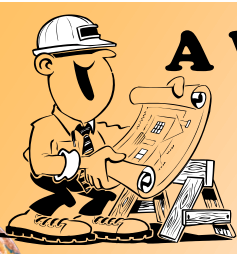




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A Word from Jim



Meeting with
Engineering Ministries International

March 25, 2012

As we shared earlier this year, Karen and I moved to Tallahassee, Florida into a small fixer in August 2011. Florida State University graciously agreed to let me study **Urban and Regional Planning for Developing Nations** at their fine graduate school. It's hard to believe I have almost finished my first year.

We continue to focus on building for missionaries and the assignments keep getting larger. It made sense to develop more skills and knowledge so that we can better serve missions agencies with their planning and building needs.

My professors have been willing to work with me when I am away overseas. Florida State has proven to be as challenging a mission field as I encounter overseas.

We just returned from a short trip to Colorado Springs to meet with Engineering Ministries International who did the plans for the University in Haiti and other projects that I have been involved with. I hope to meet some of their planning needs as I work on my Masters with hopes of graduating in April of 2013. Please continue pray for us as we juggle busy schedules and continue in service for the Master Builder.



Jim

From time to time, I will include a story from past missionary adventures. I am writing them for a creative writing class, hoping to improve as a writer. It opens up opportunities to witness to the young students and even my professor. This will be on the back so that you have the option to read it or toss it. I will include stories of Jim's on the rare occasions that he decides to write one.

I am also taking French at the Senior Citizens center so that I can communicate in Haiti and French African countries. Can you believe they took me?

Love, Karen

PS We are still looking for a good enclosed trailer to transport donations for overseas. A couple of you sent stamps. Thank you so very much.

Shopping in Senegal. Memories!



La Palmiere, Dakar Senegal



“Sun is bouncing off the world. The four of us are like a parade filing down the narrow alley kicking up little clouds of dust. I jump over intermittent rivulets of discolored water streaming off the rubble strewn sidewalks.”

The stench from rotting goat and chicken parts heaped nearby numbs my nostrils. Old urine and raw sewage are part of the charm in Dakar. We turn right and there are venter stalls lined up a street teaming with eager capitalists, in spite of socialist claims to the contrary. Beat up vehicles move in congested herds with glistening black pedestrians maneuvering expertly among them.

Beggars with an assortment of missing limbs press towards us with hopeful faces. Sweat trickles inside my shirt, the yellow circles widening beneath my arms. I clutch the small damp cloth purse, “African sewn” to my body, protecting my passport and CFAs (currency) from probing eyes.

A wiry boy with gargantuan pants bunched around his tiny waist pulls me from the path of a taxi. He has been dogging me for two blocks with woodcarvings of the “thinking man” and a small rhinoceros. I look out of the edge of my sunglasses and try not to turn my head, for to look at an item is to say you will buy it in Dakar. “Make me offer,” he encourages in broken English. My comrade offers twenty dollars and waits for change. I shake my head in disbelief as we wait, our clothes sticking to us as we perspire and I wonder if any of them listen to me when I tell them, “Take small bills, pay the exact amount after you cut it by two thirds. Don’t expect change.”

A fleshy woman with a pink turban tempts me with rows of bead necklaces hanging from her arm. She whispers, “You my sister. I give you good price. What you pay?” It

turns out I have many sisters, quite a family tree in Dakar. My bargaining skills honed over years of experience, propel me to even greater shopping excess. My goal is to purchase a gift for each of my friends back home.

I am now carrying forty-two small cloth purses, twenty-seven larger cloth purses, four meters of cloth, thirty-six bead necklaces, thirteen sets of earrings, two wall hangings rolled for simple packing and a pair of African pajamas. The prices get lower as my bargaining proficiency escalates. The adrenaline carries me along. News travels fast. Hopeful throngs of young entrepreneurs besiege me as we negotiate our way along the alley. The heat closes in but I am having the time of my life. All my treasure will fit in my black steamer trunk if I sit on it while I buckle the chipped brass fasteners.

My comrades do not share my enthusiasm and our missionary translator shakes her blond head and gives me a look with intense blue eyes that lets me know, enough is enough. She has played out this scenario with many others and is ready for lunch. I understand. I have been in her shoes and unlike the others, I am at home here.

I am pushed through a door into another world; “La Palmeraie.” The cool air washes over me. Exotic plants and mirrors surround light teak walls and tables of honey colored wood. There is a bathroom with toilet paper and real soap. Even I am caught off balance. The server asks me kindly to take my purchases off the surrounding tables and arrange them around my feet. We order from a French menu and we are surprised at the quality of the food. French wine is available if one is so inclined. This was once a French colony.

I find myself thinking of the animal parts by the road outside and wonder where this restaurant comes in on the chain of local commerce. We enjoy cold water and a popular local dish of rice and goat in a spicy mustard sauce with fried green bananas as a side. I order fruit floating in de vin blanc knowing spirits kill bacteria. One can’t be too careful.

As we emerge from our oasis, sirens and angry shouts from a loud speaker assault our ears. I finger my passport and scan the crowd. Freedom fighters egged on by questionable backers work themselves into a frenzy brandishing their AK 47s with clinched fists in case we don’t get it. Our interpreter shouts through the din that

“I find myself thinking of the animal parts by the road outside and wonder where this restaurants comes in on the chain of local commerce.”

this is a sign we should go. Politics get dicey in Africa.

We negotiate a mutually acceptable price with a taxi driver, about 1000 CFAs or \$1.50, arrange our bodies over torn seats, and crack the window so we can breathe. As I stuff my purchases around arms and legs, I am amazed to find I am the only one disappointed that our shopping spree has been cut short.

