

Greetings to All: Thursday Jan 18, 2001

MZ1 - Arrival

Late Holiday Greeting
from Beira, Mozambique AFRICA.

Betsy and I departed Greater Pittsburgh airport last Wed night Jan 9 and arrived safely in Beira late Friday after a long trip - through Atlanta, Capetown and Johannesburg South Africa and then on to Maputa Mozambique and finally Beira. We wonder if there is a more direct flight?

Anyway - we made it. We will be here for three months. Betsy is teaching Anatomy at the Catholic University of Mozambique (UCM) and also continuing to assist them as they develop basic science



curriculum for their brand new medical school. She also works on a couple of joint grant proposals involving future faculty exchanges with West Virginia U and other US schools and taking first steps in helping to establish a telemedicine capability. These new physicians will graduate in 5 or 6 years and then go to rural clinics (most still to be built) that typically have no electricity, no telephone, ... you get the picture. Since West Virginia has an extensive rural health care delivery system in place there are many things to share.

I just came along for the ride. The last time we were away - Ethiopia a few years ago, when Betsy had her Fulbright - she said ... "Dave - you will enjoy this and learn alot ... and you can continue to work on your stuff via Internet." Last time I naively said ... "OK as long as we get to see the Pyramids of Egypt." WELL we saw the pyramids and they were fantastic, but ... one must also have a telephone, dependable electricity, occassionaly some water, etc. This time we brought two computers and had a much better idea of what the working conditions might be like in one of the poorest countries on earth.

My own work continues developing a distance learning course called "Visual Basic II Programming" for non-computer scientists to be delivered via the Web and WebCT by Marshall University. This is part of a consulting contract with Marshall Research Corp.

In case some of you did not know - I left Marshall as a faculty member over a year ago. Marshall was very happy and I was very happy. This decision was made partly because of my mother's failing health (I have since been visiting her in Florida one week each month) and also to permit a start on my next career - in the "real world" of computer consulting.

We have only been here a short time - but as it turns out I will also "volunteer" helping UCM design and set up their first web site and pages, and perhaps advise them on networking plans.

Betsy was here for two weeks last February - during the terrible cyclone (hurricane) that you may remember seeing pictures of people being lifted out of trees by helicopter. Betsy is a good swimmer and had no problems. Beira had wind damage but little flooding.

Now the weather has been beautiful. But the rainy season is soon upon us. We are being provided a university house - newly remodeled - just two blocks from the beach. We have not had much water because of plumbing problems - but are hopeful that will eventually be solved and we will have water every day (yeah, yeah I heard that promise before. For perspective - we had water in Ethiopia every other

day. From recent e-mail with our friends we learn that the drought in the central part of Africa has gotten even worse and in Addis they sometimes have water one time every nine days! Our hearts go out to them.)

This current trip is possible because of a wonderful Fellowship for University Teachers to Serve in a Developing Country sponsored by Rotary International (\$10K). The Waynesburg PA Rotary and the USAID office at the US Embassy in Maputo, Mozambique also helped with the cost of sending over a shipping container of medical books gathered by the Brother's Brother Foundation in Pittsburgh. Those books have arrived and we saw them - really will provide needed help. Long-term though, their only hope is to get books, journals on CD ROM ... and develop an electronic library. If students only had their own computers.... UCM has one computer lab here at the Beira campus with about 20 older Pentiums. There is going to be a second computer lab at the Economics and Management a few blocks further downtown. A \$50K donation from the Catholic church in Italy, arranged by Sister Donata, is paying for the new lab - maybe 25 computers, going in any day.



This university is a very special place with exceptional people. We have been told that UCM is one of the few places in this part of Africa where real progress is being made. It is a Jesuit institution and has dedicated, well-educated faculty. There are three regional campuses and five "schools" - the Faculty of Agriculture, Economics and Management, Education, Law, and now Medicine. There is also a small but modern, well-equipped Geographic Information Systems (GIS) laboratory - part of a national Center for studying the country. Total enrollment is over 2,000 students and growing rapidly.

The heart of the university, though, are the Jesuit faculty. This starts with Father Couto, Ph.D. mathematician - from Italy is the "Rector" - or head guy. As you can imagine he can talk you into anything and have you leave happy. Reminds us of stories we have heard about the very successful guy over at Wheeling Jesuit College. To give a second example, I spent considerable time yesterday talking with Father Elias Roman, from Mexico, an MD who spent seven years out at a rural health care center here in Mozambique. He felt he was making little headway out there and came to UCM in order to help change that. He and others like him are really dedicated, creative, hard-working. They don't even know the word for "fail". Betsy spent most of her time during the last trip working with Sister Donata, MD - from Italy, on basic science curriculum stuff. She is fantastic! Our guess is that this new UCM effort will actually work - and work well. Scuttlebut is that USAID funding may be soon available to help in such work. Currently USAID is paying for



Internet and phone lines now being laid from the capital, Maputo, to Beira and a few other places. BUT ... that is not finished. Activities here are apparently beginning to attract wider attention. We understand that an article is being prepared about UCM for a future edition of the Chronicle.

There are an interesting mix of American, Canadian, European, and Russian faculty coming and going all the time. For example, just to name a few we have met right now - there are Dr. Bill Rougle, Fulbright professor from Montana (will be here one year), (his area is Portuguese Literature), Dr. Bernard Groosjohan from Netherlands will be here several years and is Dean of the Medical School (he is a biologist), Ann Crane from Australia, and Dondra ?? from Oklahoma are teaching English to beginning medical students. The medical program is being taught in English (although at this moment it is more in Portuguese). There are also Dr. Victor ???, a Canadian chemist, and Dr. Daan van Alten, another Dutch organic ? chemist, several Russian MDs, and many others we are still to meet. We have only been out one evening and met a young British lady (25?) working on aids education/ family planning and a Japanese American lady here for 4 years - Save the Children.

We are practicing our Portuguese. We were fortunate to have had Livia, a lovely Brazilian graduate student at West Virginia U. trying to teach us a little Portuguese over the last month. She plans to come over sometime next year and help with English instruction. It turns out that what is spoken here is a bit

different (Livia warned us) and called "European" Portuguese. We are working on the language problem. But I can easily order a cold beer - by simply looking thirsty and pointing to a grande (large) Manica.

We had hoped to call or write to many of you before we left the states - but were so busy getting ready that many things were not finished.

In future we hope to attach some photos. I have yet to find the Internet connection (one dialup line) actually working since we arrived, but will try again this afternoon. Part of the problem is that John, in charge of the computer lab is now sick - with malaria. We take our malaria pills one time per week. Somewhere I read or was told that eating brewer's yeast also helps because the mosquitoes don't like the taste as well. HmMMMMMM.

Good Luck to all. We anticipate another wonderful experience. If it is even half as personally rewarding as our Ethiopia trip then it will be a great success. We will return from Africa in three months!

ps. We have seen very few machine guns and automatic weapons - only at the bank. The people are very friendly and helpful. We feel very safe. The university kindly comes in the morning to get us (at 7 am) along with others ... returns us at noon ... we go home for lunch and a 2 hour siesta ... back to work at 2 pm and we quit at 5 pm.

Excellent opportunities exist here for international faculty to teach most everything, for one, two, three months or more. Sign Up Now!

Dave and Betsy Walker
please send e-mail to either

walker@marshall.edu
ewalker@hsc.wvu.edu

and we hope that we will be able to eventually read them!
Chau! (Bye)



