
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

Johna Brems, Ginny Stern, and Suzanne Winters, and Nancy Winters

September 2017

The New Teachers

We are blessed this year with three great teachers. Johna Brems and Suzanne Winters arrived in hustle bustle of Tanzania after more than 40 hours in route from Salt Lake City, Utah. While they were a bit bleary-eyed, they brimmed with excitement to begin teaching the Pre-Form 1 English course, less than a week after their arrival in Manow. They have shared their impressions of the journey and the first few days below.

Ginny Stern, the brave soul who taught with me in our first year, arrived with us. She is piloting an English course for adults. After Suzanne and Johna finish with the classroom, Ginny will take it over three afternoons a week. She is preparing the adults for conversational English so that next July when a group comes from Olympia for a visit, the adults will be able to share their stories with us.

Nancy

Made It To Tanzania!

The beginning of my adventure has been a totally up and down experience.

Up in Salt Lake, down in Seattle. Up in of Seattle, down in Dubai. Up in Dubai, down in Dar es Salaam. Up in Dar es Salaam, down in Mbeya. Five days of ups and downs when we were picked up by Manow Lutheran School faculty. Backpacks were loaded into the Toyota Land Rover and off we went.

Two hours later we stopped in Tukuyu to shop for provisions to take to our home in Manow. Needless to say, we bought everything to clean, and eat until we could get to the market in Lwangwa the coming Saturday. Everything but the live chicken! We next purchased notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, and pencil sharpeners for 40 students. After stuffing all of that in the Land Rover, four of us crammed back in and continued the journey.

Up, up and up hills, down slightly, up again, over a couple rivers, then up...Manow! What a beautiful

village. The *karibu* (welcome) has been warm. I feel I have met almost all of the 300 plus residents. Suzanne and I are teaching Pre- Form 1 English. We have 40 students ages 11 thru 17. Every student is eager to learn English. I'm also eager to better my Swahili. I practice it and the students laugh quite a lot.

Having the opportunity to teach beautiful, Tanzanian children is an amazing gift I have been given. Thank you for generous support of The Tanzanian Teaching Foundation.

The journey continues...

Johna

Initial Musings

First, please allow me say thank you to all who have made this adventure possible with your support of me and the Tanzania Teaching Foundation. The gratitude from the community of Manow is immediately apparent, especially in the warm welcomes Johna and I have received and by the non-stop visitors during the first several days who heard "Mama Nancy" has returned and wanted to welcome her back.

The cultural shock of traveling through the affluent congestion of DuBai, the filth of Dar es Salaam, the so California-like flora of Mbeya (with a plethora of goats mixed in), to the dusty yet verdant green of Manow was, to say the least, exhausting. Upon arriving in Manow, some of my immediate observations include the warmth and friendliness of the people, the laughter of the barefoot children, and the vibrant colors of clothing.

I am already a bit conflicted about the possible roles for Westerners in this heart of Africa. We are here teaching English to improve students' success in school. Currently less than 10% of the children here complete secondary school but nearly all of the former Pre-Form I students with whom I have engaged say their favorite subjects are Physics,

Chemistry and Biology and want to pursue careers in these areas. There is little employment in Manow beyond teaching and access to even minimal health care is non-existent. In spite of the fact that those pursuing schooling and careers outside of Manow will send their earnings to Manow for family support, this leads to a serious, local “brain drain”. Having spent the last decade of my life in small business economic development, my natural inclination is to look for opportunities to provide jobs or expand the reach of the significant entrepreneurial spirit I have observed. But the radiant happiness of the people here belies their poverty. I think Westerners have a lot to learn from them.

Suzanne

Coming, Returning, and Going Forward

Coming: It is said the journey we make is as important as the destination we reach. This year’s “journey” to Tanzania has been an adventure unto itself. *Spoiler alert:* We left the states Friday September 15th and arrived at our house in Manow Tuesday September 19th – 5 days!

I met Suzanne, Johna, and Nancy at Sea Tac Friday afternoon. (Suzanne and Johna had started in the wee hours of Friday morning.) We had stops and overnights in Dubai (UAE), Dar es Salaam (TZ), and Mbeya (TZ) before arriving at Manow. It was a long journey that literally took us over the top of the world (*There is a song in there I am sure*). Cruising south from the icy north to Dubai we crossed over Finland, eastern Russia, and Iran. We spent the night in Dubai and then continued on to Tanzania. The best part of the journey came when we reached Tanzania, because on each of the next segments, we were met by old friends, some I had not seen in nine years. Tuesday night brought us to the front door of the house I called home on my previous trips. That is when the journey truly shifted from “Coming to Tanzania” to “Returning to Manow”.

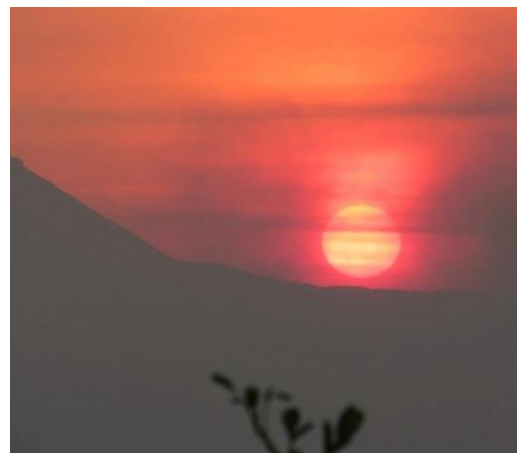
Returning: This is my third trip to Manow. The last time I was here was in 2009. I came with Nancy the first year of the TTF program. It is hard to believe it has been nine years. While at home, my memories were based on the two earlier visits. Returning to Manow, I have been confronted with a mix of the familiar and the new. Faces of friends and the lushness of Manow are much as I remembered. But

digging a little deeper, I am confronted by the impact that nine years really makes.

- Old friends are married and have children of their own.
- Students we taught have finished high school and are attending college while others are starting adult lives of their own here in the valley.
- Many of this year’s Pre-form 1 class are the brothers or sisters of the students from earlier years.

As for Manow itself, nine years bring many changes – some more subtle than others:

- The quiet mornings on the front porch before the morning bells in 2005 and 2009 were solitary moments. Early mornings are still beautiful but there are many more people traveling the footpaths to and from Manow.



The vibrant sunrise at Manow.

- The fields around our house were mostly wooded, now many have been cultivated for small local plots of corn, yams, and squash.
- There are more car and satellite dishes seen on the walk to town.
- There are more people to greet and talk with as we move about, and
- Mama Nancy is known to all.

Change happens in nine years. But what hasn’t changed is the welcome and generosity the community offer us everywhere we go. We may come as strangers and *wazungu*, but we are embraced and enfolded into Manow as old friends

returning from a sojourn abroad (even if it is the first time we are here).

Going forward:

But our time is not about the past or an exotic excursion. It is about the TTF commitment to the children of the valley and to the Manow community. It is all about going forward!

- Another year of eager Pre-Form 1 English students
- Another set of volunteers engaging with the community and building on the past successes

For me, going forward this year brings a new adventure - offering adult English classes to the local community. In addition to TTF's unfailing commitment to youth English, the program is giving me the opportunity to reach out and offer basic English to some of the adults in the community. I will support the Pre-Form 1 English volunteers but also work with adults at Manow who want to improve or build their English skills. Right now we are still working details for classes here in Manow and with the Konde Diocese in Tukuyu. I will have more to tell as the programs unfold. The goal is really simple: to continue building bridges between the Manow community and the TTF family in Olympia.

Ginny

Send email!!

We would love to hear from you about how things are going for you, and how you like the newsletters this year. We may not be able to respond as quickly as in the US, but we really like hearing from you.

Suzanne: swinters54@gmail.com

Johna: johnabrems@msn.com

Ginny: rafikisafi@gmail.com

If the newsletters inspired you to think about teaching in the program, please let Nancy know. Her email is wintersnl@comcast.net