



# The Rafiki Foundation, Inc.

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March 2005

Dear Friends and Family,

It seems that December 2004, when I last wrote, was just yesterday, not three months ago. Since that time we completed the Rafiki Girls' Center studies before the Christmas break, and I returned to the United States for the holidays and furlough. After six wonderful weeks with family and friends, I returned to Malawi to complete the current semester's activities at the Rafiki Girls' Center.

When I left Malawi last December I traveled with a friend from Canada, Martine. She was leaving Malawi for the last time. After serving here for a year as a social worker with a medical mission, Martine's contract had ended. We spent the last twenty-four hours of her time in Malawi talking about important moral issues and things of God. This was not unlike our time together over the last year. Martine often came by for encouragement and advice as she served in a challenging project and environment. I often felt our friendship was God's way of letting Martine know how much He loves her. I pray that one day she will come to know Jesus as her Lord and Savior. We certainly spent many evenings and afternoons together over the last year discussing His relevance to life. It felt like a God appointment with Martine as we spent the night in Lilongwe to wait for our flights the next day.

This was the BEST furlough I have had in five and one-half years with Rafiki. When I arrived in the U.S. in December, I was met by Beverly Lee, a longtime mother in my life. She was there at the airport to meet me, treated me to lunch as a mother would, and took me to the house of her daughter, my longtime friend Terri, whom I have known since age four. God continues to show me His love through these longtime friendships and families. I will always have a place to stay with Terri or her mom.

Christmas with my father and family in Newport Beach was beautiful and a wonderful answer to prayer. The rest of my time in the United States was full of just as much love. My time with my home church in Oakland, Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church, was a wonderful reunion. The brunch and coffee time that followed the service was so well attended. I send many thanks to the elders who saw to all the details of a wonderful time together.

Furlough each year includes a week in San Antonio with Rafiki called Enrichment Week. This was a wonderful time to study and "feed on" God's Word. The teaching was so rich; there were many talks I could have heard more than once. We had two speakers teach throughout the week along with regular sessions with Rafiki Home Office staff to help us refocus our efforts on the vision God has given Rafiki. One of the bonuses of this year's furlough was seeing Cathy Carney in San Antonio. She has been a good friend who knows me well enough to provide valuable advice. Her words reflected her humility and love for the Lord.

I thank God for so many of you that I saw again at the six coffees in Northern California. I continue to hear stories of how God uses these presentations to encourage others to follow Him. Your interest in Rafiki's work and desire to serve as a MiniMissionary is so encouraging. I can't wait to see you here in Malawi. The Rafiki Children's Center will probably be operational by the time you come.

My co-workers are focused on the opening of the Rafiki Village Malawi. I am constantly reminded of God's faithfulness to us in Ghana as we planned for and outfitted the Rafiki cottages for Ghanaian orphans in the village of Kotoku. I remember the many milestones God saw us through. As my co-workers are wondering when the professional kitchen or laundry will actually

be operational, I am reminded of God's timing and faithfulness of the past. As we dedicated the village in Ghana, so, too, will the village here in Mzuzu be dedicated next month. Here, too, we are wondering if the first lady will attend and give the keynote speech. There are many details to attend to for this special day and the team is regularly discussing them all—praying for and celebrating each piece as it gets put into place.

For myself, my return to Malawi has been full of teaching time and management of the wood carving room at the girls' center. It was a wonderful reunion with each of the girls the morning I returned. They are able to make a person feel welcome and loved.

We have been focusing on writing essays in one class, becoming familiar with writing a paragraph in another, and the most senior semester is becoming familiar with resumes (called "Curriculum Vitae" in Africa), job applications, and letters of recommendation along with cover letters. All of this is in preparation for their lives after finishing the program at the RGC in six months.

While managing the carving room, I think the most challenging activity beyond actually carving has been acquiring a tree for our future carving. Yes, you read that right, we buy wood for carving by "the tree." But now the Forestry Department has a procedure for acquiring a license for a tree—a.k.a. making payment for the tree. The local forestry officers and carvers are still becoming familiar with the proper procedure which makes it an interesting experience for a person like me, who is trying to understand "what's going on." Over the last month I have found myself rolling 100 lb. logs up hill ever thankful for the men who will lift them into the truck. I have been occupied with finding a larger truck to transport our thirty-foot tree to reduce the cost of transport. God has been faithful to provide safety while literally walking through the African forest to see "our tree."

If you would have told me even three years ago I would be acquiring trees, or six years ago that I would be living in an African country, I would have said "you're kidding." But today, I now understand that life with the Lord is full of surprises and abundantly overflowing with joy even in the midst of confusion, wonder, and sometimes lonely times. I look forward to what God will do for us here in Malawi in 2005.

As you pray with us, please pray for:

- The RGC girls because they must walk much farther to our new center.
- The April 15<sup>th</sup> dedication and the participation of Malawi's First Lady, Ethel Mutharika.
- Wisdom for me and my co-workers as the Rafiki Village becomes operational in Malawi.

With love in Christ,



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