

NOTES FROM ABROAD

Kyle Davidson
Kenya

Jambo' nchi ya Kenya (hi from Kenya),
Hope everything at St. Lawrence is awesome and that you all had good winter breaks. Sounds like it is a little chilly up in Canton. The weather here on the other hand is really nice, it's about around 70 degrees everyday here in Nairobi, or Nai-robbery, as it is commonly called due to all the pick-pocketing. But, it's a very good time.

I got to East Africa 15 days ago and I went straight onto a safari with my dad in Tanzania, which was inside a dormant volcano's crater, where all the animals come to graze. The wildlife was amazing; we saw every single animal you would expect or want to see, except the leopard, and we saw them all very close. Tanzania was absolutely beautiful but it is a very poor country - you can buy a coke for example for about 10 cents! After our 2 day safari we headed north to Mt. Kilimanjaro!

Hiking Mt. Kilimanjaro was a five-day adventure. We travelled about 60 miles, or around 100 kilometers, in that time. It was a very, very, very gruelling ascent to the summit, where at no point did I think I would make it to the top. This is because you start your final ascent of the mountain at midnight and summit sometime after sunrise. So it's cold, tiring and the altitude really slows you down big time. However both my father and I kept going and going and we reached Uhuru Peak, the "roof" of Africa, at 10:14 in the morning on January 15th! 1,9895 ft!!!!!! I have never felt that exhausted before in my life. Within that one day we hiked 15 hours between midnight and 6 p.m.; definitely the most rewarding and challenging thing I have ever done, and I can now say I have done it and NEVER HAVE TO DO IT AGAIN!

After Kilimanjaro, I came to Nairobi for the start of the Kenya program four days ago. The people in the group are really, really awesome and I'm sure it will be an amazing adventure these next four months. The St. Lawrence campus here is absolutely gorgeous! I cannot stress that enough: We have five acres of land, including a basketball court, a seminar room, a house where the girls sleep - it has a kitchen and living room and the guys stay in this miniature barn where we have our own bathroom, living area, and beds on the second floor. The compound is kept in beautiful shape. Beautiful plants and trees and plenty of area to play soccer. The compound employs about 20 people, and 15 of them live here with their families so it's a very nice community we have. It's very safe because we're in a suburb and we have eight guards.

The other day for our first adventure we were split into four groups of four and we all broke off separately and had to make our way into the city by catching the bus. Once in the city we were instructed to walk around for a few hours just to look around. It's pretty crazy walking around and not seeing ANY other white people. Everywhere you go everyone stares and you feel very out of place. There are a lot of street people who all approach you for money and you feel pretty bad. We even had one incident walking around where one of my group members got sort of attacked by a stoned half-naked girl in downtown Nairobi. There are many street kids who have no food, so they suck on rags doused in gasoline and paint thinner to make them not hungry - really sad. Those are the scenes that just wrench your heart, but Nairobi, Kenya, and Africa are really not that bad. The people are so friendly, are really interested in us, love to have conversations with us, and learn. We are all really anxious to go on our first homestay, which starts tomorrow by Lake Victoria, where we have our first person-to-person interaction.

We have all been taking this three-day crash course the last few days to learn Kiswahili. I really feel like I'm grasping it very fast. However our first homestay is in Luo community where they do not speak English or Swahili, except for one member of the family. We go there in six days and it should be a really interesting time, because of the communication barrier, the food and culture, and the fact that it is a polygamous society where the average man has three wives.

Our orientation has been very hectic these last few days. We have our first paper due tonight and it feels like we just got here, so we're all scrambling to get it done and get off onto our first homestay.

Anyways, I hope you're all great. Hope to hear from all you, keep me up to date on the news at St. Lawrence, hockey, etc. And how's that new student center???

Anyway, look forward to hearing from you guys.

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increasingly rare and peculiar species of university that does not have an on-campus convenience store. And why are the only two eating joints on campus directly opposite each other? Does this make positional sense to anyone?

It is nice to have a new multi-million edifice in the middle of our campus, no doubt about that. The central location of most of the school's key offices is indeed a welcome boon. However, prudence dictates that a new building, especially a university center, is only as good as the services offered within. In this respect, the new university center falls short. As a maker and lover of music myself, I understand and fully welcome the urgency on the part of the school to expand the arts facilities. However, I believe I echo

the sentiments of many students who believe that this can be achieved even with the Northstar Pub in the building; it is and has been too much a part of the St. Lawrence experience to just let go.

If anyone in the Ivory Towers is reading, please do take note of these student views, and also think about establishing a new convenience store. We need to be able to post our letters and packages from within the campus as well. And while at it, could we please have gym hours pushed back again to 11p.m.? With more willing workers than hours available, I am sure the Athletics & Recreation department would not be as hard pressed getting graveyard shift employees as they are now in finding friends among those of us

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THE WEEK OF JANUARY 30, 2004

SAINT: Beating Clarkson and the excellent student turnout.

SAINT: Political Activism on campus - it's great to hear students debate both sides of the political spectrum.

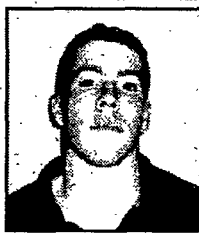
SAINT: Those who helped prepare this year's Leadership Conference. Great job!

SINNER: Lack of Sleep... Welcome back to college!

SINNER: Classes lasting the entire allotted time on the first day.

SINNER: Quizzes & Papers. Tests in the first weeks of classes.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Who is going to win the Superbowl?
SUGGESTION OF THE WEEK: Go Greek, it could be the best move you ever make.
QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "The world is a great place and worth fighting for." Ernest Hemingway



THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE HILL

Shawn Mayo-Pike
Senior Features Editor

Divorce: Weakening America and its Families

If you haven't experienced a divorce in your family, chances are that you know many people whose parents are divorced. Divorce affects millions of American families in a way that damages the well-being of millions of children and parents in the country every year. This modern, seemingly very lax practice destroys the very fabric of our society; the basic unit that has built America from the ground up: It can no longer be ignored or denied that many of our problems are caused by this breakdown of the most basic unit of our society.

Behind democracy, free markets and civil liberties there has always been a more fundamental driving force that has nourished our nation: the American family. It has provided children with loving households, to live in and strong values to adhere to—the most important resources children need. In America today, children are losing these resources and paying dearly for it - to no fault of their own.

The idea that a strong family produces stable children is not a hard concept to grip; it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure it out, but

perhaps a psychologist to prove it. The Psychology Department at UCLA has done over one hundred studies on thousands of families. The studies have found that two times as many children in divorced families, as opposed to two-parent families, are likely to show signs of behavior problems, such as hyperactivity, aggression, delinquency, poor school performance, depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety. Children that are most profoundly affected are those in their early teens, between ages 10-12--although children of all ages usually experience very negative consequences.

The study also showed that divorce increases detachment between mothers and their children. Divorced mothers experienced a lot of depression and so they paid less attention to their children. Perhaps if the mothers were not so depressed, their children would have been better off. And what about daddy? The study said nothing about fathers.

It is evident from this study and others like it that divorce is a strong cause of child behavioral problems

and the result is damage to the psyche of American children. The stresses resulting from divorce keep a child from learning and developing both socially and mentally when they need it the most.

America now has the third largest divorce rate in the world with 4.3 out of every 1000 people getting divorced at least once in their lives (Aneki.com) and the increase may be contagious. The study at UCLA showed that there is heightened risk of divorce among children of divorce and one of the reasons of the increased divorce rate may be because of this multiplier effect.

But enough about the problem, what about the solution? It is clear that this downward spiral needs to be reversed to strengthen our society. The best solution seems to be an involved government that encourages strong marriages and family values by offering incentives and services.

Luckily, we are so fortunate to have an administration that seems to care about the American family. President Bush has directed nearly \$300 million dollars towards programs that encourage healthy marriages including pre-marital counseling education as well as research.

He has also increased marriage penalty relief by increasing the deduction and expanding the 15 percent tax bracket. An estimated 46 million couples will benefit from this provision. Is this enough? It's hard to tell, but it is certainly a good start.

Shawn Mayo-Pike and Brian Lind met for the first time and the encounter went smoothly. They said they were making a New Years resolution to get along...let's see how long it lasts! Next Week: Lind's Column.



Photo by Brooke James

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