



The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau,
West Africa

June 2024

We are enjoying our first month back, in Arkansas, and looking forward to Michigan in July!

Work Continues *by Jason*

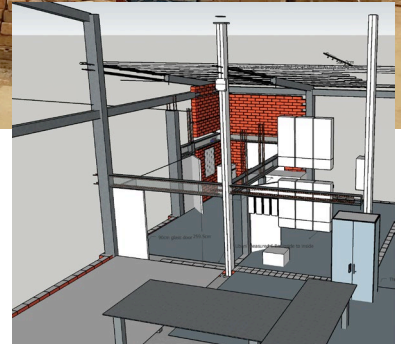
I feel fortunate to have felt the same way several times in the past, but every time we leave Guinea-Bissau and see how the team we left behind steps up and fills in to keep things rolling in our absence, I am blessed all over again. The rainy season is now in full swing back in Canchungo, which slows construction down quite a bit when we don't have inside work to do yet. Even so my team is doing their best between storms to keep making progress building the walls and pouring the columns and beams that will form my office and the storage room in the new workshop. Once those steps are done, Cirilo will spearhead the effort to roof those two rooms. Then, with the inside protected from the rain, the masons will be able to plaster and paint the walls.

The storage room will also be the nerve center of the electrical system not only of the shop but of the whole base, housing the electronics of the solar system that will power it all. Augustinho (Aug-ust-EEN-yoo) the electrician will be able to install the part of the solar array that will sit on that section of roof (the first solar panels at the site that will finally be installed in their permanent position!). In addition to panels above, he'll be able to begin the preliminary wiring, so when I get back in December, we can complete the full installation of the solar system's electronics in that room. Which will give us three phase power and pave the way for being able to run all of the shop equipment, a necessary step before everything can be moved to the new place.

Though the pace will be slower while we're away, it's a big blessing that we have a team making forward progress and keeping an eye on things while we're gone.



Amadu and Libani in the doorway of my new office, which is looking more and more like the drawing every day!



June *by Emily*

We left Guinea-Bissau in early June. After a 4-day trip from our home in Canchungo to Jason's parents' house in Michigan, we spent 3 days sleeping at odd hours, doing laundry, unpacking and repacking, and then hit the road bound for my dad's house in Arkansas.

Over Father's Day weekend, dad, his 4 kids, and their families - 17 people in all - packed into Dad's house for a sibling / cousin / dad / grandad extravaganza. It was great to see everyone and I was relieved to find out that I am still taller than all of my nieces and nephews (barely, haha).



Cooking with Dad.

Spending time with dad always involves lots of walks through the neighborhood, hikes on interesting trails, and baking delicious bread. While Dad is at work, the kids have been loving visits to the library and several splash pads. Jason has already started spending a chunk of time each day researching and bidding at industrial auctions to prepare for the shipping container we will be sending this fall, and I have been reading lots of my mom's theology books and preparing for several upcoming teaching opportunities - one in June where I preached in Dad's church so his pastors could take their family out of town and several coming up in July.

In early July we have a few days in Illinois on our way back up to Michigan for time with Jason's family and Simpson Park Camp.



Both Sides *by Jason*

The electricity we use in Guinea-Bissau is the same as Europe. Fortunately, large shop machines will work on either the U.S. or European systems (just spinning 15% slower on European power). We do use some appliances and tools that have been brought from the U.S., powering them via transformers. When we can though, it's more efficient to use the version meant for European electricity.

So during our 24-hour layover in Portugal on the way home, I made the trip to go collect some electrical supplies, appliances, and tools from Ikea and the Portuguese versions of Home Depot (Leroy Merlin) and Best Buy (Media Markt). I've done this on several previous trips and it's worked great, buying things like circuit breakers (which are a different style there than the U.S.), light bulbs, outlets, etc, and then taking them back to the U.S. to ship or carry over to Guinea-Bissau later. Sometimes supplies are cheaper in Portugal than G-B, sometimes better quality in Portugal, or sometimes just not available in G-B.

It's interesting the reaction we hear sometimes when people hear of our travels. Some people are a little jealous of all of the places we get to see, and some people feel bad for us having to make such long trips. There's a reality to both sides, and I felt them both on this outing! I started the day with a fabulous buffet breakfast at our hotel including brie and smoked salmon, walked across the street to buy my bus pass, and then hopped on the bus (armed with a pair of empty suitcases) without any trouble. I did my shopping, filling both suitcases with goodies including a new rotary hammer, a blender, circuit breakers, an iron, outlets, and electric kettles for our guest houses.

With two heavy suitcases, I left the last store to walk back to the bus stop. Due to an oddity of Portuguese road design, there were no walking paths that led back to the same bus stop—I would've had to cross a divided highway dragging two heavy suitcases. Not having a local cell plan, my only internet access away from the hotel was on the city busses. I decided to walk the other direction toward what I thought was the next bus stop. I rolled my heavy bags up a hill toward what turned out not to be the next station. The map that I had downloaded back at the hotel didn't have bus stops clearly marked, so I walked toward what seemed like a metro stop. I'd misread the sign leading me to the metro red line which was actually marking the line of the old city (linha vermelho instead of linha velho, an honest mistake). Already half a mile from the store, I felt sure the unlabeled dot on the map a bit ahead was a bus stop, and since I'd already walked so far, it was closer to go toward it than going all the way back. I made it there, only to have the bus driver tell me that his line doesn't connect back to central Lisbon. In the end, I made several more walks forward to what seemed like the next bus stop, finally finding myself more than a mile and a half away from the store and definitely off of the beaten path.

In the end, a kind Portuguese man took pity on me and drove me back to the original bus stop. Turns out I had walked out of Lisbon into the suburbs, which is why none of the buses I was seeing connected to where I was trying to go. Victorious, but pretty tired, I arrived back at the hotel just in time for dinner. It was a day I won't soon forget and a great reminder that there is both beauty and pain in travel!



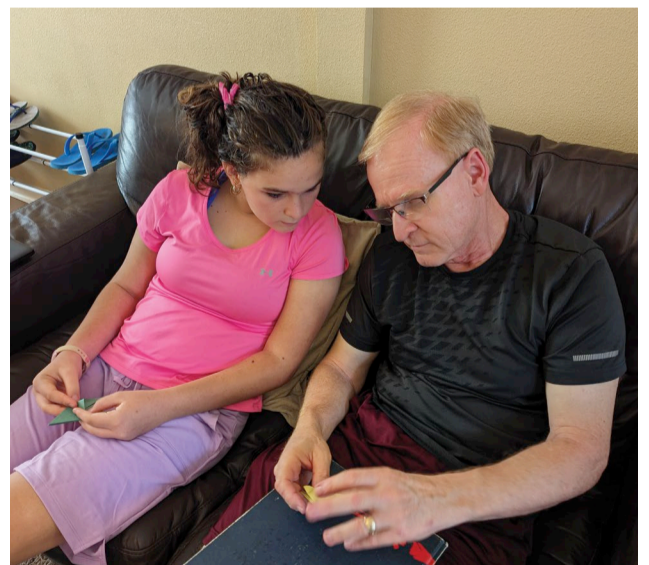
Travel is always full of highs and lows!



June (cont'd) *by Emily*



Hiking up to the top of the big rock in Little Rock.



Savannah teaching Pops how to make an origami X-Wing Starfighter.



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