

Missionary Life Harare, Zimbabwe, 05-25-1982

Morning Walk (excerpts)

We rolled out of our respective sides of the bed at 6:15 this morning. I don't know how it started, but Ida-Rose has always slept to my left. Then we popped our pills, (antimalarial) and prayed that we wouldn't get bilharzia, phutzy fly maggots, tsetse fly disease, cholera, tick fever, the plague or leprosy. Next, we put on our jogging clothes in preparation for our morning walk. This morning, I also wore my stocking cap and a sweater. You see, it is now autumn in Zimbabwe, and temperatures are falling. Yesterdays high was only 84°F and last night, the mercury plummeted to 70! The Blacks are now wearing sweaters, hood coverings, coats, and blankets even when the sun is shining. Heaven knows what they do to keep warm at night. Even though the lowest night-time temperature recorded in Harare (Salisbury's new name) so far this fall is only 65°, the deciduous trees have shed their leaves.

You may think I'm kidding, but I'm not. Last night, I wore my down-filled quilted thermal underwear to bed and the temperature in the house was 70. They say it's a matter of adaptation. During January and February, the hottest part of the summer, Sister Hall and I could hardly bear the heat. Homes, automobiles and buildings are neither heated or cooled. You just take what nature gives you. We were so hot, miserable and exhausted that we wondered if we had contracted some of the exotic, tropical diseases available here. But after adjusting to 95° temperatures at high humidity, we are like the trees and other flora. We think winter has arrived when it is 70 at night. The worst is yet to come. They say that next July night-time temperatures will sometimes fall to 40. And we left our electric blankets in Provo. Oh, well, it wouldn't work anyway. Everything here runs on 220 volt electricity. I should tell you that electric blankets, washing machines, dryers, disposals, microwave ovens, color TVs, butter, cheese, laundromats, corn syrup, K-Marts, Grand Centrals, Big Macs, Sears, Skaggs Drugs, and many other absolute necessities, including color film and film processing, do not exist here.

Although we are near to the equator (15 degrees south), Harare is 6000 feet above sea level while Provo is only 4200. Humidity is high year round so you can steam-cook in the daytime and be clammy cold at night.

Another interesting phenomena resulting from our proximity to the equator is that sunrise and sunset remain rather constant year round. The sun shoots out of the ground abruptly at 6:00 am and plummets behind the horizon at 6:00 pm. Interestingly, there is a cold, mysterious shiver in the air at sunset. Brief as they are, however, sunrise and sunset are lovely. I wonder if this is what Kipling implied in his poem "...on the road to Mandalay...where the sun comes up like thunder o'er China 'cross the bay..."

Well, I have wandered, let's get back to walking. We found the milk man and his heavy push cart over on Ruth Taylor avenue (really) near Tomlinson Drive, returned five empty bottles I had carried over in a plastic shopping bag and purchased three milk, one quava, and one orange juice. The bottles contain 600 millilitres (a bit more than one pint). It's good to pick them up early because they are not refrigerated after leaving the processing plant. The milk industry (called Daribord) is nationalized in Zimbabwe. We swing home, wash off the exterior of the bottles in soapy water, dry them, and put them in a small fridge. Then we are off walking again. We pass a Eucalyptus tree with a branch just the right height for chinning so I do a few. Ida-Rose passes on this one. Then we do a bit of race-walking which we learned from our daughter Liz. We revel in the fresh morning air, the dew, the endless varieties of

shrubs, trees, flowers, cacti, etc. Dogs bark at every gate we pass (All yards are high fenced, usually with stone and the gates are of ornamental iron). Premises are also protected by electronic devices with such trade names as "Chloride Alarm", "Chubb Alarm", and "Radio Alarm". House numbering is individual to an area such as Gunhill, Highlands, Borrowdale, or Eastlea. Once you catch on, it's a good system. Most homes, in addition to having a house number also have a name. For example, No.6 "Nervana", or No.8 "Century". The number, the house, and the family name, such as Granmur Lodge #6 (Tomlinson Ave., Gunhill), "D. Barnett", (really) are all prominently displayed in large letters on or near the gate.

We pass many blacks on our morning walks and give each one a cheery "good morning" trying to do our part for black-white reconciliation. They are often startled that a white would speak to them. They usually answer "good morning Sir" or "good morning Maddam".

One day when we went after milk, we found the milk man smoking a cigarette. Ida-Rose, in her motherly way, gave him a good scolding, telling him that he would get cancer, it was a bad expensive habit, etc. He retaliated that he was only smoking to keep warm. Ida-Rose rebutted by asking him if he could read English. He said yes, so she gave him a tract on the Word of Wisdom. We haven't seen him smoking since.

The milk men wear a blue jump suit trimmed with green. Their hat is blue with a hemispherical top and large floppy brim that goes all the way around. The detailing can be described as "definitely Afrikan". I wanted one and offered to buy his but he would not sell. He said that I could get one at Paramount Uniforms—hope to get one soon. This reminds me of a time when I wouldn't sell. A group of crochet hawkers descended on me one day as I pulled into a parking stall near a TM store. One lady was very insistent that I had to buy a crocheted dress from her since she had so many children, had school fees to pay, etc. (They are very good actors and often their stories alone are worth \$5.00). I showed her that my wallet contained only \$10.00 and that I had to buy groceries with it. She then begged me to take off my shirt and give it to her, along with the ten dollars for the dress.

We encounter many other interesting things on our morning walks. Wherever we go we see police and army personnel and army and police vehicles. The vehicles are very strange in appearance; for sure, out of this world. I've been hankering to take some pictures of them but am afraid of getting shot. We live near police and army barracks and also a prison. We sometimes see Zimbabwe Republic Police Cavalry going up the roadside four horses abreast, there being about fifty horses in the formation. A most interesting sight is a cadre of fifty young army recruits dressed in white, sleeveless t-shirts, white shorts, and white tennis shoes running down the road, in step, and in precision formation, chanting as they go, under the direction of a leader running alongside. Two of the men in the cadre, one behind the other, carry a heavy log about ten feet long on their shoulders. At the leader's command they toss the log (while still running) to another pair of recruits and continue, on command to do so until each person has had his turn at one end of the log. In the distance, in the early morning mist, one does not see black. There are only tee shirts, shorts, and tennis shoes, pumping up and down to an ever fainter African chant as they vanish into the morning.

Well, so much for our morning walk. Maybe next time I can tell you about breakfast.

Love, Tracy (and Ida-Rose)