
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

Jani Gilbert and Nancy Winters

September 2016

To Buy in Dubai

As many of you know, once you reach the international terminal at SeaTac, you are not in the U.S. anymore. And certainly when you watch the little airplane on the back of the seat in front of you and see that you are flying over places like Tehran and Islamabad, life is thoroughly changed. And getting to Dubai, Wow! We had several hours to roam about Dubai but found ourselves alone on the street. People don't wander around in Dubai. It's too hot.

Instead, the residents are working in large, air-conditioned buildings that look like something out of *The Jetsons* or a futuristic sci-fi movie. They are pointed at the top, or they wind around like a partial spiral with golden, copper-looking brilliance. They are shaped like giant sails or they sit aristocratically atop a spindly foundation. And looking up at the tallest building in the world can put a strain in your neck.

If people weren't at work in these buildings, they seemed to be at the Dubai Mall, a massive, mile-long tunnel of shops and stores and restaurants. Shoppers, hordes of them, are moved from place to place on flat, escalator-like people movers like you see in large airports. And what's a mall without women in full Burkas standing in front of a Victoria's Secret? What's a mall without men in long white robes and head covers sipping drinks at Starbucks? We saw Bloomingdales, Coach and many other high-end western stores. Prices were so high we just laughed.

Oh, and what's a mall without a block-long, four-story-high waterfall, complete with a hundred sculpted divers? Despite the outer space-like appearance of the skyline and the ultra-conspicuous consumption, Dubai gave

me the distinct feeling of quintessential Arabian Desert, with camels and even Lawrence himself. *Jani*

The Road to Tukuyu

Two days after I arrived in Manow I had to return to Tukuyu 45 kilometers away to retrieve the trunks with the encyclopedias. The trip was magical. Walking from the house to the Administration Building with the brilliant stars of the southern hemisphere overhead in the cool pre-dawn hours, reminded me without a doubt that I was back in Tanzania.

The driver soon arrived after fetching the head master from his home up the hill. We were slightly behind schedule so were barreling down the first hill at a seemingly treacherous speed. As we came over a rise, the driver slammed on the brakes and came within an inch of a cow who was reluctant to be pulled to safety by his owner. We proceeded on with a bit more caution, but still the chickens scurried off the road like ladies in waiting on tip toes.

As the sun rose, the road slowly changed from barely visible in the headlights to a dusty mauve, and then clearly to the rust of the surrounding soil. It is the dry season – or rather the dusty season- at the moment. All vegetation adjacent to the road was thus covered in a thick layer of dust, no longer green, from passing cars, trucks and motor cycles. I watched the kids along the side of the road in their clean white shirts and navy shorts or skirts turn away from our approaching car and then quickly disappear in the thick plume of dust.

We approached Tukuyu with a view of Mount Rungwe, the fourth highest mountain in Tanzania, an extinct volcano standing over 9,000 feet high. It dwarfed the surrounding mountains and accentuated the chiseled valleys not yet in full sunlight. *Nancy*

The First Week

It's good to be back where oranges are green, bananas are the size of a man's thumb, and bees are the size of my thumb. Manow is a place where we return empty bottles of Coke, where snails after a rain are bigger than softballs and where even MY knees are too alluring to show! (If you've seen my knees you know what I mean.)

We gave an entrance exam to nearly 80 kids who squished with their parents into a hot room with broken chairs and desks. If they had registered, and if they got a certain score on the exam, they were in the running. We could take only 40 of them. The next morning, the 40 were sitting in our stark, but clean classroom on creaky benches, fiddling with their new pencils, pen, eraser and exercise books.

And now, after the first week? They can (sort of) conjugate to-be and to-have verbs and name the secondary colors! They know "30-days has September" and that wet is the opposite of dry. They know where the nose is and where the toes are and that the little hand points to the hour. All in English!

And then there's the kids... Prosper is funny but talks too much. Rehema has an unfortunate sty on her eyelid, and Nancy busted Ambele (a boy) for ordering Shangwe (a girl) to clean his bench. Mariam had cramps on Thursday. Dorophina is very tall and Cosmas is very short. Anna, one of our more advanced students, makes herself very small at her desk and giggles when we call on her.

But the first week was not without intrigue and politics. One girl, so desperate to get into the class, impersonated another girl in order to get into the class. Her "real self" did not qualify. Sadly, we had to send her home.

Next week promises a number of new nouns and a veritable valley of verbs, words about the classroom and the home, and we read *The Little Baby Snoogle-Fleejer*. *Jani*

Send email!!

We would love to hear from you about how things are going for you. It keeps us in touch with life in the US. Please limit the size of the email as the system is still very slow here and crashes easily. Jani's email address is not yet working so please use mine:

Nancy: winternl@comcast.net

