

September 9, 2007

Hi everyone,

Next week will be 3 years since I arrived in Zanzibar and as I look back I'm happy to have made the move here. I can remember people asking me "But what are you going to do in Africa? How can you just move there without a job?" I had been talking for almost 20 years of coming back to Africa to work with women and small business. I knew from traveling for a year from Cairo to Capetown in 1974 that there were lots of opportunities if I could take the risk. I also felt so strongly that I belong here – that I have so much to learn from Africans. I have had many moments of fear and indecision but for the most part I know that this decision has been the right one for me. I feel at home in Zanzibar – I love the community, I love the people and I love the work that I'm doing. I was so fortunate to work for Clinton Foundation for 2 years and now I am continuing my work with ZAPHA+. I am planning on starting a small foundation in the US and also a consulting firm here in Zanzibar. I have met many Zanzibaris who are educated and skilled and have much to offer their fellow citizens as far as empowering them to become participants rather than recipients. Africa is for the most part donor driven but there is so much that can be done for the people although I think the most important lesson I'm learning is that it's most effective when it's done on a small scale rather than trying to do it on a very large scale.

The month of August was a busy one for me as usual and I'm going to try to keep this one short.

A friend of mine who is an Ismaili invited me out to the airport to see the Aga Khan when he arrived. If you want look up Aga Khan in Wikipedia – they can explain it better than I can. The Aga Khan was traveling through East Africa and was in Zanzibar for only a few hours. Zanzibar is a melting pot of so many different peoples – including many different sects of Islam. I have become friendly with Ismailis, Bahoras, Sunnis, Shiites and Ibadhis. Their families have come from Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and India. What fascinates me is how well everyone seems to accept each other and live and work together – at least on the surface. I don't ever get the sense that one group is trying to force another group to change – we have mosques, temples and churches that have groups practicing their faith with no struggles that I can see.



Here we are at the old airport waiting for the Aga Khan to fly in with his own plane. I don't quite understand the entire religious significance of all of it but certainly he is very important to many people. He is the head of the Aga Khan Development Fund and they do fabulous things in developing countries – they have a beautiful hospital in Dar es Salaam and they build many schools. I know that they're doing some great water projects in Uganda. The Aga Khan owns the Serena Hotel here in Stonetown (that's where President Clinton stayed) and they also have a medical clinic that is wonderful. They had been planning on developing Stonetown further but there had been some small difficulties with the government here. I think that this short trip by the Aga Khan may have helped to smooth that over and I'm thinking that they may move forward in the next year or so to develop our waterfront a bit more. The red carpet is out and they're picking up any stray bits of dirt on the carpet – I'm sure that happens all over the world but we were having a particularly dusty and windy day. In the center are all the people waiting to see the great man – there were Ismailis who traveled from all over the world to just catch a glimpse of him. He's a nice looking older gentleman who looks quite ordinary to me but I don't have any picture because I was standing by the red carpet and we weren't allowed to take photos – too bad

because I'm sure if I was up above I could have sneaked a picture. But oh well – I had fun. On the right is my friend Zulli and his friends. Zulli's father was the head of the Aga Khan Foundation in Zanzibar and Zulli was in charge of a lot of the event planning.



Ed Coyne is the brother of my daughter in law Alanna – she's married to my eldest son Keith and they live in San Francisco. (you should hear me trying to explain that in Swahili). Ed just graduated from the University of Syracuse and was interested in doing some work in Africa with public health and maybe psychology. So I suggested that he come here and I would see if he could help at ZAPHA+. Well – Ed arrived at 3:00 in the afternoon in mid-August and that night I took him up the coast to a Maulidi festival – talk about culture shock!!! He's sitting with the group of women and is still trying to figure out which country he's in. He has been absolutely wonderful and a great sport. In the center he's with all the people in Pemba at the opening of our ZAPHA+ office there (more later). Ed has been a joy to me – as you all know I'm just a bit passionate about what I do and can talk non stop forever. Well – Ed patiently listens to me and really listens because then he asks great questions (which just keeps me talking more). He's planning on being here for 6 months or so and I can't say enough of how wonderful he is. He's patient and kind and great with the people – he's already learned Microsoft Access (give him a gold star) and working with us to design a database of our members.

On the right is my friend Yusuf, myself and Mzee. Mzee is the consultant for my small business project (another email altogether in a few weeks) and Yusuf is the man we built the well for last year in the rural village of Cheju. Yusuf asked to come and visit me one afternoon two weeks ago and it was great that Mzee was there as Mzee was the one who implemented the well project. If you remember I had visited Yusuf in his village and he was very kind to offer water to wash my hands and to drink. I asked where he got the water and he told me that his mother got it from the well that was close to 2 kilometers away. A friend of mine sent me \$1,000.00 and I got Mzee involved and we built a well last year. Yusuf told us that things have improved quite a bit. There are two more families living by the well, the nearby village is benefiting, Yusuf's mother doesn't have to carry water so far and they're using the water to irrigate their fields. Because of that they can grow more crops and they've been selling them in a nearby town. Yusuf told me that he's saving his money to buy a pump because it's very hard to pull the bucket of water up. He said he's going to save 50% or more of the total and then approach the village elders to have the villagers contribute. He said that he's showing the villagers that he's serious by saving the majority of the money himself. I love Yusuf – he's very special and the very cool thing is that he didn't ask me for money to buy the pump – he was just so proud and happy for the opportunity to make money and to improve the quality of his and the villagers' lives. That is why I am going to start a small foundation – not a big one. So much can be done here for so little money.



And then I had a visit from Sandra Cress who is in the red and pink mtandio. Sandra was the country director of CHAI when I arrived in Zanzibar. Sandra was a part of the team at CHAI who made the decision to work with the government of Zanzibar to bring the ARVS here. She also was the one who advocated hard to have President Clinton visit Zanzibar in 2005. We were able to talk a lot about the very first days and all that happened – I think that I may have to write a book about it myself. In 2005 there were many caring people including Stephen Lewis of the UN, President Clinton, Ed Wood, the COO of CHAI at the time and Heidi Becher who was the first project manager here in Zanzibar. They all worked in concert with Dr Dahoma who is the director of ZACP (Zanzibar AIDS Control Programme) and Dr Ahmed who was the director of the clinic. Sandra and I have become good friends and have stayed in touch and I am very grateful for that. She is now director of CSHOR for CHAI – they design computer models for different countries to help them anticipate the needs when they do the scale up of care and treatment for PLHAS. On the left she's visiting ZAPHA+ again and she brought with her Jordan who is with CSHOR in Dar. He is a most fascinating man himself – having lived all over the world (he was an underwater photographer for a while). He is a lovely computer geek (yes I asked his permission to use that moniker) and has been invaluable helping Ed and Seif to design our database. In the center we're having coffee with my friend LeeAnne – she's an American PhD student from Tulane who has been here for 6 months doing a research project with Dr Dahoma of ZACP. The project is about HIV and men having sex with men, sex workers and IV drug users. Dr Dahoma cares so much for the people of Zanzibar and he's a very effective government official – he has done a lot for HIV and has just finished writing a policy and action plan concerning substance abuse. It's not easy to deal with these issues in any country, but Dr Dahoma has made great progress here in Zanzibar. On the right Sandra is enjoying her tangawezi at a Maulidi festival we went to. Yes I am now an official Maulidi ya Hom groupie.



This group has to be seen to understand how incredible they are. They are men who are praising the Prophet and they are mesmerizing. In the center (and in the center) is Mwalimu (teacher) Ustadh Majid Said Mansour. We got a photo of the entire group at the end of the evening on the left and on the right is a shot of one of the groups preparing to start their program (I don't know what else to call it but it lasts about 20 minutes). They are on their knees and they sing and sway in unison. At one point they get up on their knees and then lean all the way back and then come all the way forward again. They move their hands and fingers in a moving and delicate way – I want to say almost like a beautiful Japanese or Chinese dancer but I don't want to compare. And these men are doing this as a religious ritual – this is not meant for tourists at all. While Sandra and I were sitting with the women some of the women started singing and yelling – they covered their heads with a kanga (Swahili piece of material that they wear) and would move and sway and hit their hands on the ground in front of them. I felt like we were sitting in a Muslim mosh pit!!! I didn't quite understand what was happening or if it was disrespectful of the women to do that or not. A friend later told me that it's actually an honor to the men that they inspired the women to be infused with the "spirit" and to praise the Prophet. It was utterly fascinating. Of course they won't perform during Ramadhan but my son Keith and his wife Alanna are arriving tomorrow. I just heard from Mwalimu and he said that they will perform a small practice session for us tomorrow night – what a great honor!!!!



Here we are in Pemba officially opening the ZAPHA+ office there. The PLHAS (people living with HIV/AIDS) in Pemba had decided in 2006 to become a branch of ZAPHA+ - they held an election in November (I sent an email) and they finally have their own office. On the left is our mwenye kiti (chairperson) Consolata, Farouk (the chairman of the board of trustees), Seif, our coordinator and Amina our secretary. In the center is Mama Shadya the wife of President Karume the president of Zanzibar who was our guest of honor. It showed tremendous respect for PLHAS that such an important person would officially open our office in Pemba. On the right are many of the people who were on the far side of the building watching the event. The man holding the white piece of paper is Salum Ali Salum who is the mwenye kiti of the Pemba branch. Pemba is a very small and very poor island – the majority of the people are fishermen and farmers and very proud Muslims. As always I have so much to learn from all of them – the members of ZAPHA+ are amazing. There were 45 members when we had the elections in November 2006 and now there are almost 150!!! Their new office is right on the main road which helps to reduce stigma. Ed and I found that even the taxi drivers know what ZAPHA+ is which means that people are getting the information about HIV and they know that there is a support group available. Back to my future foundation – I have given \$1,500.00 to ZAPHA+ to hire an assistant coordinator for the Pemba branch (you call it assistant because Seif is the head coordinator). The members, like ours here, are wonderful but they don't have a lot of education or skill as far as management or computer skills. That little bit of money will go a very long way to help empower these people to become participants rather than recipients.



Just a few more photos of Pemba – we were sitting outside the office waiting for the event to start and this guy came walking by with his cow – or is that an ox? Whatever Ed and I went to one of the beaches and here are the ngalawas (the fishing boats that the men use). We saw a young boy building a miniature one but he didn't want his photo taken and then we saw some guys who were fixing a boat. The day we returned from Pemba I was resting and heard all this yelling. I went out and saw smoke coming from this restaurant that is across the street from my house!!! First the guys took buckets of water and threw them into the window (the guy in the blue pants is at the window) then a few of them came running down the street with fire extinguishers (the guy in the striped shirt has one). What I found most interesting was that they were doing most of this in bare feet.



People started to gather and then an army guy used a walkie talkie and a truck arrived with these guys in riot gear. A few minutes later the water truck came and the truck next to it which has the generator. I don't know if you can see but in the center photo behind the trucks is an army guy with a video camera down by his side – he caught the entire thing. So they took out the hose and then hooked it up to the generator – it took a full 3 to 5 minutes before the water started pumping. Thank goodness they had been throwing water and using the fire extinguishers – by the time the firemen (love the yellow hats) got there the fire was out. But let me tell you they sure did soak that inside room!!!! I don't know what started the fire or what happened but I was just glad that it wasn't serious. In the center photo you can see the blue sign on the top story of the building – that's the offices of the local accountants and it would have been terrible if the entire building had burned. What has been most interesting is that the restaurant opened up again two days later – I don't think that they're cooking just yet but I'm sure they will soon.

Sorry – this ended up being one of my longest emails. I tell my stories through my photos and I take a lot of photos. My life is fascinating and I'm glad to share it with so many others. September is going to be even more exciting if you can believe it. There are two young students here, Nicole and Katelin who are doing body mapping at ZAPHA+ - that's a project to help build up the support groups. Keith and Alanna are arriving for two weeks and we're going on safari to Selous. I'm excited because we'll go on a river safari which I never did in 1974. And we will have progressed further with the small business project that I'm doing at ZAPHA+ and I promise to give an update on what I'm doing with all of the private donations that I received.

I hope that everyone enjoyed the end of the summer. School is starting for many and the fall leaves will be changing soon in New England. I love hearing from you so please keep those emails coming.

Thinking of all of you

Kathryn