

May 2003

"Beware the Ides of May" they say –for me it's just 'beware May' I think. So – how did it start ? (Good question – I have just climbed over my neighbour' armrests on the plane to get out my Palm to find out) – oh yes – the infamous "Intercultural Event" in sunny New Orleans – HR tried to sell it to me as a great place to go to ... like I haven't been a few times before. An interesting route- Marla and I had decided to fly together on Friday and we were all going to go to the Jazzfest. So – she met me at work and we bombed off to the airport – got there with plenty of time and got onto the plane – I got an upgrade so settled into my seat and had a glass of wine – well it started raining and we were given a few more glasses of wine – Marla called me from Economy to find out what was going on – I went back to bring her some Pretzels and meet her (very cute) seat-mate. I couldn't stay long as I was ordered back to my seat. After about an hour and a half they re-docked us and we sat by the gate for another 1 ½ hrs – Marla came up to my place and I sat on the floor and she had some of my wine we were having quite a party of it ! The girl sat next to me was very excited as she had paid the extra to upgrade and was flying business – however her husband was on the phone giving her a hard time about how she was delayed and she was ruining his evening Somehow a thunderstorm in Atlanta became her fault – he was a pig and I was about to take the phone off her and talk to him when they announced that they had cancelled our flight – we dashed off the plane and grabbed the first phones that we could find to re-book our tickets – Marla and I got onto the first flight out the following day and Dave (her seat-buddy) got onto the next one.

We just grabbed cab back to the Highlands and went to Noce for Margaritas and Mexican food as we were very hungry by then – a quick walk home and we all got to bed later than intended – it was around midnight by then and our flight was supposed to be 6pm. I felt sorry for everybody else who had no baggage and had to stay in a local dive (at their expense). We got up early in the morning and took the trusty Golf to the airport – it was a little damp inside the car but I just thought that it was some of the rain that we had had and thought nothing more of it Should have known better ..

Got our flight and Dave even got on it (I got upgraded this time again – Marla is never going to fly with me again !!) and we had an uneventful flight – Rob picked us up and the first thing we did was have coffee and bagels and then went to bed to get some rest. Woke at 12 and went out to go to Jazzfest. It was amazingly hot – I got lucky as somebody was selling an internet ticket on the way in so I got a \$5 discount – Marla and Rob met my seat-mate in the queue (and her lunk of a husband – what a goon) it was very very funny. We meandered around – had crawfish bread (bread made with crawfish and hot sauce – awesome) and then went to hear a few bands – I was surprised as there was only one small jazz tent and the rest were all sorts including L L Cool J – who I saw from a great distance and thought was rubbish ! We met up with Eric's cousin (just like him – very intense) and went to a couple of places and then hooked up with Hilton- another of Rob's friends. We then went to the Gospel where there was a family of about 17 singing – not as good as I had expected and then finally off the the main arena – where in the middle under a pole with a tee-shirt and a rubber chicken on it (?) we met Hilton's friends – it was pretty wild getting there as the auditorium (can it be one when it is outdoors hmmm!) was packed ... apparently we were listening to the world-famous "Widespread Panic" who I kept calling "a little disorder" as I couldn't remember their names. We left as it was very crowded and then ended up at the jazz tent where a really awesome flautist was playing with his band. He's very sick and was there with a nurse and a bottle of oxygen but he was still fabulous !



Very artistic shot of jazz flautist (!)

After the end of a very very hot day we finally left around 7pm when it finished – got to the car and went back to shower and change and get ready – waited for the cousin and went out for dinner at a really great place that did Thai food. Back home not too late and to bed. The following day I didn't do much – read a lot and then got a life into town to check in to the hotel for my intercultural event. The first evening we had a reception dinner and then meandered back to the hotel via the World Trade Centre which had a revolving restaurant at the top and we had a round of drinks before leaving – it was totally dead – not surprising for a

Sunday night ! – The actual intercultural stuff was all sat about in one room in very uncomfortable chairs – not much fun for sure. That evening we had a riverboat cruise dinner – the food was good but it was immensely buggy and I got bitten to pieces all over my legs – not fun at all. Very itchy infact – came back and crashed out as all that sitting about was totally exhausting. The final day was a little more interesting as we went to the museum to see the exhibit of the French/Americans during the time of the Louisiana Purchase. It was Ok but not too exciting- they did have some funky paintings upstairs which I checked out - we were then all bussed back to the hotel for the final break and then a final dinner in the Bourbon House – more very very rich food in way too much sauce ... I had had enough by then! Went for swift drinks at O'Brians famous for Hurricanes and then staggered home. Up at the crack of dawn only to find out that my flights had been delayed by an hour – got to the airport and have breakfast and then sat and read. The flight was a little bumpy but not excessively bad – 3 of the others on the flight claimed to feel too sick to go back to work and went directly home – I slogged through the afternoon and didn't leave until nearly 6pm.

So – I digress - there I am in Atlanta airport picking up my car and I open the passengers door to put my bag in – to find the entire passenger's footwell full of water – right up to the edge of the centre tunnel – so only a small bit went into the driver's side.... But full means **4 inches deep** ! I drove as slowly as possible to work to prevent sloshing onto the driver's side and then spent the whole of the next hour extracting the water (thank goodness for water vacs) and then digging out all the junk in all the drains that had meant that the car filled up in the first place What a dirty disgusting job ! BUT – it's clean and dry now....

The rest of the week was pretty busy too – Thursday I went to the Opera – it wasn't bad – I was really tired so very grateful that it was only 1 ¾ hours – Salome – it was well done except for the fact that the lead who played Salome absolutely couldn't dance so the dance of the 7 veils was excruciating and I wasn't convinced by the bloody head and “now my mouth will kiss yours” part at the end Mmmmm

Friday evening my friend Jon came in from out of town – we had a traditional beer at my local and then came home. Saturday we just bibbled around the house and tried to locate the flagpole holder but didn't have the correct screws.... The evening we went to the Dixie Speedway – now I love that place ! Loads of cars whizzing around in circles on red Georgia clay – it's such a lot of fun and I just pick a car I like the pattern on and cheer it on – there's a beer drinking section so we sat in there and enjoyed. Sunday we saw a movie and chilled out when we weren't avoiding the horrible weather (I subsequently found out that we had record levels of rain in May – over 9 ½ inches !) – Monday was nice weather and we headed out for the North Georgia Mountains and just enjoyed the Boxster and I relished having a day off from work.

This has been my month of painting – Marla came around to paint my front bedroom and hallway this week – we decided on purple and lilac respectively – she did the bulk of the work during the day and I helped when I got home – then left her to it to make dinner .. we finished at around 10pm and were clearing up Sherry had just called when I noticed that I had a river of purple water all over the kitchen floor – she must have though I was mad as I started bibbling about purple rivers and hung the phone up – it transpires that the drain on the sink had come apart so there I was at 11pm struggling with emergency plumbing but got it fixed – HOORAH ! And what is more it looks absolutely fabulous – kudos to Marla for making me be brave with colours !



Marla Paints !

The following weekend the weather wasn't so good started but it didn't really matter - the book club came in to the Highlands from the boonies to get together – we had a blast – Saturday was British car day but it was cold and grey and overcast (very British !) but a lot of fun still – we had 18 Morgans show up – not a bad turn out and Stacey showed up – the evening I went out with Stacey and Ben and Sheena and a co-worker of hers – dinner and drinks in the Highlands – all very civilized ! Sunday Sheena Deb and I went out to

Birmingham to the races – the weather there was awful – torrential rain all the way – the racing was a lot of fun – especially as neither had been before and we were sat on a stretch with a treacherous puddle on it – we must have seen at least 10 cars spin out – hoorah ! But it was muddy as muddy could be and buggy too ! I had a car from work so the girls took turns at squeezing in the back – don't ask either of them what they think of Carreras for a few more months please !



Sheena and Deb and check out the mud !!!!

During this week I had decided to paint my kitchen cabinets – not a problem although there are a lot of doors – I didn't have enough of one colour (this is an INTERIM solution to nasty nasty cabinets !) so I did the shells yellow and the doors apricot (it does sound horrid but trust me it's much nicer than where it started – nasty dark brown !) – first coat was fine but just near the end of the second coat I am on top of the surfaces and me and the tin of paint decide to part company somewhat dramatically (naturally it's around the 10.30pm time again !) and there is paint EVERYWHERE ! I thought I had cleared it up by 11.30 pm but coming down in the morning (way too late to do anything about it by then of course !) I find it all over the fridge and the wall – hey ho – I now have Jackson Pollock-style kitchen appliances and walls !

So there we are – Memorial Day weekend and I am having a very domestic weekend - actually I have had a very domestic month on the whole - Saturday morning I borrowed a ladder and cleaned out all my gutters – Sherry, bless her came all the way over to hold the ladder to ensure that I didn't kill myself – although when she found out that I had found a 1 ft long snake in the front !!!! I finally got together with my neighbour on Saturday evening and went out for dinner – we have only lived next door to each other for a year by now – she invited her next-door but one friend too ! – It was a lot of fun – I had a Cayenne for the weekend so drove us in a little more style than Sheena and Deb - the Cayenne has enough room to almost live in! Sunday I spent half of it on the floor taking out all the staples and gripper rods as I finally decided to attack my floors and get rid of the horrid cream carpets (grey within a week of me moving in !) and get the hardwood floors refinished – so piles of carpet and blisters from using way too small a hammer to do the job in the afternoon I took a well-earned break and went to Jonathan and Kelly's for a BBQ – I met a great couple there – Amanda is a Brit and a personal trainer (yikes - super super fit and toned !) and Sam is a technician for Delta – they were so much fun that I stayed far longer than I had intended !

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The final week of the month was spent up in the New England area – I had a meeting with Bose that I organised for the training team – we were in Boston for the day – it was awesome – as I had organized it we got the "Engineers Tour" with all of the chambers and all the test facilities that they had used to set up the vehicle sound systems for us – so acoustic chambers and anechoic chambers and the noise-reduction

headset test chamber (phenomenal noise without headsets ...) just awesome fun and interesting too ! I want a system – they do the most amazing home sound systems too !

I finished there and took a flight to Newark, New Jersey took a hire car up to Manhattan to stay with my lovely cousin Nancy – we had cheese and wine and babbled the evening away. The following morning – grim weather and gray – we made our way over to the Neues Gallerie for an exhibition by a German artist who was just weird and his pictures had too many naked bits of women's bodies for me to be terribly comfortable with - but the Klimt's downstairs were great ! Afterwards I meandered up to my other cousins - Amy and Stephen's for the afternoon (Stephen's brother and family were the lovely people who put me up in Chicago !) – now the plan was that we would hang out by their pool – but with the weather being nothing but cold torrential rain that idea got scotched and we just hung out indoors and I got to catch up on their fabulous trip to the rainforest – the pictures looked amazing and they seemed to have had an awesome time ! Dinner was awesome (as ever !)

Sunday I was supposed to be doing some hiking in Mass with friends but it rained incessantly so we just chilled out and didn't do much of anything really – nice to rest. Monday I went to the dealer in Rhode Island – Tuesday and Wednesday were New Jersey (and I caught up with the lovely Carla who I still miss like mad !) and then flew home ...

Total flights – 5