
Bringing God's Highest Truth to a Land Governed by Fear— Part 5 (Conclusion)

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William Connery, pictured here long after the conclusion of his mission in Africa. He is an American history writer and expert.

By William Connery

In February 1975, American member William Connery accepted a missionary posting to the East African country of Uganda, at that time governed by President Idi Amin, one of the twentieth century's cruelest dictators. William's story, told here in his own words, affords us insight into the faith, resilience and love — under adversity — of those who pioneered new lands to bring God's healing truth and love. (Earlier installments can be accessed through clicking on "Early Members Tell Their Stories" at the top of the home page.)

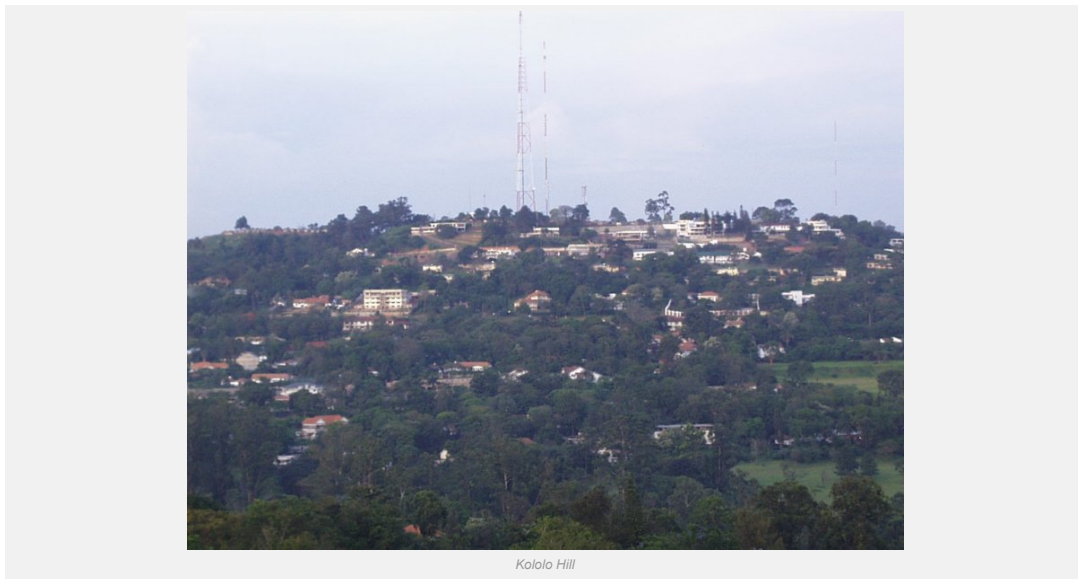
On February 19, 1977, we moved to a new home, a three-bedroom house close to the University. Ulf had been able to rent the place through one of his business contacts. On February 25 there was a radio announcement requesting that all Americans were to meet with President Amin on the following Monday, February 28. President Amin had said he wanted to give awards to the Americans who were devoting themselves to Uganda (we weren't sure if they were going

to be .38 or .45 caliber rewards!). On February 27 it was announced that the President's meeting was being postponed until March 2 and was being shifted to Entebbe and on February 28 there was news that the meeting with the Americans was being indefinitely postponed because March 2 was Mohammed's birthday (later, one of my friends in the telephone bureau told me that President Carter had actually called Idi Amin and told him to leave the Americans alone).

We were able to stay in our new house for more than a year. During that time four of our Ugandan brothers stayed with us. Our daily and weekly schedules became more solid, with prayer meetings at the beginning and end of each day, and Divine Principle, Unification Thought or Victory Over Communism lectures usually two or three evenings a week. And Sunday we had our 5 am Pledge service, a (more or less) public service at 10:30 am and a Sunday afternoon D.P. lecture after lunch. All these services were on a rotational system: especially we wanted to train our native members because we were never absolutely sure of our position.

On April 22 there was an attempted robbery on our new house. Hideaki had been home and gone out 11:00 to do some shopping. He returned within an hour, to find the main door of the house broken in and a man inside. The man quickly excused himself, saying he had just stepped in because he saw the robbery taking place. He went out of the door, whistled (probably to warn his accomplices) and ran away. Hideaki found that our radio and other valuables were neatly tied in bundles – in the end we were missing only a clock and some cash. Shortly afterwards we hired an *askari* (guard) to take care of the house during the day while we were at work or school.

Hideaki's academic year also ended in April and the university refused to renew his application: he had been attending the school under a "special student" status. During May he came with me to the Nakasero Secondary School and began teaching Math in the afternoon. But shortly afterwards he had to stop because the Ministry of Education refused to give him a teaching permit – he had no university degree. After that, he succeeded in getting his entry permit extended for three-month periods at a time while working to set up an import-export company.



Kololo Hill

On May 26 we established a new Holy Ground on Kololo Hill, which is the highest hill in Kampala, about two miles from the center of the city. We had originally established our Holy Ground on Namirembe Hill where we thought it would be safe. But at an Archdiocesan meeting it was decided that a new congregation hall was needed: and the only

place suitable for it was where we had consecrated our Holy Ground.

Our new Holy Ground was near a house used by the Secret Police. Later we were almost arrested when we went up there to pray; luckily one of our members (the president's cousin) could speak their language and they just let us go.

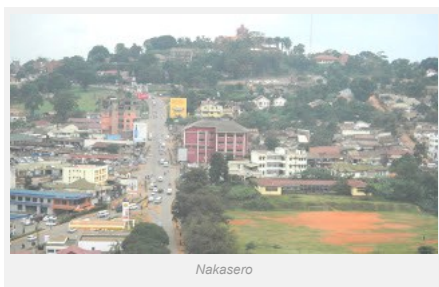
Two important national events happened at the end of June. On the 29th President Amin conferred on himself the title "Conqueror of the British Empire in General and Africa in Particular" (C.B.E.), another ridiculous boost to his ego. The next day was the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first Christian missionaries in Uganda. There was a large ceremony at Namirembe Cathedral, which the president attended.

Also at the end of June I was elected Chairman of the Scripture Union at school. Up to that point I had not done too much on religion at school. But now I was in charge of the weekly meetings. Eventually I tried to split the meetings: half the time the speaker would be from the Anglican or Catholic Church; the other half they would come from our native members or Ulf, Hideaki and me. The meetings were not compulsory and any number from 2 to 30 students attended at various times.

On September 21 there was news in the papers about all religious sects being banned except for the Muslims, Catholics, Anglicans and Greek Orthodox. Even the Baha'i Temple was to be shut down. We were glad that we were not a recognized "religious sect" so we could not be shut down!

When I attended the Tuesday Luncheon Fellowship on October 11, I met Dr. R., one of the few remaining professors at the university – earlier that day I had met his brother-in-law at Nakasero Secondary School. Dr. R. had received his doctorate in America and one of his children had even been born in the U.S.A. He was a scholar yet a true African: warm-hearted, generous and a brother in the Lord. At least once a week, from then on, I would visit him, his wife and darling four children.

October 18 was an exciting day at school. Students were preparing for the final exams and one teacher discovered that a student had his final Biology exam paper already in hand – and he discovered that another student had the Literature, Physics and Math final exam papers. The school typist was implicated: he had been selling copies of the exams to the students for \$5. The typist was fired and we were to keep our eyes open for too high scores – it was too late to redo the exams.



In addition to my other work, I began to teach some Muslim students from Rwanda at the Nakasero Secondary School. They were of mixed Omani and African blood. I myself had been reading the Holy Koran that year and felt real hope in reaching Muslims, presenting Divine Principle as a new revelation and Rev. Moon as a modern prophet.

In December we were taught a hard lesson by one of our best home members. He came to visit in the morning. One of our native members was home and let him listen to some lecture tapes while he continued washing clothes. About an hour later he came back to the room, to find our tape recorder missing. Sometime later we had to ask one of our members to leave the house because we found in his trunk some essential commodities that he had stolen. This member later repented and continued to visit us, although we wouldn't permit him to move back in. Various members, we discovered, had girl friends or dabbled in the black market. It was extremely difficult keeping a high moral standard, but Uganda's environment was indeed chaotic.

I started my third full year of school on January 16, 1978. During the previous year, besides being Scripture Union

Chairman, I was head of the History Department (two of us), and Senior Study Master (a position similar to the assistant headmaster). I was also secretary for staff meetings and in charge of distributing paper and pens to the other teachers. Eventually I even got my own small office.

February was quite a momentous month for all three of us. The owner of our house suddenly stopped by on the 5th and announced that he had sold the house and we would have to move out by March 1. Just as we were beginning to contact our friends and the various housing agencies, we received word on the 11th that we should be in Kinshasa, Zaire as soon as possible. Lady Dr. Kim, an early follower of Rev. Moon, was visiting various regions in Africa. We were actually supposed to meet her in Nairobi at the beginning of February, but we had gotten the message too late. We left on the 16th, after getting tickets and the necessary documents to leave and return. We spent almost a week in Kinshasa, with missionaries from five or six nations. The center there in Kinshasa had 30 or 40 members and they were in the process of being recognized by the government.

Lady Dr. Kim spoke to everyone together several times and saw each person individually. She thanked everyone for their hard work and sacrifice during the three years. It was a time of revival and renewal for all of us. We were back in Kampala late on the 22nd.

March 1 came and went without us being kicked out of the house, though our search for a new home continued.

During that month and the next I had a breakthrough at a local high school. It was the school where I had been visiting the librarian almost every week for the past 2 years. On March 30 he told me that I could speak to about 100 students the following week on the Principle of Creation. April 6th I spoke for over an hour and answered questions from between 80 and 100 students; they were very curious and open-minded. April 20th I returned for a final lecture on the Purpose of Life and the Fall of Man. My lecture series ended there. In some ways I was glad: the price of fame in Uganda was usually death.



William leading singing

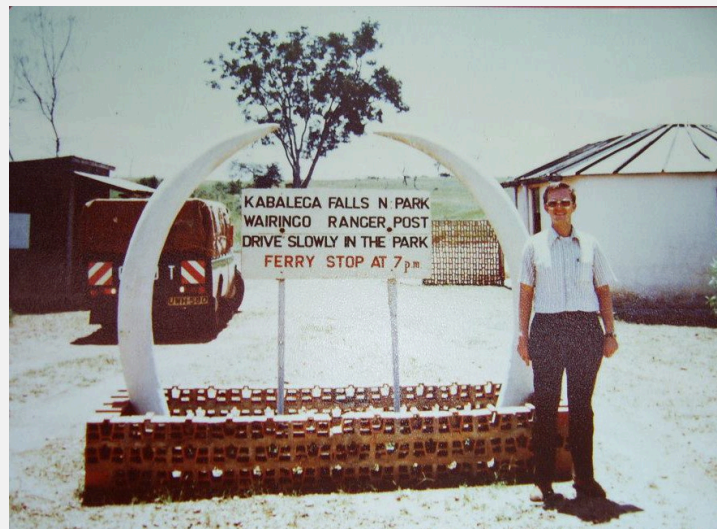
In the first week of May we acquired an empty apartment near Namirembe. We rented a truck, loaded it up and moved to our new home, a small, two-bedroom apartment (about half the size of our previous house).

Ever since our trip to Kinshasa, we had often spoken about touring the country. Ulf had gone several times to Nairobi and to different parts of the nation for his engineering firm. But except for brief trips to Entebbe and Jinja, Hideaki and I had never seen the rest of the country. We contacted several travel agencies and finally settled on one. Hideaki and I tried to leave on the 15th, but there were no vehicles available (it was also my third anniversary in Uganda). We made connections the next day and headed north from Kampala. The area around Kampala is hilly; as we traveled north the land became flatter and more arid. At 1:30 P.M. we arrived at Paraa Lodge, not far from the Kabalega

(Murchison) Falls, the largest falls on the Nile. The operators wanted to charge us \$85 for a boat trip on the Nile, but we refused. About 4:00 we re-crossed the Nile in our van and the driver took us up the back way to the Falls. (The Falls are actually only 20 feet across and 130 feet high; but the whole pent up volume of the river dashes out of a ravine – it is more of an explosion of water than a fall). It was truly a powerful, inspiring sight.

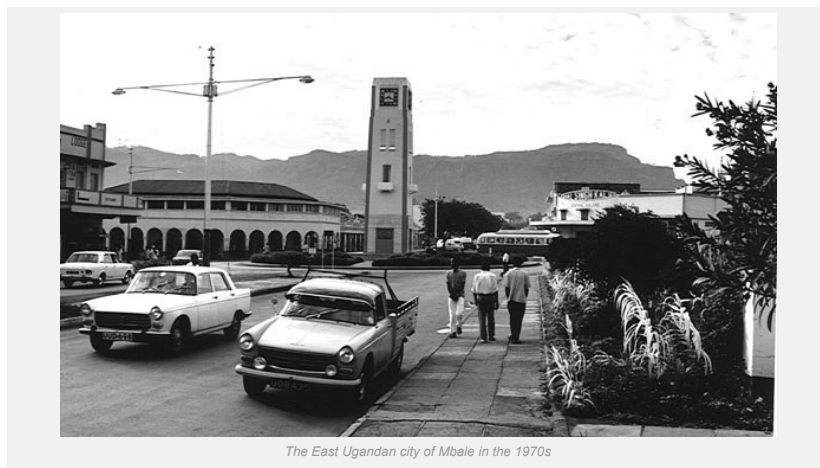
On the way back to the Lodge we outran a storm and saw a beautiful rainbow. The next day we visited another place along the Nile (Chobe Lodge). In the afternoon we went on a game ride and saw giraffe, hartebeest, warthog, waterbuck and a herd of elephants. The lodge is famous for its baboons which will even come into rooms and steal

waterback, and a herd of elephants. The lodge is famous for its saboteurs which will even come into rooms and steal things if windows are left open. We saw them and Hideaki wanted to become friendly with them – one man warned us that they were known to bite through a rifle butt!



At the Kabalega Falls on the River Nile

The next morning Hideaki and I tried our hands at fishing in the Nile. We were near a pool of hippos. One of our guides caught a perch; Hideaki and I struck out. Our driver took us to Lira, a small town nearby. Hideaki and I wanted to see the eastern part of the country, but we felt it could be too expensive to use our van and driver. We used public transport from then on. We stayed overnight at the Lira Hotel. The next day we traveled down to Mbale, the largest town in eastern Uganda. It is reputed to be the most beautiful town in the country, at the foot of Mt. Elgon, which is 11,000 feet high. We just stayed overnight there and returned to Kampala the next day. We could see why Uganda is nicknamed “the Pearl of Africa.”



The East Ugandan city of Mbale in the 1970s

During this time the first International 40-day training session took place at the New Yorker Hotel. Members from 41 nations participated, including Uganda. John-Patrick, whom I had met three years earlier in the Post Office, had been able to sneak out of the country (he still had a passport from his previous job in East African Airways – he hid it when

he crossed the border into Kenya). Two months later he returned to Uganda on the train. He brought many books and tapes back with him – there was no border check.

We gradually settled into our new home in May and June. On June 6 we celebrated Creation Day [Day of All Things] there.

Soon after, I was appointed treasurer of the Tuesday Luncheon. I began visiting more people at the University, including Dr. R. and Dr. Ohin, a West African surgeon who had spent more than 15 years in America.

August was a busy month for us. Ulf was able to get both a printing machine and an electric typewriter. I was able to get my work permit extended until August, 1981. Ulf, Hideaki and I had been discussing for some time what type of business could support the church in the future. A friend of ours at the university said we could get land from the government about 80 miles west of Kampala. We were considering raising cows and opening a cheese factory. I began writing and drafting letters, especially to cheese-making companies in West Germany.

August 15 was the second occasion I had seen a news article about Rev. Moon in the local English paper (Voice of Uganda): it dealt with the New York newspaper strike and News World being the only paper published. The first article had appeared when the church had bought the New Yorker Hotel.

September 9 was the third anniversary of my work permit. On that day Hideaki and I went to Namirembe Cathedral, where we met Bishop Watanabe, visiting from Hokkaido. Later that day the sister-in-law of my school's owner was married, also at Namirembe. About 6:10 I was back in our apartment and I received a phone call. It was Nancy Neiland calling me from Church Headquarters in New York City! She told me that "Your Dad wants you to come to the Seminary." In other words, Father wanted me to start a new mission as a student at the Unification Theological Seminary! I was truly shocked – I had never applied to the Seminary and never thought I would ever go there. Ulf, Hideaki and I had a good cry together. We were glad at my good fortune of being picked for the Seminary and sad about my having to leave the mission..

I took care of legal matters for leaving the country and purchased my air ticket. Ulf and Hideaki took me to Entebbe, where we had a final prayer and cup of tea and I left 8:40 pm vowing, like General MacArthur, that "I shall return."



Holding a celebration together

Postscript and Conclusion

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This account, dealing with my missionary years, was compiled mainly from the daily diaries I kept. Some parts of my diaries were difficult for me to decipher, especially concerning the many people I met during my stay in Uganda. Since most of them are still alive and the present situation is still volatile in Uganda (there have been 4 governments since Amin's overthrow in April 1979) I decided to use either initials or first names. Also I was not sure of the exact dates of some events (e.g. when I first met Hideaki) because I had to write in somewhat cryptic style in case my books fell into government hands. Also I just tried to present the main events that happened to all of us.

I realize I have just glossed over our personal dynamics – Ulf, Hideaki and I generally got along well together, although our ragged edges did grate once in a while. It is also probably noticeable that I don't mention women at all in my paper. This is not because I am a chauvinist. I met quite a few beautiful, loving and caring women in Uganda — and actually my attraction to some of them was very physical, although I was always able to keep myself within the strict confines of God's Will. From May 1975 I kept written contact with my American fiancée-wife until she left the church in 1977 – that dealt quite a blow to me which Hideaki helped me greatly to overcome.

I hope in the future to give some fuller account of all the events that took place during my missionary years. I would like to thank Ulf and Hideaki, who sacrificed more than I ever could and helped me get through many difficult situations. Especially I would want to thank Father and Mother Moon, whom I believe are Very Special People in this present age. And thank you to my precious brothers and sisters in Uganda, who have undergone years of trials and whose suffering still continues.

Father said: This dispensation is for everybody: three races and five colors. Since this is the time for the black people to receive the truth you have to give them equal treatment – the problem is for the three lineages to be united into one to have unity among the three races. We have to train ourselves to live together with three races, even in the family, under one roof. So we cannot under any circumstances abandon Africa. God's will is to save all of humankind.

[The End]



Despite the struggle to stay in Uganda and maintain the mission through much adversity, William, Hideaki and Ulf succeeded in laying a foundation that is gradually being built upon today.