



## March 2010

It has been almost a year since we have been back in the States. And it has been a difficult year but not devoid of accomplishment. The Maternity refurbishment project is well along. The ward which had been relegated to “stores” is being reclaimed as a nursery/newborn ward. It is light and airy and is now awaiting flooring tiles and partitions. The foundations for the added space have been laid and soon the walls will be going up (see photos). When finished it will be a boost to Maternity activity. One of the major difficulties the Hospital has had to face is no water. Can you imagine a Hospital with no water? *Don't!* The municipal water company, after privatization, was hopelessly mismanaged. The debt was such that they could not pay their power bill for pumping. Therefore, for the past 6 months no water has been pumped. The Hospital's roof runoff cisterns did not have the capacity to supply the Hospital when the rains did not fall regularly. As a result, the Hospital has had to purchase water by the “jerry-can” from expensive commercial sources. The good news is that Engineers Without Borders has taken us on as a project. They visited in early January to size up the situation. They concluded that there would be enough water from mountain runoff to supply the Hospital *and neighboring community* with water if properly collected. They returned home to raise funds for the project and hopefully to return in August to set the project up. Meanwhile, we do rain dances, etc.

Of course the old problems persist. Inadequate personnel in terms of training and performance is a continuing problem. Unfortunately that includes the nursing and medical staff. The dependence of our administration upon the Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK) for computer network software is a terrible mistake. Computers have been sitting unused in Stores for the past year awaiting the “software” I suspect will be obsolete once the software for accounting and network is obtained, if ever. CHAK, in my opinion, has been a disappointing advocate for Mission Hospitals. They keep touting agreements with the Government which are never honored by the latter. The hospital has stopped performing any major surgery because of the bad results which we get from the “hit and run” surgeons we can rent per procedure. The world financial downturn has diminished donor funds for the Hospital so that common items are “out of stock” all too frequently. We expect even more decrements because of the human tragedy in Haiti. Meanwhile, inflation proceeds apace. Our salary scale is too low to attract nurses or Clinical Officers except as a place to work until something better comes along, and longer term expatriate volunteer docs are not to be had. The NGOs and the Government keep hiring away our personnel at very high salaries so that the average stay, for instance, of our new Clinical Officers



ranges between 2 and 3 months. The Hospital must become more efficient and pay more if it is to keep capable employees.

We have now had three residents from U of Tenn., Memphis, each for one month. They have done a good job and seem to have enjoyed and benefited from the experience. There is now a “desert period” until August, when the next resident will be coming. I am happy to learn that a group of medical students at UCSD have formed an organization aimed at allowing students to gain experience in “Global Medicine”. They even have a faculty advisor! Obviously, given the financial state of California and its Universities, UCSD itself is not helping to fund this project, but students are resourceful and hope to raise funds from various sources to finance the travel and boarding expenses. I can guarantee them quite a time here! So there are some harbingers of continued success. Nonetheless, the increasing complexity of demands means that, at least this year, Nan and I feel too much is going on for us to spend more than a month away. Therefore, we shall have to forgo our tour back East which we had always enjoyed for the chance to see friends and acquaintances and family.

The Mothers’ Union Orphan Program is getting a boost from James and Mary Higbee, Episcopal Missionary Volunteers who are here for three months. They are working on the craft shops in Kakamega and Luanda that will sell products of the orphan program parish committees. They have completed a grant proposal for educational materials sent to the United Nations Women’s Guild. And they are meeting with parishes distant from Maseno. Jess and Steven Thomsen are also working on Mothers’ Union Orphan Program logistics, craft shops, and other activities. We are supplying all the parishes with exercise books and pencils, thanks to gifts from Rome, Italy. We are challenged by volunteer fatigue in the parish programs, and are working on ways to mitigate that problem. Suggestions are welcome!

The bees at St. Philip’s are becoming more productive thanks to Steven Thomsen. He has been working to improve the hives and the surrounding environment. The College farm is producing vegetables and bananas for the College kitchen. Students are almost all returned from having been sent away for fees, so we are feeling more ‘normal’ again. Business at the cybercafe and the computer center continues to increase, which is hopeful. Winnie Musimbi at the bookshop translated some interviews for Anna Doering, a graduate student from Yale, and did an excellent job both of the translation and the questionnaire layout. If anyone needs translation from English to Swahili, Winnie is available for more such work!

We are looking forward to a month with family, our California friends, and rest. We seem to get more involved here in Maseno at the same time that we are getting older.

God bless you.

Love,

Nan and Gerry

[www.masenomissions.org](http://www.masenomissions.org)

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