

Kenya Trip October 21-November 6, 2020

Monday November 2

After breakfast on Monday morning, we held another seminar in a mud-brick, dirt floor church in Kianjuie. I decided to do a shortened version of my Basic Animal Care presentation, and then invited Alex to join me in answering people's specific questions. Between the two of us, we were able to give some real life advice to the problems and challenges people were facing. Alex later told me that many people he talked to afterwards said how much they learned and how helpful the seminar was.



One of the principles I share is "Cows are Mothers! Treat them like you would your mother!". Now, I don't take credit for this thought - it's thanks to W. L. Hoard of Hoard's Dairyman fame that I picked that up many decades ago. But as I shared that thought, I saw many people understand that principle, especially the ladies. One of the lady pastors shared, "I never thought of that. I just think of them as animals, and yell at them and hit them with a stick to make them do what I want them to do." Days later I was told by Jane, my interpreter, that is the talk in the villages - that cows are mothers. It does my heart good to think that today in the bush villages of Kenya, cows are now being treated more kindly!

After the morning session, we traveled to Lower Embu where Randy found some property. This property consists of two parcels, one 23 acres, and one 46 acres. An investment group had tried to start a biodiesel project on the property, planting trees they had hoped would provide nuts they would be able to extract oil from to make the biodiesel. For whatever reason, it wasn't successful, as the nuts didn't have high enough levels of oil to make it feasible.

Randy's vision is to start a farm with various types of agriculture as a place to demonstrate better agriculture methods, and as a place where people can come to get training. He wanted Ed and I to look at the land to see if it was possible to do something, and then to suggest possible types of agriculture that would be suitable in that location.

As we walked the property, and talked to a family that was living there, it was very apparent that because there was access to plenty of water that almost any type of crops could grow on that land. One of the things that surprised me about Kenya was the high price of land. When Randy shared the asking price, Ed and I were both shocked, but if God wants this to happen, then He will find a way!

We returned to Randy and Bonnie's home in Thika and it was so good to take a hot shower and sleep in a nice bed. Again, we were so grateful for their hospitality, and the chance to enjoy the birds and monkeys that were in the trees and bushes around their yard.



Tuesday November 3

I had planned on staying home most of the day to get caught up on a lot of writing and other correspondence that was piling up and needed to be done. But Michael, one of the pastor's

from Destiny Church wanted to take Ed and me to visit a couple of macadamia nut companies, as he has a desire to start an export business. Plans were to be back in Thika by early afternoon, but people make plans and God decides what they do.



I was glad I went, even though I was tired, and had much to catch up on. Both places were doing an excellent job, one was also exporting coffee, tea, and avocados. The last place was the only organic macadamia nut company in Kenya, focusing on small scale farmers. They had over 7,000 farmers who averaged 2 acres per farm. They paid the best prices for the nuts, and employed many of the wives and children of their farmers to work in their plant. They had extremely high standards, every nut handled and examined multiple times, and everything done by hand. The finished product was the best quality I had ever seen in macadamia nuts and they had a thriving export business to US and Europe.

Wednesday November 4

In the morning we drove to Ruiru where we met with Dr Ignatius Nyaga, the pastor of Christian Church International. Pastor Ignatius contacted me soon after I arrived in Kenya, as he had my contact info from cousin Mark Yoder. Mark has been working in Kenya for many years and is a good friend of Pastor Ignatius.



Of course we didn't have nearly enough time to learn of all of the things that is happening with that ministry, but we did get to see some of the work, the school that is on the same compound and to share our respective ministries. One important connection was between Pastor Ignatius and Randy, and Randy has been invited to speak in that church, and I believe that the two ministries will be able to work together on some projects.



From there we stopped at a place so that Ed and I could pick up a couple of souvenirs. I really didn't need much, but wanted to pick up a couple of animal carvings. Ed wanted some of the same to take home to his grandchildren. The place we stopped had many small souvenir stands, and Randy kept telling us that we needed to get ready to do some bargaining. Not my style, but when in Rome . . .

The first one that Ed and I stopped at had exactly what we were looking for, and a quick look around confirmed that this one had the best quality of any of the other stands. We looked a bit, and Ed wanted to check out all of the others. Of course the man who owned the stand was anxious to do business, but Ed wasn't having any of it, so he went on to look at the others, while I picked out 2 pieces that I really was interested in.

The owner pulled out a little tablet, and said that he knew that we didn't do things this way in US, but here is how it works in Kenya. He wrote down 1. 2. 3. and said under 1. he would write

a price, and I would write a price. Then he would write another price under 2. and I would write a price. Then 3. would be the price we agreed on.

So he wrote down a price, 13,500 shillings, and I wrote down 2,000 shillings. He put his hand on his chest like he was having a heart attack. Then he said, "Like a monkey from the tree, I come down!" He wrote down 9,500 shillings and I wrote down 4,000. We talked for a while and then he wanted to split the difference, but I told him I really don't need these things, and I didn't think we would be able to come to an agreement that worked for both of us.



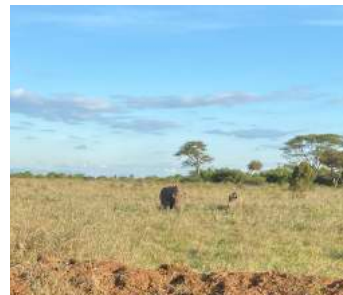
We finally settled on 5,000 shillings, almost 1/3 what he was asking but probably twice what they were worth. But I was very happy with an ebony wood rhino and a water buffalo head. Ed spent some time looking at the other places and then returned where he ended up buying over 20 pieces to take home. All in all, I think everyone was satisfied with our arrangements.

Then we spent the afternoon at the Nairobi National Park. We didn't hire a guide and safari vehicle, as Randy has been there many times and knows all of the animals by name. We quickly saw some giraffes and zebras, a few impalas and other animals, but Randy assured us we would see much more and much closer.

We did see some animals, and found a small lake that Randy hadn't discovered before, getting a closeup look at a large crocodile, and seeing the eyes of hippos in the lake. We drove around the park for a couple of hours seeing some animals, but not the abundance Randy was hoping for. There was quite a bit of road work being done, and there were places we couldn't travel to as some roads were closed and others were not fit to travel on. Randy did go some places we really shouldn't have traveled, one time we all exited the vehicle and Ed put down some rocks so we could navigate.



It was getting late in the afternoon, and time to return to Thika. Ed and I were satisfied, but Randy was disappointed, as he had talked up the park so much, and it wasn't coming up to expectations. We were ready to leave, but Bonnie said why don't we drive back to that lake we discovered when we first entered the park for one last look. And God let down His sheet and we saw an abundance of animal, many quite close to the road so that we could get a good look at them.



We rounded a corner and there were some water buffalos close to the road, then a bunch of giraffes, then we saw a safari vehicle stopped and when we drew close we saw a mother and baby rhino feeding maybe 20 feet off the road. We were able to stop right in front of them, and watched them for maybe 10 minutes.

Then we went to the lake and watched the hippos who were rising up in the water and were becoming active as the sun was going down. We watched them, some with babies, and then Randy spied another crocodile on the road on the opposite side, so we drove over to see how close we could get. We were able to slowly drive right past it and get a very good look at a 12+ foot long croc, as it never moved while we drove beside it.

Then as we headed back, a couple of the giraffes were standing right along side the road. One walked across the road in front of the vehicle and stopped to eat from a bush right outside the vehicle. And as we left the park, we saw many other impalas and other species of antelopes as well as lots of zebras. Coming up the the exit gates there were a bunch of baboons that we stopped and got some picture of. So it turned into a very good day after all!