

Witt's Wanderings

by John W. Witt

Leaving safari country, we drove from Lake Manyara toward Arusha, where we were supposed to catch the Precision Air 3:30 flight to Dar es Salaam. A brief stop was made at the Rift Valley Gallery and Arts store on the B144, the route out of the wilderness, apparently to satisfy the typical tourists' urge for cheap artifacts. We didn't live up to expectations; I bought a couple of trinkets for display and Lenora settled on some fabric she apparently intends to turn into a masterpiece of some sort.

Later, Ami took a cell phone call informing us that Precision Air's schedule wasn't so precise. Our flight was delayed till 5:45. So he stopped at another curio shop down the road where we killed another 45 minutes or so, bought nothing and then cruised slowly toward the Arusha Coffee Lodge, where a garden lunch was planned.

The lunch was excellent and the surroundings lovely. On a coffee plantation, it's a hotel often featured in travel magazines. Many safari groups spend their first nights there. The manager sat with us for a while, asking in the process where we might be going for the remainder of our holiday. We told him about the "Enthronement" in Dodoma and he responded that, although a Muslim, he knew of Bishop Valentino Mokiwa and the positive role the latter plays on behalf of the country's people of all faiths. It was our first clue to the bishop's important political and humanitarian position in his homeland.

At the airport, we bid Ami farewell and our Precision Air flight finally took off at 6:10. After a brief stop on Zanzibar, we arrived at Dar es Salaam around 8:30, grabbed a cab (that's another story, but it'll have to wait) and were taken, through rather heavy traffic, to our hotel, the Mövenpick Royal Palm. It's a modern, Swiss-owned facility, on a par with a good American business hotel.

The next morning, we joined others out front, waiting with our luggage for the transportation to Dodoma arranged by Bishop Bill Atwood. It was supposed to pick us up at 10:00, but didn't show up till 11:00. Loading the luggage in the roof racks and finding tarpaulins to ward off expected showers caused a further delay. Our two Toyota Land Cruisers finally left around noon.

We took places in the second Cruiser, along with Bishop Atwood, Father Bausch, the Rt. Rev'd Lawrence Dena (Assistant Bishop of Mombasa, Kenya) and the Chancellor of the Province of Kenya, a partner in a Nairobi law firm. I shared the fold-down seats in the back with the Chancellor and someone's bag, which apparently didn't fit in the Cruiser's roof rack. Having the two lawyers in the back and out of the way, was probably a salute, one way or another, to our profession.

Getting anywhere in Dar in an automobile is a real challenge. We headed more or less westward on Morogoro Road. It took us about an hour to get out of town through traffic, dominated by exhaust belching buses and trucks of all sizes.

By 3:15, we reached Morogoro, a city of some 250,000, for a "break," which as it turned out was either for a late lunch or an early dinner, whichever you preferred. Service was extremely slow and they altogether forgot the order placed by the Archbishop of West Africa. We left when the Archbishop finally finished his tardily served meal. It was already around 6:00 and we weren't halfway to Dodoma yet. There was a distance of 207 km. (130 mi.) to go and it was getting dark.

Daylight driving on a Tanzanian highway is nerve-wracking enough, but it's particularly bad after dark. Sitting in the rearmost part of the Cruiser, my new colleague and I strained to see if we were passing slow-moving vehicles safely, without hitting oncoming traffic head-on. They have an effective signaling system, however. When a driver going our way noticed us behind him, he'd turn on his right-side turn signals to tell us traffic was coming. When he turned his left-side signals on, it was all clear and safe to pass. (Remember, in Tanzania they drive British style, to the left.) It worked!

We reached Dodoma around 9:30 and checked into the New Dodoma Hotel, not an elegant western establishment, but clean and comfortable enough. Most of us met downstairs afterwards for drinks. We hadn't been there long before the Archbishop-elect, Bishop Mokiwa, joined us. It was a nice, quiet celebration of our arrival.

Next morning, after breakfast, we hopped back into our Cruisers and were driven over to the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. Outdoor bleacher seating was erected. It was already crowded and lots of people were milling around outside. Although the clergy had assigned seating inside, we were apparently

on our own, so we bravely entered the church and, spotting some unoccupied seats in the back, headed for them.

As we started up the center aisle, a lady tapped me on the shoulder and asked where we were from. I answered, "San Diego." She responded, "You're the ones," and led us to an empty reserved pew near the center of the nave. Apparently, the Archbishop-elect made sure we had somewhere to sit during the long service.

There were eight choirs inside, located next to the walls of the nave. They were from parishes from all over the country, including a Maasai choir. As we waited for the ceremony to begin, each choir burst out in magnificent a cappella form. It was sensational.

The Enthronement ceremony lasted more than six hours, most of it conducted in Swahili. Fortunately, the Kenyan Chancellor was seated with us, keeping us somewhat abreast of what was going on. The new archbishop's address lasted about an hour. He challenged the Government to improve education and the economy in an effort to improve the lot of all Tanzanians. The address was met with enthusiastic audience approval. The nation's Vice President responded in defense of the Government. His remarks were listened to politely, but without enthusiasm.

Although sitting on hard wooden pews for six hours was taxing, the color and sounds of first-rate Christian worship were worth it. The kindness of the Tanzanian faithful was generous and particularly appreciated. We felt completely at home. The feeling was intensified later by our reception at a dinner in the gymnasium at St. John's University. Our Rector and I were asked to come forward to be recognized and introduced afterwards.

We returned to Dar the next day, the trip being less harrowing in daylight. The Mövenpick took us back in. We visited Archbishop Mokiwa's cathedral and eventually caught the next available flight to Amsterdam the next day. After a wonderful dinner and a restful night, we flew home, ending a "once-in-a-lifetime" trip.

John W. Witt
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