

Nance's Striking Things

A real mom moment. I'd been thinking about Kate all week while I was in Nairobi as she started her ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro. Honestly, except for work and a little yoga, it was about all I could think about. For my flight back to Dar Es Salaam I asked the check-in attendant if I could get a window seat facing Kili. I told her I wanted to see my daughter. She nodded, she's use to crazy wazungu! So I searched for the mountain through some pretty challenging cloud cover and then suddenly there it was, just amazing. And I could see exactly where Kate should have been ascending. And I sent her a prayer. When she got home several days later I told her that I saw her. She said, “I know, Mom. I saw you too.”

So Luke finally gets braces on and I'm thinking of seeing him for the first time smiling and how funny some kids look when they have braces and all you can think about is making sure not to call them tinsel teeth to their face but when I see him he reluctantly smiles and oddly enough he's just as cute as ever but he looks about two years older!

My son wears pink shoes. But he's not going to get carried away. He says that actually he won't be wearing anything else that is pink. But man those shoes are terrific. High top pink converses. The girls love them (him!). On top of that he appears to have a bracelet from every girl in his harem. And none of them match the shoes. Lots of colors going on. Lucky thing he only wears black t-shirts. Future rock and roll stars must consider what those childhood photos will look like in Rolling Stone magazine.

Another day on our own beach. We take an almost weekly trek an hour south of Dar by road and ferry to wonderful South Beach. We try to get there early enough to be assured of our favorite banda so that we can park our beach chairs, towels and books and head out on a 10 kilometer RT hike on a lovely stretch of nearly deserted beach for exercise and family communion. Per usual we marvel at our good fortune—what's not to like about your own beach!?? And then we start enumerating all the really cool things there are to do and how lucky we are and how there aren't enough hours in the day to do the things we love. The sailing, the running, the gym, the tennis, the beach . . .amazing. Thank you, God, for holding us in your hands. The next day we get lured out on the tennis court for some doubles. An hour into it, Michael falls to the ground and turns white as a ghost grasping his leg in excruciating pain. The MRI shows that the ACL is almost completely torn. The medical people tell us to let the swelling go down and then we'll decide what to do. So it sucks that Michael is laid up — he can't sail the Laser anymore. But he's nothing if not resourceful...he solved his sailing problem...he went out and got a bigger boat.

We are finally outside again. After five months of being forced back in by the crazy hot humid weather from December through April, we are back out on our porch. We knew Dar was going to be brutally hot so we are thrilled to find that we can be outside for seven months of the year. I think that beats Washington.

Anyone

who knows Kate, knows that she is a young woman of simple tastes and requirements. She has moved that up (or is it down?) a notch. Since here lack of availability ensures she can't take any pleasure in refusing to go shopping with me or in disdain of clothes and jewelry and other girly things, she has come close to donning the equivalent of the Tanzanian hair shirt in the midst of what is often called a really frigging hot city. She refuses to turn on her air conditioning and the fan is on so low it barely stirs the air. And she sleeps on the floor. At first we thought this was her way of training for Kili. But she's been back for weeks and the only difference is now she has eliminated the yoga mat that separated her from the tiles. She still uses a pillow and sleeps with her favorite lamba. I wonder how much longer they'll be around?

The
 Luke Gehron Story: A Boy Who Loved his Phone. That could summarize 75% of Luke's waking activities. The other 25% is spent getting more phone cards. Luke spends about half of his allowance on phone calls. And he is a master texter using two fingers. His phone has several of his favorite songs stored on it. One of them wakes him up every morning.

Every
 morning I leave home at about 6:45 for my short commute to work. I almost always catch BBC's "Why I Love Africa" program. I smile to think of the Africans who write in about their love for the continent. Sometimes I nod vigorously in agreement. Sometimes I shake my head at their seeming applause for the status quo of sexism and old boy networks. And sometimes I just laugh. The backbone of most of the essays is that in spite of it all, Africans rely on their sense of humor and their undying patience to get through each day.
 Personal achievement: Finally mastering the subjunctive in Kiswahili. I'm on my fifth noun class in this ostensibly very easy language. Gaining a good grasp of some of the cool things to say. Ni wazo jema. (Great idea.) Nimechemsha. (I screwed up but literally translates as I'm boiling.) Mungu akipenda. (God willing.) Ninakula kiporo. (I'm eating leftovers. This for some bizarre cultural reason makes them break into laughter.) And the coup de grace: Nipe bia. (A beer please.) Of course, my better half graduated a month ago. Not enough time in his schedule.

Invitation
 to a Gehron party warns those considering the invitation that there will be: Music From the band formerly known as TAR and now Undefined. It also reassures them that they will be loud, but not long. The advantage of knowing only six songs!