

June 2003

The first week was spent up in the Northwest finishing up my "Goals" – things we have to do to be sure to meet our annual review requirements and potential salary / bonus increases – so a good thing to do – so I drove from Mass, where I had been for the weekend, to Rhode Island, and then on to New Jersey for two days at Becker – the Radio supplier who I have gotten into the habit of going to visit every 3-4 months. The meetings were all productive and everything went pretty smoothly on the whole. Almost as soon as I got back I managed to hurtle into a whirlwind of social events culminating in the weekend of the Highland Festival. It was smaller than last year and not so many stalls or live music – but as I lived in the neighbourhood I invited everybody round for the Saturday evening – thinking that around 6-7pm would be when everybody would be sick of the festival – well – it seems that most people came over especially. Anyway – food and drink aplenty and I am afraid Sheena, Amanda and I sat up one corner and were very rowdy and English – shocking everybody I think – hey ho ! We had fun.

On Monday I flew out to Reno to go to the last A/C class that was going to be on this year. As usual I stayed at the Atlantis Hotel – not my favorite but it has a gym and I can totally ignore the casino aspect of it by now. Not a very eventful week on the whole – I refused a car all week and walked the 2.5 miles to and from the Training Centre every day (I **am** climbing Kilimanjaro at the end of the month) except for the final day when I took the car as I was going to need it for the weekend. Saturday morning early Andy, the Training Instructor picked me up from the hotel to go cycling with his daughter. We went via a cycling shop where I finally got a helmet that fitted. So – picked up Jessie and made our way to the bottom of the Flume Trail – there was a 'moment' in the car park when Andy realized that he had locked his keys in the car and we had to take the rear screen out to retrieve them.... And then we were off – the flume trail is the route by which the loggers got the logs over the mountains and to the routes to get them milled – so it is wide and not rocky – well-kept mostly but not exactly flat either – we spent the first two hours climbing steadily – Jessie was a little rocket and went whizzing past everybody on the trail – especially leaving snotty 'wearing-all-the-latest-gear' guys for dust – we laughed. Andy kept back to make sure that I wasn't completely on my own – nice of him as I am pretty slow – steady – but slow.



Andy, me and Jessie



Lake Tahoe below us....

Anyway we finally made it to the top of the trail and around a lake, upon which somebody had built a sea-worthy sailboat and then shipped it down again to the sea – nutter – anyway – we crossed the edge of the lake and I got the hero points for the day by riding through the edge of the lake (all of 1.5 ft deep) rather than walking my bike through it. I say my bike – it was one that Andy had leant me for the weekend – a very posh Porsche bike with all sorts of suspension on it. We then went down a very steep windy bumpy trail which I walked (only about 300 yds) as my knee is very weak at this point and I couldn't afford to be half-way up the mountain and have it

blow out on me. Then around the edge of Lake Tahoe – but at 1000 ft about water level – up in the trees – on fabulous trails – sun blazing and great views (only marred by a forest fire in California which made it a little hazy) – down the other side to be picked up at 2pm – bikes on a truck and back to the start. I was dropped off back at the hotel by around 4pm and took the Turbo (yes – they kindly loaned me that for the weekend) for a drive back up around Lake Tahoe – but the opposite end to which I had cycled – it was a great end to a fabulous day – and my knee barely hurt at all. Andy was convinced that all my muscles would hurt after the cycling, but I am glad to report that I had not one ache.

Sunday was spent in coming home – with the time change and the 6 hrs flying it's pretty much a whole day taken – boo hiss. The only thing of consequence the following week as that I went to the Georgia Shakespeare Theatre's performance of "Much Ado About Nothing" which was pretty disappointing on the whole – I can't get into a heavily cut version of the play – especially if they have been very awkward about the cutting so that some of it doesn't even make sense – and it'll take me some time to get used to it in a 'southern' accent – "mah house is youah house" does indeed sound really odd. The rest of the time has been spent at home getting all my equipment together for the trip – poles, a 35 litre rucksack, a new water carrying system (platypus) and other bits and pieces – the two pairs of walking socks that my parents so generously gave me as my birthday present this year (and then sent to me surface mail) finally arrived a mere 7 weeks after my birthday, but a week before departure – hoorah ... anyway – packed and re-packed and then finally thought that I had everything. Out for dinner with the usual suspects on Saturday as Rob was in town for a change and then Sunday I had lunch with Amanda and Sam and the Morgan got its first real spin in a few weeks – it was a lot of fun. I even finally caught up with a friend who travels more than I do for the first time since January – and that was great. Infact I saw him again on Tuesday at his leaving do which we held at Blind Willie's – he's moved job but will stay in Atlanta (but moved apartment too – further south) – we had a riotous evening as Delta Moon were playing and John and Maxine turned up – I had almost more friends there than Kevin did in the end!

This month is definitely the month of finding out which airlines go where and when Kili on / Kili off / Kili on / Kili off – all started with a terrorist cell in Kenya which cannot be found So we cannot fly through or even land in Nairobi to get to Tanzania (bit of scene setting here ...)

First of all – end May the trip is off as flight goes to Nairobi and British Foreign Office (FO) says "No"

Then it is on as we are traveling via Addis Ababa (Ethiopian airlines) -but I had to change my return flights as we get back later than originally planned and my return to Atlanta needs to move to accommodate this movement.

Then it is off again (Monday) as the plane actually refuels in Nairobi and the FO said "no way"

Then it is on again as we will be flying via Amsterdam leaving on the morning of the 27th so we have to be in London on the 26th now but it is then off as Jeremy and Lucy can't make it as they can't change their flights to London as they can only change return part (that is I believe normal for flights)

So Jeremy calls Explore and cons them into changing the whole thing for us so we leave after the main group and fly direct to Kili via Amsterdam - leaving on the morning of the 28th at ungodly o'clock and they will provide special transfers for us to join with the rest of the group. At this point I change my tickets for the 3rd time ...

THEN it is off again because they have called saying we are leaving on the 27th at ungodly o'clock a.m. but none of us arrive until 10.30am on the 27th into London..... THEN I call Explore

AGAIN and they explain that they have called the entire group and forgot that we already had special arrangements....

And then ... two days of no changes – miracle – we must be going until Jeremy calls me to say that he has checked the KLM flights and the Kili flight actually does stop in Nairobi briefly too the same day there are massive news warnings about potential terrorist activities in Kenya – yikes so then I call Explore at 4a.m. my time to find out the craic – apparently KLM have changed their schedules so as not to land in Nairobi - hoorah !

And then it all went silent – so we presumed that it was on. Flew into London to find that the train line to West Hampstead was down so had to do a convoluted train/Underground route to them – when I arrived I found out that Jeremy and Lucy had been directed through Amsterdam – didn't bode well that's for sure. I dumped my stuff and met Rach for lunch and trip planning for Xmas (only chance to get together and get it sorted – there are some things that you simply cannot do by e-mail) – she and I walked to a noodle place and then meandered back – by which time Jeremy and Lucy had come and gone.... We finally met up at 6pm and had BBQ for dinner – bed at 9pm which was quite sensible as we were getting up at 3.30am to get to the airport for 4.30am to meet the person with our tickets..... no traffic made us terribly early but we queued in the interim and were glad we had as it ended up about half a mile long within half an hour – tickets in hand and got all sorted – hoorah – changed in Amsterdam and finally landed at Kilimanjaro International Airport around 8pm – too dark to see anything. Picked up and shuttled to Moshi where we had a quick introduction to the tour leader (a New Zealand guy called Nial) and then to bed – I was sharing with a girl called Fen who had taken up most of the spare space in the room by the time I had arrived. Mossie nets on the beds gave me a great feeling but too tired to do much worrying and so just went to sleep. We did however religiously take our Malarone – anti-malarial pills – just as well all three of us were on the same thing as it helped to remind us to take them.

The following day we met the rest of the group, about half of who were going to be doing Kili and we went off to start the safari. The first couple of days were spent in the Tarangire National Park where they have vast numbers of elephants and giraffes – lots of bumping about in the back of the truck and lots and lots of dust.



The bus



Camping – WITH chairs no less !

The camping part was fine – the tents were reasonable and were really there for privacy as we didn't need protection from the elements. They certainly didn't feel very protective when there was a stampede of wildebeest one night, lions meandering around the campsite another night and a zebra on yet another – who needed to go out game driving ? We were there during the migration of the wildebeest (which seem to spend their whole time hanging out with the zebras – apparently the zebras have great eyesight and the wildebeest have great hearing so make good

pairing) but we must have seen millions of them – they were like rows of ants on the horizon just on a mission to get to where they wanted to get to.



Found her lazing in a tree



Cute baby elephant

Although it is winter down there we were out of the rainy season so although it wasn't too warm we had no rain except going to each of the parks – oddly enough – as soon as we got into the park it stopped raining and we could see really well. So – a couple of days camping and wildlife spotting and then we made our way out to the Serengeti – a couple of endless days on the truck – nothing I wasn't expecting to be honest... and that was June !