

# Spotlight on Orphans



## Uganda or Bust!

*By Pat Reese*

My excitement was beginning to build as the time for my trip to Uganda drew near. Three days before my departure date, my excitement turned to panic when I came down with the flu. I still had a million things to do. How would I ever be ready in time when I could hardly get out of bed? Two days before departure, I found that my first flight had been cancelled and in order to keep from missing my other flights I would have to leave a day earlier. Ahhh! Now how would I ever get ready?

With my husband's assistance, I made it to the airport by 5:00 a.m. on February 27, only to find out that the flight they had told me to take was full and I would have to fly on another airline to Atlanta to catch a flight to Chicago. From there, the flights (routed through Germany and Addis Ababa) went smoothly and within forty-eight hours of leaving home, I met Esther in Entebbe, Uganda. Unfortunately, though I thought I had recovered sufficiently from the flu to make the trip, I found I was not very well after all. So many take-offs and landings seriously affected my sinuses. When I saw Esther as I descended the ramp with my overflowing luggage cart, I felt great relief that my long journey was finally over and someone was there to meet me.

My first glimpse of the beautiful country of Uganda was a view of Lake Victoria from the airplane window. Even though I was quite ill, the anticipation was building. What experiences awaited me in this beautiful place?

Those experiences started immediately as we left the airport, with our driver driving us through Kampala on some errands. What an experience! I've been told they have rules for driving here, but I was unable to determine what they might be. It looked like complete chaos to me, with people, cars, bicycles and motorcycles all going in every direction. The drivers have to be very skillful to avoid accidents. In fact, later, we heard of some very serious accidents in which several people were killed.

One such accident took place just a short distance from Bridge of Hope Center and claimed the life of a cousin to one of the workers there. As we viewed the glass-strewn road from this head-on collision between a 14-passenger taxi and a 29-passenger minibus, I couldn't help thinking of the number of children walking along the roads going to and from school, as well as all the boda-bodas carrying their passengers. The effects of such an accident can include many innocent people.

After reading Vicki's article in the last issue, I see that my experiences so far have been very similar to hers. I was overwhelmed by the gracious reception we received when we arrived at Pastor Musungu's home that first evening. Children came running out, so excited to see us. Each girl took my hand and knelt down to greet me with, "How are you?" Even the women here in Uganda greet in this manner and it is especially sweet to see the very tiny girls doing so. Even girls of six or eight, with babies carried on their backs, will kneel down to greet a visitor.

Once we were finished greeting everyone, we were asked if we wanted a bath. It felt so good to bathe after two long days of traveling. After bathing, food was served. The women and children ate in the "dining room," (seated on the floor as there is no table) and we ate in the living room with the pastor. The girls knelt down as they brought in each dish. I believe they treat all guests in this manner but it felt like we were royalty.

The days since have become a blur of interviewing widows and orphans. Some of the widows we visited are Rwandan refugees who live very far out of Kampala. The roads are extremely rough; often only a two-track. Sometimes I couldn't even tell where the road was supposed to be. There are huge ruts, gullies and rocks all over the roads. One time we got stuck badly enough that we needed help from the villagers to get out because our own pushing was not sufficient.

After we got free of the mud, the driver let me drive for awhile. It was an experience trying to maneuver a small Toyota car through the ruts, rocks and holes all over the road. As we were riding on these roads, we decided that Toyota should come and make a commercial to show people how tough their cars are. The drivers here will put the cars through places we would never attempt. I think I would have to walk everywhere if I lived here because driving is not anything like what I am used to.

I knew that we would be visiting very poor people, but I was not prepared for how some of these people live. So many of them have absolutely nothing and sleep on straw or rags. Some have roofs that let water pour in. Others have no latrines or just broken down remnants. Some go to neighbors to beg for food. Some of the houses are falling over and are propped up with poles. No matter how poor they are, they greet us kindly and give us the best seat they have. Several times we have been offered gifts of food, which I am sure they could not spare.

Everywhere we stop people come from all over to see us. They want help and to have their pictures taken. The children are all so sweet and want attention. They tell us how well they are doing in their classes. I would love to have time to play and get to know each one, but we have so much to accomplish in a short time.

Some of the places we visited were so remote that they must not see “musungus” (white people) very often. One little boy, just big enough to walk, came with his sister to see the commotion we had caused in their village. The poor little fellow didn’t notice me until I looked up from what I was doing. When he saw my face, he was terrified. He started screaming and ran home as fast as he could. Of course I felt bad, so I gave his sister a treat to give to him.

After our work was finished in the Kampala area, we drove to Mbale to visit Pastor Mukhooli and the children at Bridge of Hope Center. It took several hours to drive even though the road was good. The countryside is gorgeous. (I would have asked the driver to stop every few minutes for pictures, but I knew we didn’t have the time.) One thing we did take time to stop for was a troupe of baboons by the road. We rolled down the car windows enough to feed them some bananas. Their manners were terrible as the biggest ones scrambled to get them away from the younger ones. As hard as we tried to include the little ones, we were not able to succeed. One time we came close and the privileged little baboon was soundly beaten and ran off screaming into the forest. That took a bit of the joy out of the experience for us but we did treasure our short visit with the baboons.

Since reaching Mbale, things have again been a blur of visiting and interviewing. I have been excited as we interview the widows to see that there are things that they would like to do to help support themselves if they had some capital to get started. We saw widows weaving mats and purses which they want to sell. Others would like to sell produce. It was wonderful to see hope come into their eyes when we told them that we would do our best to help them get started on the road to self-sufficiency.

There is one grandmother in particular that I would like to tell you about. This lady is old and extremely poor, but is willing to work to help support herself and her grandson. She said that if she had just a few shillings, she could buy a quantity of bananas and sell them to the people who pass by her house. When we learned that there truly was a need for a “banana lady” in the village, we were happy to give her the forty shillings necessary for her to begin her business the very next day.

In the evenings I have a little time to get to know the children at Bridge of Hope. The children there are very bright and loving. They are curious about us and love to ask us questions. Of course, we ask them many questions as well. We have enjoyed learning about each other.

One of my favorite things has been handing out the clothing, toys and sweets that we brought with us. On the way, it seemed like I had a lot of luggage. My bags were full of things to give away. Now, it all seems like such a small amount among so many. The people are so appreciative for every little thing we give to them. They thank us over and over. We are sure to tell them about the generous people in America who have sent the things to them.

I, also, am very appreciative to those of you who made it possible for me to have this experience. I hope I can be a great benefit to this ministry because of the knowledge I have gained here. I know that when I get home, I will have many things to work on. Our heads are spinning with ideas and information that we have gained. I pray that we will be able to use this knowledge to help the people we have been working for, and that God will continue to bless our efforts.

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## BLESSINGS UPON BLESSINGS

By Esther McDaniel

“What a beautiful country,” I exclaim as we speed down the smooth roads of Uganda. “That’s why it is known as ‘The Pearl of Africa,’” our driver volunteers proudly.

The smooth roads are a welcome relief from the rugged ones we have experienced throughout Kenya but I’m a bit apprehensive as I keep my eye on the speedometer: 120... 130... surely that must be kilometers (not miles) per hour. With the same peripheral road conditions existing as in Kenya, including even more bicycles and motorbikes (boda-bodas if they carry passengers), I can’t help feeling some concern but I breathe a silent prayer and say nothing. My privileged front row seat seems both a blessing and a curse. I’m glad God is in control.

Everywhere I look I see green. Banana groves are plentiful. Rice, sweet potatoes, cassava and coffee are also grown in abundance.

Something else that grabs my attention is the presence of smoke curling skyward from numerous brick kilns, as far as the eye can see. We are fascinated by the mechanics of this local industry and grateful to the snickering Ugandans who allow these ignorant Americans to take photographs of such mundane operations.

Though this is my second visit to Uganda, it is the first time I’ve traveled very extensively within its borders. I knew that visiting all of the widows we are working with in Mbale and Kampala would entail a lot of travel but I was not prepared for the fact that Pastor Fred Musungu had moved his family two-and-a-half to three hours’ driving time out of Kampala. To complicate things further, he had moved in the opposite direction from Entebbe—where we had to go to meet Pat Reese’s plane. Consequently, our travel expenses in Uganda were significantly increased over our expectations.

I should explain that Pastor Musungu’s move was necessitated by our inability to cover the cost of rent in Kampala for his increasing family. Since we are well aware of the problem of orphans in East Africa, it is not surprising that the number of orphans living with Pastor Musungu has increased from five to twelve and they have begun referring to their home as the Maranatha Children’s Center. (Unfortunately, we cannot allow them to expand further in spite of the many orphans knocking at their gate.) I am happy to be able to report that they have found a very beautiful home in the country to rent at a reasonable rate and that the children are healthy, happy and productive members of the family.

On the other hand, the children at Bridge of Hope Center were evicted from their spacious rented home just shortly before our arrival because the landlord wished to renovate the structure they were living in. This forced them to move into a nearby home that is much too small for their needs. We found some of them staying in the homes of neighbors due to the crowded conditions. There are several possible solutions currently being considered but we must not rest until BOHC also has a permanent home.

I cannot begin to express the blessings that have come to this ministry through the generosity of those who gave so generously to make this trip possible. There are so many experiences and photos we want to share with you. Surely we will never be able to cover it adequately but we intend to do our best in subsequent issues of this newsletter.

I would like to devote a bit of space here to thank my fellow travelers for their sacrifices and contributions in time and/or funds to help us achieve the goals we set for this mission trip. It has truly been a whirlwind of activity the whole time but very gratifying to watch

things come together and to gain a new understanding of conditions and needs at each of our projects.

You already know Vicki Kritzell and the blessing she has been to this ministry from the beginning of our work with orphans. I know you will be greatly blessed as she shares with you her first-hand knowledge of our projects. Unfortunately, she was only able to spend three short weeks visiting Kenya but already she has moved mountains upon her return in her efforts to raise the necessary funds to supply the needs she observed. Vicki's presence in Kenya will have many lasting effects for the ministry.

Steve Reiners of Minnesota also accompanied Vicki and me to Kenya and returned when Vicki did. Steve has been an educator for forty years and his love for children was very evident. It was wonderful to have him along to brainstorm with and just to love the children. I am looking forward to touching base with him upon my return to see what further insights he has to offer us.

LaQuita Thurman is another person who has been traveling with us. In fact, she arrived at our projects about a week before we did. Her visit came about in a rather interesting manner. Barb Spencer, whose family sponsors one of our widows, was very interested in helping us to get some health education to our administrators. Since I have also realized the need for such education, I was very happy to hear her suggestions. In a land where libraries are almost non-existent, where Internet access is expensive and where TV is much easier to obtain, is it any wonder that the people are gullible to the advertising they see everywhere. "Drink [a certain brand of beer]. You deserve it after a long hard day," shouts a large billboard, for example.

Barb knew of a couple who teach health classes and who travel to many places to give lectures so she contacted them to see if they would consider a trip to East Africa. They informed her that they were already leaving for Ghana the very next week. Then they told her about LaQuita.

LaQuita is a young woman from the state of Washington who attended one of the workshops. She has also attended other workshops and studied many health principles on her own as well. Furthermore, LaQuita's mother is Kenyan and she and her mother had already planned a trip to Kenya to allow LaQuita to meet her mother's relatives, whom she had never had the privilege of meeting. When LaQuita was contacted, she was excited about the prospect of lengthening her stay in Africa to include teaching some health principles at our various projects and to learn more about her mother's people. We, on the other hand, were grateful that her airline ticket was already covered. It seemed Providential.

Hearth to Hearth Ministries has been blessed in many ways by LaQuita's service. She was able to share eight basic health principles with each of our widows' families, as well as treat various injuries and infections of the children who gathered wherever we went. Her hydrotherapy treatments have been a help to several as well. One of our young workers at Glory Center has been suffering with back pain for nearly six months. The pain and frustration brought her to tears as she told us about her problem. Through the simple means of a hot water fomentation, God relieved her suffering almost instantly.

LaQuita and I were joined in Uganda by Pat Reese. Most of you are aware that Pat Reese is our treasurer for the Uganda projects. When Pat arrived, she was so ill and exhausted from her long journey that I hardly recognized her. After a night's rest, she felt better but was still weak. Our schedule was tight, however, and Pat did not want to be left out. I was grateful because I also felt it im-

portant that she be involved in the process of visiting the widows. Even though she wasn't able to fully participate that first week, she did absorb a great deal of what was going on around her. In that way she gained knowledge that will greatly benefit both her and the ministry. By her second week she was feeling much better.

Vicki mentioned in her article of last month that she had lost her glasses down the latrine. Unfortunately, this was not the only mishap of this trip. Somehow, in downloading Vicki's Hope Center photos from her camera onto my laptop, the photos were lost. I will never understand how this happened but I did learn an important lesson—never delete photos from a camera until a CD of those photos has been made. Fortunately, I was returning to Hope Center anyway and the photos of the children have been retaken. Regrettably, this does not, of course, replace the other special photos that Vicki had taken at Hope Center. Sadly, some things just can never be replaced.

Both my laptop and LaQuita's have suffered viruses; apparently from our interaction with the email bureaus and the fact that our antivirus protections had expired. LaQuita's phone was stolen out of her pocket at a busy stage (a place where vans congregate to take on passengers) in Kisumu upon our return from Uganda. In the overall scheme of things, these are mere bumps in the road of life. They throw us off track for a short time but life eventually moves on. I'm sure I speak for all of us when I say that the blessings we have experienced have far outweighed our losses.

One of the major blessings that has come from this trip occurred at the Glory Children's Center. This was the first project we visited upon our arrival and we soon discovered that they had absolutely no source of fresh drinking water for the children. As LaQuita gave her health talks, and as we discussed various cases of illness, the importance of drinking plenty of fresh, clean water was stressed many times.

I had been aware, from my very first visit, that most Africans do not drink much water and I had become convinced that this fact has resulted in very many of the illnesses they experience. I was not prepared, however, for the revelation that our children were drinking almost no water! For so many cases of illness our prescription was, "Give him/her two glasses of water and see what happens." The results were easily seen.

Imagine my joy upon my return to Glory Center, preparatory to returning home, to discover that two fifty-five-gallon drums have been installed to hold fresh drinking water. They are each equipped with a faucet that allows the children to drink from them freely. The water is treated with Water Guard for safety. Already they are reporting fewer cases of illness. What a thrilling sight to see the children, cups in hand, obtaining their share of this life-giving liquid. Thank you so much to those of you who provided the funds for this most necessary addition to their Center. At Hope for Children Center, I was pleased to see their new gate installed. What a blessing these improvements are! Again, a big thank you to those who made these things possible.

In addition to these improvements at our two major projects, I have also learned that the money has come in for the dormitories at Good Samaritan Center, as well as enough funds to begin construction on the dormitory for Glory Center. God has truly been blessing!

In our next issue we hope to share with you some of the exciting things we learned while visiting our widows in Uganda. Hopefully we can also share many experiences and photos. Much will depend upon the financial picture and how much is available for funding the printing of that issue.

(Continued bottom of next page.)

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## The Last Word

### PILLOWLESS IN EAST AFRICA

By: LaQuita Thurman

In my travels through Uganda and Kenya, I have found that many of the comforts of Western Society can be lived without. The term "country living" has come to have a whole new meaning to me. That is not to say that we Westerners don't have great benefits, we just don't realize how many everyday necessities can be lived without at no great loss to us. Really, if you would have told me that I would get used to sleeping without a pillow, I would have probably laughed. In America advertisers spend millions of dollars trying to convince us that we need special pillows to sleep well at night. I have found that my fleece jacket makes a great pillow, and if I need to wear my fleece during the night no cushion for my head also works.

I really appreciate the letter that Paul wrote to the Philippians in chapter four, versus eleven through thirteen. In this chapter he shares his personal experience of living with abundance and living with the minimal. He writes: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." This text is great comfort to me, especially in the mission field. When the Lord called us to go to the four corners of the earth to share the gospel, He never said the experience would be like a vacation.

It has been very stressful to be away for two months visiting places with no electricity, as well as not having access to adequate email services. I am now nearing the end of my sojourn in this land and looking forward to returning to my home and family.

I am extremely thankful for our staff of dedicated volunteers who have kept things going in my absence. Pat Kroeger, the Director of our Finance Department, deserves special recognition for her untiring labor. Without her efficient and dependable service, this trip would not have been possible. We are very blessed to have her on our team.

There are many blessings and challenges while being in the mission field, but the blessing of being an instrument for the glory of God supersedes the difficult moments.

I am amazed as I look around, absorb, and contemplate the culture of the people of Uganda and Kenya. In spite of the growing number of orphans, widows over burdened with caring for children and grandchildren, poverty, degradation, and tribal wars, the smiles on the people's faces make a cloudy day brighter. Surely they are very aware of their condition. I believe the key to their joy is the Lord. The Bible says, "The joy of the Lord is our strength." The people of East Africa love to sing praises to God. They laugh and sing and enjoy every minute of life God has given them. Everywhere you look you can see signs, billboards, or vehicles with statements like "God is Great," "The Lord is able," "Trust in the Lord," "Praise God," etc. It seems that in all the hustle and bustle of everyday life one can look up and be encouraged by the messages all around, calling the believer to trust in God.

The time so far spent while here in a foreign land has been challenging, inspiring, breath taking, and life changing for me. I am very thankful to the Lord that He has allowed me the privilege to represent Him to the people of East Africa. Also, I would like to thank Barb Spencer and family for supporting me by being my sponsor on my first mission trip to Africa. I also want to thank the Hearth to Hearth Ministries Board for allowing me to volunteer for your ministry. May the good Lord multiple the seeds of love that have been planted in the lives of the orphans and widows of East Africa and bring forth a great harvest for the glory of His kingdom. )!(

Each of the project treasurers have also been indispensable and Laura Sauer is another who could not have been done without. She is the one who took care of getting the March issue from the printer, keeping the mailing list updated, and mailing that issue out. Please forgive us if this issue is a bit later than usual. Trying to get it ready without electricity to run my laptop has been a challenge.

All in all, this has been a wonderful trip. What a privilege we have each had to be laborers together with God! You are also privileged to be co-sharers in the blessings of this trip. )!(