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# TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

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## ***Generosity and Good Will***

TTF teaching volunteers receive acceptance, support, and gratitude from the Manow Community that is hard to describe. Volunteers from past years know of it, but if you haven't been here, words really can't convey the generosity and good will which we experience.

At the same time, the Manow Community is receiving your generosity and good will through your moral and financial support of this teaching program. As we are warmly greeted everywhere we go and given special seats at events like graduations and weddings, we know a great portion of the honor belongs to you. We wish you could experience it more directly.

We have our students write thank you letters to sponsors who "adopt a student" (that is, made a donation that covers expenses for one student for the 10 week course). Below is a statement from one of our students in her letter.

"You have given us exercise books, pencils, pens, file folders and plastic bags. You pay for our school fees and tea. We know you have many and a lot of difficult issues but still you help us. We thank you forever for caring for us."

Other students' "thank you" letters are similar. Some acknowledge that your donations pay for all the transportation and living expenses of volunteers who teach this course. In short, our students get it! We share in their gratitude to you! *Marty*

## ***Rights of Passage***

The late October graduation ceremony for the Form 4 students was a smaller event than in past years for several reasons. First, the student body is only 82

students. Second, the school has not been able to afford to feed the parents after the event, so the parents were not invited. But the numbers in attendance did not reflect the intensity of the celebration.

For me the graduation was a very special event. Half of the 12-person graduation class had been in our 2019 Pre-Form 1 English class. I know each of these wonderful young people, from my time getting Laurie, Ivy, and Burnell settled in Manow, and from the glimpses of them that I get from the letters they write to their sponsor. I also know a full quarter of the student body because TTF people are sponsors are supporting them. Knowing so many students in and of itself made the event fun. The students of all four classes displayed their talents with songs, dances, a fashion show that brought many giggles, and an allegorical skit featuring three of last year's Pre-Form 1 English graduates – Peacemaker as the distraught father of a rebellious daughter (Anifa), and Bariki as the shaman who channeled the craziness of the Rafiki character in the Lion King. The conclusion of the skit had to be summarized after a half hour because – as is typical of these ceremonies – we were running 2 hours behind schedule.

Marty, Jordan and I were honored at the head table to hear Mwakaje's key note address. He admonished the graduates to stay away from drugs and to care for the environment - both messages after my own heart.

The celebration concluded with a 4 pm lunch of pilau (the national spiced rice dish) chicken, beef in scrumptious tomato sauce, cooked cabbage, carrots, and onions, and soda. A super treat for all! I returned home with uplifted by feelings of the

promise of these students and my love for them. I will hold the memory of this graduation in a special place in my heart.

*Nancy*

### ***Community***

The Manow Community is special! We experienced a full measure of it a couple of weekends ago. On Saturday we attended a wedding and reception – 6 hours of celebration. We didn't understand the Swahili or Nyakusa, but we surely felt the happiness and joy. The groom was in the next generation of a family of eight surviving sibling, all of whom we've gotten to know well over the years. Both of the groom's parents have passed away, but he is totally supported and embraced by his aunts and uncles, as are his two siblings. The family used every excuse to get out from under the tents and dance in celebration of the marriage --despite the steady rain.

The next day Jordan and I took a long hike to the highest volcanic peak in the area. TTF's 2009 scholarship student, Elieza, was our guide. He led us up the traditional way from Manow, but then took us off the back side of the mountain into new areas for us. We left the sparse vegetation on the mountain ridge and entered a dense forest. We were not seeing houses or fields that high on the mountain. Suddenly, we came to a group of about 100 people at a celebration of life gathering. It was raining and they had tarps set up and a couple of fires going with lots of talking and laughing. They had a big pot of *makande* (corn and bean stew) tended by a group of women under one tarp. The women motioned us over and ladled out steaming bowls of the stew for us. We were very tempted but were slightly chilled by the rain. We tried to convey that we had to keep moving to stay warm. They seemed disappointed.

We marveled at their generosity to complete strangers; Elieza just said, "that's usual, it's the way we are." We walked another hour before we started to see houses. Why all those people gathered in such a remote place for their celebration is one of the mysteries this place holds from us. The joy and happiness of people here is another mystery, but it

must spring in some large part from the mutual support and cooperation their community gives.

*Marty*

### ***University Graduation***

Before the start of the ninth week of the course, we attended the graduation of one of Marty's former students. Godi, short for Godlove, is Ngwitika's son and he was graduating from university in geography and language. He is awaiting appointment to a teaching position. It was an honor to be invited because Ngwitika helps us so much and Godi helps deliver the tea for our students every day. It felt good to give back to them for all of their hard work.

The graduation itself was not what we expected, as are most social events in Tanzania. We arrived in Mbeya to the home of Godi's step mom, where friends and family were gathering at 11 in the morning. After doing some shopping in Mbeya, we arrived at the university at 2 in the afternoon and waited until 4:30 to eat, just then realizing that there we had not come for the ceremony which had taken place earlier that morning. We were simply waiting for everyone to finish cooking. We arrived early with the intention of watching a ceremony, and all that happened was waiting around to eat. From my experience there is nothing more Tanzanian than that! Hah!

At the end of the lunch, which was the size of an American Thanksgiving, the cake was brought out. (cake is only for very special occasions here). Then Godi thanked everyone who had a part in his upbringing which as very special to witness. In conclusion, my first Tanzanian university graduation was not what I expected but it was an honor to take part in it.

*Jordan*

### ***Send email!!***

We would love to hear from you. We may not be able to respond as quickly as in the US, but we really like hearing from you.

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