

# *Spirit of Bainbridge*

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**For the Community • By the Community**

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*Chip and Linda Henry of Auburn celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary with a trip back to the roots of their romance---Africa, where they met while serving in the Peace Corps. Here, they are pictured on the way to the village of Thaba Tseka to visit Chip's old work site in the mountains last December. The romantics on our Spirit staff felt their story was the epitome of love--romantic and service to others--for our Valentine issue.*

## Love Travels from Africa to Auburn and Back Again for Chip & Linda Henry

By Angela Foote

In celebration of their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, Chip and Linda Henry of Auburn returned to Lesotho Africa where their love story began.

Chip Henry and Linda Blommer met in 1980 at Kennedy International Airport along with 18 other Peace Corps volunteers awaiting to board a plane destined for the adventure of a lifetime. Little did they know that two and a half years later they would return to the U.S. engaged to each other.

Chip, an Ohio native, had business experience and felt he could contribute to the Peace Corps, and was also inspired by his brother.

Linda was born and raised on her family farm in Idaho and had plenty of agricultural experience to share.

After three months of learning the local language of Sesotho, and living and working among the local villagers the twenty volunteers secured their place in Lesotho.

Chip was stationed in the mountains while Linda worked for King Moshoeshoe II in the lowlands. Chip was attracted to Linda, and as often as allowed he would travel by moped to Linda whose camp supplied fresh produce. Even though they were good friends at first, their relationship grew stronger every month.

"I was sure he only came to see me because I had fresh produce," Linda laughs. As true as this may be, Chip found Linda to be patient, kind, focused, pleasant and a friend to all. "Linda is a person everyone wants to be around, and I agree," Chip added.

When the mail was delivered Chip would steal the letters that Linda's boyfriend had written her. Chip now admits that it was very juvenile, however it served its purpose and grabbed her attention. Chip was also involved with a woman from home but soon after they settled into the Lesotho lifestyle both relationships dissolved.

They agreed to a first date and it turned out to be unlike any other first date the two of them had ever experienced.

Chip filled his moped, prepared his pack and picked Linda up for a ride through the mountains. Linda recalls that it started to rain very hard, their trail flooded and they became stranded. The rest is history.

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Continued on page 2

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# Chip and Linda Henry Return to Africa where Their Love Began 27 Years Ago

continued from page 1

When they returned to their camps later that week, they continued their relationship by writing love letters back and forth.

According to the Henrys' the more their relationship developed, they were discouraged to continue dating when they returned home to the US, even by close friends. Many of the other Peace Corps volunteers were worried that the relationship would not be strong enough to adjust to the fast paced American culture. Luckily their friends were wrong and there relationship survived.

Upon returning to the US from their two and a half year service, Linda returned to Idaho and Chip entered Law School.

"On my first Christmas break, I traveled to Idaho, met my in-laws, and got married the next day," Chip remembers.

Even after the one day meeting, Chip and Linda had full support from their families.



*Pictured is Chip and Linda's whole training group (Chip and Linda are circled) at the capital city of Maseru.*

The Henrys currently live in Auburn Township, and their children, Adam and Kim are grown. Adam lives and works in Denver and Kim is a sophomore at Ohio University.

Chip and Linda agree they have a deep appreciation for their lives. In their opinion many of the Lesotho people are happier than wealthy people in the U.S. because they don't need to have material things in order to be happy.

Linda wore her mother's wedding dress and lace veil for their wedding that they joke only cost \$300. While raising their two children, they would communicate using Sesotho. "We enjoyed using our (limited) Sesotho over the years to get around our kids," Linda adds.



*Above left, Chip arrives at his site in Thaba Tseka, Lesotho by small plane "Lesotho Airways" in 1980. At right is Linda at her site in Matsieng, Lesotho, with her little farm pickup truck. These photos were taken about 1982.*



Their second trip to Lesotho last December proved to be very different than the first. Peace Corp volunteers each have cell phones provided to them now, vehicles are no longer marked with the Peace Corps logo for their protection. Security is greater than it was in the early 1980s.

Even with the happiness of their anniversary trip, the Henrys do not want the important issues of Lesotho overlooked. One in four people in Africa has AIDS and they are currently experiencing a drought. Children who have lost their parents to AIDS have nowhere to turn and are living on the streets.

"Sacrifice, independence, self confidence and a deep appreciation that never leaves you," are what the Henrys agree they gained from the Peace Corps, and of course they have gained each other.

*Thanks to our newest Spirit contributor, Angela Foote of Auburn, for this fascinating saga of Chip and Linda's love and service to others.*