

# Guilford Connects With Africa

by Jennifer Park

October 13, 1983

"Today has been an overwhelming day! I climbed a peak that rose to 15,400 feet plus. It was really a lot of work... Every once in a while when I got near the top, I would turn around, the sight of hundreds of feet between you and the ground makes your stomach jump and immediately you turn around and vow not to look back til you are sitting on top, but you always do it again. I guess that's all part of the thrill of the climb... And pretty soon the peak is in full view and you're almost there. That's all you can tell yourself and ya feel like exploding when you step over the edge and look up. For miles and miles and miles the earth spreads... For those few minutes the three of us were really sitting on top of the world. We were higher up than most anyone in the world would ever get. It was a funny feeling all the same, kind of like this was something sacred and you were trusted not to abuse the privilege. So I couldn't get my camera out, the picture could never capture what I saw from there anyway. I think you're just supposed to recall it in your mind and unless you work to see it from the top you can never know the whole truth."

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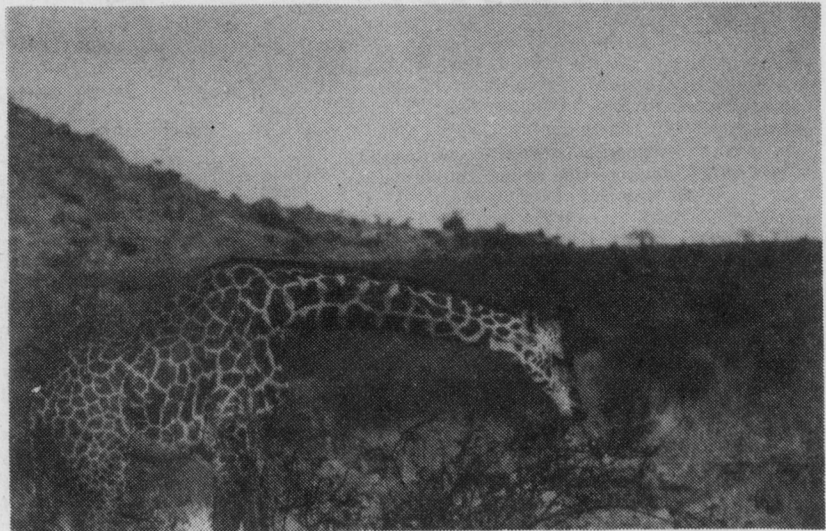
Debbie Chirtea spent the 1983 fall semester in Kenya on a National Outdoor Leadership course.

Debbie said she wanted "to get away from Guilford completely," and go somewhere she "didn't know anything about." The NOLS Africa program offered her that opportunity.

Debbie arranged to get biology credit with Dr. Fulcher and sociology credit with Vernie Davis. For both she has had to prepare reports on what she observed. She also arranged to receive one credit from the sport studies department.

The first three weeks of Debbie's course were spent hiking and climbing the Burgumet route on Mount Kenya.

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A herd of giraffes fascinated the NOLS students on their first game drive.

"Nakuru Nat. Park... the site of Lake Nakuru, BIRD CAPITOL of the world!! As we approached the lake, it was just amazing... as far as you could see. The edges of the lake were pink from flamingos. Interspersed with the pinkness were pelicans, herons, storks, cormorant, egrets and so many other kinds... The noise they make is tremendous!"

October 23, 1983

Tonight we had a fantastic game drive... And what was most exciting was that we came upon a herd of giraffe... They just looked at us as we drove up right next to them and turned off our engine... The eyes they kept on us were both curious and cautious... We just sat there mesmerized by their size and elegance."

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The third part of the course was a chance for students to practice leadership. Small groups planned and led their own routes through the Loita Hills without instructors. Debbie's group decided to change their planned route to spend more time with the Masai tribespeople, and less time in the forest.

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November 7, 1983

"... don't care what the instructors or other students think of our trip... Everyone in this group is having an experience that I don't think too many people in the world could match! We are being led through Masai country by a Masai."

"His pace was most amazing!... I decided that part of being led by a Masai was to go his pace... Francis was impressed. I think he said, 'How is it the Mtoto (that's what he calls me it means small child) with such small legs can keep up with such big feet!'"

"An older woman emerged from the boma (the mud and stick huts the Masai live in)... we got the message to take off our packs and go inside... this was it, the thing we risked going this way for was really happening and the anticipation of what was to come was unbearable. I

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Debbie poses with Kibuyo women and children in Nard Muro.

September 30, 1983

"We hiked all day through the Bamboo... this Bamboo is about 40 feet high and you feel like an ant when you walk through it."

October 2, 1983

"Well, we stayed at the same campsite for another night because today we got rationed. 20 porters it took to get us all our food and climbing equipment.

"I just finished a class on the Giant Heath Zone. As we talked about each species of plant, we walked until we found it. And then, we looked as things were being said. And we saw it!... Onyargo was pointing out different things and all of a sudden a cloud rolled up the hill as we were standing there—Until you couldn't see the person next to you. We all sat there in a daze because we watched it come right at us until it enveloped our bodies. Onyargo said, 'that's good because it won't rain now and it won't be so cold tonight'... He was right."

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The group spent the next ten days on a safari through five of Kenya's national parks.

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October 22, 1983

"The drive to Nakuru only took two and a half hours... People were staring (as usual!) and the town knew the Mzungu had arrived. We were given our baskets and the cook groups set out for the market. All of us were a little hesitant, we didn't quite know how to do things. It was time to try our Swahili out and get our fruit veggies for the next couple days. The market itself was overwhelming. There is so many colors and smells and sounds."



In Kenya's national parks lions do not pace small barred cubicles.