

DO NOT REMOVE
THIS TAG BEFORE CONTACTING _____!

These words are hand-written on a small paper tag which is attached to electrical and communication wires by a simple cotton string. In every church, there are people who volunteer to help in ways suiting their gifts and abilities. Keeping track of people on various committees and what each committee member might do to help can often be lost without good notes somewhere. One person thought there was no better way to stop an uninformed repair than to leave a note on the actual wiring he had previously repaired.

In the church, I believe the truism is correct that, in all we do, whether in a physical plant or spiritual relationships, we stand on someone else's shoulders who came before us.

In the case of the communication wires and the handwritten note, we stand on the shoulders of John Paul Martin. Much has changed since John Paul wrote that note. His kind attitude and patient work are hallmarks of what I believe to be a good Christian man.

Alvin Pelton



John Paul Martin, who worked for Southern Bell, helped care for our church buildings with his mechanical and electrical expertise. He was also a Deacon. His wife, Marguerite Martin, served as our front desk receptionist, and she was the WMU director.



FEBRUARY 3, 2019

WE'VE A STORY TO TELL
75th Anniversary Memories of Mountain Brook Baptist Church

OUR MISSION TO EAST AFRICA AND UGANDA

My interaction with the heart of Refuge and Hope began in the 1990s, well before the organization was formed, when I attended college and served on the student ministry council with Shelah Acker, its co-founder. Even then, I saw the vision of what the organization has now become, although God had not revealed His full plan to her or to Jade, her husband and co-founder. Fast forward 25 years, God opened the door to cross paths with Shelah again. Mountain Brook Baptist Church accepted Refuge and Hope as a missions partner. I got to know Jade (whom I consider a close friend) through weekly basketball games in the Mountain Brook Baptist Church Christian Life Center gym while they were in the States on furlough.

This is where the story goes from seeing the heart of what God would do in the work of Refuge and Hope in Uganda. Jade and I had multiple conversations on a weekly basis—after heated basketball games—about their ministry and ways that they could become a more self-sustaining ministry and be less dependent on outside support. One evening, Jade told me that I was coming to Uganda to be on a “Shark Tank” type panel to hear small business ideas that needed capital to start or continue to grow. For that capital, the organization would become business partners and share in future profits of the business that would then go back into Refuge and Hope to help with ministry. I reluctantly agreed and had the blessing of spending the week visiting Uganda and the organization. I fell in love with the people of Uganda. The brightness of their smiles and openness of their hearts were vibrant.

One individual who personified this is Gilbert, who works for Refuge and Hope. The first activity we did the week I was there was a scavenger hunt of sorts, where we had to buy supplies for the organization all over town. This helped me gain an appreciation for the local business and the economy of the country. The most interesting item we had to buy was a live chicken. I had handled livestock in the past as I grew up running around my grandparents’ farm in east Tennessee, and at one point in my life, I literally saw a chicken running around with its head cut off while my family served as home missionaries in Montana. However, this experience was a little more amusing, as it had been many years



Photos from Curt Stokes's experiences serving with Refuge and Hope in Uganda.



since I picked up a chicken (that was flopping all over the place). Even funnier was the fact Gilbert wanted me to buy the fattest chicken while I was trying to buy the cheapest because we were almost out of money. I finally was able to convince the chicken salesman to sell me a fatter chicken for the price I wanted to pay. I came to find out that Gilbert was taking the chicken home for dinner that night as compensation for ushering me all over the city that day. I later bought him a chicken hat in the United States that he wears to this day.

My heart is still full of memories of Gilbert and the other men and women of Uganda—in particular, the families who are refugees trying to survive from day to day. However, their hope is strong thanks to the work of Refuge and Hope.

My ties with Refuge and Hope have grown even deeper since my mother has had the opportunity to visit Uganda twice in the past two years and on one occasion spent a month there teaching English to refugee children. She is in her 70s (sorry mom for disclosing) and she became equally fond of the Ugandan people, the refugees from neighboring countries, and the Acker family. So, don't let age (young or old), financial position, marital status, or any place that God has you keep you from engaging with and/or visiting Refuge and Hope or any of our other mission partners. Mountain Brook Baptist Church continues to partner with Refuge and Hope in its growing ministry to refugees flowing into Uganda. Jo Wills of Mountain Brook Baptist Church serves on the board of directors for Refuge and Hope.

Curt Stokes, 2019 Missions Committee Chair