

African Journal Part 4

February 23, 2011

5:35 PM Bukavu, DR Congo

Thanks for all your prayers and concerns. We did finally make it to Congo safe and sound. It was a challenge in several ways but any trip in Africa where you arrive safely is a good trip.

I will try to go through the highlights of what took place for us here to help you get a better picture.

Of course it began with us looking for a specific part for the vehicle we knew was bad, called a drag link. It is part of the steering system and it attaches to the steering damper as well. It was completely worn out. We went to the major Nissan dealer in Nairobi and found they only had those for right hand drive vehicles and ours is a left hand drive (for driving on the right side of the road.) In the process the sales rep gave us the number of a good Nissan mechanic who could have it altered to fit ours. So we made contact and arranged for the mechanic, Sadaam, to come look at our vehicle and see what it needed. Of course he found many more things which needed to be fixed so we arranged for insurance so he could drive it to his shop (outdoor work area in a lumber yard) to begin the repairs. He said he would have it in a week. He actually took about a week and a half for the repairs but as we later found out, it didn't matter since it took much longer to get the papers needed to leave the country. When the vehicle was temporarily imported into Kenya, it was for 1 month. That expired in July 2010. So we had to get a new paper which would allow us permission to leave. He finally, after many attempts, was able to secure the papers through the friend of a friend. But in order for it to work we had to have another guy travel with us to the border to help get us through. It proved good that he did. On the way we had a small accident which he helped us work through. A minivan, used for moving people around like a bus, was ahead of us out in the rural areas of Kenya on the way to the border. In Kenya and Uganda they put speed bumps everywhere, usually several close together. Anyway, he came to a speed bump and slowed down to go over it but instead of continuing he just stopped. By the time I realized he had stopped I did not have enough time to stop and I hit him a good whollop. It caved in the lower section of his back lift gate. No one was hurt and it only knocked our bull bar loose (a protective grill over the front of the truck for things like this) and cracked one of the parking light covers. The driver of the van said it would require a new tailgate but our new best friend argued with him that it could be repaired. After a half hour of negotiations we settled on a payment of \$75 dollars to cover his costs and went happily and shakily on our way.

After about 9 ½ hours on the road we made it to the border. Our passenger, Jim, then took our car papers and met with his friend and they began their maneuvers to get us through. He sent Brenda and I to the immigration office to get our passports stamped out of Kenya and then on to the Uganda side to get checked in there. He said he would come across with the car and be waiting for us on the other side. When we finished there was no Jim and no car. A sense of panic set in as he had our papers, our car and all our stuff still in Kenya and we were in Uganda. I decided to walk back across which you really aren't supposed to do and see if I could see the car. When I got there, I was wonderfully relieved to see him with the car still waiting to come over. He said just go over and wait but I chose rather to stay within eyesight. Soon he came across and we were able to pay the necessary fees for Uganda for the vehicle. We had already paid them for the insurance so they provided the necessary papers for that and we on our way, almost 3 hours later. Thanks to God were plenty at this point. We got directions on which road to take to Kampala, Uganda where we had arranged to stay at Matoki Inn, a missionary guest house on

the edge of town. By the time we arrived in Kampala it was dark and all of the markers we were given to find our road which would lead us to the guest house escaped our attention. But with help from a security guard on a road leading somewhere else, we got straightened out and finally found our way. The rest of the instructions worked out and we made it about 8 PM. Of course Brenda was exhausted because she had come down with something which she thought might be kidney infection, based on past experience, and which makes the back very sore. Oh yes, the road we followed to the border of Kenya/Uganda was the rougher of the two options because we had to use the border crossing where we could get help getting through.

The folks at the guest house were very warm and welcoming and some food ready for us when we arrived. After a little visiting I mentioned that Brenda was not feeling well and immediately got questions from a man and woman who we then learned are husband and wife. He is a family doctor and she a RN. He did a simple examination and concurred with Brenda's diagnosis and changed her antibiotics to something better for this kind of infection. She is still taking it now and we are praying it will do the job quickly. We did sleep well and started out the next morning for Kigali, Rwanda. Friday took about 15 hours on the road and we hoped for a shorter day on Saturday. It was, only about 11 1/2. But we did arrive before dark with no accidents. The only confusion was again in Kampala, Uganda where we missed a turn and when I found a place to turn around I was stopped by a motorcycle cop who called for another police officer across the street to come and deal with me. There is a winch on the front of the truck and it is covered up with some pieces of old inner tube to protect it from the weather. He said it blocked the view of the front license plate and made me remove it. He was thinking about having me remove the winch as well which would have been a major task, especially since all I had for tools was one adjustable wrench and my multitool. I explained we were on our way to Congo and Brenda was asking God to have him just let us go. As soon as she prayed he said, okay, go ahead. A quick answer to a quick prayer. Upon moving away from the police man we lost our way again and ended up in some part of town we did not really want to see. We turned around again and found a good fuel station where we filled up with diesel fuel and asked for directions. The guy pretty much said, "You can't get there from here." Not that it couldn't be done but that I couldn't do it. So after some time he called a friend who runs a motorcycle taxi who could lead us safely back to where we needed to be and on to the road out of Kampala toward Kigali. Another angel from God as we seemed to be relying on people all over that we did not know and had no real reason to trust but who were very helpful all the way. Thank goodness God works beyond my weak faith to bring surprises and victories.

Our trip to Kigali was uneventful and we made it to the border in about 8 hours, after we actually started traveling the right direction out of Kampala. We spent about another 2 hours at that border just getting all the papers done on both sides of the Uganda/Rwanda border. From there it was about 1 1/2 hours to Kigali where JP met us and took us to the Hotel where we spent the night. The following morning we left in the rain on our way to the Rwanda/Congo border and into Bukavu. That was about a 6 hour drive. With little difficulty at the border we were soon across and to our house where we collapsed after being greeted warmly by a group of our friends, who laughed heartily at our misadventures along the way.

That is about enough for this journal. More will be following soon. We are using a rather slow internet connection here at the house and will be getting a second different one tomorrow so we can go between the two depending on which one is working the best, or just working!

Thanks for your prayers and your concern for us. We are thankful to be back here where we hope God will use us for His glory.