

FROM THE JOURNAL OF BILL MONAGHAN
UGANDA
2007

ON HIS FIRST VISIT TO BUBAARE PARISH, IBANDA
IN UGANDA, EAST AFRICA
FEBRUARY 2 THROUGH FEBRUARY 24, 2007

PROLOGUE TO AFRICA

In August, 2006, Fr. Joseph Sserugo visited my parish of St. Vincent de Paul, as he had done off and on since around 1999. I was playing music for the 5 pm Mass, as the teen group, headed by Chuck and Linda Ormsby, was returning from a mission trip to Western Pa. Little did we know the journey that was about to unfold when Father Joseph nonchalantly invited from the altar at the end of Mass:

"So, if anybody wants to come to Uganda..."

REPORT FROM IBANDA, UGANDA, AFRICA #1

FEBRUARY 6, 2007

Hi Friends!

We have arrived in Africa! We landed in Kampala on Saturday Night, and Father Joseph was there with open arms and a great big "Yahoo!" The weather is fine – a bit cloudy, which probably keeps it cooler, around 78 degrees in the day and a little cooler at night – but no snow!

We've seen some great sights – a show performed by Ndere which was traditional Ugandan dances with live music, and the emcee was really funny; many markets on the roads as we travel, which include bananas, charcoal, goat meat, other meats, people on bikes, walking, motorcycles, cars, big, big trucks usually carrying many passengers, cars, cows, goats, and yes, ladies carrying things on their heads.

We arrived in Ibanda on Monday afternoon – we passed a rocky cliff on a high mountain that Father Joseph calls "Lion King." On Monday afternoon, after meeting several teachers at the school, a farmer's wife who gave us 4 papayas, a bear/soda distributor lady who gave us a free case of water, we met with many of the choir who want to continue learning music under the direction of Godfrey, a 26-year old choir master. The keyboard works, and he is very happy to use it. Ashleigh brought some crayons and cartoon sheets for some of the children to color, and the numbers soon swelled as word spread that she was there working with them. So as the choir and I were making cool music (a mix of African and some of our Teen mass songs) Ashleigh and the kids were coloring and breaking crayons in half so there weren't any fights over the crayons.

Everyone has been very nice. Usually, after I say "Agandi (hello)," and they stop laughing, they greet us with the words "you are very welcome here." The food has been great – fish, bananas in the form of steamed or mashed, chapati (wheat tortilla), goat meat, chicken, noodle soup, corn flakes, coffee, tea, (I even drank a milk African tea!), and yes, plenty of bottled water. The eggs usually have onions in them (rats!, but I eat them anyway) but today at breakfast we had eggs without onions! Yahoo!

We are now at the hospital, which has internet access, and later today I will work with the choir for 2 hours, I have to learn more Runyankole, but I can count a little, and say a few sentences. Most people speak English, so it's pretty easy, but often you get these wide- eyed stares, and I'm not sure if it's because they don't understand what I am saying, or because I am a white boy.

Well, we hope to send a couple of pictures with this letter. Notice in the picture that Father is enticing with me with a Bell Beer.

Peace to all, and if it snows, throw a snowball for me. You are in our prayers, and I miss you and Ashleigh misses you too!

I love you all –
Billy M (And Ashleigh O)

REPORT FROM IBANDA, UGANDA, AFRICA #2

February 14, 2007

Greetings from St. Charles Lwanga Bubaare Parish, Ibanda, Uganda!

Happy Valentine's Day!

Today, Wednesday, is slightly hazy and sunny, even though the nights are cloud free and the night sky is sparkling with so many stars (ones we cannot even see at home) because the sky is free of city lights. Ashleigh and I have been making many friends in Ibanda as we continue to work with the children, the choir, the school, and many more in Father Joseph's parish. And if you think we are starving, well, you couldn't be farther from the truth – Father Joseph and his friends, the Rubanju family, Kaboine family, and many others, have fed us so much food: rice, french fries (Ashleigh's favorite), chicken, goat (not Ashleigh's favorite), Karo (millet – you'll have to look that one up!), soup, pumpkin, pineapple (which is called enanaansi), of course ebitokye (bananas) in every form imaginable (steamed, roasted, plain) and some choice drinks! So I don't think we'll return looking skinny.

Our work takes us to the school, where we help their teachers with some lessons, and I get to teach some music. I have been teaching the children the Beatitudes in sign language to the tune of "Blessed and Happy" (yes, from *The Word, A Gospel Opera*), as well as "Go Make A Difference," which is rapidly becoming the Ugandan national anthem. Everyone loves it, and everywhere we walk, they want to sing it! We even visited the parish of Ishongorero, where Father Joseph was able to concelebrate a Mass with Archbishop Paul Bakyenga. During the Mass, the parish presented the Archbishop with his own bunch of bananas and two of his very own goats. I was asked to sing a brand new Psalm I had written for the day called "Happy the man who places trust in God." And then, we feasted!

Everywhere we go, the first thing people say is "You are very welcome here," and boy do they mean it! We have been given gifts – I now own a chicken, about 36 amahuri (eggs), and 2 enanaansi, and 2 amapapari (papayas). When we leave the school for the day, I feel we are leading a parade – the children hold our hands and say thank you. They really want to learn about us, and are happy we are here, and we love learning about them!

In the evenings, after I teach choir, Ashleigh and I seem to have started clubs – we play with children on the rectory front lawn – they show us games, we teach them songs like "Awesome God" and "Go Make A Difference," and they do some dances. I also have a music club going, where up to five people at a time play the one ananga (keyboard), and a few people play guitars. They are learning, and I can't wait to show them more each day. By the end of each day, we are tired. Definitely!

Although we are beginning to get around town and see the market shops and different views of the landscape, the highlight continues to be the people – they are warm, welcoming, courteous, funny and fun-loving. We keep a list of things that we think can be of use to them – baby clothes, mosquito nets, and other things that we are discussing with Father Joseph and will be able to share with everyone back home.

Father Joseph is a great pastor and a great host, and is always enthusiastic about his connection with America and St. Vincent's, and is a very happy man! And now his friends in Ibanda share and feel that same connection and enthusiasm. I think the true nature of this friendship we feel with Father Joseph and our Ibandan friends is they very essence of Christian love, a bond that stretches from the simple streets of Africa to our home in Richboro, PA!

We miss you all back home – our parents, family, friends – and we look forward to seeing everyone when we return. We love you all!

Love and peace,
Ashleigh Ormsby and Bill Monaghan
And "Yahoo!" From Father Joseph!

REPORT FROM IBANDA, UGANDA, AFRICA #3

Monday, February 19, 2007

Hello Everyone and Greetings from Uganda!

Sometimes on the weekends, one gets to relax, slow down, take it easy. Not so in Ibanda! Since last week, Ashleigh, Father Joseph and I have been constantly on the go! Ashleigh and I have been working with the people of Bubaare Parish, Ibanda, including the school children, choir, orphan babies, and others. I can often see Ashleigh teaching English or Math, or, when I'm with the choir, I see through the church windows Ashleigh and the children outside playing football (soccer), or Ente Ente Imbuzi (cow cow goat, which is our version of duck duck goose). These games can go on as long as my choir rehearsal, which is 2 or more hours. And that's just the beginning of our busy schedule.

On Saturday, a group of 14 of us drove about 3 hours to Queen Elizabeth National Park. The ride started at 5 am and we passed through many towns which were "sleeping." As the sun rose (beautiful in this country over mountains, banana plantations, and hosed in the valleys), we saw a monkey on the side of the road, and then the Great Rift Valley, which stretches, as you can imagine, as far as the eye can see through Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, and beyond. It puts the "awesome" in "Awesome God!" We then began to see pobs (antelope), water buffalo, by the dozens. After "officially" entering the park, we began to see wart hogs (very funny, especially the babies), and then three elephants which were snacking on some trees. Father Joseph, not a squemish guy, did indeed get a little fidgety as the elephants moved directly toward our small bus – they were thirsty, and we were in their path. It did make for some great photos as they came quite close. The rest of the day included more water bucks, pobs, water buffalo, hippos, elephants, many birds, a snake (which made an unfortunate entry into a large gathering of birds on the bank – a bigger bird took action on this intrusion, which was kind of a major event for us onlookers from our spot on our boat), and a couple of crocodile sightings (I think I saw it, really!). Lunch was fun as we shared our scraps with a vulture – Father Joseph and the children were particularly fond of this creature as they'd toss their scraps and the vulture would catch it in midair. He was pretty brave, coming pretty close to the table!

Sunday was just packed with activity. We attended the 10:00 am Mass, during which Father remembered my brother Michal Shamus Monaghan on the ninth anniversary of his death. We also sang "Amazing Grace," which the choir now loves and is also dear to my family since Michael died. And then, things really took off. Ashleigh and I led the offertory procession and offered our goat, followed by about many, many people offering bananas, jackfruit, chickens (enkoko), another goat (embuzi), sugar cane, eggs, millet (oburo), and even some money. The whole procession, which is very joyful, and women carry their offerings on their head, lasted about 30 minutes or more, with great and spirited singing the whole time. Two of my guitar students played their "endongos," and I even played the African drum (engoma) with the drummers. Everyone's generosity and willingness to participate in the church was truly amazing and an event in which we were truly blessed to be a part. I believe we finished Mass at 1 pm, but then, on to our next engagement.

Finally, the day had come. Father Joseph has been talking about this since October, when Ashleigh and I first discussed coming to Uganda: the goat roast. We went to the farm of Dr. Louis and Kellen Kaboine, and they had really prepared a great day for us. It is on this farm where they grow many things (bananas, pineapple, cows, goats, you name it), and they served a fine array of foods. Dr. Louis had also arranged for a group of traditional Ugandan musicians and dancers and singers to entertain us. Those in attendance were Father's close and dear friends and their families, and everyone, most of all the children, really enjoyed and participated in the dancing, especially the dance traditional for this region. Even the 4-year old knew the moves! The group, called Post Test Club, was started by Dr. Louis in 1997 in Ibanda as an answer to the HIV testing that was being done large-scale at that time, and those who were tested were invited to join the club, regardless of your result. The group now promotes a good message through music and Ugandan cultural awareness, and I plan to work with them in June on producing a CD and DVD of their work. Ashleigh and I also taught Post Test Club the "Limbo Song" and Ashleigh led the guests in going under the Limbo Stick – it was a competitive free version, so there was no winner. Even the Post Test Club dancers and musicians got in line to play. Lots of fun. We finished the evening with some songs, games, and just sitting around the fire drinking and eating. The comradeship and friendships we have with the Kaboine family, the Rubanju family, and Father Joseph and Father George (an Apostle of Jesus who also lives with Father Joseph – very funny man) are very special, and we are truly able to share with each other and grow in knowledge, love, and our bond in Jesus.

We begin our third and final week here as we plan to continue working with the school children, Ashleigh with the orphan babies, I with the choir and musicians. We will perform a concert of English and Runyankole songs on Thursday evening, so if you want to attend, get your ticket now. Seats are going fast!!!

We hold you all in our hearts, and we will see you soon! Miss you lots, and lots of love!

Peace,
Your friends in Ibanda, Uganda,

REPORT FROM IVYLAND, PA, USA #4

February 27, 2007

Dear Family, friends, Father Joseph, and people of Saint Vincent's and St. Charles Bubaare Parishes:

We have accomplished re-entry upon American soil, but it's a little hard to see right now through all this white stuff, what do they call it - SNOW?!? Our time in Ibanda, Uganda, with St. Charles Bubaare Parish and Father Joseph is a treasure trove of memories, shared friendships, good old fashioned Christian love, and good, good times.

Our last few days were as non-stop as ever. I continued teaching the deaf children, who were eager as ever to learn. I once brought an enanansi (pineapple) to class to use as a visual aid for learning the signing for "pineapple" and you should have seen their eyes light up – I think they thought we were going to eat it (what was I thinking) so I quickly started drawing elephants, lions, and chickens on the blackboard to divert their attention. I covered the pineapple with my hat, and lucky for me we were able to draw animals with crayons and they forgot about the pineapple – phew! The deaf class tripled as the week ensued – I started with 7, and ended with about 20 on Friday. They are a great group, and I could see from the older children how much they appreciated the attempt to teach in their language. I have fond memories of Winfred, Anthony, Joan, and Moses, who were stubborn, funny, intelligent, and mischievous (especially Winfred). Our big accomplishments were signing each other's names and drawing pictures and writing the words they were learning. They really need a teacher devoted to them, and Father Joseph thinks one is supposed to be coming, although the teacher has not yet arrived. This special group really needs prayers!

On Wednesday, we celebrated Ash Wednesday with Father Joseph and the school children. With as much singing as usual, the Mass was fun. Ashleigh and I noticed that Father administers ashes on the hair line instead of the forehead, and though they look black on our skin, they appear a gray-white ash when compared to the deep darks of the African hair. At lunch after Mass, Father and I enjoyed some fish (which Ashleigh opted not to eat). By fish, I mean the whole thing – from tail to head! Now that's a Lenten lunch!

Ashleigh continued teaching English and Math during the week. I was able to stop in a few times to see P7 learning verb tenses, and Ashleigh was really doing great. She also introduced them to the game 7-up (ask any elementary kid – they'll tell you how to play) and they loved it, even though they always picked their friends and cheated, I mean peeked, all the time. It was a great game, Ashleigh said, because everyone could play, regardless of being deaf or not. Towards the end of the week, we would share time in different classes, mostly P5, 6, and 7, and I would teach music to them. We covered songs we do in Teen Mass, such as "Trading My Sorrow," "Awesome God," "Go Make A Difference," and "Blessed and Happy." They loved every song, sang with full hearts and voices, and did the hand motions and sign language. And I think they learned a few new words too – awesome, slandered, you know, the normal way we Americans speak!

On Thursday, February 22, we had a wonderful concert featuring 5 songs in Runyankole, and 14 songs in English. Many people came to the concert, including the charismatic group, some people who stopped on bikes, our neighbors (the gang of children with whom Ashleigh and I played with everyday) and droves of school children and some teachers who were on their way home. I noticed a few beginning to leave during the penultimate song, and as soon as I began our final song, with "go make a..." they all came back to join along, very loudly, in "Go Make A Difference." After the concert, we had a sunset photo shoot, a quick rain storm, and a rainbow! Everyone wanted their photo once, twice three times! Those Africans sure are camera happy!

On Friday, the school invited Ashleigh and me to a special presentation at noon. The whole school sat around a tree, and Sylvester and Beninya, with whom Ashleigh worked closest, and Godfrey, with whom I worked closest, had orchestrated a farewell given by the school to us. Each of the older classes performed a song with dance and drum, often with our names in it too! At one point Ashleigh asked me if my allergies were bothering me, but I (like the sensitive guy I am) said no, it was something tugging at my heart. The teachers and students presented us with plaques, mats, and the most heartfelt farewell I think I have ever received. And then...yes, we ended of course with the new Ibandan Anthem – "Go Make A Difference," sung louder and with more energy I've heard yet! They really

were great, and you could feel the love all around. I could see some of the deaf children in the audience (to whom I kept signing their names and they smiled and signed back), many of our neighbors, some of the orphans, and many of the other students who really touched our lives. We announced, in coordination with Sylvester, the beginning of a pen pal program, for teacher-to-teacher and student-to-student, and I was given a packet of already written letters from many of the school children. Children also ran up to us and gave us avocados, handshakes, and more farewells, and a few of them carried our gifts back to the rectory with us (there was no stopping them, honest!).

On Friday night, we had a choir gathering, but people were really just enjoying the time together. True, we sang a little that night, but mostly just had fun. Ashleigh and the children came into the church too. We had an incredible rain storm with hail (no snow, however), which was amplified by the metal roof of the church. It was deafening, and we were singing our hearts out, but you could barely hear. The rain subsided quickly, as is the way in Africa, and we had an easy singalong session. Afterward, we took some photos, and I spoke to several people – Scovia, whom I've now known for 3 weeks, but just was finding out about her being a widow and having three sons who are struggling to receive an education, one of whom is not even enrolled and he's 12 years old; Getrude, who is also a widow and has a son who needs help; Betty, who is 21 and wants to continue her education but is also lacking funds; Edwig, who is 19, studying at Light College of Business, and is in a lot of debt because her uncle cannot help her; and other stories. Father Joseph always checks out the validity of these stories, but I can tell from the hearts of these people how true their situations are. Ashleigh and I have decided to do what we can to help some of these people, and we have brought their stories home to you all too, to share the bond of friendship and love and to do what we can to give them the blessing of an education, which is one of their most treasured interests. While all this was going on, and sometimes even in the same breath, people like Scovia and Mariet and Pelly were giving me gifts – cool instruments and beautiful mats that they hand-created. They also sent letters of thanks home to their many American friends who have been praying and helping them.

We spent a nice evening with Father Joseph, the Kaboine family, and the Rubanju family, dining on pizza (kind of like Pizza Hut deep dish with an African twist), rice in a pumpkin, fish (it was Friday in Lent), and more. William, in what he said was not going to be a long speech, said some very nice words of Christian friendship and love, which we echoed back to the group as well. They look forward to our return in June with 18 more abejungu (white people!), and send their love and greetings home. Then, William, Kellen, Sarah, Pelly, and Ben presented us with with 2 drums and an akacence (shaker) – wow!

Saturday found us driving from 7 a.m. on to Kampala, and gave Ashleigh and I much time with Father and much time for reflection. Both of us took time in the afternoon to catch up and finish journaling. The memories of our 21 days in Ibanda, our friendships with such great people, the needs they have and the gifts they bring, and all of our experiences have gone and made a difference in our hearts. We are excited to share the bond with Father Joseph and his people, and are eager to help enlighten and educate our friends about life in Africa, and hopefully get some more people to go and visit.

They are waiting, they are welcoming, and they are our friends!

From Ashleigh and Bill,
Peace, Love and Katuhimbise Ruhanga – Praise God, Alleluia!

ENDNOTES:

I will be posting photos and all of the updates on www.monaghanmusic.com for all those who would like to see more!

Pen Pals: If any school children – high school, elementary school – and any adults, especially teachers, would like pen pals to their students and teachers, I arrived home with a packet of letters waiting to meet some American friends. You can let me know in person or through email : bill@monaghanmusic.com – place in the subject African Pen Pal Request.

REFLECTION FROM IVYLAND, PA, USA

May 24, 2007

I am jealous. Ashleigh Ormsby gets to go back to Uganda a whole month before I do. On the other hand, I get to stay home for 30 more days and tell everyone about the wonderful people of St. Charles Bubaare Parish, Ibanda.

Since we've returned from our February adventure we've been able to tell several parishes and schools and many, many friends of our experience and the mission we've chosen. To my surprise, people are not bored by the 350 plus photos (out of 2200 or so) that I show them, nor do their ears seem to tire of the many accounts I share with them. I guess I expect the classic feigning of interest, as in the classic cliché of someone sitting you down for their slide show of the recent family trip. Instead, our presentations, both large group and personal, invoke many questions, and inspire many people to brainstorm ideas which they can implement to help: donations, clothes collections, pen pal letters, prayers, and even some considering joining us in the future.

Our work includes: raising awareness about the orphans' home, the school conditions, curriculum, teachers and students, the parish choir, and private music lessons I was teaching. The people are very happy, but they have needs ranging from basic to what we might consider a western world overhaul. Some basic needs range from orphans who need money for their education, books and supplies for the school, secondary high school students who need monies for their education, medical care, clothing, mosquito nets, and even toys for disabled and orphaned children, and others of course.

The "western world overhaul" is probably the conclusion most Americans would make: electricity is unpredictable or even non-existent in some places; no running water in some places; many have ripped, sewn, or patched clothing; books are scarce; where is the nearest pizza place or water ice stand? trash pickup; no high rise buildings; most people ride bikes or walk; no after school organized intramural sports, ballet, or Spanish club; but for me, that was more of the beauty of being in Africa – *their* way of life, not ours! Perhaps we can share some of our "western world" with them, but I wanted even more to learn about the world of Africa from the African people.

The most important aspect of our work is to invite people to share the beauty of connecting personally with Father Joseph and his people by visiting, writing letters, photos, emails, and the "number one banana" – prayers, prayers, prayers! Ashleigh and I really felt the support of your prayers when we were in Uganda in February.

What I hope to find in Africa

The first time I went to Africa (oh, that is such a cool sentence to say!) I had some impressions of what I could experience there, and I knew I wanted to teach music and give as much to the people as I could. However, I suspended pretty much all expectations in lieu of going with as open a mind as possible, knowing that I just wanted to absorb the authentic African life from native African people. I always told my friends that, even though it looked like I was going to do some mission work, this was a selfish trip for me, the fulfilling of a lifelong dream.

Well, I did get to play and teach music, but the rest of my experience in Uganda went far beyond the horizon of my imagination. The beauty of the people who welcomed us into their homes and into their lives, the joy in the simple things of life amidst the lack of our "western" luxuries, and the seemingly innocent acceptance of Ashleigh and myself into their community, their church and school, their family – these aspects and more refreshed and rejuvenated me, brought a soaring faith back to my belief in people, and in one short month brought me to love the people of Ibanda and know that I do indeed have a mission: to bring to my friends and family and the rest of the world an awareness of these people, their lives, and what we can do to connect with them and help them.

Here are some of my most vivid memories.

Father Joseph: What a relief to embark from the plane, make it through customs, retrieve our luggage and exit to the wide arms of a "yahoo!" yelling Father Joseph on our first night in Africa. This man, an Apostle of Jesus, who has visited St. Vincent's over the years, was so happy to have visitors of his own. He took the best care of Asheigh and me, introduced us to the people with great zeal, empowered us in our work, and always kept prayer alive in our daily

activities. I mean, of course, in our breakfast prayer, ending with “Amen, and A-woman!” or “Yahoo – what shall we be having for lunch?” or “we must prepare for the Holy Hour this evening – where shall we be eating?” Needless to say, we were well fed, and every meal was an opportunity for fellowship with whomever Father invited to join us. We also saw first-hand the projects Father has undertaken: restoration of a church, saying Mass for the Girls High School, orphans home, the disabled and home-bound, the school, water tanks, a well, electricity, even having to get a generator started for morning mass when there is no power. Father empowers many people in many tasks, and is really doing great things for the people of Ibanda. It was a great honor and very fun to be able to work with him, his people, and for his parish.

Gilbert: This tall, lanky 19-year old guy is currently studying at senior secondary high school for boys. He is robust, energetic, eager to learn and always smiling wide. My memories of Gilbert include learning guitar, taking us hiking, teaching us Runyankole grammar and sentence construction, and our pledge to help his education.

The Kaboine family: Dr. Louis, father, and Kellen, mother, with their three children that we met, Marc (11), Natasha (7) and Redempta (5). They invited us to their home many times for meals, we learned songs and clapping games from the children, we traveled to their goat farm (about 20 miles away on winding dirt roads), and to their other farm, where we were honored by a goat roast and an afternoon performance of Ugandan songs and dancing by the Post Test Club performers (more on Post Test Club follows). We also traveled together to Queen Elizabeth National Park, as well as pizza, sugar cane, and a fish in a pumpkin feast on our last evening. Marc, Natasha, and Redempta were the first three to write penpals to our American friends.

Edwig: This pensive but brilliant smiling 19-year old student at Light College of Business walks from the outskirts of the western end of the town all the way to Bubaare church at the east end, probably about 4-5 miles, each night for choir practice and also on Sundays, and still managed to bring me a gift of a pineapple or some sugarcane. Her birthday happens to be on St. Patrick’s Day, which I found incredibly ironic. She sings with a sweet voice yet one can easily see when her face turns thoughtful how seriously she takes her studies and desires to continue her education. I am also sponsoring her educational costs (with donations of course by whomever wishes to help).

My Abeshongozi (choir) and my lessons: Each day I taught lessons to whomever showed up at the rectory on the two donated guitars and the donated keyboard. People came to make a “program” (a schedule), but since many don’t have watches, clocks, or transportation, “program” is a loose word. Nevertheless, they came alone, in pairs, in groups, and they came to learn. Joseph, John Bosco, Pius, Deo Gratias, Evagelista, Scovia, Evaristus, and more; I never knew when they were coming, but when they did arrive, they eagerly took notes, played the instrument, and most impressive of all, they would stay for 1, 2, 3, or more hours. I wish my American students had this kind of initiative and drive! At 4 pm, we would relocate to the church for Abeeshongozi rehearsal, and remember, this was every night! Traditionally, in America, we rehearse for church once per week. I believe this is a reflection on how much the people desired to learn new material, and the love they had for practicing it. Plus, I’m sure hanging out with the musical “omujungu” had something to do with it too! I received many gifts: from Edwig, a pineapple, and also sugarcane; from Deo Gratias, a chicken (enkoko); from Mrs. Mariet Rutobo, 36 eggs and 2 mangos (compliments of the entire Abeeshongozi); and many more gifts. Oh, and we also made some great music with singing, drums, clapping, and lots of energy!

Christine and Helen: This Abbot and Costello duo (Helen is tall, Christine is short) met me every evening as I was taking “snaps” of the sun setting over the mountains of Ibanda. My photo perch was on a street which they travelled each night returning from school. Students in P5 and P6, these girls were always smiling, with a quiet interest in what I was doing. I could see the thrill on their faces when I turned to take a photo of them, which they took with very serious smiles and even my sunglasses! Then invited Ashleigh and me to meet their family, and were so excited for us to come to their homes. We were indeed honored! They would welcome us at school with warm smiles, and you could see that their close friendship with each other extended without question or boundary to include Ashleigh and me. It was not until Thursday of the last week that I came to know that Christine is one of the 20 orphans who are being sponsored by people from St. Vincent’s, which brought her even closer to my heart.

Pelly and William Rubanju: This is probably the reverse order of how I should introduce you to this fine and fun couple, because I’ve introduced the woman first. But, that is the order in which I met them, so that is how I bring them to you. First, Pelly, whom I have dubbed the best alto singer in the world. On the first day of Abeshongozi practice, Pelly could sing immediately back to me her alto harmony for any song I was teaching. I have worked with many great alto singers, but considering Pelly could hold her own, and in a language not her native tongue, and really have a passion about her singing, just elevated her to the top of the list. She is a pillar of the church community, always present at daily and weekend Mass, a singer and drummer in the choir, and funny too! She even got malaria while we were there, but did her best to keep a social life (and that’s no easy task, keeping up with Father Joseph’s social life!). Secondly, William Rubanju, chairman of Bubaare Parish. He will introduce his wife to you as “she is beautiful, isn’t

she? Do you see that beautiful woman there? She is my wife!" William shared many times with Ashleigh and me, including teaching us very important phrases like "tihariho Kizibu" ("No Problem") in the back of a truck ride to a catechist meeting. He is a wonderful dancer (ha!) of the traditional tribes – he puts much expression into his dance moves. He is also a serious-minded liturgical man of God, and even takes care of running the generator for the morning Mass when there is no power. Perhaps his most important contribution to our experience was being forefront in our purchase of our very own imbuzi (goat), which we, the omujungus, offered at the Mass in which they were collecting all kinds of goods to auction for raising money to purchase land for the church (which cost about \$600.00). This is a truly great couple, and Bubaare parish is very fortunate to have them.

These and other people are whom I hope to find in Africa. I long to continue developing friendships with these people, to learn from them and to offer what I can as a Christian, an educator, and a musician, as well as an American friend who has been blessed with so much in my own life. I wish to pass on the good things I have in the hopes that it will make a difference to the people of Ibanda, and ultimately spread to other parts of Africa and the world! Yes, very idealistic, but hey, like I said, this my selfish dream.

Obusingye, and Webare Munongo - Ninkushabira
(Peace, and Thank you very much – I will be praying for you).
Bill Monaghan

Post Test Club

My First Exposure to African Music

When I saw Peter Gabriel perform "In Your Eyes" live at an Amnesty International concert broadcast on MTV way back in my college days, a flame was ignited inside me that has grown into an all-out blaze over the years. Peter Gabriel's song, with which I was already familiar, suddenly took on a whole new life. Through his work with Amnesty International he was raising world awareness of wrongful imprisonment of political prisoners, one of the most famous being Nelson Mandela, who when finally released, became President of South Africa and instituted a policy of forgiveness and amnesty to all who oppressed South African blacks. A very "Jesus" thing to do, which I still find amazing to this day.

The other aspect of this performance of "In Your Eyes" was how Peter Gabriel utilized African dancers in his song, and African rhythms in the music. The image of these dancers in the full vibrant color of their regalia, and the vigorous exhilaration of their performance – jumps, stomps, claps, swaying -- these images are still imprinted on my mind's eye: a permanent picture of joy, freedom, celebration.

Africa was Electric!

When Father Joseph and the Kaboine and Rubanju families threw a complete goat roast in honor of Ashleigh and me (it was the first goat roast ever given in my honor!) Dr. Louis Kaboine arranged for a group to entertain us. When we arrived, we could see various instruments scattered on the ground. This is when my eyes opened wide, the hairs on my arms started tingling and my body wanted to jump out of my skin. Real Africans playing real instruments and I get to talk to them. We received a lesson on the instruments from Amos and Moses, including a xylophone completely hand-made of wood; two edungos, stringed instruments that are shaped like sail boats, the bigger of which is the bass edungo on which to play it; and of course, the many drums – the taller tom-tom, and the normal engomas – all played with the hands.

Little by little, more of the group arrived. I noticed a huge difference in this respect: at home in America, myself and my band mates will mapquest our gig, print the directions on our home computer printer, load our own car with our own instruments, and drive ourselves to our destination. Dr. Louis had to provide transport for the members, who don't own computers, cars, or printers, and they were arriving in small groups. The members went to a changing area and emerged in costumes of orange, black, white, and yellow – and some of the women in blue dresses. Many also donned accessories, like shaker and rattling instruments attached to the shins, and colorful poofy garments worn around the women's waists.

Post Test Club's Performance

In speaking with Amos and Moses I learned that their group name was *Post Test Club*. I didn't ask at first, but I thought it was a curious name - not *Amos and the Rockin' Africans*, or *Moses and the Sea Splitters* – just *Post Test Club*.

The afternoon unfolded with Post Test Club performing traditional Ugandan dances, complete with singing and music, from every region of the country. Our leader would tell a background of the song, whether it was a cow dance or a husband seeking his wife (or wives) or other stories. At times, even the children and William Rubanju got up to dance – this kind of culture runs deep in the blood of all Africans it seems. Four-year-old Console Michelle especially knew the moves.

I recorded the music with my hand held tape player, knowing that this music has a long multi-generational history and is the stuff of Africa I have been seeking. Those images of "In Your Eyes" came back again and again as I witnessed Post Test Club performing with full energy, living colors, and vibrant African beauty.

What's in the Name?

Eventually, I was able to delve a little further into the curious name of Post Test Club. I was chatting with Dr. Louis, who casually remarked how he had formed the Post Test Club in 1997. My mouth just dropped. "Do you mean that you formed this group we are watching perform these African dances in your backyard? This professional and highly cultured, not to mention, extremely talented group of young people?" I asked him between bites of roasted chicken and goat-kabobs. Dr. Louis went on to explain that Post Test Club is formed on the practice of administering the HIV test, and upon completion of the test, people are welcome to join Post Test Club, regardless if they test positive or negative for HIV. So, after the test (Post Test), they can join, and as a result, more awareness of HIV spreads to more people, and everyone takes another step to fighting and possible preventing the spread of HIV. The musicians are a part of this club, and have built a repertoire of more than 100 songs from all over Uganda. The songs come from North, South, East, West, from different tribes, and are sung in different regional languages. The group leader can explain the songs to the audience in English, and I am sure in other languages too. I was on the edge of my African mat the whole time I was listening, thinking of possibilities, excited at this whole new depth to the people I was watching and admiring.

Sharing Our Music

Near the end of the goat roast, I taught the musicians how to play the Limbo song (our own American tradition – ha!) and Ashleigh taught everyone how to do the Limbo dance. It was quite funny to see everyone trying to get in line – musicians, children, adults, even Father Joseph! We all posed for a group photo – one of my proudest moments as a musician – and then they told me I was now considered a member of Post Test Club. Me – a member of an African music group! An eighteen year old dream come true!

My hope with Post Test Club is to film their dancing and make the best quality possible audio recording of the music and create a DVD of the authentic tribal dance and song performances that Post Test Club performs. I intend on working with Dr. Louis Kaboine, Amos Muhinda, and Post Test Club in conjunction with Monaghan Music in a combined, international effort to promote and sell the DVD and to raise awareness of the Ugandan culture and HIV. Profits from the sale of the DVD will be used to directly help this fight, whether to help orphans of the disease with their school fund directly in Ibanda, or with research, or with other victims of HIV.

I have even contacted Gilbert and Edwig and asked them to be on the "crew" to help me film and record this group.

Pray that We Make A Difference

Please keep this project in your prayers, for many things will need to take place for this to be a successful project. I hope together, we will make even a small dent in the movement to eradicate this dreaded disease known as HIV, which is such a killer of the African people, as well as others world-wide.

REFLECTION FROM IVYLAND, PA, USA

June 25, 2008

I'm off to see Uganda! That wonderful African land!

If you've hummed these words to a certain tune about a wizard, then you're in my mindset. I am jumping out of my skin to return to the town of Ibanda in Western Uganda, to meet up with the friends I met in February this year.

Since I've returned, I've been spreading the stories of my African Adventure to schools, youth groups, and anyone with an ear and a heart to listen. Many of my friends, and even people that I don't know, have been so very generous in donating money and items to our future Ugandan trip, which is finally here. On Tuesday, June 26, 16 of us Amazungu (plural of Omuzungu, of course, which means "white people") are traveling to meet Father Joseph Sserugo and our own Ashleigh Ormsby who returned late May with 80 copies of Charlottes' Web to continue her passionate teaching in the school. We are returning with pen pals, rosaries, mosquito nets, toys, books, and so many of your prayers. I feel truly blessed to be able to go back to Uganda so soon, and to be able to share this journey with my fellow Amazungu travelers from St. Vincent de Paul, OLGC, and beyond.

I am very much looking forward to the smiling children, the interested piano and guitar lesson takers, the Abeshongozi (choir), the joyous and spirited church services, and just sharing friendship with the people I met in February: Fr. Joseph, Gilbert, Edwig, Scovia, William, Dr. Kaboine, Kellen, Natasha, Marc, Redempta, Console Michelle, Pelly, Sephas, Mariet, Pius, Evaristous, Brenda, Herbert, and the rest!

I am especially interested (and still holding my breath) to film Post Test Club when they perform the traditional songs, dances, and music of Uganda. I will be working with Dr. Kaboine and Amos Muhinda in developing a DVD of these dances. Post Test Club is formed on the idea inviting people to take the HIV test, then offering membership into the Post Test Club whether they are positive or negative, which raises awareness of HIV and also of each person's status. My goal is to film the group performing the dances, a culturally rich phenomenon in itself, and to create a DVD with interviews and special features highlighting Post Test Club and their work for HIV awareness. I hope that in America and Uganda we can sell the DVD in order to raise funds to support Post Test Club and to help orphans of this deadly disease with their educational costs.

My fellow travelers have been working so very hard for about 9 months now, and the reward that awaits them is quite a treasure indeed. I don't know which is worse – having never been to Africa and having to plan for 9 months, or having set foot there already and waiting, waiting, waiting to get there again. For 15 of my fellow Catholic Amazungu and myself, the day is near when we will be on African soil among the warm, joyous, and loving Ugandan people. It is so near, I can taste the bananas, I can hear the drums, and I can almost wipe the dust from my shoes and clothes once again!

I want to thank everyone who has supported this mission. Your prayers, your donations, your eagerness to hear all about Uganda, and the desire that some have of even going in the future – it is contagious, I have captured it, and I bring it with me in Uganda. We will be praying for you; please pray for us as well. You can be assured the people of St. Charles Bubaare Parish have been praying for you for a very long time.

We will see you soon, and have better stories and photos to share with you all!

Obusingye (Peace)!
Ninkusabira (I pray for you)!

Bill Monaghan

**ON HIS SECOND VISIT TO BUBAARE PARISH, IBANDA
IN UGANDA, EAST AFRICA
JUNE 26 THROUGH JULY 7, 2007**

REPORT FROM IBANDA, UGANDA, AFRICA #1

July 2, 2007

Agandi and Greetings from Ibanda, Uganda!

I write to you on the evening of my 37th birthday, July 2, 2007, which I have just celebrated in Uganda, Africa! Here is an account of what has been happening on our trip so far.

June 27, 2007. It has been a non-stop journey for all of us Abazungu here in Uganda for the last week. We deplaned to find Father Joseph and Ashleigh waiting for us at the airport in Entebbe, and then all 18 of us crammed

into an African bus that was waiting for us in the parking lot. As you may know, we each brought one piece of luggage for personal clothes and things, and one piece of luggage for the many donations to the people of Ibanda, including toys, clothes, rosaries, crayons, books, and lots of other things. And, there were now 17 of us with Father Joseph and two drivers. So...multiply that all together, and you can see how potentially crazy everything can be. Amazingly enough, this group has been amazing with efficiency, timeliness, and having it all together. Of course, it doesn't hurt that in Africa, the unofficial motto is "There is no hurry in Africa." So, we squeeze together in our tight quarters and get to know each other even better than we thought we did already.

Our first night in Entebbe with the sisters at their convent was very nice. I roomed with Larry Devinney, who's pretty darn cool – all over the journal idea and taking as many pictures as possible, as well as learning what he can about the language, culture, and cool enough, the music. The sisters treated us very well indeed, with a feast (I don't know where all this good stuff comes from) and Father Joseph, as the gracious host, made sure the "holy hour" was just right. Father Chris and the others enjoy a variety of beverages, including Guinness, Nile, and Bell beers, as well as chips, matoke (bananas), embuzi meat or ente meat or enkoko meat (goat, cow, chicken, of course), and fruits, vegetables, and more.

June 28. Each morning we start our day early, with Mass, followed by breakfast. On our first full day we traveled into Kampala to the Shrine of St. Charles Lwanga and the 21 other martyrs who died with him. The church itself is very interesting, with 22 pipes which represent the 22 martyrs, and modeled on the shape of the typical African huts. The children were in the Mass as we arrived, and the whole group of us could hear the music flowing outward from the church: singing, clapping, drums – just great praise. I know that many people, like Kristi, were touched by the adoration the people have for the Eucharist, especially when they sang "O Come Let Us Adore Him" just after the consecration. This of course, was just one of the many things that have left very vivid impressions on the hearts and minds of our group. And all along I have to force myself from just screaming out "Wait til Ibanda – wait til you live among these great people!" (It may have slipped out a couple of times!) We stopped at the equator, and this time we did more than get photos in the cool "Uganda Equator" commemorative arch. We all witnessed the amazing display by one of the locals who showed us quite clearly how a toilet will flush in different directions based on whether you are north or south of the equator, and even flushing straight down (no direction) directly on the equator line, which is a yellow line going directly across the street. It was well worth the 10,000 shillings (about \$6.50) that Charles Ormsby spent for the momentous experiment.

We carried on in our African bus through Masaka and Mbarara until we finally entered Ibanda town, and I could feel the excitement in the bus, but also the familiarity and euphoria touching my all my senses: the view, the smells, the sounds, and soon, of course, the tastes! We didn't even turn into Father's driveway and the children were running along the bus singing "Go Make A Difference." If the Beatles ever came to Ibanda, it would look like 17 Abazungu from Richboro, PA arriving to a welcome you could not imagine! Many people were there to greet us and yes, we felt like celebrities. I think for the group it was overwhelming and wonderful, and for me it was a magic pulling my heart like it had done before. It is great to be back in Ibanda!

Each evening we have an activity called "Gifts and Challenges" whereby we share a gift and challenge of each day. It is a great way for the group to witness to the events of each day and to be together to recap and share. And it fits in nicely with Father's "Holy Hour."

June 29. Friday, we accompanied Miss Ash-a-lee (as they call her) to the school, and in pairs we cycled through each class room introducing myself. I was fortunate to be paired with Dan Condon, and his unique and amusing pantomiming talents, which the children enjoyed as Dan tried to find his way out of an imaginary box. In our 5 minutes, we played some songs, and as I began to notice the deaf students with whom I worked in February, I taught some sign language for the alleluia song, "Katuhimbise Ruhanga," and I could see their eyes light up as they were able to join in the fun. Of course, as I am sure by now it has been ratified in Ugandan Parliament, the biggest hit was "Go Make A Difference." Even across the school grounds, I could hear different classes singing with the other pairs of our group. The school also prepared a welcome ceremony for us with traditional songs and dances, and some speeches. First of all, the performances were incredible, as if they had been practicing for 3 months (which, maybe they were, maybe they weren't). Secondly, Africans are very big on speeches, which are always very welcoming and full of the kind of information which makes you feel like they really want to invite you into whatever they are doing. And Thirdly, we were fortunate to teach them some of our American traditions, a kind of sharing which has become a theme as we continue to gather each night with different groups of the Ibanda community. At this school rally, you will all be proud to know that we taught them, yes, the "Eagles Fight Song" and the "Chicken Dance" (even though some of our group was kind of hanging their heads like "Why, Lord, Why?!")

After lunch I am reunited with some of my lessons – John Bosco, Edwig, and some of the others. We head to school and teach baseball for the "games" session which ends each school day. For some reason, Kristi and my group is P6 and completely girls, who by the way pick up the sport very well. We even get into foul balls and strike 3! Jacqueline

does very well, and Irine hits a single and proceeds base to base and finally scores a run – which is pretty cool since the kids were saying “she’s deaf.” I was very proud of her, and I think she was too!

Did I mention I bought myself a big ol’ African drum? Actually, 2, and Larry bought one too!. So, we have a goat roast in the evening (my second, for the record!) and we break out the drums, which are quickly snatched away by Ben, Sarah, Pelly and others. Gilbert arrives, and it is great to see him. The party unfolds into an exchange of American and African songs. Each group is proud of their traditions, like Jimmy Buffett and the “Twist” as well as the African “Calypso” and traditional dancing. Father Chris even belts out the “Wild Rover” and everyone claps the refrain. Lots of fun, culminating with a very shared feeling of the blessings we have been given of each other.

June 30. On Saturday, after the morning Mass, I begin to see my friends from the choir and some of the children who have written pen pals. We begin receiving many gifts, such as baskets of amahuri (eggs) and ipapari (papayas – mmm). We also begin learning more of the stories that people have. Scovia is a widow whose 2 sons, Leonedes and Ronald, have been boarding at Bubaare Primary School, yet her youngest son, Rogers, was not attending. Since February, we have been able to place Rogers back in school, and are now looking into what can be done to help with all 3 sons boarding there. It turns out that Scovia has her own shop now, and she makes incredible baskets and woven bowls and plates, which our group is scooping up faster than Scovia can produce!

I have also been distributing some of the things people have sent personally, like Shannon’s gift to Gilbert, the pen pal letters, photos, my mother’s gifts and more. If you could only see in person the way each person’s face just lights up and beams when they receive these items, it would just melt your heart. The group has also been distributing toys, books, and many of the other things we have brought here, and the reception is so gracious and thankful. I know we all want to do so much more, but just being here is such a great gift.

Sunday, July 1. All kinds of preparations have been going on for Sunday’s high Mass which is held outside. The church grounds look very well decorated with all kinds of coverings and colors and fabrics and more. The people have begun assembling even on Saturday, and when Sunday finally arrives, people are just everywhere. The Choir gathers, the catechists and town and church leaders work hard to get everything in order, for today the Archbishop Paul Bakyenga is coming to preside over the Mass. This Mass includes 19 weddings, 200 first communion recipients, a wonderful procession of “The Word,” and praise, praise, praise. During the speeches, which conclude the Mass, the rains come, and you’d think that Africans melt the way they were running for cover. Some children ran under the stage. Others squeezed together under the tarp coverings. All in all, the general consensus was that the rain was a gift from God, as Ibanda really needs the rain now.

Festivities followed as the sun returned and everyone went to the rectory to greet the Archbishop and indulge in the many foods and drinks that had been prepared. Prexeda, Kasingye, Sister Joseph, and Edwig work nonstop and complaint free to serve the guests. As the sun sets behind the clouds, the remaining guests again create a musically sharing environment of African and American songs and dances, with the occasional Irish song from Father Chris. Larry, Bill, Willam, Pelly, Father George, Gilbert, and Godfrey engage in some intense drumming and Larry learns the ins and outs of African drumming. As the evening winds down, the rains come as we clean the house just as the power goes out and we are left in darkness.

July 2 – My Birthday! Monday sees us off to a new day. Jo Fran and I travel to Scovia’s shop to check out her baskets and wares. Chuck and Jim host a Bible Study with students at the primary school. Father Chris, Dan and Jake head up a mosquito net building project for the boarders at the school. Brooke and Kristi finish *Charlotte’s Web* with the P7. Charles, Maryanne, Ashleigh, Scott, and JoFran go to Kellen’s farm to see how Kellen will advance into commercial farming.

Brittany, Linda, Chuck, Brooke, Jake, Fr. Chris, JoFran, Kelly, and Larry go to the Hospital to observe the conditions and meet the patients. Charles, Father George, and Scott go to the school for an organized-turned-mass chaos game of football (soccer). What else could you expect from combining these Abazungu and the school children? Kelly, Larry, Maryanne, Jim, Father Chris, Bill, Gilbert, and Edwig climb the mountain and meet a cow-herder at the tip top of the mountain named Fred, and on the way down, meet a sickly older woman with whom the group, led by Father Chris, prays. Thunder storms arrive in the evening, and amazingly we do not lose power. A Canadian named Lee Fox visits the group at night and educates everyone on his non-profit reforestation Uganda project and rivets the Americans with his detailed descriptions of his travels and experiences.

The group is retiring early tonight as they are planning to leave at 3:00 a.m. for the Queen Elizabeth National Park in search of Elephants, warthogs (engiri), hippos, lions and all kinds of African animals.

July 3. On Tuesday the group arises in the dark and travels to the park. Bill catches a couple more hours sleep and joins Father George in daily Mass. Gilbert and Edwig join Bill and Father for a visit to the Babies home, which is headed by Sister Christine Laboi and run by some sisters and workers. Bill, Gilbert, Edwig film and interview Sister and the 48 orphaned babies who live in the home. It is a very joyous atmosphere, despite the runny noses and each child’s history. The new toys which have arrived provide a great source of entertainment for the babies, as they play non-stop with their new treasures.

Closing, for now. Everyone has been impressed and touched by the people of Ibanda town. We feel a real sense of the Kingdom of God here through the warm welcomes and sharing and love the people have show us. Several times our members have remarked how we are saddened that we are more than halfway through our trip and will be leaving soon. It's too bad, because Larry is developing such a nice accent, even though Jim calls it kind of strange. From the youngest orphan babies who smile up at us, to the primary school children, to the young adults and town leaders, to the shop owners, parishioners, and people we see on the street, the people understand all of us in the love, joy, and fellowship we are sharing in Christ and our faith.

So, from the heartland of Uganda in Ibanda town, we say Obusingye (Peace) and Ninkusabira (We are praying for you). I wish you could be here with us and I miss you all!

Narukundo, (With Love)

Bill Monaghan (pronounced Beeel Mog-han usually here in Ibanda)

REPORT FROM IBANDA, UGANDA, AFRICA #1

Agandi again!

Tuesday Morning, July 3, 2007. 2 a.m. The black calm of the African night explodes with the rush of Abazungu activity in the St. Charles Bubaare Rectory. It is Tuesday, the day everyone is going to Queen Elizabeth National Park to see hippos, lions (they hope), impala, water buffalo, crocodiles, and of course, elephants. Everyone, that is, except for me. So I lay there listening to the clanging and the hubbub as everyone clamors through their rising rituals and eventually assembles onto the bus. I rather enjoy listening – I don't sleep very well anyway, so at least I can take comfort in the mild distraction to my normal sleeplessness, especially knowing I'll be getting another four hours of rest on a mattress, and not on a bus! They are rising so early so they can get to the park in the very early hours, when lion activity is high and many of the animals are out. I hear the slow crunch of the tires over the dirt and stone rectory driveway. They are gone, and all is quiet once again.

I arise at 6:30 a.m. and gather the guitars for morning mass, but find, as is normal rectory custom, that the doors are locked and I am basically trapped inside. And there is absolutely no one here. I can spy Mrs. Mariet Rutobo through the small peephole of the big iron rectory door, and I call to her. Luckily, Fr. George Opio has 5 minutes before Mass to let me out of the rectory. Mass is great as usual, and I am amazed again at the spirituality, the praise, the mesmerizing music that make this morning mass so personally enjoyable for me. I even start to hear a few words in Runyankole that I am finding more familiar. We've been hearing a lot about Abarahamu, Isaaka, and Ishamaeili. Many people chat outside after Mass, and then it's to the rectory with Fr. George, Gilbert, and Edwig for a hearty breakfast.

Today is the day that Gilbert and Edwig are to receive their first lesson in filming, although they've been witnessing the filming I've been doing sporadically in days past. We have planned to go to the Babies' Home and interview Sister Christine and the babies, documenting each child's story, and their everyday activities and living conditions. I grab a couple bunches of bogoya (the yellow bananas) and the remainder of my birthday cake from last night. We also go to the beer distributor, for rumor has it that the sisters like the holy hour too (that means we will pick them up some beer and some sodas for the workers). When we arrive, the sisters are ecstatic at their gift of libations, and they also take the cake and prepare it for the orphans. Gilbert and Edwig and I get the camera and microphones ready, and we are greeted by Sister Christine and about 12 of the older children – four years old. They are running and happy and, well, have no pants on. Luckily, their shirts are long. They make very willing actors, as they greet the camera with "Agandi!" and "Hello Uncle, Hello Auntie!" As Sister tells of the details of the Babies home, we learn that to the children, everyone who is a friend to them is their Uncle or Auntie.

Gilbert and Edwig stay with me the whole time, capturing the audio for this soon-to-be documentary. It is a cloudy day, so the rooms are pretty dark, and we open some windows for light. We visit the youngest babies who are incubating under blankets to keep warm as they grow into a normal routine of hopeful health. Sister gives each of their stories, such as:

"This one is baby Justin, who lost his mother and was born at 6 months oldthis one is baby Lilian, who was left in the hospital, was born two months early, and at present is grand, not sick at all, is looking fine...this one was born premature, and lost her mother, and the aunt brought the child to the care of the Babies' Home...this one, this one, and the other one are triplets, whose Father said giving birth to triplets was

a curse, and the mother and a neighbor were taking care of them, but couldn't cope, so they have come under the care of the Babies' Home, and are very happy, and are nice looking, and are nourished...Baby Rose was thrown at the gate of a one of the priests' home, and the mother at the priest's home cared for the child for 2 months, but then brought the baby here... These two kids, here, are kids – this one lost both her parents on the same day, and the other one was abandoned in the ponds in Mbarara, just near the fishing ponds, after delivery he was dumped there, so he was picked and hurried to the babies' home. This one lost both parents on the same day, but both of these babies are HIV positive babies who are already taking the therapy and treatment. “

Our next visit is to an older but smaller group of babies who are eating the birthday cake; there are triplets in this group, and all the babies in this group, as sister says, are very happy to be eating cake today. We go outside and see an even older group, this one of many babies, who are also eating cake and drinking milk from their cups. There is some baby chatter going on, and the babies wave at the camera and make funny faces. We catch another group who is learning the potty – they are all sitting on colorful potties against a wall – they also wave at the camera. There are lots of baby clothes, stamped with “Ibanda Babies Home,” hanging on the line as it is washing day (I imagine everyday is washing day at this home). Our last visit is to the play area, where the older kids (now wearing pants) are allowed to get a toy each and play with it. It is like Christmas day – everyone is running around with their toys, making loud playing noises, and having fun. Many of these are the toys which came with our group, so it is good to see that kids in Africa are just like kids in America – ready to play and play and play! The smiles and hard concentrated effort is a blessed thing indeed. Father George and some of the workers are congregating around the water tank, so that is where we end our documentary. The children come nearer with their toys, and they can hear the truck radio playing music, so they inquisitively seek out the source of the music as they slowly slip into an inevitable dance. Soon, the children are dancing right along, forgetting that they were even looking for the source of the music, and being egged on by the workers and Sister and Father George. Even at this young age, music and dance and expression run deep in the African culture, and it is beautiful for me to witness this.

We have a nice tea with Sister Christine, and then as we are departing, I get to distribute, with Edwig and Gilbert, many of the Rosaries we brought with us. It's like Christmas, Easter, and the Lottery all at once. The Sisters are so overjoyed and thankful, and the workers are even moreso, and everyone with such a sense of humility. It is a privilege to be able to experience the gratefulness of these people over something I normally take for granted.

We say our farewells, and head back to the rectory for lunch, and then to the Internet café to try to send a message home. While we are there, it begins to rain as the Abazungu bus pulls up to the café also, and we find out that yes, indeed, there were lion sightings today! Very cool!

We eventually head back to the rectory, gather ourselves, and have a supper so all can retire early. I stay up a little while and teach Father Opio some more of the computer – he is a very fast learner. I am getting some tutoring from Prexeda in my Runyankole reading of Genesis. Eventually we all retire and rest up for a new day!

Wednesday, July 4. On Wednesday morning, we awake to clouds and no electricity, so the generator is running. Happy 4th of July! At morning Mass, I read by flashlight in Runyankole from Genesis about Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Ishmael, and Hagar. I only got stuck on one or two words! After Mass, we arrange for a group of us to listen to the stories of four people: Mary, John Baptist, Ndigye, and Wemba. Mary is a 35 year old teacher who lives with her mother and is raising an orphaned child. She is asking for help with continuing her education, as her teacher salary cannot provide for a living and all of the fees necessary. John Baptist is an orphan who has stopped going to school. He is now 23 and is seeking to enter senior secondary school, and would like help with his education fees. Ndigye has 2 broken arms, which have healed crooked. He and I have talked before about this condition, which he says brings him some pain yet he can still use his hands and arms for light lifting and writing. However, Ndigye asks the group for help with his education – he is 17 and is also seeking help with fees for senior secondary school. Wemba is a self-employed worker who is asking for help with the fees for his four children. Through the questions from our group, like Chuck, Jake, Father Chris, we find out that Wemba would like to sew. I applaud these people for coming forward to tell their stories, and I think it is good for the Americans to hear these from the people themselves. Hopefully, through our listening, we can find some way to unite with these people – certainly through prayer, and possibly even in trying to come up with a solution. Chuck begins forming a plan to help Wemba, which he, Dan, and several others will work out with Wemba on Thursday.

The exciting conclusion will follow in the next installment.

Final Log entries from the Starship Uganda

Wednesday, July 4, 2007. After our meeting with the 4 parishioners, there is much activity. Some of us go to the primary school to work with the classes. I get to teach P5 Awesome God, to which they respond enthusiastically – I'm

sure you probably heard their voices reach you in the early morning hours all the way here in PA. The smiles on their faces and the excitement in their voices, and their motions, rival even our own Teen Mass, but with the African singing that is unparalleled in the world. The Abazungu group continues to work with the school, and several other activities while I prepare to work with Post Test Club. I meet Gilbert and Edwig in town. We stop to see Hedwig, a very nice woman who always greets me with a smile and a dozen questions on how we can keep doing the music I taught Abeshongozi (choir) in February. I have brought her a gift today because she is always bringing me many gifts. I present her with my tie-dye Vinnie's Vision t-shirt, and she is happy, even though she says it will be very big on her, which makes her laugh. Back on the street, we meet Amos Muhinda and the bus of Post Test Club dancers and musicians as they are gathering the people and costumes and even a generator to prepare for our filming. This is one of the most amazing things about the African people – how much they can fit into a small bus. I think we numbered about 16 people, plus the other supplies, in nothing much bigger than a normal sized van! I pass out some photos from when I filmed them in February, and there is much Runyankole chatter. Edwig tells me that the girls are very happy to see themselves in the photos. Which is good, because I didn't know what they were saying (I'm only versed in Runyankole greetings, and readings about Abraham, Sara, and Hagar).

Post Test Club on Site: We arrive at the Kaboine farm, our filming site, and a very beautiful site indeed. There are green leaves and trees and bushes, with many flowers, and a nicely cut lawn, with tree stumps scattered here and there for sitting, all enclosed with neatly kept hedges. Post Test Club dons their colorful costumes, while the musicians, also in costume are tuning and setting up instruments: drums of all sizes, a large edungo and a small edungo (harplike stringed instruments), and a xylophone made of wooden boards of specific sizes. Gilbert, Edwig and I set microphones and the camera, and the laptop is powered up to receive the microphone inputs. A few of the Africans with Dr. Kaboine are getting the generator in order. I begin filming without the generator as the cooking crew begin the evening's preparations for roasting the goats. Thus, smoke is wafting through our filming area, which creates a very cool atmosphere (Hollywood pays lots of money for this effect – I get it by accident!). We do several takes of the first number, "Otweenge," and even though they are dancing very athletically, and playing with much vigor, they barely breathe heavier and no one is sweating. While the process takes a while, we press on and by the early evening we have filmed all of 2 different songs, from different angles and with closeup shots. At around 5 pm, the group of Americans arrives for the goat roast feast, to be greeted by Post Test Club's performance of yet another Ugandan song and dance. The Americans are very impressed and enjoy this rich sharing of African culture, and Kellen and Dr. Kaboine welcome everyone. The children, Natasha, Marc, Redempta, Cecelia, and Console Michelle, and even Prexeda, the rectory "house girl" who is now our friend, have come to share in the festivities, as well as William and Pelly Rubanju, Sarah Matsik, Daniel the seminarian, and many others.

+++

The colors of Post Test Club traditional Ugandan dress are brilliant. The women, who dance elegantly and vigorously, wear orange and blue dresses, with feathery ornamentation around their waist and hips, and bells and shakers on their ankles. Some of the singers wear yellow dresses with orange and brown details in the fabric. The musicians (men) wear long white tunics with narrow red details on the edges of the sleeves. Some of the male dancers wear predominantly white shirts and shorts, with colors of black, orange and yellow on the front, displaying the colors of the Ugandan flag on the front. The ankle shakers add another dimension to the music, punctuating the drum with shaker rhythms according to deliberate stomps, steps, and other footwork.

Edwig and Gilbert are great as the film crew, with Gilbert monitoring sound on the laptop and all of us setting up microphones. Edwig remarks that she knows all the dances and songs and would like to perform them so I tell her to speak to Amos. We next see Edwig emerging with a great big smile, fully dressed for the next song. She also takes many still photos of the performance with my camera. During a break, the pleased Africans are mesmerized as they watch themselves on the small video screen of the camera playback.

At around 5 pm, the Abazungu Americans arrive with Kellen and the children. They are totally amazed and entertained by the singing, dancing, and music of Post Test Club. As dusk descends and the dancing finishes, everyone meets and partakes in Kellen's feast of matoke (bananas), embuzi (goat), enkoko (chicken), and many fruits. The Africans and American again swap songs and adventures. We all sing "God Bless America" to honor the 4th of

July, and I get to sing "I Will Fly (My Red, White, and Blue)" on a red, white, and blue blow up guitar, thanks to the children. Console Michelle and Cecilia do a lovely rendition of one of their African songs. There is the soft nudging threat of rain on the air, but everyone is relaxed and enjoying the "Holy Hour," which reaches a high point in the joint efforts of our clergy, Fathers Chris, George, Joseph and Seminarian Daniel, as they unite in the Latin rendition of the hymn for closing of the hours called "Salve Regina." We load up and depart as the soft rains begin to fall, and drive back in the mostly darkness to the rectory to retire.

Thursday, July 5, 2007

Last day at school. Rise and shine for morning mass and then it's off to the school. I join Linda and Kelly Titus in a classroom with their teacher Immaculat. On the wall are drawings the students have made, some of lions, others of their parents and what they make at their jobs, and cars, trees, houses. The class is reading a book as Linda and very energized Immaculat show the pictures. I play some songs and of course we do "Go Make A Difference." We then go out to the schoolyard for Linda and Jo Fran to distribute to the children the books that Scholastic has donated. This is an inspiring sight to behold as the children in twos and threes are totally spellbound by their books. Although Linda is pushing for a formal photo I just keep taking pictures of what is happening naturally as the children read their new treasures with wide eyed wonder. After a group "pat-on-our-backs" photo, we distribute St. John Neumann medals – both teachers and students cannot contain their elation upon receiving these gifts. Everyone helps each other pin the medals onto their uniforms and the children go back inside while I visit two more classrooms to sing some songs with the children, who participate with great zeal.

Wemba's Meeting. A few of us go back to the rectory for the big meeting with Wemba. Chuck has been busy doing what he does best: preparing a legal document outlining the details for an agreement with Wemba. Chuck, Dan, Jake, Kellen (who will translate the finer points), Fr. George, and yes, Wemba are there. In the corner of the room sits a newly purchased Singer sewing machine and a box of supplies. Chuck goes point by point with Wemba, basically stating that we will give him the sewing machine and he will make monthly payments on it. Each time he makes a payment, we will help with one of his children's school fees (he has four children in school). If he fails to make a payment, no school fees will be paid. He cannot sell the machine either. Wemba asks some pertinent questions (which impresses Chuck) and all are agreed – Wemba signs the document with Chuck and the others, and then poses with his new sewing machine for some photos. I think he may have been a bit overwhelmed, but none the less very happy (it's a pretty good deal if you ask me). We all see this as the ground work for future scenarios where the help we give to people can be offset by something they contribute – whether it be repayments or services. After this historical session it is back to school for all 17 Abazungu where we are entertained and welcomed with an energetic and even emotional presentation by the school classrooms. There are many dances, which Chuck and Larry join impromptu. Kristi joins her class and even sings a whole verse of "my name is Kristi – yes! – you are my lover! No!," of which we still do not understand the full meaning. (Later, we will revisit this song). Helen, from P7, sings a farewell to Miss Ashleigh but is so overcome she breaks down in the middle and hides behind some of her friends. The headmaster and teachers then present us with speeches and very small prizes – some to the Ormsby family for producing such a wonderful Ashleigh, and watermelons to each of us.

After these energetic and finely performed songs and dances, the entire school receives a great treat – a goat roast and sodas. One of them says they will never forget what the Abazungu have done for them – I'm pretty sure any school that is treated to a goat roast will remember that for a long time (we'll have to try that at OLG or Archbishop Wood). At this point it is an all out party, with the teachers and several students sporting their new Vinnie's Vision tie-dye shirts; frisbees, paddles, balls, and soccer balls are out, and everyone's having a good time. Kristi and Fr. George make a triumphant entrance in the truck – with Kristi driving – and we begin to collect the soda bottle cases so we can return them for more.

My good friend Anthony takes the lead - he is the deaf boy from P2 – he gathers and takes charge of stacking the bottles in the back of the truck. The stack is higher than him by the time that he is finished. It is a time consuming process, which takes, well, about 100 rounds of "You are my lover!" – Just ask Kristi – she and a growing group of girls take turns leading the song and must have sung it for about 25 minutes straight – with big smiles and always eager to start the next round as if it was the first one. I even get to sing a round - still don't know what it means - before I notice

that all the other Abazungu have disappeared. I go to the rectory to find everyone – exhausted – flopped around the living room. I make my plea that the children would love to continue playing games – Larry, Scott, and Charles and I return to join an intense soccer game – Charles scores! I decide after running up and down the field several times and losing the ball to my opponent, to play some Frisbee instead.

A group of us gather and toss the Frisbee for a bit, then as it is near the school day's end, several students, including Jackline, Hilda, Editor, Caroline, and others, help carry my equipment back to the rectory. Normally at this point the children want to take photos or sing songs or play games. This time, Editor asks, upon reaching the low rectory wall, if we can all just sit and talk. I don't know if it was exhaustion from trying to keep up on the soccer field, or the realization that our time was running out and we were leaving, but I couldn't even look in their faces. Something was happening again to my eyes, just like last time – and they even ask why I am sad. "I'm not sad," I said, "I just am not ready to leave yet," so, I retreat to my comfort zone, the guitar, and we play and sing a few songs. But we do indeed get to chat, and it is the peace of this moment and others like it that I treasure most – being, simply being, with these African people. We talk about life in America, when I was coming back to Ibanda, their studies, visiting their families, even their future plans. Then I see Jackline has also caught this affliction in her eyes, and I tell Editor to tell her some jokes.

Of course, the moment is broken by another group who has hired a photographer to take photos. So, we go and pose, and the tired Abazungu find new life in this impromptu rectory lawn session of photos, farewells, songs, games, dances, and even Scovia bringing and distributing the baskets, mats and other wares she has made. I even spy Prexeda, Edwig, Scovia, and a Kasingze modeling the wedding dresses we have brought for Father Joseph (well, not for *him*, for brides who cannot afford them). Everyone is happy and conversing – a great way to end our last day in the community – with fellowship, fun and hopes for the of this friendship we have cultivated with each other, children, teens, adults, Americans, Africans.

Several of us walk to visit some of the homes of these students – we go to Helen's home to visit her family, and Patricia's home to visit her families. We find streets by passing through alleys, streets I couldn't have foreseen to exist, yet there are so many people and simple houses on these streets. Children come from everywhere and walk with us – in front, behind, next to us – and hold our hands, sing songs, or just talk to us or each other. Even though the older girls tell them several times to go home, they persist in walking with us. It is an honor to meet the families of these people – we only stay several minutes, look at some photos, and learn about the family, but wow, what a simple treasure to be invited into their homes as friends! We finally return to the rectory to eat dinner and begin the cleaning and packing process, which takes the rest of the night. Everything is set to go, and it's lights out to sleep and arise at 5 am .

Departure Day - Friday, July 6, 2007: Our departure day is filled with many morning activities – coffee, packing the bus, and saying goodbyes to Father George, Prex, and everyone at the rectory. We drive out in the dark morning hours, on the bumpy road from Ibanda, to Mbarara, to Masaka, where we eat at a "fast food" place, which Father Joseph calls "McDonalds." We have a tasty treat called simbusa (meat, corn, and other good stuff in a fried wrap) and some drinks, then continue onward. Somewhere in the dawning light, we see zebras on the side of the road – very exciting! We finally arrive in Kampala and go to a cool little market place which sells many trinkets, instruments, books, clothes, and more African memorabilia – a great opportunity for the Americans to unload their last Ugandan shillings and get some things for home. We then eat at an Italian restaurant, which the Americans have been craving (kind of odd that we eat Italian in Uganda, but, nevertheless, an excellent meal!). As the day is ending in Kampala, we begin driving to the airport – the sun is setting over Lake Victoria, many people, bikes, cars, trucks are on the streets, walking, driving, carrying – going to wherever it is the Africans go at the end of a Friday. The group has our last "Gifts and Challenges" session on the bus, and we end by saying, actually shouting, the Hail Mary and Our Father out the bus windows. No one really looks at us like we're crazy or anything...but it was a good challenge to see if we would actually do it. I think Chuck was smiling that we did.

At the airport, we say our farewells to Father Joseph, knowing that we will be seeing him shortly in America when he visits St. Vincent's for the summer. We board, and get ready for the next leg of the journey back to American soil.

We've traveled since 5 am , and we will eventually arrive back to St. Vincent 's at 2 pm on Saturday, July 7, and with the time difference, it will be 42 hours of traveling.

I know the group, including myself, will be happy to be back home, in America , and with our families, but I also know that once again, I have left a bit of myself back in Uganda , with an extension of my family, these people who have taken a little more space in my heart. I will be reflecting on this trip for a long time, and sharing with anyone who wants to hear and see of my adventures. Inside me there is a something stirring (no, not the goat meat) which I do not yet fully comprehend. Something calls, and I will be trying, in the activity and in the quiet, to discern this path onto which God has sent me. As I grow in this understanding, I will be looking forward to returning to Ibanda soon, and making our Bridge to Uganda just a little shorter, knowing that at both end of this bridge are family and friends, and the love they all share with me. Yahoo!

Obusingye na Narukundo, (Peace and With Love)

Billy M

REPORT FROM IVYLAND, PA, USA

July 10, 2007

UPDATE FOR MYSPACE

It's good to be back on American soil, especially after 42 hours of straight traveling in Africa and the friendly skies! This last trip to Africa was even better than the first, and way too short for me. I must say, at the end of my time in Ibanda, I could feel the old heart strings tugging, and something in my eye...I just wanted to stay longer and teach more and spend more time with the school kids and the choir and Gilbert the rest of those cool Ugandans! The highlights of this trip were bringing about 17 extra pieces of luggage filled with toys, Rosaries, medals, mosquito nets, books, medical supplies, Frisbees, balls, and more! When we distributed these things, whether it was to the neighborhood kids, the school, the Sisters, the workers, whomever – it was like Christmas morning meets a Birthday bash meets 4th of July! They were so happy, so grateful, so excited to receive these gifts – now I know how Santa Claus feels! We traveled as 17 Abazungu (if you don't know by now, that means "white people" or, as Gilbert says, "the whites") and got visit the school and other parish centers quite frequently. We read books, played music, played football (a.k.a. soccer), frisbee, netball, whatever. I also brought my good camera and made a couple of documentaries about the boarding rooms at school, where 65 boys and girls live in 2 dorms; about the orphan babies' home and each of their individual stories; and even an interview with Father Joseph about his dreams and also the Archbishop Paul Bakyenga about the state of his Mbarara Diocese and some of their needs. This was right before the Archbishop sped away in his SUV with a couple of goats in his back seat that the parish gave him as gifts. At a High Mass, we experienced 19 marriages at once, as well as 200 communions and great praise, singing, and dancing. Ashleigh and I brought back about 3 times the amount of pen pals than the first time. A group of us constructed mosquito nets in the boarding rooms for about 60 beds, which will help keep the students a little safer from mosquitoes and malaria. We also heard firsthand some of the stories that people would bring to us of their problems. Most requests are to assist financially with school fees, which we filter through the wisdom of Father Joseph and Father George, who help decide if someone is fabricating their story, or if the people truly need help. Most do, as the living and working situation is very day to day, basic, and doesn't forecast much beyond surviving the day with food, clothing, and shelter. Most people are very happy, and fortunately can sustain a diet because of the natural foods – fruits, lots of livestock including goats and chickens, but I have no idea how people earn their money...therefore, most people place their hopes in education. My goals, upon returning, are to teach more in the areas of music, written English, computers programs like Word and Excel, even English as a conversational language. I would also like to work with the deaf children, as they are a bundle of energy with no real teacher yet. A small portion of the church choir has begun the process of forming a more contemporary group based on the songs I was teaching them in February. They know the normal choir won't really perform these songs, but they feel a real calling to perform this kind of music at their services, and they have talked to Father George about implementing the group and music into a normal curriculum with the parish. It's funny, because all this sounds all too familiar to me as well, knowing there is a need and desire for the kind of contemporary praise and worship music I have been doing in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, but also knowing that the more traditional choirs don't really pick up on it. It is yet another aspect of Africa that I look forward to when I return, as the music and spirit of the people I have met has infected me, as I knew was inevitable. I am planning to return to Africa as soon as possible, hopefully sometime in mid-October of this year. I just can't stay away too long – the Ugandans have stolen my heart, a couple of my Frisbees, and often my guitar, yet they give me so much, and as some songwriter once wrote, "I don't think that I can hardly wait!"

Check out youtube.com and search monaghanmusic for a cool video called "Afrika Afrika Afrika" and www.monaghanmusic.com for updates and more about my great African adventure!

**FROM THE JOURNAL OF BILL MONAGHAN
ON HIS THIRD VISIT TO BUBAARE PARISH, IBANDA
IN UGANDA, EAST AFRICA
OCTOBER 22 THROUGH NOVEMBER 12, 2007**

**FOREWORD
Afrika Afrika Afrika – The Seed of a Dream**

It all started so long ago. I heard Peter Gabriel's "In Your Eyes" complete with the vibrant and vigorous African Dancers, the percussive rhythms, the harmonies, and the very groove oriented, exciting music. Ever since then I have had this seed of a dream planted inside me: Africa. I did not know what it meant or how the seed would manifest itself until August 2006 when Fr. Joseph Sserugo, a visiting Ugandan priest, stood at the front of our church and spoke these words:

"So, if anybody wants to come to Uganda..."

I was in the first row, raising my hand and gesturing wildly, "Oooh, me! Oooh me!" It seems that all I needed was the spark of that invitation to take the first step into a journey that will probably continue for the rest of my life.

In February 2007, I visited Father Joseph and his parish of St. Charles Lwanga Bubaare in a small town called Ibanda, which lies nestled amid green mountains and banana plantations in the west of Uganda. I stayed for 3 weeks in February, made some wonderful friends and learned a whole new culture. I returned in June with a team of 17 Abazungu, "white people," as we are called, mostly by children running behind us and pointing and smiling!

Both trips changed my life – the people charmed me with their warm welcomes, their faith, their spirited music, their friendships, their love, and yes, even their food. While the people are very poor, they are yet even happier, despite the basic living conditions, the common poverty, need for basic things like water, school fees (which compared to America are very low), mosquito nets, medical care, shoes and clothes, the many orphans, and the ever-looming black cloud of HIV.

We might say despite these conditions, but sometimes I think that because of these conditions, the Ugandan people have such a close community and family culture. Adults and children alike congregate freely with each other, able to walk the streets with no fears, sitting closely in classrooms or church pews, and helping each other unselfishly. They make the most of practically nothing, and their joy shines through in almost all of their daily activities.

While so much of this is news to me, and I continue to find many here in America who are fascinated by the African culture, there is yet still a saying: "This is Africa." This is so well known to many who others who have visited or lived in Africa.

I am very excited to share this story, and I am always honored and pleased to be able to share my personal experiences in Uganda, including firsthand accounts from my African friends about life at the school, parish, and orphaned babies home, and the gifts, challenges. Interwoven tightly into these stories are what we have been doing to help our African brothers and sisters actively and to educate and encourage them to help themselves.

Bill Monaghan

October 15, 2007

**PRELUDE TO TRIP #3
Jingle Bells and Bananas**

“Jingle Bells! Jingle Bells!” I know this will be the familiar sounds on our radios and in our schools soon, as the air grows chill and the snow will fall, and many of us will don our sweaters and scarves, and retreat to the warmth of a cozy fire.

But not me! Oh, no! Where I am going there are banana plantations of green leaves as far as the eye can see, and mountains overlooking the hazy valley of dirt roads, mud houses, and many, many people filling the streets of Uganda, Africa. And in all this, I know I will encounter the same spirit of Christmas in the warmth of the Ibandan people – their joy, their welcome, their “Who-ville” sense of singing, dancing, praise, and sense of community. I spend these last days preparing for Bill’s third African Adventure, but don’t worry mom and dad, I’ll be home for Christmas (and Thanksgiving too!)

There are so many aspects to this particular trip. We have had the honor of Father Joseph Sserugo visiting us this summer, and he has visited many school like Archbishop Wood, Nazareth Academy, Our Lady of Good Counsel, as well as celebrated Mass at several Parish communities in addition to St. Vincent’s. Our bond through prayer with the Ugandan people has grown stronger, and many of my American friends are also actively supporting through donations, sponsorship of education, writing pen pal letters, and more. Our “Bridge to Uganda” is growing more visible – can you see it? More aptly, can you feel it? I have felt the energy from meeting and talking with people, from emails, and from the continued prayer for support, both here and from the Ugandan emails too!

So I bring all of this with me plus a special bonus: one of my best friends will be coming also, and that is Christine Favorite. I can’t wait to see her eyes light up and her voice blend with the African people. While I have some of my own goals – teaching, music, working with the deaf students – I mostly want to go with an open mind and heart, and become once again immersed in a culture I love and with people I cherish, and from whom I learn so much about simple faith and loving. I ask you to continue those prayers, and I know that the people, whether it be 2, 3, or 1500 gathered in the name of Christ Jesus, are already loving you, thanking you, and praying for you. So, let the spirit of Christmas come early this year, ringing loud and clear from the Pearl of Africa.

Yaho-ho-ho!

Peace (Obusingye)
Bill Monaghan

Update #1
October 22 – October 25, 2007

October 25, 2007

Just how long have I been here? It seems like 2 weeks already, things are happening so quickly, yet I've only been in Ibanda town for 37 hours! The people have welcomed me and have extended their greetings to all of you in America, especially, of course, Miss Ashilly (Ashleigh) who has spent so much time with them and become near and dear to their hearts.

I landed safely in Entebbe, and was greeted heartily by Father Joseph, with an added bonus: Prexeda! This was very nice to see her so early in the trip, even though she insisted on carrying all my luggage (there is no fighting these African women on matters such as these). We departed for Ibanda early the next morning (5 am early) which brought our trip to 5 hours – Father Joseph, dodging potholes, pedestrians, cows, birds, and even flying ants – shared that at this early hour we could get through Kampala in 30 minutes instead of 2 hours.

I was VERY GLAD about that!

We arrived and were greeted by Fr. George Opio with big smiles and witty welcoming remarks, who then dashed off quickly to perform a burial. I met many familiar faces, and Father Joseph, Prex, and I took a car ride to every supermarket and mini-market store in Ibanda (there are at least 8) as we were on a quest for Olive oil – Father was quite obsessed in reaching this goal, which thankfully, by store #8 we reached. They really need to cook more Italian style here.

Upon returning to rectory, Father showed me how the solar lights are now installed in the case of power outages, which is very nice because it eliminates the need for a generator and saves money and fuel. And, as if that wasn't enough, you can see in morning mass even without real electricity! Yahoo!

I also attended a makeshift Abeshongozi rehearsal of some people who really like the music I taught them in February. This group consists of Gilbert, Edwig, Mrs. Mariet Rutobo (Gilbert's mum), Hedwig, Mary, and some new people who I met. They are longing to combine these new songs into the main choir, and their enthusiasm is a great step to doing this.

We practiced until sundown, which was approximately 7:30 pm, then walked back to the rectory through the town, amidst several greeting of "Omuzungu!" directed probably to me, which is confusing, since I have really been working on my tan to blend in better here. The weather is said to be in the rainy season, but like Ireland, we have been receiving some sunny spells during the days. The temperature is on the cooler side, approximately 60-70 degrees in the cloudy days, and definitely hotter when the sun is shining. Just like Africa in October, you know, from all my past experiences here.

I try in the evening to keep my eyes open long enough to sort through the pen pals I have brought with me, but 2 planes, a five hour car ride, and a day in Ibanda have finally caught up with me, and so I retire for the first night of my third visit to Uganda.

The morning of Thursday, October 25 finds us in morning mass with the Abeshongozi (choir) from last evening. They perform very well, and after Mass we make plans to continue and to communicate with the choir master about a program for practicing. I then visit the school, and I meet Headmaster Peter (who sends his greetings along with pretty much every other Ugandan I have met so far) and also Kellen Kaboine visits the office at the same time. During this meeting, we discuss a new list of orphaned students at Bubaare Primary School that I can bring back to St. Vincent's and our Bridge of Hope for Uganda group. I also discuss a program to offer additional help in Math and English as P5, P6, and P7 are preparing for their final exams. We are briefly interrupted by a student who needs a pen, which the headmaster directs towards a drawer. This student happens to be Ronald, who happens to be my mother's sponsored child, and with a great big toothy grin, welcomes me and greets my mother (there you go, Mom!). I ask to see why he need a new pen, and he shows me his current one, which is bone dry – there is absolutely no ink whatsoever – when was the last time this happened in America?

I met Wemba, and delivered a package of sewing materials donated by a very kind St. Vincent's parishioner, which he accepted most graciously. I congratulate him on fulfilling the first two payments in full on his sewing machine contract. With Father Opio and Kellen, I will apply \$50 (87,000 UgSh) to his children's accounts at the Primary School, which was also part of his contract, but will happen early as this was supposed to happen after the December payment was made.

Today, the rains came in heavy thunderstorm with a strong wind. It is apparently not a good combination to be out on a motorcycle in a thunderstorm on the African roads. Just ask Fr. Opio, who had gone to say Mass at one of the Catholic schools about 15 km away, and not only found his motorcycle stalling, but also covered with mud. So, Father Joseph took the truck and a worker to rescue him and the motorcycle, and then he took the truck for a wash. Fortunately, Father Joseph and I had already returned clean and with full bellies from our Mass and lunch at another Catholic School which was also 15 km in the other direction, and earlier than the bad weather. Both Masses were successful, with about 360 pupils at each school, out of which 36 candidates at each school were blessed to prepare them for final P7 exams, which are necessary for their next step towards a secondary education. I was amazed at the enthusiasm and spirited singing and participation, the warm welcome of the people whom I had not yet met before, and the reverence the children showed as they were being blessed (they were telling each other to kneel down when the arms were outstretched over them).

But boy, are these African roads bumpy! And according to Father Joseph, these were the good roads of Africa, as again, he swerved in and out of huge ruts in the roads. I was laughing so hard at some points because it was so much like a roller coaster ride, and those always make me giddy.

The pen pals are now ready for delivery, as I have organized them with much pre-organization from Donna Dwyer. Even though only half have been collected, and hopefully Christine is arriving with more, this is a wonderful bridge of children to children, as testified by the variety of creativity in the envelopes and decorations of the pen pals. I'm so glad that a girl scout seeking an award will be taking this on as her project because, boy, is it a headache coordinating over 200 pen pals on either side.

I have my first lesson with an Ibandan to day – Edwig has arrived “terra Endongo” – play the guitar. I teach her “Amazing Grace” and “Katuhimbise Ruhanga (Praise God Alleluia)” and the chords for “Silent Night.” In typical Ugandan fashion, she spends about 3 hours just playing over and over, until the sun is setting, at which time she departs for home. It is during this time that Fr. Opio has made his triumphant re-entry back to society with his mud covered motorcycle carrying him, his

briefcase, and an enkoko (a live chicken). As I look at the chicken eye to eye, I realize this is probably soon to be dinner.

We have a hearty supper of pasta, meat, tomato sauce, matoke (bananas). Cassava, beans, and some greens (I don't know I just eat it). There is no hunger in this rectory, and everyone is fully satisfied. After dinner I show the "Bridge of Hope to Uganda" DVD to Fr. Opio, Prex, Scovia, and Penny, who react to it's positive coverage of Ibandan life, and they thank us for what we are doing.

As I am sitting here with a very tired Fr. Opio, and Father Joseph has long since retired (it's only 9:35 pm), I will close by saying, how did we all get so tired? It must be that there are only 2 priests and 1 Omuzungu, instead of 2 priests and 17 Abazungu!

I miss you all, and send my love and greetings, will all of the collected greetings of every one whom I have meet!

Obusingye, Ninkusabira, Narukundo
(Peace, Prayers, and Love)

Billy M

Update #1A
The Muddy Day
October 26 – October 28, 2007

Today is Friday, October 26, 2007, the birthday of my sister Megan, so Happy Birthday Meg! Fr. Opio and I ride out through the muddy roads on his motorcycle towards Kakongo, home of the Ibanda Babies Home and the Internet at the Hospital. We arrive at the Babies Home and the first thing I notice is the brand new sign – very cool. It now displays the official name, "Holy Innocents." We are greeted by running four and three year olds exclaiming "Uncle, Uncle!" What great energy! I meet with Sister Edwine (I don't know where Sister Christine is) and we arrange a time when I'll come to show the DVD to the children. That should be a fun day! We depart and head into town for some errands, and just as Betty at the photocopy center is about to hit the button, the power goes out. TIA (This is Africa)!

We see some various people as we ride through the town, including Edwig who is trying to meet with Ibanda District to get Industry training – I hope she is successful; and John Baptist, the Abeshongozi choir master, who arranges with me to learn ananga (piano). I head to school next to bring some name tag supplies so the school can display their names when Christine arrives, and partly for me too, as I still don't know the names of all 600 children. It's nice to see some familiar faces as they come to greet me – there's Winfred, the deaf girl with one blue eye, very spunky; Roman, who will probably be President of Uganda someday; Anthony, another deaf boy with a big smile who always helps me by carrying anything I have with me, and many more children. It's like a parade through the school grounds. In the evening I discuss some things with Father Opio, learning that he has finished a book and is looking to print it. The book is quite fascinating, and I think genius, as Father Opio, a native of the Lango tribe of Eastern Uganda, has taken Lango proverbs and riddles and fused them with moral theology, thereby utilizing teachings with which the people are familiar and setting up a basis for teaching theology. I offer to continue editing the English and grammar, which shouldn't be hard since he is so far close to completion. He hopes to print and distribute the books, knowing that many

people have already read advance copies and are wanting more. As always, his only problem now is funding for the printing and binding of the books. Here's to his success!

Saturday, October 27, starts with much hope and promise! John Baptist arrives for his lesson in ananga, and I teach him some theory and also place stickers on the keys with the letters on them. This way, when I am gone, there will be no mistake as to what is what, and the Africans have no excuse but to thrive and excel in learning ananga. My endongo student Julius arrives with a gift – an “enkoko” (a chicken). It's my second “enkoko” ever! Whatever will I do with it (well, in reality, it will be dinner some evening). He also is doing pretty well. Overall, the African students are pretty content to just keep playing, strumming, and hanging out with the instruments they are learning. They put in many, many hours of practice time – a hint to my students in America! I head off to school for I know that P7 is having extra lessons today to prepare for their final exam in about a week. Beninya, the deputy headmistress, is teaching a section on analyzing compositions, so I sit back, then we both help individuals around the room as they do their seat work. I particularly help Jesika, a deaf girl, and we kind of get a little farther, despite the obvious communication barrier. Luckily, it's composition, so we can use writing as a good means of getting the message to each other. When I return to the rectory, I bring Beninya, Jacqueline, and Immaculate their pen pals – they are so super excited with great big grins and excited hands exploring their letters. I think I saw this scene when I was about 7 in my living room on Christmas day! After lunch, one of the neighborhood girls, Dairis, brings me some cakes – mmm! She asks me to visit her home, which is close to the rectory. I meet her mom, sister Damalie, and her younger brother, while Dairis is jumpy and giddy the whole time. They are a very nice family living in a mudhut in the close quarters typical of these Ibandan homes. I walk by a makeshift football (soccer) game played by 4 boys and a makeshift ball and using 2 bricks in each end as the goal – no shin pads, no shoes, no shirts, just pure fun! Across from them, some men are building a toilet facility behind the church pavilion – they happily work as I snap some photos of them. At 3:30, I head to the church for the children's Abeshongozi practice with Immaculate and Jacqueline. Ronald, my mother's sponsored child, is a very good tenor with a great big smile. The rest of the group is practicing hard as we are preparing for tomorrow's “low” Mass at 7 am, the English Mass, which is really a mixture of Runyankole and English. We practice til it's dark, and of course, there is the usual photo shoot and exchange of some of the gifts I have brought for William and Ronald. They are ever so anxious to receive their gifts, then humbly and graciously give thanks for them.

The next morning's Mass is wonderful and enthusiastic, and we even end with “Soon and Very Soon.” Luckily, through the night, we had electricity, so I was able to charge the batteries for Godfrey to play the keyboard. Directly after Mass, Father Joseph and I head out towards Kampala to await the arrival of Christine Favorite! Yahoo! It's a mix of sunshine and storms, as Father gleefully sings along to “Lion King” and Mary songs, winding through potholes and craters, at his normal speeds of 100-120 kmp. We usually cheer when inadvertently he hits a pothole, but remarkably the man avoids most of them, as well as 100% of the trucks, cows, people on bikes or on foot hauling their wares. It's the most wild and fun ride for 5 hours you can imagine! We even witness the emergence of the flying White Ants, which the rains have forced out of their homes and into the air. Father reminisces how when he was younger, he would collect these, fry them up and eat them as a long coveted delicacy. We even see some children on top of an anthill with some branches, as I guess they were trying to coax more of the ants out of their home so they too can enjoy this delicacy. We arrive, have a meal, and wait at the airport for Christine's plane. In the meantime, Father meets with the man with the plans for the new Secondary School proposed on the Apostles of Jesus land which is about 40 km north of Kampala. It's very exciting to see these blueprints, and Father is thrilled at the prospect of seeing this come to completion during his lifetime. Yahoo!

Finally, the plane arrives, and we wait in the arrival section for Christine to emerge. Then, the power goes out, and everything is pitch black. This should be fun, trying to find a first time visitor to Africa in the utter darkness. Luckily, the backup system kicks in within a few seconds, and moments later, Christine walks out! Double Yahoo – she is finally here! Father welcomes her and we set out for our overnight stay at the convent. Mission accomplished.

A Prayerful, Partying People!
October 29 – November 2, 2007

November 2, 2007 – All Souls Day

Agandi from the Pearl of Africa! Christine has finally set her feet upon African soil, and after the Monday morning trek across the southern part of Uganda, we arrived in Ibanda on a glorious, sunny day at around 10 am. Although electricity has been scarce this whole week (probably about 15 hours of electricity total this week), this has not slowed down the packed days and endless activities which have been filling our lives. Uganda is the only place I've ever been where it can be a clear blue sky in the morning, a thunderstorm with high winds in the afternoon, and a pristine night sky with a million glistening stars in the night.

Monday evening itself culminated with a welcome rivaling all the other welcomes we have received. Father Joseph hosted a festive goat roast welcoming Christine to Ibanda, and some of the people present were William and Pelly Rubanju and their new daughter-in-law, Dr. Louis and Kellen Kaboine, Sarah and Ben Matsiko, Father Opio, Prex, Scovia, Dr. Julius, Chris Tibanyendera (town clerk) and his lovely wife, and Dr. Muniga and his lovely wife, to name a few. There was singing, dancing, and of course, the speeches we have come to know and love. William and Christine did some special dancing to the "calypso" as well, and there was much food and fun. Father Opio led us in a wonderful closing prayer, which we sung together, holding hands and swaying.

We have been helping with the school, visiting classes, especially P7, as they are preparing for final exams. For P7, this is very important because it is their exit exam from Primary school and their placement exam for Secondary School. We have been to several Masses around town, including Bubaare Parish, Ibanda Modern School, and Ibanda Town School, each of which had a special blessing over the entire P7 class. So please keep them in your prayers. It is also a common tradition (in fact, I've never seen it omitted yet) to have a song of Thanksgiving where people are swaying, dancing, singing, hooting, jumping, and praising – from the smallest of the p1 children through the headmaster or headmistress of the school, even the priests! The most amazing difference is how the older children are more involved as contrasted to our American adolescent school children who tend to hold back and be more subdued as they get older. I wish they could see what we have seen here, and how the whole culture of Uganda is centered on faith and praise, singing, dancing, and very active participation.

The pen pals are a hit, and unfortunately, we only were able to collect about 98 of the 200 from the Americans. Many of the children are so very excited to hear from their pen pals or receive the special gifts from their sponsors, and of course, many were disappointed. I encourage them to write another letter, and that I will be collecting more when I get back to America to send to Father Joseph and give to Bubaare Primary school. Now that I have handed them out, there is a steady stream of pen pals every hour, as children are walking up and handing them to Christine and me, and my suitcase is getting quite full!

Christine and I have also been working with Abeshongozi (choir) both at school and the adult choir in church. We have been especially concentrating on English songs, as there is a very strong desire to have an English Mass and utilize the songs I began teaching in February. We are making an audio library – taping songs as we rehearse them - and also typing out and printing copies of the words. Our goal is to make a booklet of words that can be printed for the church and the other centers around Ibanda. The harmonies are great, and the people are such a great pleasure to work with. I wish I could bring them all home!

For Halloween, Christine and I dressed up as Abazungu. Nobody else dresses up here, but the next day, for All Saints day, there were many celebrations. We attended Mass 4 times. The evening found us at Dr. Muniga's home, which is a very nice home with a lovely garden and lawn overlooking Ibanda and the mountain – very scenic! This was a very special occasion, shared with his friends and guests, begun with a Mass, and followed by a feast and some

songs. The occasion was Dr. Muniga's 66th birthday celebration, and he is the most energetic 66 year old I have ever met! In fact, when the evening was over, he declared he had lost 10 years and was now 56 years again. He was ever so happy to have everyone there to celebrate, and humble in his thanking of his guests. In Africa, reaching 66 is a major milestone, as many of his colleagues and friends have already passed away. So, truly, youth can be achieved in the mind and heart, and hopefully, as in Dr. Muniga's case, the body will stay young too!

I am humbled myself by the faith of these people. From blessing themselves quietly when receiving even a snack, to stopping wherever they are to give thanks or to pray together, to attending Mass and participating, to their individual welcomes and the love they are sharing with each other and with Christine and myself, I continually feel that I have so much to learn about my own faith, and that they have so much to teach us about simple living. And then, to top that all off, they sure do know how to celebrate and party: the goat roast, Dr. Muniga's party, and the daily singing and dancing in church, are just simply awesome and joyful!

Here are some of the updates you have probably been waiting for: I have completed one phase of Wemba's situation in following through with the agreement made between Chuck, Dan and Wemba, and will finalize it with a visit to his home to present him with receipts that his children's school fees have been paid for, since he has honored the first two months of his agreement. As for the Apostles of Jesus High School to be built north of Kampala, the plans have been delivered to Father Joseph, and they look great. Father is confident he can begin phase one – which would be constructing the block of buildings to begin with the first Secondary Class (S.1) and then in the future adding more. Father Joseph is super excited about this, and as he is approaching 50 (his birthday is Dec. 21 so mark it in your calendar), he feels the completion of this school in his lifetime would be a gratifying achievement and a major personal milestone for him. Of course, it would also be doing Uganda, the Apostles of Jesus, and the Secondary School students a lot of good too! Father Joseph is particularly proud that the rectory is now utilizing solar power (great for light but you still can't charge anything or run any machines) and therefore has discontinued use of the generator (and also now saves on fuel).

And my last update is that, unfortunately, an era has ended. The little boy I call "no-pants" is growing up. Instead of daily running around with no pants on, he is starting to wear a full set of clothes. Don't worry, old habits die hard, and you can still catch a glimpse of him wearing only a shirt and a smile, but most days he is pretty well fully clad, and looking quite respectful.

Every day here in Ibanda is a blessing – I get to speak with people, learn their stories, and build more friendships. I appreciate more and more what I have been given in America, and I also assimilate this wonderfully simple lifestyle here in Africa into my own being. As I reflect on these things, I also want to share these stories more and more with everyone. Since we are one world, one church, one people of God, we have so many ways we can help each other, from the poor helping the rich, the faith-filled helping the struggling, the blessed helping the not-so-blessed.

I still have that place in my heart that misses home – and yes, I will be home soon! I look forward to being with my friends and family and appreciating the love we share as well. I just feel so blessed and lucky! Well, without getting mushy and sentimental, I leave you with an Irish/Ugandan saying: Until we meet, Obusingye (Peace)!

I love you and miss you always,

Billy M

Here Begins Bill's Update #3

November 2 – November 3, 2007

Tuesday November 6, 2007

Welcome to the luxury resort known as Ibanda, where it rains often during November, there is scarcely any power, and we sing, dance, and have goat roasts all the time! What more could you want out of your luxury getaway!

Today is November 6, Tuesday, the first day we've had consistent power since....So, finally, I get a chance to send not one, but TWO greetings home!

On Friday afternoon, Christine and I spent some time with Gilbert's family for a wonderful lunch time feast! It was very nice to be in their home, and they were very glad to have us there as well. Gilbert, who is currently studying in Mbarara, had made the one hour journey back, and brought a teacher with whom I've been emailing. His name is Mujuni John Baptist, a very nice guy, and he's been helping Gilbert with learning the internet, as he is a computer teacher and also seeking to further his own studies. It was nice to finally meet him face to face.

We then had abeshongozi (choir) with the school children, then followed by the adult choir. Lots of fun, and we sang til it was dark outside. A nice dinner with the rain falling outside followed, and then an early evening for me, because the next morning I had big plans.

On Saturday morning, I went with Gilbert, Edwig, and Sylvia (Gilbert's cousin) visited Scovia in the market place – she was so happy to show me her wares, but sad since she has had to move out of her store into the central area where she displays fruits, veggies, and her baskets on a stand. But her smile is such a joyful thing, you forget these hardships because she is so delighted to share her life! We then began our trek up the mountain near Kakongo (at the other end of the town) and with my handy GPS hiking unit, I could monitor our progress. Starting at about 4800 feet, we hiked up to about 6098 feet at the top of Mission Hill. The view was incredible as we could see the whole town of Ibanda in all directions, plus mountains, banana plantations, places where people were working, playing, driving, walking, and even burning smoke in the distance. The air was thin for this Omuzungu, and even the Africans had a little trouble (although Gilbert was prancing all around like a show off!). This is my third time up the mountain, and I always enjoy the serenity and the camaraderie with my African friends of mine.

The rest of the day found Christine and I with the Abeshongozi for a 4 hour rehearsal, with kids coloring on one side, others singing and dancing, and the rains falling all around us. We were practicing for the next day, where the P7 class from Bubaare will receive a special blessing since Monday is their final exam. Christine also learned some of the fancy footwork as well.

Sunday morning was cloudy, but not yet raining. Still no power, as we all began preparing for the Sunday celebration. As I am running out of Internet time, I will finish this very cool account of what happened in the next installment.

Sorry for the cliffhanger, but there is no hurry in Africa, and hey, it might keep you anxious to receive the next installment.

Please keep us in your prayers as we finish our stay here in Ibanda and begin our journey home next Sunday.

We miss you all, we love you, and of course, can't wait to see you all again!

Peace

Billy M

Update #4 November 4 – November 5, 2007

Sunday, November 4, 2007: A lazy, cloudy Sunday, begins with no electricity. I attend the 7am Mass (sometimes you just can't resist when the drums and singing are playing right outside your window) which was a joyful celebration quite on par with the norm – lots of great music and participation. And then, the children's Abeshongozi arrives to prepare for the 10 am Mass which will feature a special blessing for P7 as they face their final examination which will not only let them exit Primary school, but also place them for Secondary School. You can feel the air these days, a nervous excitement at the school and surrounding any student of P7, as they all know just how important these exams are (you'd think they were taking the bar exams). Finally, the Mass begins with a hymn of praise in Runyankole – one of my favorite's, "Twija Hanu," and the liturgical dancers begin in the center aisle at the back of the church, clad in brightly colored matching garments. I can see Immaculate, one of the school teachers and leaders of the children's Abeshongozi, also one of the sponsored orphans named Christine, about 9 other children, including 2 boys, the deputy headmistress, Beninya, and, whoa! Is that an Omuzungu? Yes, indeed, Christine Favorite's also in the back dancing with the liturgical group! As they process down the aisle toward the altar, the whole church is involved in singing, clapping, swaying, and really enjoying this great hymn to praise God, and smiles are everywhere when they catch their first glimpse of Christine dancing this traditional style African dance.

The priests follow, and Mass unfolds even more joyous, as you can really feel an air of celebration which clouds all that nervous energy - people have come to praise God for gifts, blessings, life. After communion, there is a great hymn of Thanksgiving called Ndyakusiima Nta ("How can I thank you?") – another one of my favorites, which features the liturgical dancers once again, but joined by a swarm of children and adults who fill the sanctuary with their dancing, swaying arms, singing, and smiles. Following this hymn, P7 moves into the sanctuary with heads bowed low for a special blessing which Fr. Joseph performs, and the whole congregation helps by raising their hands over the group of children. Even though we've attended a few of these blessings for other schools, it means so much more to me this time because these are the faces of the children I have been seeing since February, and I have such a special place in my heart for them that I really just want to see them get the topmost scores and do so well in the future!

Mass concludes with a glorious recessional, and then Christine and I get ready for one of my favorite events: the Kaboine farm and goat roast, which always features the promise of seeing Post Test Club performers. The sky is threatening rain as we make the short drive toward the farm, passing the big mountain towering over Ibanda with the gray swirl of clouds in the background. We arrive at the farm, where we will spend our afternoon, and I get to see the members of Post Test Club. We greet each other with big smiles and handshakes, take some photos, and begin talking of more plans to keep filming their dances in the future. Even though I have brought my camera, today is too cloudy and we will not have time to film, but the prospect of the future plans is very exciting.

The day turns damp, well, outright drenched, as the rains just let loose on the Kaboine farm. Streams and rivers that were once non-existent course through the yard downhill towards Kellen's garden as the guest take shelter on the inside couches, and the PTC members crowd the front porch. So, I break out the laptop and dvd of their June dances and they watch themselves. Apparently they have a VHS tape of some performance in the past, but for many this is the first time they are seeing themselves. They enjoy it, and we talk about how we can make it better by setting up a real production schedule at some point, which I will arrange with Dr. Louis Kaboine, the founder of the group.

While we are inside eating the goat and other fine foods, which have been prepared in the garage, Post Test Club performs for us right inside the house! They have the big drums, and the dancer girls are dancing about 1 foot from us, with wild energy and big smiles. Talk about larger than life! After their performance, William Rubanju requests that Christine and I perform a song (he's now a big fan of the international singer Christine Favorite!) so, after a brief discussion with the PTC musicians, we perform the part of Isaiah from *The Word*, and also "Blessed and Happy." It's the first time I've ever had the chance to play this African influenced music that I've written with real African musicians – wow! And of course, everyone claps, hoots, and hollers when Christine sings the high notes at the pinnacle of her performance.

On Monday we arise at the crack of 2 a.m. in the hopes of seeing...Lions! Today is the day we are traveling to Queen Elizabeth National Park – except Father has to spend the next two hours on the phone locating our driver. Well, we set off at around 5:30 a.m., and inside I know that the lions have probably all gone home by now...oh well, as Father George Opio says, "T.I.A. (This is Africa)." 3 hours and several hundred bumps later, we arrive to a majestic morning atmosphere of sunshine and mountainscapes with blue skies and scattered white wisps of clouds. In the fields on either side we can see antelope (called Kob), water buffalo, warthogs, water bucks, and even a herd of elephants toppling a tree! We keep driving, and at one point the "road" is under construction, and our guide suggests that the driver jump the van over some humps and up the bank onto the grass for a short drive to bypass the construction. Easier said than done. It's funny to hear the Africans reprimanding each other: "Well, you misunderstand me, you were supposed to go this way, but you went this way, and..." It's so very courteous. This is the part of the trip where we walked about a quarter mile beside the van being towed by a 4-wheel drive truck much more suitable for jumping over bumps and embankments. Too bad there were no lions around, I'm sure they would have enjoyed this funny site! TIA!

We sight some baboons on the side of our van a little later, and the male baboon scurries around the van, looking to me like he was kind of angry. But for me, it's very exciting to see any baboon – angry, happy, sleepy...We stop for lunch: I go with my normal QENP lunch, a full fish on a plate of "chips" a.k.a. Fries. The afternoon is spent on a boat on Lake Edward as we cruise along the bank of hippos and waterbuffalo submerged in the water or basking in the sun. We also sight some tree monkeys, fish eagles, many of the 610 species of birds, crocodiles (I spotted three myself!), and monitor lizards. No elephants this time, and still no lions! It's a great treat to have Father George on board, because he was hinting his shyness of the water and that he might stay on the shore, but lucky for us, he took the risk (he heeded his own homily advice from earlier this week) and I think he really enjoyed himself. Father Joseph, the old pro, was up on top deck for half the boat ride, absolutely enjoying himself.

The ride back to Ibanda takes us to a pub in some town, and during our "snack" of goat, popcorn, Bell beer and Krest, the power goes out. When we emerge from the pub, I look up to see a million gleaming sugar crystals in the African night sky (hey, this sounds like a lyric for a song!). Very

cool! After more bumps, we arrive back to the rectory to retire from a wonderful day in the park (alas, no lions).

As I have just returned from Uganda, I will be finishing this account of my third visit to Uganda. See you next time!

Peace
Billy M

Update #5 November 6 – November 12, 2007

Tuesday, November 6: I wake up to find a gorgeous sunrise, which I photograph from my favorite spot up the road from the rectory on an uphill perch I found in February. It overlooks a home at lower elevation, and then fields of bananas and swamp which blend into several low mountains on the horizon, and the sun is now coming up between the inner two mountains. It has shifted since February and the changing of seasons, and the time is about 15 minutes earlier. The scattered clouds makes for a mesmerizing display of colors as the sun appears as a great big orange orb which I can actually photograph, since some of the clouds act as a kind of filter. If you can imagine the opening of Disney's *Lion King*, that's it! The day is filled with more prep work for Abeshongozi, some lessons, and then our rehearsals with the school choir followed by the adult choir.

Today, we take a trip to the Babies' Home, and I bring the laptop and the dvd documentary we have prepared based on footage I collected on the June trip. The sisters assemble the older babies, probably 3 and 4 years old, in a darker room so that we can all see the screen pretty well. As soon as I start the first segment, "Afrika Afrika Afrika," the beating drums and images on the screen immediately entrance this young audience as they smile and clap their little hands together to the heavy drum beats (perfectly in rhythm, I might add). It doesn't take long before they start pointing and screaming enthusiastically as they see familiar faces in the montage, and even the ekicuncu (lion). When the song is over, the room is filled with cheering, and excited exclamations of Runyankole as the children are bursting with joy. The air quickly changes as the next segment begins, which is our short documentary on the Babies' Home. As soon as they hear the opening "How are You?" which is spoken by themselves from my June footage, the room responds with "I'm fine!" Then, it's just gesturing toward the screen and screaming out as the excitement builds again, sometimes so loud it doesn't matter what Sister on the screen is saying – the kids are just alive with joy at seeing themselves. The end of the documentary features a scene where the truck radio was playing, and the children were doing a little dance which I had filmed. When this scene begins, the room itself erupts into dance and singing, and then, when the final "Webare Munonga" chanting of the 4 year olds is happening, the room joins in with wild jumps and singsong chant "Webare Munonga." I couldn't stop laughing, the joy was so contagious! By the way, if you don't have your handy Runyankole Dictionary at your side, "Webare Munonga" means "Thank you very much." Now, I'll have to make a documentary of the watching of the documentary! I never dreamed this no budget film would be such a smash hit. I hear they are lining up already for the sequel!

Wednesday, November 7: Today, I get to read in Runyankole at church! The reading is from Romans 13:8-10 and goes something like this: Mutarigira eibanja aha muntu weena, and so on...

Basically addressing the idea to love one another, and let this love be our only debt, even in the face of the other commandments, which can all be summed up as one rule: "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself." Except I got to read it in Runyankole!

I particularly like the way they end their readings, which translates very well: Beene Taata ekyo n'ekigambo Kya Mukama, which means, Brothers and Sisters, this is the Word of the Lord. "Beene Taata" in Runyankole is all inclusive, beautifully collecting us all into one benevolent family, as it literally means "relatives of my daddy." It's nice sometimes learning other languages, not that I am a master of any, but understanding a culture through its language helps to understand the people. For example, in a single conversation, the typical Ugandan will interchange "he" or "she" when referring to an individual, which means that Gilbert could be a "he" or "she" at the same time when a Runyankole person is speaking in English. This is because the language of Runyankole does not have a gender distinction in third person. If you conjugate the verb "to love," for example, you will get the following:

<i>Ninkunda</i>	<i>I Love</i>
<i>Nokunda</i>	<i>You Love</i>
<i>Nakunda</i>	<i>He, she, it loves</i>
<i>Nitukunda</i>	<i>We love</i>

So you can see that He, She, and It are all covered under the prefix "na." So one must really have to be alert when talking, even to Father Joseph, a master of English, as the people slip back and forth freely from "she" to "he" in their sentences, and I know many times I've done a double take until I realized what they were talking about. (It's pretty funny if they say "he's gone to the girl's bathroom" and their talking about a girl!) I wonder if this had anything to do with those orphan boys at the Babies' home who were wearing those dresses...

This day concludes with another major milestone celebration, the First Birthday Party of Angelina, the granddaughter of Chairman William Rubanju. We visit the lovely home of William and Pelly Rubanju, and we get to meet 3 of their sons, Major, Angelina's father; Cassius, the first born; and Mbagu. The stars are crystal clear and a myriad tapestry in the night, and the air has become quite cold. The food is great, as usual, and William Rubanju gives another round of his great speeches. We contribute a little bit by singing and playing "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" followed by "Birthday" in the style of the Beatles. It's an honor to be guests at this lovely young ladies first birthday, and she doesn't disappoint either, donning a crazy mask and activating her brand new car (yes it's a toy) with flashing lights and wild sounds. She is a joy to be around, always smiling, and usually with one hand on someone's Bell beer...which I hear incidentally tastes much richer than American beer, yet another reason for you all to go and visit Uganda!

Thursday, November 8: Today I wash my socks. I know it doesn't sound super exciting, but it's quite a process. I learned this from Prexeda last week, and boy, can the African girls wash. I know I'm pretty much the only one in Ibanda who wears socks, but I like the idea of not having mosquitoes biting my exposed ankles. When I returned home in February, and washed my clothes in the machine, they still contained a faded trace of the rich clay dirt from Africa. I couldn't get it out. But with Prex, we scrub with 2 kinds of soap in a wash bin, using only one tub of water. We go piece by piece, and clearly I have a substandard method of washing, as evidenced by her constant grinning and double checking my work. The truly remarkable aspect of this activity is Prex's totally selfless and serving attitude, so humble, as she not only offers to "help" me, but does a top notch, high quality job. She does not know how to be lazy or slack off in the quality of work she does, not only in washing, but in cooking, cleaning, dishes, and in her new job as secretary for the Parish. I try to show her what I can about the computer, and she is always a quick and eager

student. I learn so much from her and her fellow Africans, who share much the same spirit of service, although Prex tends to outshine many with her high work ethic. She is truly a joy to be around, and an excellent blessing to Father's rectory family. The result is that my socks turn out whiter than you can imagine after accumulating the hard clay dirt which seems to lock itself in magnetically to the cloth. Truly a miracle!

In the afternoon, I read to P6 the story "Polar Express." Of course, we had to address some issues such as snow and Santa Claus and Reindeer, but once we get started, it seems to go okay. The book itself, as well as the bell, was donated by a fellow African, my friend Carol Fenton who was born in South Africa (and now resides in Newtown, PA). I tell the children this and they feel an instant bond to their fellow African. I really like this class. There is Jackline, Hilda, Christine, and three of the deaf students, Ireen, Joan, and Mackline. I tell them to come forward to see the words as I am reading aloud. At the story's end, the teacher asks them if they have like it, and the children applaud. I guess they got the point! The book will remain with Bubaare Primary School, so they are free to re-read it any time they want.

In the evening, Father Joseph hosts a catered dinner for a very nice woman, Mrs. Jean. She is the representative of President Museveni who is being transferred out of Ibanda district. Father likes this woman, telling the story of how the first time he met her in her office, Mrs. Jean was listening to an older woman. Father was impressed that someone of such a high office took the time to listen to someone who was common and ordinary, and he could feel immediately the love and example that Mrs. Jean has for the people. He must have said at least three times in the evening that this is such a great quality, wouldn't it be great if more of Uganda's leaders displayed this quality? For me, Mrs. Jean immediately reminded me of my mentor and good friend, Ann Menna. The way Mrs. Jean addressed us, was witty, charming, funny, and most importantly, relevant and wise in her knowledge and application to us common folk, made her the "Ann Menna of Africa." It is a great testament to Mrs. Jean that Father would host such a dinner in her honor, and that her transfer brought statement from the guests which also honored her and wished her the same success in her new post that she had here in Ibanda, as all whom attended clearly showed their admiration of Mrs. Jean. Mr. Rubanju, of course, led the evening's speeches, followed by his sons, and his request for Christine and me to perform "The Prayer," followed by Major's request for us to dance Africa's favorite song, "Calypso." Even what seems to be a high class event in Africa turns into a song and dance of the most joyful spirits.

Friday, November 9: Christine and I catch another gorgeous sunrise, meeting the normal array of students, workers, and water fetchers passing on the road as we snap and click continuously catching the sun's morning glory.

Kellen and I finally connect this morning, and we visit Wemba's home, a mud hut on the path from the school to the market. He has many newspapers on the walls as decorations, which is not like most homes, which have hardly anything on the walls, save for a few photos maybe. I know we have caught him by surprise, but he and his wife are very glad we have finally made it to his home. His wife shows us a jumper she has made with the sewing machine, utilizing the orange cloth that was donated by a St. Vincent's Parishioner. I take out several receipts, and explain to Wemba that Chuck has honored the other end of the agreement. Since Wemba has made his first three payments on the sewing machine, Chuck has arranged payments for the current term balance at Bubaare for 3 of Wemba's children, and also the current term balance of his child in Secondary school. There is also a surplus of 20000 shillings which is applied in credit to the next term at Bubaare. All in all, Chuck's \$50 went very far to help Wemba's family with educational fees. We briefly discuss when we can expect to see more from the sewing machine, and he projects that by April 2008, he and his wife will know enough to be able to begin the creation and hopefully sales of

clothes made on his sewing machine. I encourage him, as that is the point of this project, to enable someone to do something to help themselves. With prayer and support and encouragement, I look forward to seeing this happen for Wemba and his family.

In mid morning, we head to the Babies' Home to hang with our favorite group toddlers. I've arranged to film the 4-year-olds, as they will be leaving in a week for a new home. They have reached the age limit at which the Babies' Home can no longer accommodate them, and they will be sent to another home for older children. They will not be raised as Catholics once they enter the new home, nor will they even be in Ibanda. There is a noticeable tinge of sadness when some of the sisters speak of their leaving, and it is no question why, for as in the words of Sister Christine Nancy, she says, "These are my bosses. These are the ones who bring me joy, happiness..." I film a segment for the documentary with the 4-year-olds, and as the sister introduces each child, we get a little wave and a "hello" from each one. At the end we conclude with a group "bye bye" which is so soft, it's like a lullaby. Then, of course, they erupt into a dismissal as they run out of the room back to their play activity.

Christine and I head back to the school, where they have prepared a closing and farewell assembly for us. This part always gets me. The classes perform songs like "You are my Lover!" and "Bye Bye, oh oh oh Bye Bye!" but the one that always gets me is

*"We are sorry,
very sorry,
to leave our friends
shine away,
but since we have
nothing to do,
we have to say goodbye
we have to say goodbye."*

This is the third time I have had to sit through this song, and it doesn't get easier. I now know more children, their stories, even their homes, as I have been invited to meet their families. These words haunt me, as it is a slow moving, lilting song with a sad tone to begin with, then the young voices echoing what's in my mind about being sorry to leave friends. I know they are sad too, but I tell them we are coming back in June with a group, and I cannot wait until then to see them. I wish them well in their exams, and look forward to seeing this year's P6 class rise up to P7, the leaders of the school. We end with a little photo shoot as they children are going back to class, and then it's back to the rectory.

Of course, I still see them at the afternoon music rehearsal, and I'll see them Saturday and at Sunday's Mass, but this official closing really has it's own mood and message which touches my heart. "Webare Munonga, Bubaare!"

In the evening, Sarah Matsiko and her family prepare an extraordinary dinner for us, and of course, it's no surprise that the power goes out within the first 10 minutes. It's very quaint to eat by lantern light and enjoy the company of everyone in the room through conversation. One of her daughters is Console Michelle, who is very excited to spend time with Christine and myself, and I admit, I am happy too! She is the one who has recited "Afrika Afrika Afrika," a poem I used as the basis for a choral piece I've written. (It's on youtube.com if you want to see it – just search monaghanmusic.) The night ends and we drive home through the town in the chilly night air to another gleaming African starry night.

Saturday, November 10: This morning is very exciting, as Father has arranged a meeting with the five P7 students who are orphans and being sponsored by those through St. Vincent's and Bridge of Hope (our new group's name). This meeting is to inform them that as an extension of their sponsorship and a transition into Secondary School, during their Holiday, they will work and find room and board on Kellen's farm. Here they will learn skills valuable for African life, which will set them farther ahead than others of their age. This program has many benefits. Since the Holiday is about three months, it will enroll these children in a constructive program whereby they will learn these skills, and effectively keep them from being unfocused, wandering the streets with nothing to do, and ultimately prime fodder for trouble. As they are teens, some as old as Ronald who is 17, this is a very good thing, as one can only imagine where a young mind with no clear activity or program, will go under the influence of African society. Father is offering this alternative to keep them occupied. Another benefit is the idea of being able to earn some necessary things, like a mattress for example. Ronald had already approached me and said he didn't have a mattress anymore, as the one he used in boarding at Bubaare was the property of Bubaare. A mattress itself costs about 30,000 to 40,000 shillings, roughly \$25-30, which I know my mother and I would sponsor, but the idea that Ronald himself will earn his own mattress is so much more the better, as he will have ownership and pride at having earned it himself. The less handouts and more that the people can do themselves, the better and stronger Africa will be. It's the old "give the man a fish and he eats for a day, teach a man to fish and he eats forever" adage, which is what this program is all about – learning necessary skills to survive and thrive in African life. Personally, I think it will be comforting for the sponsors to know that the child who has received their gift of education is not continuing in the world unguided, open to predators, roaming around aimlessly, but is rather being cared for, nurtured, and looked after as they transition between Primary school and Secondary school. By the way, they begin work next Tuesday, November 16.

The rest of the morning finds us heading into a town without electricity (again) to see Scovia at her market and purchase a few baskets from her. She greets us with a great big smile and she can hardly contain her excitement as she pulls out all her wares and sets them on a mat for us to see. Of course, I've already pre-ordered mine, but the display is extraordinary – the woman has talent! I only wish this bridge we are building was shorter that everyone here could see these beautiful hand crafted objects and judge for yourself. After a few more stores, I head back to the rectory. I see some of the recent graduates, and we spend a few minutes taking some photos. The drum maker from whom Christine and I ordered some items stops by with his finished products, and we are now the owners of 2 more African drums and 2 tube fiddles. You can smell the hides, very fresh, not that I love the smell of goat, but it's definitely present! We have Abeshongozi in the afternoon, and we sing until it's dark. After a quiet meal, I begin packing, and packing, and packing...how did I get so much stuff?

Sunday, November 11: Well, I've been packing my things to return home, and now the last day in Ibanda has begun. Christine and I accompany Fr. George to Kibubura Girls' Secondary School (that's "chee-boo-boora") for a Mass with the students. Everyone crowds into a classroom and the girls are very excited to be celebrating with Father George. Ashleigh and I had the privilege in February to attend two masses with the girls school, and I have been anxious to return, but have been missing opportunities. The music is just as wonderful as anywhere else, and Christine makes quick friends with the girls when she starts dancing with them; all the girls are smiling at the Omuzungu's participation. Near the end, Father tells them a little about Christine and myself, and the girls ask for a song. So, we sing "The Prayer," which we have been singing at the special "holy hours" throughout our trip, but this performance is so special – the girls are very attentive, and get very excited when Christine hits the high notes. It's really fun to be in that room. Father also blesses the S6 and S4 students, who are entering a phase of final exams before the end of the year. For the S6 students, this will be their passage into the "real world," whether that is working or

University, of course, depending on funds. As evidenced by the signs around campus, there is a tremendous focus on young women pursuing an education. Not only does it provide that women will be well educated contributors to society, it also influences that these young women will be married at a later date, helping to then produce a more stable family life suitable for the raising of children, and by consequence helping with the control of HIV. The idea is that some girls will marry as soon as their hope of education is over – sometimes at the age of 13 or 14. So, another vote for the continuing of education, and you can see how eager and serious these young women are about continuing their studies.

We depart the school with warm wishes for a safe journey home, and the invitation to come back when we have returned to Uganda. We arrive at the parish shortly before the 10 am Mass, and I can hear “Lord When Your Glory Appears” as the Abesongozi is practicing. Yahoo! For that means that we’re actually going to perform this Psalm. I have been very excited albeit concerned during this trip. I know that of course the Bubaare community will ultimately make their own decisions for what music they will be singing, but I have been hoping that we get to perform at least this song as the responsorial Psalm on this particular Sunday. Normally, the Abeshongozi picks a song to perform between the first and second reading, and from my understanding, it is not necessarily the Psalm of the day. So, I was very excited at the prospect of being able to offer a Psalm for which I had written a musical setting that we could perform together in Africa. I just didn’t know if it would actually happen. Furthermore, I had also left our musical groups at home with the idea that if they performed this song for Nov. 11, and we performed it in Africa, not only will it be the first “Bill-song” to be performed on two continents on the same day, but we will be linked even that much more strongly in our faith and celebration. You can only imagine the leaps and bounds in my heart as I heard them actually practicing the song, and how proud I was that the Abeshongozi had taken it upon themselves to do this on their own, completely in harmony and with the verses and everything.

The Mass begins like a horserace: the excitement and smiles, clapping, singing and dancing are a storm of uncontrollable energy! The dancers repeat their previous Sunday performance, again joined by Christine, and the sounds are so full in the small church packed to capacity and overflowing outside with parishioners. This day is another special day, as BUCWO (BUbaare Catholic Women’s Organization) has a special presentation during this Mass and these women are dressed in traditional yellow flowing dresses and beaming, proud smiles. The culmination of this Mass is another activity, the election of a new Parish Center Chairman. The previous chairman passed away on Friday, and now it is time to meet the candidates and elect the best one. For me, this is an incredible process, for it involves the entire Bubaare adult community. The children are ushered outside so the adults from outside can be seated with the rest of the community inside. People nominate a candidate, which is seconded by “mmms” from the congregation, and the candidate comes forward. Three candidates are chosen, who stand before the congregation, and each delivers a short speech. The first candidate is Honorato, father of Wemba, and his speech receives some chuckles and nice applause. The second candidate, a much younger fellow, receives lots of laughter, “mmms,” and a big round of applause, while the third candidate, also young, receives a more polite applause. Then, the voting: by a show of hands, the community votes, the counters count, the secretary tallies, and the winner is...Candidate #2! Father Joseph, who has been sitting and only watching, quietly letting his parish do their work, is pleased with this choice. Some more activities happen, lots of people stand up, more votes are taken for different positions, and finally, the Mass is over, the final song is sung, and we begin making some hasty goodbyes to our friends. Some of the school children, like Christine, Edgar, William, Jackline, Editor, and others, look pretty sad, which doesn’t help me much...but, as Father is very conscious about arriving in Kampala before darkness, we pack our things, say goodbye to Father George, Prexeda, and Scovia at the rectory, and “hit the road.” It’s a nice day for traveling, even though we

are visited by a crazy storm about 3 hours into the trip. After five hours, we arrive at the Pope Paul VI Hotel, where we stayed on that first night way back in February, and we enjoy an excellent meal at the restaurant, complete with chicken, fries, and fish fillet, with Father Joseph and Christine sharing Nile beers together, and me with my Krest cola. A very nice meal to end the day, and our trip.

Monday, November 12, we set out at 5:30 a.m. from Kampala. The roads are just craters upon craters, and father dances through them with the grace that only an African driver can muster. Even for 5:30 am, there are many trucks and people already bustling on the streets. We are driving north today to see the plot of land that the Apostles of Jesus now own, which will be used to build a secondary school as well as a primary school and hospital. The drive takes us 40 km north of Kampala where we meet a very nice Father Mugabe (which means "giver"). We switch into his truck, with Father Joseph and I standing in the back of the truck as we bumpily "cruise" through these back roads of nooks, crannies, holes, and even some scary canyons. If I thought Father Joseph was good, this guy is definitely equal competition! I map the journey on my GPS unit, and we travel past hordes of children on their way to school along about 8 miles of, for lack of a better word, "roads." At one point, Father Joseph yells out, "Are you going to wave to everyone?" The children are all smiles to see an Omuzungu in the back of a truck on a Monday drive in the middle of Nowhere, Uganda. Even Father Joseph bellows out "Omuzungu! Omuzungu!" as he joins the chants of the children we are passing.

I learn during the drive that this area north of Kampala was severely devastated during the War in the Bush Uganda faced 1981-1986, and the people are still recovering this day. We see many mud hut dwellings, some of which are barely held together, leaning sideways, or missing complete walls. The people are poor, making ends meet with some farming or livestock. Some children are not even going to school, but working with hoes, or herding goats or cattle, or preparing fires, or other chores. I will read more about the effect of the war on this area, but seeing firsthand the struggle of the people is yet another scene with remains as such a vivid impression on my mind. The development of this Secondary School, Primary School, and Hospital in this area will not only be a good center for education and medical treatment, but will be a huge benefit to the local community in terms of bringing electricity and somewhat of a social center to this area. Father proudly announces that the name of the facility will be the "Apostles Secondary School."

After we cross a "bridge," which means we have to get out of the truck to guide Father Mugabe over the only 2 planks available for navigation over this small creek bed, we arrive a small mudhut with a woman who welcomes us. We pass on foot through the barbed wire fence, and are now officially on the "Apostles" land. Yahoo! The land is about 1 mile square, and currently still "the bush:" trees, banana trees, weeds, bushes, and loose trails. The land is basically two tiers, from what we see, and each tier is pretty well flat. So, once the area is cleared, the upper flat surface will be for buildings, and the lower flat surface for a playground. We can see these two priests beaming, and I am filled with excitement at being present at the beginning of what will be an incredible achievement for these people – the building of a school facility under the care of the Apostles of Jesus. Father Joseph expresses that the most important focus now will be the completion of the first phase of this facility: constructing the buildings necessary to begin Secondary School Senior 1 (first year students), and continuing in the future to continue building until the entire school is complete. The plans include farming and other skills (like carpentry, for example) that the students will learn in addition to their academics, thereby building well rounded students who are equipped for their future as citizens of Uganda, Africa, and the world, armed with knowledge and skills necessary for success in many areas of life. The farm itself, for example, will provide more self sufficiency for the school in terms of food and livestock. It will also help the local community as well, and indeed Father Mugabe, who is stationed at nearby Lima farm, which he

has built from the ground up, has already begun a farm there, and is able to utilize the help of a local widow and her children as they contribute to the work of the farm in return for help with rebuilding their house and some reimbursement for school and food. It is people like these Apostles of Jesus, Father Joseph and Father Mugabe, who are so important to Uganda: men of vision, truly African, who are wise enough to see what needs to be done and really push relentlessly for the means and support to get it done.

But perhaps the best element of this secondary school being built, specifically for those in our own St. Vincent's community, is what it will do for our own personal Bridge of Hope which we have been building through Father Joseph and the Apostles of Jesus. For those how have been sponsoring the orphaned students at Bubaare, and those of us who have been following this whole journey, this school offers a secure hope for the future. As we know, children grow up, and when they pass through P7, the next step is Secondary school, which is very scary for these students, since their future is so uncertain in terms of having enough money to even attend Secondary School. With the completion of the Apostles Secondary School, we are in on the ground floor of a a project that is one step closer to securing a more stable future for these children with whom many of us now personal relationships. Since the Apostles of Jesus will own and operate this school, Father Joseph and others will be able to make their own decisions about policies. So, for example, students who may not have the funds to pay for school may be able to participate in a work study type atmosphere whereby their work at the school, on the farm, and more will be a way they can "pay back" their education fees. Currently, Father Joseph (and we too) are helpless in this aspect since other schools are owned and controlled by outside people. The possibilities are exponentially increased with the development of a Secondary School owned and operated by the Apostles of Jesus! As Father Joseph likes to say, "Amen and A-woman!"

After emerging from the Bush, Christine and I journey back with Father Joseph through Kampala, and are treated to a very nice roadway from Kampala directly to Entebbe Airport. The city has been preparing for next week's CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, including a visit by Queen Elizabeth II to Uganda), and this road is beautiful, and evidence of what is possible in Uganda. We can only pray that these kind of positive changes for Uganda can continue and radiate throughout all of Uganda in years to come.

We sit for a few minutes with Father Joseph at the airport before saying goodbye and wishing each other "Safe Journey." We go our separate ways, preparing for our long journeys home. I can only hope that our plane ride is a little less bumpy than Father's car ride will be as he drives back to Uganda.

"At the end of the day," another expression borrowed from Father Joseph, I reflect on yet another beautiful and blessed excursion to Uganda, filled with many impressions, beautiful scenes, loving welcomes, exciting music, dancing, culture, and most of all, friendship and Christian fellowship as I continue to grow in my relationships with the people of Bubaare parish in Ibanda. I know they are excited about the return of the Abazungu in June, and I know I am just excited. As I have looked around each day, I only wish our Bridge of Hope was a little shorter, and we could just see these friends and share our lives every day. I tried packing a few people, who were all too willing, into my suitcases, but since the drums were taking up too much room, we decided we'll have to try again sometime in the future. I continue to keep these people close to my heart, and pray that one day more of us can visit Ibanda, and more of our friends can visit the us at home in America.

Please know, to all of you reading, the Ibandan people are greeting you, praying for you, and even though they have not met you, they are holding you in their hearts, as they truly love and cherish that even through your interest in reading this account, we are all connected to each other. I thank

you for the prayers, support, and interest you have had in this part of my life. I leave you with my traditional closing, a wish for “Obusingye” – Peace!

Narukundo (with love),

Bill Monaghan