills that they can use now if a friend breaks a bone or suffers from heat exhaustion etc. But more importantly we hope that the students will remember what to do when their child has diarrhea or is ill with malaria. We emphasize getting to the doctor/hospital early. The tendency here is to wait until the person is on death’s doorstep. They the doctors really can’t do much. The students have fun in this unit with both role-play and a practicum.

As I mentioned in our first newsletter, this year’s class at Manow has some stellar kids. Of the 250 students we’ve had over the past 6 years, Jani’s and Ernie’s class seems to shine. Recently they asked one of the better girls, Elininsia, in the class to help the students who were lagging behind. Elininsia made some real progress. More surprising is that she asked to have a “discussion” with the top six students and the teachers. She suggested that all six of them help the lagging students, and they agreed. And this from a 14 year old girl. WOW!

The other bit of success to report took us all by surprise last week. Martin Mwakaje, the International Coordinator, showed up in the classrooms with forms recruiting our students to attend Manow Lutheran Junior Seminar in January. The forms tell the applicants that if they have taken our Pre-Form 1 English course, the school will waive the entrance exam. WOW! In an environment where western-style performance measures are virtually unknown, this ranks at the top for our program!

Nancy

Ugonili Abounds!

I walked down to the school's kitchen to take the spent bucket of tea back and noticed several things that I'm afraid I've begun to take for granted. I walked through our neighbor's property through their cement "breezeway" and saw two of our students, Christian and Kuambya, washing their whole family's laundry. The laundry was in two big buckets and they scrubbed in a tub with water from the outdoor spigot, and stood in mud. This was after nearly eight hours of intense school work.

In the background, I heard the rattling of the village's corn crushing machine. The corn is used for making *ugali*, a bland, pasty-white, local staple. I walked along a path where, one night we saw a two-inch wide army of flesh-eating ants marching from one side to the other. (By the way, one afternoon we watched these ants tear apart a giant spider and carry the spider parts into their holes.)

Then I walked into the administration building with my bucket of sweet tea and ants where I was greeted by warm *ugonilis* (hello) and *karibus* (welcome). The man in the food room gave me several appreciative *asante sanas* (thank you very much) for the bucket. Small groups of men, mostly teachers, sat in various rooms having heated discussions in Kiswahili.

I meandered home and was *ugonilied* about six times along the way. I walked past our house to pick some delicious little yellow berries along the foot path to the church. I started to do my wash once I got home, thinking of Christian and Kaumbaya.

Jani

Deluge of Rain and Words

Two weeks ago, the clouds let loose for five days in a row – and not with the gentle rains of Western Washington, but with downpours that soak your clothes in less than two minutes. Water ran under the front door, across the living room, and into the dining room soaking papers that were on the floor at Ernie and Jani's house. Many folks here are saying that these unseasonably early monsoons are due to climate change.

Regardless of the reason, the weather has made the students out of sorts because they can't play football (soccer) at recess. Or perhaps it has been me who has been out of sorts because my laundry is mildewing rather than drying.

My students just finished week four. They have assimilated almost 500 words, and present, past and future tenses. This week I taught parts of speech and parts of a sentence to give them a method to build their sentences. This has been only partially successful as their adjectives still follow instead of precede the noun. More practice, practice, practice to come.

We are transitioning in class to our units about healthy living, then first aid, and STD prevention. Not surprisingly, the students seem more interested in these topics than parts of speech. This morning I brought in a bar of soap for their use because our lessons call for hand washing before eating and after going to the bathroom. Unexpectedly, they burst out in unison with an enthusiastic, "Thank you Mama Nancy!"

The students are very slowly beginning to speak English when they want/need something (e.g., the football, jump rope, or to tattle on someone). While these sentences are very rudimentary now, they give me hope.

Nancy

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). Jani has not been able to access her Gmail account to download emails, so I have not included her email. Our email addresses are:

Ernie Malick : newmalick@comcast.net

Nancy Winters: wintersnl@comcast.net