





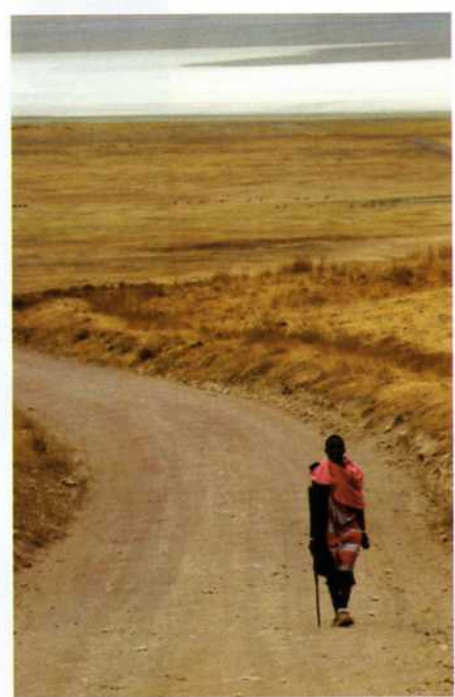
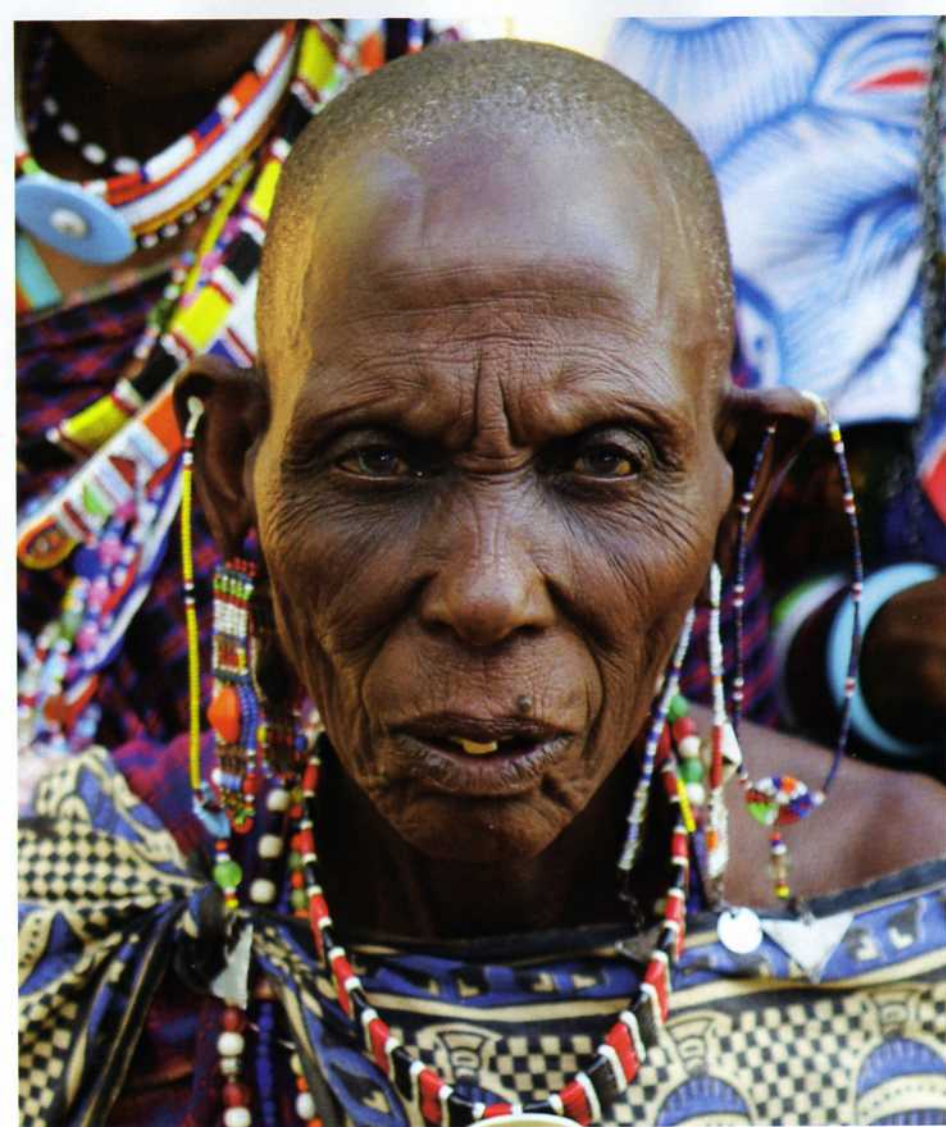
the water. project

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOUG PITT

Doug Pitt is more than just someone's brother. Along with being related to Brad, Pitt is a family man with a computer-repair shop in south Springfield. And he is a photographer. He calls it his "hobby run amok." He is good at it, and he has been using his gifts for humanitarian ends. Pitt has partnered with a faith-based group called WorldServe International, whose president happens to attend James River Assembly of God church with him. Now Pitt is taking pictures that bring light to one of the most important news stories of the 21st century—one the media isn't covering: water. Safe drinking water is something that about 1.1 billion humans can't get. Three hundred and three million of them live in Africa. The solution? Part of it is to dig simple water wells in rural villages. And those rural people are the people Pitt gets behind his lens. In 2006, Pitt took a trip to Tanzania to photograph a rural community of the Maasai people, in hopes of building awareness and bringing water to more people. —Gregory Holman

"Untitled." Doug Pitt with Maasai tribesmen, 2006.

"Doug has such a gift for connecting with people," says John Bongiorno, president of WorldServe International, the Christian NGO that digs wells in rural Africa. That includes spear-wielding tribesmen. Pitt recalls entering a Maasai village during a clan meeting, when outsiders aren't permitted. Men jabbed sticks and spears at Pitt and Springfield developer Matt Miller, who was also on the trip. "Our guide says, 'Put away your camera,'" Pitt explains. "Those spears were kinda convincing." Afterward, the tense situation was smoothed over and the village chief invited Pitt into the community—but no cameras could be used during the clan meeting. This photo was taken by Matt Miller.



"Wow," 2006. (Top left.) Doug Pitt's capacity for capturing the human face in photography is remarkable, and that aspect of his work has also made the cover of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*, an Assemblies of God weekly distributed worldwide. In Springfield, this image, as well as the other photographs in this essay, appeared at a February exhibition at Randy Bacon Photography, and will soon tour other U.S. locations. Shannon Bacon, who curates exhibitions at RBP, says this photograph was her favorite.

"God has created a masterpiece with this woman," Bacon says. Artist Brad Noble and his wife, Tina, purchased a copy of this image. Bacon says 32 photographs were sold at the opening reception of "The Water Project;" Bongiorno says this exhibit has raised enough money to dig a new well in Tanzania.

"Lonely Road," 2006. (Top right.) The Maasai live in northern Tanzania and Kenya and since the 17th or 18th century have made their livelihood as pastoralists—that is, with livestock free to graze this flat, big-sky landscape. During the past 40 years, the Maasai have been making a transition to cultivated agriculture. There are a lot of reasons for this, partly because private and government interests have taken over Maasai land, sometimes in the name of environmental conservation, sometimes for tourism. Less room for Maasai livestock to graze, and difficulty joining the money economy, are just two economic problems that fuel the villages' lack of clean water.

"Working Mom," 2006. (Left.) Pitt says he was struck by the sweetness of the people he met in Tanzania. In a culture where so many people die that Saturday is set aside as "burial day," Sunday is "grieving day" and on Monday life just "goes on," Pitt felt shocked by how people related in ordinary life. "They were so endearing to each other," he recalls. "Kids went arm in arm, hand in hand."



"Maasai Family," 2006. (Left.) There are a lot of children in Maasai families. "It's almost kids by quantity, because you expect to lose a few," Pitt says of these rural Tanzanian parents. "It's a gross concept for Westerners." Bongiorno explains that lack of clean water kills more people in Africa than hunger, yet few Americans were likely to celebrate World Water Day on March 22. Yet Pitt says the impact of a clean drinking-water well on a village—like the one where this family lives—is immediate. "It sustains a village for years," he says.

"Untitled." Doug Pitt with a Maasai child, 2006. (Below). Pitt says two out of five children in the Maasai community he visited with WorldServe don't live to the age of five. There were a lot of aspects of Maasai life that were shocking, he says, including the fact of life that kids die from highly preventable diseases. "But at the same time, it's like, 'Back off, Western guy, we like where we're at,'" Pitt explains. This photo was taken by Matt Miller, Doug's "6'6" photo assistant."



HELP the water. project

WorldServe International is a Christian humanitarian group based in Springfield and Washington, D.C. John Bongiorno, its president, talked to us by cell phone from Tanzania recently. He had just stepped out of a meeting with that country's prime minister, Edward Lowassa, to arrange for WorldServe to dig more water wells in rural Tanzania. Sales from Doug Pitt's "The Water Project" exhibition in February at Randy Bacon Photography raised enough funds to dig one of those wells. "The Water Project" will also go on tour in locations around the United States, including TBA dates in Philadelphia and New York City.

Details on these exhibits, as well as details on how to donate money or time to WorldServe International, is online at worldserveintl.org.

