

SLU International: Winifred Kivutha Brings Kenya To Canton

By Michele A. Fazekas

Winifred Kivutha has been warned to prepare for the North Country winter.

She may have a little more preparing to do than most, since she is from the district of Kalifi in Kenya, where the temperature rarely gets below 50 degrees.

For the next two years, however, she will put up with the infamous climate and teach Swahili to the students at St. Lawrence University.

In addition to adapting to a new climate, Kivutha is also adjusting to separation from her husband and four children. "It is hard for my husband, but he is accepting it, and he understands," she says.

Kivutha received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Nairobi, where she majored in sociology and linguistics. She spoke Swahili at home, and English is an essential part of education in Kenya.

Kivutha is not a stranger to St. Lawrence University. Since 1979, she has taught Swahili to the St. Lawrence students who participate in the Kenya program.

Although English is spoken throughout Kenya, Kivutha feels it is vital to know some Swahili. "It is important to know the language, so that you can identify with the people."

Monique T. Casey ('92), a student in Kivutha's Elementary Swahili class, says that the classes are fun. "She is funny, and her sense of humor makes it easier to learn," said Casey. "She wants us to learn and to understand, and because of that, it isn't a task or a chore to participate. Every question asked is always answered."

Of her teaching technique, Kivutha says, "I try to explain the implications of what I am teaching. Then the students understand the concepts and remember." She also uses her socio-linguistic background to teach her students about the culture of Kenya. "You can't know the language without understanding the culture."

In addition to her Elementary Swahili class, Kivutha is taking classes of her own through the University. She is pursuing her Masters in education, taking two classes on Thursday nights. "It is hard," she says, "I am still trying to find a way to balance teaching and taking classes."

Kivutha explained that one of the reasons she is getting her Masters in the United States is because education in Kenya is very difficult. "It could take two years to get a masters degree in Kenya, when you can get it



Winifred Kivutha is teaching Swahili this year.

Photo by Nick Klose

here in nine months. Kenya really makes it very hard on the students."

Despite her hectic schedule, Kivutha is pleased with

her new job, and says things are going well for her. She plans to visit other parts of the country if she can, and hopes that her family can

come to see her soon.

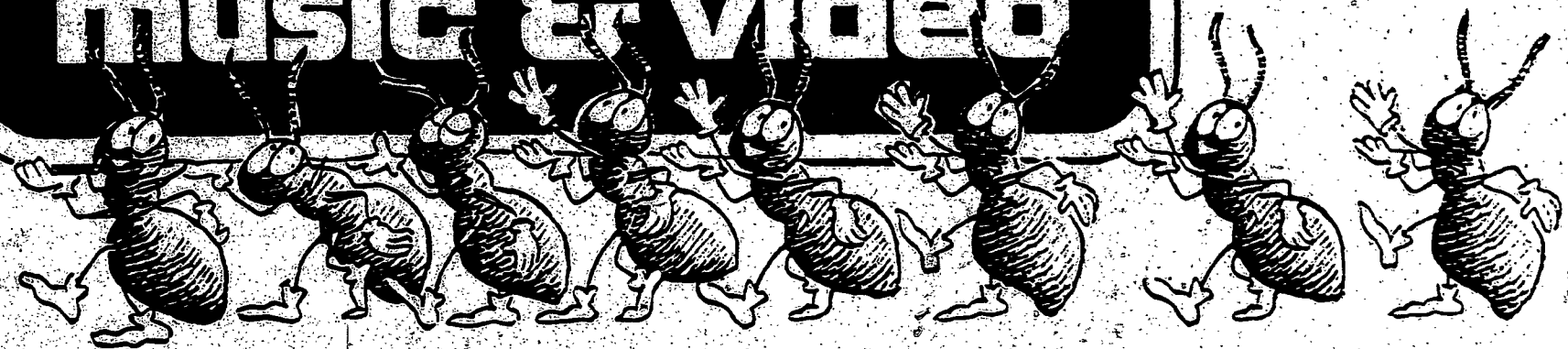
Next semester she will teach an Advanced Swahili course in addition to the introductory course.

Merrill Brothers Hardware
Packing and shipping services available here.

Radio Shack Dealer
We now have FAX machine service.

70 Main Street 386-2501

northern
MUSIC & VIDEO



BOOGIE ON OVER!

29 Market St.
Potsdam, NY
(315) 265-8100