



The Rafiki Foundation, Inc.

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“Another disciple said to him, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury the dead!’” (Matthew 8:21-22).

Dear Family and Friends,

When Jesus said, *“Let the dead bury the dead,”* He was saying to count the cost. Nothing can stand in the way of following Him, not even family. Before I ever left California to begin this final career of my life, I knew leaving my family behind was the most costly part for me. And now, after only two months of serving in Madagascar, I received the dreaded call from my brother last week that my father had passed away. I knew my father was sick when I left California. I knew I couldn’t and wouldn’t return home when he died. But that doesn’t make news like this any easier when the reality hits that he has truly passed from this world. Count the cost. Yes, it **is** costly to follow Jesus.

Rafiki Girls’ Center

But the rewards of being here far outweigh the cost. Going to work at the *Rafiki Girls’ Center* each day and experiencing God’s hand at work is a blessing and a pleasure. We have fourteen students ages fifteen to nineteen. In the mornings I teach English II and in the afternoons the girls and I work on the needlework products that we send to the Home Office in San Antonio, Texas. As production manager and design manager, I’m responsible for coordinating the product with the *Rafiki* Exchange manager. I haven’t done needlework for years, but I’m finding great pleasure in learning how the Malagasy do their embroidery. Before *Rafiki* transitioned from a women’s center to a girls’ center, Charlene was one of the women students. She now comes every afternoon to train the girls in embroidery and

cut work. I’ve been working with Charlene to refine some of the patterns and design some new products. Right now we are working on Christmas ornaments and bookmarks, Christmas table runners, and pillow covers. I told the girls to imagine the joy their work is going to bring to American families as they decorate their homes with our products. Yesterday, all the girls got into the Christmas spirit and strains of *“Silent Night”*, *“O Come All Ye Faithful”* and even *“Jingle Bells”* filled the air as we sewed.

Now that Sharon and Don Bixel and Renee and Walt Butler have returned from their two month furloughs in the U.S., we have a full team. During their absence, three MiniMissionaries made the long flight to Madagascar to help me run the center. Barbara Smith, Gail Lundquist, and Ida Lepp taught the sewing, cooking, health, and music classes (following the well-written daily lesson plans *Rafiki* has provided for each course), helped with the shopping and cooking of the noon meal, and stayed for the afternoon production time to talk with the girls and to prepare for the next day’s classes. Anyone who attends BSF (Bible Study Fellowship) or is part of a *Rafiki* Prayer Group is eligible to come on a short-term mission (two to four weeks). Check out the *Rafiki* web site at www.rafiki-foundation.org for more information.

If Madagascar is chosen as your MiniMission destination, I’d love to host you here and have you experience first-hand just what life is like at *Rafiki*. The other *Rafiki* centers in Africa also need MiniMissionaries with various skills and talents. To give you a peek into our day, here’s

a picture of three students as they practice first-aid skills they are learning in the health class.



Sylvia is putting a splint on Tahina's leg while Norosoa is consoling the woeful patient.

Other Aspects of Life Here

When I came last May, *Rafiki* was planning to relocate the center to Talatamaty to a larger building. One of the things I was told to do when I first came to Madagascar was to look for a suitable house in Talatamaty. After looking two days, I found the perfect house—perfect size, perfect rent, perfect yard, and within one kilometer from the new *Rafiki* center. The only problem was it was dirty and the walls were a mottled pink. Since the rent was below my stipend, I decided that it was worth it to do some repairs to make it more comfortable. The day before I was to move in, Rosemary Jensen, the *Rafiki* director, informed us we were not to move due to the uncertainty of the availability of future *Rafiki* Overseas Staff to be assigned to Madagascar. For now, I am still living in the house vacated by the Pedersons. Although the house is large for one person, it is convenient to the *Rafiki* center—only a ten minute walk through the rice fields—and the landlady has agreed to lower the rent and accept my monthly stipend.

I also inherited the Pedersons' two German shepherds, who love romping in the large yard,

two guards, and a housekeeper. Andre is the day guard and takes care of the yard. I brought some seeds and he's planted a vegetable garden in the back of the house. When we were doing the legal paperwork to transfer the employees from the Pedersons' name to mine, Andre said he didn't know exactly when he was born, "vers 1947" (around 1947). Andre speaks poor French with a Malagasy accent. I speak poor French with an American accent. But most of the time we can communicate. Freddy is my night guard. He's twenty-four years old (he knows his birthday!), and has a wife and two little girls ages one and four. When he brought his family to meet me, his four-year-old hid behind her mother when she saw me. Freddy said she had never seen anyone with a white face before (a *vazaha*, as white foreigners are called in Malagasy). I found a small dress that the Pedersons had left behind and gave it to Freddy to give to her. He said she was very proud when she wore it to church and told everyone that the *vazaha* had given it to her. Emilienne is the house worker. She has a sick husband who doesn't work and three children, ages four, six, and twelve. She wanted to go to *Patisserie* school to learn to bake. I'm paying her tuition and materials cost so she can attend during the afternoons. Every Sunday night, the missionary community meets for fellowship and everyone brings snacks. I'm hoping Emilienne will produce scrumptious baked goods so I won't have to spend my Saturdays preparing goodies.

I ask for your prayers for the girls at the center and for the *Rafiki* team here.

My love to you all,

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NOTE: The *Rafiki* web site has been revised. Please visit at www.rafiki-foundation.org and find information on your ROS, what *Rafiki* is doing, the centers, and the Exchange.