



**DON & MARTY ON KKUMBYA HILL**

### **The trees are happy!**

Ugandans have a unique way of communicating, almost quaint. "Speaking in a corner" means telling secrets; telling a lie is "dodging"; "store" means storage cabinet, while "shop" means a store; "drizzle" means light rainfall; "too much" means heavier rainfall and when one describes distance, it's done by pointing away at eye level, if not far away, with the words "just there", while longer distance is done with raising the hand as high as possible, pointing and then then drawing out the length by exclaiming "ssooo far" in higher pitched voice. Actual distance is irrelevant; demonstration is the key.

But happy trees? I smiled but then remembered Dec, 1973 when I came to faith in Christ. The day after I made that decision, I started to wonder what I had actually done with that profession. As I drove to work that day, still wondering, I noticed the trees I was passing all looked like they had just been scrubbed clean; an unlikely reality, since I was in the city where air itself seemed heavy and not clear on some days. In fact, as I looked around, it felt like the **entire** world around me seemed brighter and cleaner. That did not help my "crazy" concerns. But over time, I came to know others had similar experience-I was not crazy after all.

Happy trees...I just had to know. I suspected it might have been Fred's perspective.

### **STRUGGLE SINCE 2017**

After starting a number of radio and humanitarian projects in Uganda since we arrived in 2004, we eventually became aware of the NGO "graveyards" where well intentioned charities like ours had come to this beautiful but challenging country, to make a difference in some way.

We would drive by old schools that had seen better days-walls and floors now breaking apart, signs faded and students wandering in and out of class seemingly unsupervised; we had visited churches whose walls had never been painted or even completed after the mud bricks dried when donors came to build them; we have seen old clinics once provided by concerned international charities, now sitting empty without staff or medicines-just an old reminder of what had been at one time...

We just could not build and leave...it felt like we were giving someone a meal and then leaving them, hoping they would find another one. **Our desire became our focus**-to build charitable efforts that would continue on well after we went home-either to Canada or to the Lord. That required time and money.

### **HQ FIRST**

We began with our own Ugandan charity, because we knew if there were no staff to direct the other charities that we took years to build, there would be no charity at all. So, our first focus was to develop sustainability for our Ugandan charity through in-country income generation, beginning with a piggery. Ugandans are #2 in the world for pork consumption on a per capita basis, so that was a good start. But animals need to eat. So, we bought and developed land for their maize food supply...and then added a maize grinding mill to process that food... and buildings to store it.

And so, the dominoes kept falling, until we were ready...or so we thought.

After a bout of the swine flu, followed by national price fluctuations, and several seasons of weakened food supply due to weather inconsistencies, it became clear diversity would help.

That is when we bought the 18-acre Kkumbya Hill, and started to plant Eucalyptus trees (long term investment return), maize for the piggery (immediate support) and coffee trees at the top, which would afford us 25 years of ministry support to balance piggery income, once in production. There also was enough space for a radio tower for the next vision...So far so good.

**KKUMBYA HILL 2019**



## OH OH - ITS FAIR

Ugandans try to be kind to their sometimes-overly optimistic western friends who always only like to hear of good news, so, they never tell us bad news. If it is actually bad news, they will categorize it as "fair". So, when a Ugandan friend discovered his wife had an affair with his friend, he reported his own life devastation as "fair"; when we lost 60% of a coffee project due to flooding, we were told the circumstance was "fair".

After several years of struggling to grow coffee on Kkumbya Hill, Fred would only say the project was growing slowly, because rains had not come. He never mentioned "fair". So, we felt safe.

But at the end of COVID, I called, expecting the usual mention of slow growth, only to hear, the Kkumbya coffee is now "fair". Time to brace myself...what he meant was the rains had been so weak for so many seasons, the coffee trees weren't "fair" ... they were gone! We must start over.

That was bad news. The hill *could provide* 60% of our charity's long term operating income if we could get all planned 3,500 trees growing and producing. That "if" looked very big now. But the optimism underneath Ugandan refusal to accept fair news as bad news, seeped through Fred's voice as he began to unfold a dream he had been nurturing since we first installed water collection and drip irrigation at the Ongutoi Health Centre. There, over 2,860 orange trees are thriving on collected or stored water-even through terrible 5-month dry seasons, during punishing heat for weeks without end. It is working but just somewhere else!

## WHY NOT HERE?

I am usually the visionary. But this time it was Fred, expounding the potential of building a rainwater collection platform (like Ongutoi), with an underground storage cistern (like Ongutoi), which would send water to above ground tanks (like Ongutoi) from where the water would be sent to the coffee trees by gravity flow (almost like Ongutoi). When locals heard he wanted to dig a cistern on top of Kkumbya, some thought he might be crazy. But "crazy" (or the perception) was familiar to me since 1973 and the dream resonated. So, we began.

Fred's team of hardy locals dug until they hit rock-lots of it. And then with our powered jack hammer, they kept digging until Fred said "stop" at 12'. Soon, his 55,000-litre cistern was a reality. Then the collection platform was added and we waited for rain. But it was only "fair" in the first rainy season of 2022. So, we extended the platform during the summer of 2022 and waited for the next rains.

Fred's dream kept unfolding with the addition of a small house that would allow for workers to live and work here, enjoying solar power and even a flush toilet with septic system. One might say Fred's team was "living large" by Ugandan standards, there on Kkumbya Hill. But when workers realized the house was actually sitting right on top of 55,000 litres of water, stored 12' beneath them, it was difficult to draw anyone to come inside much less sleep in there. Fred did not help...in his teasing way he said *"you will be OK. But if you see cracks begin in the floor, get out quick"*. Some workers still won't come in...I wonder why?

Fred's team was just finishing as we arrived in November, to build the drip irrigation process for the first 1,200 trees. Like most things we do there, an element of faith is involved.

## FAITH and FREE

Wayne (Chairman of our board and long-time field volunteer) had acquired several donated water bore hole pumps that could operate under solar power (which he also designed). But they were made for Canadian power and must be adapted to Uganda; not to mention the pump capacity was at maximum capability to send stored water out of the cistern up the hill and further up into holding tanks. But we installed everything and then held our collective breath when Fred switched on the pump. I was standing beside the tank and when that first splash dropped inside the tank, I captured the moment on iPhone. The video was not very good quality because I was jumping with the rest, but the audio capture was strong reminder of God's provision.

## LIFE

As our team walked the field of baby coffee trees just planted and now being irrigated, I flew the drone overhead trying to appreciate the scope of what had just happened. Watching water drip on either side of the new trees, I just knew this was not fair news-it was good news. Just like Ongutoi, where so many trees produce life with the meager water support, they do receive from collected rainfall.

But here, each coffee tree needs only 5-6 litres per week and if we could just fill the cistern and the 2 storage tanks, we could survive the torturous hot seasons that were coming. That was the dream. Even before I could fret about that one, the "drizzle" came as we worked, followed next week by its big brother "too much". But soon, more even-bigger brothers came also. Within a short time, we had the cistern AND tanks full of heavenly water-70,000 litres in all! And it kept raining...now we need yet another \$1,000 tank...but that's another story.

## CAN'T STOP YET

Fred and I were enjoying the dripping water as we scanned the hillside. Our breathing was almost back to normal when Fred the visionary was in dream mode again. The Lord had just provided water support for the first 1,500 coffee trees. But there are another 2,000 that must be planted and supported-only a few hundred feet below us..."just there".

## KKUMBYA HILL 2022





**1 OLD COMMUNITY BUILDING IN DISREPAIR-NOW OCCUPIED BY AN ANTHILL**

**2 OUR PIGGERY IN KKUMBYA**

**3 NEW RAINWATER COLLECTION AND STORAGE SYSTEM ON KKUMBYA**

**4 1200 COFFEE TREES NOW SURVIVING ON STORED RAINWATER**

**5 INSTALLING A DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM**

**6 PLACING WATER EMITTERS FOR EVERY TREE**

**7 WATER DRIP IRRIGATION PATTERN**

**8 OUR DREAM FOR THE NEXT RAINWATER COLLECTION SYSTEM**

Fred kept talking and I was quickly moving into my “whatever the Lord puts in my hand” mode. After some dreaming and more drone footage, we left the hill in agreement, declaring openly if the Lord would allow and provide, we will build a second rainwater platform and another cistern, both of which would be capable of supporting the larger 2,000-tree field. And we will build another drip irrigation system!

That was the easy part. The hard part was finding the \$14,000 USD (\$19,000 CDN) for the water collection and 150,000 litre storage system PLUS the \$5,000 USD (\$6,600 CDN) for the drip irrigation system.

As we wait on then Lord, this week, Fred reported all November baby coffee trees on Kkumbya are surviving the dry season and thriving with the rainwater we collected...they are happy.

### IN CONTROL

I don't panic as easily as I used to. Experience has taught me if the Lord is leading, He will also provide. That is not arrogant nor is it presumptuous-it's just a fact (thank God)! So, I was not concerned... but I confess to being a little excited in anticipation. Like Christmas, waiting has never been easy for dreamers.

However, before I could share the project with anyone, a good friend called with news she felt led to send us a gift. The first \$5,000 was on the way. And within another 2 weeks another long-time friend also felt led to send us her annual gift-actually double what she had been planning. Her \$10,000 gift brought us to within striking distance of the cistern and platform.

Today we need \$4,000 to complete the water collection and storage; we also need \$5,000 to purchase the drip irrigation system. Our volunteer installation team is already planning a fall trip (in faith) to put it all together. So, I would ask for prayer that our Jehovah Jireh would provide what we need for this project.

In the end, it's about providing a support system to ensure charitable ministry in Uganda for the next 25 years. That is a good kingdom investment.

If you would like to enjoy a brief video that we created on Kkumbya Hill, just follow this link:

<https://vimeo.com/786304896>

Join us in making Fred's trees happy!

Don



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**PHONE: 905-898-5447**

**IN CANADA: 350 DAVIS DR, PO BOX 95561 | NEWMARKET, ON | L3Y 8J8 | MAIL@BVBROADCASTING.ORG**  
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**February 2023**

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