

Notes from Tanzania

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Why did I want to go to Tanzania? It is the primordial call to our past and our present and I want to see, smell the earth, walk on the land. Also, several years ago I decided I would not have fear rule my life, hence be open to whatever comes up or make change happen.

So when my daughter-in-law mentioned that she was going to the Mufindi village clinic as part of her residency in family medicine, I asked if I could come along.

She and my son, Andy, have been here before but Andy cannot come now as his anaesthesiology residency is not as flexible. Gail speaks Swahili as she was a peace corp. volunteer in Tanzania, at Makembako, between Mbeya and Mafinga, a few years ago. I am excited beyond words and am grateful to them both for giving me this opportunity.

First Leg:

I seem to have lost the first part of my journey, so here is a recap. Left Comox, B.C., early Monday the 16th of November 2015, and flew to Vancouver. Pouring with rain as we disembark and then very cold inside at the gate for the Air Canada flight to Seattle. Everyone is cold, even the staff is wearing heavy jackets. Board after a 3 hr. wait and again get thoroughly drenched just running to the plane.

Warm in Seattle...wonderful. Hot shower is the best. Don't sleep well and am up and heading for the airport at 5:45 am. Gail booked our tickets through Travelocity and when I tried to check in from the hotel was told that I was not listed. Two hours on the phone confirmed from Qatar that I was indeed on the list but American says no. Decide to get to the airport in plenty of time with my ticket number, etc. to enable American to find me.

It turns out there is no problem. Qatar has straightened it out. Never use travelocity....have had trouble before with hotel reservations.

Off to Chicago. Arrive on time with Qatar agent waiting to direct me to the right terminal. This is not easy. Short on time, I try to write the directions while getting to Gail's gate so we can rush together to find the shuttle to the right terminal. At the shuttle gate we go through no less than four passport checks before boarding. If we miss the shuttle we miss the

flight. Crazy situation. Then at the gate, a long wait and several checks again. Many people of different colour, shape and language.

At last we board on a huge 770-300. The flight was not as bad as I expected. Food was quite good and service wonderful. I managed to sleep a few hours. Gail who had worked all night, getting off late, with only 1 hour sleep before boarding for Chicago, sleeps most of the night.

Doha, Qatar:

Glitz.....hajabs with many wonderful designs in gold, silver and different colours. Women in groups flutter by. Fabrics vary with some light and airy and others looking quite dense. We look for an advertised family quiet room and find one. It is reasonably comfortable, but cold. Gail curls up on the floor and is out. I am focused on the variety of travelers coming in and out. Six hours later we head for our gate to Dar es Salaam.

Doha airport is huge and very posh. It's a long walk to our gate, but it feels great to be physically moving. We board. It is dark. It was dark when we left Chicago, dark when we landed in Doha, and dark when we leave. It is a 6 hr. flight to Dar es Salaam, but I am unable to sleep. I am flying over this vast continent of Africa and I watch the sun rise over this totally new world for me.

Tanzania, Africa

DAR es Salaam:

DAR...is oppressively hot. Long wait to get our visas but eventually get out of the security area and are met by a contact of Gail's. Winnie is handling our transfer on to Fastjet at 4pm., a five-hour wait. Gail gets a phone for us. I go to the ATM to get Tanzanian shillings. Everything takes a long time.

The people are so varied...beautiful variations in skin colour. Many people whom I assume are tourists. But I don't know. Not in big groups, but individuals.

Would love to go out and walk, But it is midday and very hot and I am very tired as I have now been travelling over 40 hours.

We eventually get to a nice restaurant upstairs where it is cooler and we

are able to sit out our time drinking water and eating.

President Magufuli is giving his inaugural address and it is on the TV. There are many people paying close attention.

I am so grateful for Gail. Being able to speak Swahili and making the contacts which make our way easier, is enormously helpful, besides being a great companion. Check-in with Fastjet for Mbeya and the boarding line is jammed. Then onto the jet. It is all exhausting and so exciting. I don't know which is taking the biggest toll...the constant flying and subsequent jet lag or my excitement.

We have decided to take the route via Mbeya as Gail has good friends here that she wants to see. Dietrich meets the plane and takes us by taxi to his home. Mbeya is windy. Apparently it is always windy. I am grateful for the wind as the taxi ride through jammed streets full of bumps and twists and unbelievable diesel fumes is making me car sick. This is truly Africa. Bicycles laden with roofing, wood, food, a mattress, all share the road. Sometimes it is hard to find the driver under the load. Throngs of people. Women carrying loads on their heads dressed in bright designs, all wearing a shawl-like cloth wrapped about for carrying children and anything else. I learn they are called Kangas and carry babies and children and are also another layer for modesty. Busses, bikes, pedestrians, trucks and cars all vie for space on the road, all at top volume, but very slow as the traffic is dense. It is very hot.

At last we get to Deitrich's home. It is out of the city on what passes for a road. Very slow going to get here. Road full of holes and ruts from the rains and much dodging to arrive safely. Cattle everywhere, fields with women digging, ant-hill like structures which are kilns for baking the clay bricks from which all homes are made. We are greeted by Deitrich's wife with their 10 month old son. She is a truly beautiful woman in every sense. A short greeting for me, and I am in bed under mosquito netting. I started taking doxycillin in Dar for malaria protection. In the night I wake up, take the headlamp and try to find the bathroom to use the squat. Little chickens dart across the floor startled by someone moving about and the light. Back under the mosquito net, wind flapping against the ubiquitous blue tarps covering all the windows. Shortly thereafter a rooster wakes up. He seems as confused about the time as I am. It is not even predawn.

Up just after 8 am and I take a bucket shower. These are very kind, lovely, people. Deitrich is a teacher. Actually, he is a biochemist, but it is hard to find a job as such, so he is teaching. He and Gail have long conversations.

The house is built of the local clay bricks and is quite cool. Ceilings are 10 feet high and the roof is peaked and as it is still unfinished, covered with tarp. We eat breakfast, pack all five of us into a taxi and head down to Mbeya so that Gail and I can catch a bus to Mafinga where we will connect with Sele, a taxi driver, who in turn will drive us to Mufindi.

The bus: Nganga Express

I have changed out of trousers into a dress. Anyone who has travelled on a local bus in a foreign country will understand just how it is. After Deitrich doing the necessary negotiating re the ticket price, Gail and I board. I am washed with the different smells, not all of them pleasant. A young man tells me that he wants to marry Gail. I tell him that she is married to my son. He is very taken aback. Food, people, children packed in a very hot environment. People keep getting on. Gail and I are seated separately mid bus and I am amazed at all the people that keep going by us. There can't be that many seats back there. I begin to wonder if the journey for some is to come in the front and go out a rear door for it seems impossible for the bus to hold so many people. I then understand. In the max 12" space that makes up the aisle, there is a jump seat. Plastic bags on the floor, then the jump seat is put down and then more luggage. And so it goes along with luggage racks and aisles overstuffed with belongings. We are squashed. Fortunately I really like African music as it is playing at full volume. Delightful small children spend a lot of time staring at Gail and me. Finally, after much haggling and further squashing, we are off, not any spare space. I am glad I cannot see up ahead for the driver seems to go at breakneck speed and they drive on the left side here and I am constantly thinking we are going to smash headlong into another truck.

We stop at many little places along the way and each time people climb over one another to get out, shift about, reload, and we are off again. Two very round nuns end up sitting behind me. I am reminded of The Canterbury Tales. The nuns are jolly and lean over to return my hat which has blown off as I open the window. However, they were apparently not so polite with Gail.

It is a bit disconcerting sitting by the window as flying objects whiz past my head on their way out the window. Empty bottles and food scraps being disposed of.

Finally it is our stop. I feel a small sense of panic as I try to negotiate over bodies and luggage, carrying my overnight bag and handbag, trying not to trip and fall because I can't just hitch up my skirt. I am afraid I will still be

struggling and climbing over bodies and the bus will take off.

Sele, our driver is here to meet us in Mafinga. We are much late. There is a lot of discussion in Swahili as our four pieces of luggage, all heavy, are in the back of the bus under many other pieces. At last they come through a back window while the passengers duck. After a quick pit stop and cup of tea, we are off. I am so relieved. A great experience which I am so glad to have had and so glad to be over.

Later Gail tells me that ordinarily the bus would have people hanging on the sides and on the roof. It is just that we have several police checks on the way and for this reason they are only carrying passengers inside the bus.

Mufindi

Lovely country. Could be in mid forest in USA or Canada. Pine trees, tall eucalyptus, and vast tracks of logged land. Also reforestation. Beautiful vast, dense, forest landscape. It is only a two-hour journey to Mufindi but I get car sick. Much up and down and winding. Mufindi is high, about 7.000+ feet! Higher than Denver.

We pass tea fields with lovely patterns marking the different varieties. It is evening and workers are taking their huge baskets of leaves to be weighed. After weighing, the tea is spread out on large drying racks.

In the dusk the scenery is breathtaking. We continue to climb and are now at the village. I meet Jenny Peck and Geoff Knight and Amari Alexander. Jenny and Geoff run the NGO here and Amari works with them as a volunteer coordinator. I am awed with the whole operation.

Friday..

Today I am beginning to feel about 70% alert. There is so much to see, people to talk to. Jenny takes us around the little village to each of the houses. Each house is for orphans of different ages. Children rush out to meet us and are very happy to see Jenny who picks up and holds many, remembers all names and the history of each. She passes on all the medical information to Gail i.e. failure to thrive, malnutrition, HIV, cancer, etc. The children are happy and healthy. It is a good place with lots of care and affection.

Most of the orphans are those of HIV parents who have died. HIV

nationally in Tanzania is about 6-8%. Here in the Iringa region it is about 15%. The NGO's project consists of 16 villages where the total incidence of HIV is about 35%. The incidence is high here because this particular area is a "perfect storm" as

1. It has a migrant population with disposable income from employment with the lumbering industry and tea plantations;
2. There is a lack of education generally and specifically about HIV; and
3. There is a lack of treatment facilities.

Many of the children in the orphanage are from a remaining parent whose partner has died of HIV and is struggling and unable to care for the child or children. Some ask if their child can stay at the Orphanage for an indefinite amount of time until a relative who can take the child can be located. Also, HIV is transmitted from mother to child and it is essential to get the newborn on treatment as soon as possible.

In Tanzania, an orphan is defined as a child with one or no parents. Children that live in the orphanage or children's center/Village, as it is now referred to, are orphans and vulnerable children of parents who have died of HIV or have opportunistic diseases, i.e. pneumonia, cancer, etc. and are unable to care for their children. Most of the children living in the children's' village have come from extreme circumstances and do not have any remaining relatives to care for them. A social welfare officer asks that a child or children be placed in the children's' center for an indefinite length of time, mostly long term for the educational advantages.

One-third to one-quarter of the population are HIV infected. If an individual is under treatment, the virus is less likely to be passed on. Major preventative difficulties exist inasmuch as the church states that wearing a condom is bad for you and a sin. Condoms are easy to buy and medical personnel are constantly combating the sin issue as well as it is forbidden by the church to have premarital sex. But as abstinence is so unnatural and has never been very popular anywhere, young people are having sex but do not want anyone to know that they are having sex, and therefore hesitate to buy condoms.

Not all the churches are of the same mind. The Lutheran missionaries are very good educators and very proactive in spreading condoms. There are many Christian denominations, most of which have their very conservative elements along with their very proactive liberal sides. Not an easy situation for the medical teams teaching family planning.

We then go see the new clinic building where Gail will be working when she and Dr. Leena* are not in the outreach villages. It is small but impressive. There is also a part time dentist from Sweden, Dr. Bodil*, who comes and goes during the year. Dr. Leena is a Finnish paediatrician who is here six months of the year. A paediatrician and a dentist here part time every year and other visiting medical people coming through such as Gail.

I meet some of the teachers I will be working with, walk about a bit. I see a rabbit. The first wildlife I have seen. It makes me laugh. People come to Alaska to see wildlife and sometimes only see a rabbit. I will not, absolutely will not come back from Africa and have seen only a rabbit. I am going to try to arrange to go on a small safari. I never have been wild about rabbits anyway.

The Tanzanian highlands, where we are, are beautiful. The land seems endless and it is, as Africa is a huge continent. I hear many different bird songs and see a few varieties. Am going to locate a bird book. All colour here is very intense and the jacaranda tree is in bloom with it's purple flowers draped from top to bottom and is spectacular. Bright red flowers in abundance and small yellow orchids. A type of blue lily which I recognize as it has been transplanted to Europe and America.

Without the help of Molly Hirtle, the long-term intern in the education dept., Amari and Jenny, I would never be able to accomplish anything here. Also Dr. Bodil, the dentist from Sweden, who is a very interesting woman and has enormous versatile creativity. She is proving to be my mentor here but unfortunately leaves tomorrow. I have only had two days with her. I met Dr. Leena yesterday, the Finnish paediatrician that Andy likes and admires so much. She too, is so remarkable.

The school here in Mufindi is based on the Montessori method and it is very effective. When students get to grade 3, English is taught as a class, but all other classes are taught in Swahili, and by the time the students graduate and go on to high school, everything is taught in English, as it is the lingua franca and necessary for future study. But complicating this already difficult situation is that the teachers themselves are not that familiar with English. Therefore, only a small percentage of the children actually get their high school diplomas, although many of the students are eager and capable and know more than their test scores indicate.

It is Tuesday and so this is my fourth full day here. The nausea is from the doxycillin that I take as a prophylaxis for malaria. So I frequently

remind myself that nausea is a lot better than malaria.

Today is Friday. The teaching has gone well and I am so pleased with the results. Jenny thinks the NGO will be able to make notecards of the paintings done by the teachers. We did simple collages and the nine teachers caught on to the process right away and just ran with it, their individual creativity coming through in each piece. They come back the second day and learned about mixing colour. Some of them have a great colour sense without knowing, for example, that red and yellow make orange. We painted with multiple colours of paint yesterday, but today they learned how to make these different colours and paint a colour wheel. And, each teacher came back to class the second day, which is so gratifying. I was afraid no one would turn up.

I talk to Amari about the upcoming seminar on Dec, 7. Kindergarten teachers from surrounding villages will come to Igoda, the nearby village, for the day. I am going to show them what I do. Try and make the connection of how art in all forms can stretch minds and transfer to other disciplines..I.e science, geography, history, etc.

Gail leaves every day early and is either at the clinic here or out in a neighboring village with Dr. Leena. Dr. Leena has written two or three very interesting books about her time here. Unfortunately they are in Finnish and the suspicion is that the translation through the internet may not be the best. But I am going to try to figure out how I can read them.

Wednesday I meet Chasaki. He is a wonderful Tanzanian painter and has done several whimsical murals here for the clinic, sewing school, and other buildings. He is a lovely individual, and despite the language difficulties, we have good conversation. I started to paint with him this afternoon but it poured with rain and the Banda we were in leaked and I decided that I really didn't want to get cold so came back to Mianzi house where I stay. Mianzi means bamboo in Swahili and there is much bamboo about. Gail had arrived shortly before and was totally drenched.

Mianzi house is one of the houses for volunteers. Right now there is Dr. Bodil, Justin, who has something to do with teaching, Gail and I. It is simple, but very adequate. Our meals are simple, but nutritious. Not very much variety but I find I am doing fine, do not crave anything but apples, and feel great. It has a western toilet (squats are great, no problem squatting, but getting back up is a challenge). The house also has a shower which after the second week has hot water. Wonderful.

Lots of rain and hard to get things dry. Learning to wear the same clothes for days while waiting for laundry to dry. But as it turns out, although we are at the beginning of the rainy season, we have only the one rainy day and most days are bright and sunny and clothes dry easily.

I am introduced to three women who come here to Mufindi for a period of time every year. They have developed the African Children's Book Box Society; a great project which they now have managed to have taken to many villages. They have been doing this for over 20 years. Bringing African Books to African schools and villages. They generously give educational support to the NGO. These women, Ann Pearson, Ruth James and their friend Birgit come from Victoria, B.C. where I also went to school, so it is fun talking to them about the Island, etc.

Yesterday Bodil, the Swedish dentist left. I am so glad I met her. She was great company being of much the same age. She will be back in January. She, and Dr. Leena, must go back and forth to Sweden and Finland to retain their residencies. These two and others have been coming here for 10-20 years.

On Wednesday night we were all invited for dinner at the Foxes' home and lodge. Geoff and Vicky Fox are very gracious people in an atmosphere of a goneby era. There are many guests, all very interesting. The food was absolutely great. We don't get much meat at Mianzi house and that's OK with me, but the roast served was delicious with many fresh vegetables, dessert and wine. Vicky Fox is a delight. Runs the lodge, takes care of the place and the cattle etc. She tells me that she taught school here for 27 years. She is an amazing woman. They started the NGO about 10 years ago (see Mufindi Orphans website).

On the 27th, Jenny and Geoff host a thanksgiving dinner that is truly a feast. Lots of kids make it just the best. Many people and I spend most of my time picking Vicky Foxes' brain re ideas of how to explain just how art enhances all learning.

The days go by quickly. Everyone here is very involved, works hard and is very busy. I have nothing but admiration for the NGO, Jenny Peck and Geoff Knight and all their support staff.

Running the NGO is a very complex operation as they do many things. Today I picked up some skirt pants that I had made at the sewing school. The fabric is very exotic and I love it. I am so pleased. The sewing school is an amazing place with about 20 treadle machines. They

turn out a variety of beautiful things to sell in the little shop they have here. Also, they make the school uniforms for the Mufindi school, and other secondary schools generating income for the community. They are very adept at making patterns such as taking the pattern of my skirt pants from the pair I leave.

We only get electricity for about 4 hours/day. When it is on in the evening, if possible, I go down to the main house where there is wifi. Here there is no problem walking alone in the dark. I put my headlamp in my hand as I need to be looking for frogs or nightjars on the road. Wonderful. Very dark and I think I can touch the stars.

Tomorrow I leave to go on a safari. Dr. Leena has two guests from Finland who are going on a safari and I am invited along. Fabulous. I have no idea at the moment just what is involved and where we are going but will certainly find out. I leave tomorrow at noon, and am being driven by Sele, the lovely taxi driver, to Iringa where I will meet the others.

Monday, 29th November. Yesterday Sele picked me up about noon to take me to Iringa on the first leg of my safari trip. I really need to describe the roads here. Except for tarmac around the larger cities, which ends abruptly once you take off for smaller destinations, the roads are an adventure in themselves. Deep ruts from the rains, nearly always washboard to a greater or lesser degree, dusty and mostly only one lane for two-lane traffic. Coming from Alaska and having lived there for many years, I am familiar with roads very similar to this that are full of potholes and ruts. But these roads even put our old Alaskan roads to shame. Also, people drive on the left side here and this combined with the state of the roads makes passenger travel not for the faint of heart. As I cannot take motion sickness medication, I am faced with the choice of sitting in the back seat and getting car sick with the swerving, swaying, bouncing, and diesel fumes, or sitting in the front and constantly feeling that we are driving headlong into another vehicle, truck, bus, etc. So I opt for bouts of terror over bouts of vomiting.

Sele gives me a run down of all that we pass; the eucalyptus and cypress forests, the logging operations, the reforestation. We pass through many small villages with houses of the local brick, straw or tin roofs that are rusted from the rain. The fragrance of the eucalyptus is everywhere.

There is a huge need for environmental conservation here. The ancient Mufindi forests with their unparalleled diversity, are at risk. Development via deforestation affects everything. The eucalyptus trees are tall and

straight and are used for telephone poles and shipped to many neighboring countries of Africa. Multinational corporations give lip service to conservation, ignoring the problems they are creating. Forest plants are being destroyed although it is known that many have medicinal qualities, known for centuries, which are just now becoming known to western science. There is a great need for awareness and help in so many areas and forests have to be close to the top of the list. Later in Ruaha, one of our guides tells me that deforestation of the Congo, which seems so far away, is affecting the rainfall in Tanzania.

I would love to take pictures along the road, but it is hard for Sele to stop and I don't want to take photos of the people without asking. So many bicycles loaded with everything imaginable - produce, lumber, firewood, household goods. And the pikipiki, little motorbikes often carrying 3-4 people. Women wrapped in their bright clothing with the Kanga across their body to hold a child, who are often pregnant, holding one child by the hand and another in the Kanga sling and also carrying a load on their heads. Most women are walking with large loads on their heads, their backs very straight, heads high. Women are on bicycles with small, children riding behind them, clinging like little monkeys. It's terrifying to look at. There is every different kind of bright fabric on men, women and children and more bicycles everywhere. It is a kaleidoscope of color and activity changing every moment.

We reach Mafinga and immediately Sele helps me get a phone and we program his number, Gail's and Dr. Leena's friend Henna's so that I can contact her and her mother and arrange to meet in Iringa. Sele and I then eat, find a safe ATM and then head off again. Iringa is a much larger town, pretty and a mixture of many people. There are lots of ex-pats. Crowded streets and street shops. One sign says "artist for hire". The Lutheran guesthouse where Dr. Leena has arranged for me to stay is just fine; small, clean, cheap and a wonderful shower. There are other tourists here, too. About 8 young Japanese, 4 couples. They speak very good English and one helps with a question about my cell phone.

After a shower I crawl into bed with a mosquito net canopy. I can hear the noise of people, the street, cars, and think how much I enjoy the silence of Mufindi. But nothing keeps me awake and the next morning Henna and her mother Satu arrive early. Henna is 23 and has been here in Tanzania working in a village quite close to Mufindi. She is a medical student in Finland and somehow works this in with her studies. Her mother, Satu is also a physician.

It is another adventuresome car journey to Ruaha National Park and the Mwangusi Safari camp in the park where we will be staying. It is much hotter down here as compared to Mufindi, which is higher and cooler. The wonderful Finns have very good English, which is good for my Finnish is nonexistent. There is no chance for conversation in the car as the traffic and ambient noise make it impossible. I am in the front again with their driver and they are in the back. Another approximately 4 hr. journey but always colorful with villages, people, cattle, and land that stretches forever. Just before we get to the park entrance, a steel blue kudu leaps across the road in two bounds. It is a larger animal than I had imagined and is the beginning of sighting wildlife.

We stop and pay our fees to enter the Park. Then off again across the endless land that stretches to the other side of the world. Beautiful country. Huge boulders, grassland, reddish earth, infinite varieties of green, trees whose leaves turn red, trees that look like giant mimosa.

About an hour into the park we are stopped by a herd of about seven elephants. Two of them appear to be in elephant teen years. I can't get any photos as they turn and are behind the car and we are not allowed to get out. We continue and see many impalas with the wonderful stripes on their bums parallel to their black tails. We come across a river with many huge hippos and a few crocodiles in a few deep pools in an otherwise dry riverbed. Then come the giraffe...they are so elegant and dignified.

Birds of all description and their calls mix with the cicadas.

Saturday, November 28. We get to Mwangusi Safari camp shortly after noon and are greeted by Simon, the head guide and Erica, our sort of concierge, who is South African and who takes me in tow to my Banda. It is beautiful, situated right on the bank of the dry riverbed and very spacious. High roofed, open with a large mosquito net tent over the bedroom area. It has a lovely spacious bathroom and shower. Truly a gorgeous place all round. I am a little overwhelmed. Erica tells me to be very careful to hide any food I may have in a very heavy lidded trunk or the monkeys will find it, and always shake the towels before using to make sure there are no scorpions hidden in the folds. Even if I were to see no animals I would be very happy...the tranquility, the land, the trees and the endless variety of birds and bird songs. It is like being in another dimension.

At a sumptuous lunch, we arrange to go on safari at 4:30 and again

tomorrow at 6:30 am. The four Belgian people that I met at the Foxes' dinner party are here also. They have been here for several days and leave tomorrow. Teatime is at 3:30, then safari, then dinner at 8 pm. As it is dark at dinnertime, very dark, someone will come to get me for dinner. It is absolutely forbidden to go out alone at night, unescorted by a member of staff. No worries. I don't feel I have much to prove in life and I certainly have not desire to wander out alone at night on off chance of meeting some form of wildlife that is much bigger and more fierce than I just to show that I am not afraid. I am afraid.

A breeze drifts through my Banda and rocks the swing that I am lying in. I am serenaded by one bird after another, although I rarely see the bird in question.

At 4:30 we leave on safari in the land cruiser. The country is vast. Blue mountains in the distance, baobab, acacia and many other trees fill the landscape. Dry savannah with patches of green from the latest rain. Shortly after we leave camp the guide receives a call to say that another safari party from another camp, has sighted a leopard and we abruptly change direction and are off on a leopard hunt.

We bump, and lurch and rock and roll, over the land. I hang onto my hat with one hand and the truck with the other. Fortunately we go quite slowly. Vincent, our driver is great and we find the place. The female leopard is lying asleep in a tree about 30 feet above ground. She looks like spotted liquid poured over the tree, with her bottom resting in a crook and her head resting on a branch slightly elevated from the rest of her body. Henna has a good camera with an extra lens and takes many photos. Geoffrey, our guide takes photos for me and gets much better shots than I do. We wait and wait for the leopard to stir. It is late afternoon and getting dusky and our guide is confident that she will soon wake up and come down to start to hunt now that it is cooler. Well, she seems to be taking a lazy day and after an hour or so, slowly stirs and melts down to another lower branch where she again decides it is too early to get up and settles for another snooze. As it is getting dark, we leave.

Henna really wants to see a lion. The guide thinks it unlikely but we use the remaining light to search and almost unbelievably find seven lions. They are all stretched out asleep, one right across our road, the rest lying one beside the other...a pile of cats. Their long black-tufted tails twitch. We are only about 10 feet from the female stretched out on the road. Now it is truly close to dark and we must get back to the camp. An amazing day as seeing a leopard is very unusual and the lions, and the

birds... the variety, the colour and their songs. We take off at speed with bump and sway and I hang on for dear life.

A quick wash up and someone is at my Banda to escort me through the dark to dinner. Again I am reminded that it is absolutely forbidden to venture out at night without an escort as animals pass through the camp in the night. Dinner outside under the stars then escorted back to the Banda.

Sunday, 29th,. We leave on safari at 6:30am. Nice and cool. We drive to a dry riverbed where some small waterholes remain under the roots of trees at the embankment. There is a pride of lions consisting of about four females and seven cubs about five months old. They are drinking, cubs playing, adults lying around or slowly looking for a better spot to settle for the day. You could see that their bellies were full and our guide says that he saw this pride a few days ago and they were thin and hungry. Not so now. He suspects a kill of giraffe or water buffalo. Something large.

Then Geoffrey, our guide, spots the huge male, lying above the riverbed on the embankment. From the male's vantage point he can see the riverbed and his harem. He is very regal, truly majestic, very much "simba". It is truly a breathtaking sight. Fearless and dominant, only man or another male in its prime are to be feared.

Travelling on we find a large herd of elephants. Unlike yesterday, this herd is very skittish. They do not like our presence, and keep moving away when our vehicle approaches. A large bull shows himself in an aggressive stance. Geoffrey says there may be poachers about, hence their concern. Also, they have small ones with them, tucked in the middle of the herd. We again see impalas, giraffes, zebras, and some stunning waterfowl. The cranes are showing off and leaping up and down as only cranes can do. Large geese.

It is a beautiful land and endless. Here in Tanzania the symbiosis/interdependency of every life form is very apparent almost on a visibly immediate basis. Life and death are close and immediate. This is part of the attraction. No sugar coating or euphemisms here. The impermanence makes life and the moment very real.

At one point we stop by a large baobab as Henna wants a photo of the huge hole in the middle of the tree. Our guide goes first to scope out the hollow and out flies a white owl.

Back at the Banda, a little monkey with a baby firmly attached underneath,

keeps scouting about looking for food. Apparently they often take toothbrushes! It is thought because of the sweetness of the toothpaste.

It is so peaceful here. After lunch, I sit in my Banda, a slight breeze rocking my swing and cutting the heat. A short rain shower, and then again the heat. The light is golden in the late afternoon sun and there is every shade of green imaginable. The sky a pale cerulean. Even the birds are silent in the heat. This will be my last night at Mwagusi. It has been an amazing adventure. Each night there has been dinner served out on the riverbed under the stars. There are so many, many stars. With no light pollution the heavens have enlarged. A bonfire and lanterns are the only light. Lanterns surround our group to keep animals away.

Here at the safari camp, I lavishly apply sun screen and reapply several times during the day. In the evenings I generously apply "Eau de Deet" on body and clothes. Deet is not necessary in Mufindi, for it is too high, but here it is mosquito heaven.

At about 7:30 a light appears on the path and it is a member of staff coming to escort me to diner. On the return trip about 10 pm., the staff person sweeps the light from side to side out into our surroundings as we walk. Then, at the Banda, they turn on a light (from solar), spray inside the tent bedroom and I am alone again in the beautiful night. It is possible to see clearly through the mosquito net windows and see the riverbed, hear the frogs, cicadas and cuckoos, and sometimes in the distance (we hope) the roar of a lion.

The camp nicely gives you a checklist for the animals and birds, so here is what I know I saw. I may have seen other animals as well, but did not recognize them and especially with the birds.

Animals: Bush pig, common warthog, yellow baboon, Bohm's Crawshaw Zebra, rock hyrax, bush hyrax, tree hyrax, black-backed jackal, leopard, lion, elephant, hippopotamus, giraffe, cape buffalo, lesser kudu, greater kudu, Patterson's elan, Kirk's dikdik, southern impala, bush duiker.

Birds: black-headed heron, little egret, hamerkop, Egyptian goose, Heuglin's francoline, bush petronia, several vultures, black kite, helmeted guineafowl, crested guineafowl, red-necked spurfowl, common-button quail, grey crowned crane, doves, African cuckoo, black cuckoo, black and white cuckoo, lilac-breasted roller, pied kingfisher, Tanzanian red-billed hornbill, owls, black kite, yellow throated sand grouse, white-napped raven, violet-backed starling, several beautiful sunbirds.

Safari camps vary a great deal from the upscale lodges to tent camping. This one is rather unique as it is very ecologically oriented. Sitting in my Banda is like sitting outside but with a roof. I can smell the earth after the rain. It is the beginning of the rainy season but so far we have escaped the unending torrents that make such misery of the roads. I have three guests hiding from the short rainfall. I think they are bush squirrels. Small, much like our squirrels, but with skinny tails, they spot me and are horrified and leave.

Wednesday.

Time to leave. Henna, the 23 year old Finnish medical student is ill. Fever spikes that may be indicative of malaria. Fortunately Satu, her mother is a physician. I can see that she is concerned. When we get into range, Satu manages to connect with Dr. Leena who in turns refers us to a clinic in Iringa.

The blood test is negative for malaria. Henna is still not well and as these tests are not always accurate, she starts taking meds for malaria as a precaution.

We reach Mufindi and I say goodbye to them. I have enjoyed their company very much but will not be able to see them again as they plan to go off early Friday to Zanzibar and then home to Finland.

It is good to be back in Mufindi.

The longer I am here at Mufindi, I see how Geoff and Jenny and the others truly live up to the Foxes' NGO mission statement. People are integrated into roles that enhance their lives and their own villages.. Transitional skills are learned. Everyone contributes, everyone learns, everyone benefits. Jenny and Geoff, after 9 years, instinctively sense the priorities. They are flexible to the needs of the moment with an emphasis on education in all phases, and family planning with an upcoming family planning center here in Mufindi. Dr. Leena and interim docs like Gail and others, provide services and work alongside their Tanzanian counterparts, providing a cross-exchange of education between learning about tropical diseases and bringing in modern methodologies.

What do they need? Much, but mostly \$\$\$\$\$. On the website for Mufindi orphans you can see how to donate. I give a set amount every month which is put on my VISA. If you have other skills that you think would be

useful, email Geoff/Jenny and start a conversation. Don't be alarmed if your email takes a week or so to be answered. There is only electricity and wifi for about 3-4 hours a day, so all email does not get answered as quickly as they would like. Getting more electricity is one of their needs. Sponsor a child to be able to go to secondary school. Fees and room and board are approximately \$ 400/year.

Today. Is December 5. It is another wonderful day.

Time is moving too quickly. Molly and I plan the upcoming seminar with two teachers who are going to be co-facilitators. Chasaki is also involved and will be a great help in explaining the difference between abstract and realism. Should be fun and we will again do colour wheels and make collages

Dr. Leena asks Gail and I to her home for tea. It is delightful and we meet Dr. Heinke*, another visiting physician, a gynecologist from Matema, and Dr. Leena's sister and brother-in-law. All are working in some way as volunteers for the NGO. Marietta, Dr. Leena's sister, and her husband Osmo have started a Finnish charity for Mufindi. Everyone in the village except for the Tanzanians are volunteers. A lot of shop talk and pleasure in noting how the children are flourishing. Babies and very small children who have come from very difficult situations, are now running, laughing and generally thriving. Older kids who have come in from compromised homes, and how readily they have adapted and are so eager to learn.

It is so important not to become dehydrated in the heat. So it is water In one end and out the other all day. I do not find the heat as oppressive as I imagined, but do not go out too much for too long in the midday. The village is on the side of a hill and therefore one is going up and down hills at all times to and from the different buildings. Dr. Heinke, the visiting gynecologist refers to them as "cardiac hills". I have several such interesting and wonderful conversations with Dr. Heinke in the short time she is at Mianzi House. Another mentor.

Tues. Dec. 8. On Monday, Dec. 7. The seminar goes spectacularly well. It was truly awesome thanks to Chasaki and Molly and Amari translating for me. Molly, Chasaki and I had had many talks about how to approach what we wanted to say. Molly brought all the necessary supplies up to Igoda village where the seminar was held. Chasaki did all the talking and did an awesome job of talking about how doing art helped one expand the mind. How ideas, imagination and innovation can be applied to other disciplines, learning to paint frees one to think out of the box and is

empowering. It was great and the teachers jumped into the colour wheel exercise. After a delicious lunch of rice, a bean mixture, meat and veggie mixture, greens, watermelon, banana, oranges, we start the collages. Again thanks to Molly and Chasaki, and the total enthusiasm of the teachers, everyone freely pushed paint and colours around making good and some really good work. I am so pleased. I feel that I have contributed but could not have done so without Chasaki and Molly and Amari. Every idea I have they grab and run with and expand on.

My camera battery dies so Molly and Chasaki take pics and will forward them to me.

We only have today and tomorrow before we leave on Thursday morning. I am so grateful for my time here and am sorry to leave....want to do more painting for myself, but my mind is bursting and I will be able to get some of it down on paper and canvas later on.

I only brought a pack of five very small tubes of acrylic and a pad of paper with me as my space and weight was taken up with supplies for the school. Everyone coming here has supplies of one form or another that are needed. Suitcases packed to the maximum weight. So I try watercolours with the small kit I have bought. Watercolours and I have never been able to get along very well but I am trying to get them to work for me, doing what I teach: Not be locked in by how you think paintings have to be.....explore, try...

Four weeks with no TV and limited internet. A total immersion into another culture and environment. This experience, including the people I have met, will influence the rest of my life.

Things I will always remember about Mufindi.....sitting outside in the early morning sun drinking my coffee and watching and listening to the children laughing as they run lickety split through the woods on their way to school. Their uniforms of bright green sweaters and blue skirts/pants making them look like flocks of birds.....the multiple and varied birds both in colour and song. The laughing and kindness of the people when I try to greet them in Swahili and I get my syllables back to front. The little tiny children running up to me and saying "hi", their faces beaming.

I am sitting here at the airport in Dar. One of the great ovens on earth. Left yesterday morning with Sele driving after a wonderful, fun dinner at Jenny and Geoff's. Two visitors from Kentucky who have been donating for years, Dr. Bill Smock and Tom Conway are here. Tom

has just paid to get 24 electric power to Mufindi. It is certainly a marvelous thing and will make so many changes possible, not the least being able to charge iPads and have WIFI, and so many more important things. It is indeed a joyous night and I manage to say goodbye to the many people and community here that I have come to love. Dr. Smock is an orthopedic surgeon and is eagerly awaiting Andy's certification in 2-1/2 years so he can come and give anaesthetics while he, Dr. Smock, operates. Both he and Tom Conway are great guys making a huge difference.

I need to get home but certainly hope one way or another that I can get back. I will paint for the upcoming art auction fundraiser for Mufindi that is annually held in Lawrence, Kansas. And paint for myself for \$\$\$ to return.

Chasaki is coming with us in the taxi so he can drop two paintings off in Iringa where we stop for lunch then off again for Morogoro. Down here in the valley it is hot. At least now the road is all paved. We end up driving through Mikumi National park as the highway runs right through it. It is 5:30 in the evening and much to our surprise we see many elephants. Sele and Gail are delighted. So am I but I have seen them in Ruaha. But it is always wonderful. The golden light of the late afternoon makes it all magical.

By the time we get to Morogoro I am a bit car sick. We meet Patricia, the daughter in Jenny Peck's host family who taught Jenny Swahili. She is now about to graduate from law school. She takes a to a hotel near her home. The hotel is marginal, but cheap and close by. We then go back to the host family for dinner. Nice, nice people. Wish I felt better and had more Swahili. Back to the hotel where the mosquito net tent has several holes. Ah for the comfort of knowing we are on doxy. And the room is cool so we will sleep and it is up early in the morning and off to Dar.

Easy trip. The hardest part is it takes us two hours to just negotiate through Dar. It is very hot and muggy. Sele picks up a friend, a fellow taxi driver in Dar who takes over and gets us to the airport.

One very noticeable thing, especially in the airport at Doha, is that one never hears the PA service announcements of the type heard every 20 minutes or so at the American airports i.e. Do not leave your luggage unattended, etc. ...no mention of this either in Dar or Doha and you frequently see luggage left while people use the restroom or get food. No one seems concerned and I never felt in any danger. There are many security checks before boarding the plane however.

Gail and I part in Doha after an 8 hr. layover again. We are both astonished and amused by the Christmas songs being played on the PA system. I have enjoyed all my time with her. She has been fun and we have even managed to maintain our relationship after I accidentally use her toothbrush in Morogoro. Usually a game ender for her she tells me.

The flight to NY is long, another 13-14 hr. leg. I have a seat with a spectacular view of the right wing. However, if I crane my neck I can see out the window behind me. Mostly overcast but occasional breaks where I see lovely mountains and one very high peak somewhere over Iran. I try to find out from the flight map but whichever button I press, English, French, I only get Arabic. Next break is over the Alps, then Norway, Iceland and the huge land of snow that must be Labrador.

Then JFK. Welcome to America. The airport is packed with travelers, and I hear boarding calls for many other parts of the world. Then on to Seattle where on Sunday morning they are having their annual Jingle Bell run with people in reindeer hats running down the street.

My head is still in Tanzania. It has been an epic journey from many perspectives. And it has reinforced again for me how many good people there are in the world doing good things, large and small. Never doubt that the world is a wonderful place.

** These are their first names.