

Zimbabwe, Africa

My bike ride through Zimbabwe, Africa was my first long distance group bike ride. I think I like the freedom of going on my own, I can pace myself and change my plans as desired. On the other hand, it was nice to have some sort of structure and planned special events (rafting, visiting schools, etc.). I feel that going with the bike group to Africa was a very good and interesting choice. The group of people I biked with were interesting and fun. Ezra was a 29-year-old man with a Ph.D.; he seemed to know a little bit about everything. It always seemed like he was in too much of a hurry when it came to biking. Heather was a nice girl and seemed to like pacing herself. Heather had a lot of experience with long distance biking. She wanted to bike around the world, I hope she goes for it. I always said I would like to ride my bike around the world, but I still have a long distance to go. Gary was a comedian from California, one of his best jokes was that he lived in Saudi Arabia and claimed to be a teacher. He even has an address in Saudi and he fooled everyone except me. John and Karen were the married couple. I think John probably ended up with some of the best pictures, he was always taking pictures of interesting things. He had an old camera with a light meter. Karen was very friendly and seemed to be more interested in the culture than the bike riding. Becky was a schoolteacher and had a very good attitude. It seems like she never got mad and always enjoyed herself. We also had a tour guide, Shingi, a native from Harare, Zimbabwe. Shingi was very easy to get along with and was able to get us through tough situations. He was a bike racer for Zimbabwe and worked as a lifeguard at a swimming pool near Harare. He grew up on a farm in Zimbabwe. David Mozer was not on the bike trip, but seems to be worth mentioning. David is from Seattle and is the person that coordinates all the activities for the Bike Africa organization. While in Africa, I often ran into people that had heard about David.

Two days before leaving for Africa, I went for a bike ride and broke a spoke on my front rim. It's actually the first time I had ever broken a spoke on the front rim of a bike. Considering I was ready to leave for Africa, it was not a good time to have this type of problem. I went home and tried putting on a new spoke. Guess what, the spare spokes I had were not long enough. I guess I lucked out that I did not break the spoke in Africa, I would not have been able to get new spokes. That night, I was eating dinner and chipped my tooth. It seemed like a bad time to have such a problem, right before leaving for Africa. (Day -2/ Wednesday, July 21, 1999)

The day before leaving for Africa at lunchtime, I biked to a bike shop and bought some new spokes for my bike. I ended up getting off work about 5:30 PM and biked to Dollar Rental car at the Portland International Airport. I was renting a car, so that I could run errands (I did not own a car at the time) and also have transportation to the airport the next day. I arrived at the rental car place about 7:30 PM and rented my car. I then drove to the Laundromat at about 8 PM where I did my laundry. Then I went home to call Annette. I ended up talking with her from about 10:00 PM to 11:00 PM. Then I cleaned my apartment from 11:00 PM to 12:00 PM. (Day -1/ Thursday, July 22, 1999)

From about midnight to 1:30 AM I fixed my bike. I replaced the broken spoke and removed the Mr. Tuffy from my rear tire. When I was reading my Bike Africa book it said that Mr. Tuffys ruined tubes. The previous weekend, I had my first tube ruined by a Mr. Tuffy. I had been using these tire liners for year and thought it was a myth when I first read it. At about 1:30 AM, I was finally ready to start packing for my trip to Africa. I was most of the way packed at 4:00 AM. I then went to sleep and woke up in time to go to work at 7:00 AM. I ended up leaving work at about 12:30 PM. My first stop was the mall to eat lunch and get some self-pictures (I used the photo booth in the food court). Then I biked to Target and bought some rope and strap tape to bring to Africa. I finally made it home at about 2:15 PM and continued packing for my trip to Africa. At about 3:00 PM, Darren and Jack from work showed up at my apartment. I was not sure why they came by. Well, they wanted to give me something for my trip. I finished packing and drove to the Airport, I arrived at about 3:30 PM. It took a long time to check my luggage in. It also cost more than expected to ship my bike. I was told it would cost \$60 and they ended up charging \$125 for my bike. On the flight to San Francisco, I sat next to a nice lady and told her about my planned trip to Zimbabwe. On the flight to New York, I sat next to a man from Johannesburg and he told me that South Africa was very nice (he said South Africa was like California). Although he did not think that Zimbabwe was a very nice place. (Day 0/ Friday, July 23, 1999)

When I arrived at New York's JFK airport, I felt like I was in a foreign country. It sounded like no one was speaking English. When I was checking in at the South African desk, they told me that there was a direct flight from Johannesburg to Bulawayo. I was scheduled to fly into Harare and then to Bulawayo. I tried to get my flight changed, but found that I couldn't get my luggage rerouted (it was already checked through from Portland to Harare to Bulawayo). I fell asleep at the airport while I was waiting for my flight. When I woke up, I met Becky. She was one of the people on the Bike Africa tour, she recognized me, because I was wearing my Bike Africa T-shirt. Becky is from New Jersey and she had done a bike tour in Europe. Becky's 18-year-old brother was cycling the Pacific Highway and stayed with people he had met on the Internet. On the flight to Johannesburg, I sat next to a quiet, short, heavy, balding man. We never said a word to one another. At one point, I said something to him and he only grunted. My headphones did not work on the plane, so I slept for most of the flight. (Day 1/ Saturday, July 24, 1999)

At the Johannesburg airport a guy came up to Becky and me and asked if we were on the Bike Africa tour (he saw my shirt). It was Ezra and he was also on our bike tour. At that point, I had already met 2 of the other people on the Bike Africa tour and I had not even arrived in Zimbabwe yet. We all ended up talking and then we all caught the plane to Harare, Zimbabwe. In Harare, we didn't get all our luggage; Becky only got her bike, Ezra got everything except his bike and I did not get any of my stuff. We took a taxi to the museum in Harare. It was Sunday and the museum was free (it's free only on Sundays). We looked around the museum and then went to the Chicken Inn for lunch. I ate chicken giblets; they were cheap, but not very tasty. We then went back to the museum to meet the taxi driver (before going into the museum we had arranged to have the taxi driver come back and pick us up). Some people were selling cheap looking mailing cards. Ezra and Becky liked them. They ended up buying one each. I did not want to buy one, but bought one because the guy would not take no for an answer. The card was a cheap wire design on a plain tan card and cost 50 ZWD (= 1.40US). We then took the taxi back to the

airport and found that our luggage still had not arrived. Then we flew to Bulawayo and met up with most of the other bikers at the Zim-Zone Hotel. (Day 2/ Sunday, July 25,1999)

I woke up at 6:30 AM and was the only person in the group that was not jet lagged. Everyone else slept in and I ended up exploring the city of Bulawayo. Lots of people were out, going to work and setting up market stands. The market did not open until 6:30 AM, so I went back to the hotel at 7:30 AM to see if Ezra (my roommate for the trip) was awake. He was still asleep, so I showed the hotel guard my key and continued to walk around town until about 8:30 AM. I went back to see if Ezra was still asleep and he was. We only had one key to the room and if it was locked from the outside, you could not get out. That is why I had to keep going back to the hotel. At 8:30 AM, I had the maid lock the key inside the room, so Ezra could get out when he woke up, I would not be able to get into the room without asking the maid. I then walked to the bus station. It was an interesting place with several mini-vans used to commute people around the countryside. A lot of the mini-vans looked very crowded. As I was walking around town, I noticed that many ladies were balancing objects on their heads. This is the way that women carry small loads, the men usually pushed large carts of goods. Most people did not own cars or trucks to haul their stuff to the markets. Back at the hotel, I talked with Heather (one of the bikers in our group); she told me that she once cycled coast to coast with her mother. She had also done bike trips in Alaska. After breakfast, we all went to the museum. I was very concerned about my bike. Becky and Ezra did not seem worried. We did not call about the bikes until late in the afternoon and then we called from the Air Zimbabwe office in Bulawayo. They said that they still had not found our luggage. Back at the hotel, I called South African Airways and they could not give me information about our lost luggage. They wanted a confirmation number, but I did not have one of my lost luggage receipts. I ended up getting cut off. The phone call cost about \$94ZWD (about \$2.60US) for the short call. Ezra reached the airport in Bulawayo and found out that our luggage had arrived. By that time, I had already started writing postcards that said my bike was lost. After getting my bike, I added a line to these postcards saying that I had found my bike, then I mailed the postcards from the hotel. We ate dinner at the hotel. Then Becky, Ezra and I went to the bar for some beers. At the bar a drunken lady told us that it was dangerous for us to be at the bar and suggested that we leave. It did not seem like a bad place. I think the lady was actually the dangerous person. She ordered a beer and could not pay for it. I ended up getting conned into buying her the beer. I left and Ezra talked with the lady for a while. (Day 3/ Monday, July 26, 1999)

I woke up at 6:30 AM, finished putting my gear on my bike and ate breakfast. I went to the craft store to buy some postcards and exchanged money. When everyone was ready, we biked out of Bulawayo. Our first stop was Khami Ruins where we saw baboons and lots of neat birds. We also hiked up to the ruins and then ate lunch. We biked through a small town. Karen said that she felt like we were in a parade and that we were the bike float. That's the way it seemed throughout the entire bike ride in Africa, people always came out and waved to us as we passed. As we were biking to Hlenkweni training center a car stopped and the passenger got out of the car and told us he was supposed to join our bike tour (it was Gary from Saudi Arabia/ originally California). The training center was the place where we were staying that night. Gary told us the center was not expecting us. I guess there was a miscommunication. Once at the center, Shingi straightened things out and went to town to get food for our dinner. We ended up

having a great meal of chicken, rice and spaghetti. That night, we stayed at the Hlenkwani training center. (Day 4/ Bike miles 28.67 miles/ Total bike miles 28.67/ Tuesday, July 27, 1999)

In the morning, John, Karen and I went to the mass. I do not normally go to church, but decided it would be interesting to see how they perform the ceremonies in Africa. They did some neat African songs and a short prayer. The whole mass only lasted about 20 minutes. Then we ate breakfast; we had eggs, bread and cereal. In front of our room (we had 3 rooms in a house), we saw a lots of neat birds. We sat down with the school principal and he told us some African history, he mentioned that Livingston was the first white man to see Victoria Falls. Then we went for a tour of the training center's grounds. The tour consisted of driving around thorn bushes in the back of a Toyota truck. The school had a lot of nice land and at one point we stopped at a cattle corral and found some kudu horns near a fire tower. On the drive, I found some stuff that I thought was pottery chars, but after spending time in Africa, I decided that they were broken pipes (I often saw stuff that looked like these chars/ they looked like cement). We also saw a couple of wild boars on the bush drive. At one point, we stopped to check out the water supply building and it looked like it was in poor shape. The electric pump looked like it was poorly wired, but seemed to work fine. The training center taught people from out in the country how to use their land more productively. They are taught how to farm and build useful objects. Once a person learned the skills, he goes back to his people and teaches them the new ways. I noticed that they still did not use the new technology. They used picks and shovels to dig. In one room of the center, there were people building a welder; they were in the process of wire winding an electric coil. Another building was where carpenters learned how to build dressers. When we left the training center, we biked to a store with a butcher for lunch. To eat you ordered a steak that they cut off a slab. It only cost about \$17ZWD (about \$.50). I also bought 2 cokes and chips for \$20ZWD (about \$.60US). You could also get sadza (a stiff maize meal that you eat with your hands) for \$8ZWD (about \$.22US) at the grill. The grill was where you had to cook the steaks that you bought at the meat market. The meat markets (stores) normally owned the grills. Then we biked to Cyrene school and checked out the chapel. They were working on the outside of the building, so the construction workers had to make us a bridge to get into the chapel. They put a 2x8 over a ditch and we crossed on the board, it was only strong enough for one person to cross at a time. At the school, Ezra helped a native man fix a flat tire on his bike. Then we biked to a music hall and watched a group of kids play their xylophone. I ended up giving the kids some United States coins. John gave them a tip in Zimbabwe currency. I often gave people United States coins as souvenirs, I noticed that the people at the schools liked the coins and people on the road wanted to know how much the coins were worth. We then biked to Figtree and spent the night at the hotel. It was a nice hotel with hot water for the bath tubes. I took my first bath since Bulawayo at this hotel. We ate dinner at the hotel's restaurant. (Day 5/ Bike miles 21.23 miles/ Total bike miles 49.9/ Wednesday, July 28, 1999)

I woke up at 7:00 AM and walked around. I went near a school and noticed the student looking at me. I also noticed that some of the kids had shoes and some had school uniforms. A lot of the children run to school, about half of them had no shoes. A slow, loud train went through town in the morning. The train woke up most of the other bikers. We then ate breakfast and started biking. Ezra had a flat tire as we were leaving the hotel, he had a rim flat and the tube was punctured by one of the spoke rings. We cycled a 16-kilometer dirt road with Claire (a guide from the other tour in Zimbabwe). Then we cycled a

paved road to the turn off to a Bambata cave. Claire hitched a ride to Bulawayo from the turn off. We biked to a parking lot and hiked to the caves. The hike was on some nice large rocks. The cave was very shallow and had some light-colored paintings (not real spectacular). As we were biking that day we saw baboons, an Ostrich and a giraffe. On one dirt road, Ezra biked into a ditch and fell over. He ended up getting a pretty good gash in his arm. As Shingi was bandaging Ezra, we (Karen, Heather, John and me) heard baboons. We thought the noise was dogs chasing pigs in a nearby farm. It started getting late as we biked through Matobo National Park. Near a lake we saw several rock rabbits. Then we biked up a short very steep road. It started getting dark and we made it to the turn off to the school. Ezra was having trouble keeping air in his tire when we got on the dirt road. He had a tough day; 2 flats and fell a couple of times. The dirt road was very bumpy, sandy and rocky. It was dark and Shingi ended up using my flashlight to guide us to the school. As we biked in the dark, we would relay messages back through the group, describing the terrain, sandy, rocky, bumpy, etc. A little before we reached the school, the moon came out and it was a lot easier to see the road. At one point, some children on the side of the road welcomed us to their village and said they would see us in the morning at their school. Near the school, a horse drawn carriage came out of the dark and the people on the cart said they wanted our torches (flashlights). This was Gary's first day of biking with us and he seemed to enjoy himself. That night, I drank beer at the school with the teachers until about 1:00 AM. I talked with the science teacher. He told me that he had done part of his training in Cuba. He also asked me about my beliefs in God and told me about rock rabbits. He mentioned that they use corporal punishment to discipline the children. That night, I learned that DC meant District of Columbia and that to get married in Zimbabwe a man must pay the parents of the lady (this guy said 2 cows/ but Shingi told me that it was normally a lot more than 2 cows). The teacher also told me that David (the man that runs the Bike Africa organization in Seattle) made Shingi quit smoking. The ladies talked about AIDS and when they asked me where it originated from, I did not want to say monkeys in Africa, but Ezra felt comfortable saying that. I heard Claire say that someone tried to blame AIDS on the United States, I felt this was a sticky subject and for some reason it kept coming up (I am not sure why people kept asking me about it). The school had minimal electricity; it was just installed in the area the previous May. (Day 6/ Bike miles 35.63/ Total bike miles 85.53/ Thursday, July 29, 1999)

I woke up at 6:45 AM and walked around the school. As I walked around, I saw lots of students going to school. The kids were all running to school, some had no shoes. At 7:30 AM the school commencement started. The school children gathered around the flagpole to sing a song and raise the flag. Then we each introduced ourselves to the children, gave them our names and told them a little bit about our lives. As we introduced ourselves some of the students giggled. Some of us walked to the primary school and ended up shaking the hands of students and playing dodge ball (Gary wanted to play dodge ball/ he was a lot better at it than I was). I talked to people putting a roof on a hut on the way to the primary school. At the secondary school near our rooms someone told Becky not to take a picture of the dead chickens that were hanging on the fence (that was the only time we were told we should not take pictures). The school children produced several skits for us; including Sivani beer boys with a drunken fight - Boy dancing in rabbit skin skirt - rap dances - song and poems - native dances - girls religious song and more. In one skit they gave a peace sign - it was having their hands crossed to form a T. They did not have a couple of the planned skits (I guess those students were not ready) - tough girls - don't touch girls and what does it take to be a friend. The students enjoyed giving the presentation and the crowd laughed a

lot. After the children presented their skits, we were asked if we had something we could share with the group. John thanked the group for the warm welcome and asked who welcomed us to town (When we were arriving the previous night a voice in the woods welcomed us to their village). Then Karen decided we should teach the group the wave. She first had us demonstrate the wave, we were all lined up and one of us lifted our arms and lowered them - then the next person did the same until we got to the end of our group. Then she had all the other children perform the group wave. It seemed like a very good idea, since we did not have anything else prepared. Next the class president gave a short talk and school was dismissed. The schools are set up a little different than in the United States. The secondary school has form 1 through 4; the forms are similar to grade 9 through 12 in high school. Next, we went to Mashavuka caves across the canyon from the school. A local boy gave us a tour (he wanted to become a tour guide when he grew up) of the cave. He told us how the local grass huts were colored with termite dirt and that they needed to be repainted annually. The colors wash off during the wet season. Each building in a set of grass huts has a different purpose (sleeping, eating or housing a different family). The caves had painting on the walls that were 4 to 6 thousand years old. The tour guide said that he learned about the caves from his grandfather and when he was younger people did not go to the caves. Some children followed us to the caves and when we were returning, Ezra was growling at the children and they became fierce warriors. As we hiked down the canyon from the cave, we meet some tourists from California. When these people went to the caves, some native people set up souvenir stands at the base of the trail. I ended up buying 2 masks for \$50ZWD (about \$1.40US) each, a wood elephant for \$70ZWD (about \$1.95US) and 2 necklaces \$10ZWD (about \$.30US) each. We went to the store in town and bought 3 cokes for \$20ZWD (about \$.55 US). Then we ate dinner and stopped for beers in town. The natives wanted us to buy them Zimbabwe home brew style beers (Chibuku). One man wanted me to give him \$2ZWD (about \$.06). I almost never gave people anything, because I felt that I should not support their begging habits. We stayed in buildings at Silozwe secondary school. The place where we stayed had no electricity and we needed to use a latrine as a bathroom. At about midnight, I had to go to the restroom and could not find my flashlight. I ended up going to the restroom and missing the hole (the bathroom is in a very dark room with about a 4-inch diameter hole to aim for). I ended up going back to my room and finally found my flashlight. I went back to the latrine to make sure I did not leave a mess, well I made a slight mess. I then got some water and washed the mess into the hole. (Day 7/ Total bike miles 85.53/ Friday, July 30, 1999)

I woke up at 6:20 AM and walked around a little. Then I went back to the room and packed my gear. We all ate breakfast and started biking back to Bulawayo. We stopped at Rhodes grave and met some people from California. It ended up being the same people we met at Mashavuka cave near the school the previous day. Gary wanted to try to roll a rock, so we tried to push this big rock near Rhodes grave. The rock would not budge. When we biked back to the turn off to Rhodes grave, I bought a souvenir drum at a craft center. In front of the center, I met a geologist lawyer from Seattle. I asked him about jobs in Seattle and if he could bring some of my souvenirs back to the Seattle area. He ended up suggesting that I ship my stuff back from Bulawayo, I ended up lugging my stuff all around Zimbabwe and taking it back to Vancouver in my carry-on luggage. After Rhodes grave we stopped at the MOTH (Monument of Tin Hats) which was nothing special. For lunch we went to a butcher store and bought steaks and sadza. This was another one of the stores where you buy the uncooked meat and cook it yourself on a grill in front of the store. After that we checked out the white Rhino cave painting. Then we finished biking to

Bulawayo. In Bulawayo, I asked a man how much a wooden carving cost. I just wanted to compare the price to the one that Gary bought. The man tried very hard to sell me the pointed wood item, he actually chased me across the streets and offered to sell it to me at a reduced price. I had to tell him that I really was not interested in buying it, I was just curious how much it cost. At a park, I saw a big group of people watching a kid and man try to take a package from a lady. It seemed strange and I was not sure what was going on. I do not think it was a robbery but it could have been. For dinner we got Pizza to go and took it on the train. The pizza came from the Pizza Inn in downtown Bulawayo. While waiting for the Pizza several people asked us for money. John and Karen ended up buying a bunch of apples and gave them to the people that wanted money. These people ended up enjoying the apples a lot. Ezra also gave a person some food he had on his bike. In Bulawayo, another Bike Africa tour guide, Elizabeth, joins us. We all went to the train station. When we arrived at the station, a man said not to bring the bikes in and Shingi ignored him and told us what to do. We had to tag our bikes and load them onto the train. Then we loaded our gear in a room on the train. Once on the train, we had to find the conductor to see if we had the correct room, I guess the train tickets did not tell the room number. The conductor told us the room number and we started (the train was already moving) searching. The train cars were not in order (ex. car number 1021 was not followed by car number 1022) and it took us a while to find the room that we were told was our room. Once we found our room, we found people there and they said that the conductor told them it was their room. Some people in our group started moving stuff and they ended up moving the stuff back to our original room. The halls in the train were very narrow and it was not possible to carry gear in the halls at the same time that someone was moving in the opposite direction down the halls. While looking for the room, I kept running into this guy that was looking for beer, he ended up being a train buddy. Shingi said we should close the window in our berth on the train room so no one would grab something out of our room when the train stopped. The conductor finally came to our room, he told us that we were supposed to be in a first-class berth. Then we found the correct room and it was empty. We moved all our gear to the new rooms and I helped Elizabeth look for the conductor, she was still not sure which room she was going to stay in. That night was a light beer night, I only had 2 castle beers. It seemed like I drank a lot of beer while in Africa. (Day 8/ Bike miles 36.08 miles/ Total bike miles 121.61/ Saturday, July 31, 1999)

In the morning, Shingi and I played my drum. Neither of us were very good at playing the drum. We made it to Victoria Falls at about 7:00 AM. We checked out the Falls and it was very misty. The sun created a glare that made it tough to get any pictures. It was still a very nice waterfall. We ate breakfast at the Pink Baobab Cafe. Outside the cafe a man was trying to sell me a wooden carved bird and I was not interested in it. He kept going down in price and I finally ended up buying it for \$100ZWD (about \$2.75US). I showed the bird to Elizabeth and she told me that it was the same as the one on ZWD coins. After breakfast, I went to a shop and bought a T-shirt, shorts, film and postcards. Next, we went on a boat cruise where we saw giraffes and a large herd of elephants crossing the Zambezi River. The boat ride included free beer and appetizers. Elizabeth wanted me to go with her to town when she called her children. I assumed she wanted me to go for protection. On the other hand, it seemed like she might be trying to get close to me. She asked me if I was married and I told her I had a serious girlfriend and she told me about her kids and 2 x-husbands. When I walked Elizabeth to the phone booth in Victoria Falls, we held hands, I was probably the only white person in the area and it seemed like the black men may have been looking at me funny with Elizabeth whom was a black native lady from Zimbabwe. They

probably really were not thinking anything, but I was a little nervous since I had read the it can be dangerous to be out at night in the village near Victoria Falls. Elizabeth seemed appealing and I should have probably made the moves on her. I guess I just did not want to risk having the wrong reaction or outcome. Once back at the hotel I talked with Shingi our other Zimbabwe guide that evening. Shingi told me that he really liked my company, he said that normally he gets someone that he relates to better in his groups. I am not sure what it was, but I did notice that often when other people were asleep, we would talk about our cultures. We also talked about our personal interests (work, hobbies, biking, etc.). I was talking to Shingi about the number of cows required for marriage and he told me that it normally cost about 7 cows and some money. He said that it depends on the quality (education, job, etc.) of the lady (how much you would need to give the parents in order to marry their daughter). When you marry a lady in Zimbabwe you must pay the parent for the privilege of marrying their daughter. I told him that the person at the first secondary school told me that it cost 2 cows and Shingi said that it was much more than that. (Day 9/ Bike miles 2.21 miles/ Total bike miles 123.82/ Sunday, August 1, 1999)

Becky and I saw some monkeys while we were waiting for the rafting trip. We were waiting at the location where the tour guides picked us up and brought us to the spot where we had to walk down the hill to the river. Becky had her camera and I think she may have gotten some good monkey pictures. I did not bring my camera, because I was told it would get wet. Becky ended up putting her camera in the dry box and it was still dry at the end of the rafting trip. We rafted down stream of Victoria Falls on the Zambezi River. At the top of the canyon there were lots of groups of people waiting to go on raft trips. It was a very steep downhill hike to the river; the raft tour groups made us sign a waiver saying we understood that we must hike in and out of the gorge. This portion of the Zambezi River is supposedly the toughest commercial rafting trip in the world. I did a lot of rafting as a youngster and this trip definitely had the biggest rapids that I had ever encountered. I think the river would be similar to rafting down the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon of Arizona. At the biggest rapids (rapid 4 to 11) the guide paddled the boat. Then we had a lunch stop and we paddled the rest of the rapid (rapid 12 to 21). Before leaving on our rafting trip, the tour group told us that the crocodiles on the river were all vegetarians and did not attack people. While on the raft trip, our boat guide told us how different animals in Africa kill people. He said, "Elephants kill people by stepping on them, splitting a tree and crushing a person in the tree. Buffalo charge people and then pee on them. The pee is very itchy, if you scratch yourself the buffalo would charge you again. He told us that crocodiles pull you under the water, suffocate you and then lay you on the shore under some leaves to rot. The crocodiles prefer eating rotten meat. After the rafting trip we climbed out of the canyon carrying out paddles and gear. The tour group had people carry the rafts to the top of the canyon. The hike was about 3/4 of a mile up a steep bank. At the top of the canyon, they supplied free beer and soda. Gary was the only one that was thrown out of the raft into the river. After rafting we went back to camp and then Ezra, Gary and I went Bungee jumping. I bought a T-shirt, fanny pack and disk of photos from the Bungee jumping place. They also had videos, but none of us bought them. We saw 2 buffalo in the woods on the way back to camp from Bungee jumping. While on the bridge and in Victoria Falls lots of people were peddling goods (souvenirs, drinks and food). One child Mike asked me if I knew Michael Jordan, Monica Lewinski, Paula Jones and other United States celebrities. He also told me that DC stands for District of Columbia. He was a young kid trying to sell freeze pops and seemed to be very smart for his age. I did not end up buying anything from him or anyone else. Another kid tried to sell us a British pound for \$100ZWD (about \$2.75US). That night, we

had delivered Indian food for dinner. It consisted of rice and spicy chicken. (Day 10/ Biked 0 miles/ Total bike miles 123.82/ Monday, August 2, 1999)

In the morning, I woke up with a bad sore throat and a minor cough. We ate breakfast at the Pink Baobab restaurant in Victoria Falls and a monkey took Ezra's banana. Ezra chased the monkey into the trees and everyone at the restaurant turned their attention to the monkey act. I was not sure what happened until Ezra said the monkey took his banana. At the restaurant, I met the biker that was staying at our campground. His name was Ralph and he was from Texas. He told us about how he normally camped next to the road and it reminded me of my typical bike trips. We also met bikers from Seattle that bought books from David Mozer (David is the person who is in charge of the Bike Africa group). It was a hot dry ride and I ended up taking a lot of Vitamin C suckers and had to drink a lot of water. My sore throat needed the moisture. Becky and Shingi saw some wart hogs and kudu at a river. I guess we were in too much of a hurry to see the wild animals. We ate the subway sandwiches that we bought the previous day in Victoria Falls for lunch. That day we biked in-groups (instead of all together), John and Karen left first, then all of us except Heather left. Heather biked a little behind the rest of us, I think she liked riding solo (I also enjoy riding solo. It is easier than trying to keep the pace). At Hwange, I saw some baboons at the park in front of a train exhibit. Becky, Ezra and Heather went swimming in the pool at the Baobab hotel. Ezra lost his glasses in the pool and Heather ended up spotting them for him. She pointed to them and Ezra grabbed them out of the water. We all ate dinner at the restaurant and then went to Elizabeth's sister in law's house for a snack. On the way over to the house we all piled in a small car. There were 7 people (John, Karen, Gary, Elizabeth, Ezra, the driver and me) in the 4-passenger car. At Elizabeth's in-law's house we talked about pro wrestling and the fact that a man can have more than 1 wife. A lady however cannot have more than one husband. We ate monkey beans and sweet potatoes. We also had tea and talked about the local mine. They had a very nice house with high ceilings to help keep the house cool in the summer. I also noticed that they had some African souvenirs in the house, a drum and a couple of wood carvings. On the way back to the hotel, we went in a caged back Mazda truck with 9 people (the original group plus 2 children). Before getting back to the hotel the truck stalled and the driver got out of the truck with a gas can and put more gas in the tank (we ran out of gas). Then we drove the rest of the way back to the hotel. That night we stayed at the Baobab hotel. It was probably the nicest place on the trip. It had a big tree in front and was located on top of a hill. The hotel had a great view of the surrounding valley and a swimming pool. We had shared rooms at the hotel, Elizabeth had her own room and she told me it was nice. I felt she wanted me to check out her room, I might be wrong and I did not try since I had a sore throat. I felt the throat thing may have been a mild cold and did not want to spread a cold to Elizabeth. When I look back on that night, I often think I should have asked to see her room. (Day 11/ Biked 65.75 miles/ Total bike miles 189.57/ Tuesday, August 3, 1999)

In the morning, someone from the hotel woke us up at about 6:00 AM and they gave us a sack breakfast. We wanted to take off early so that we would not miss our afternoon game drive. We ended up leaving the hotel at 6:35 AM. Gary shipped his bike (the one he borrowed from Shingi) back to Harare from Hwange the previous night. Gary had to return a little sooner than the rest of us. It was Gary's last day with us and he ended up using Karen's bike. Karen did not feel like riding and took the bus for that stretch of the ride. In the early morning, we saw several children running to school. Gary was telling

some of the kids that they were very fast runners. As we were biking past the kids, Gary and I high fived (slapped hands as we passed) some of the school kids on the way to school. I noticed a few of the kids backed off when I held out my hand, I guess that they did not know what to expect. We stopped for breakfast at about 8 AM and a bus went by. Karen was on the bus and yelled to us out the window as she passed. It looked like she was taking a picture, I think she said that she was not able to get a good picture from the bus. I met some bikers from Holland; these people told me that they had met the people from Seattle that we met in Victoria Falls. It seems funny that no one else in our group stopped to talk to these bikers, I thought it was standard procedure to always talk to touring bikers. They were going in the opposite direction and I actually stopped them to talk. I bought a walking stick, basket and drum at the craft store in Dete for \$405ZWD (about \$11.25US). John told me he saw elephant poop in town; I did not notice it. Also, Karen and Elizabeth said they saw the guide from Mashavuka caves. This was the man that we met near the secondary school that was guiding a tour to the cave. Gary and I went to the waterhole near the house where we were staying that night. We were not supposed to go on the roads near town, it was dangerous to be in the woods with all the wild life. The waterhole was very close to the house and at first, we only saw 2 interesting birds. We followed them for a while hoping to get some good pictures and then we found some buffalo bones and skull. My guess is that another wild animal could have killed the buffalo. We decided it might be too dangerous there and started heading back to the house. As we were leaving the waterhole, we saw a herd of 5 elephants going to the pond. They stopped when they saw us, so we moved away from the pond and waited. Then they approached the pond and played in the water. We watched them for a while and then we saw more animals approaching the pond. There were zebras, wart hogs and antelope type animals approached the pond. Then all except one elephant ran away from the pond and the remaining elephant tried to keep the other animals from the pond. The elephant used its trunk to chase off the wart hogs. Finally, the remaining elephant left and all the other animals went to the pond. We then went back to the house and everyone went on a game ride. Gary said that we should not tell anyone that we went to the pond. So, when we went back to the house, we said that we just went for a walk around the neighborhood. After that Gary told some of the others about the pond. We never told our guides about the pond, because we knew that we should not have gone there. I do not think it was a safe place to go. On the game ride we saw lots of wildlife; elephants, giraffes, buffalo, crocodiles, rhinos, kudu, wart hogs and more. I saw the elderly ladies that I met at the gas station in Hwange the previous day. They were on a game drive in the same park as we were on our game drive. My cold seemed to be doing a lot better, but I still had a slightly scratchy throat. I was very hungry by dinner time. The breakfast that they packed for us at the Baobab hotel was not very tasty and we never ate lunch. Elizabeth cooked a very good dinner for us that included rice, soup, green vegetables, etc. That night I drank 4 beers. We all tipped Elizabeth for her assistance while she was with us (cooking and cleaning our clothes). That night's accommodations were in the Wild side house, a pink house with 3 bedrooms and a single bathroom (the tube was separate from the toilet). (Day 12/ Biked 47.48 miles/ Total bike miles 237.05/ Wednesday, August 4, 1999)

At about 6 AM, I went to the forbidden pond (the pond that Gary and I saw the elephants at the previous day) and I could hear a lot of scary noises. It was still dark and it took me a long time to walk the short distance to the waterhole. I was watching the woods to make sure no lions were hunting me. When I finally approached the pond, all I saw was a lot of small birds. I went back to the house and packed my stuff. Gary asked why I didn't wait for him and I told him I thought he already left (I did not see him in the

morning, I thought I saw him leave earlier that morning). I ended up biking with John and Karen at 7:30 AM, we left about an hour before everyone else left. It was nice to bike at a slower pace (my normal pace), up to that point I felt like everyone was in a hurry and that I could not stop to take pictures at my own leisure. I took some pictures of neat grass huts (one set of huts was a bicycle repair shop). At one craft center people were hitting their drums, so I returned the drum call (my drum was mounted on top of all my stuff on the back of the bike). I could hit my drum as I biked down the road. The people selling the drums got a good laugh out of my drum. The day's ride consisted of biking over 3 large hills. I walked my bike near the top of the hills. I stopped at a tuck stop (I guess it's like a truck stop) and played foosball with a native boy. He beat me 5 to 3. I stopped to take a picture at a hut and a boy came out to greet me. I gave him a postcard and a United States quarter. I then took his picture and biked off. A local crafts sales man stopped me, he wanted me to trade or give him something. I ended up giving him 2 United States quarters; he wanted to know what they would be worth in ZWD dollars. He had no interest in the coins, only how much they were worth. It seemed like lots of people were trying to get free handouts. Children came to the streets with their hands extended asking for money and sweets. The children often came to the road yelling mukiwa (white man in their native language). One place we stopped to eat and a lady with a bucket on her head stopped to talk, I assumed she wanted handouts, but she did not ask for anything. I asked Shingi why there were so many people looking for handouts in that area and he said that the people are poorer and need food. That night we had to get our water from a water pump (1-KM hike to waterhole) near the school where we stayed. We ate dinner at the school; they served tough chicken, rice and vegetables. That night, I had a long talk with Shingi and he told me that he appreciated what our people (whites) did to help the African people. Shingi told me how a Canadian guy put an African child through school. He said the child could not afford books or clothes and the Canadian guy paid for the child's needs. Shingi also told me that some people think that we use African people for experiments. He told me that some people think AIDS is an experiment and he did not believe it because people are dying in the United States from AIDS too. I told him that the best prevention is to use a condom. He told me how he often had opportunities with women, because he was with us and people figured he was able to get a lot of money. He told me that a prostitute that charged \$150ZWD with a condom and \$300ZWD without a condom once approached him. He said that she was willing to take the risk for the additional money. Shingi is happily married and said that he never took advantage of these opportunities with other women. Ezra entered the room and Shingi told him that we were talking about AIDS and that people from Africa thought AIDS was a United States experiment. I thought Ezra was going to tell him that AIDS was thought to be originated from African monkeys, but to my surprise he said that people often put the blame on other people for things that are not explained. Ezra also explained that people are living normal lives in the United States with AIDS. I still think it's a big problem and realize that they can prolong the lives of people with AIDS. However, I think that no cure is in sight and prevention is the best medicine. I do not think that people should think they do not need to worry about AIDS. Especially people that do not have access to the drugs that help people live a normal life with HIV. I also understand that it is very expensive for these drugs. The kids at the school wanted to see what a United States bill looked like, so I gave them some United States coins. They also told me boys in that part of the country often married as early as 14 years old. I asked how old these boys were and all of them were over 14, so I jokingly said that they must not be normal. I also told them not to worry; I was not normal either. I asked Shingi how old he was when he got married and he said he was 21. I thought I heard the kids talking to Shingi about thefts in Binga. That night, I went to sleep at about 11 PM. (Day 13/ Biked 66.45 miles/ Total bike miles 303.5/ Thursday, August 5, 1999)

I woke up at 6:30 AM and walked around. I went over to the school and looked into some of the classrooms. In one room I saw a sign over the chalkboard that said, "AIDS shrinks AIDS stinks." The school principal saw me looking at the sign and told me that it was their AIDS awareness sign. He also told me that it was not as much of a problem for his (Tonga) people as the Ndebele people. He told me his people are more rigid about sleeping together. The school principal also told me that there were not enough chairs for all the students. Then he showed me his small office and I noticed his secretary had a typewriter. He also pointed out the non-electric duplicating machine and told me they had to type stuff on special paper (the paper creates a stencil). Then you would run the special paper through the copy machine. I often saw others in the group giving out their addresses and up to that point I had not given out my address (I don't really like exchanging addresses anyway). At this school, some of the students asked for my address and I gave it to them. That day was an easy bike ride. I stopped at a hut and gave a lady my red sweat pants, undershirt and 2 pairs of underwear. She danced in joy and I took some pictures. Then I continued biking. We stopped in Binga and I gave a shoe repairman my neoprene booties (I broke the zipper when I put them on at Victoria Falls). He seemed interested in looking at them, but I did not think he knew what to do with them. Next, we biked to the Hot Springs Hotel and checked into our room. We needed to leave at about 1:30 AM to catch the bus to Harare and that meant we would not do much sleeping. It was a nice hotel and some of us (Ezra, Becky and Heather/ not me) went for a swim in the hot springs. The Hot Springs was a pool that was warmed by water that was feed from a natural Hot Spring. I biked from the hotel to Lake Kariba. I went to the spot that the hotel guy told me about, but it was not a very scenic spot. There was a boat dock and telephone lines across the lake view. I then biked to another spot on the lake and found a crocodile farm. At the farm, I saw about 30 crocodiles on the shores with my binoculars. Then I biked on a dirt road that ended up on a scenic part of the lake. I saw 3 people nude bathing at this part of the lake. I did not look to see if they were male or female. If not for the bathers it would have been a nice place to watch the sunset. I ended up missing the sunset and biking back to the hotel. Back at the hotel, I told everyone about my ride. When I told them about seeing 30 crocodiles, they did not question it. Some of them never found out that the crocodiles were in a farm. Back at the Hot Springs we talked to some people that had a farm near Harare. From these people, I found out the largest bill in Zimbabwe is the \$100ZWD (about \$2.75US) and when people go on vacation, they don't talk about how much they take, but how many inches worth of bills they take. I think Shingi had about 2 inches worth of \$100ZWD. The farmers told us it was a wet year after 6 years of drought. They also told us how the native wait 4 days after birth before getting clothes for their babies. This is due to the fact that children often die. That night, when I told people how I gave a lady my sweat pants and underwear, everyone thought it was funny how I gave away my underwear. (Day 14/ Biked 48.11 miles/ Total bike miles 351.61/ Friday, August 6, 1999)

We woke up at about 1:40 AM and biked to the road in the dark at about 2:00 AM. The bus was going to pick us up at the road to take us to Harare. While we waited for the bus I saw a scorpion in the night with my flashlight. This was the first scorpion that Becky had ever seen. Then I pointed my flashlight at Becky's sandals and said, "look another scorpion!" She jumped! When I told her not really, I think she was a little unhappy with me. We took the "chicken bus" to Ganywa (My notes say we took the bus to Ganywa, but I looked on a map and think the town may have been Kwekwe or Gweru). The bus was given this name because people take all their belongings (including chickens) on top of the bus. At one

point a person on one of Shingi's tours called the bus the "chicken bus" and the name stuck. The bus was very crowded and we all got in the far back of the bus. We were the only white people on the bus. It was a very bumpy dusty ride in the back of the bus. I think I slept part of the time, but most of the time I was trying to keep hold of all my belongings and thinking that I could not wait for the ride to be over. About 28 Kilometers before we reached Ganywa, I heard a loud thud and then the bus pulled over. We had a flat tire and there was no spare on the bus. There were about 100 people on the bus and they all needed a ride to Ganywa. A bus came down the road and a lot of the people from our bus got on that bus. Then a second smaller bus arrived and Shingi quickly got on the bus. I think he gave them some money and then we took the bikes off the bus with the flat tire and loaded them onto the smaller bus. There were a lot of people on the bus with the flat tire trying to get on the small bus. We pushed our way onto the small bus and then other people that were waiting packed the small bus. Karen and I were able to get seats, but everyone else had to stand. At Ganywa we changed buses and got on a nice comfortable bus. The "chicken bus" was like a school bus and the more comfortable bus was similar to a Greyhound type bus (but had no restroom). It seemed like there was a conflict over how much Shingi was to pay for the next bus, it might have been a conflict on the price he ended up bribing the driver on the bus that rescued us from the flat tire bus. There were lots of people at the bus depot and we had to guard our stuff until everything was on the new bus. The new bus was not crowded and had very loud music playing. I saw Shingi flashing his wad of \$100ZWD bills and seemed surprised that he was not concerned with other people seeing his money. I noticed other people on the bus looking at the money (this was the second time that I had seen Shingi do that). My cold was about 99% better and I felt very good. When we arrived in Harare, the bus dropped us off with our gear across from the Sheraton Hotel. We then biked to the Selous hotel and found out that our reservations were not correct. We had reservations for the next night, someone made the wrong reservations and they did not have room for us at the hotel. Shingi had a guy leave a bike box for me at the hotel and I was able to get the box out of their storage shed. I loaded the box (I folded the box up) on my bike and we headed to another hotel. The next hotel was a hostel with a swimming pool. It looked like a good place to me, but the other people did not want to share rooms with strangers. We then went across the street and stayed in a mid-range hotel. The hotel was a nice place with 2 beds per room and a bathroom for every group of 3 rooms. Then we went to eat at a restaurant down the road and I had piri piri chicken. It was a very good meal. (Day 15/ Biked about 5 miles/ Total bike miles 356.61/ Saturday, August 7, 1999)

I woke up at about 5:45 AM and saw Ezra off. He came back to the room 2 times. Once I think he forgot something and the second time he told me to leave his stuff at the hotel, because the hostel across the street was not able to take his stuff. Later, I noticed his coat was hanging on his bike, I think he still forgot his coat. After talking with others in the group we decided to have Shingi take the stuff for Ezra, Shingi was already going to store his bike. I took a bath and finished packing for the flight home. At about 6:15 AM, I woke up Becky, Ezra had her alarm clock and I agreed to wake her up at about 6:15 AM. Becky and I then biked to the craft center in town and it was closed. They claimed that it did not open on Sunday and then we biked back to the hotel. I then roped my panniers together and wrapped them in plastic for the flight home. I biked back into town to look for a post office. I went by the craft center and found that it was partly opened. I bought some rock (green (verda) and black stones) souvenirs and then I asked one of the venders how to get to the post office. Then I biked to the post office and sent the rest of my post cards (I wrote about ½ of them the previous night). That day every time I biked into town I was on Ezra's

bike and his bike had pedals for clip in shoes. I did not have the correct shoes, but it was still easy to ride the bike, although the seat was a little high for me. I biked back to the hotel and a little after that Shingi showed up with a minivan to take us to the airport. We loaded our gear and said bye to Heather (she was staying for another day). Then we went to the Holiday Inn and picked up Karen and John (they wanted to stay at a nice place on their last night in Africa). Then we drove to the airport and Shingi gave me a rock sculpture as a gift. Shingi gave John a copy of the paper that was written by the guy that showed us around the Mashavuka caves. The copy was hand written by Shingi. We then checked in our luggage (The people would not check my luggage all the way to Portland). I bought some more souvenirs at the airport craft center. I spent most of my ZWD money while at the airport. I was flying from Johannesburg, South Africa, to Miami, Florida. Everyone else (John, Karen and Becky) was flying to New York. I said bye to Karen and John at the line to check in at Johannesburg. I asked about checking my luggage to Portland in Johannesburg and they said it was too late. Then I said bye to Becky at the gift shops in the Johannesburg airport. I boarded the plane to Miami and sat next to a man from South Africa. He said that South African Airlines was not really good until an American purchased it. He also told me that the flight from New York to Johannesburg is the longest non-stop commercial flight in the world. He then gave me his theory that God created AIDS to help with the population problem. He explained to me that a survey showed that AIDS was heavy in the area of a trucking route and that it spread from the highway out into the countryside. I think the truck route was from Pretoria to Durban, South Africa. He claimed that truck drivers spread it. He also told me that in some areas 57% of the people had HIV. He told me that a Toyota plant in South Africa was losing 10 employees per month to AIDS (out of 3000 employees). He also told me that South Africa was very rich in natural resources (gold, platinum, diamonds, etc.) He said that they have great doctors and that the first heart transplant was performed in South Africa. He also told me that they have some of the best mining engineers in the world. He mentioned they had a mine in South Africa that was 2 miles deep. The flight to Miami was an all-night flight. (Day 16/ Biked about 5 miles/ Total bike miles 361.61/ Sunday, August 8, 1999)

I arrived in Miami and checked my luggage to Portland. They changed my flights and I was able to leave Miami sooner than expected and I also had an earlier flight out of Denver. Overall, my new flights got me to Portland about 3 hours earlier. When I was at the Denver airport people asked about my walking stick. This was the first-time people commented on the stick since I had left Africa. I also had people asking about my walking stick at the Portland airport. I unpacked my gear, reassembled my bike, loaded the gear on my bike and cycled home from the Portland airport. My bike rack was damaged on the flight home (the box I got from Shingi was small and not in good shape, but at least I was able to get a box) (Day 17/ Biked 11.77 miles/ Total bike miles 373.38/ Monday, August 9, 1999)