

My Lifetime Education Experience *in East Africa*



I wish to thank, from the bottom of my heart and on behalf of my group, all the people who willingly gave monetary donations to this mission, especially my BC Notary colleagues George Tanco, Cathy Yong, Stella Davis, Devika and Sanjay Mehta, and Esther Chiu, and some of my clients. The priests will use the donations for their work in Igadene, Kionyo, Meru, and Ussongo.

The Adventure

From September 15, 2004, to October 9, 2004, the Pastor of St. Augustine's Parish, Vancouver, BC, and 10 parishioners spent time in East Africa on a mission, organized by Neysa Finnie, our leader in this adventure. Neysa had previously been in Ussongo, Tanzania, with Habitat Canada and had helped build houses in a village in Ussongo.

Before we left, we had vaccinations, bought medications to help keep us healthy during our trip, and collected school, medical, and religious supplies and toys.

It is 9 hours to Amsterdam and another 9 to Nairobi. There, we stayed overnight at the Methodist Guest House and although we arrived late at night, the staff was helpful and courteous. At 7:30, we were up for breakfast, Western style, with lots of tropical fruit, then enjoyed a quick tour of Nairobi.

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Then our two vehicles, loaded with people, luggage, and lots of bottled water, laboured along the narrow, bumpy, winding roads and hills to Igadene, the parish of Frère Ken, head of missionaries in Kenya.

Frère Ken shared his home and prepared breakfast for us: fresh fruit—including pineapples, bananas, papayas; boiled or scrambled eggs; toast; coffee; and hot milk. For dinner, the cooks—local ladies and very beautiful—prepared ugale



Students in Meru, Kenya

(mashed potatoes and corn) and marinated beef and chicken.

We had our own comfortable beds with blankets tucked tightly in. And we had mosquito nets. Because their water is scarce, we were told not to flush the toilet unless it was essential. And hot water did not come out of the taps very well so I usually cold-showered. No complaints; this was a mission.

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The first time I saw the locals, I felt safe and comfortable. The people are gorgeous, courteous, and generous and their generosity is genuine. They were eager to shake hands and give us hugs.

Working from the Igadene and Kionyo parishes, we visited people in Catholic churches in various villages. In two primary schools and a secondary school, we learned about the Water Shed Project that Frère Ken is working on with CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency] to bring water to the area. Teachers and students walk to school, some for an hour each way. The students are ambitious and smart. One primary school is top-ranked in Africa in terms of student success.

In Africa, women do the hard work, like farming, fetching water—miles and miles away from their homes—and wood-picking for their huts and cooking. Men do the sewing and build the huts. We saw men gathered around smoking, while women in the fields picked tea leaves for processing.

On our way to the tea factory, we stopped where women were harvesting tea; some had babies on their backs. The work is labour-intensive. They pick a few branches from each plant, then move to the next plant, to the next row, up or down the mountainside.

Later, we visited the women at the baking co-op. Although doing well, the bakery cannot go to full production because they have no vehicle to transport their goods.



Students in Meru, Kenya



In a village in Kenya



Students from St. Thomas Aquinas secondary school in Ussongo, in front of a typical clay-brick house with grass roof

