

# **Jeff Currier** *global fly fishing*

November 14, 2005

African Whitewater

Dear family and friends,



**Granny jumps aboard a pickup truck full of locals in Malawi**

It feels like Africa these days. Honestly, last email we were pumped as heck about the fishing and animals, but the fact that we were in Africa wasn't all that obvious. It was basically the end of the African winter and the trees like the Baobabs and Acacias had no leaves. Also, we were typical Americans, kind of keeping to ourselves and not spending enough time enjoying the locals.

Everything has now changed. 1st off, bus travel is so unreliable that we hitch rides. They are easy to get and so far as safe as a bus. It's a heck of a way to hang with the locals, learn the culture, and most important, get a hold of the coldest beer! Top it off with the 1st rains in 6 months, and what was a desert a month ago when we arrived, has now turned lush green everywhere. It finally looks and feels like Africa!

As you might expect, I have a lot to tell. I think my last email was from Livingstone, Zambia. There I did the most unbelievable whitewater rafting you can imagine, Granny and I did a walking safari in which we lucked our way through a few herds of elephants and some cape

buffalo, a memorable boat safari and I survived a bungee jump off the Victoria Falls Bridge (one of the worlds biggest). (Sorry Josh, but now you need to do the jump you were talking about in NZ.) We also spent a couple days in Zimbabwe and fished lots of the upper Zambezi based out of Namibia.

Let's begin with the whitewater (no Granny on this trip). A whitewater trip is very un-Currier-like. Usually when there is water, I fish. That's it. But here the Zambezi boasts the best (toughest) commercial whitewater trip on earth. Whether it's true or not, being one who likes to experience everything, I signed up for a full day, 24 rapid trip. 5 of these rapids are rated #5's - very scary. I figured, I've done the whitewater of Jackson Hole, how bad could this be?



**Jeff, in front, left hand side – head down. He would rather be fishing!**

The trip started out pretty cool, but by afternoon, I had way more than my moneys worth. We flipped our boat on rapid #12, named, "The 3 Ugly Sisters and the Mother". Basically, the boat flipped on the 1st Ugly Sister and during the flip I got tossed far from the boat. In a nut shell, I got smashed into the rocks amongst the most frothing whitewater you could imagine. I was underwater long enough to actually think. We had a rescue team of kayakers that run along with us, and I remembered them telling us, "If you flip, you may go under water for about 3 seconds. Just hold your breath. Sometimes it might be 5 seconds. Hold your breath, don't fight it, just let the life jacket float you up. If it's longer than 5 seconds kick your feet until you surface. Last, if it gets life threatening, SWIM LIKE HELL!" I was way past the "swim like hell" part and as far as thinking goes I was on the old, "Ok man. You stupid shit. Why didn't you stick to fishing?"

I was impaled amongst rocks and I didn't know which way to swim because I could tell if I was upside-down or not. The roar of the water was so loud it was like thunder that never ended. I actually did have my eyes open searching for daylight, but I couldn't find it. It was a

bad situation. Then, as I was about to burst and end it all, I popped up. As I gasped, still in a frothing rapid, I could see one of the kayaks guys screaming at me (I couldn't hear shit) and below him, was the "Mother", a #4 rapid. Things were not looking good. Without a choice and the will to survive, I took another deep breath and 10 seconds later I resurfaced below the "Mother". A new man I might add!



**Jeff jumping off of the Victoria Falls Bridge**

I was a part of a 7 person group. 3 of us ended up doing the entire group of rapids boatless. A girl from Malta was so close to drowning it wasn't funny. Our raft actually got me out before we found her and she was spitting up and gasping and crying - not cool man, not cool.

Anyhow, we had 12 more to go! Yippee! I was pretty worked at that point, but re-took the front of the boat

and paddled while trying to determine how badly I was hurt. Sure enough #18 wasted me again. This time it wasn't a flip but rather I and the other front guy got tossed. Luckily, this time the 3 second rule existed and I surfaced and all was cool.

Thank God, Granny stayed back at our Backpacker place that day. When I got back she was ready to hit the town till she saw how slow I was crawling into camp. I had bruises from head to toe and sprained the heck out of my right hand, but glad I did it.

We chilled for a few days after that, then I did the bungee jump of the Victoria Falls Bridge. The jump happens so fast that I can't describe it in an email. All I can tell you that it's not the brightest thing you could do, but probably gave me the greatest 5 second rush I'll ever have. I'll have to tell you that story on the river.

I have a lot more fishing stories from the last 10 days but have run out out of time.

Look for a part two in the next day or so.

JEFF