

Adventure in communication

The organization itself is currently undergoing an evaluation of its purpose and structure.

Neither Judy nor Rosemary can point to very tangible results. Judy sees her contribution as being "clean floors" and the fact that they are now separating the dirty and clean linen. "I just tried to get across a basic concept of infection and personal hygiene."

The only thing the two girls are sure of is they left friendly impressions of Canada and the US. Rosemary's group, unlike Judy's, was the first Crossroads group to be in the area. "All of us were accepted into the community very warmly, particularly as we were the first white girls to stay on the island. People would come from all over to invite us to their homes for meals and dancing and to go fishing and canoeing with them.

Communication limited

"Their hospitality was quite overwhelming at times. How much actual knowledge of North America we gave them I wonder. It's a fantastic job to try to instill in people an idea of the other side of the world and western culture when they've never been off their island or seen electricity. As our counterparts did not arrive until three days before we left, discussions with the people were limited by language barriers and concepts of their education—the highest grade taught at the school was grade 9.

"I think the most important thing Crossroads accomplishes is a different perspective on white man. Instead of seeing him in a superior role of colonialist, professional or missionary, the work projects enable them to work and know white people at their own level. For this reason I feel the work camp idea is valuable despite the difficulties involved. Some of the groups do have difficulty being accepted by the community due to the misconception that they are CIA agents or paid skilled labor. However, once they understand that you are students coming over during your holiday their attitudes change."

Awareness gained

Everyone who goes feels that they have gained much more than they have given. In general, people become much more aware of the vast economic backwaters that the underdeveloped countries are in. Rosemary notes that Kenya, one of the wealthier countries, has one paved road connecting its cities and trains that go twenty miles an hour. She now sees the problem in other terms as well.

"The problem isn't solely a technical one but a problem of values. The new nations are having to decide what values they want to base their societies on and try to incorporate these in their new political and economic structures. They are trying to obtain an industrialized society without having a lot of the sickness of our society that has come with it. In East Africa the aim is African Socialism, an economic welfare system based on the

existing tribal and clan structure that would utilize the traditional values of communal sharing.

"It's a tremendous task and I have great respect for their determination to do it themselves and more understanding for the mistakes they make. The tribal nature of politics in most countries makes the job even more complex. I definitely believe that the Western world has no right to try to impose its culture and values on Africa either directly or through a strings-attached foreign aid program."

The slower, more genuine way of life affects most North Americans who go. Judy says that she had her faith restored in humanity through meeting sincere and spontaneous people who would take time to talk to other people and lived one day at a time.

"Militants challenged us"

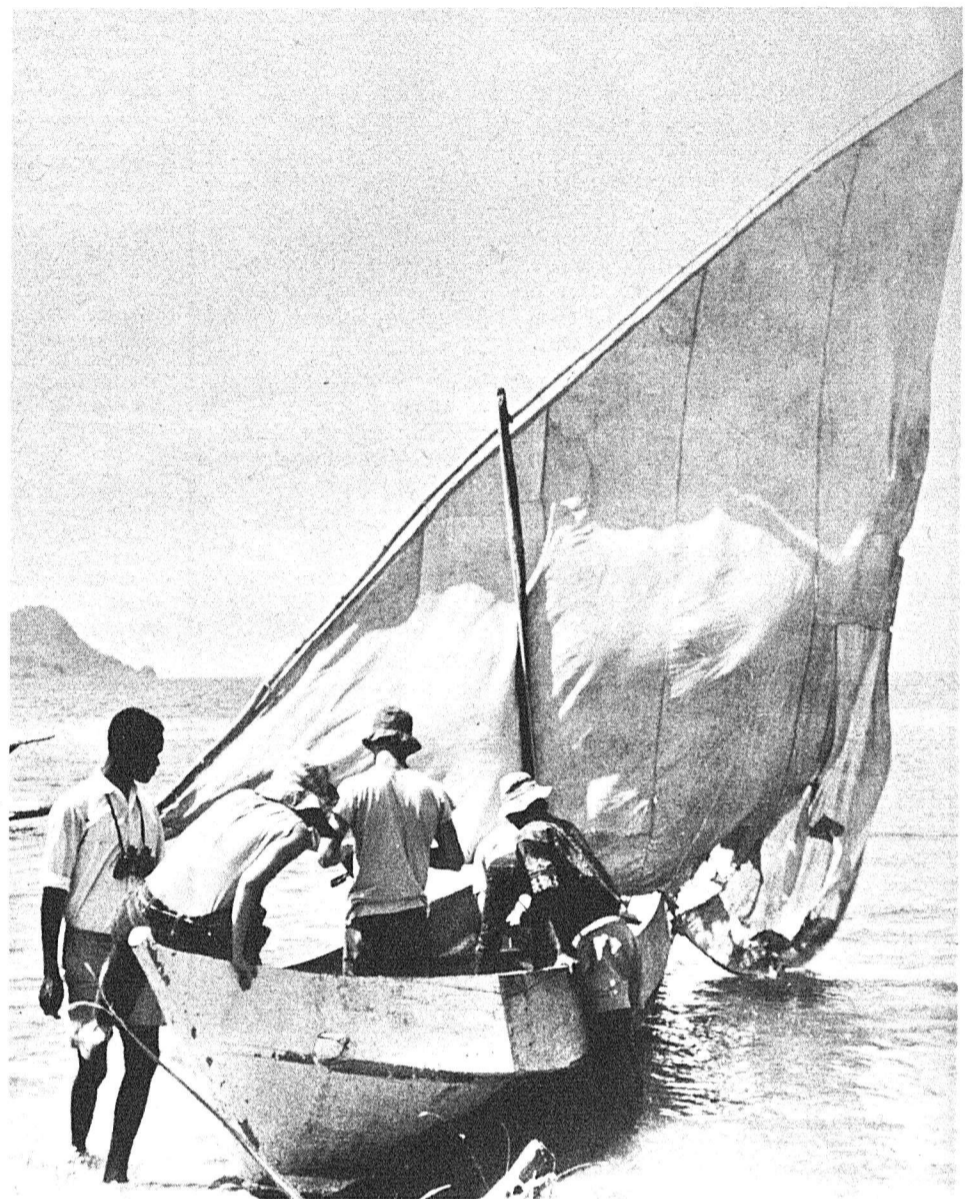
Another unexpected experience came through the Black American students in the groups.

"This became the biggest challenge in terms of human relationships that we met the whole time in Kenya. Four of our Americans were Black students who were quite militant and who had come over, not for Crossroads purposes of increased understanding, but to find their African heritage and to preach Black Power. None of us had ever been so closely confronted with Black hatred of White and all of us spent a great deal of time working through our emotional reactions. This particularly affected the Canadians who were relatively unaware of the seriousness and complexity of the situation in the States and who were completely unaware of the taboos of conversation and language that living with Blacks demands.

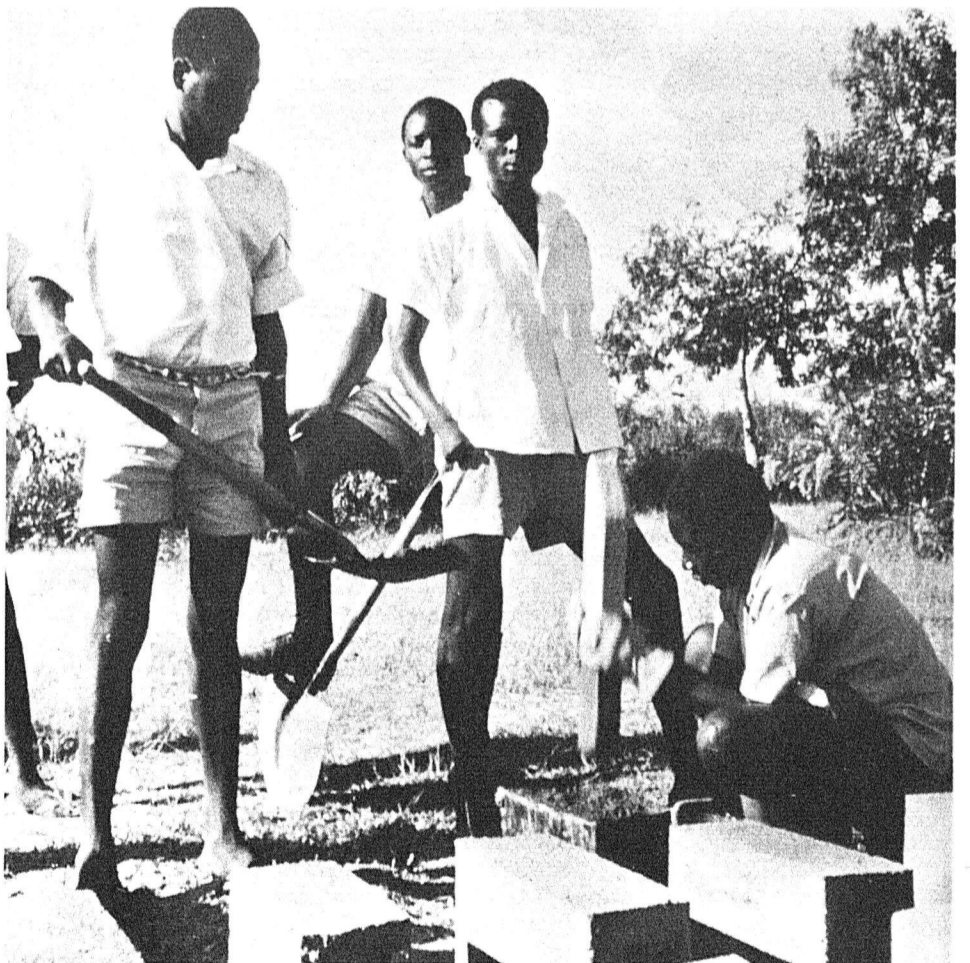
Acceptance difficult

"I personally found it extremely difficult to accept their extreme and in many ways unreasonable sensitivity to race, their refusal to treat us as individuals and their forcing on us as individuals the responsibility for all the sins of white men everywhere. I now feel it was one of the most significant experiences I've ever gone through and find myself defending the American Blacks and wishing I could make people aware of what I see now as complacently racist attitudes and societal defenses against doing anything about it. It's made me more aware of the Indian situation in Canada and generally more involved with social issues here."

Crossroads Committee on campus is currently recruiting for next year's participants. Anyone seriously interested in applying should see Ken Kuhn in SUB 158C immediately as the application deadline is in two weeks. Students are selected primarily on the basis of references, and extensive interviews. Participants receive a week's orientation, spend six weeks on their site, then have ten days to travel before meeting again for a summary meeting prior to flying home.



LAUNCHING A NEW ADVENTURE in communication, Crossroaders and natives set out across Lake Victoria.



MAKING BRICKS for the science laboratory. Over 400 bricks were made with only two molds. Sand, cement and water were mixed by hand and then the bricks were left to dry for three days in the sun.