

**Journal of Week of August 15 to 29, 2007**  
**Sister Rosita Aranita, CSJ**

**August 15, 2007:** Arrived safely in Nairobi after 22 hours in the air. The longest part of the flight was the segment between Dulles Airport, Washington D.C. and Doha, Qatar. When we reached Doha, the clientele on Qatar Airlines became distinctively Muslim with a sprinkling of Africans and Whites. The flight stewardesses on the long segment were of mainly Malaysian descent. The ones on the last segment were Africans and Malaysians.

I had given Jemimah, Mary Lieta's sister, the wrong date and time of our arrival. Jemimah and Joseph Mungai spent all Tuesday at the airport waiting for our flight. On our arrival on Wednesday, Joseph and Mary Lieta greeted us. Mary had arrived Tuesday. The box of tools from the Gries arrived safely with her.

After going through the passport lines and getting our baggage, we stuffed the large suitcases into the car trunk and carried the rest of our baggage on our laps for the short ride to the Mungai's apartment on Upper Hill in Nairobi. Traffic was congested. As soon as our luggage was deposited in our room, Angie and Anika crashed for several hours while I took a shower and went off with Mary Lieta to the nearby Barclay Bank.

Diane, Mary's daughter, and Pauline Mungai joined us at the bank. We walked to the matatu stop to catch a ride to some cellular phone shops downtown. I purchased two affordable cell phones for Anika and Angie and for the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph in Raruowa, my return gift to the sisters. I also bought more phone minutes so I could activate my Safaricom cellular phone service.

**August 16, 2007:** Angie and Anika were refreshed after several hours of sleep. They joined Mary, Diane, Pauline and I to an internet café in downtown Nairobi where Father Gregory Ombok joined us. We all walked a good distance to the Nairobi Museum which unfortunately was closed down for renovations. We did, however, visit the reptile and fish exhibit next to the museum. While there, Jemimah had arranged for two taxis to take us to Nairobi National Park to attend a thanksgiving ceremony for the Kenya Wildlife Service employees and to meet Bishop Philip Anyolo, the ordinary for the Homa Bay Diocese.

After some short introductions to Bishop Anyolo, we all went on the short Safari walking tour. Pygmy Hippos, hyenas, a lioness and leopard who were stalking each other along the dividing fence, zebras, buffalo and some beautiful antelopes were in natural settings that were divided by fences. We circled the exhibit area on board walkways along and above the pens. We ended admiring a pair of tame cheetahs who were being caressed by visitors. Fr. Gregory headed for his bus to Mombasa while the rest of us went back to our Nairobi apartment.

**August 17, 2007:** Joseph drove Mary, Anika, Angie and I to Langata to meet with Sister Elizabeth, a Sister of St. Joseph of Mombasa. I learned that they are an indigenous African congregation who the Precious Blood Sisters helped to start in 1941. The congregation is a Diocesan one, but is seeking pontifical status. They are not part of the Annecy CSJs as I had first thought. Sr. Betty teaches education at the Catholic University of East Africa which was founded by several East African bishops. The area where the sisters reside is full of religious formation houses and seminaries because of the two Universities and three colleges in an area about a few miles square.

Sr. Betty explained that they would like to build a womens hostel for women attending the educational institutions around the area. Students come from several east African countries and are mostly poor so an affordable and safe hostel is a real need. Before the hostel and a Montessori College can be erected, a borehole to supply water to these institutions will be needed. Sr. Betty will have the estimates done a few years ago revised and also submit it. I left my business card so she can transmit the proposal via e-mail. Anika and Angie will then put together a full grant proposal for Rotary.

Sr. Betty drove us back to Upper Hill, Nairobi. We spent the rest of the afternoon packing for our Mombasa trip by train. Mary accompanied us to the rail station by taxi. Sister Conrad met us at the rail station. It began pouring rain shortly before Mary left. Our train was a little late. We traveled at night and reached Voi at day break. It was a challenge using a squat toilet when the train was lurching.

**August 18, 2007:** Our total travel time was 17 hours with all the stops to deposit and collect passengers along the way. It was noon when we finally arrived in Mombasa. Fr. Gregory Ombok and his brothers Dennis and Cyril greeted us there. After discussing our afternoon plans, Father and his brothers went off to have lunch with a friend of Father's. After the lunch, they would take Anika and Angie to Fort Jesus. I would remain to discuss and tour facilities operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Mombasa that need water.

In the afternoon, Sisters Brigitta, Ursula and Jane Francis accompanied me to visit Amadeus Health Clinic, the St. Irene Montessori College/Nursery School/Primary School complex and the street children rescue center. An unfinished borehole next to the primary school lavatory needs a pump, holding tanks and distributing pipes to all the buildings in the complex. The Rescue Center needs a rain catchment system with holding tanks and pump. It is a three story building which can accommodate a few tanks on the roof level. All of these facilities serve the inner city population of Mombasa. We briefly visited the site where the foundation for the convent for sisters working in the slums could reside. Squatters were building on the perimeter of the church property. The property needs a borehole.

**August 19, 2007:** Fr. Greg and his brother Dennis fetched us at the Generalate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Mombasa to go to the Cathedral for an 8:30 A.M. mass. Lo and behold, the presider, Fr. Tim, was a class mate of Fr. Greg's. We had chai at the rectory dining room while waiting for our ride to the Mamba Crocodile Farm. The owner of the enterprise sent his son to pick us up.

The crocodile farm has about 80 mature breeding crocodiles, pens for egg laying and for the young crocodiles, another pen for crocodiles between a year and five years old. When the crocodiles reach about a meter long, they are harvested for their skins and meat. The meat tastes like chicken, we were told. The farm has diversified its activities to include riding ponies, a tropical plant exhibit and a reptile exhibit of arachnids, snakes and lizards. Anika took a picture of herself with a ball python draped around her neck. We ended our tour with late lunch. Sister Bridgitta and Jane picked us up to take us to the Grandsons of Abraham Farm north of Mombasa.

When we reached the 8 acre farm, the rehabilitated street boys were assembled to greet us. They ranged from about 8 years old to teenagers. After some introductions, Sr. Jane had the boys accompany us to tour their new dormitory. The dorm had units for 8 boys each with individual beds and storage cabinets on both sides of the corridor. The lavatory had to be kept locked until there was water available. An unfinished borehole sits near the outdoor classroom and space. Again, a pump, holding tanks and distributing pipes are needed to service the new dorm and other buildings that are planned.

Two groups of boys entertained us with a drama and acrobatic feats. They were very good. Sister Jane told us that all their classroom tables and chairs had been stolen recently. The neighbors have been hesitant about the project and not very supportive. The project has influenced the neighbors to begin farming their fallow land when the boys began clearing and planting food crops. Sister Jane would like to have a dormitory built for girls. There are more and more girls on the streets of Mombasa. The boys are happy in the farm setting. They help out with farming and other household chores.

We returned to the Generalate for supper.

**August 20, 2007:** We left for Voi 3 hours away to visit a primary school and health care facility for HIV/AIDS patients/orphans operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Mombasa. Voi is a truck stop town two hours away from the next major town on the way and from Nairobi to Mombasa. It has high rates of HIV because of transient sex. Most of the people there work for the trucking industry or service them. The area is quite arid and sits on a high plateau above the East Tsongas National Park.

**St. Agnes Primary School is the highest achiever of the KCPE exams in the district. It, too, has an unfinished borehole. The school needs a pump, holding tanks and distributing pipes.**

**St. Joseph Center of Hope is a novel health care service center which has a farm, health clinic with a laboratory, storage for Insure for HIV patients, a counseling office, conference room for education, and a residence for the sister nurses. Three farmers raise vegetables and fruit for HIV patients and orphans. The nursing staff does outreach care as well as hold clinic days when a visiting physician comes. Classes on HIV/AIDS and related issues are held from time to time.**

**The Center has a functioning borehole system which provides water to the facilities and to the farm. A library is presently being erected for the many orphans in the area. The nursing staff could use motorcycles to make their outreach work easier. Right now, they walk to the homes. They would be able to visit many more patients if they had the vehicles.**

**After leaving Voi, we headed for the inner city complex to take pictures. Our last adventure was to walk the fine white sand beach in Mombasa and dine at the Voyageur Hotel under the stars.**

**August 21, 2007: We boarded a MASH bus for Nairobi in the morning. It was a new luxury bus with air conditioning and video. We watched “The Gods Must Be Crazy II” and a James Bond like move called “Transporter” on the way. It took about 8 hours to reach Nairobi.**

**As instructed, we got off at the Mobil Station in front of the Belle Vue Hotel in Nairobi and waited for Joseph to pick us up. Pauline met us and we sat in the pizza shop and ordered two large, take home pizzas for dinner with the Mungais. Anika and Angie later went to Nakumatt across their apartment to purchase some ice cream as a thank you gift for their hospitality.**

**August 22, 2007: Joe and Jemimah drove us down to the Crown Bus Station downtown. Our journey to Kisumu went quickly through Westlands and the Aberdeen Hills. The bus stopped at the beginning of Nakuru where we later transferred to a dilapidated bus with no air conditioning. Jemimah had taken such pains to see that we were on safe and good transportation. She would have been horrified to learn that her preferred bus line turned cheap.**

**The 8 hour trip from Nakuru to Kisumu was on unfinished and rutted roads. The scenery through Nakuru was mostly arid and dusty bushland. When we got to the foothills before Kericho, it became verdant forest land speckled with tea farms. It was my first journey through this part of Kenya.**

**On reaching Kisumu, we off loaded our baggage which was covered by dust into a decrepit taxi and headed for the Kibuye Cathedral Convent. Sr. John Mark put**

Angie and Anika in a guest room next to their dining hall/kitchen and me into a room in the convent rooming house adjacent to the convent proper. After supper, we all crashed for a good night's sleep.

**August 23, 2007:** After a wonderful shower, we rested and read while waiting for Frs. Aloys and Tom and Mary to pick us up. They arrived in the early afternoon using Fr. Tom's new truck to haul our baggage. On the way out of Kisumu, we stopped off at Nakumatt City to pick up groceries and household supplies for our new home in Raruowa.

After unloading the goods, Mary rallied her teachers to help put up our mosquito nets and makeshift curtains. Mary had gotten the carpenters and groundsmen to modify the two decker beds to one cot level, had the beds made and the renovated house cleaned. We settled in grateful for safely arriving at our final destination. That evening, the girls from St. Lucy and Fr. Greg greeted us.

**August 24, 2007:** We set up house most of the day while greeting a steady stream of visitors. Judith, the sisters housekeeper, did our laundry. Maurice Otieno was hard at work cleaning our side yard. In the afternoon, we went off with Fr. Greg to Homa Bay to download e-mail and visit with his family.

Fr. Greg was emotional as he bade his family good by. When we were ready to leave to shop in Homa Bay, the right front wheel of the truck had a flat. It took awhile to get the tire changed because the lever was not high enough to lift the truck. After several attempts to elevate the lever, the right height was attained.

**August 25, 2007:** We had planned a Mexican meal for Fr. Greg's farewell party that evening. I did the coleslaw and tomato salsa. Angie did the guacamole and chopped up the ingredients for the other dishes. Anika made the Spanish rice and chapattis. The sisters and priests enjoyed the repast which was topped off by pineapple custard made by Sr. Christophina.

**August 26, 2007:** Fr. Aloys believes in being prompt unlike our previous priests. Sunday mass was finished in 2 hours, a record time for the parish. After mass, another stream of visitors came to see me about sponsorships, etc.. We all flopped to rest and read for several hours.

**August 27, 2007:** We had our first staff meeting, with Mary Lieta included, in the morning to organize our house schedule, responsibilities and work. After each person described her talents and experiences, we each claimed what we could do. Anika volunteered to be the information manager for the water and other projects. She acts as our scribe for our meetings. She will also coordinate the U.S. network of agencies/churches doing projects in West Kenya and network with local organizations and NGOs in Kenya. She will make sure that Karen Olson gets all the necessary information about our water projects.

**Angie will tutor and do supplementary English classes to St. Lucy students. She will assist Mary in the Educational Sponsorship/Scholarship Fund. She was interested in doing some health care at the clinic on the compound.**

**Mary Lieta will coordinate the income generation, training and orphan support projects for womens groups. She will also coordinate the “Adopt A Grandmother” project with the U.S. fundraiser, Lois Minot. She will coordinate the Sponsorship/Scholarship Fund using a new bank account under the Marit/Monica Womens Groups. Mary has been quite involved with the renovation of the Home Craft Center and will be a major mover of those programs.**

**Sister Rosita will oversee the Water Project and other projects connected with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and the Consociates/Ohana. She will be the primary contact with village, organizational and church leaders. She will also do grantwriting for the various projects.**

**In the afternoon we prepared dinner for Bishop Colin Davis, Sr. Frances Cassidy, Fr. Aloys, Mary Lieta, Kenneth Nyatol and ourselves. Bishop and Sr. Frances arrived in the late afternoon.**

**August 28, 2007: Met with Anika to set up a table of Water Projects. That prompted me to move the rest of my belongings from the Franciscan Convent to our residence. The day was spent reorganizing my personal stuff and unraveling the barbed wire along our side yard. Right now, the sheep and cattle wander through Snacking on the plants and grass.**

**August 29, 2007: After mass at the convent, I prepared breakfast for us, Fr. Aloys and Sr. Christoph. Fr. Kennedy Nyumba popped up so we included him. Fr. Aloys already had a queue of parishioners wanting to see him. After a hearty breakfast supplemented by Lucy’s dishes of cooked bananas and porridge, we met with Fr. Aloys about our work. He was interested and cooperative. He asked us to consider establishing a Montessori Nursery School in the compound. He has had some experiences with private and governmental programs and was particularly interested in the education of the young. He has limited money because the parish is poor. Fr. Aloys has been a priest for 4 years now and recently finished his term as pastor of Mbita parish. His vision is to make the Raruowa compound a real community asset for education of all sorts.**

**During the day, a succession of building contractors, school carpenters, housekeeper, groundsman came by to show estimates for needed repairs, attend to leaks in the plumbing, or get instructions about tasks to be done. Sabine Juma came by to ask for assistance for his ailing wife who had just given birth. She had been bleeding for several days after the delivery. I sent him off with a donation to take his wife to a Homa Bay hospital.**

**I set up a simple lunch of soup, bread and soup for us, two of the girls who had been tutored, and our housekeeper and yardman. The girls filled the tank on the tower with water then went off with a grocery list I gave them.**