SERVICE LEARNING in Zimbabwe, Africa

INTERIM '88

ZIMBABWE 1988

GROUP CHRONICLE

Written By

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We had a farm in Africa, in the mountainous eastern region of Zimbabwe near the city of Mutare. Actually, unlike Isak Dinesen, author of Out of Africa, we were only temporary residents of a farm in Africa, the farm at the Old Mutare United Methodist Mission Station. "We" were twenty-four students from Birmingham-Southern College and five adult advisors. We were there for two weeks in January of 1988 as a part of a course at Birmingham-Southern, an Interim in Service-Learning, during which we intended to learn about Africa, ourselves and God while living and working at the United Methodist Mission.

After months of preparation, our adventure began on the afternoon of January 6th, when we met at the Delta desk of the Birmingham airport. The temperature in Birmingham was in the upper twenties or lower thirties that day, and everyone was bundled up. But underneath warm sweatshirts and sweaters were short-sleeved shirts, for we were to travel not only to another continent but also to another season. As people arrived at the airport, they compared the sizes and contents of their duffle bags, putting them before the counter to be checked through.

A little after 1:30 p.m., we said goodbye to the people who had come to see us off and boarded the plane to begin the first of eight flights that would carry us to and from Zimbabwe. After thirty minutes, we landed safely in

Atlanta.

In Atlanta, we had to retrieve our luggage from the conveyor belt in order to carry it to the international concourse to check it through to Zimbabwe. The thought of having to carry all this luggage through the Atlanta airport was frightening in itself, for not only did most of us have a large duffle bag and a carry-on bag of our personal belongings (traveling light to the Third World!), we each had also another checked-through bag of medical supplies for the hospital at Old Mutare. Fortunately, carts were available near the baggage claim area, and we rolled successfully to the KLM desk.

Having checked our bags, we separated until time to gather for the flight to Amsterdam. Sometime after 6:00 p.m., we boarded the KLM 747. About 7:00, we left the runway, and our international journey began. The flight was an uneventful one. To pass the time away on the long flight, people played cards, read, slept, ate, drank or watched the in-flight movie "Mannequin." As the flight went on, we began to feel the time change that was to come because we were served dinner and breakfast within three hours of each other. Amsterdam was seven hours ahead of Birmingham; Zimbabwe would be eight. Because of favorable tailwinds, we arrived in Amsterdam about 9:00 in the morning of the 7th, about two hours earlier than expected.

Because there was a twelve-hour layover before our

flight to Nairobi, we had time to sightsee in Amsterdam. We rode the train into the city, where we spent the day in a tourist area full of restaurants and shops, people and lights, and speeding busses, streetcars, and automobiles.

In the afternoon, we met to go as a group to the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh museum. By the time we reached the Van Gogh Museum, jet lag and the cold, rainy Amsterdam weather had begun to take their toll, and we were all feeling tired and fighting sleep. The experienced world travelers, Diane and Sam Brown, encouraged us to stay awake in order to adjust to the new time, but this was much more easily said than done. We did wake up a little after leaving the museums, when Bob Slagter led us through the red-light district of Amsterdam. Prostitution is legal there, and the prostitutes sat alluringly in the windows of their shops waiting for customers. Along with the prostitutes, there were numerous theaters showing pornographic movies or advertising live sex on stage. We took a little more time for shopping after seeing the red-light district, and then we took the train back to the airport. Riding the train, several of us succumbed to the sleep that had been trying to suck us under throughout the afternoon.

We were more alert after being able to eat and take showers in the Amsterdam airport, but the wakefulness did not last long. Many of us slept again in the gate at the

airport and on the flight to Nairobi, which left Amsterdam at about 11:00 Thursday evening.

Upon awakening Friday morning, we looked out the windows of the 747 to see the mountains and the grassy plains of Africa below. The airport in Nairobi was in the middle of one of these grassy plains; Nairobi itself was nowhere in sight. We left the plane under heavy security (required because this airport is a military airport and because the Israeli airline, El Al, flies in there) to enter what many of us perceived as a very dismal, unfriendly airport where we would have to spend six hours. Those hours we spent strolling about the airport past the little shops and dingy bars, drinking hot soft drinks, sleeping on the floor, and being moved from one gate to another by airport personnel. At one point, Stewart Jackson and Barclay Browne got out Stewart's small telescope to pass the time looking out the windows at the planes on the runway. As they were looking out, a security guard approached them and angrily confiscated the scope, saying that they absolutely could not observe the runway that way and threatening them with imprisonment. After some discussion, the guard returned the scope with a warning that they should not look through it again. Barclay spoke later of being afraid of being thrown into prison in Kenya and being forgotten for a long time. Such was our first experience with the Third World.

Finally, to the delight of most of us, the time came to board Air Zimbabwe for the flight to Harare. Interestingly, when we walked to the plane, we found all our checked luggage sitting out on the ground waiting for us to bring it to be loaded into the cargo hold of the plane.

After a very bumpy, turning flight, we arrived in Harare about 6:00 Friday evening. To our relief, people were there to meet us along with the bus that was to take us to Old Mutare. Partly because they were there, the reception in the Harare airport was much more warm and welcoming than it had been in the Nairobi airport. Meeting us were Mr. Rhodes Chimonyo, a United Methodist official, and Jasmina Bouraoui and Clarkson Jerahuni, two University of Zimbabwe students. Jasmina, an exchange student from the U.S., had met Stewart when he visited Old Mutare in June, and when she was working there temporarily. Clarkson is her African boyfriend.

Because of some arrangements made by Mr. Chimonyo before our arrival, we were able simply to walk through customs without having all our bags checked. This was a big relief to all of us, because we had been uncertain as to whether we would be allowed to carry all the medical supplies into the country.

After getting through customs, we set about exchanging our American currency for Zimbabwe dollars. Not only did

each of us have our own spending money to exchange, but also the team treasurer, Donna Johnston, had to exchange a large sum of group money, which we had brought for buying painting supplies and food, for paying the women who were going to cook and do laundry for us, and for financing special group outings. Donna's three weeks were especially stressful, because she was in charge of keeping up with these thousands of dollars throughout the trip.

After the currency exchanging, which took a fairly long time, we boarded the bus for the four-hour ride to Old Mutare. We arrived there about 1:00 a.m. Saturday, Zimbabwe time, about fifty-one hours after we had left Birmingham.

At Old Mutare, even at 1:00 in the morning, Max Chambara, the administrator of the mission farm, and the Reverend Eben Nhiwatiwa, the pastor in charge of the mission station, were waiting up for us. Before we even got off the bus, Rev. Nhiwatiwa made us feel very welcome by coming onto the bus and shaking each of our hands in greeting. The two men spoke with us briefly inside the large room that was to be our dining hall, and then we all unloaded our luggage and moved into the concrete house that was to be our home for the next two weeks.

The house had four rooms, two on the front and two on the back, each room opening to the outside. The two front rooms were somewhat larger than the back rooms, and they

opened onto a concrete porch. One of these rooms was claimed by the seven boys, and the other three by the girls, about six to a room. Because the back rooms were only a little bigger than a dorm room, they were very crowded. Mosquito nets hung like tents over the beds made them seem even more crowded, especially when the string suspending the nets over the beds crisscrossed the room, making it inconvenient to walk through.

We finally went to bed by about 3:00 a.m., after hanging our mosquito nets securely enough to protect us for one night.

Fortunately, Saturday was not a particularly busy day, since we were all still very tired from the trip. We did have to get up by 8:00, however, for our first breakfast in Zimbabwe. Our hosts had arranged for us to employ five local women to cook for us and to do our laundry while we were there. Our first meal did not bode well for the rest of our stay, however, because they served us corn flakes with hot powdered milk to pour over them. The milk was hot because the water that it was made with had had to be boiled shortly before making the milk. The women also served us bread and hot tea, which were to become, along with peanut butter brought from home, the staples of our breakfast diet. Hot milk and cereal were not served often after that first morning, and the food during the rest of the stay exceeded our initial expectations. Having been

prepared to eat sadza, the grits-like staple of the diet in Zimbabwe, every day, we were surprised to be served instead either chicken or beef, rice or potatoes, and gravy for most of our meals. We did eat a traditional meal one night with sadza, pumpkin leaves in peanut butter sauce, and greens, but this menu really did not catch on. The monotony of our diets was occasionally broken when the women served us jello and custard or ice cream. The jello, because of its coolness, was usually met with cheering and excitement.

With this discussion of the food at the mission, I must also talk a little about the water. Never had water seemed so important to us before this trip. The water supply to the farm was not pure, so all water for drinking had to be boiled. Each day, a committee of us who had been appointed as the water committee boiled our water for the day and filled each of our water bottles for us to have water to drink. Although the water was safe to drink, even after it was boiled it usually still looked brown with dirt, which would settle at the bottom as the day wore on. In addition, the water usually took a while to cool, and it never got really cold. We learned to tolerate it, though, and learned to appreciate it greatly when the women cooking for us strained and refrigerated the water they served us with our meals.

The rest of that first Saturday was spent discovering

the parts of the mission and settling into the routine of life there. Some of the more adventurous (and energetic) people went walking and found it to be about a two-mile walk from the farm to the main part of the mission where the school and hospital were. This group also made another important discovery: there was a small store at the mission which sold cold soft drinks! We would go there often in the next two weeks. Right next to this store was the mission telephone where we could place calls to the United States.

For the women, another part of adjusting to life at the mission was remembering to wear skirts whenever we were going to see Africans. Especially in the rural areas of Zimbabwe, no woman ever wears anything but dresses or skirts, and a woman who wears pants is thought of as "loose." We had been told that in order to interact as easily as possible with the Africans, we should always dress in skirts. We were very conscientious about this to begin with, but as time went by, we discovered that it was acceptable for us to wear pants around the farm, where Max and the women who were cooking for us knew to expect it, and that we only had to wear skirts when we went over to the mission. Even to go to the mission to do painting, we wore our skirts, usually with shorts underneath them, however. Once we got inside Dodge Hall, where we were painting, the skirts quickly came off.

Also that first Saturday, we prepared for our two weeks of living at the farm by putting up the mosquito nets more securely. We in the back rooms devised an effective system of hanging them. Because the beams of the ceiling, from which we wanted to hang the nets, were too high for us to get the twine over, we solicited the assistance of Joe Rock, a small stone residing at the time in the dirt behind the house. By tying Joe to the twine, we could throw it over the beams easily. After an hour or so of banging the tin roof with Joe, we had all the nets securely hung. When we finished, each room looked like a small tent city.

Outside, Chris Janes was making friends with some of the African children who lived nearby by teaching them to play hopscotch. The only problem he had was the disagreement within our group over what exactly the rules for hopscotch were.

On the next day, Sunday, January 10th, we had our first real contact with the Africans who lived at the mission when we went to morning worship at the mission church. The students at the school were not back yet, so the congregation was rather small. We were introduced in front of the church during the service, and the people there welcomed us in the traditional way by clasping their hands over their heads when the pastor gave the signal. The service was entirely in Shona, but Barclay and I were fortunate to have met Lovemore Matewa before church, and he

translated most of the service for us.

After we had walked back to the farm and eaten lunch, Peter Mudiwa came over in his new blue Toyota truck and took a group of us into Mutare. While we were in town, a disagreement arose because some of the girls wanted to go into the bar they had seen, just to look. Peter did not seem to think they should go, and finally they decided not to after Penny Ford said something to them. This incident raised a question that we dealt with for much of the time at the mission, the question of how (and whether) to adapt our ways to the expectations of the people at the mission. We had been told that the rules against drinking and smoking by Methodists in Zimbabwe were taken much more seriously than they are in the U.S., and that for the Zimbabweans to see us doing these things would undermine their beliefs and turn them away from us. Needless to say, the implication that we were there solely as representatives of the United Methodist church rubbed some people the wrong way, while others felt strongly that we should adhere to the expectations people had of us as representatives of the church. This issue of drinking and smoking and when to do it became clearer after we were there awhile--after we learned that we should be discreet but did not have to totally abstain.

Sunday evening, we had our first group reflection session of the trip. Having all been told to bring a

favorite shirt to the meeting, we began by throwing all the shirts in a pile in the middle of the floor. Then, on Penny's signal, we all ran into the center and grabbed any shirt we could. We were supposed to find the person to whom the shirt belonged and ask them why they had come to Zimbabwe, why they liked that shirt, and any other question that popped into our heads.

On Monday morning, we said goodbye to Jasmina and Clarkson, who had stayed with us over the weekend, and we prepared to learn of the work we would do at the mission.

Work began for the medical team on Monday morning. They went to the hospital that morning and began to see what their routine would be like and the kinds of patients the hospital treated. They saw people afflicted with hepatitis. They saw in practice what they had been told before we left: that all fevers were first treated as malaria. They saw men with AIDS who were told that they had Gallo's disease, not AIDS. They saw women in labor. They visited the orphanage, or "baby fold" as it was called, where about forty orphaned children were cared for. During the course of the day, they experienced the frustration of knowing that more could be done in some cases for the patients and the helplessness of not being able to do anything. They learned the kinds of jobs they would be doing: giving shots, handing out medicines, sewing baby clothes, making rounds with the doctor, and

going out to the rural clinics. They also had to deal with the clash of personalities within the medical team, an issue that was finally resolved.

While the medical team got into their routine, the construction team rested on Monday, because Max and Chris Janes had not yet decided upon a project for the construction team. Finally they decided we would paint the inside of one of the dorms at the mission school, and some people went into Mutare to buy paint.

Monday evening, we had a time of reflection and discussion of our feelings about the trip so far. Most of what people said was positive, although before the meeting there had been negative rumblings especially among the members of the medical team over the question of who was going to be in charge among them.

We began the painting project on Tuesday. That day, we painted five rooms in Dodge Hall, a boy's dorm. The rooms, many of which had dirty and scuffed walls, seemed to be improved by the ivory or blue paint we used. Laura Boyd especially distinguished herself by painting the red trim along the bottom of the walls. This was not as easy as it may sound because the trim had to be drawn in a straight line just by eyeing it, since there were no baseboards.

By the end of this day, our routine, like that of the medical team, had been established. We would generally arise about 6:00, begin our work about 8:30 or 9:00, break

for cokes about 10:30 (the medical team would have tea at the home of Matron Kapenzie, the hospital administrator), work until Max picked us up about noon, go to the farm for lunch, return by 2:00 or so, and work until about 5:00. Of course, being on the more relaxed "African time," none of these hours were carved in stone.

The medical team's activities on Tuesday were much the same as Monday, except that the team got to do more work themselves, rather than simply observing. In addition, Scott Haugh, Barbara Baker, and Louise Randolph went out with some of the nurses to one of the rural clinics and returned to the farm rather late that evening, for the drive was a long one.

Tuesday was also the day of our first experience with traditional food, when they served us sadza, pumpkin leaves in peanut butter sauce, and greens for dinner. Tuesday evening was spent, as was most free time, either sitting on the porch of our house writing in journals, reading or talking, or sitting inside the big room playing chess, poker, or spades. Sam Brown could almost always be found playing chess, while Lynn Ridgeway and Mona McPherson became especially fond of poker as the days went on.

Wednesday, January 13th, was a day of many diverse activities. In the morning, several people went to morning prayer with Max and the farm workers, and Ryan Goodman milked a cow.

Some exciting things also happened at the hospital. Both Diane Brown and Barclay Browne witnessed babies being born. Seeing a baby being born became the coveted experience for many people on the trip, an experience which some found to be the most moving of the entire trip, for the women gave birth without being given any anesthesia at all. Also, the conditions under which the women gave birth were not nearly so clean as they are in the United States. None of the attendants wore masks, for example.

Also at the hospital, Diane Sisbarro spent the day giving shots and being kicked by the babies she was giving them to. Meanwhile, Lynn Ridgeway, Donna Johnston, and Missy Newton were working in the hospital lab, where they had discovered the parasite bilharzia in urine samples. The hospital staff knew that patients with blood in their urine probably had bilharzia, which is acquired from drinking impure water, but they usually did not have time to look at the urine samples to actually see the parasite.

Over at Dodge Hall, the construction team completed the painting of three more rooms.

About ten people took off from working on Wednesday to have a day shopping in Mutare, something each of us would get to do before our stay in Zimbabwe ended. They bought souvenirs of stone and wood carvings, baskets, woven bags, cookbooks, musical instruments, and tapes of African music.

In the afternoon, Betty Bagwell, Diane Sisbarro, and

Laura Rankin attempted to climb "the mountain" which overlooked the mission, and which many of the group tried to climb at some point during our stay there. Their climb proved to be a very frightening experience for the three of them, for being unable to find the clear path to the top, they found themselves going up a densely wooded way. In the course of coming down, Diane nearly fell into a deep ravine, but Betty caught her and pulled her out.

Wednesday evening, we had another time of reflection, this time to address the question, "What are you learning?" For this discussion, we divided into smaller groups, in which people seemed more willing to share than they were in the large group. When we got back together in the large group, we shared the things that people were learning. Some of us were learning from the development of community among the twenty-nine very different people that made up our group. Some spoke of the difficulties and joys of trying to live and work so closely with one group--that there is much patience and compromise involved in working within a group. Also, being in such close quarters with so many people for such a long time was making some people learn that they had a need for solitude. Living in such intensity with one group had its positive side, too, for some of us were getting to know people we might otherwise never have known. Despite the difficulties of our living situation, Diane Brown expressed amazement at the way the

group was coping with life in a different culture.

Besides learning things about our own group, we were also learning about the bonds between us and the rest of humanity. Someone commented on the universality of human nature, of human suffering, of human feeling, and of human experiences. And others felt a particular bond with the people of Zimbabwe because of Christianity, whose message has reached both Americans and Africans, despite the distances in the physical world.

Many people seemed to be being very emotionally affected by their experiences, saying that they felt every experience to be an intense one and that they felt the need to soak up and remember every small and large thing that they were experiencing and seeing.

So went our first week in Africa.

Thursday, January 14th, began our second week. That day was a day like most others at the mission, with work continuing at the hospital and at Dodge Hall. A group from the medical team traveled in the ambulance out to one of the rural clinics, this one about fifty kilometers away. In five hours there, they saw about 140 patients, giving shots and helping the nurses give out the prescriptions. Back at the hospital at the mission, the other group continued their same routine, with the highlight of the day being Penny Ford's seeing a baby being born.

Another group took the day off from working to have

their day in Mutare. Looking forward to a relaxing, enjoyable day shopping and eating, the seven of us (Adair Brevard, Diane Brown, Barclay Browne, Leslie Thomas, Helen Krontiras, Elata Bowman, and I) set out to walk the dirt road from the farm to the entrance to the mission, where the bus stop was. It was after reaching the bus stop that we had our first real experience with public transportation in the Third World. There is no bus schedule; busses simply come along every now and then. But we did not feel too silly waiting there, because several Africans were also waiting. After standing optimistically for a while and seeing no bus, we began to get hot and tired and sat down. Finally, we spotted a bus in the distance. But as it approached, we saw that it was packed with people. It didn't even stop. Frustrated, we sat down again. We stopped expecting a bus and decided that we would ride with anyone who would stop for us. Finally, after we had waited an hour and forty-five minutes, a woman in a pickup truck stopped and picked us all up. We were on our way, so we thought. About two miles down the road, however, we came to the start of a very steep grade. The woman's truck was giving her problems, and she came around and said the truck wouldn't make it up Christmas Pass with all of us in it; we would have to get out. There we were--stranded. We decided to try to walk toward town, which was about ten kilometers away. As we walked, we came upon a tiny fruit

stand where an English couple had stopped their Volkswagen to make a purchase. Diane ran over to them and asked, "Will you take some of my girls into town?"

"We can't take all of you," they responded, but they agreed to take three of us. Elata, Adair, and I panicked, not wanting to leave the rest of them stranded there, but Diane insisted we go. So we went, finally reaching Mutare after a more than two-hour ordeal. We had shopped for a few minutes at a store selling African crafts when the four stranded ones came in, having gotten a ride shortly after we did.

Despite the difficulty of going the seven or so miles into Mutare, we had a good day of shopping there, with a break for lunch at either the Manica Hotel or the Dairy Den (which, by the way, served something called an "Alabama Burger"). By 3:30 p.m., we were ready to go back to the mission. We walked to the bus stop, but, naturally, the bus was already full. Not to worry, though. There were several vans and trucks also waiting to carry people out of town. Diane arranged for one of these to take all of us, and we all piled in, along with several Africans and one small African child, whom Adair held on her lap. We were so pleased. We thought how easy getting this ride had been compared to that morning. We had spoken too soon, however. After going about three blocks, the van cut off and would not start again. The men driving worked on it for a little

while, as we sat patiently, and then he told us we would have to get out. But he said not to worry, "Someone will come." We got out and sat down on the curb, thankful simply that we were in the shade. The men pushed the van around the corner. Somehow, after a few minutes of tinkering with it out of our sight, the same van drove around the corner again. Adair picked up the child, and we all climbed back in and had a blissfully uneventful ride back to the mission.

Thursday evening, some of the group went to the weekly men's prayer meeting over at the mission. Later, Stewart played the guitar awhile, and several of us sat with him and sang. That he was able to play his guitar was in itself a small miracle, for it had broken at the neck on the trip from Atlanta to Amsterdam. For a time, he had been uncertain if he would be able to repair it, but when we got to the mission, he bought some clamps and glued it back together. Then he took it over to the woodshop at the mission where Luke Nzara put a wooden brace on the back of the neck to steady it where it had been glued. His work held up nicely, and all of us relaxed listening to Stewart play it for the rest of this trip. Some hidden guitar talents also came out of the closet as Mike Johnson, Penny Ford, Chris Tucker, and I got much enjoyment out of playing Stewart's guitar many evenings.

On Friday, January 15, the construction team finished

painting all the rooms in Dodge Hall, returning to the farm by 10:30 a.m. When we got back to the farm, we found several of the farm workers standing around together near our house. Lying on the ground by them was a freshly killed Black Mamba snake about two yards in length. They had killed it in a storage house about thirty yards from our living quarters. The Black Mamba is one of the world's deadliest snakes; a person being bitten by one will almost surely die within about twenty minutes after being bitten.

After getting over the shock of the Black Mamba incident, the construction team spent the rest of the morning lounging on the front porch of our house. Meanwhile, at the hospital, Mona McPherson was getting to do more than just see a baby being born; before the day was over, she had actually delivered a baby herself. As for the rest of the medical team, some had gone out to a clinic for immunizing babies.

Also on Friday, another group went into Mutare, without the difficulty that we had experienced the day before, for they rode into town with the wife of the doctor at the Old Mutare hospital.

Stewart Jackson, Ryan Goodman, and Bob Slagter went with Peter Mudiwa that Friday to another United Methodist mission school near Old Mutare, where Peter is now teaching. The students there were very curious about the United States, and the questions they asked were revealing

about their impressions of the United States. They wanted to know, for example, if political science students in the States were taught how to make nuclear weapons. They also asked about Jesse Jackson.

That afternoon, we all gathered back at the farm, where the Secretary of Parliament, John Kurewa, himself a former student of Old Mutare school and of one of the missionaries there from Alabama and a United Methodist clergyman, came to speak to us about current issues in Zimbabwe. He named education, creating a one-party state, and creating or regaining its identity as three of the major problems facing Zimbabwe today. He especially tried to emphasize to us that Zimbabwe is not a communist country and that the one-party system is the best system for African countries.

All of us, including Max, took a break from our work on Saturday, January 16th, to take a trip to the Great Zimbabwe ruins, for which the country is named. These great stone walls are the ruins of a fairly advanced ancient civilization which came to an end in about the fifteenth century. The name "Zimbabwe" comes from two words meaning "stone houses" and describing the ruins.

The ride to Great Zimbabwe was to be about five hours, so we left Old Mutare on a chartered bus at 5:00 a.m. We arrived at the ruins by 10:30. Since we had left the more mountainous area of Zimbabwe where Old Mutare was, the heat

was even more intense at Great Zimbabwe than at the mission. Nevertheless, we began a rather steep and rocky climb up to the higher part of the ruins, situated on top of a mountain. After making it to the top and spending a little while taking in the view, we descended the hill and walked over to the Great Enclosures, where we made the first of several group pictures.

After the making of the group picture, it was time for lunch at the Great Zimbabwe Hotel. Eating there seemed like a great luxury to us after living for a week at the mission, and we were all looking forward to that almost more than we had looked forward to seeing the ruins. We were served either cold meats and salad or lamb and vegetables, a dessert bar, and, most importantly, cold water. Not all of us could enjoy it though. The heat had been so oppressive that Keith Crowe had begun to suffer from heat exhaustion and had spent much of the morning vomiting. Obviously, he did not feel much like eating.

After lunch, some of the group slipped away from the table to have a drink in the bar. They were very discreet about their drinking, however, since Max was with us. Max's coming with us had been a source of some unhappiness when we had left that morning, since everyone knew the Zimbabwean Methodists' strict position on drinking, but after this trip and other trips Max took with us, we began to see that Max was not as naive or as easily shocked at

our customs as we feared he would be, and we came to like him very much.

The five-hour ride back from Great Zimbabwe was very hot and very long. Many of us slept much of the way, but we did wake up long enough to see the baobob trees Diane Brown pointed out to us. The baobobs, which look like they have been turned upside down with their roots sticking up into the air, are a common sight in Africa.

That evening, after we were back at the mission, we began to have our first real problems with sickness, as several people were plagued with nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Also that evening, Stewart, who had not gone on the trip to Great Zimbabwe, went into Mutare to attend a dinner with a delegation of dignitaries from India. He had gotten invited to this event as he had wandered around Mutare while the rest of us were gone.

The next morning, we walked over to the mission for our second Shona church service. This service, though, was very different from the one the week before, for by this time, all the students at Old Mutare school had returned, and, since they were all required to attend church every week, the church was packed this Sunday. Out of the approximately one thousand people there, we were practically the only whites. After we sat in the church a few minutes, the huge choir began to process in singing,

unaccompanied, and doing a sort of shuffling side-to-side movement as they entered. At the very end of this long line of Africans came Stewart, trying to fit in by doing the shuffle but standing out nevertheless. Once the choir arrived at the front of the church, they sang again, this time accompanied by shakers and drums. Having been asked right before church to do the prayer, Stewart then read a Psalm. Before the sermon began, the minister had our group disperse among the students so they could translate the Shona for us as the rest of the service went on. After church, many of our group traded addresses with the students, many of whom seemed eager to have American pen-pals.

After we had lunch at the farm, many of the group took a trip into Mutare to visit a museum and a small game park there. One of the borders of the game park was the Mozambique border. Along this border were signs warning of the presence of mines.

Sunday night, Betty Bagwell and Diane Sisbarro went to the mission to work the night shift at the hospital. The two of them helped the one night nurse with the births of two babies and treated a cancer patient and a child who had been burned.

On Monday the 18th we returned to our regular schedule and arose again very early. After breakfast, one group went into Mutare for shopping, and the rest of us went over

to the mission where we were to sit in on several classes at the high school. Some people went to a biology lab, where the African students spent the hour asking our students questions about education and AIDS in the United States. In the chemistry class some people attended, the Zimbabwean students wanted to know about how to get into American universities. The history class, which the rest of us attended, went on as scheduled, with Rev. Nhiwatiwa lecturing on the topic, "Ethiopia: The Making of a Modern State." Some of us participated in the discussion; for example, Penny Ford commented that, "The ruler, he or she might..." We wondered afterwards what these students in this male-dominated society had thought of that remark. After class, we went to tea with the students, a regular part of their daily routine.

Before walking back to the mission for lunch, several of us walked over behind the hospital to look in the waiting house for pregnant women, which we were going to be painting in the next couple of days. The women were friendly to us and even stood up from where they were sitting on their beds so we could take their picture. Although the women were very friendly, their room was not so inviting. About sixteen beds were lined up together along the sides and down the center of the room, which was itself very dark and dismal.

In the afternoon, four of the medical team went out to

one of the rural clinics, while the rest of us waited at the farm for Max to return to take us back over to the mission to look more closely at the waiting house. As the afternoon dragged on and Max did not come, we took advantage of the break to relax on the front porch reading, listening to music or sleeping until the first rain in several days finally came. The rain drove us off the porch and into our rooms, where most of us napped for the rest of the afternoon. Max finally came back during the rain, and a few people who were awake went over to the mission to plan for the painting of the waiting house.

Monday evening was unusual in that we did not all eat dinner together. The people who had gone into Mutare returned late, after having to walk much of the way because of a bus breakdown. Ryan, Penny, and Betty had been invited to Peter Mudiwa's home for dinner, and the adult advisors went to a dinner at Rev. Nhiwatiwa's home with many other staff people at the mission. Interestingly, at this meal, the men were served first, and the women who had prepared the meal did not eat with everyone else. In addition, Stewart reported that the television blared the entire time.

Our routine was disrupted again on Tuesday by another trip--this one to Nyanga national park, about seventy kilometers from Old Mutare. All of our group along with Max and the associate minister of the mission, Rev. Joseph

Makande, left at 8:00 a.m. and wound our way by bus on the dirt roads through the tree farms and up into the Nyanga Mountains. We stopped and hiked to a spot overlooking two very high and narrow waterfalls and stopped again at several scenic overlooks. The mountains were of about the same height as the Appalachains in the United States, but were rockier and less tree-covered. We had our second luxurious meal of the trip at the Rhodes Nyanga Hotel, the former homestead of Cecil Rhodes, who had founded Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) as an English colony and who had ruled it for many years. In a country where many people are still living in mud huts with thatched roofs, it was striking to see the luxury of such a hotel, with its manicured lawns, its bar, its fine European food, and its black employees serving mostly white, English patrons. I felt that we had seen Zimbabwe from the African perspective by living at the mission, and from the European perspective by visiting this hotel. One could come and stay at this hotel and hardly know one was in Africa at all. In some ways, we felt as if we had stepped back into society.

By this trip, we had begun to feel more relaxed with Max, and we were told that we could order alcohol with lunch if we did not sit too near the table where he and the Reverend were sitting. Stewart had carefully positioned Max and the Reverend so they were sitting with him and facing the wall. Meanwhile, all around them, members of

our group were ordering beer and wine and generally enjoying themselves very much.

On the way back to the mission, we made two more stops. One stop was at the Church of the Good Samaritan, a small sanctuary shared by four denominations and having inside it some very beautiful wood carving. The other stop showed us again the European way to stay in Zimbabwe--it was the Montclair Casino Hotel, run by the Holiday Inn company.

We returned to the mission by 6:00 p.m. After supper, Shirley DeWolf, a white Zimbabwean working for an organization called Christian Care and married to a teacher at Hartzell High School (the school at the mission), came to speak to us about the work of Christian Care and about the current issues facing Zimbabwe. Among other activities, Christian Care helped relocate refugees during the civil war, teaches family planning to Africans, and tries to set up a local structure in various areas to help with food distribution in times of famine.

Current issues she discussed included overpopulation, women's issues, the cool relations between the governments of Zimbabwe and the United States, AIDS, education, taxation, unwed mothers and battered wives in the inner-city areas, child abandonment, adoption, the difficulty foreigners have in getting jobs in Zimbabwe, job training, cooperatives, and land distribution. (The government of

Zimbabwe owns the land.)

We got back to work on Wednesday, January 20th, the end of our second week away from home. By 8:30 that morning almost everyone from both teams was at the mission, ready to begin painting the inside of the waiting house for pregnant women. This four-room house was a place where women come as much as two months before their due date to await giving birth to their babies. They pay a small fee to stay there, and they have to provide their own food. They come there to wait because they have to walk a long distance to come to the hospital and cannot wait until they are in labor to come.

We began our work by moving all the women and all of their belongings out of the house under the trees in front of it. We spent all morning painting. At lunchtime, we all went to Matron Kapenzie's home near the hospital, where she fed us a huge meal of potato salad, potatoes, chicken, rice, sadza, and ice cream. While most of us were eating, a few people had gone back to the house and finished the painting. So when lunch was over, the rest of us returned to the house, cleaned up, and moved the women back in.

The pregnant women's response to our work was one of the most moving moments of the trip. After seeing how the paint had brightened their house, they came back out onto the porch and broke into joyous singing and dancing. They sang a religious song in English and in Shona, and they

clapped their hands. Matron Kapenzie, a large woman in her fifties with eyes that squinted behind her glasses when she smiled, even joined in the dancing.

While the painting had been being finished, Adair Brevard, Rose Mary Evans, Melissa Godwin, and Mona McPherson had gone to the hospital to watch a woman deliver her baby.

Everyone returned to the farm by about 4:00. While some people lounged on the porch, a few of us worked on painting the two rooms that were to be Max's new office, in a brick building next to our house. Having nearly completed this task, we ran out of paint and had to stop until the next day.

After dinner Wednesday evening, most of us went into Mutare with Max, Rev. Makande, and Rev. Nhiwatiwa to the home of the District Superintendent for snacks and fellowship. The District Superintendent and his family received us warmly, shaking each of our hands as we came into the house, and offering us plentiful popcorn, chips, ice cream, cake, punch, tea, soft drinks, and hot chocolate. While there, Penny and I met Spiwe and Lucy Rwarasika. We had met Spiwe's boyfriend, Shongedzai Mawokomatanda, a former student of Old Mutare's high school, at the United Methodist Student Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, in December of 1987. "Shaun," as we called him, had given us Spiwe's name and had written to

her telling her of our coming. She had found out that our group was going to be at the District Superintendent's home that night, and she and her sister had come there to meet Penny and me. Spiwe and Lucy were students at another private school outside of Mutare, where most of the students were white. They were much more British than most of the other Zimbabweans we met. For Penny and me, making this connection between Shaun and Spiwe from one side of the world to the other was one of the most exciting events of the trip.

Before leaving the District Superintendent's home, all of us sang "Jesus Loves Me" in English and in Shona. In Shona, the words went something like this: "Jesu adonda tese."

Thursday, January 21st, began early for Penny, Stewart, Barclay and I as we left the farm at 6:15 a.m. to walk over to the mission to attend the morning assembly at the high school at 7:00. After lining up outside, the 800 students filed into the auditorium. The four of us sat on the stage with the administrators, who introduced us to the students. At Stewart's request, the students sang their version of "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing," which differs significantly from the American version in having another tune with alternating men's and women's parts. The assembly ended with the students proudly singing the Zimbabwean national anthem.

The rest of Thursday morning and afternoon was fairly relaxed. Some of us ate breakfast while others slept in. After breakfast, one group went into Mutare to shop, while the rest of us lounged on the porch. In the afternoon, some people completed the painting of Max's office. Later, we all posed for a group picture at the farm.

After supper, we all went over to Peter Mudiwa's back year at the mission for the Thursday men's prayer meeting. The men meet at a different person's home every week; this week, they met at Peter's in order to welcome him home from his three-year stay in the United States. Women attend these meetings, but they have to sit on the ground while the men sit on chairs or benches. On the way to the meeting, Betty and I rode in the cab of Max's truck. He told us about the strength of the women's group as compared to that of the men's group. The women's organization, he said, is much stronger and more active, and it has more direction than the men's organization has because of efforts that have been made in recent years to educate women to compensate for the fact that they have so long been neglected. Max said the women's group has more projects; for example, they were able in 1987 to send the bishop's wife with him to the meeting of the Council of Bishops in the United States.

The men's prayer meeting began with singing accompanied by shakers and drums. Stewart and Penny

followed by singing a duet, and then Stewart gave a meditation centering on the verse in Matthew about being a sheep among wolves and being both wise and innocent. Max translated his words into Shona as he spoke. After the meditation, Rev. Nhiwatiwa spoke words of praise for our group, and Stewart responded with thanks to the people of Old Mutare for all that they had given us during the two weeks. Our group then sang the doxology in harmony, as we had done at every meal since we had been there, and everyone took communion. The service ended with another song.

Riding back to the farm in the cab of Max's truck, Betty and I learned of a crisis that had occurred the day our group was to arrive at Old Mutare. On that morning, Max had found that the water pump at the farm had quit working. He panicked. He went into Mutare and found a white man whom he did not know but who dropped what he was doing and came out to the farm and fixed the pump in the nick of time. Max was touched by this man's being his friend in his time of need and by the way God is able to work things out.

Friday morning started with a small controversy over what time everyone was supposed to be ready to leave Old Mutare for Harare. Most of the students had understood Stewart to say that we should be on the bus by 4:00 a.m., since our plane was to leave Harare for Nairobi at about

11:00 a.m. So when 3:30 came and Lynn and I saw no lights on over at the "big house," where the adults were obviously still sleeping, we decided we needed to awaken them. We snagged Barbara Baker, and the three of us went into the house, stood in the hall and sang "Morning Has Broken" followed by "Rise and Shine and Give God the Glory." After a few moments, Stewart stumbled into the hall, scowling. We left. Later, Diane Brown walked up to the porch and asked, in a tone that indicated she was not happy, who the wake-up crew had been. When she found out, she asked why the wake up couldn't have come a half hour later since we didn't have to be on the bus until 4:30. We told her we had understood that the time was 4:00. She subsequently spoke to Stewart and found out the we had in fact been told 4:00.

Despite this confusion, we were all on the bus by 4:10 a.m. Before we pulled out at 4:30 from Old Mutare, both Rev. Nhiwatiwa and Max, in his bathrobe, came on the bus to say goodbye.

We arrived in Harare at 8:30 a.m. to find Jasmina and Clarkson waiting at the airport to see us again and to say their goodbyes to us. At 11:00 a.m., we left the runway aboard Air Zimbabwe destined for Nairobi. This Air Zimbabwe flight, like the other one, was very bumpy, with the plane frequently turning sharply left then right, then left, then right...

Despite the bumpiness, which lasted until right before we touched down on the runway, we made it safely to Nairobi, arriving in the mid-afternoon. After going through customs, we took taxi mini-vans to the Methodist Guest House, where we were to stay the night. There, to our delight, we took our first warm showers in two weeks, and we slept in real beds without mosquito nets hanging over them. Although the Methodist Guest House was very simple, much like a dormitory, it felt like luxury.

Saturday morning, the 23rd of January, we arose at 7:30, ate breakfast, stored the luggage we were not going to need on the safari, and checked out. About 9:00, the four drivers for our safari arrived in two white Nissan mini-vans and two green four-wheel-drive Toyota Land Cruisers to take us out to the Masai Mara game reserve, where we would be on safari. Before we left for the Mara, however, we spent two hours in crowded, bustling downtown Nairobi becoming acquainted with the system of bargaining for what one wanted to buy. The shopkeepers in the market and sitting outside were very aggressive, and everywhere we went, we were bombarded by people trying to get us to "Come into my shop" because "I give you a discount" or because "I give you the special morning price" or holding out an armful of copper bracelets to entice us to buy. Several people were approached and offered marijuana. Prices for everything were always negotiable. We quickly learned to

be firm with the vendors.

About 11:00 a.m., we piled back into the four vehicles to travel to the Masai Mara. The trip out took us through the Great Rift Valley, a huge depression in the land which extends from Turkey to Mozambique. Most striking about the ride out was the poverty on the edges of Nairobi and the bad condition of the Kenyan roads. Rough along the edges and full of potholes, they were a challenge for the drivers to navigate; they had to swerve left and right in attempts to miss the roughest spots while trying not to hit approaching trucks head on.

After coming out of the Great Rift Valley, we turned onto the dirt road into the Masai Mara. Soon we began to see some animals, as well as some of the Masai tribe, with their stretched earlobes and dressed in their colored shawls and beads. No one was more thrilled by the game we saw than Laura Rankin, who loves giraffes and who saw her first giraffe on this ride out to the camp. Seeing it moved her to tears.

After bouncing and bumping along for about six hours, we finally arrived at our camp about 6:00 p.m. After the crowded living conditions in Zimbabwe, the camp seemed to provide great personal space since we were only two people to a fairly large tent. Also, because the tents had zip-up screens over all the openings, we did not have to use our mosquito nets at the camp. Our small tent village also had

several bathroom tents (a hole in the ground with a wooden stool over it) and shower tents. The showers came from a canvas bag of water hung from a tree over the rectangular tent. There was also a long tent where we ate our meals. Our first meal around the long table in this tent consisted of corn on the cob, bread, spaghetti, and pineapple juice or wine. After supper, some people went to bed, while I fought nausea and diarrhea. The sounds of Stewart's guitar and the light of the campfire put a peaceful end on our first full day in Kenya. During the night, we could hear the sounds of the lions lying nearby. We had been warned not to stray far from the camp or to shine flashlights on them, and two Masai warriors with spears sat under a tree at the back of the camp to guard us.

We spent the next two days either riding across the grassy fields of the Mara on "game runs" or lounging around the camp. We would take a game run early in the morning and another late in the afternoon, when the animals were most likely to be out, and we would spend the middle of the day sleeping, sunning, showering, washing each other's hair, or washing our clothes at the camp.

On game runs, which usually lasted about three or four hours, we would drive out across the plains either on dirt roads or right through the grass in search of animals, which the drivers were skilled at spotting even when the animals were hiding in the bushes. The tops of the land

rovers and of the vans opened so when standing up, we could put our heads outside and see better. Sometimes we rode for quite a while without seeing anything except birds or gazelles, which were very common. Then suddenly, we would be jolted as the driver, having spotted some animal, a lion perhaps, turned the land rover and began to speed across the plains toward it. Having been instructed beforehand by Sam Brown that human voices would frighten the game, we would all get very quiet and wait to see what the driver had seen. Amazingly, we were able to drive right up within a few feet of the animals without frightening them away, for the animals do not become frightened by the vehicles. At least once, when several lionesses with their cubs had been spotted under some bushes, there were at least eight or nine vans or land rovers parked around them! After a little while, they began to get nervous, growling and moving their cubs away, but not at first. This was a time of considerable anxiety for those of us riding in the vans as well, for we had gotten stuck in the mud about ten yards from the lions. To get us out, the drivers had to connect us with a rope to one of the land rovers, which meant that someone had to get out, not a very safe thing to have to do. Very carefully, the land rover stopped in a spot to block the lions' view of the front of our van, and then our driver quietly got out of the van, leaving us to watch the lions for him, and tied the rope. We were pulled out

successfully a few minutes later. Getting stuck in the mud was the only real problem we encountered on the safari, and it happened so often to the vans that we ceased to get worried when we heard the wheels begin to grind uselessly in the mud.

The animals we saw on the four game runs were many and varied. They included the following: lions, elephants, giraffes, gazelles, impala, topi, black rhinos, cheetahs, baboons, zebras, warthogs, cape buffalo, waterbuck, ostrich, storks, jackals, hyenas, and hippos.

Besides seeing animals on the game runs, we also stopped at Keekorok Lodge, a luxurious hotel where people on safaris sometime stay instead of camping out.

In addition to the game runs and the times at the camp, we did have a chance to interact a little with the Masai on Monday afternoon. Lazarus, our head driver, had arranged for us to go into one of the Masai villages near our camp to take pictures and to purchase some of their beadwork. We had eagerly awaited a time when we could take pictures of the colorful Masai, because we had been instructed not to take their picture without having it arranged beforehand. Many of the Masai believe that the camera takes the soul when it takes the picture, and they have been known to get violent if someone tries to snap their picture. On our way out to the camp, a young Masai boy had thrown his spear at our land rover. Lazarus turned

around to speak to him about it and took the spear away from him. Later, when he told the people minding one of the gates in the park what had happened, their first question for him was whether one of us had tried to take the boy's picture. We had not. For a fee, however, many of the Masai will consent to having their picture made.

The women in the Masai village had their beadwork displayed on wires in the center of the small circular enclosure where their mud huts were, and they were very aggressive salespeople. If one of us even looked like we were interested in a particular bracelet, the women would have put it on our arm before we knew what had happened. As in Nairobi, it was necessary to be very firm with the women. Some of us had a difficult time being firm enough, however; Adair Brevard ended up having bought twenty or so bracelets before she finally managed to escape to the safety of the van.

Late Monday afternoon, a group of the Masai came to our camp to dance for us. Their specialty in dancing is jumping high into the air from standing still.

Evenings at the camp were spent sitting around the campfire. Sunday evening, we had a time of reflection on what the trip had meant to us, after which the group dwindled to a few who talked more intimately about the nature of God, for example, or shared very personal changes that had happened during the trip. Monday evening,

everyone was awarded a certificate commemorating the fact that they were now "Equatorial Traversers."

Tuesday morning, January 26th, we packed up and left camp about 8:00 a.m. for the drive into Nairobi. After bouncing and bumping along for hours, we finally arrived in downtown Nairobi about 3:00 that afternoon. We spent the next two hours shopping, bargaining, and trying to escape bracelet salesmen, and then at staggered times, we went back to the Methodist Guest House where we had a place to shower, re-pack our things, change clothes, and eat supper. At 7:30 p.m, we left for the Nairobi airport, and at midnight, the KLM 747 rose from the runway and began its nine-hour flight to Amsterdam.

We landed in Amsterdam at 6:30 in the morning, when it was still dark. In the airport, we split up and spent the next six hours showering, eating breakfast, shopping in the duty-free stores, sleeping on convenient couches, or helping Mona McPherson with her psychology project. This project, done to make this trip fulfill her senior Interim requirement was a study of how the members of the group saw each other before, during, and after the trip. Mona had us group the members of the team by any criteria we wanted to, and then she planned to examine the results later to see how people's perceptions of each other had changed. So she was periodically chasing each of us down during the trip to have us do our groupings.

At 1:00 p.m., we, along with other world-traveling college students from Samford University, Wofford College, and Erskine College boarded another KLM 747 for the flight to Atlanta.

Nine and a half hours later, at 5:30 p.m. Atlanta time, we touched down in the United States. Having only an hour and forty minutes before our flight to Birmingham, we zipped through passport control, ran to baggage claim, flew through customs, re-checked our bags with Delta and arrived at the Delta desk with an hour to spare. At 7:00 p.m., we were reunited with our parents and friends waiting for us in Birmingham. Despite the wonderful time that the trip often was and because of the difficult time that it also had been, it felt good to be home.

With our arrival in Birmingham, it appeared that our adventure had ended. Actually, though, it had only begun. We were only beginning to discover that impact that this experience had had and would have on our lives. Over the next few weeks, I heard many team members say that all they could think about was Africa. Even two months after our return, one person said to me, "I miss Africa." Clearly this trip had meant for us much more than simply three weeks away from Birmingham. All of us were permanently changed by what we had seen and experienced in that three weeks; although the ways in which we were affected by our experiences differed, surely none of us would ever again

look at the world in quite the same way as we had looked at it before.