

## The Setup Team Arrives, Fall 2012

The unpacking began and our teammates arrived. I'll call the two American young men Tom and Andrew. Our Tanzanian colleague was an evangelist with the Africa Inland Church. His name I'll call Enoch. He was sent to help us and to learn all that was involved in preparing for a team to move into a new village.

Mr. and Mrs. "Jordan" brought them in their Land Rover to our door, hauling a trailer behind with a large 3000 liter water tank on it and a pile of luggage strapped to the roof rack. To my everlasting gratitude Mrs. Jordan, who worked with her husband on the administrative staff supervising various teams like ours, brought with her a cooler with spaghetti sauce, bread, cereal and chocolate chip cookies for the crowd. They stayed a couple of days, helping sign contracts for other houses, then went on their way and left Tom, Andrew, and Enoch with us to stay six months.

The young men were tough, I have to say that for them. Their house was up the hill from ours and they cheerfully hauled water, did their own laundry, dug a latrine and built a bathroom around it, caught plenty of mice and even killed a snake or two. Eventually a third bedroom in their tiny 400 square foot house was finished with a floor and plaster on the mud walls, and Enoch moved out of our house and in with them.

For three weeks we all ate together at our house. Enoch slept in our second bedroom, and since there were no ceilings, we could hear each other snoring. In the early mornings he turned on his radio to hear the national news. Colin stumbled out of bed and made instant coffee on our small gas stove, bringing it to me in bed. Not long after the men arrived, Tom had a birthday, his 22<sup>nd</sup>. We discovered that Enoch had never had a birthday party in his life. He was in his late 50's. I baked a chocolate cake in a pan on the stove and added chocolate chips on top, and we pretended it was Enoch's birthday, too.

Every morning the men would figure out what there was to do that day. Many times Tom and Andrew would ask Colin after breakfast, "So, what's the plan for the day?" He dreaded that question. So often there was no plan, just a long list of things to do many of which needed other things to happen first before they could be done. Get a bathroom door. Hmm...first find the man to make the door. Then go with him to look when he cut down the tree. Then negotiate the price for how much it would cost him to bring the planks to town once he had sawed them by hand. Then go daily to check on how the carpentry was going. Meanwhile, get several loads of gravel, also find people to bring clean riverbed sand by the bucket on their motorcycles, also buy cement from the local hardware store owner...Each of the six houses we eventually rented had to be prepared with a bathroom, concrete floors, plastered and painted walls, a water tank with gutters on the roof, screened windows, and simple furnishings. Colin wanted every house to have one faucet indoors so no one had to go outdoors to get water out of their water tanks.

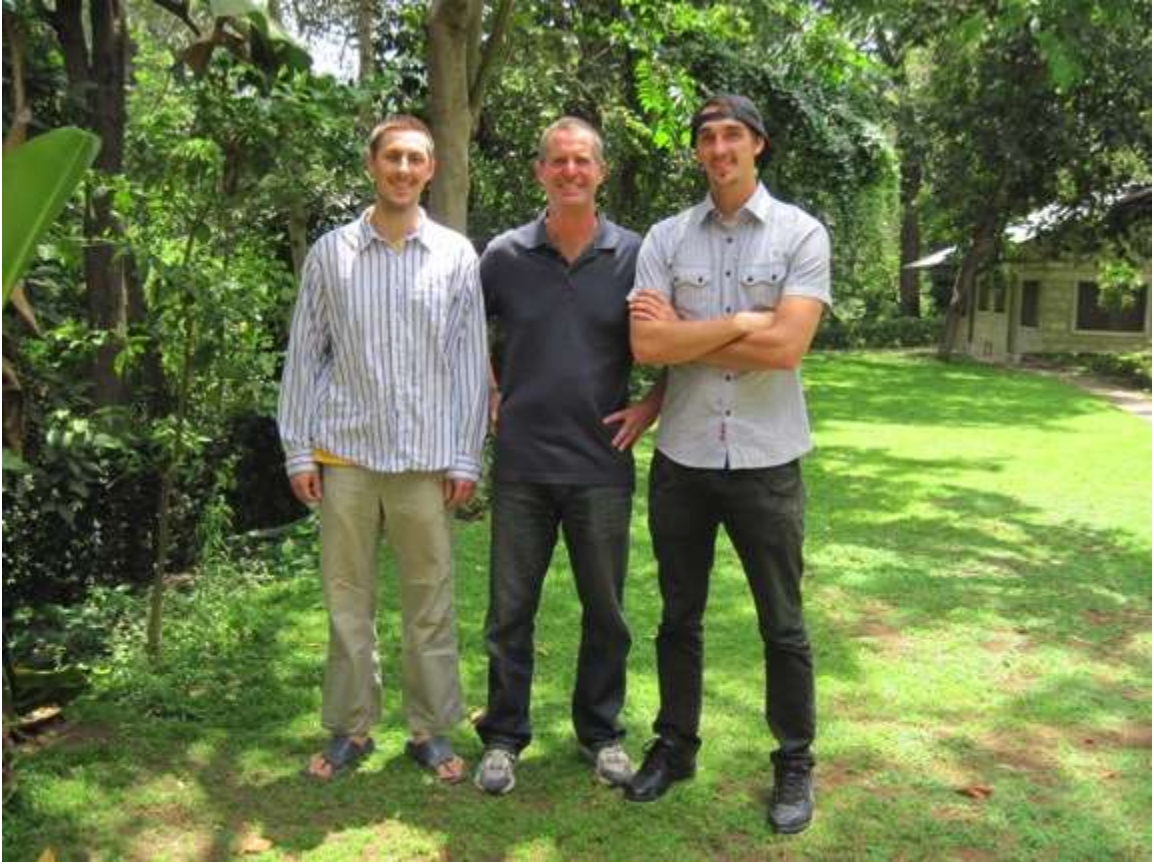
A man who helped us a great deal was the town sheriff. He was the one who put us in contact with owners who might want to rent houses to us, and helped write up and negotiate the contracts. He was curious about our profit motive in bringing a group to live in the town. Did we want to start a business? Explore their natural resources? We patiently explained that we would teach Christian students, coming to study through an educational program designed to help them learn language and culture and how to live in a rural setting in Africa. Hmm...

The sheriff would stop by and see how we were doing, and he invited us to attend the memorial service for his father. When we arrived at his house, we were escorted to separate places. Colin sat with the men on a large mat in the shade, and I was brought inside the house to sit with the widow in a large room with many other women of the family and close friends. All around the back yard of the house people were cooking rice and meat over small fire pits. The men heard a number of religious speeches and then ate from large platters heaped with rice and meat. Because Colin was an honored guest, they brought the bucket of handwashing water to him first. He plunged both hands into it, rubbed them, then watched as the next man put only his right hand in and rubbed a bit, and every other man likewise after him. Uh-oh. Too late Colin remembered that in that culture the left hand is considered dirty.

Meanwhile in the house I was being questioned closely about whether we were there to dig for oil or gold. The women laughed at my halting Swahili and taught me a few phrases in the local language. The old lady patted the place next to her and insisted I eat off her tray when the food came. They laughed as they watched me make a mess of eating rice with my hands. I could tell they were thinking, "This should make life interesting, watching these white people adapt to our ways."

The sheriff was no pushover. When our team of students took a number of pictures at the elementary school graduation ceremony, we were summoned to the sheriff's office to be sternly reminded that one of the terms of our signed permission to live in that town for three years was that we would take no public photographs. He was cordial, glad to have us there, yet always a bit stern and periodically ready to keep us conscious that we were aliens and guests. Any visitors from out of town who came to stay with us were required to sign the official village guest book in the sheriff's office.

We knew very little about Islam when we were invited to attend the sheriff's father's memorial service. Later we learned that there were some ceremonies Christians did not attend because they involved offering sacrifices for the dead and praying for their souls.



The Team: Colin, Enoch, Tom and Andrew.



Tom's 22<sup>nd</sup> and Enoch's birthday cake



Colin, Tom and Andrew head up the hill with computers and phones to see if they can get internet connection.



Colin and Becca waiting for emails to download through the phone Bluetooth connection.



The first table, made by the local carpenter, the man in the red hat. He made tables for every person on the team using local lumber for the legs and plywood we brought into town from the city.



Enoch and his wife. She cheerfully let her husband come stay with us for six months, and fed us when our team came through town.





The houses were quite rough when we first rented them. Each one needed a bathroom, plaster and paint, and furnishings.



The tables had to be varnished. Our living room was always full of construction supplies and projects. Working together was a good way to spend time talking one-on-one with the setup guys.