



Tales From Tanzania, 2015, #10

Above is a combination songfest and talent show. The kids voted on who should accompany Sister Helena to a government conference in Mwanza last week.

Contest categories included: Volume, Clarity, Behavior, and Endurance... since the field trip would be a twelve-hour day, without food, or naps.

The six winners are pictured here.





Jojo is adding his own interpretive dance,
which brings Elvis Presley to my mind....

Most of the songs were written and choreographed by Sister Helena.
The chorus to this song is

*Dear Mother Tanzania
Give us a home, and protect us...
So we can protect you.*

Upon their return from Mwanza, Sister described the outing:

It was a great success...I marched up to the stage manager and announced that my kids were going to sing a song. They put us right on the program.

When the children began singing, first the audience was shocked. Pretty soon, everyone was in tears.

Their performance was on the evening and morning newscasts, on television.
And now the phone is ringing, with more people asking Sister Helena to take in their albino children. She has to refuse.

I decided to spend my last afternoon in Lamadi making a card for every child that was old enough to read, complete with my photograph, inside. As I made each card, I sent him or her a special blessing from my heart

For the littlest kids, I made a poster with their names on it, and put it on the wall for someone to point to, when they wondered ...

where has Mama Joy gone?

The kids seemed very very happy to receive their cards.

Below is a Valentine's Day project that we made...I had the kids write thank you notes to the staff and to our benefactors.





And although it makes for great photo opportunities when little kids carry water to the garden, I have a dream for next year:

I'd like to install a bicycle-driven water pump, attached to water hoses with drip irrigation. Paul and Josia now carry water about 60 yards to the gardens, most days. Perhaps we could become self-sufficient in our vegetable and fruit consumption, if we had bio-intensive gardens MUCH closer to the well, with highly enriched soil?



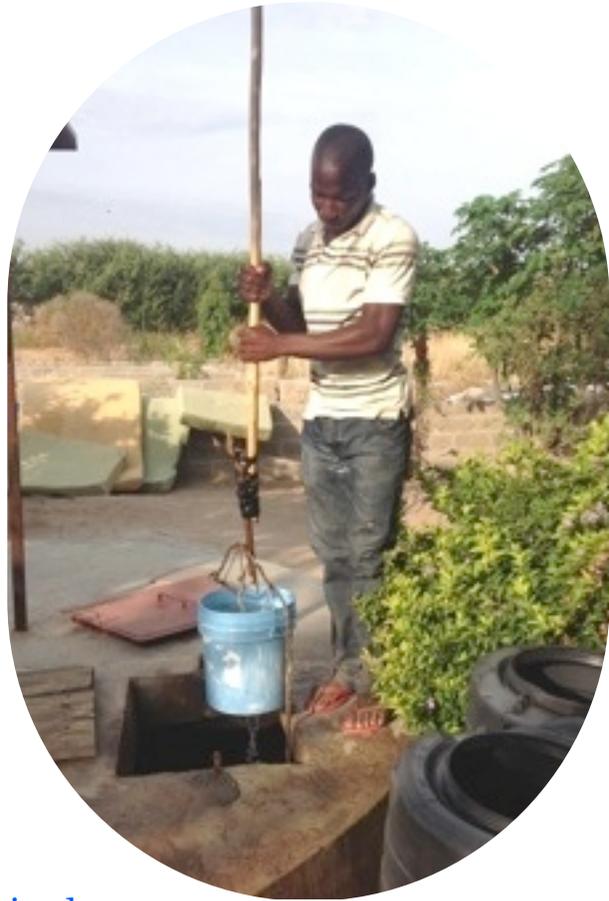
And what is Paul doing with a stick, in the well?

He is fishing for the bucket that I just dropped down there.

...I was feeling proud of myself for learning to tip the pail in a certain way so it would fill up.

Meanwhile, I let the rope slip out of my hands, by not paying enough attention.

Speed, endurance AND precision, I'm learning. While being preoccupied with "my achievement," I lost focus. Life lessons continue....



Before I close the Tales From Tanzania for this year, friends, I want to share Nehma's story:



Her father died when she and her siblings were quite young, and the mother deposited her four kids with grandma, permanently. The grandmother refused to accept Nehma, who was two years old when she arrived at the Center. That was three years ago.

Sister Helena soon discovered that Nehma had a bizarre and frightening physiological disorder: a portion of her lower intestines would occasionally fall out, when she was pooping. Sister took Nehma to the hospital several times when this occurred. She spent a lot of money trying to remedy the situation, and to stem the resulting infections ...to no avail.



Finally an elder told Sister Helena that she needed to burn a turtle and apply the ashes to Nehma's butt.

That evening, Sister said to Mama Miriam,

I never see turtles. Where am I supposed to get a turtle?

The next day, a turtle walked up to Sister. She thanked it, and then burnt it, and followed the Grandmother's instructions.

Sister told me:

We never had another problem with Nehma's health.

Logic does not always suffice, does it?

My last morning in Lamadi, Sister became quite serious and somber. She told me:

The older children know that you are leaving...But all these babies...they know that you go to Mwanza, and come back the next day...and they will be waiting for you. They will be knocking on your tent door outside, and telling you to come out now.... They will be watching and waiting for a month, at least.... Asking me, "Where is Mama Joy?"

Everyone in this town loves you. The neighbors are telling me, the Church people are telling me:

We have never seen a mzungu like this. She is so happy. She is living just the way we do. She is eating what we eat. Everybody loves you!

I was alarmed when you said 'I just will eat whatever you eat...Please, no special mzungu food'. We wondered if you could survive. Because we are eating pig food, food that pigs eat in other places...just corn and daga, mostly.



I have been deeply humbled, watching you and learning from your philosophy. We really need you here....

I know that you will go home...and wrap things up and come back here to live, with us. I am praying hard to Mother Mary that you will be back in three months, to stay....

I explained to Sister that I do plan to be back in nine months, but she was adamant that it would be three. So I had to conclude that one of us would be correct.

The children kneeled and prayed for my well-being...and each one individually laid hands on my head in blessing as we sang our favorite hymn, "Salaam Mama Maria."

Then we all broke into tears, as we began to shake hands goodbye.



The children carried my luggage on their heads, and everyone walked up to the bus stop with me, babies strapped onto the children's backs.



I'm writing this from Dar Es Salaam, in a modest hotel room in the industrial part of town.

Probably my last day in Tanzania will be spent at the beach tomorrow.

Then, twenty-four hours of plane rides later (unless I get snow-bound), I'll be landing at a winterscape, in Washington, D.C. Estimated temperature: 10 degrees.

Another adventure!



Here is my final failed attempt to capture Violet's smile.



And Zawadhi is chatting with her toes during a yoga session