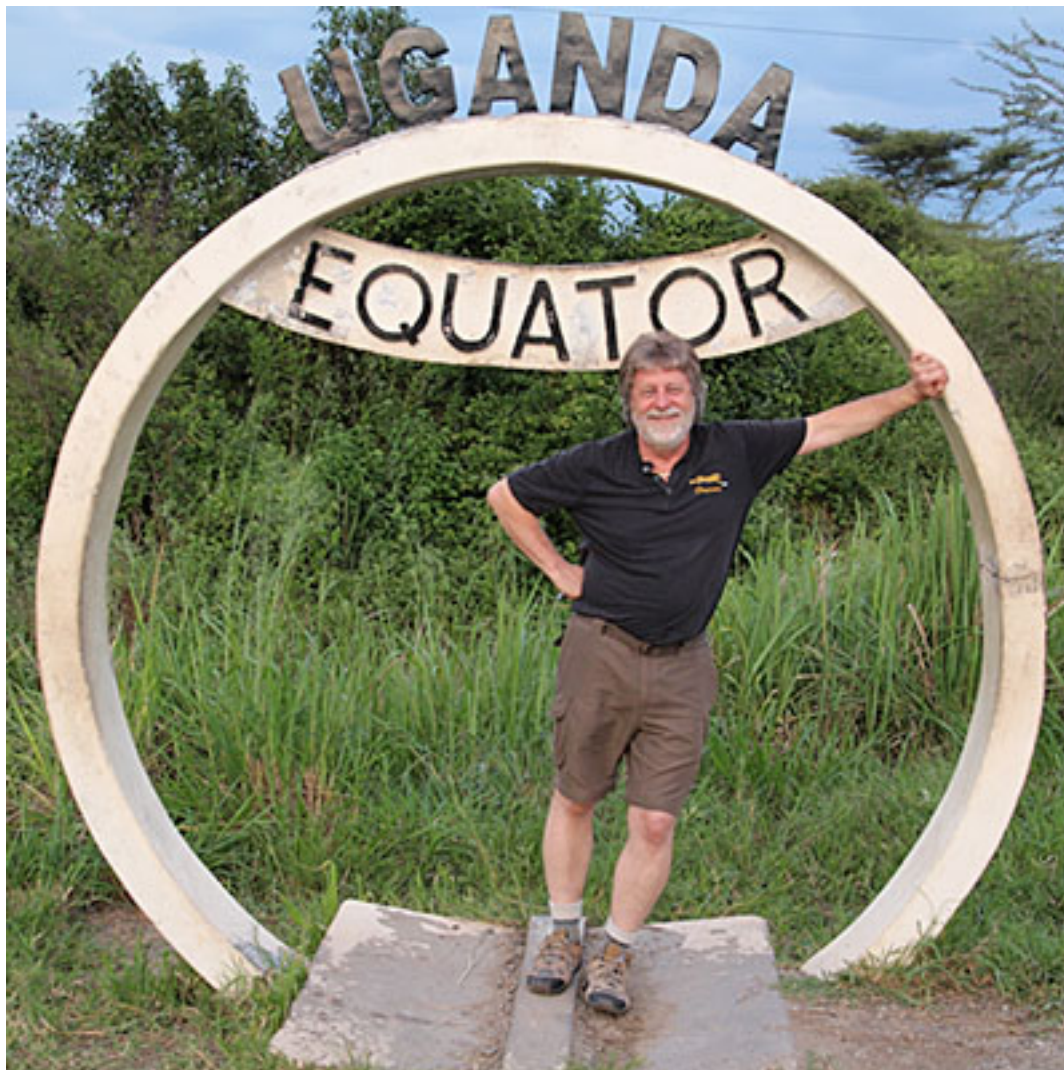


September 2017

[Click for a printable PDF and links to past issues](#)

Life & Times of the Rebels of '69

Class of 1969 Thornton Fractional Township South High School, Lansing, IL



The Search for Silverbacks

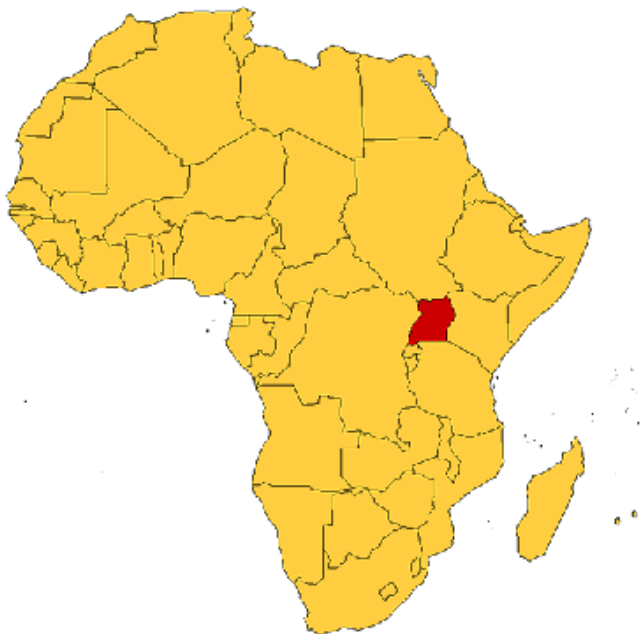
by Michael Sailor (Illinois)

Travel is my avocation and occupation. I've explored more than 70 countries and some of the world's greatest sights, but I have a passion for Africa and have devoted

that give way to tea plantations as we climbed the volcanic terrain. This part of Uganda is punctuated by dozens of dazzling blue lakes formed in the caldrons

much of the past decade to enhancing my Africa expertise and arranging safaris. My first trip to Uganda in 2016 had the primary purpose to encounter the remaining endangered Silverback Mountain Gorillas.

Soon after you disembark the plane in Kampala, the foreignness is apparent as if the familiar has become slightly warped. Arriving late at night, jostling through baggage claim and immigration, stepping out of the terminal into organized chaos and the warm air scented with a mix of domestic pollution and the perfume of tropical flowers, you know you're "not in Kansas anymore." It was exhilarating to be back in Africa.



Uganda's moniker is the "Pearl of Africa," coined because of its fertile land, lush vegetation, and temperate climate. Uganda lies on the Equator but at a rather high altitude that yields a verdant forested landscape rather than an oppressively humid jungle.

My escort whisks me off to my hotel at the best pace that the ever-present traffic permits. I was meeting up with other

of former volcanoes. Our lodge for the night was perched atop a ridge overlooking one such crater lake. As with many of these lodges electricity is limited (solar) with evenings lit by candle and kerosene lamps, ever so relaxing and conveying the romance of Africa. Following a sumptuous dinner, the lodge owner brought out his telescope and we peered at several planets amidst an amazing canopy of stars.



Uganda has a relatively good road system, but we did suffer a flat tire on a local dirt road, which turned out to be one of the highlights of the trip. There were no more than a few people around when we broke down, but by the time we were repaired and underway it seemed as if an entire village had come out to observe our dilemma, offer advice, and provide assistance.

travel professionals who had also been invited to safari through several National Parks. Our first night in Entebbe was spent in a delightful little guesthouse enveloped by a kaleidoscope of flowers. Not unexpectedly the electrical outlets and shower were a bit unpredictable, but that's part of Africa's charm. Dinner, breakfast, genuinely warm hospitality, and the atmosphere were all superb.



Every day is an early day in Africa. Up and on the road just after sunrise. The first day we drove approximately four hours through the countryside toward Kibale National Park. We passed through towns and villages teeming with intriguing people and their wares, and traveled through farmland and banana plantations

I was entertained by a gathering of children who were ever so curious about these strangers from a faraway land. Before we departed they proudly sang their national anthem in both English and their native tongue.

At the end of Day 5, we arrive in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, home to nearly 500 gorillas. They represent about half of the last remaining mountain gorillas on earth. Uganda is one of only two countries where you can observe habituated gorillas in the wild, where dense vegetation and steep terrain help shelter these giants.

After orientation at the Ranger Station concerning proper behavior and etiquette when in the presence of gorillas, we drove about 30 minutes, and then hiked another 30 through the cultivated countryside before reaching the trail head at the edge of the forest.



Trackers had set off an hour ahead of us intent on locating our gorillas. The path through the rainforest is irregular and ever inclining (we started this trek above an elevation of 6,500 feet) and the altitude amplifies the strain. We had hired porters as a gesture to contribute to the local economy, but as the trek trudges along we're glad not be lugging our daypacks and grateful for the occasional supportive hand steadying us over precarious terrain.

We had been hiking for about two hours when a cackle comes over the two-way radio. The trackers have located our gorillas. They're somewhere below us, so we leave the trail and descend through a blanket of foliage barely creased by our guide's gnawing machete.

Eventually we come to an abrupt halt. A few more paces and we step into a clearing shared by about twenty of the wonders of the animal kingdom—a mother with a newborn not much more than a week old, other females and juvenile males, several youngsters, and of course, the imposing silverback, who gives a sideways glance to more or less indicate that he knows we're present, but doesn't consider us to be of any significance. Silverbacks are 450 pounds of muscle and they don't take any guff.



The group went about their daily activities eating and pruning. Only the curious youngsters seem to take much notice of us as they frolic about, but never straying too far from their elders.



The hour passes quickly and as if on cue, the silverback grunts to his family, and they obediently follow him as he slips off into the dense forest.



One moment we were among giants, the next...silence.

The second day with another family of gorillas was also not without its thrill. A young man in our group was mimicking a gorilla as it fed. In a flash, this powerful beast faux charged him and brushed within inches of me. It was a heart pounding experience, and I was reminded that we are on their turf.

We returned to the lodge physically spent but exhilarated. A hot shower, massage, farewell dinner, and then off for a deep sleep. Alas, the week had passed too quickly as I returned to Kampala to wing my way home with abundant memories of Uganda.

[CLICK HERE to view Michael's Uganda photos in his Dropbox.com gallery](#)

[CLICK HERE to visit Michael's website www.safaris-sojourns.com](http://www.safaris-sojourns.com)

What's in Your Vista, Ken?



Ken Hanes (Indiana) enjoys a garden paradise in his vista. Ken says, "My wife, Linda, and I have been blessed to have a small slice of nature near her mother in Dyer, Indiana. We are content to sit and watch the birds and flowers. We just don't need much more than that. It's God's little acre."

TFS **TEAM69** Heard from...

Paul Thomas Andrew Carter (Indiana)—I know I was part of the best class that ever attended TF South High School. Thanks to some very special people in our class who have kept us so close. I thank every one that makes us the best class that ever attended TF South.

Bill Hutchison (Indiana)—The issue arrived today and I just have to say it's really good. [*Life & Times* Aug. 2017] I think back to when the newsletter first started and how it has evolved into an incredibly professional looking and reading newsletter. Great job to all who have been involved in the writing and growth of this newsletter over the years. [*And that includes you too, Bill. Thank you! —TEAM69*]

Ken Jayne (Illinois)—The article about **George Gussman, Jr.** (Indiana) was very good. ["To My TFS Friends," *Life & Times* Aug. 2017] You are doing a great job with the TFS69 stuff. I do appreciate your hard work. Thanks.

Donna Torgerson Clark (Illinois)—**George [Gussman, Jr.]**, your life story is anything BUT boring! Thank you for your service. And thank you *Life & Times* for honoring him. ["To My TFS Friends," *Life & Times* Aug. 2017]

Ken Hanes (Indiana)—Great story, **George [Gussman, Jr.]**, you have had a busy, interesting life. Hope to run into you one day. ["To My TFS Friends," *Life & Times* Aug. 2017]

Dean "Dino" Groom (Indiana)—Still playing in the band [Lake Effect] and livin' the dream. Thanks for all you do, gang. [Dean shown here holding his new grandson, Dryden Dean, born in May to son Adam and daughter-in-law Anna.]



Welcome, New Grandbabies!



Jack and **Kathy Prondzinski Fabanich** (Pennsylvania) welcomed granddaughter Taylen Jo Fabanich in August. Taylen was born to son Christopher and daughter-in-law Kim. Kathy says, "These two wonderful people gave me my first grandchild. I'm so blessed!"

Heidi and **Dan White** (South Carolina) have a new granddaughter, Savannah Joy, born in August to daughter Katie, son-in-law Len, and big brother LJ. "Yay!!!" says Dan. "I'm a grandpa again!!!!!"



Happy September Birthday—

Kathie Christian Bruesch, George Vincent, Judy Gasquoine Hudock, Bob Armstrong, Pat Sartini, Keith Gardner, Pam Neal Pfeffer, Christine Jacobs Burr, Katherine Nelson Mader, Len Rompca, Renay Vanderby, Janet Truman Clark, Dean Groom, Gina Langbeen Russell, Dale Robinson, Scott Tatje, Donna Fazio Mrskos, Jim

Celebrated August Wedding Anniversaries—

Fred & **Diana Steinweg Plese** (Illinois)—47 years

Joan & **Harrison "Butch" Porter** (Michigan)—38 years

Carol Stanhope (TFS '68) & **John Jones** (California)—45 years

Cindy & **Dave Mellendorf** (Georgia)—38 years

Boyd & **Sharon Reid Kerley** (Arizona)—46 years

Dennis & **Sally Steeb Harvey** (Indiana)—47 years

Greg & **Donna Torgerson Clark** (Illinois)—40 years

Our Heartfelt Condolences to ...



Michele Linn Robins (Utah), Dennis Walton (Utah), their daughter Jenny, and family on the death of Michele and Denny's son-in-law Brady Mark, 46, who was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident in Utah, August 2017. Jenny and Brady had recently celebrated their 23rd wedding anniversary.

Our condolences to Patricia Wozny (Illinois), her sister Kathy Wozny Pfaff (TFS '74), and family on the loss of their mother, Evelyn Wozny, 95, in August. In Pat's tribute to her mom, she writes, "My beautiful mom, my best friend, the wisest woman I have ever known."

Hey, Kids! TF South Class of 1977 Will Celebrate 40 Years

since graduation with dinner and a DJ, Oct. 7, 2017, at Lencioni's Pub and Banquets in Lynwood, IL. More info on their Facebook page [T F South Class of 77 Reunion](#)

For the Sept. 2017 *Life & Times*

Photos: Michael Sailor, Ken Hanes, Dean Groom, Kathleen Ellen Fabanich, Dan White, [Bill Hutchison Photography](#)

Editorial: Patricia Walsh, Cheryl Ridder Woldhuis

Editorial Assistance: Kathy Neumann Smith

Technical & Design Consultant: Bill Hutchison

Facebook Birthday Wishes: Dave Dickinson

Has Seen "The Lion King": Bud Jenkins

Stay in Touch

Our 210 subscribers stay in touch through our free monthly newsletter. Help us keep our database current by sending changes in your phone number and email and snailmail addresses to TFSouth69@gmail.com

Send Your News

And comments, photos, questions, stories, and story ideas to TFSouth69@gmail.com, or message us at our Facebook page [Tfsouth Classofsixty-nine](#).



Forward the Life & Times to Friends and Family

Copyright © 2017 TF South Class of 1969, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

