

Been there / **Chris Stockdale**

Adventure rules in Third World travel

TRAVELER: Chris Stockdale of Cottage Grove, the community relations representative for Lane Memorial Blood Bank, is a British subject who specializes in traveling to Third World countries — "places where I feel like a foreigner," she says.

A resident of the United States since 1964, she has been living in Lane County for 3½ years.

She started traveling with a job-related trip to Costa Rica in 1976.

"I had great fun wandering around with a Berlitz phrase book and very little money. Staying in cheap places and finding just the locals was wonderful.

"And this has always been my preferred way of travel, going on very a small budget," she said. "I never had much money and I liked to go for a long time."

Continuing her travel history, she said, "Because I had family in South Africa, I was going out there fairly regularly and did a lot of traveling around there."

She recalls "a very intriguing, quick trip" to what was Rhodesia then, Zimbabwe now.

"As the plane landed — it was a prop-jet that was going fairly slowly coming into the runway — and you'd see the armored cars and tanks on both sides of the runway keeping pace with the plane as it slowed down. So that was kind of an interesting trip.

"People will say, 'Well, why do you want to go?' I will say, 'Why not?'"

Stockdale said she had an opportunity to see the contrast when she returned two or three years later, after Zimbabwe had gained its independence.

"When I'd first gone there, going to Victoria Falls, you couldn't go near the falls because the terrorists — or whatever you want to call them, freedom fighters — on the other side of the river would just take pot shots at you," she said. "After independence, you could go right to the falls, and it was fascinating."

Her biggest trip in 1978 when she did an overland trip from London to Katmandu, Nepal, with an English company called Encounter Overland.

"They specialize in budget, long-term trips," she said. "You ride in a converted truck. It's not the most comfortable, but it has seating for passengers, tows a trailer with camping gear so you have tents and camp beds and things like that, and the group shares in all the camp duties. You shop in the local villages, do your own cooking.

"It's really a wonderful way of seeing parts of the world you wouldn't see. Because the truck has four-wheel drive, you can go off on side roads. You get to go into the villages. You meet some of the people.

"When I look back on that trip (I think) how fortunate I am, because it was at a time when you could still go through Iran without any problems," she said. "But the best part was going through Afghanistan. This was about six months before the Soviet invasion."

Her trip lasted about three months and took her through Pakistan and India to Nepal, where she went trekking in the Himalayas.

"I ran out of money," she said. "I had a ticket out from Delhi and that was it. I had an apartment (in the Washington, D.C., area) and I had to get back so I could pay my



Chris Stockdale stands in Capetown, South Africa, with Table Mountain in the background.

rent. So I said, 'I am going to do this again. Only next time, I'm not going to have any reason that I have to be back. I'm just going to wander.'"

She saved her money for 18 months and then set out on what became two years of traveling in Africa and, later, Asia. She started her trip by flying to South Africa, with a stop in Rio de Janeiro to see her father. After the family visit, she took a five-month camping excursion from Johannesburg to London, again with Encounter Overland.

Stockdale said her travels have been much more limited in recent years. She made a three-week visit to Ecuador in the early '90s, and she again found Encounter Overland the most economical way to travel.

"It wasn't by truck there," she said. "We used a local bus."

FAVORITE DESTINATION: "I'm going to say Afghanistan, because I was just so fascinated by it," she said.

"There was just something about that place. It's not someplace I would recommend for a vacation, but it's for somebody who really wants to get a feel for history and just a totally different culture."

FAVORITE WEEKEND DESTINATION: "Taking my tent and going up into the Cascades and finding a nice remote lake — so backpacking into the mountains," she said, refusing to reveal the directions to her favorite remote mountain lake.

MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE:

She spent a minute mentally sorting through her many experiences and then said, "One that just keeps popping into my mind is spending a day with a band of Pygmies in the forest of Zaire as they went hunting.

"I mean, I was just tagging along, but watching how these people actually hunted. They use nets they string through the trees, and then they drive animals into them.

"Yes, it's one of the many (memorable experiences), but that is one that does come to my mind very easily because it's incredible. I mean, just spending time with the Pygmies and seeing their villages, and then going out following them as they went on their hunt."

Asked for other impressions of that day, she said, "I suppose just the amazement, having come from civilized areas, that there really are people living in virtually Stone Age conditions, but seeming to be happy. They seemed to be laughing and the kids were playing, and I think that probably would be the most incredible thing."

TRAVEL NIGHTMARE: "Being forced out of the truck at gunpoint," she said. "I want to be careful because this was in Uganda, and I'm not sure whether it was the Ugandan military or the Tanzanian. Back then, there were a lot of problems. The Tanzanian army came into Uganda, would be raiding and holding up people. So we were in the truck, way out in the middle of nowhere and were stopped by

quote 'the army' and forced out of the truck.

"We all had to get out of the truck. They all had guns. And, quite honestly, I really thought that was it."

She doesn't know how they got out of their predicament, only that they did.

"The drivers of those trucks — they have to be everything: the interpreter and the go-between and the driver and the mechanic," she said. "He talked us out of it. I'll never know if we were in any danger, but it was the thought. It was pretty darn scary."

ADVICE: "My advice is do as much research and reading as you possibly can about your destination, so when you go there, it's almost familiar. You know where you want to go. You know what some of the customs are of the people. Instead of just landing at the airport and saying, 'Now where do I go?'"

We welcome profile suggestions. If you or someone you know has intriguing travel tales to tell, write Been There, P.O. Box 10188, Eugene, OR 97440; phone Jim Boyd at 338-2363 or (800) 377-7428, Ext. 2363; or e-mail the nomination to jboyd@guardnet.com. Include the nominee's name and phone number and your name and phone number.

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