

Masai tribesman graduates from Virginia college

HARRISONBURG, Va. (AP) — Retired missionary Denny Grindall watched with pride as the young man he first saw as a child some 30 years ago in an isolated Kenyan village stood and received two college degrees.

"It's the answer to our prayers," Grindall, now 85 and living in Seattle, said Sunday at Moses Sakuda's graduation at Eastern Mennonite University. "This is such a thrill to us."

During a visit in the 1970s, the Grindalls had persuaded Sakuda's father and other members of the Masai tribe to send their children to school, and Moses was among the first to go.

The Masai, more than any of the other 40 tribal groups in Kenya, had managed to remain outside modern development's mainstream, living in rural isolation and keeping cattle.

The Grindalls went to their village of Olosho-Oibor, about two hours southwest of Nairobi, and introduced dams and agriculture to the tribe, which relied on cattle for milk and beef and lived in small clusters of huts made of cow dung.

"The Masai really had a desire to change. They just needed someone to show them how to do it," Grindall said. "They were stunned to see me get down in a ditch to help them build a dam. They said many white men had passed through the village telling them things, but none stopped to help."

The Grindalls helped Moses Sakuda enroll in a

missionary school in the town of Kajaibo, about a four-hour drive from the village.

Because the Masai are a nomadic group that often roamed the land in search of greener pastures, Sakuda had a hard time locating his family when he returned home during school breaks.

"It was an experience coming back home," Sakuda said. "Sometimes it would take me another week or so to find out where they were. By the time I located them, it was time to go back to school already."

Moses excelled in his studies and later went to a teacher's college near Nairobi. Wanting to take his education one step further, Sakuda traveled to the United States in 1995 to participate in an exchange program in Lancaster, Pa.

That's where he ran into his first major cultural barrier: he wanted to get a driver's license, but had no record of his age.

The Masai, like many other tribal groups, don't keep copious records of events. All Sakuda's mother remembered is that she was pregnant during a major drought in Kenya, perhaps around 1968.

"That did not help the people in the department of motor vehicles," Moses said.

Douglas Eichelberger, a driver's license examiner in Lancaster, said he'd never encountered a situation like Sakuda's.

"We were baffled," Eichelberger said Friday. "I remember we asked him his height and it was 6-1, so we

gave him a birth date of June the first."

Eichelberger said he admired Sakuda's determination. He took the driver's test several times before he passed.

"He never gave up, in spite of the obvious cultural differences," said Eichelberger, who still keeps a picture of Sakuda on his desk at work. "I wish a lot of people had his spirit, energy and attitude to accomplish

things in life."

Sakuda enrolled at Eastern Mennonite University in 1997. He plans to earn a doctorate in business administration before settling in Kenya.

Sakuda's mother, Ruth Nasibku Sakuda, and about a dozen other Masai sold some of their cattle — a major sacrifice for the group — to raise money for airline tickets to attend the graduation. They also sold handmade jewelry

and blankets.

"I am overwhelmed with God's doing," Ruth Sakuda, who speaks the Masai Sudanic language, said through a translator. "To God be all the glory for this day."

So far, Sakuda's relatives — who endured a 16-hour plane ride from Kenya — have a favorable impression of the United States. It's the first time many of them have been around running water or electricity.

Sakuda said having family and friends at his graduation was one of the happiest moments in his life. He received a Master's of Divinity degree and a Master's of Art in Education.

"In my tradition, you are never supposed to see a man shed tears, but when they called my name I couldn't help the tears from rolling out of my eyes," Sakuda said. "It has been quite a day for me."

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Understanding

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Jackson in the early 1970s, before he became an appendage of the Democratic Party. "Before he (Jackson) moved up the Democratic Party political ladder, Jackson led the black opposition against abortion calling it 'murder'," Smith said. Jackson is now pro-choice.

While Keyes didn't win the Republican Party nomination, and he didn't have a chance against the \$70 million war chest Bush raised, his presidential run was a sign of relief. It showed America that all blacks aren't liberals and they don't all think alike. It showed people that blacks can be multi-faceted in their thinking. And there are even those who may agree with Keyes on some of the issues.

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Generation

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discretion to judges, target high level dealers for prosecution, and end drug profiling and random stops of black and Latino motorists.

McCaffrey and other federal officials are at least finally paying some lip-service to the pathetic truth that billions are being squandered on a wasteful, racially-flawed drug policy that targets mostly, poor, and desperate small time black drug offenders. They have done nothing to change that policy. Until they do more and more young black men and women will continue to stuff federal prison cells.

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