

November 2004

Miles flown 7534
Countries visited Jamaica, Curacao
States visited California, Alabama

November started much as October finished – in and out of CIC as John's only visitor. They discharged him on the Monday night and he stayed with me for a couple of days to be close to the hospital before going back up north. It was nice to see him looking so well and going back home as it was a stressful time going to the hospital as well as working.

Thursday morning I escaped onto a plane to see Suzy and Mark. Now I had been given a list as long as my arm of stuff to buy them since they are starting their own dive business. This involved 30 ink cartridges and 5 solar showers (amongst many other things) – I was wondering how I was going to explain these items to the customs guys : “well – I was planning to get the ink all over me and get very dirty and then have a lot of showers.... Thankfully they didn't see my enormous bag as something unusual so I got through without being stopped. Boy it was good to see them. In between me booking my flight and getting there they had flown to Aruba to become “legal” to start their business and while they were away all hell had broken loose as somebody had hacked into their website, “doctored” their business plans and then sent them to every dive shop on the island and adjoining islands. It was pretty traumatic for them and it certainly seemed to have been a very difficult time. I think I turned up at absolutely the worst time as they had so much other sorting and things to do. Anyway – they were the hosts with the most as usual and we had a spectacular couple of days eating and drinking and diving.



Their new business is a Dive bus are aiming to get more experienced divers out to the shore diving sights which are plentiful in Curacao- so we had to try a couple of them out. We went to Porto Maria the first day – my second time at this lovely place. The best bit was seeing a Manta Ray – the first

for me and the first for them since the Bahamas of all things.

The dive was great and chilling on the beach after was even better !

We tried out a couple of great places for food – my favorite was the pontoon restaurant with lovely views over the lagoon. The second day we went out to another site which involved a tight squeeze between two walls – it was tight in the little 4x4 Toyota that they have – lord knows how they are ever going to get the big bus through the gap. And then we went diving. For some odd reason I had a terrible dive – my mask and I were simply not getting on. Coupled with sneezing a few times – and you can imagine how horrible that is in a mask ... it was a pretty crap dive for me.

Anyway – the chilling bit was good and Suzy and Mark even tried out the solar shower – thankfully it worked pretty well. Dinner at another nice water-side restaurant and the day was over again. Sunday we went for a drive and checked out all the other things that can happen on the Island – we drove past the wind generators, which look manageable until you are right up close and you crick your neck to look at them, and then wish you hadn't because they look like they are swaying and will fall down on you anytime. Then we went to another beach and Suzy showed off her prowess at surfing

All too soon I was on my way to the airport and on my way home.

The rest of the week was quiet except for finally getting to the Chihuly exhibit at the Atlanta Botanical Gardens which I'd tried to get into but was not prepared to queue for over an hour to get in to. He's a glass-maker who does some very strange things – the gardens were slightly foggy which made it eerie and interesting as we really didn't know where all the glass exhibits were so we wandered around the ghostly gardens looking for them.

My favorites were definitely the water-based exhibits, glass bubbles floating on water. The strange thing was that the last time I was in Venice in 1996 he had a huge exhibition all over the city and I had had no idea – I just saw all these strange glass sculptures and thought it was cool.



Water sculpture



Ugly fountain

Saturday I volunteered at Café 458 – a place that feeds homeless / alcoholics who have gotten into a re-hab program during the week and is turned into a brunch place weekends to make money to support the program. Deb was the “expeditor” – or what I call “garnish girl” – she was in the kitchen calling out our orders and then sending them out to the wait-staff. I was a mere serving wench. I have never done waitressing before and I had no idea how terrified I'd feel. Strange really since my income doesn't depend on it or anything but it was nerve-wracking to serve the first people. Many are old-hands at this place so were very understanding about my nervousness, the table of 9, including 2 kids had never been before and were expecting top-notch service – and they got me !!! Actually it wasn't too bad and I got into the swing by the end of my 7-hour stint. I was, however totally exhausted by the end. We did the 2nd busiest Saturday even – 111 covers and 2 down from the record. I was glad when Amanda and Sam suggested a film that evening since I couldn't do much conversation. Sunday I went to go cycling but obviously got the wrong time as there was nobody there when I got there – it was compounded by the fact that while I was 'waiting' I put some air into my tyres and the rubber around the valve perished – it was 10.30am freezing cold and I had no spare tyre. ... I started calling around to find somebody to give me a ride home as I didn't want to carry my bike for 2 miles and I certainly didn't want to ruin the rim. Thankfully Deb's new lodger was around with a big truck so I managed to get him to pick me up and take me home before I became a frozen statue.

The previous week Stefan was out of the office and as usual the boys sat about and played around and did nothing. Not only that but they whispered in corners and ran out at lunchtime and avoided talking to me. I had just about had enough of this childish behaviour so decided to do something about it – there was an opening for a Field Technical Manager position in Northern California – a place that I really like – so I decided to apply for it, almost for a laugh. Well – they pretended to take me seriously and even set me up with an interview at the end of the week. Stefan was pretty disappointed but understood where I was with the boys. The interview was in Ontario – all day at the incumbent's house (they are splitting his job in two) – the morning with

him and that afternoon with him and his boss. It went pretty well on the whole – it's really all about whether they look short or long term. The other applicant is technically good but will be terrible in arbitrations and court. I am not so technical but have vast amounts of credibility in those cases. So – I started to look at housing in San Francisco just in case – wow! It's expensive – about 80% more expensive than Atlanta. I arrived back on Saturday afternoon to go out with the usual suspects for Zach's birthday which was fine once I'd extricated myself from the dreadful Bill and Sherry who had adopted me a long time ago and I can't really shake at the moment. She's nice enough but her glass is always half empty – and she doesn't have a good word to say about anybody – lord knows what she says about me behind my back. So – evening at Loca Luna (tapas place) and even a small amount of dancing before I went home. It reminded me how much I have missed dancing.

Sunday I went to go cycling with a friend, his dad and a cycling group (this time I had the correct time – I was 10 minutes late last time – I was shooting for 10,30 and was early – it goes at 10am . . .) but it started pouring when I got there and we bailed and went for brunch at "Waffle House" – a southern experience I have so far managed to avoid so far. IT was 'interesting' – basically a cheap diner – but it was very funny and very southern. The rest of the week was simply a build-up to Thanksgiving – which was spent with the Bondon's and their family, a small gathering of 27 people. It was great fun – Stacey and Ben picked me up so I drank white wine slowly all day and chatted to everybody and ate – basically my total day – but it was so much fun. The Bondon girls imbibed too as you can see:



We staggered over to the Johnson's (they of the deep-fried turkey) around 5pm to catch up with them for an hour and then staggered home.

It was all very civilized and a lot of fun. Friday night I went to a salsa class – it was a lot of fun although extremely basic and there were a lot of people there. On Saturday I went out to Birmingham to see Kate and the boys the weather was awful so we played Monopoly and sat about all afternoon, but it was good to catch up. Sunday I went to the Van Gogh Exhibition at the High Museum – it had some really odd stuff there too, it was actually works from a woman called Kroller-Meuller's collection and was eclectic to say the least. The Van Goghs were splendid and it was great all in all. That was November basically.