

AFRICAN ANECDOTES

I am sure that those of you who keep reading about our car breakdowns wonder why we break down so much – and why we don't just get a newer vehicle.

So... travel with us

We enter Zimbabwe on the main Cape-to-Cairo road. The speed limit is 120 kph/ 75 mph. Goats and cattle graze in the (relatively) luscious grass on the “verges” (shoulders) of this road. Les thinks he can read their minds, but on this trip we hit a goat that couldn't make up its mind – so Les couldn't “read” it! The goat sprang off into the bush and we were minus a front parking light.



An all-too-common sight: bent axles and destroyed bearings.

We go off the “tar” on to main gravel roads that lead to small villages. These roads were built by the



government years ago with proper drainage on the sides. Buses and heavy “lorries” imprint them with corrugations that make it necessary for light vehicles to travel at about 25 MPH max. Otherwise you just bounce the car right out of control! When the roads get really corrugated, and if it is not raining, light vehicle users make their own side roads in the “ditch” which is a lot smoother!



Small villages are linked by public-made dirt tracks. No engineering was involved, and so when it rains, parts of the road wash away, making gullies and potholes, and exposing large stones that jut up out of the ground. One skill needed is to be able to

tell just how high those stones are so that you do not rip open the bottom of your sump. Another skill is to make sure that the gullies and potholes aren't so deep that you damage your suspension. And finally, you mustn't hit large loose stones in such a way or at such a speed that they fly up into the insides of the engine compartment and knock a hole in your radiator, etc.

Preventative strategies employed by Les were to weld a large plate underneath the car to shield it from stone projectiles and to weld a large bar in front of the sump that hits up against those jutting stones first. He also has replaced various bolts on the car with special nylock bolts to keep things from juggling loose, but when the car got worked on last time, it seems that the mechanic did not use the nylock nuts. Consequently the protective shield came loose and fell off during the first week. One of bolts on the



shock absorber also fell off, causing the shock to drop down and be damaged by stones. And the radiator coming loose was the straw that broke the camel's back. However, despite these difficulties we somehow don't picture the new fibreglass campers of today "making it" on these roads!

Oh, I forgot to mention: finally, we come to the part where there is virtually NO road. Here is a picture taken as I bounced high in the air and Les asked Newart, "Where's the ROAD?"

"She hath done what she could"

Someone (can't remember who) once wrote a series of articles called "She Hath Done What She Could," and I often think of it when we go to Zimbabwe. World Vision has initiated a scheme whereby they donate bicycles to female primary school students who live more than a certain distance from school, motivating them to attend school regularly. The bicycles are very well made and particularly suitable for the rough roads. However, spare parts seem to be at a premium. And so they innovate!



The sister on the left made this basket as a gift for me three years ago – completely out of grass. Now she is too blind (cataracts) to see well enough to make baskets, but she saved it all this time.

And the sister on the right made me a door mat out of sisal. Unknowingly, she gave it to me on my birthday!





As you can see this place of worship is a very simple mud-brick structure with tin roof. However, the lady seated on the chair on the left in the black top took curtains from her house to make it look nice inside. Two of the ladies in the crowd started walking at 6 am, and walked 5 hours to attend this 3-hour meeting. As we gave them a lift home we found out that the preacher of the congregation where

they are went to a denomination, taking all of the members with them, including their own children. Only three ladies remained faithful to the Lord – and they walk 3 hours one way each Sunday to the nearest faithful congregation so that they can worship God “in spirit and in truth.”

So in many different ways, our sisters in Zimbabwe have “done what they could.” I treasure their gifts: the way they humble me by their faithfulness, the way they colour the drabness of their surroundings, the way they innovate, and their literal gifts – all of which I shall always treasure.

May the Lord bless us to do what we can.

With love, Linda Maydell