INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

American Express Travel Services,
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2000 Johannesburg, South Africa
October, 1981

ZIMBABWE: ALIVE AND WELL

The Tourist Trade Emerges
From A Long War's Shadow

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Dear Peter,

I knew we were entering the Africa Tom had described when a fellow wearing a plaid shirt and no expression quietly offered us Zimbabwean dollars for South African Rand, one for one. We were in the South African border town of Messina, it was six a.m., already hot, and we did not even know what the official exchange rate was.

Tom Werner is an American who had just come down through Tanzania and Kenya, and we were sharing expenses on a brief trip to Zimbabwe. In Tanzania, the Black Market rate of exchange for dollars was close to eight times better than the official rate. I was so green, Tom had to tell me later our Messina offer was the Black Market.

The trip was originally to have been a threesome travelling for ten days, including stops in Salisbury (to be called Harare, soon,) Bulawayo, and Victoria Falls. The third was to have been a South African, but he could not get a visa from the Zimbabweans, so our ten days became a week. Salisbury/Harare was eliminated from the itinerary as reports of an acute fuel shortage in the capital made the prospect of travelling by car difficult. Then, the seven days turned into five due to a perplexing encounter Tom had with South African Airways.

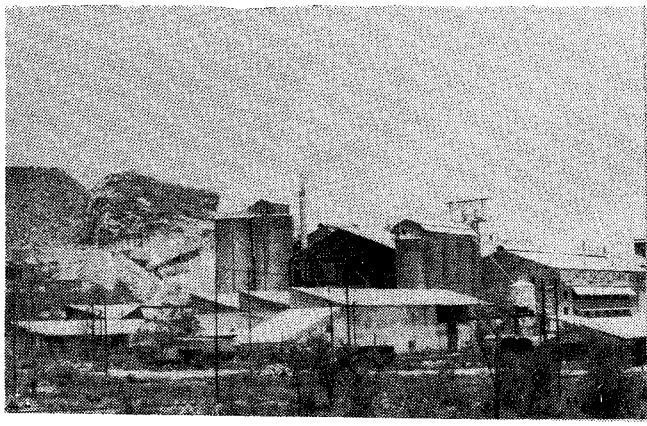
Trying to regain its old stature: Fresh paint to lure back hard felt lost dollars

Tom was to fly standby from South Africa to Australia. He had made the appropriate arrangements several months before in the States, but because of our proposed trip he went to see about changing flights. No room for months. Okay. How about his status on the original flight? That would depend, she told him, asking for his name again. Werner, that's a good name she said, looking him up and down. Tom asked what his name had to do with it, other than where it was on the waiting list. She explained that they had a formula, couldn't divulge its details, but his chances were good—so long as he showed up on time for the flight. Because the more he pressed the subject the more mysterious became the innuendoes of how the system worked, we decided to be there for his original flight.

It promised to be a busy trip. Now with only five days to drive the thousand kilometers each way, see the falls, a game park, and Bulawayo, the emphasis was on go. We picked up the rented car, which was a new Ford, and headed north. Twenty kilometers outside of Johannesburg our new Ford stopped going.

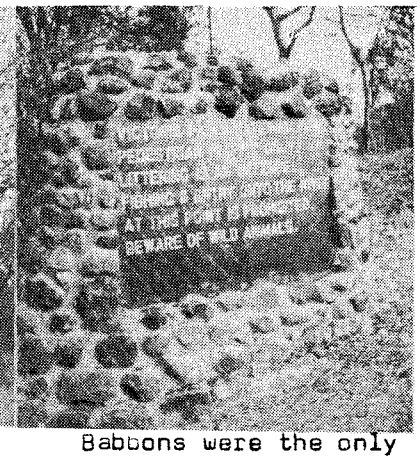
It was discovered, after a mechanic was

Kendal Price is a Fellow of the Institute studying the cultures of South Africa, her black Homelands, and the bordering African nations.



One of the few interuptions in the seemingly endless bush; a cement factory.

Dr. Livingstone at Victoria Falls.



Babbons were the only real threat.

called for us by a policeman, that the car's gas gauge was broken and stuck on full. We had actually just run out of fuel, and three hours later we were on our way again.

Through a combined desire to avoid some of the daytime heat, and simple impatience to get to Zimbabwe, we wanted to drive as far into the night as possible. Gasoline is not sold after six p.m. daily, and not at all on Sundays in South Africa. However, foreign tourists and South Africans in critical services can apply for permits to buy fuel after hours. (There are usually black Africans attending gas stations, apartment buildings, or parking garages twenty-four hours a day).

In Pietersburg, a fair sized town (takes more than one minute to drive through,) several hundred kilometers from the border we thought we would try and get one of the permits. At the local police station I encountered several young, but businesslike and cordial policemen who in less than ten minutes gave me a permit good for three weeks. We felt so privilaged.

When we drove into the Shell station around the corner, the black fellows there were doing all they could to handle the steady flow of cars, cars towing speedboats, and honking hot rods full of locals. In a place where the shops close at five p.m., gas stations by six, and most of the restaurants by nine, that all of this was happening at close to midnight was surprising. While entering the particulars of my permit in the logbook, most of the after-hours fuel was purchased by South Africans for "tourism" and in a few cases "business." So much for exclusivity. (Yet, the confusion still remains. Subsequently the permits were more difficult for me to obtain in other parts of the country, and officials in other towns have stood by the original qualifications for a permit). Tom said, "Anyplace else and we would have had to bribe somebody to get a permit for ourselves."

Calculating that we had enough fuel to get us well beyond the border, we drove off into an extremely dark northern South African night. We arrived at the border at three a.m., discovered it would not open until six, so slept in the car until then.

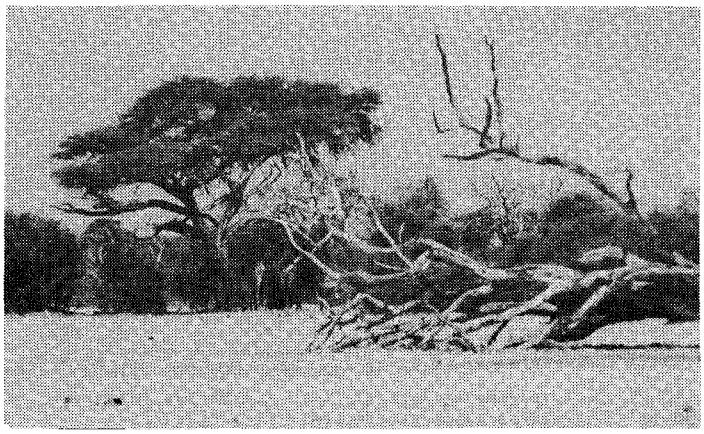
Except for having to list the make, model, and serial number of everything we owned, including camera lenses, getting through the South African side was a snap. After the formalities we drove down a hill, around a curve with a bunker built into it, and over the bridge that spans the Limpopo River as well as separates South Africa from Zimbabwe. We waved to the white South African soldiers dressed in brown (who grinned,) and the black Zimbabwean soldiers in camouflage uniforms (who waved back.)

At the Zimbabwe border the entry forms had the question "Race?" crossed out, and all but one or two of the officials were black. There was some construction going on, and things were visibly in transition, but the operation was running smoothly. Visitors were being processed quickly, and the only grumbles to be heard were from two foreigners who did not want to list the make, model, and serial numbers of everything they owned, including camera lenses.

In Zimbabwe's border town, Bietbridge, even at seven a.m. it was already in the nineties. At the bank, our dollars and South African Rand were quickly accepted for Zimbabwean dollars—at a rate thirty percent more expensive to us than our bargain border businessman had offered. The road to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city, was straight, well maintained, and bordered by a continuous expanse of bone-dry bush.

Bush, in this context means large areas of flat land, or gently rolling hills with sparse or no vegetation. The dirt is a deep rusty red, or where it has been sunbaked and without water for a while

its appearance no longer has a color. You will find soil like this only in places where the sun burns from early in the morning, and the air is so lacking in moisture a drenched bandana is dry in minutes. Because it makes the mouth cottony, and competes with the layers of sweat salt for possession of your skin, this land is felt more than seen. But because in southern Zimbabwe in October--"Suicide Month" to the locals--the sun is either on or off, and as soon as it comes above the horizon it blinds, you don't even see in the familiar sense of the word.



Heat and dryness are hard even on "forest"

It was a long drive, not particularly pleasant, but the harsh weather and stark landscape made it continually interesting. We detected the lingering British influence at Lew's roadside restaurant a hundred kilometers from the nearest town. The coffee served with breakfast came with hot milk, and the toast with orange marmalade. Tom reassured me the orange marmalade was the British influence because he had just come from another former British colony and orange marmalade was all that had been served with breakfast there. Six weeks of orange marmalade, and the sight of it now was enough to make him ill.

Actually, Lew's roadside restaurant was only part of several businesses operating under the lew's masthead. There was Lew's Hotel, Lew's Bar, Lew's Garage, and even Lew's Cattle Yard. Not that it is unusual to find all of these services together, but the obvious concern Lew had for it being known they were all his, underscored just how...c'mon now, take three guesses-first two don't count-what do you mean you don't know. Oh, alright. ...just how bush-league was his conglomerate. Some people.

Since we were going to see Bulawayo on the return trip, this first time through only served as a pit stop. Thus, only thirty-one hours after leaving Johannesburg we arrived at Victoria Falls.

The initial impression was one of surprise. Perhaps just as Livingstone was surprised to have almost fallen into one of the greatest waterfalls in the world, so were we amazed when after hours of barren and apparently deserted countryside we drove into a modern, well-lit town complete with a Wimpy's hamburger shop.

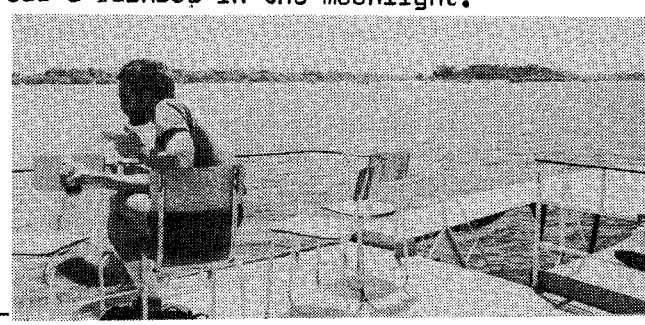
We checked into the Victoria Falls Hotel for one night. "You have come a long way. Surely you must spend more than one day at our falls." He looked hurt. I was mildly embarassed to appear the typical American tourist, giving a country's major attraction the one day once-over. Tom did not help matters when he came over to the desk and asked where the path was so that we could walk to the falls from the hotel right then.

"You don't want to walk down there at night, there are lions." Lions in a place with a Wimpy's? Never, I thought to myself. "There are lions around here," his face was serious. "But you can drive down there, only be careful."

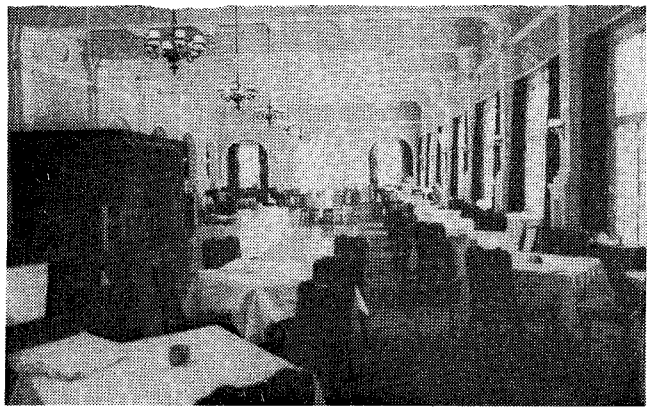
My idea of how to be careful of lions was to go to bed and see the falls in the morning. Tom had other ideas though, and talked me into going...by car.

We drove to the falls and at the entrance to the short walking path there was a sign with "Beware of Wild Animals." That almost did it, but a few more minutes of discussion and we continued. For an American, in southern Africa, normal things are often juxtaposed with the uncivilized (such as in Johannesburg) and so it is easy for irrational fears to creep cup closer than they could normally.

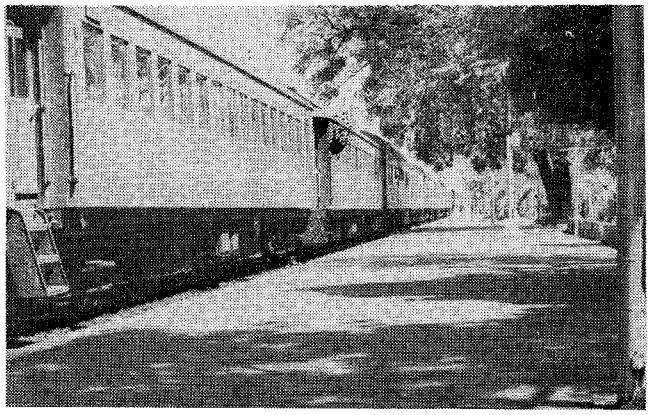
When at last, we walked to one of the look-outs on the edge of the falls, the sight washed away all of the fatigue and fears. Even in the dry season, the amount of water going over the falls was enough to create a cloud of mist some four hundred feet above the Zambezi River. The grass we stood on was slick, and around us grew a veritable jungle. It smelled fresh, and clean, and pure. There was a full moon out, and after our eyes adjusted to the night we saw a rainbow in the moonlight.



The Zambezi River Cruise, minus seafood.



The Falls Hotel dining room: colonial elegance



Step aboard, and step back thirty years

Late the next morning we were able to get on one of the short boat cruises up the Zambezi River, from a spot a few kilometers above the falls. The sights on the boat were more interesting than anything on the shores, human beings being the only creatures dumb enough to be out in the direct October sunlight. Up on the exposed top deck where only tough Americans, blithe Englishmen, and pale, fat Germans sit, the German fellows had their shirts off and were doing a fine imitation of cooked lobster. The Englishmen and Americans were arguing politics, and the Americans' newness to Africa was showing through rather embarrassingly.

There was a group of Zimbabwean schoolchildren on the boat, and after the constantly startling homogeneity of groups of kids I had seen in Johannesburg (even a busload of all Chinese children) it was a pleasant change to see black, white, and Oriental children together. Granted, when I spoke to them, the black children were shy and reluctant to talk, while the white children spoke with the confidence I would compare with the products of any upper-middle class education in the States. But most importantly, they were together, and their teachers appeared sensitive and concerned about all of them.

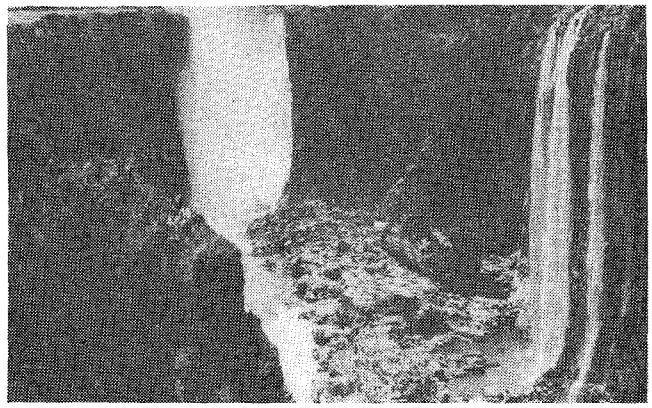
Back on shore, we headed over the border to Zambia on foot. Doing the customs thing with a carload of stuff just to look at the falls from another angle was too much. So, we humped it on foot instead, and ignored the stares and giggles from all the people sitting in the noonday shade. It was 109°F.

One of the things we learned while passing through the Zambian customs was that Zambia is suffering terrible shortages of the most basic items. Sugar, flour, soap, and even salt, not to mention countless other necessities, are next to impossible to find in Zambia at the moment. As a result, the largest flow of traffic across the border at that point is Zambians making regular shopping trips to Zimbabwe. I asked one woman how long this had been going on, and she said it had gotten steadily worse since 1977, but since the reopening of the border (at the end of the Rhodesian civil war in 1981) they could at least get what they needed, albiet with considerable effort. At the end of our conversation she accused us white men of being responsible for the entire situation, having created their dependence on a wage, and goods from other places, when before that they were able to grow and make all what they needed. When I told her I was a black man she was quiet for a moment, and looked at me carefully. Then she laughed and walked away without another word. That laugh caused a thousand thoughts, but not a single answer. After that I went and looked at the falls, and stopped talking to people.

We really were behaving like boorish tourists, running(how about walking, in that heat) from place to place, cameras clicking, hardly taking time to do more than make sure our eyes, ears, and noses snatched it up and sucked it all in before dashing off. It was mind-lock for later replay; the classic American technique.

Victoria Falls was done with, and after checking with the police for a fuel permit ("You don't need one anymore, there are no more fuel restrictions,") we drove off into the night, and almost smack into an elephant. Only a little ways out of Victoria Falls, Tom and I were talking about trying to see one of the game parks when Tom said "Whoa, there's an elephant on the road ahead." And sure enough, straight ahead of us was this big, beautiful, gray beast, lumbering along in the middle of the road with that kind of sexy strolling motion elephants in captivity rarely get to show off. Tom and I laughed and giggled because this was my first elephant in the wild, and because we had been poking fun at

White specks at two o'clock are people. Big,eh?



108 meter drop from the Zambian side

the Yield to Elephants signs. Warning:Deer Crossing, and Cattle Crossing we could buy, but Yield to Elephants had been too much of a chuckle until then.

Still excited over our encounter with Authentic Africa, we turned off the highway onto the dirt road that was to lead us into a game park and Safari camp. It was closed, the big sign said. Whoosh, there went all the excitement, just as suddenly as it had arrived. However, as we were turning around we saw a small fire that did not look like it was burning out of control, so we decided to see if anybody was home.* Thus, John the Rhodesian Irish bushwhacker entered our lives.

A white face was unusual to see in what for us was a remote part of Zimbabwe. A white man wearing a green felt hat, safari shorts, rubber boots, and who spoke with an Irish accent was too interesting to not talk with for a few minutes. He introduced us to two black men with him, one of whom only babbled in response, then offered us a beer. "They're a little hot," he apologized.

John was Irish, had been a sailor for nearly two decades, had put up protective fences in Rhodesia during the war, and now was in charge of thirty black laborers clearing brush from under power lines. Bwana John. He had obviously been out there for a while because he was so eager to talk to us he was almost stumbling over himself. We asked why one of his men talked so strangely, and he told us the fellow had gone a bit bush mad. Even in the firelight John must have caught Tom and I looking at his feet, and with a laugh he said, "Bet you're wonderin' why I'm a wearin' these rubber boots, eh?" We didn't want to be rude, but...

* (During the entire trip, both in South Africa and Zimbabwe we saw many brush fires and even one forest burning out of control. We were told most of them were caused by cigarettes, although many were ignited by lightning).

(The boots had nothing to do with power lines or exotic spiders. They were merely to keep his feet clean after he had bathed but before he'd gone to bed).

We asked what had happened to the park, and he told us that the park was open, just nobody had bothered to take the sign down since the war. During the fighting you could not get through the road at night, and during the day it was risky even in convoy. Now? Now it was not a good idea to go through at night mainly because if you broke down the animals could get you. But, there was a tremendous bar at the Matetsi River which was only about twenty-five kilometers in and he could guarantee us a good time and real cold beers if we were up for the drive which was really not that far and since we couldn't drive into the park until daylight anyways didn't we think it would be a great idea to go up and see ol' Trevor at the lodge and then come back and sleep in his trailer for the night? Huh? Huh? Huh?

The Matetsi River Safari Lodge was a homey and well-worn game viewing camp that also catered to the increasingly less frequent great white hunters who felt like dropping forty or fifty thousand dollars to shoot big game, have it stuffed, and sent back to the States.

"Ol'" Trevor was as friendly, bearded and well-worn a bush barman as we expected. The bar smelled of fresh cut wood, and food—like summer camp's dining hall. Since we were the only ones there, we settled into the woven cane chairs, and Trevor, John, Tom and I sat at the bar and talked for over six hours. (Too bad we were Americans i.e. normal human beings, because John was paying, and had we been able to keep pace with him we could have drunk the equivalent of our petrol bill that night).

The conversation turned towards the war, and it turned out they had both had been in the country the entire time--Trevor even staying out at the lodge during the height

of the fighting. "Business was kinda slow then." They made it clear from the start of the conversation that neither of them were combattants, which made it easier on us. (It was part of the CODE. If you'd fought, you didn't talk. Observers from a close range could tell the stories, but even then it had to be in the right tone of voice. No "Boy, did we almost get wiped out that time,"s). So, it was not to be hours of war stories from has-been losers with something to prove. Essentially, Tom and I became privilaged observers in a conversation between two people who had stuck it out through a tough war, and even tougher, were sticking it out as members of the side that lost.

The protective fences John had erected during the war had been mostly for farmers or small businesses that were threatened with attack by the guerrillas. He would put them up, and take charge of organizing the owner's defense. This included clearing brush to increase the inhabitants' "fields of fire" (area in which you can see to shoot;) attaching anti-personnel mines "Like your American Claymores" (to be set off from inside the houses;) and even selling them rifles and ammunition. It was, a rather elaborate fencing business.

"The guy that owned the company made a load of money during the war," John said."And South Africa's next." John had recently travelled down there to try and promote the defensive fence business. Apparently they were not biting, or even nibbling. "What do we need fences for?" John said they had told him. He looked at us and grinned, "Man,have they got their heads stuck in the sand."

"Say, where'd you get them boots?" John asked us, suddenly serious.

"South Africa, why?"

"Well, it's just they're exactly like what the gooks used to wear."

"The gooks?"

"Yeah, the terrs, the blacks. You know-the GOOKS!"

"That was an American term used in Vietnam," I said, remembering where I was and leaving out that it was a particularly crude one. "How did it turn up here?" (A leading question if I'd ever tossed one).

Apparently the Rhodesians felt a kinship with the Americans who had been in Vietnam. Something along the lines of them both having been in a no-win guerrilla war, where there was little or no popular support. Thus, the terms gook, waste, chopper, and blow-away came into the vocabulary as the Rhodesian troopies saw themselves locked into a futile struggle for something they weren't even sure was worth fighting for. (Not just a few American mercenaries helped with the introduction of certain terms...and techniques. But you didn't hear anything about that Jack, right?)

Trevor and John told us more about the war, and how in that section of the country it was a pretty clean fight. This was the western section of then-Rhodesia, where Joshua Nkomo's forces were, having infiltirated down from Zambia. They were organized more like a regular army, and were very disciplined. "When they took someone out, that's all they did. They worked very clean." ("Clean kill," their term,) "Whereas Mugabe's boys, they were organized into cadres, like the Viet Cong. They would stay out on their own, and each cadre would decide on the targets, and whether or not to attack. Those chaps were brutal, and that's where the bad stuff started." We then asked them about the Selous Scouts (pronounced Salew,) former Rhodesia's elite anti-guerrilla unit that reputedly were dressed and armed like the guerrillas, had their skins blackened, and carried out atrocities on the civilian blacks to discredit the insurgents.

"Well...(the great, all-telling "well dot,dot,dot,) said Trevor, "you have to understand that like any elite unit, as soon as they try and make it bigger, it stops being elite, and all sorts of the wrong type characters get involved. Much like your Green Berets during Vietnam. They lowered the requirements and all of a sudden you had people doing things that gave the whole outfit a bad name. Same thing here."

"The Selous Scouts were the best trackers in the country." And Trevor and John went on to tell us how the Scouts didn't bath for months at a time so that they couldn't be smelled by the guerrillas (that Ivory glow's a sure give-away,) and they dressed the same as them because that was the most comfortable in the bush. And the atrocities?

"A little of that happens on every side, now, doesn't it?" It wasn't a question.

For all of the talk about the tough Scouts, the gooks, and taking people out; for all of the stories about a war now finished, these were white Zimbabweans who loved their country dearly, and were fiercely proud of it. We were put off by some of the things they said, but you couldn't help

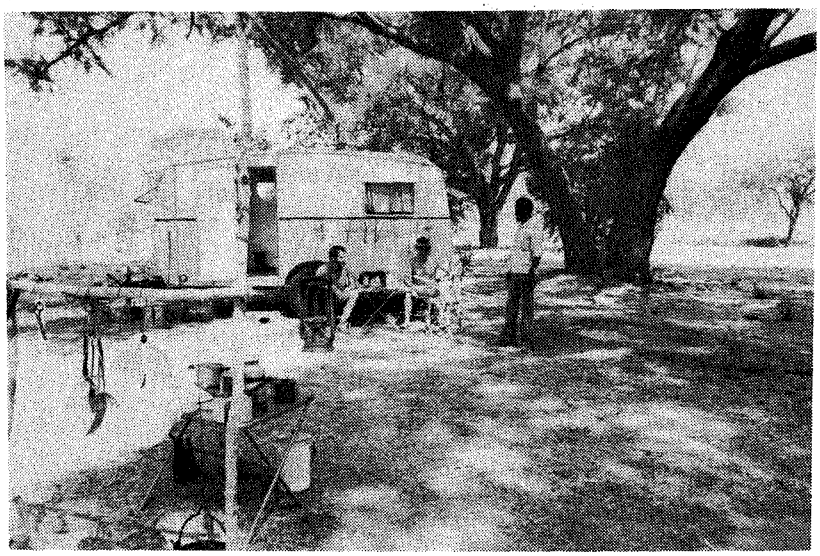
being impressed by their honesty and sense of fair play. "If they can give this chap Mugabe a fair shake, things will turn out right." John added, "Just hope he doesn't get taken out by some of his own people."

There's no getting around the fact that Trevor and John were genuine NRA, Gun World, Soldier of Fortune types. They discussed the relative merits of AK's, Uzi's, G-3's, R-1's and more kinds of weaponry than I'd ever heard of before. But for a place where only a year before, a white man didn't go to the toilet in his own house without a loaded rifle, they were doing okay. Sort of...

...John opened his briefcase to get out an old clipping for us, and inside there lay a .45 automatic. Tom asked, "can I see this?" and Trevor and John became all eyes. When Tom reached for it I never saw anybody sober up quicker than John, who reached also, meeting his hand halfway, and said, "let's take it kind of slow with that." The edge was still there.

When the fighting was over and most of the guerrillas were at the collection points, John had a clearing operation that was nearby one. His men came across a pile of old guerrilla uniforms, and they put them on. Over the next few days their work deteriorated steadily until John said to them--kinda off-handedly, as he put it--"You're having a pretty grand time strutting around like some big war heroes, but what do you think those chaps over in that camp would do to you if they found out you were CF (Citizen's Force) and fought for us?" Their work improved immediately. Just as every other Parisian became a member of the Underground once the allies arrived in 1944, so did every other black Zimbabwean become a former guerrilla once the settlement had been attained. No color bar on human nature.

We slept in John's trailer that night, and in the morning were served tea and hard bisquits by his camp-"boy." John's camp-boy was in his late thirties. (A white American businessman at a hotel said to the black porter, easily in his sixties, "Boy, get my bags." The porter did, and then asked, "Mister, why do you call me boy, when I'm older than you are?" "Because you're doing a boy's job." I've always understood that comment but never been able to agree with it.) John looked upon his camp-"boy" in the same way, judging from the way he spoke to him. I didN't find myself angry at John for it, but I did find myself wondering about just what are the things that are done only by men, and those only done by boys. Sitting around talking guns and tough guys seemed kind of boyish. Taking an unchallenging and demeaning job to feed self and family strikes me as rather manly. But I truly don't know at this point, the rules are all so different here.



Tom, John (with spear,)and the Camp "Man"

For my conclusion, which is about Zimbabwe's National Park Service and getting back to South Africa, I'm going to pull a John Fowles on you (The French Lieutenant's Woman has two different endings,) and try two different style endings. The reason is, because this is only KBP-2, and I'm not yet completely entrenched in any particular format, I would like to give you an opportunity to voice your opinion about what you like. And, of course, if you're inspired to write me about style, and you choose to throw in a few comments here and there about content--I won't complain. (Okay, so it's gimmicky. But I have to get the letters started somehow).

Short End

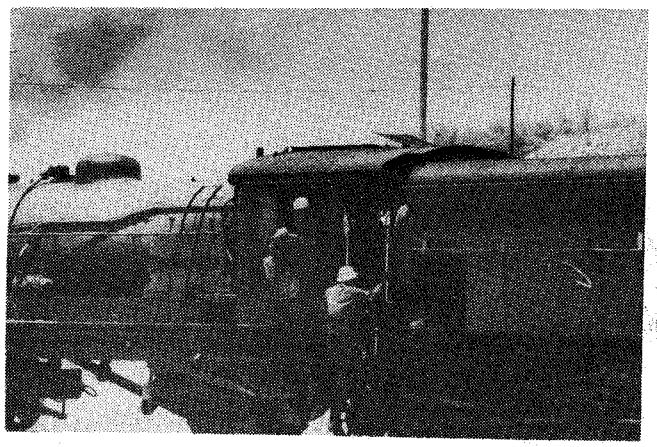
The Zimbabwe National Park system is doing an excellent job of maintaining the travel services and conservation measures in Zimbabwe's game reserves. Despite major economic difficulties plaguing the country, and the continuing emigration of skilled workers, President Mugabe young government has wisely chosen to keep the park system in good order. On a recent tour of several nature areas in the western part of the country, it was observed that Zimbabwe's most well-known attraction the

Victoria Falls National Park, and the Wankie Game reserve were in first class shape. The areas were clean, roads and paths in good condition, information plentiful, and workers courteous. Evidence of the new non-racial labor laws was seen in the large percentage of blacks in hotel management and tour guide positions, previously the exclusive domain of whites.

There was no evidence of animosity being shown toward white visitors by black workers, or locals. There were a sizable number of policemen seen at Victoria Falls, in a small town bordering the park, and in Bulawayo (second largest city in Zimbabwe.) A sense of law and order prevailed throughout that region of the country, and it was observedthis was carried out in the complete absence of firearms. Although the more remote police station was sandbagged, and had armoured vehicles parked out front, none of the smartly groomed black policemen were seen with weapons. There were no white policemen.

Long Ending

Tom and I got off to a predictably late start; sleeping in the trailer had been like spending the night in a sauna, and we had woken up groping for air in the heat and humidity. Even the tea had not done much to clear our heads.



Black engineers on steam locamotive

It was almost an hours drive from the main road to the entrance of the park. When we arrived though, we were somewhat surprised to find a cluster of cottages, lawns, and reception building which was both orderly and well stocked with maps and brochures. The few park staff we saw wore uniforms and were friendly, if a bit curious about a brand new shiny, red Ford way out there.

Driving through the park we began to realize that the animals were once again desplaying their superior intellects, and not displaying themselves at noontime near the end of the dry season. Yet, for the few animals we did view, seeing the largest game park in Zimbabwe, and how well it was

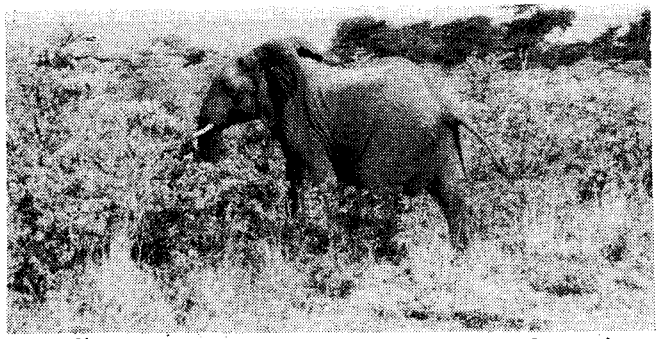
Blacks at the helm of the Zambezi River Cruise

being run in the aftermath of the war was worthwhile. Shortly after driving out of the park we came upon a hotel complex, resort really, of three or four star quality. It turned out to be part of the Southern Sun chain, which brought Bophuthatswana (one of South Africa's newer black homelands) its Sun City Casino and place for Frank Sinatra to sing, the Sun City Superbowl.

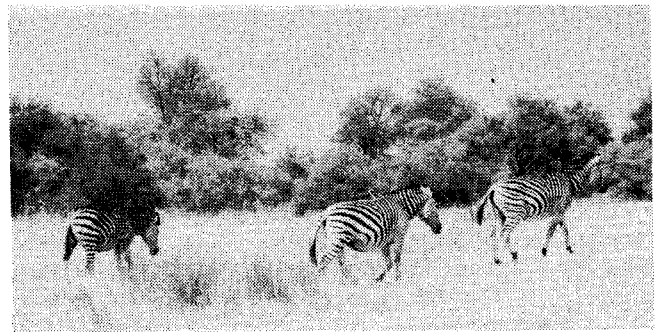
We had planned on gassing up at this resort but the gas pumps were part of a rent-a-car office, and the white woman in charge of the operation refused to sell us any fuel. When we told her we had been told we could buy gas by the police, and that we had even already purchased some that day three hundred kilometers north, she just got angry. (I knew we were very dirty after two days in the same clothes, and six hours of dirt road, but we didn't look that bad). When we tried to contact the local police however, the source of her anger became apparent.

Communications in the region were not very strong, and the language barrier between the now all-black police and the whites was still formidable. However, when the local police chief asked us to make the thirty kilometer trip out to the station to discuss why we needed fuel on Sunday, we were treated to two surprises.

The first was finding someone who was capable and willing to make a decision. Even in South Africa, with its completely white government apparatus, passing the buck has



Elephant just before he got tired of posing



In that heat the zebras just walked away

been refined into a fine art. Tom vouched for the inability to get anybody to be decisive in Tanzania and Kenya, but then that fact does not stand out as much in countries with as many other problems as they have.

Our decision maker turned out to be th e tall, thin, and leisurely dressed chief of the Dett police force. His appearance was in contrast to the pressed uniforms and shiny calf-length boots of the patrolmen on duty. His relaxed air, and confidence was also striking amidst the sandbagged walls of the police station, and the bug-like shapes of the mine resistent trucks parked in the yard. Within a few minutes though, he was convinced that we had indeed been put into a predicament by the inconsistencies of the fuel regulations, and he agreed to call the resort and inform the woman she could sell us fifteen litres of fuel. Funny thing was, he spent twenty minutes typing out a letter explaining our situtation, and when he had finished it he stood up, shook our hands, and kept the letter for himself. "It might fall into the wrong hands."

The second surprise was that after a half a day in a game reserve, we saw our first elephants in the daylight on the way back from the police station. It was exciting because it was a small herd crossing the road, we were outside of the park, and very near a populated area. And of course, it was a thrill when the biggest of them had decided we had taken enough pictures. "Tom, what's all that snorting and flapping mean?" (He was already in the car, had it started, and was in gear by the time I figured I should join him).

Bulawayo is an extremely orderly and well laid-out city, whose stores look out over boulevards six and eight lanes wide. That quantity of open space throughout the city gives it an unhurried feeling. However, we <u>were</u> visiting in October, so any judgement about the pace of the city would be unrepresentative. Although, on the Saturday night we were passing thwough, there was a carnival atmosphere around a hotel where a soul band was playing. We gave a lift to an undercover policeman who had the interesting assignment of mingling in the party crowd and difusing any fights or arguments. He was not supposed to arrest anybody if he could avoid it, just help things stay calm. Tom thought the claim dubious. The cop was only about eighteen, looked about sixteen, and acted pretty harmless anyways, so I figured he was on the level.

Our next encounter with the police in Bulawayo was disappointing. On the night we arrived, we argued unsuccessfully for permission to buy some fuel. They did not really care what the police chief in Dett had done ("Where is this Dett?") they weren't sticking their necks out with the government in Salisbury/Harare. "Okay, then, what are your names. We'll talk to the chief in the morning."

"No, we can not give you our names. You might use them to get someone to sell you petrol illegally."

"Mean to say, if we knew your names somebody might actually be persuaded by that alone?" (Dumb enough, we didn't say).

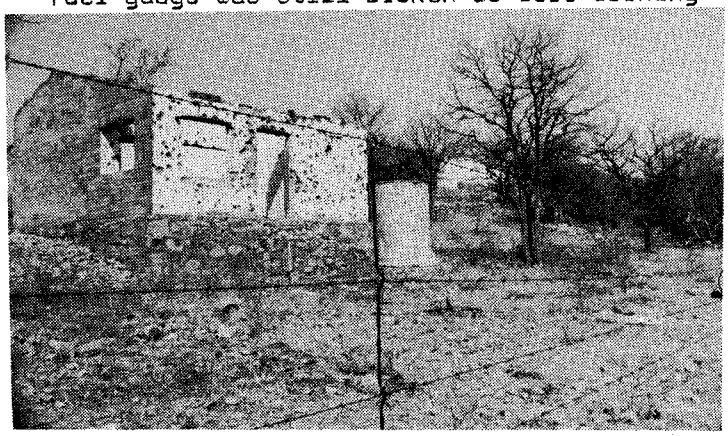
"Yes."

Tom explained that in his experience the power of the written word, or even an official sounding directive can have inordinate influence with many blacks in Africa. This was further demonstrated the next morning when the Inspector (the highest ranking policeman in the town) also refused us fuel, did not care we were in the entire jam because of the police at Victoria Falls, and then refused to tell us his name when we were finished.

One compliment that must be made to the Zimbabwean government is that while they have managed to have control over their new government workers (perhaps to a debilitating extent,) they have been able to exert that control or influence over the civilian population without a constant show of brute force. While there were many policemen to be seen in Bulawayo, none of them carried

more than a nightstick, and yet none of the people we approached were willing to sell us even some of their own gasoline, because siphoning is illegal. It was to our disadvantage but we could not help respecting how the man in the street stuck by the new laws.

With no chance of getting gas, legally or otherwise, we stopped wasting what fuel we had by driving around Bulawayo, and after some careful calculations decided to make a run for it with what we had. Because the fuel gauge was still broken we were working



A former Rhodesian farmhouse not protected by Bwana John's Deluxe Fencing

with estimates, and even being hopeful, the best we could come up with was that we had seventeen litres of fuel to drive sixteen litres worth of distance.

In those first three hours of driving we could have doubled for the EPA mileage testing team for say, Cadillac, or Ferrari. We glided down hills in neutral, cut corners, even turned the motor off during one long decline, and generally crawled along in the hundred degree heat at about thirty miles an hour. Going into the fourth hour of this Tom and I were beginning to get apprehensive about running out so far from anyplace, and in the bush while the heat was so terrific.

We were discussing how this might have been the best bad decision of the trip (one big, bad one to make up for all the good luck,) when two carloads of South Africans pulling speedboats passed by and then pulled over in front of us. They jumped out of their cars and grabbed a fuel tank from one of the boats. "You running low on petrol?"

"How'd you know?" The relief in the speaker's voice need not be described.

"We saw you driving so slowly...and your South African plates. You're welcome to this, it only has a bit of two stroke oil in it." And they gave--wouldn't sell-- us almost ten litres of petrol. (More than enough to get back across the border to South Africa).

When they found out Tom was from California, he couldn't answer their questions fast enough.

"Have you seen any movie stars?"

"Ever been to San Francisco?"

"I'd like to see Los Angeles, is it nice as they say?"

Tom tried to answer them honestly, while I kept quiet and watched the gas go in. (New Jersey doesn't rate much excitement anywhere in the world. But it was cool, we were fast becoming mobile again).

When they finished siphoning the fuel into our car, and all the profuse thanks and taking down of addresses was finished, one of them smiled and said, "Maybe we'll be seeing you there in about the year 2000, when ours goes the way of this one."

SINCERELY,

Kendall

Received in Hanover 2/1/82