



**Andrews University**

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**From the Selected Works of Keith Clouten**

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2013

## SAGE Mission Safari - .pdf

Keith Clouten, *Andrews University*



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# **SAGE Mission**

# **Safari**

January 2013

Keith Clouten



## What is SAGE?

A wise person? Yes, most seniors fall into that category. Some years ago, a group of seniors in the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists coined the term to describe an exciting new organization: SAGE (**S**eniors in **A**ction for **G**od with **E**xcellence). Maturity should never be equated with lethargy. The idea captured the interest of seniors in other places. In 2012, SAGE Alberta popped into existence with the sponsorship of the Alberta SDA Conference.

Since SAGE Alberta was launched in March 2012, it has been led by a team of seniors, each with specific job descriptions that include work projects, social events, evangelistic outreach, campouts, and travel experience which included this Mission Safari to Kenya with A Better World Canada in January 2013. Our group of 34 includes 11 Adventists from Australia. The trip was planned with opportunities for involvement in humanitarian work and a broader understanding of needs.



## Meet the Tour Leader and Hosts

*Eric Rajah* is the cofounder of A Better World which started in 1990 and by 2013 has taken over 2200 people to 12 developing countries.

*Keith Clouten* is a cool Aussie living in sub-Arctic Canada, married to Ngaire who is a displaced Kiwi. Keith has been an academic library director in the United States, Australia, and Canada. The two have traveled a lot, and visited more than 100 countries. Their first big trip, with two little girls, was a six-month overland journey in a campervan from California to Australia via India (figure that one out). This is Keith's fourth trip to Kenya.

*Neville Clouten*, like his brother, is Australian-born. While finishing his first architecture degree at the University of Sydney, he spent time helping construction of world-famous Sydney Opera House. His education continued with advanced degrees from universities in Ohio and Edinburgh, Scotland. A career in architectural education led him to Andrews University in Michigan, where he established its architecture program. He and Norene have two children, both living in America, and two grandchildren.

This tour has special significance to the four Cloutens. A key event will be the official opening of a brand new school that they have funded at Rapogi Lwanda in remote western Kenya.



## Wednesday, January 16: Arrival at NAIROBI

Kenya's capital is the largest city in eastern Africa, with a population exceeding 3 million. It's airport is the major entry point for eastern Africa. During Friday, January 18, 2013, SAGE tour participants disembark international airlines from east, west, north, and south. Eric Rajah meets each of person on arrival and transfers them to Nairobi's Safari Club for a welcome meal, a short session for meeting each other, and a bed for the night.



## Thursday, January 17: Baby Elephants and BOMAS

This morning a convoy of eight safari vans (one of them stacked with bags and suitcases of clothing and school supplies) sets out from Nairobi. Our first stop is a baby elephant orphanage. More than 30 years ago, Daphne Sheldrick founded this place to care for baby elephants whose mothers have either abandoned them or been killed by poachers. Baby elephants are brought here from all over the country, sometimes carried here by airplane.



On arrival at the orphanage, each baby elephant gets its own private room, but has to share the shower and dining hall with other elephants. Each baby is assigned a keeper who becomes its surrogate mum. The keeper spends 24 hours with his “babies”, feeding them special formula milk, keeping them warm, and playing with them (elephants love soccer), giving them coconut-oil massages, and even sleeping next to them. Like good parents, keepers teach the baby elephants good manners, to respect each other, and how to be independent and ultimately be able to survive in the wild. This morning we watch small elephants being fed with milk by their keepers, and then they have opportunity to play with each other. It’s a beautiful thing to see.



BOMAS is a living museum of Kenyan culture. It aims to preserve, maintain and promote the cultural values of the various ethnic groups of Kenya. That includes living styles, crafts, music, and dancing. We watch a cultural extravaganza this afternoon in a large auditorium, with experienced performers, concluding with a spectacular show of Kenyan acrobatics. Outdoors, we explore eleven traditional tribal villages, showcasing different architectural styles.



Southwest of Nairobi, near the town of Ongata Rongai, is Advent Hill, a large property owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Three different institutions have their campuses there – Maxwell Academy (since 1947), the headquarters of the East Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists (below, left), and the Adventist University of Africa, a graduate school offering advanced degrees in theology, education, and business. After a brief tour of each facility and a buffet dinner, we are accommodated tonight in self-contained apartments of the East Central Africa Division.



## Friday, January 18: Rift Valley and Nakuru

Heading west this morning, we come quite suddenly to the edge of an escarpment which marks the eastern edge of the Great Rift Valley. At an overlook we have fine vistas of the rolling landscape ahead. A winding descent, then a drive westward past a volcanic cone (now inactive) and a couple of large soda lakes en route to Nakuru, the fourth largest city in Kenya. Our destination is Lake Nakuru National Park, just south of the city. The lake protects huge flocks of pink flamingos, plus a variety of animals that includes tree-climbing lions and hundreds of white and black rhinos. Home for three nights is Sarova Lion Hill Game Lodge, overlooking Lake Nakuru.



## Saturday, January 19: East African Mission Orphanage

Just west of Nakuru is EAMO (East African Mission Orphanage). Here a dedicated Australian couple, Ralph and May Spinks, operate a large facility where more than 200 orphans receive lodging, food, clothing, security, education, and love.

We are here today to spend Sabbath with the children. Several of us lead the children in worship. Afterwards, we sit at tables with the children, sharing some of our picnic lunches with them. Ngaire and I are met by two little boys who remember us from a visit here two years ago. With them, we tour the gardens and the boys' dormitory.

“Do you remember which beds are ours?” Benjamin and Emmanuel look at us with big grins. Searching our memory, we point to a pair of bunks, one above the other. The boys' faces break into huge smiles. “Yes!”

A Better World Canada has provided funding for several projects at EAMO, including a dining room, girls' and boys' dormitories, classrooms, and a bore hole for water.



Above left: Arriving at EAMO

Above right: Benjamin and Emmanuel

Left: Leon and Stan share some of their lunch food with orphans.



Late this afternoon we board the vans again for a game drive. We're rewarded with sightings of flamingos, lions, baboons, vervet monkeys, warthogs, gazelles, and reed bucks. Tonight, someone in the lodge kitchen discovered that January 19 is my birthday, so there was hoopla in the African tradition and a cake to share.



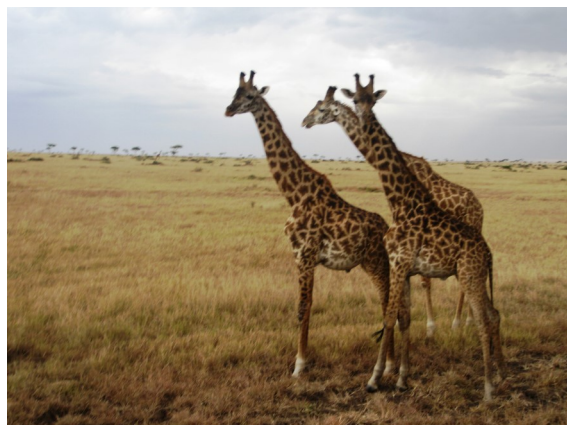
## Sunday, January 20: Shopping with Orphans

This morning about 30 of the newest orphans at EAMO join us for a shopping expedition. At a department store in Nakuru, an excited little boy takes our hands for his first shopping experience. With our guidance and 1,000 Kenya shillings (about \$15), he buys himself a small backpack, some socks, skin cream, and little toy cars. Back in the park lot there are miles of smiles and pictures before happy children board the EAMO vans and wave goodbye.



Left: Barbara and Janet guide two boys in their shopping choices. Above: Orphans pose with their shopping bags.

After lunch, a game drive gives us close encounters with giraffe, impala, kudu, and a big white rhino.



## Monday, January 21: Tea Country

Our convoy continues west today, climbing gradually into the hill country where large tea estates cover the landscape. En route, we stop at the village of Sogobet where an Alberta family, working through A Better World, has funded new classrooms at a government school. We tour the new classrooms, and Brian finds opportunity to tell a story to keen listeners.

The compact and orderly town of Kericho is Kenya's tea capital. Tea has become for Kenya a major export and the country's leading source of foreign exchange. We conclude the day at the out-of-town Exotic Hotel for a three-night stay.



Group arrives at Sogobet School. Connie stands with some students at Sogobet School. Old classroom in background.

## Tuesday, January 22: A Home for Disabled Children

We depart early for Ndanai, a very rural and remote village bordering the Maasai Mara reserve. Most people here are poor by Kenyan standards, living by subsistence farming of maize. The population is 90 percent illiterate, and there are many health issues such as AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. A Better World has been active at this place for several years.

The Ndanai Home for the Physically Challenged, funded by a Better World donor, is assisting 47 challenged children by providing physical therapy, daily living help, and education. The nearby government school, with new classrooms, integrates the challenged children into their regular classes. Sadly, many challenged children in the area are hidden away by their parents and do not attend school.

On the way to Ndanai this morning, we stop at a street market to purchase rice, bananas, and vegetables. When we arrive at the Small Home for the Physically Challenged, funded by A Better World donor, we all get busy. Some of the ladies prepare vegetables for the pot, and two of us take turns stirring a huge pot of rice over the fire. When the food is ready, we all help serve the children and then enjoy the meal with them.



Top left: Ndanai Home for the Physically Challenged.

Top right: Beverly teaches some boys how to knit.

Left: Ngaire, Doris, and Connie prepare lunch for the children.



New Class-rooms at Ndanai, and the old ones.



## Wednesday, January 23: A Day in the Tea Country

Another school visit this morning. Ringa School is another Better World project. The kids are obviously excited by our visit. We meet the teachers and some of us eat lunch with them.

Later, we visit a tropical Arboretum near Kericho, tour a tea factory, and spend awhile at the historic Tea Hotel with its surrounding gardens. We complete the day with a guided walk through a tea plantation.



Above: Two of our group talk to some students at Ringa school; Teachers at Ringa.

Left: Leon talks to three boys at Ringa School.



Above: The historic Tea Hotel at Kericho. Tea pickers at a large tea plantation.



Left: A guided walk through the tea fields.

Below: Children's ward at Kendu Hospital. Amanda assists a small boy at Kendu Physical Therapy Clinic.

## Thursday, January 24: Kendu Bay

Our direction continues west. Leaving the tea fields, our road winds through the hills to the prosperous town of Kisii and from there to Lake Victoria, where the first mission hospital established by Adventists in eastern Africa was opened at Kendu Bay in 1824. Today the 240-bed Kendu Adventist Hospital is preparing to open a fine, new surgical unit.



We have a guided tour of the hospital before visiting the nearby Physical Therapy Complex. When Dr. Ken Hill from Canada visited this place 25 years ago, he saw 80 children with severe deformities caused by polio, dragging themselves around a compound adjoining a government school. With support from ADRA and A Better World, Dr. Hill established a rehabilitation clinic where treatments and surgeries could be carried out. Today, dozens of disabled children are housed and given treatments at the facility. During our visit, we meet a fine young man who was one of those children dragging themselves on the ground. Back at Kisii, we check in at the Dados Hotel for three nights.



Top row: Amanda with two orphan boys. The new surgery unit at Kendu Hospital is nearing completion.

Above: Setting sail on Lake Victoria at Kendu Bay.

Right: This boy was one of the 80 children Dr. Ken Hill observed crawling on the ground.

## Friday, January 25: School Opening at Rapogi Lwanda

Welcome to Luoland! The Luo tribe, Kenya's third largest, occupies much of south-west Kenya, including the County of Migori, where we are going today. Luo language and culture is distinctive. Households are largely supported by subsistence farming and fishing along the shores of Lake Victoria. AIDS has taken a heavy toll among the Luo population of Kenya, resulting in thousands of homeless children.

Two miles west of the small village of Rapogi is the scattered farming community known as Rapogi Lwanda. The community is poor and struggles to support more than 80 locally orphaned children. There is no school here, but the local Adventist community here has visioned and prayed with hope in their hearts.

We are here today to open the first three classrooms of a church-sponsored 8-grade primary school, and the excitement of the people is palpable. A Better World has partnered with the local community and Clouten family donors to make this day possible. Visitors from the West are rarely seen in this part of Kenya, so the people are excited that so many of us have come from Australia and Canada for the opening of their school. Two large tents have been erected to accommodate the influx of visitors. There are speeches, performances by the children, some costumed dancing, and finally a meal for our group in one of the new classrooms.



Two views of the new school at Rapogi Lwanda.



A tree is planted in honor of Neville and Norene, who initiated the building of the school.



## Saturday, January 26: Sabbath at Rapogi Lwanda

In colonial days before independence, the British-controlled government allocated each Christian denomination a specific region of the country to conduct missionary work. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was allotted the Kisii region as its mission territory. The restrictions were later abolished, but it no surprise that more than two thirds of the Adventist membership in Kenya resides in this region near Lake Victoria.

The Rapogi Lwanda Adventist Church, which adjoins the new school property, is way too small for the large number of visitors today, but the leaders have created a beautiful setting with seating under some large trees outside the church for the morning services. Our hearts soar heavenward with a magnificent anthem of the church choir, and the morning worship involves several from our group.



Top row: Rapogi Lwanda Church building; A group of children at Sabbath School.

Bottom row: A group of ladies at the church. The church choir.



Tonight, back at Dados Hotel, we meet Faith Akoth, a bright young orphaned girl whose intensely written plea for an education won the hearts of Neville and Norene Clouten. They provided funding for her schooling at an area Adventist boarding school. In 2010 they travelled all the way to Kenya to meet Faith and her “Aunt Lilly” at Rapogi Lwanda; and the rest, as they say, is history. (As I edit this report in 2021, Faith has completed a degree in music at the University of Eastern Africa at Baraton.)



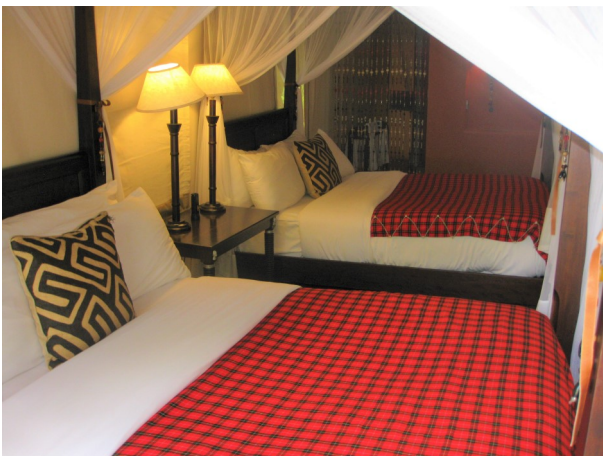
Faith Akoth is the young lady on the right in this group which sang for church at Rapogi Lwanda.

## Sunday, January 27: The Maasai Mara

Maasai Mara National Reserve is Kenya’s finest and largest wildlife reserve, covering over 1500 square kilometers. The wildlife, however, are not confined within the reserve boundaries, so an even larger area, referred to as the “dispersal area”, extends north and east of the reserve. There are Maasai communities within the dispersal area, with their cattle.



Today our convoy of vans follows dusty roads leading into the Maasai Mara Reserve. Our accommodation for three nights is Fig Tree Camp, where we assemble in the large dining room for lunch and a briefing session. We must not wander outside the camp area, must keep our tents zipped at all times, must not feed monkeys, and not go near the river below the camp. Then we are shown to our tents, each with bathroom facilities.



## Monday, January 28: Maasai Visits

Of all Kenya's peoples, the Maasai have received the most attention. Often strikingly tall and slender, dressed in brilliant red cloth, with beads and metal jewelry, they have a reputation for ferocity. Cattle are at the heart of the Maasai culture. The people live in kraals arranged in a circular fashion, and surrounded by an acacia thorn fence that prevents lions from attacking the cattle.

We spend most of the day visiting Maasai projects of A Better World, and viewing wildlife along the way. Besides the game drives, we visit two Maasai schools, the Talek Clinic, and a Maasai village of dung huts where we watch some colorful and noisy tribal dancing. Highlights of the project school visits are new kitchen and dining spaces, motel-style accommodation for teachers, and the successful growing of vegetables that results from the drilling of deep water wells.





## Tuesday, January 29: Game Drives

Wildlife is abundant in the Maasai Mara, and the gentle rolling grasslands ensure that animals are never out of sight. With no more than five passengers in each safari van, with raised roof, everyone has ample opportunity to see and photograph animals. It is exciting to observe a lioness carefully moving three newborn cubs to a safe location, fun to watch the antics of a family of baboons, and satisfying to capture on film the graceful motions of a giraffe. We encounter large herds of elephants, a family of cheetahs, and hippos in the Mara River.



A delightful surprise today is a bush vegetarian hot-and-cold buffet lunch, in a remote forest of acacia trees, catered by special arrangement with one of the hotels in the Mara.



### Wednesday, January 30: Homeward Bound

This morning we leave the Maasai Mara for the five-hour drive to Nairobi. There is time for some last-minute souvenir shopping before a light dinner. Then the Canadian continent transfers to the airport. The Australians have one more night at a hotel before flying to Sydney tomorrow.

Travel through countries like Kenya, experiencing firsthand the poverty and desperate needs of the people, changes our perspective on life. Marcel Proust once said, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes." Learning to see some things differently is an important asset for everyone, even seniors. It's part of the journey.



## Some Comments by Tour Participants

Carol Nicks: “It was overwhelming to see so many orphans. It was so touching to see my husband, Murvin, holding little Kevin.”

Raelene Taliaferro: “It was amazing to see how happy and contented the children were, even though they had so little, and wonderful to see how the orphans looked out for each other.”

Marlene Holdal: “Instead of exchanging Christmas presents last year, we have the money to support medical needs here in the Maasai Mara. At the clinic we were introduced to a young man recovering from surgery to his injured arm. Seeing results of our giving meant a lot to us.”

Amanda Anderson: “It was astonishing to see children who walk up to seven kilometers to and from school. That tells how important education is to them.”

Bob Holdal: “Our safari driver, Paul, gripped my hand as we said goodbye. ‘Thank you for coming to help my people’, he said.”

Eleanor and Ivan Scale: “We are privileged to have participated in two SAGE functions. We are impressed with the way SAGE is achieving its goals. We believe seniors are often an undervalued and under-utilized resource in the Adventist Church.”

