



Africa Update
03.08.07

Dear All,

I write this update from the lounge room of my new house as shown in the photo below. Yes, I finally took possession of the Garneton house and land just over two weeks ago. But since I have been busy assisting another team of international conference speakers, I have had very little time to settle in properly. I have just come back from a week in Lusaka and am about to receive two Australian doctors to assist them with a 12 day program in Kitwe. After the doctors depart, there will be more time to plan how I am going to restore this house and get furniture and household goods.

My first night in the house was interesting. I arrived at the house on a Saturday afternoon after driving up from Lusaka. The former tenants wanted to vacate then and there and I was given the keys to move in immediately. It was dark by the time I got to move my few belongings in. Then I drove back into town to have something to eat before returning for the night.



The lounge room looking through to the dining room

I set up my tent in the main bedroom because I don't have a bed yet, just my sleeping mat and sleeping bag. I thought the tent would also keep any mosquitoes out. Then I went to bed because I was tired from the trip up from Lusaka. The night was interesting to say the least. There seemed to be things running around outside the house as well as things running around inside the house. I was woken quite a few times because of the noise but chose to stay zipped up inside my tent until daybreak. On looking out the window, there was a pack of four dogs running around the house. It took me until the following night to discover that the noises inside the house were being made by rats and mice.

Within a few days, the mice and rats had been exterminated with rat bait. But then I noticed that I was being bitten and the bites were very itchy. Also I woke up at 5.30 am one morning to a hissing sound. I got up in the dark to investigate to find that as I stepped into the corridor, I stepped into water. The water hose that feeds water to the toilet cistern had broken and water was pouring out on to the floor. At that stage, the toilet, bathroom and second bedroom had all flooded. I managed to locate the water mains tap outside and shut the water off. I had nothing except a bath towel to mop up the water but after about 20 minutes of this, the flooded rooms looked just as flooded, so I gave up and went to bed. In the dark at 5.30 am, this incident looked like a big disaster.

After not much more sleep, I was up again early to see the situation in the daylight. I realized that it could have been much worse. If the water had flooded into my bedroom, the water could have ruined my camera, laptop and other possessions. Also, if the hose had broken a couple of days later, I would have



The kitchen looking down the corridor to the second bedroom

been in Lusaka for a week and the water would have spilled out unchecked all this time doing much more damage to the house and my remaining possessions. Looking at the situation that morning, it didn't seem as disastrous to me as it did at 5.30 am and I was able to have a plumber come that afternoon and replace the hose. I also bought a mop to clean up the water. When I finally did leave for Lusaka the next day, I turned off both the water and the power at the mains. I learn't a good lesson here, I think. The tradesman was also able to help identify the source of my bites and itchiness.....fleas! After that I could see these little black mites as they flicked around the house and onto my skin. At least I knew what the problem was now. I was happy to spend the week in Lusaka to have a reprieve from these little biting bugs.

I stocked up on flea bombs and spray whilst in Lusaka to fumigate the house on my return. After arriving late to the house, I spent the first night being bitten again. But then I fumigated the house the next morning and went into town whilst the fumes settled. On entering the house that afternoon, I was unfortunately greeted by very alive fleas again, so they seem to have won the first round of this battle. Now I am going to have to pull out the heavy artillery and spray the land around the house and probably the house itself with a more toxic spray. In the meantime, the biting continues in spite of the repellants etc that I am trying.

Whilst back in Lusaka, I was able to finish the importation and registration process for my car and also finally pick up my work permit. The permit is for 2 years rather than 5 as immigration will want to collect a new permit fee from me



The house entrance through a secure patio

again in two years time when I go to renew it again. Five year permits create less government revenue and so are not currently being granted. I'm just happy and relieved to finally have the permit in my hands and to have finished the car importation process. It means I can now concentrate on the work ahead.

As you will see from some of the photos, the house is very secure. All the windows have metal grills, some on both sides of the glass. There is only one usable door into the house and this door can only be accessed through a locked patio area. The other preexisting doors have either been bricked in or permanently secured shut with metal grills on both sides. In the seventies, Zambia experienced some trouble when Congolese soldiers were crossing the border into Zambia and creating havoc. To resist this, the then owners of my house fortified the house to withstand any unlawful soldier break-ins. It means that I now have a very safe house that is very difficult to break into. Of course the Zambian borders are now well secured and Zambia is enjoying very peaceful times.

In my next update, I'll share more about the recent conferences here and about my time with the doctors. I'll let the visiting teams have a chance to report back first so that I don't steal their thunder.

In the meantime, I will continue with "Operation Flea Control".
Stay well,

Mike





*For those who haven't seen it, the house as it looked back in
March during
the rainy season. The only access into the house now is through
the
locked patio at the back as pictured.*

*The floors inside the house are polished concrete. The lounge
room has a glazed stone wall with an operational fireplace.*

The house has electricity, running water and a hot water unit.

The bathroom has a big bath but no shower.

The plumbing and electrical fittings all need to be fixed or checked.

The house needs to be painted inside and out.

Many of the windows need to be replaced as do a lot of the window sills and skirting.

Some of the ceiling boards need replacing or repairing as do the various cupboard doors and shelves around the house.

The whole house needs to be debugged!

Cheers, Mike