

Chapter 4

Before we left Zambia we had asked Keith to submit an application form for a company house that had a swimming pool, and would become vacant while we were on holiday. When Keith met us at the airport, he said that the application had been successful and we could move in when we were ready. We had been lucky, some people had waited many years before having the opportunity to move into a house with a swimming pool. We stayed in our own house for two weeks after our return, this gave Jan and Fred time to clean the other house and move some of our belongings in. This would make the final move much easier as the house was only two houses away from where we were living at the time which was 25, Musasa Avenue. We managed to complete the move on Saturday morning which left us the rest of the weekend to settle in. Moving was quite amusing and we had lots of fun, I had arranged to borrow the lorry and driver we used for work on the transmission lines. Saturday morning arrived and John Kandela our driver came to the house with the lorry. However on the back of the lorry were the line gang, all twenty of them. I asked John what was going on, he laughed! and said that when he had told the men where he was going, they insisted on going with him. Needless to say the lorry wasn't needed, the linesmen carried everything by hand and all Jan had to do was tell them where to put things as they arrived. By lunchtime everything was in place, Jan and Fred then made sandwiches and mugs of tea for the men. The house we moved into was 29, Musasa Avenue, as I said only a short distance away. Although it was great to have a swimming pool, there were a few things that needed doing. The first job we needed to do and as soon as we possibly could was to repair the fence around the pool area and make a gate for the entrance. These jobs we did straight away and also fitted a bolt on the gate too high for the children to reach. This done we felt much happier knowing that unless one of us was there the children could not get into the pool area.

After some time we found the filter was not cleaning the water properly, so decided to make a new filter. Having obtained a length of one metre diameter pipe, we welded a plate in the bottom and a flange around the top. After this we welded the spray pipes inside, and fitted the external pipe-work and valves. We then filled the filter with different grades of filter sand and bolted the top in place. The new filter worked well and with a weekly back-flush the water was crystal clear. Although Gary was only four years old, he was a good swimmer and spent most of his free time in the pool with friends who lived nearby. Having the pool made quite a difference for us also as we both enjoyed swimming, and could now swim whenever we wished. There were a couple of changes we still wanted to make in the pool area, which would make life more pleasant. The first was to build a brick Braai with a thatched roof to give some shade. The second was to make and install a diving board at the deep end of the pool. Once these changes had been done we spent much more time in the pool area. At one end of the pool area was the garage wall which was painted white. In the evenings we would often sit outside and watch slides and cine films which we projected onto the garage wall. It was a much better way to view them, than inside the house plus we didn't need to use a screen.

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The house at the rear of ours had banana trees the length of the rear fence, which not only screened our pool area but also meant that we had an abundance of bananaâ€™s when in season. Jan planted Pawpaw Trees in a corner near the garage and once the trees had grown we also had a good supply of those. We also had mango Trees in the garden plus Avocado Trees, we were not short of fruit. While I am writing about the fruit trees now would be a good time to mention some of the things Jan would use the fruit to make. Pawpaw was excellent for making pies, if used before they had fully ripened would taste very similar to apples. Bananaâ€™s Jan used to make banana-bread, both the pies and banana-bread she would freeze. Mangoâ€™s Jan would use to make jam and chutney, tomatoes were also used to make chutney. It was only by doing this, we could have a regular supply throughout the year as all fruit and vegetables were seasonal.

It was about this time that Fred started to drink heavily, we tried to find out why but he wouldnâ€™t say. He began arriving at the house late and drunk, usually in the evening when we needed him to look after the children. We couldnâ€™t allow him to stay not in the state he was in, so we would have to tell him to leave. He then started coming in to work in the mornings drunk, we made another attempt to find out why he was drinking so much but he still wouldnâ€™t say, we knew then that he would have to go. Fred had been with us for some time, and was very much part of the family, although we were reluctant, we had the children to think of and it was now quite evident he couldnâ€™t stay. Many of Janâ€™s friends employed girls as house-servants which they spoke very highly of. Jan thought about it and decided her friends were probably right. A house-girl would probably be more trustworthy with the children and most probably not drink. Once again Jan interviewed a number of house-servants, and finally decided she had found the right one and so she employed her. The house-girlâ€™s name was Anna, she seemed to fit in well, and both the children liked her. She was efficient around the house and pleasant to talk to, however things are not always how they seem. Sometime after Anna had started working for us, we got a call from the local Police Station. They wanted us to drive to the police station and collect our house-servant, who they had arrested that afternoon for being drunk and disorderly in one of the local bars. Jan told them that the person they had arrested could not be Anna our house-servant as she was a non-drinker. The person they had arrested must be someone else, although they were quite insistent Jan refused to go to the police station as she was so sure they had made a mistake. Next morning Anna came into work as usual and when Jan mentioned the phone call we had received the previous afternoon from the police, Anna laughed and agreed with Jan that the police were mistaken.

For a time all went well and we had no cause to complain about Annaâ€™s work or behaviour, she did seem to be all that we had looked for in a house-servant. Having a girl as a house-servant meant we would now have to hire a garden-boy. Once again Jan asked around and interviewed some of the likely candidates, she chose a young man whose name was Arman. He seemed a likable person and certainly kept the garden and swimming pool in shape,

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although unlike Fred and Lamek he only had the garden to look after so had plenty of time. A few weeks later we received another phone call from the police to say they had once again arrested our house-girl for being drunk and disorderly and would we collect her from the Police Station. This time they insisted that it was Anna they had arrested, they also insisted that Jan or I should drive to the Police Station to identify her and then drive her home. The police were right it was Anna they had arrested on both occasions. Until now Anna had made a point of not coming to work or to look after the children in an intoxicated state. Having been found out she seemed no longer to care and would come in drunk or not bother coming in at all. Once again we were left to look for a reliable house-servant. This time we were lucky, Jan employed a man whose name was Richard. Richard was by far the best house-servant we had employed and was to stay with us for many years.

Some weeks after Anna had left, Arman came to the house and told us that he had to leave. Jan asked him why he was leaving, he said he had a personal problem to sort out and would have to leave town. Jan asked him if it was something we could help him with, Arman said no only he could sort things out and then left. I will jump forward here 1218 months to make sense of the reason Arman had left and why only he could sort out his problem for doing so. Jan was near the fence in the front garden when a Zambian crossed the road and said hello to her. She answered his greeting but must have looked puzzled, because he then said "ædonâ€™ you remember meâ€™" Jan replied that he did look slightly familiar, she just could not remember where she had seen him. He said that he was Arman who had been our garden-boy months earlier. Jan asked him what the problem had been and was it now sorted out. Without a word he dropped his trousers, and before Jan could turn away started waving his tackle in front of her, saying look! Nothing wrong now, completely cured. Jan was caught completely unawares, she was so embarrassed and didnâ€™t know where to look. I would have given almost anything to have been there and seen how she reacted. It appears that the angelic Anna was not only a heavy drinker but also a part time prostitute, if you have not already guessed Arman had been one of her customers. It also explained how she had the money to drink as she had. I have gone into some detail about our house-servants as at various times they all played a part in our lives. I will now continue with my tale as the pages are rolling by but time seems to be standing still.

We are still interested in boating and fishing and go to the Fishing Club at Mindola Dam quite often. Over the past few months we have been watching people water ski-ing and sailing from the boat club which is adjacent to our club. We have for some time wanted the opportunity to try water ski-ing but have never been in a position to have a go. One of the people I was working with said he had a power boat for sale, which was fast enough to ski from, however it was a little on the small side. We were given the option to purchase the boat when it came up for sale. However there was a small catch, there were two engines being sold with the boat, one was a 20hp Westbend and the other was a 40hp Evinrude. Unfortunately the boat owner had loaned

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the 40hp engine to a friend and could not get it back for some weeks. Therefore we would have the 20hp Westbend only for a few weeks. Although we were a little disappointed we decided to buy the boat anyway. Having bought the boat, the owner suggested we should spend a weekend with him and his family at the boat club so that he could show us how to launch the boat and answer any questions we might want to ask. We went to the boat club and played around with the boat, getting familiar with the way it handled and finding the little quirks that all boats seem to have. While we were there we had the chance to try water ski-ing which we thoroughly enjoyed. Although it wasn't possible to ski from our boat until we got the 40hp engine, we could use a disc. A disc is basically just that, about 800mm/1000mm in diameter and 12mm thick with the edges smoothed and rounded, the board was then sanded and varnished. A disc could be towed behind a boat at much lower speeds than would be required to tow a water skier, which meant that our boat could tow one quite easily. A disc in many ways is an ideal way to learn to water ski as the method used to stand on the board is similar to that of water ski-ing. The main difference being that your legs can't do the splits. Normally the method used is to kneel on the disc while the boat built up speed, and when the speed felt right stand up. It is possible to have a lot of fun on a disc as a person can turn in either direction and plus going backwards. I personally feel that it is much easier to teach people to ski if they first start on a disc and gain confidence.

Although we had enjoyed our time at the Fishing Club, we had noticed that over the past few months there were less boating activities and more drinking. It was turning more and more into a drinking club with the shouting and fighting one would expect to find in a local bar. After our visit to the Rokana Sailing and Boating Club where we had gone to try the boat out when we bought it, the fishing Club now seemed dowdy and unattractive. It was now time to move on so we decided to join the RS&BC as the club was usually known. There were three sections at the RS&BC a Rowing section, sailing section and the powerboat section. All the sections were very active and elected their own committees to run the individual sections. There was also a main committee in overall charge of the club. The club was quite large, it had a swimming pool, children's adventure playground and a bar, also a large lounge overlooking the water plus toilets and showers. At the front of the clubhouse was a large expanse of grass leading down to the water's edge. We had a good idea of the people we would meet there as some worked for the same company that I was working for, others worked at the Rokana Mine and there were those that we had met when we spent the day there after buying the boat. Also the work I was doing meant I had to travel all over the Copperbelt and so I met many people in my travels to the various mines. All the people we met were very friendly and couldn't have been more helpful. We applied to the club and were allowed to use the facilities while waiting for our application to go before the main committee. After about two weeks of waiting we were told our application had been accepted, and although we knew of no reason why it should have been refused. It was still a relief when the approval came through. At this point I will deviate again, all mail was sent to the company PO. Box 819 and then collected by the company. The mail was then sorted and delivered to the individual departments. There were no house deliveries for mail at the time, and because of the work I was involved in some days could pass before I would be able to collect our mail.

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We spent most Sundayâ€™s at the boat club for the next few weeks as we were quite keen to learn how to water ski and the boys enjoyed the swimming pool and other activities plus they had a number of friends to play with. Most evenings after the boats were hitched up ready for the trip home we would have a braai outside at the front of the clubhouse with other powerboat members, it was a nice way to end the day. We would talk generally of incidents that had happened during the day, many of which were quite amusing, we would also speak about stuff that we wanted to try the following weekend. There was quite a lot of laughing and joking but all in fun and without malice. Although we were keen to learn to ski and enjoyed spending time at the boat club, this did not interfere with our liking for travelling in Zambia. It did in fact help us to find other places of interest as we met people who had been to places we had not yet heard of. Some of the places talked about seemed quite interesting and we knew we would visit them when we had the opportunity. Since most of this chapter has been devoted to our lives in and around Kitwe, I will for the moment continue.

Every year we had the Mayday Parade, the parade would start in town and make its way along Freedom Avenue to Freedom Park. There were always a large number of floats and people marching and singing. Very similar to a carnival in England, the main difference being that in Zambia all the floats and bands were amateur, they didnâ€™t have the money to spend but made up for it with their enthusiasm. People put a lot of effort into building their floats and although the bands had limited instruments the singing compensated. The parade was very colourful and noisy and enjoyed by all including the spectators. After the floats reached Freedom Park the floats would be parked and the singing and dancing would begin.

The other annual event which I have yet to mention is the Copperbelt Agricultural Show, held at the Showground in Nkana West. This we went to every year, it is similar to the County Shows in England. Again the main difference was finance, the Copperbelt Show was run as a joint venture between the farming community and the government. Very few people were paid, most of the people involved in the running of the show did so for the enjoyment they got from being involved in the event. I am not going to say too much about the show at this time as I will be returning to the subject in a later chapter. There were the usual animal sections, vegetable and fruit stands plus many more stands exhibiting the products made by local industries. There were the bars and food stalls that were expected at a show of this size, at various places around the grounds there were groups of traditional dancerâ€™s. They danced to the music played on their tribal instruments, large numbers of spectators would also join in with the singing and dancing creating quite a carnival atmosphere. I donâ€™t remember us ever having a bad day out at the show which we went to many times over the years.

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Another place we have already been to on several occasions is Monkey Fountain Zoo, it is situated off the Kitwe/Ndola road approximately 5 miles from Ndola on the right hand side of the road. The zoo is quite small, probably about the size of a small English safari park. There are no large animals there, most of the birds and animals are of a kind that appeal to young children. After all we are in Africa and if we want to see large animals, we go to a game park. There is a large variety of monkeys which most children love to watch. There are other animals also which include, baboons, deer, wild pigs plus many domestic animals which appeal to young children. There are two aviaries which contain a large number of exotic birds, Oops! They aren't exotic they are all from this part of Africa. There is also a reptile house which contains a number of lizards, monitor lizards which are the largest lizards in this part of Africa, plus rainbow lizards and chameleons and many others that I have forgotten the names of. There were also a number of snakes, many of which are the most poisonous in Africa ie:- Gaboon Vipers, Puff Adders and Spitting cobra's plus many others. It was a good place to take the children for the afternoon after spending the morning shopping in Ndola. A while back just before Craig was born we came here with Gary for a day out. At the entrance to the zoo there is a café which is about 6 feet above ground level with a concrete wall around the edges. While we were sitting at the café having a drink and cooling off, Gary decided to walk round the top of the wall. Unfortunately he lost his balance and fell on the rocks below. When we reached him his face was covered in blood and he had a large gash under his right eye. Once we got him cleaned up we could see there was no other damage, although the gash was deep and just under his eye. We decided he needed to have it looked at in the mine hospital in Kitwe as soon as possible. All the towns in Zambia have a General Hospital, but we like many people had little faith in them and preferred to use our own hospital. We arrived at the hospital and found that the cut was quite bad and had to be stitched. Gary even today still has the scar from that little episode.

I have been writing in a serious manner for some time and feel it is time to lighten up and mention a few of the more humorous incidents which have happened during these early years in Zambia. One afternoon I got a phone call from Jan to say that she had been reversing out of her friend's driveway and turned too sharply and the car was stuck over the storm drain. I did ask how she managed to do it, the answer was not printable. Running the length of the street the storm drain was about 6 feet wide and 4 feet deep. At the end of every driveway there was a bridge spanning the drain, at each side of the bridge was a low wall about 9 inches high. She had reversed so fast that the rear of the car had mounted the wall and slid along on the chassis, half the car length was hanging over the drain. Well done Jan! Now I knew why she had phoned, there was no way we could get the car off the wall without a crane and even then we would have to be careful or it could fall into the drain. There was only one way out, which was to return to work and get the crane, then lift the car clear and let it down on the road. Once the car was back on the road I was just a little angry and tried telling Jan she needed to take more care when she was driving, it was hopeless! we both ended up laughing, as by then we could see the funny side. Then there was the time that Gary decided to spend the night in his tent, camping in the front garden. Just before we went to bed Jan went to check that Gary was ok, when she went in the tent she found that Cissy had got in the tent and into Gary's sleeping bag and

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was curled up beside him. On another occasion Cissy went missing and after three days we thought that she was gone, we doubted that we would ever see her again. Then one night Jan was in the kitchen when she heard a noise at the window, when she turned to look there was Cissy hanging onto the window frame obviously wanting to come in. About two days after Cissy had returned a guy who worked for the same company asked if we had a pet monkey. I said yes, everyone around here knows we have, he said thank goodness. A monkey had been living in the tree outside his house the past few days, he had seen it several times but every time he pointed to the monkey so that his wife could see, it disappeared. They then started to argue and his wife told him to stop making fun of her. Cissy was only missing for three days but in that time she almost caused a divorce. However to stop any further arguments and to also convince his wife that he wasn't cracking up we took Cissy round to meet them and explained to his wife that Cissy had been missing for a few days and that it was probably her in the tree. Cissy really was a nut, if Allen came round to see us Cissy would be all over him, however if Barbara his wife went near her she would scream and bare her teeth and behave in a most frightening way. I am sure it was just a game to her, she either liked a person or didn't, there were no grey areas. Smokey also had his funny little ways, one of which was to make a dive for anyone who didn't like cats. He seemed to have an instinct for spotting these people, and would make a bee-line for them the moment they entered the house. A lady called Val who was a friend of Jan's was his usual target. As soon as she sat down he would run across the room and jump on her lap, Val was too terrified to throw him off. He would sit there looking innocently at her face, Jan would walk over and lift him off her lap. He would then walk back to her chair and sit as close as possible staring up at her. About October time just before the rains started, the heat would become oppressive, almost unbearable and we would be invaded by flying ants. There were swarms of them flying out of nests which were in the ground. The birds would swoop down to catch the ants and Smokey would be dashing round in circles trying to catch the birds. Fortunately he was usually unsuccessful and after some time would flop on the ground and just watch. The ants are no more than white maggots with wings, while the weather is dry they fly around in swarms. As soon as it rains they fall to the ground and the wings come off. It is quite normal to walk out of the house and find the paths covered in ants and wings after a rain storm. Fortunately we only had to put up with them for a few weeks a year.

In Zambia we had a large range of creatures that could be found in the houses and gardens, mainly gardens. The spiders were unlike any we had seen in England, there were so many different sizes and colours many of which were really pretty to look at. One I remember in particular was about the size of a fifty pence coin, black with bright yellow stripes, long hairy legs and very large eyes. We never destroyed spider webs around the outside of the house, since the spiders lived by eating insects they helped keep the mosquitoes and flies away from the house. When we had lived in England Jan had been terrified of spiders, and so one day I asked why was she not afraid of the spiders here as they were much larger. The answer I got was classic 'these aren't spiders, they are animals' there was nothing I could say to that. There were many other insects native to Zambia, some we had never heard of and others

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we had learnt about when we were at school. The stick insect I am sure most of us have heard of, the locust is similar to a grass-hopper but camouflaged and much larger, a serious pest in Africa as they destroy large areas of crops. The grass hopper is bright green in colour and a source of food. There is a large variety of lizards all of which are harmless, the Blue Skop is easy to spot as it has a green body and blue head. There are a number of small lizards which are mixed in colour and are usually known as rainbow lizards, these are generally found in rocky terrain but often seen in houses. They are completely harmless and most people just leave them alone, to catch them and put them outside would be almost impossible, they are so fast. One lizard that fascinates me is the Chameleon, these have the ability to change colour to fit in with their surroundings. Unfortunately they change colour so slowly that we have often seen a bright green chameleon on a brown tree branch. The chameleon is very slow moving and relies on its camouflage to prevent being spotted in most types of terrain. Most Zambians are very superstitious and keep well clear of chameleons as they believe the chameleon will bring them bad luck. The last of the common lizards and the largest is the Monitor lizard, I don't know what length they grow to but we have seen many that are about 6 feet in length. They are not easy to find as their habitat is along river banks and around the edges of lakes and dambo's they are very good swimmers they are often mistaken by people who think they have seen a small crocodile only to find out it was a monitor lizard. We were walking along the bank of the Zambezi one afternoon with a friend whose name was Dave, he gave a sudden Yell! And almost fell over. He said he had stood on a crocodile which was lying on the bank. Jan and I laughed and said that if he had stood on a crocodile, he would not have got off so lightly. We looked into the river and saw a monitor lizard swimming away from the bank. It must have been really annoyed having its afternoon siesta spoilt by Dave. It did take some time for Dave to live that one down.

One evening we went to Keith and Eileen's for the evening, during the evening Keith said that he had been told about a place called Mita Hills. It was apparently a good spot for a weekend fishing trip, so last weekend he drove out there to find out just how good the fishing was. Although the fishing was quite good he decided it would be a nice place to take his family for a long weekend. After some discussion we decided to spend a long weekend there as a group. We decided to take the two boats as there would be eight of us in all, four adults and four children. We were a little hindered at the time as we still had our Cortina, however Keith had a Toyota Pickup. This we could load most of the bulky gear in, the largest item would be the cool-box, which would contain our food and drink. It was impossible to buy a cool-box of the size we would need whenever we went away for some time therefore we would make our own. One thing we did learn in Zambia, was that if you needed something then often the only way to get it was to make it yourself. To make a large cool-box we would find an old fridge and completely gut it, as we only needed the cabinet. We would then seal all the holes with araldite, then drill a hole in the end near the bottom and fit a copper tube and plug, the rear of the fridge would be the bottom as we needed the cabinet door at the top. Before leaving on a trip we would make ice blocks by filling empty ice-cream containers with water and freezing them. While camping we would drain the water off once a day, and open the cool-box as little as possible. By doing this we found that food would stay frozen for as much as ten days, this was adequate as we rarely went camping for longer periods than that. Apart from the cool-box which was

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packed with our food and drink we also had to carry spare petrol for the boats and vehicles. Although there were a few garages on our route, it was quite common to pull in only to find they had no petrol. We would also need to carry enough water for the duration of our stay, although we could wash and bathe in the dambo we needed water for cooking and drinking. It sounds as if getting ready for a camping trip would take an age, however we were so well organised that it rarely took us more than 30/45 minutes to pack all the gear we needed and be on our way. Our route to Mita hills would be on tar roads as far as Kapiri Mposhi, at which point we would turn off the tar and onto dirt roads for the rest of our journey.

We left Kitwe early on a Friday evening and arrived at our campsite just after dark. At the campsite some-one had built a frame-work from tree branches, so all we had to do was pull a tarpaulin over the frame and we had a tent. By the time we had unpacked the gear it was getting quite late, so we collected some wood from around the camp-site – which was fun for the children – and got a good fire going. After we had cooked and eaten our evening meal it was time to get the children to bed. After the excitement of the day it was difficult to get them to stop nattering and go to sleep, however after many threats they were quiet. The rest of the evening was ours – we could now relax by the fire and make plans for the following day. Next morning we launched the boats, had breakfast and then set out to explore the dam. This was the first time we had been boating on a lake or dam where the trees were clearly visible above and below the surface of the water. It was quite an experience, also a little eerie as we made our way through the channels between the trees. It was also a little strange watching the tops of the trees sliding beneath the hull as we passed over them. About halfway along the dam we saw a large hill rising up out of the water, since it was about lunchtime we decided to make for the hill and have our lunch there. We moored the boat and decided to have a wander round, there was something different about the surface of the hill. There was no grass or vegetation of any kind, and although it was solid rock, it was not a type we had seen before. We were by now familiar with most types of rock found around Zambia, but this was different to any rock formation we had seen in the past. It was rough and came away in flakes as we walked over the surface. We picked up one of the flakes and after studying it for a while, realised that the hill was Mica which is used in industry as an electrical insulator. Mica is not just an insulator, it is also heat resistant which is why it is used so much in domestic appliances and also in industry. Although we had used mica, we had never thought about where it came from or how it was formed. Like many materials we had used in the past we had just taken it for granted.

We did spend quite a bit of time fishing, but as usual caught very few. We are still the world's worst or unluckiest fishermen. On Sunday afternoon Keith wanted to see how fast his boat was and how tight it would turn. He went out onto the dam by himself, he then proceeded to go up and down the dam, making tighter and tighter turns at the end of each run. After a time it became obvious that he was getting carried away with excitement as by now the turns were so tight the boat was in danger of capsizing, something had to give. It did! The

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clamps holding the engine to the transom gave and the engine flew through the air in one direction, while the boat was travelling in another direction. Finally it disappeared beneath the surface by which time it had travelled some distance. Could things get worse, of course they could! It was quite funny to be honest, there was Keith racing up and down the dam, then suddenly sitting in the middle of the dam with no engine and no means of getting to the bank. We went out and towed him back, he then decided that he knew where the engine had gone down and wanted to dive for it. The water was not very deep, only about 20 feet however it had gone down in an area full of submerged trees. Our main concern was that by diving for it he might get caught up in the trees and be unable to free himself. However he was determined to try and find it, we took him out in our boat and he started diving and looking for his engine. We did insist that he took a 6mm nylon line with him so that if he ran into trouble he could pull on the line and we could go down and assist him. Although Keith made quite a number of dives he was unable to find the engine, although the water appears quite clear from the surface at that depth it was very murky with little visibility, it was an impossible task. Mita Hills was also the first place we saw a Fish Eagle, they are about the same size as the American Bald Eagle and look superb in flight. It is quite an experience to watch as they swoop down onto the water and then fly up with a fish in their beaks. There are many Fish Eagles at Meta Hills, they could often be seen perching on the dead branches of the trees, waiting and watching for any movement in the water which might be a fish. The Fish Eagle is the National Emblem of Zambia and it was nice to see them in the wild. It is only now, having seen them in the wild that we can appreciate just how awesome and beautiful they are.

On the morning we were leaving, Jan was up very early. It just before sunrise and has she had no wish to disturb the rest of us, went for a walk around the edge of the dam. A few hundred yards from where we were camped, she came across a grass hut, just outside the hut there was a Zambian lighting a fire. Jan stopped to talk to him and he said that he was a fisherman and had lived there for many years. To the side of the hut was a piece of land that the fisherman had cleared to plant his crops, maize, groundnuts, cassava and other vegetables he would need. While Jan was talking to him she noticed two dugout canoes, one was down near the water and the other which was only partly made was near the hut. Jan asked if he was making a new canoe, he said yes when he was not fishing he would make canoes and sell them. Jan asked if he would show her how they were made, he said ok and if she wanted she could take a film, he had noticed that she was carrying a camera. Jan stopped for a while and watched as the man worked on the canoe, as he worked he explained what he was doing and why. Although the tools and method he used were very basic, it was apparent that a lot of skill and patience was necessary in making the canoe. The canoe at the water's edge was submerged in the water, when Jan asked why it was submerged in the water. The fisherman explained that when a canoe was not in use it was always kept submerged to prevent the wood drying out and cracking. This would stop any leaks and lengthen the life of the canoe. By the time Jan returned to the camp we were cooking breakfast and packing, ready for the return trip home. The trip back to Kitwe had it's moments as Keith's pickup broke down twice and although we were able to find and fix the faults. The time taken meant we did not arrive home until quite late

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in the evening.

Around Zambia there are many places of interest which are unknown to many people. The maps that were available at the time were poor and showed very little detail apart from the main towns. Apart from the maps there was also very little information available, most of the information we picked up was by word of mouth. One place that we went to on a number of occasions was known as the Sunken Lake. Leaving Kitwe we would drive towards Ndola, then take the Luanshya turn-off and after approximately 400 yards would turn left onto a dirt road. From that point it would take about two hours of driving on dirt roads before arriving at St. Anthony's Mission. "When I speak of dirt roads, I don't mean loose dirt, many are constructed using Laterite which is compacted and levelled, others are simply dirt tracks" therefore not all dirt roads are bad to drive on, many are just very dusty. It is not possible to drive to the lake so we would park at the mission and then walk to the lake along a narrow bush track. On most occasions the lads from the mission would act as porters and carry our gear to the lake for us. They were a very friendly crowd and nothing seemed too much trouble, I think they enjoyed seeing and talking to people from outside of the mission. Although we were never asked, we always made a donation to assist with the upkeep of the mission. It was our way of thanking them for their assistance and also for allowing us to park at the mission where we knew we could safely leave the car.

The lake was like an oasis in the desert, after walking through the dry arid bush, we were confronted by green vegetation and water of the deepest blue which was crystal clear. It has been said that the lake is bottomless, many people over the years have tried to find the depth but to knowledge none have succeeded. The area is volcanic and the lake appears to be the crater of an extinct volcano. It is very rugged around the edges and there are not many places where it is possible to enter the water. Whatever time of year we went the water was always cold, which was nice to swim in as generally the days were hot and after such a long dusty drive and walking along the bush track, it was a relief to dive in and cool-off. After we had been for a swim we would light a fire and have a braai in the shade under the trees. It was a long drive but we always found it worthwhile, there are not many places where you can take children and play around in the water without keeping a sharp eye on them, most rivers and lakes have crocodiles in them, so it is nice to take them to a place that is safe. It was not just the swimming that we enjoyed at the lake, as there were an amazing variety of trees and shrubs around the edges of the lake and it was nice to spend time walking through them. While walking round the lake we would also see a large variety of lizards and birds, it was as if they felt safe from predators there. As I have said we went there on many occasions through the years and I can't ever remember seeing anyone there apart from those who lived at the mission. Perhaps it was the drive that put others off, however we enjoyed the peace and quiet there. Standing at the edge of the crater and looking into the water was quite amazing as we saw many varieties of fish which could not be seen from the surface of the lake. It is not always necessary to travel great distances to find places of interest or beauty, as in most countries they can be found on your own door-step. Unfortunately most take time and effort to find, and all too often people don't

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have the time or sufficient interest to look for the places around the counties where they live.

Needless to say, we are still into stock-car racing which has greatly improved during the past year or so. The track and clubhouse have both been completed, and there is enough income to pay a small amount in prize money. The racing has also improved, most of the drivers had never driven a stock-car until now, and therefore credit must go to them for the greater number of spectators now attending the race meetings. Probably the greatest asset the club has are the members, who spend hours continually improving the grounds, clubhouse and track. Life at the moment is hectic, as we are now getting on quite well with our attempts to water-ski and this combined with the stock-car club is keeping us all quite busy. We have now got the 40hp. Evinrude outboard engine, this means we can now ski whenever we wish, which is one of the reasons we are improving much quicker than we were. Unfortunately ski equipment is not available in Zambia, so everything we needed had to be made. The first item we needed was a trace which would fit across the transom of the boat. We would then need a pulley to fit on the trace and a float to prevent the trace becoming tangled in the propeller. The pulley and pin were made in the machine shop and the pulley bracket and the swivel were made in the fitting shop. These were then fitted to the trace which we made from a length of 15mm. nylon rope with an eye-splice at each end. The float we made from a cistern ball, which we drilled at each end, then fitted a length of polythene tube through the ball and glued in place at each end. The ski-handle we made from a section of a broom handle, drilled at each end. We then spliced two lengths of rope together to form a "Y" shape, which we then fitted to the ski-handle. We also fitted one of our floats just in front of the "Y" to support the ski-rope when it was on the surface of the water to prevent the rope from sinking. Apart from water-skiing this was all the equipment we needed to start ski-ing, it may sound basic but it worked and was strong enough to be safe.

For the first few weeks we were lucky to be able to borrow skis from other club members, but knew we would have to get our own as soon as we could. One Sunday evening after we had packed away and were outside the front of the clubhouse having our usual natter and braai, Ron mentioned that the powerboat section had a ski former but he was not sure who had it. Another member whose name was Frank overheard us talking and said the former was at his house, Ron had made the former and the club had agreed it should be kept at Frank's for reason of safety. It was agreed that we would borrow the former which they assured us worked as they had both used it in the past. The ski former was made of 12mm plate and curved in the shape of a water ski. At 50mm intervals along both sides it had been drilled and tapped to take 6mm set screws, there were also wooden slats to clamp the layers of plywood in place using the slats and 6mm screws. Our one remaining obstacle was to find a sheet of plywood, one sheet of plywood cut into 150mm strips would be enough to make two flat skis. We would also need waterproof glue to laminate the strips of plywood. Having obtained the plywood and glue we could now make a pair of flat skis. First we cut the wood into strips and placed four strips

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onto the plate with glue between each sheet. Next we clamped the wood to the plate using the wooden slats and 6mm screws, these were pulled down evenly to prevent any deformities occurring. The laminated ski was then left in the former for 48hrs to set. Next we had to shape the ski, this we did by placing an old ski on top of the laminated strip and drawing round it. Having marked out the shape we then cut the ski out using a jigsaw, finally the ski was sanded and varnished. We then repeated the whole process over again for the second ski. It took time but we did get a lot of satisfaction once they were made. We now needed fins and bindings for the skis™ without which they would be of no use. Once again Ron came to our aid, apparently he and others had suffered with the same problem in the past. Because of this he had spoken to the foundry manager who had agreed to make moulds and cast fins and the plates needed for the bindings. After one or two attempts they got it right and were then in a position to make them in larger quantities. There is now only one item preventing us completing the manufacture of the skis™ which is the rubber for the actual foot bindings. This needs to be a type of latex rubber which is comfortable and yet extremely pliable, once again Ron came to our assistance and obtain the rubber we needed. Now we were in a position to fit the fins, shape the rubber and fit the bindings to the skis™ the skis™ were well made and varnished to a mirror like finish. All our efforts were worthwhile and we were determined to take good care of the skis™ and put them to good use. We now had all the equipment we needed for water ski-ing, they might not have carried a brand name but they were well made and serviceable. Gary who was only six decided he wanted to have a go at ski-ing, however our skis™ were much too large for him. Laurie came to our rescue, his son Jeffrey had learnt to ski a few months earlier and since Jeffrey and Gary were of a similar age Gary could use his skis™. Laurie had made a pair of children™s skis™ for Jeffrey. The skis™ were not just smaller but also tied together with two wooden slats, one at each end to prevent them from opening out when the boy™s were ski-ing. After some time both Gary and Jeffrey were ski-ing with the ties removed. It is quite amazing how quickly children can learn to do things that seem to take us adults ages. I have spent some time on the boating aspect of our lives and need to move on, however before I do, we had one last problem to overcome. The boat is quite small and flat bottomed and with a 40hp outboard on the stern it ploughed through the water rather than skimmed over the surface. This slows the boat and is also not safe, we gave some thought to the problem and decided to fit trim tabs to the stern level with the bottom of the hull. Since we had no way of gauging the right angle for optimum performance, we decided to make them adjustable. With four pieces of stainless sheet and four hinges plus two turnbuckles we made the trim tabs. After some experimenting we found the optimum position and locked the turnbuckles in position. The difference was amazing, the boat now planed across the water with the hull remaining level. There was also quite an improvement in the speed. We were so busy at this time with our boating activities and the stock-car club, we had little time to do anything else. With so much time spent on our holidays and sporting activities it would seem that we do not have a job or any work to do.

This is of course not true, I am still foreman of the transmission section and township electrical department, and am also responsible for the rigging department, this is a very busy time for me

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as we have a lot of work going on in all three sections. The company had always sent their air conditioning units plus domestic fridges to a local company for repair. For some time I had been keeping a check on the work we were invoiced for and was not happy with the rising costs of labour and in particular spare parts. I was also convinced we were being charged for items that were not fitted. I queried this with the company and was told that due to import restrictions they had no choice but to raise their prices by a substantial amount, there were other excuses but none that I believed as I knew about the cost of importing spares into Zambia which had not risen for at least five years. I really was not happy with the reasons they gave, so decided to send a working air conditioning unit for repair. Before I sent the unit I marked the various components, and then waited for it to be returned with the invoice. One week later it came back and I checked the unit against the invoice and found we had been charged for a new compressor that had not been fitted. When I pointed this out they refuted our findings and said that since they were the only refrigeration company in town we had no choice but to have our repairs carried out by them. Making that kind of statement is both foolish and irresponsible, they were about to pay the price for their arrogance. Having worked on refrigeration units some years earlier, I knew that if we could obtain the spares and equipment, we were quite capable of carrying out our own repairs.

My first step was to see the refrigeration foreman at Rokana Mine concerning the availability of spares and equipment, plus the availability of gas. He supplied all the information that I required, the tools would have to be imported from England but most of the spares were available in Zambia. He also agreed to train some of my staff in refrigeration repairs. Now I had the information that I required it was time to see my engineer and convince him that we could do the work and also save the company a considerable amount of money. I went to his office and after a short meeting he agreed that we were being overcharged for the work they supposedly carried out. We then went through my list of equipment we would need and the training of my staff. Once again I went to see the refrigeration foreman at the mine only this time the engineer came with me. After our meeting with the mine foreman, he was also convinced that we were capable of doing the work ourselves. There was now only one hurdle left which was to get the General Manger to agree with us, as we could not proceed further without his permission. By now I was convinced that he would agree, so a meeting was arranged between the three of us. With the help of the maintenance engineer we managed to convince him that it could be done. Now that we had his consent it was time to get moving, I ordered the equipment from England which I knew could take up to two months to arrive. While waiting for the equipment I sent two of my electricians to the mine for training. I really wanted four men trained but the mine would accept only two at any one time, I did get the four but over a longer period than I had wished for. The reason I wanted four was to cover for sickness and holidays. After the first two had completed their training and the equipment had arrived we never again used an outside company to repair our units. Once our men caught up with the backlog then life got easier for them and there were times when they had little work to do. This was noticed by the general manager who then came up with the idea that we should take in work from outside of the company. This turned out to be an excellent idea, so many people and companies had been virtually held to ransom over the years that they gladly came to us for any repairs that were required. The section became so successful that after a short time the profit from outside work

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covered the cost of our repairs. We did however also carry out repairs at no cost for the Hospitals and Clubs around the town, this the general manager insisted was the right thing to do. There were no arguments from us as we totally agreed. I would not like to think how much it cost the local company who had said you have no choice but to deal with us.

I will continue for now as above, most of the work carried out by the township department was routine domestic repairs, water heaters, cookers, fridges and house wiring. It sounds like an easy job which in some ways it was, however they also had to be diplomats. It was quite amazing to see how many of the women could behave, I am sure their behaviour would have been different back in their own countries. If their neighbour had a better cooker or fridge than the one they had they would complain, they would complain if a neighbour had better light fittings, in fact many of them would look for any excuse to make a complaint. Some would speak to the men with unnecessary rudeness and use foul language. Such language might be fine in England but it is not here, or in many other parts of the world. On a number of occasions it was necessary to send letters to women reminding them that their attitude and language was un-acceptable and would not be tolerated. This is not to say that all the women were like that as the majority, were fine and got on well with my staff. Apart from the housing there was the fish farm to maintain plus two company clubs and quite often they carried out work for other clubs and organizations. We did all we could to assist various sections of the community. Our general manager had a policy of helping the community whenever possible, a policy I was in total agreement with. An example of this, which comes to mind, was an occasion when we were asked by the Rotary Club if we could repair some sterilizer units for the Kitwe Central Hospital. The hospital had seven units and over the months they had all failed, and they could get no new units or get the existing units repaired. The hospital had become desperate as they could no longer perform any kind of surgery. We checked the units and found in most cases the elements had gone, however we could not get the correct elements. We then came up with the idea of fitting twin kettle elements into each unit, this we knew would work. However because of the cost involved we needed permission from the general manager before we could go ahead. Needless to say, he gave permission and we managed to repair five of the seven units. It was because of the attitude our general manager had, that we became known not only in Kitwe but throughout most of Zambia as a helpful and caring company and we were proud of the company's reputation. There was a lot of help we gave when we could to other charities and clubs, but that occasion stands out.

The transmission and rigging sections usually worked together, it was the only way that I could ensure they were efficient as they often had to share labour and resources. We were engaged in line construction and line maintenance from 220kv down to 66kv and even lower in some of our substations. The 220kv construction job that readily comes to mind is the building of the Likasi/Michelo Tee-off, probably because of the humorous incidents that occurred on this particular job. We were also constructing 66kv transmission lines mainly in the Chingola/

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Chililabombwe area. As well as constructing new transmission lines we were also stripping out obsolete lines and equipment. While all this was happening we still had to carry out line maintenance on the existing lines and also continue with the line patrols which were important to the smooth running of our network. Joseph and Kaila were my two line patrol men, both were experienced linesmen and would know which faults would need immediate attention and which could wait. One would patrol the northern area and the other the southern area. Everyday they would patrol a different section of line and make out a daily report. Minor repairs such as earth-ing and fitting of labels on the towers they would do while on patrol, faults that required the isolation of the line would be reported to me and I would fit them in whenever I could. There was a fair amount of paperwork that needed to be kept up to date, but never was as I hated paperwork which was usually unnecessary and a complete waste of time, others however did not agree. The Likasi/Michelo 220kv line was always going to be difficult, it is a six conductor line and we only had equipment to pull two conductors at a time. The job was delayed through lack of materials for some time and by the time we were able to start so had the rainy season. We were struggling right from the start, it was almost impossible to construct the towers as the ground was a sea of mud. We would normally build the tower sections on the ground and then lift into position as we progressed up the tower. However this time we had to hand build all the way to the top, even then our problems were not over as we had difficulty in getting the mobile crane to whatever tower we were building at the time. Once the towers were finally erected we had a bigger problem, which was how to string the conductors without dragging them through the mud. We had self braking jacks, but nothing to pull and tension the conductors under these conditions.

Time was getting short, because of the delay in starting and the weather conditions it was unlikely we could meet our deadline. The general manager called an engineers meeting looking for ideas on how the work could be speeded up. Oh Dear! Why did he also invite me to the meeting, it was something that had never happened before, after all I was merely a foreman. Many suggestions were made at the meeting, although the engineers meant well, I knew there was only one way we might gain time and so kept quiet until all had given their suggestions, the main idea was the obvious, get more labour on the job, flood it with bodies. As the meeting came to a close, I spoke for the first time. We needed a large tractor which would be able get through the mire and also had the ability to pull a heavy load. After the meeting was over the GM asked me to stay behind, I explained once again that I felt nothing else would make any difference. After a few moments thought he said I could buy the tractor, but the line would have to be finished on time or I had better start looking for a new job! Once again I was in a bit of a rush, I phoned Jim who was the GM for Massey Ferguson in Zambia and arranges a meeting for the following morning, I then phoned the GM of African Wire Ropes and arranged another meeting for the afternoon (these were people that I knew, we had done business in the past). I then went across to the machine shop and explained that I would need two large Capstans to fit the tractor rear wheels, as soon as I was able to give them the hole dimensionsâ€™™ work would need to start. I then organized the line patrolmen to be on site plus Kennedy who was in charge of the riggers, not only was he a good guy to have around but clever at his job and also a

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personal friend. There was nothing more I could do until the following morning. Next morning I saw Jim and bought the tractor, it would be delivered the same day. It was a bit pricy 22,500 Kwacha, however the price did not concern me. Next I saw the GM at African Wire Ropes as I needed eight wire ropes all matching, they would be delivered the next morning. We were now starting to move, I took the hole fixing data that Jim had given me to the machine shop and they started to make the Capstans. All I could do now was to wait and pray we still had the time to complete before the deadline. Now we had the tractor and the rest of the gear, we completed the work on time. I remember that job well as we finished at 11.00 on the morning of Christmas Eve. The men would arrive back too late for the company party which seemed unfair. It was at this time I made a fool of myself. I was talking to John and Kennedy and said if I could go into a Zambian bar I would treat the men to a few beers. John looked at me and then Kennedy, next they both started to laugh, I mean really laugh! I asked them what the joke was and they said you. I looked puzzled so John explained, did I really think that with a group of nearly 30 Zambians anyone would dare say or do anything to cause offence. Once they had stopped laughing and wiped the tears from their eyes we decided what we would do and where we would take the men. I really did feel such a fool! But then that's what friends are for. We drove to a Bar in Chililabombwe which was the nearest town, just around the corner from the Bar we chose there was a bakery. I went in the bar and bought two crates of beer, then while the men were having a beer John and I went to the bakery and bought all the pies, sausage rolls and cakes they had. We then went back to the bar and filled two tables with the stuff from the bakery. We arrived back at CSS at about 16.30 just in time for the men to catch the company bus home. I later found out the reason for the GM's concern, there was a penalty clause included in the contract which would come into effect if we had been late on completion of the line.

The transmission section could be hard work at times but there were humorous moments as well. We were building a 66kv line near Chingola, I drove out to see Paul who was my assistant. While we stood talking next to my landrover a snake came from under the landrover and crawled between my feet and was now crawling between Paul's feet. I wasn't quite sure what to do, Paul was new to Africa and might react suddenly, so I kept quiet but watched until it had disappeared into the bush. I then told Paul and we both had a good laugh.

One night we were called out because a line had tripped out, I sent Joseph to one end to start checking the line and Kaila to the other end, after about two hours they came through on the radio to say they could find no fault. We closed the line back in but it tripped again and locked out. I got them on the radio and said the fault was still there, I would come out and help them look, some time later they were back on the radio to say they thought they had found the fault. By this time I was only about 10 minutes away. I told them to stay where they were and I would meet them. It is no wonder they had a problem in finding the fault, I had to see the cause to believe it. There were the charred remains of a snake hanging between the tower and

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conductor. I took out a permit over the radio, we climbed the tower and cleared it away, then I cancelled the permit and the line was re-energized. It had been the fault as the line was now clear.

Another little episode that comes to mind, one evening at about 22.00 a major line fault occurred which required a number of staff, the fault covered a long section of the line and we needed radioâ€™s to cover the length of the line that was to be repaired. The film Smoky and the Bandit had just been shown at the local cinema, we decided instead of using our normal call signs we would be

Bandit 1 to Bandit 4. We had great fun, it made a change from always being serious when using the radio. However we found out later that the control centre was not pleased as they had no idea who was talking to whom on the radio. Next morning we were called into the control centre where the Control Superintendant played back the tape recording for the previous day. We all thought it was great, but for some reason he did not seem amused, no sense of humour!

Not all incidents are amusing at the time they occur but often are in retrospect. One problem we often had were Hornet Nests which they would build in the towers and substation gantries. This particular day we had found a very large nest in a gantry, adjacent to the control room. We attempted to remove it in daylight but the hornets were swarming so we had to leave it until after dark. Because of its size I arranged to have the street lighting and security lights turned off. The whole area was now in total darkness, we climbed the gantry and had just started spraying the nest when a car stopped with full headlights on. A man got out and walked to the bottom of the gantry and shone a powerful torch on the spot where we were working, all our efforts to get him to turn his lights off fell on deaf ears. Suddenly we were surrounded by a swarm of very angry hornets that were not happy at being disturbed. We came down the gantry so fast that anyone watching would have thought we had sprouted wings. The idiot who had come by was the head of security, he decided he wanted to see how the work was going, and didnâ€™t think about the lights being off.

An incident that occurred while bush-clearing beneath the power lines was not at all funny. At the start of the dry season we employed 100 manual workers to clear the bush, this would prevent bush fires under the lines which could cause a lot of damage. One of the men was bitten on his thumb by a Black Mamba, the hospital at first thought they could save the thumb. Unfortunately gangrene set in and the thumb had to be amputated. When the general manager heard he asked me to find him a permanent job to compensate him for the loss of his thumb. I found a job for him in the storeâ€™s yard, it was not high paid but was the only work I could find for a manual worker who was unable to read and write. A permanent job in Zambia is hard to

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find when the employment level is about 5000 to 1, unfortunately he believed that he could not be sacked as the general manager had offered him a job for life. After he started work, items began to go missing from the stores, we watched and found he was the culprit. I warned him a number of times to stop or he would be sacked, I was wasting my breath, he still carried on stealing. I was left with no choice but to see the general manager and explain what was happening, the man was sacked, I still cannot understand how he could be so foolish, as a permanent job is something most Zambians could only dream about. I am now boring myself with all this talk of work and so am moving on.