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# TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

Laurie and Burnell Schaetzel Hill, and Ivy Metz

late October 2019

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## *Seven Degrees South*

The sun is moving across the Livingstone Mountains as the season moves with us. We are 7 degrees below the equator and the sun rises a mere 10 minutes later, even after living for 6 weeks in Manow. The daylight hours remain virtually the same: 6:25 am-6:30 pm. The field below us has corn growing now. My favorite white cow with black spots randomly visits our back door, my rebellious friend, always on the loose with its dangling rope and being chased by its owner over paths and through the corn fields. So rural are we that one day Ivy exclaimed: Look, there is a car by the church! Indeed, how long it had been since we had seen an actual car. Still, I love this rural, real Tanzanian lifestyle. Well, I don't "love" the 24 hour power outages or the one water outage from the local water tank. But we are prepared with solar lighting and extra stored water for ourselves.

The classroom warms quickly in the heat of the summer. We are thankful for 3 walls of open windows. The woodsmen have felled several trees in the forest to the side of the classroom and have completed digging a pit, and sawing those logs into 6-8 boards by hand, never stopping for 7 hours over 4 days. The man in the pit pulls the huge saw downward while the man who balanced on top pulls the saw back up, turn the logs and saw the cross cut. There are no chainsaws. The hand hewn boards will be used for rafters of a metal roof of the outdoor latrines being built nearby.

The children have finally shown a growth spurt in their learning and we are seeing some consistency in most children's sentences. Even some of the remaining children, after releasing 9 students for poor performance and tests, still struggle with all but the simplest of sentences. Initially, they wrote sentences such as: "The man is are walk sit." Or. "The teacher is are sit to chears." Or, on a quiz, when asking for them to name colors we got: fingers, stomach, and fish.

Other crazy sentences include: "Who is eating Riziki on Sunday?" (Riziki is one of our students). "How many mothers is mothers is." And "Who is a pencil?" When it comes to math problems one girl, Shukrani, calculated 48 divided by 8 equals, and, weirdly accurate, six oneth. (the fraction 6/1 which of course equals six!).

We have quite a few star students who we hope will go on the university. At this half way point, we are geared up to fast paced studies on ecology, water and nitrogen systems, sustainable farming for Tanzania, climate change, First Aid, sex education and STD prevention, and consensual sex. And more grammar.

Yesterday was Sunday. Burnell and I adventured and intuited our way to the top of Mt. Kyedjo, a nearby mountain. We crossed corn fields planted on steep hillsides, ate our way through the orange raspberry-type prickly plants (*mang'ang'a*) and had a cool lunch stop under 3 coniferous trees. Finally, on the shoulder of the mountain, we spotted a good trail that led us to a steep cinder cone, which of course we scrambled up, thanking our chosen walking sticks. We reached the top and a high ridgeline took us up our final ascent to wild irises and unknown flowers as well as the local "wildlife": yes, the grazing goats and cows. Sigh. Yet, beautiful, so many villages below, their metal roofs shining in sunlight, and we enjoyed the scenery together. Another impenetrable ridge held as yet untouched jungle, not yet cut or burned for grazing at this elevation. We heard the hornbill laughing, and saw a variety of sunbirds eating from the flame trees. We followed the long, long tail home, appreciating our steep shortcut up the mountain at the beginning of the day. After 8 long hours, we arrived home tired and hungry to find Ivy and Martin who had fresh guacamole and chapatti chips waiting for us. Life is good!

Laurie

### ***Midway Point***

We reached our half-way point Friday 10/25/19, with 5 weeks of teaching behind us and 5 weeks ahead. We have been very busy moving through the fast-paced and well-organized Pre-Form 1 English curriculum. The volume of material we're throwing at them appropriately meets the description of "drinking from a firehose." We are giving them reams of vocabulary words and challenging grammar concepts, which they are organizing in their exercise books with a table of contents for easy study reference.

The ironical event of last week was a terrible foot laceration on a wicked broken bottle fragment requiring stitches at the Manow dispensary that occurred the day following "Rules for Healthy Living"; rule #8: "Wear shoes or flip flops when outside." The student missed four days of school given the serious injury preventing her completing the 4 km walk between home and school.

We have mandated that students study 2 hours every night. Many of the students have been meeting this requirement and keeping up with the rigorous learning pace, but approximately 25% of the class don't have the study skills or home support to accomplish this critical habit. We did a quiz/exam analysis and determined 9 of 40 students were making insufficient progress, being unable to absorb this intense curriculum. It is unfair to ask them to continue with the overwhelming amount of required learning and jeopardizing the education of the remaining students.

These students were recognized with a *Certificate of Completion* for their efforts in the five week "Basic Pre-Form 1 English" program (a practice implemented for the previous four years). They will have the opportunity to continue English at a more acceptable pace in secondary school in January 2020. We celebrated everyone's accomplishments Friday with play, songs, Tangawizi (a delicious ginger soda), and shortbread biscuits. Tears were shed by some of the departing students, smiles of relief by others.

Discipline has been on ongoing and expected challenge. Would one expect otherwise with 40 young adolescents attending class 7.5 hours/day, 5 days/week of a concentrated curriculum? Our corrective measures have been escalating and we

sent three students home in week 5, for issues ranging from disrespect for other students and teachers, cheating, and generally disruptive behavior. We trust the students understand we are serious with our expectations of good learning behavior and will respond in kind for the remaining five weeks of the program. *Burnell*

### ***How are the children? The children and their teachers are persevering. Thanks for asking.***

In some African societies, the greeting asks "How are the children?" The implication is that if the children are well, the society/village is well, and I am well. We and our children have crossed the half way mark of our teaching/learning season. Eight have left us with Certificates of Participation for the Pre-Form I Basic English course. They received instruction in alphabetization and capitalization; the "to be" and "to have" verbs plus 125 other action words in the present, past, and future tenses; days, months, years; family relationships; nouns and subject, possessive, and object pronouns; vocabulary for body parts, clothing, household items, classrooms, and outdoors, animals and their sounds; and they learned how to write paragraphs, stories, and letters. Their progress was beginning to peak through, but slowly.

The other 31 will continue on as the curriculum intensifies and speeds ahead with more grammar, compound and complex sentence structure, writing summaries and stories, sustainable farming, climate change, first aid, STD and HIV prevention, and Healthy Living. Some student written sentences are providing more information, stating not only that they went to the market, but when they went, with whom, and maybe even why they went. Adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases are beginning to show up in sentences. Some students volunteer more frequently, are participating when they're unsure about whether or not they have it right, and with correct answers. Sometimes it's like pulling teeth, but when there is success, I get goosebumps and shout 'Hallelujah!'

Last week as we graded one of our daily quizzes, Laurie tapped her pen in exasperation and exclaimed "I'm tired of checking sentences about going to church, going to market! Don'tcha go anywhere else?" I thought about it for a minute and asked "Where else do WE go, Laurie?" and we both fell

out laughing. We do this often, for one reason or another. Burnell has commented that at times it seems we've returned to adolescence.

Our after work "happy hour" is peanuts or popcorn with tea or a Tangawizi (a ginger soda bottled by Coca Cola). Then we hunker down to prepare dinner and the next day's lessons. Sometimes we reflect on the day, other times, it's forbidden. We often muse about going somewhere for wine, a meal out, or ordering in; but that's for another time and place.

***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.

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