

# NorthSide

NORTH FULTON, EAST COBB, DUNWOODY, FORSYTH



INSIDE

## Steak plit a few twists

A new addition to the Roswell dining scene offers savory Mediterranean and Southern style.

# One man's mission

Kindness received years ago in Kenya inspires projects to help villagers

By BILL SANDERS / bsanders@ajc.com

Walter Dean is headed to Kenya in a couple of months and he's taking a team with him.

They'll stay in a five-star resort the first few days — room service, pool chairs and fancy dining.

But within days, Dean will have his team in the Khwisero district of the country, listening to villagers and seeing first hand the building of Dean's vision.

Fifteen times Dean has returned to Khwisero to fulfill a promise he made 24 years ago, when he was in Africa as a new college graduate wanting to make a difference.

While there in 1984, he contracted malaria and typhoid. He was quickly taken to the best hospitals in Kenya. He was treated by top Russian and Indian doctors and told he had to return to America to heal.

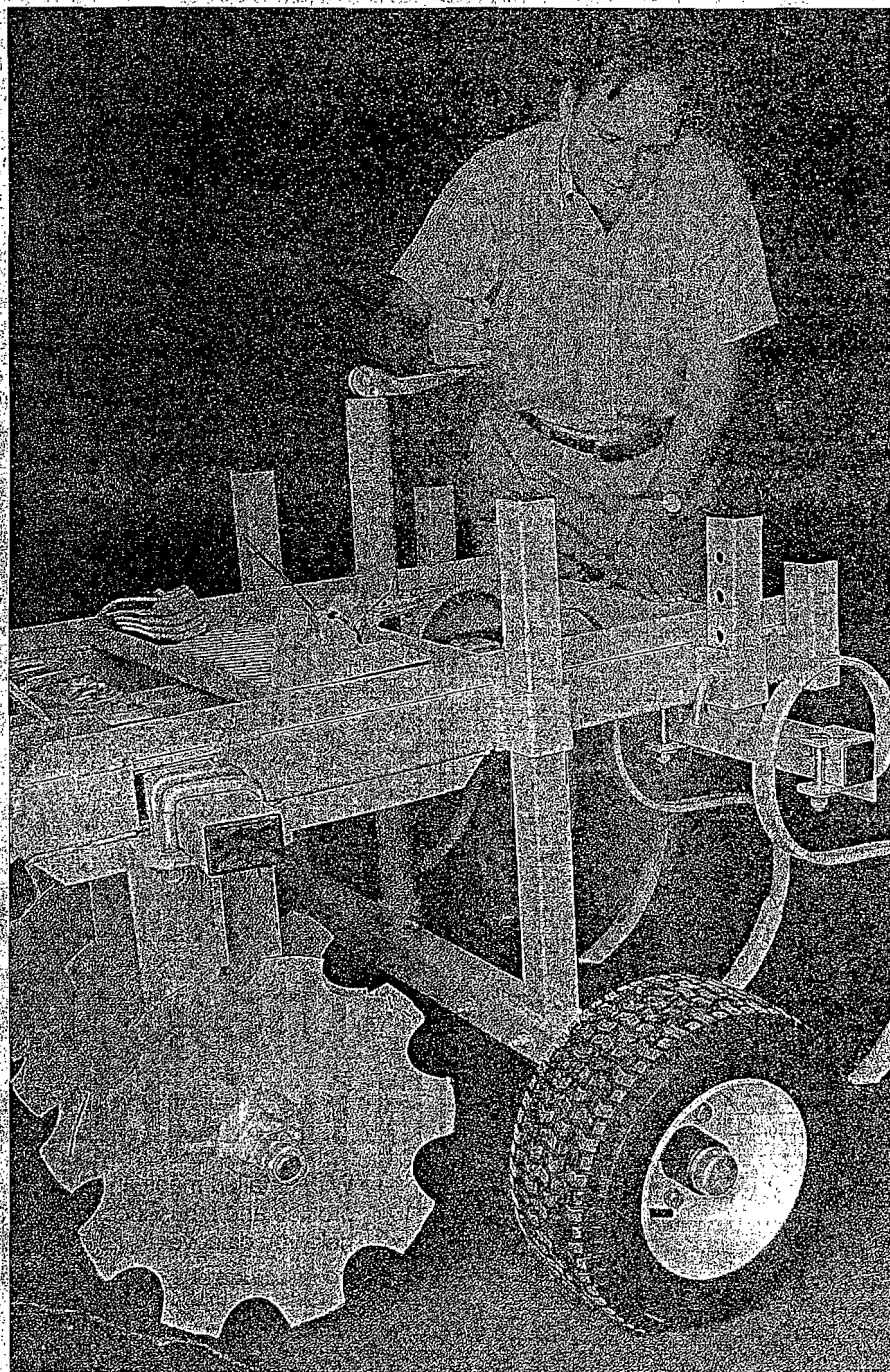
"I remember thinking that I basically bought my way into the hospital and now could just leave and come home and get well," Dean said. "It was a real dilemma for me to see what I was leaving behind. Everyone gets malaria and now I was going to leave prematurely, while kids were dying there every week. I mean literally, there was a funeral there every week."

"And these people were so nice to me and did everything they could when I got sick, so I made a commitment to them."

And he's fulfilled that commitment.

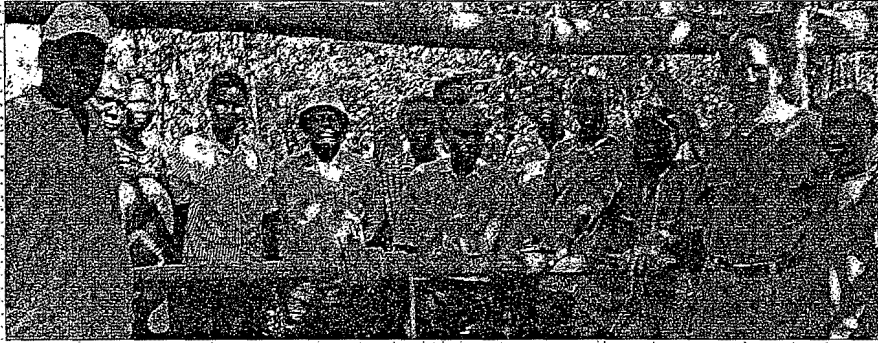
For years, it was just Dean going back and helping build schools and clinics. Then he got his family involved. Now he's formed a non-profit organization, Habitat Aid Institute, and is focusing on helping the community get food, water, education and health care.

More than getting supplies to Khwisero, Dean wants to put into play the old proverb of teaching a man to fish.



PHIL SKINNER / Staff  
Walter Dean of Alpharetta demonstrates a nonmotorized plow that he hopes will help revolutionize farming in Africa. He's visited Kenya more than a dozen times to work with villagers to improve conditions.

► Please see PROMISE, JH4



Special

Walter Dean, at a clinic he helped build in Khwisero, has been touched by the kindness of villagers.

## Promise: 'Once you see Africa in this way, you can't walk away'

► Continued from JH1

He's working on getting specially designed plows to the area, teaching residents to harvest peanuts — peanut oil is much more valuable than the peanut itself, he said — and getting the villagers to buy into ownership of their plight, their recovery and their future success.

"I had greater expectations for myself than what I was able to do 24 years ago," he said. "Once you see Africa in this way, you can't walk away from it."

That's what Dean counts on when taking these teams.

It's not a cheap trip, though much of it is discounted through various contacts Dean has made. He thinks everyone who travels with him will ultimately be a part of his extended team

forever.

Janet Hidalgo Russell, a travel agent who has been to Africa repeatedly, is going on Dean's team for the first time in June. She knows she'll never be the same.

"Once you go to Africa, you are changed forever," she said. "You are humbled and at the same time empowered to do good for those who live there. You give up the choice of doing nothing. I am quite certain that our projects will change lives for generations to come in western Kenya and possibly be a model for east Africa and the rest of the continent."

Dean confesses to having a certain degree of guilt for the wealth he now has.

"I'm not wealthy by any means. And by these [north Fulton County] standards, I don't live extravagantly at all. But by African standards, we

all do. Those people in Khwisero consider me a son of the community, and let me tell you something, that hit me right here," he says, tapping his heart.

Dean works closely with CARE, and is a past-president of an Atlanta CARE committee.

"That's where I first learned that there was such a large group of people that want to do something good in the world; that they feel they need to do something."

Dean first took his family to Africa with him five years ago.

"I needed them to be engaged in what I had been so passionate about since 1984," he said. "My wife had never been further than Texas when we married, and I told her that she was marrying into this commitment that I had made. She said she knew."