

## **Paul David Wilkin's Chronicle of a Sentimental Journey to Zambia, Xmas 1970: Post Christmas greetings to everyone**

If you didn't get a Christmas card, please accept this letter of greetings in lieu of it! I simply didn't get them all mailed. Seeing Zambia was simply too exciting and sidetracked me from finishing.

The journey was, in brief, fabulous. I met too many old friends and made too many new acquaintances to count, both within Zambia and at Dar es Salaam en route. Also, I saw many old places and things with fond memories attached. (Even had a ride down the Zambezi in my old dugout canoe!)

Left Nairobi on the 9<sup>th</sup> December and after a bumpy air flight -- East African Airways at their worst -- arrived in Dar es Salaam. The wretched journey was offset by the excitement of meeting my brother-in-law, Mteto Enoch Gqomo, for the first time. (He and Zindi have not seen each other for ten years.) It was an unusual situation, two brothers-in-law meeting each other without the connecting relative to introduce them to and without even having seen recent photos of each other. I confess that I questioned Mteto carefully to make sure that I was with the correct man as he has put on a lot of weight since his last photo. However, I am sure to Zindi's relief, we hit it off very well and stayed up till after midnight on several occasions simply chatting about ourselves, and, of course, about Zindi who wasn't there to say "*hayi khora*" or to stop us. I met several old friends and acquaintances of Zindi's. Anyway, after several days of much needed rest, I passed on to Zambia, but agreed to stop back [on] New Year's Eve on my way to Nairobi. (On my way back we spent time at the beach. It had been many years since I had last swam in the Indian Ocean, and I enjoyed every minute.) Dar es Salaam is a lovely city with a lot of atmosphere. But, the heat was pressing. I'll stick to either Nairobi or Zambia!

### **ZAMBIAN IMMIGRATION**

James Brown and his dance troupe were on the plane to Zambia. Festive crowds met us in Lusaka. Unfortunately, the festive atmosphere didn't extend to the Zambian immigration officials! They were as unpleasant as ever. As much as I love Zambia, I openly declare that they must have the world's worst immigration officials, seconded by America. After a friendly greeting by David Tanner and his health officials, the trouble began. The immigration official kept my passport and other documents and sent me out into the main station to get change to pay for my visa. He neglected to give me a re-entry pass. The guard politely let me out, but not back in. I said "no one told me I needed..., etc., etc." I begged, pleaded, and cajoled. To no avail. I went to look for the airline's representative or the police and could find neither. You probably know my mad panics and I went into one. After a virtual nervous breakdown, a kindly car rental man coolly took me through the luggage entrance. When I reached the immigration officer, he wondered why I had taken so long! Then, to top it all, my luggage was temporarily lost.

### **LUSAKA**

After this I collapsed into David Tanner's car who proceeded to restore me. Gloria and Kerith (17 months old) also helped, the latter by putting on a one girl floor show. Frank Hall, visiting from Solwezi, added his dry humour and later that evening so did Benjamin Chiyangi. The next day, I met Benjamin at work. (He is now a bank teller along with David Mukuma.) I was very proud to see him, and so many other ex-Solwezi and Balovale (now Zambezi) students, doing well in their jobs. Benjamin and David showed me around the city. At Mulungushi House we

first met Thomas Samungole who is now the editor of the periodical, *Progress*; second, the Honourable (Miss) M. Chilila, still active in her important government duties; and, third, four ex-Zambezi students including Dan Malasha and Kayombo Yonga -- all now handsome young men and no longer mischievous school boys. Later in the day I met Miss Savenda, now a receptionist/typist in the National Publicity Bureau. After several more days of exciting and, of course, sentimental meetings with literally dozens of people, I bid farewell and headed north with Frank Hall.

### **"GO WEST, YOUNG MAN, GO WEST!"**

It took us three full days to reach Solwezi. The journey itself was pleasant, but the slow pace was agonizing. The first two nights were spent in Ndola where I was both to meet James Kanga and to settle some old business. Well, in two hours I settled the old business and met Arnot Sondoyi, now bank clerk, but did not meet James until thirty minutes before departure. (We somehow got wires crossed!)

Frank and I hit the NWP border late the third night out. Although I had awaited the sentimental moment eagerly, it arrived ignobly. A severe case of dysentery started just at that point. It took another old ex-Balovale, Dr. Bwanausi, to rescue me. A lovely evening at their home also helped to restore me. Seeing old friends is always a cure, at least partial, for anything. Their eldest twin daughters are now lovely young ladies. A very handsome family indeed. Ethel is very busy these days. Besides being a busy housewife, she is also working in the Minister's office. Harry is now the P.M.O. of the North West Province and his smile and hearty laugh are the same as always.

On the 17th, I headed westwards again -- on to Zambezi (Balovale). The 320 miles of bush and bad road, separating Solwezi from its remotest district, haven't changed one iota. My sore rear end, complicated by the dysentery, bore witness! However, the journey was offset by meeting Henry Alfonso, whom I have assisted through secondary school. Again, quite a change. He sits his G.C.E. this year and so now a handsome young man. He is thinking of joining the police. A most wise decision as the Zambian police certainly can use any help. (Dave and Gloria will doubtless agree as they were robbed before I got back -- their third in 2 ½ years!)

### **UP AND DOWN THE ZAMBEZI, AT ZAMBEZI**

The next six days in Zambezi were pure pleasure for me, both in seeing old friends and in reacquainting myself to the river. Every day I hiked and swam. Then old Muloji and Chinyama, who still maintain the old secondary school dugout, took us up and down the river on several occasions. Also, Chinyama brought fresh fish several times. Needless-to-say I met too many people to mention each, but of special significance were reunions with Father Daniel, Chief Ishima, and Dr. and Mrs. Worsfold. Fr. Daniel is now living in the township and, except for a few gray hairs, has not changed at all, not even his N.Y. accent! (Later, on the bus ride east, I met in Kabompo, Fr. Rock, steadily gaining weight, and Fr. Luke, totally unchanged. They very kindly gave me some food at a two minute notice.) I was pleased to once again meet Chief Ishima. At Chit, I met Jim and Hilda Worsfold. We had a lovely chat over a tea that lasted for several hours. The good doctor's new hospital will soon be complete and he appears as active as ever to me. Still, he has taken the death of Dr. Deubler hard and doesn't feel he is quite up to his old power. Hopefully some young M.D. will soon feel the urge to assist him and relieve him of some of the intense work he has had for almost 30 years.

While at Chitokoloki I visited the graves of Mrs. Colliass and the three other ladies who died so violently and mysteriously in a car accident last year. So many stories of tragedy to several of my old acquaintances in Zambia. Prior to this, Dr. and Ethel Bwanausi had told me of Augustine Bwanausi's equally violent and tragic death in another car accident. Africa and the world is the poorer for the loss of so many young and experienced people all keen on making the world a better place.

At the secondary school I was royally treated by many, especially Mr. and Mrs. Layton and the Deputy Headmaster. The latter kindly put me up in the guest house and the Laytons took me on my short safari to Chitokoloki. They also arranged a slide show for my wretched slides showing the first days of B.S.S.. After my slides, Mark Williams, the present health inspector, showed his far better ones. I'm afraid that 2 ½ years had seen a complete change in expatriate and local staff so that we knew but few of the other people in each other's pictures. Oh, I'm sure that Zindi will be pleased to know that her rock garden is still doing well. Also, Peter and Hazel Britton can take pride in the fact that the lawn surrounding their old house is now the most charming place at the school, thanks to their work of planting trees and shrubs in 1966.

### **BOUNCING TOWARDS THE COPPERBELT**

Transport problems still necessitate careful thought in Zambezi. My air ticket in and out was totally worthless as the airport was closed. Road transport was also in short supply. When a bus finally came into town on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Henry and I took the opportunity to jump aboard. Also on board were 8-20 fellow humans, 1-3 chickens, 3 bicycles, 10 bags of mealie-meal, 2 beds, plus other odds and ends. A bus ride through the NWP is certainly colourful! The bus's starter didn't work and the drivers had an unfortunate habit of stalling the motor. Naturally, the passengers had to push it through fair and foul -- generally the latter. Fun, glorious fun. Incidentally, one unstated rule of the bus for proper ladies when stopping for the necessaries: walk with dignity straight ahead into the bush. (The more brutish portion of the species, the male, stopped at the edge of the bus.) There is nothing like a good NWP bus ride to bring the most dignified and pompous individuals back to terms with nature! In Kabompo there was a domestic quarrel between the representative of a lady's ex-husband and the representative of the lady's new husband who was escorting her to the Copperbelt. Great excitement prevailed with the other passengers siding with the lady. It ended with the rep of the ex-husband being virtually tossed off the bus. Adding to the din of this was a blaring record player. A new passenger had started entertaining us by putting on, at full volume, his selections of old Congolese cha-cha-cha records. Eventually we were relieved of the music when the bus hit a large N.W. pothole, knocking the needle off of the record. To lay one's head on the leather seats was not unlike the pleasure of hitting it against a leather punching bag!

### **CHIZERA AND ON TO KITWE**

By the time we had reached Chizera, 1:00 A.M., 24th Dec., class distinctions on the bus had become obvious. Besides the numerous, and varying number, of plebeians', there were five aristocrats, who quickly established themselves in "style" by hogging the five front seats: Henry, P.D.W., and three police inspectors -- two of whom indignantly swore never to set foot into the N.W. again. (The third sophisticate had his "pain" eased by a local lass. More need not be said!) Anyway the hour was so late that most of us could have slept in a bed of mud - and we almost had to. The drivers promptly threw off the plebeians, who enjoyed the pleasures of sleeping on

the floor in the local "rest house". We, patricians, indignantly refused to accept such high-handed treatment. After a prolonged discussion, the drivers decided we were not a security risk to the mail bags and promptly made a bed out of them and snored away. With somewhat less dignity, we either slept sitting or perched precariously between the seats. The floor was less than desirable with its layer of mud. For Americans acquainted with only Greyhound, the resemblance to the NWP buses is remote, except that both are called "buses", have wheels and carry people. At 6:30 A.M. all reboarded and we moved slowly, but steadily onward, like the patient turtle. At 8:30, Kalengwa mine; at 11:00, Kasempa turn-off; at noon, Kasempa; at 2:00 Kasempa turnoff again for a delay where the drivers ate and the passengers baked; finally, at 4:30, Solwezi. Here I made a mad dash to the Bwanausi's. With a fifteen minute goodbye and a Merry Christmas, I ran back to the bus. (Ethel looked at my clothes and compared me to Mick Lycett, which in all fairness to Mick, I did not consider it the best compliment that Ethel has ever given me. I deserved it however.) In the five minutes the before the bus departed, five old B.S.S. pupils appeared, including "smiling (Paddy) Luwaya" and Jimmy Musumali, who sported bushy mutton chops!

The rest of the bus journey was simply tiring and a pure bore -- Christmas Eve on a slow moving bus towards Kitwe left something to be desired. Although spirits perked up as we approached Kitwe, the "best" was yet to come. Five miles out of Kitwe's centre, on the big hill west of the city, the driver stalled the bus -- going up! It was quickly obvious that neither driver could back straight when they tried to start it and equally obvious that it was not going to start. If Santa flew over Kitwe Xmas Eve, he saw two tired chaps hiking and thumbing their way into Kitwe. The Nchanga Hotel is not the Hilton, but it surely appeared like it to us. But, to add insult to injury, the restaurants had all closed and we had to go to bed hungry.

As if to compensate, Christmas Day was gorgeous -- sunny and warm. At 11:00 A.M. Henry and I parted ways, he to visit friends before returning to Zambezi, and I to go on to Ndola -- on the much better Copperbelt buses. That evening in Ndola, I was with James Kanga reminiscing over old times. On the 26<sup>th</sup> we parted and I reached Lusaka on the 27<sup>th</sup> via the new fast passenger trains. Although I had telegraphed both Kanga and the Tanners from Zambezi of my two day delay, neither had received the telegram before my departure from Zambia!

## **THE ENDING**

My last days in Lusaka, and later Dar, were lovely and restful, a most fitting ending to the pilgrimage. Kurith never forgot that she had a visitor to entertain; Gloria and Dave kindly drove me around Lusaka; Benjamin gave me special help; last, but not least, Mr. and Mrs. Samungole joined me for a lovely meal at the Ridgeway, and then Mrs. Samungole showed me around the Adult Literacy Program and explained her work. I was most excited to see the progress on this project which I had seen initiated in the mid-1960s from a small office. There are now more than two dozen special new books for new adult literates in Luvale alone.

As my plane departed from Lusaka, and then three days later from Dar es Salaam, I left for Nairobi satisfied that it had been a perfect holiday for a sentimentalist like myself. Still I hope that this is not the end. If I can get back to Zambia again either on holiday or to work, you can rest assured that I will! Kenya's a great place, but I always feel like a visitor. Zambia, from 1963--1968, was home.