

August 2003

After the whirlwinds of June and July, August has been a very quiet month – for reasons which will become obvious. August started out much as my months do – very busy indeed I went out for dinner with Deb on Friday night to catch up and to make sure that I had a bag of clothes at her place for after the operation, despite the early start (6am) from Kate's place in Birmingham after her wedding.

Saturday morning I decided to do some of the Silver Comet trail with Marla – we had been threatening to go cycling for many many weekends and this seemed like a great time to go. The trail is as flat as flat can be, but it means that it's easy to cycle together and chat as well – so we did around 20 miles round trip as I had to get back. It was enough for me with the timing and my knee had started to hurt (it was also getting extremely hot by midday) so we came back and have made plans to do a full-day ride up to the town at the end for lunch and back – around a 70-mile round trip come November-time.

Chez Nabney had its second-biggest booking so far – Neill and Mary and the Girls came over. I dashed home from the Silver Comet Trail to shower and straight out to pick up the Brodey's – which was a clear feat of logistics. Bearing in mind how difficult I have found it to meet people at Atlanta airport this whole thing had been managed by e-mail without a single phone call! Anyway – the girls had grown but I still recognized Alex as soon as she came to the top of the escalator. We picked up their bags and hopped into the Cayenne, which I thankfully had for the weekend. It was funny that despite knowing that my personal cars are the Morgan and the Boxster (between them not enough seats for all 5 of us) Neill was confident that I'd organize something for them.

So – Saturday afternoon in Atlanta – what do you do with two almost teenagers and some adults ? – Atlanta is not exactly heaving with tourist sites – well – you do what the locals do – we went to the ball game. Neill had been before but Mary and the girls hadn't. The match was booked out but we managed to scalp some tickets at not too-much over face price, but not all together – two really great ones and three not so bad ones – I took the girls and we took our seats. It's a lot like rounders so explaining it wasn't as hard as I thought it might be and we really started to get into it – arriving at the top of the 4th was perfect as nothing had happened before we arrived but it all started to happen as soon as we got there. Naturally the guys all around us were trying to help explain the rules – (having heard the accents and my pitiful attempts) and we had a lot of fun – some people left early so I got Neill and Mary to join us – bad move for them as they had awesome seats but it was good fun. Pizza and beers and it was indeed a *real* game and a surprising hit – the girls loved it ! Once we got home I left them to go for dinner in the Highlands and I dashed off to Sam and Amanda's engagement party – I was horribly late and most people had left by the time I arrived, but it was good to see them and I gave them a tub of Maltesers as an engagement gift (they love them apparently). I helped clear up and then dashed back home.

Sunday started out not very nice – we had thought about going tubing down the river but it looked murky – but the alternative was to go to something 'educational' which instantly switched the girls off ! We decided to go anyway and left around 11am – it poured as we got up there and was tipping down once we arrived at Helen. We had lunch and as we finished it began to clear up so we decided to go for it – bouncing around in the bus on the way up we decided to let the others go ahead of us – with all the water it was going pretty fast. We went down in two groups and had the usual bouncing off everything and into everything too – about half way down we decided to tie everybody together – this would have been fine if we had not decided to do this at a particularly fast-flowing part – naturally I ended up head-first in the river water !!! Still – we hooked into a circle and bounced, mostly off each other, the rest of the way down. Exhausted we staggered home, picking up a much needed, and much talked about toilet plunger off the side of the road that Neill had spotted on the way up (everybody thought we were mad when the car stopped and I jumped out and ran across the road !). Sunday evening we fought for awhile with the BBQ until it finally lit and sat out in the back eating and swinging and drinking – all very pleasant.

Monday morning I had to go to the hospital to sort out the pre-op stuff – all I found out was that the anesthetist was a complete smart-arse and my brain mouth disconnect switch failed – because I told him (oops !) on the way back I picked up the Brodey's and dropped them off at the airport on their way to San Diego – I got to work and turned right back around to go to Chicago for two days to go and fix and then test a car. Not too exciting but away for a couple of days. We finished early and got an earlier flight back (of course our luggage didn't !) and so was home in time to chill before having to get picked up at 7am to go the hospital. Not much to say about the whole thing – the only positive thing was that I didn't get to see the anesthetist again! I woke up around 2pm but Deb wasn't due to pick me up until 3 so I went back to sleep – she called in and picked me up – on crutches which I will never master and plonked me into the car. On the way home she filled my major pain-killer prescription and we staggered home – I had to go up the 3 stairs to her front door on my arse as I was so hopeless on crutches. I went to sleep almost immediately. This was the tone of most of the next few days – I was vaguely awake for a part of the day but mostly dozing and in a load of pain. We had a laugh going to the theater the day after the op – she dropped me off right outside and I had already gotten us tickets with me on an aisle – it was OK – not as good as Cymbeline – we saw "A School for Wives" the first half was awful but it did get better. I fought with the insurance company and the medical supply company about a machine that I was supposed to be on from day one after the op – it moves your leg back and forth and keeps the movement going and you are supposed to increase it every day – you are also supposed to do it for 6 hours a day ... I eventually got this instrument of torture and somebody to set it up for me so spent the whole of the weekend on it. Deb had to go away on Saturday for the weekend so she handed me off to Sherry who did the honors over the weekend – I was mainly drugged up so probably really bad company.

Monday morning Sherry dropped me off at the doctor's and what an experience that was – he looked at my knee – looked at the staples holding the holes together and then got the medical equivalent of a huge pair of pliers out and basically yanked them all out – ow ow OW ! Sherry dropped me off at work where I staggered around for the rest of the day – I had a Cayenne automatic to drive for a couple of weeks as I could not physically get into my car. I was told to left-foot brake – not a good thing as I am used to stabbing the clutch with my left foot – the first time I tried it I nearly went through the windscreen. Anyway – oddly enough with work and 6 hours in the instrument of torture I wasn't too sociable that week – John came over one evening as Maxine was playing tennis and we played cards – it was hilarious as we made up all the rules. I even watched 'Miss Teen USA' out of total boredom one evening – and was amazed that the natural, sassy, interesting, funny girl won (over the girl whose declared hobby was 'planning my wedding' pur-lease !). Friday of that week I had to go to Florida to do an investigation – and Monday I had organized to go and see another dealer – I was originally going to spend the weekend with a friend in the middle but he decided at the last minute to go to Utah (?) so I decided to stay anyway as I had too much work to do and not enough time to go back and forth – started out in Fort Lauderdale – that was fine – Saturday afternoon I was so bored I went shopping in Bloomingdale's sale. I went for dinner with a friend of Deb's who lives down near Boca Raton – he was very tall and quite funny which made for a pleasant evening. Sunday I drove to Tampa – what a tedious dull drive – flat, flat, flat. Got into Tampa and spent the early evening at the pool chilling and swimming and reading. The work on Monday and Tuesday was fine but for the fact that the equipment broke on me so I left early on Tuesday. The rest of the week was spent in the machine.

Saturday Jeremy and Nick came down after dropping Nick's stuff off at Duke – we went to Brian's surprise 40th birthday party – it was great fun – we were all there in plenty of time to surprise Brian and boy Sharon did a great job on him! The evening was really pleasant but we left promptly as we had to get up to drive to Birmingham for the PCNA employee driving event. So – up early and drove over there in two cars – Jeremy was going to drive back to Detroit direct and I was going back to Atlanta and drop Nick off at the bus station to get back to Duke. We raced down the I-20 (late) with Jeremy in lead car with the radar detector – although he nearly got caught out by a motorbike cop and we eventually caught up with a bunch of other PCNA people driving in

almost convoy into the track. We started out with a breakfast and I caught up with lots of the guys from February – who remembered me which was really nice. Then we went off to the autocross events – skid pad in 911s, autocross in the Cayenne (me laughing hysterically as Nick whizzed us around the track) and then the Boxster event. I let Nick take my turn at that – I've done it before so I could take it or leave it.



Then we went for the hot laps – we had two choices of sets of drivers and we three went for the Hurley Hayward / Doc Bundy pairing which was a lot of fun - I waited until the end to be sure that everybody got a decent turn and then amazed myself at doing it without screaming then we went to the off-road track – the demonstration circuit which I kned and had even driven and then some off-roading. Nick didn't endear himself to the instructor by asking about how fast you could do this course Off-roading is all about skill and totally NOT about speed (!) but the two of them did a good job and I didn't have to hang on for dear life in the back – again – having done a great deal of off-road last time I let them take the reins and to be honest I wanted to be sure that my knee would hold it for the drive back. We gobbled down some food and then we were on our way – I had to get Nick to the bus station by 4pm so it was a hot-smart drive back getting him to the station 15 minutes early – hobbled back in after Jeremy called to make me make sure that he had some cash And then went home. I was beat so glad to just be back.

More Phisio during the week and then Sam's surprise 42nd birthday – some of the people I had met at their engagement party but I didn't know that many people – but Sam and Amanda are always great company so we had fun and he had NO clue that Amanda was planning it !

Friday was the last night I could get together with the Casson's and we had an absolute riot – cocktails for an hour and then off bowling (not easy when you cant twist one leg...) I started off OK but by the end John had poured more beer down me I was getting more sporadic (I still maintain that this was his plan to win !) – we mixed and matched team members as the boyfriend of the girl who is sitting their house came with us (she was painting a gift for her granny). By the time we stared looking for food everywhere was closing and I was exhausted – they got pizza in and I went directly to bed – very drunk I am afraid.

I woke in the morning to deathly silence – I had to get home to meet Marla so I left a note and drove across their lawn in the Morgan as I was blocked in. Home and Marla came over and we went down to Callaway Gardens to meet with Bob and Debra and Sam and Amanda (as it happened). The ride down was great and it always makes me smile to be in the Mog – we were negotiating the directions in the Gardens when we came across Sam and Amanda going in the other direction! Met with the Gerlachs and had lunch, all met up and then went to the classic car show – it was funny my car would have fitted right in there which we all had a laugh at – drove over to the butterfly house which was very cool. Especially when they land on you.

We went off to watch the Birds of Prey show, which had to be curtailed as one of the birds was playing up. But it certainly was a great lesson in how badly people could bring up their children. The guy must have said at least 20 times how dangerous the birds were and now the centre aisle was to be kept clear, and he had to stop 21 times to ask parents to stop their children from running around up and down the aisle. We were all shocked – how could the parents be so stupid ? So – Sam and Amanda went for a chopper ride while we sat by the beach in rocking chairs (how old are we ???) chilling out for awhile – then the time came for the balloon display – I was a

little disappointed as there was only one balloon that had some kind of shape to it (a vague jester) but it was rather cool having them fly directly above around 40ft up !



Bob, Debra, Marla, Amanda and Sam



A balloon

We left while the weather was still good, but it started to threaten as we got closer to Atlanta – as ever I chose to stop one junction too late – when it was already raining and o we got soaked while waiting for the light to change – poor Marla – she was very good natured about the whole thing and very kind spirited. We got back at around 9pm and I was just glad to be home – it had been a long day.

Sunday Deb had a brunch with all her High School friends – I was a little nervous they would be exclusive, but knowing Gregg from my trip to Florida I found it easy and they were all great fun – we ended up at the park to let the 5 kids play – I ended up being swing-pusher extraordinaire but it was fun. The afternoon I raked my gravel to get rid of some of the dead leaves that had collected – I found them hard to rake up in the gray stuff so burnt them off (it worked) in the pea gravel they came up leaving the gravel behind. The evening was a quiet supper with Sheena – we had planned to go carousing in the Highlands but we were both feeling a little more like a quiet evening and it was fun.

So – there you go – August – much more quiet and refined and laid back (mostly as half of it I was actually laid-up) – to be honest if I had known how long the recovery was and how much it would hurt I am not sure I would have gone into the operation with such ease – but at least I had the timing arranged about right with no major travel planned (my flights were upgraded thankfully so I could stretch out my knee...) oh well – at least it is done now and I have to be sure not to mess either of them up again.

