

*an interview with...*

## *Arlan Abel*

*Cross of Light Foundation, Minneapolis, MN*

*by Gerrie McCall*

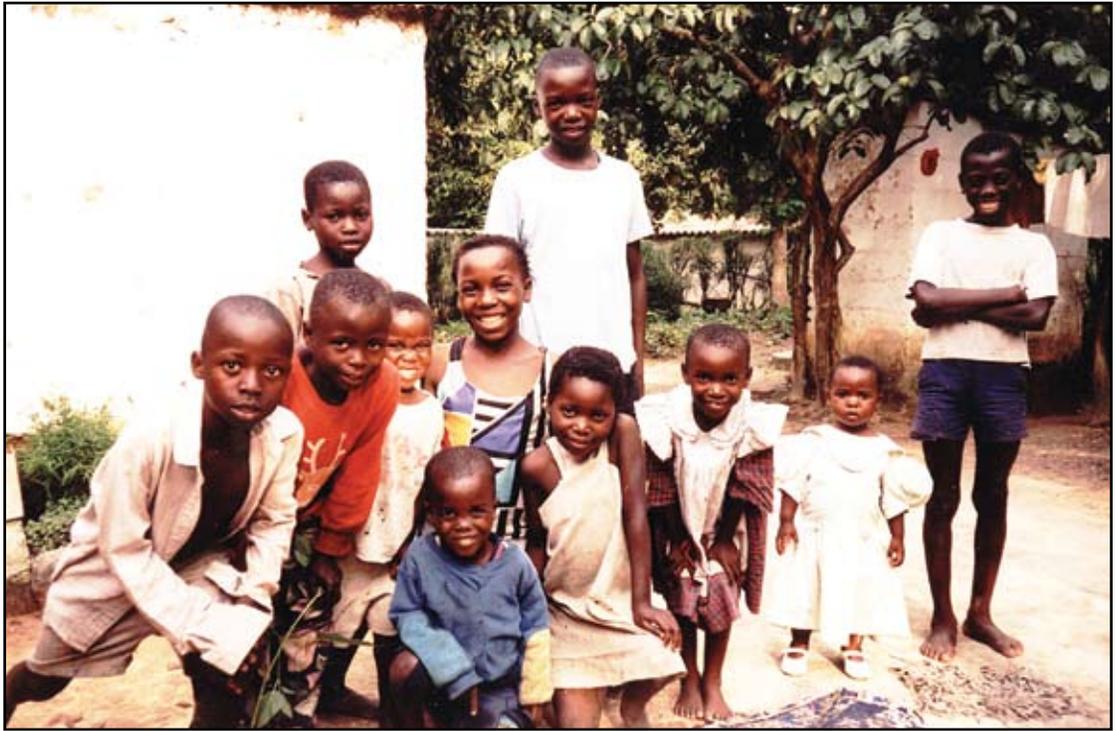
*Arlan Abel is the President of Adamus, Inc., a Minneapolis jewelry firm that specializes in designing diamond and gemstone jewelry. He is a member of the American Gem Trade Association and a Fellow of the Gemological Association of Great Britain. Royalties from sales of his Cross of Light Diamond benefit the non-profit Cross of Light Foundation, which he established to assist African orphans.*

“Diamond branding has gotten more popular in the last ten or so years. The motivation for the special designs has been attempts to make the diamond more beautiful. In other words, the motive has been aesthetic. I wanted to do a diamond with an eye to the aesthetics, but also have a diamond that would be more meaningful because it symbolized something that other diamonds do not. That would be one way to distinguish the Cross of Light Diamond. The second is that a unique faceting pattern is called for in order to create the three cruciform images. There are a total number of sixty-nine facets. The additional facets, as against an ordinary round brilliant, were necessary because I needed those to create the three cruciform images in the pavilion. In terms of design and the motivation for the design, the Cross of Light Diamond is different.



*Zambian Partners*

When you look at the Cross of Light Diamond with just the naked eye, you see a diamond that looks pretty much like any other really well-cut diamond. If you look at the diamond through a special viewer, then you see one of the three crosses. It was designed with the angles in such a way that through the viewer the cross appears.



*Beneficiaries of Cross of Light Foundation school program*

The Cross of Light Foundation is a relatively recent innovation. It was chartered in the state of Minnesota last year. We wanted to assign all of the royalties that were due based on the sale of the Cross of Light Diamond to the foundation. My family has been involved in Africa for a number of years. It really started with my daughter Rachel when she made her first trip to Africa about fifteen years ago.

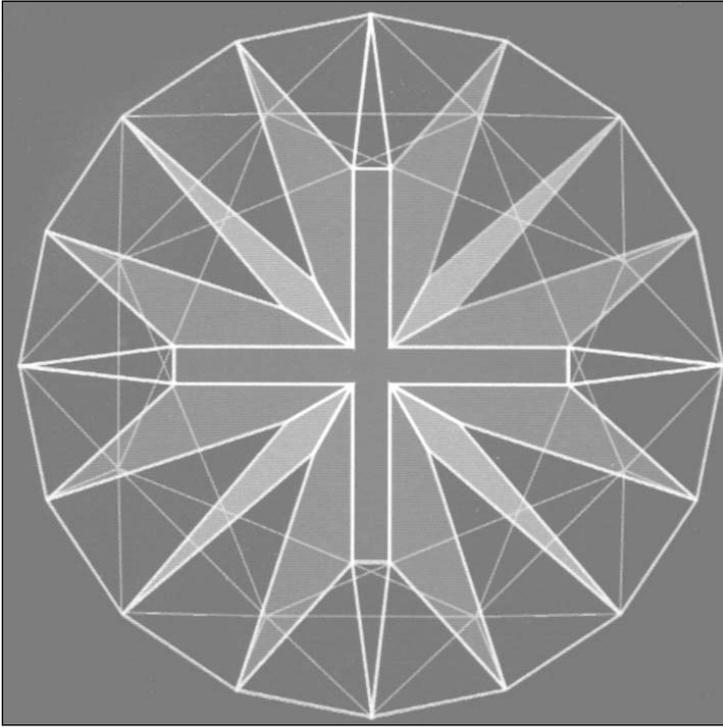
Her original point was to go on an Outward Bound trip to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, but she got sidelined and got acquainted with people in Zambia. She stayed there for a season, made friendships, and got familiar with some of the problems that they're experiencing. She began the commitment to work to alleviate

some of the problems that she witnessed there.

The principal problem was the problem of orphans, occasioned primarily by AIDS. That led to being focused on paying school fees for kids that would not otherwise be able to go to school. More than anything, the focus is on girls so that they can attend school and be less likely to contract AIDS as a result. Attending school makes it possible for them to earn a living as they get older. The work is in both Kenya and Zambia. This has gone on for fifteen years just on a family basis. With the creation of the Cross of Light Diamond, we decided to assign all of the royalties to a foundation that would continue that work and expand upon it.

I think girls in particular would have less tendency to contract AIDS if they had something to look forward to and some goals and opportunities. Attending school would give them more social power. Historically the boys probably had preference. If there was a choice as to who could go to school, they probably took the boy before the girl. These usually aren't family decisions anymore because they're all orphans. The focus is primarily on what's called double orphans or ones where the child has lost both parents.

The royalties are such that it translates into a decent one carat Cross of Light Diamond generates enough royalty to pay school fees for a kid in Africa



for a year. Two hundred and fifty dollars is about what it costs for school for a year. It doesn't cost much.

My daughter Rachel is the administrator of the foundation. She's the person who goes over to Africa to make periodic visits. She keeps in contact and does all of the communication with the kids and the parents and the people who are on the ground making decisions. She disperses the funds. It's the day-to-day decision making she's involved with.

We have people on the ground in Africa who have to give an accounting of everything — how the money is spent and who it goes to. Then there's communication with the kids. We are able to monitor the

kids' work, their grades, and how they're doing, and have regular correspondence with them as well. Hopefully we can get involved in some other things, such as directly supporting orphanages.

The nice part of it is that all of the proceeds end up benefiting the kids. There's no big cost

in raising money. There are no salaried jobs. No one gets paid in the foundation. So it's pretty much a net-net deal. The money can go a long way. If you have to spend 90% of your revenue on raising money, really it diminishes what can be done. The patents on the diamond were secured not too long ago and it has just started to be introduced and sold in retailers' shops. We'll just have to see how it goes and see whether or not people are receptive to it.

If a person has not been to Africa, it's really hard to identify with the tragic circumstances. If they're not double orphans — if there is at least one parent around — those parents are just so pleased and grateful to have this kind of opportunity. I just hope that we'll be able to do more.

Adamus was pretty much a conventional jewelry business until recently when I felt the desire to do some gemstone designing from a religious angle and see whether or not that might appeal to people. For a lot of people, when they're getting engaged to be married, it has a sacramental feel to it. I enjoy making the purchase more meaningful than it might otherwise have been, because now they have something that speaks to what they're feeling and what they intend the relationship that they're celebrating to reflect. I hope our diamonds get to be better known. A lot of people can benefit from it.”

For more information on the Cross of Light diamonds, please contact Gemco International (distributor) at 800-827-1909.



*Gerrie McCall is a freelance writer living in Austin, TX. She is the author of several nonfiction books.*