

Kenya II

August 14-30, 2010

August 12, 2010

At the Embassy Suites, the trip up to Dulles was uneventful, and Bri and I pulled in the Embassy Suites at the same time. We ate at Moe's, then returned to the hotel. Bri and Kath were busily re-packing his bags, so I left them to their work.

Friday, August 13, 2010

Great night's sleep. Quick breakfast of oatmeal and coffee and off to the airport. Ethiopian Airlines is actually very nice, and has excellent services. Because of the seven hour time change, we arrive in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (through Rome) at 9:00 a.m. on August 14. Get off the plane, go to a people-herding area in the airport, then right back on the same plane. Josh Dowell is traveling with us. I probably only slept three hours total on the trip to Addis Ababa. My plan is to struggle through the 14th and go to bed by 10:00 at the latest.

Saturday, August 14, 2010

On the plane in Addis Ababa headed to Nairobi. Bri and I have read books – a crappy one by Patricia Cornwell – and I have been using The Nook to read What is The What – excellent book – the story of one of The Lost Boys of Sudan.

A lot happened once we landed in Nairobi. We made it through customs and money changing. Our driver – Purity – tried to take us to the Intercontinental instead of the Kenya Continental. Surprisingly, once she said Westlands, I could direct her. Michael and Dave Brooks were waiting. Bri and I shared the same room as Conor and me in 2007. Josh next door. Dinner was goat and chips with some veggies for Josh. The goat was tough. Thank God there was some chicken. Before dinner two beers and a trip to the mall. Bought some Bourbon too – later poured in a plastic water bottle. Early night. Good sleep.

Sunday, August 15, 2010

On Sunday, August 15, 2010, we ate breakfast at Kenyan Continental and then met our drivers, Jackson and James from Arid Adventures. We drove south through Nairobi, past the airport and on to Hunter's Lodge in the small town of Koboko. We stopped along the way for petro and for Somosas. At Hunter's Lodge, Bri and I walked the nearby road to the balbob tree and back, then had Chai. Good dinner and fellowship. Josh spent two hours trying to catch a tilapia from the pond in front of Hunter's using dental floss and a bent golden safety pin. No luck. Lots of jocularly at his expense.

Monday, August 16, 2010

Up early for breakfast at Hunter's Lodge. Drove over to Mielu, a nearby extinct volcano. Walked to the top – about one mile each way. 700 ft. change in altitude. Saw two Kamba goatherds and their goats at the top. Still have not seen Kili!!!

Left Hunter's for the Sikh Temple in Makindu. Winnie Barron, founder of MCP was waiting. She is taller than I expected. I enjoyed meeting her. We washed up then went to MCC. There were lots of kids; lots of guardians; and lots of MCC employees and satellite program committee members. Their presentation lasted over two hours. Songs, dances, poems, speeches from local representatives. The best song was one in all English by a group of about 12 teenagers from Koboko. The best speech was Michael's – all in Swahili, which always makes the guardians smile. Just before we ate, they asked for a prayer, so I jumped up and said a grace impromptu.

We ate rice and goat with pilipili. I sat with two committee members from Koboko who told me that they only have funding for 50 children. 273 children applied. The committee had to choose after doing home visits and confirming that they were accepting the best candidates. The committee members felt like they should be paid. I mentioned it to Michael. He said the MCP Board in Kenya now makes all the programming decisions. The Board in the USA only makes financial decisions. I will discuss it with Winnie on the walk.

We watched Josh mixing into a soccer game. One of the kids was an extraordinary, intuitive player. The kids love looking at themselves in pictures on our cameras. They love the balls we bring, and many of the smaller children seem to love our touch.

When we left MCP, we went down to a local bar and had a couple of Tuskers. Afterwards, Dave Brooks and Josh had pictures taken with the waitress. I then slept and then we ate a veggie dinner at the Sikh Temple in headdresses after listening to about 30 minutes of chants. Good day. Journal caught up. Bad night's sleep.

Tuesday, August 17, 2010

Up early at the Sikh Temple. Goodbye to Winnie's friends, Jan, Marty and Kathy. Ate breakfast. Made a sugar and butter pastry out of the flat bread. Good Chai. Drove all the way to Lake Baringo. Jackson is a star driver, but James is too careful – like an old lady on the highway. Once we got on the older style Kenyan roads, James was fine. All day driving. Arrived at Roberts' Campground on Lake Baringo, home of the Thirsty Goat Bar and Grill – became Farley's nickname.

Spent the night in a cabin because of pretty heavy rains. Walked down to the lake. Saw a sign – "Hippos and Crocodiles Are Dangerous." - No shit. Ate dinner, had a beer and some Jack Daniels and water and a 5 mg Valium. Slept great – very relaxing – and no

drowsiness in the morning. Heard the group singing and harmonica and drum – but slept and read.

Wednesday, August 18

Up early, Brian and I saw four hippos - only the tops of them, but unmistakable - one spouted up water. Off we went from Baringo to the start of the Walk spot. Horrendous roads and heroic driving. Arrived to find John and Amanda with a young girl, Bertie (probably 25) from UK, and seven Kenyan "camel guys." We gave them Bri's shirts. We had some Chai and food and set up our tents, including rain flies. I am now sitting in the tent writing in the rain. John and Amanda are wonderful hosts - at least they feel like hosts. Drank some Tuskers and threw frisbee. There is very good rapport among the six of us - and with Amanda. The big question will be how we respond to the physical trials of the walk. Right now, I am hoping my tent holds up and my choice of tent location is good.

Famous last words. After a really great dinner, we sat and talked, then went to bed. It rained all night and my tent leaked.

Thursday, August 19 - Day 1

I slept little, and woke up almost angry. I thought I'd done everything right and the plan failed. Everything is wet. We got up at 4:15 or so and packed and ate a standing-up breakfast of fruits and grains. Chai is good.

The walk ended up being "only" about 12 miles, but it was hard. At first, I tried to walk like Farley, using my poles on every step. In a short time, my neck, back and the left side of my chest hurt. I thought I was having a heart attack in the first hour. Turns out, I was just irritating the slightly herniated disk in my neck. I reduced my pole usage to an as needed basis and the pain went away.

We started off on fairly flat land with relatively modest ups and downs, then we entered the Tiati Mountains and things slowed considerably. The camel guys have to cut down brush and trees to make room for the camels loaded with all our stuff and all the food, etc. I was exhausted, got in my tent, turned on Dick Bennett's little fan and slept. I don't know how long, but I was a bit delirious. I lose my balance easily. I think I am staying hydrated and eating the right food. The highlights of the day were the overlooks from the mountains and after a great dinner of "mince meat" and spaghetti and vegetables, Michael and Josh played for the camel guys - three songs. They loved it. Sleep time 9:00 p.m. Up at 5:00. Strong winds overnight almost blew my tent away.

Friday, August 20 - Day 2

About 1/2 mile uphill followed by five plus hours of slow progress as the camel guys had to machete bushes and trees to make room for the camels. Around 2:30 or so, we emerged onto a low river bed (up as high as 7,000 feet down to 3,900) and walked pretty

hard until about 4:30. Amanda picked another good camping spot, and we had tea with cheese, tomato and avocado sandwiches. I then took a nap because my head started to hurt. Up for dinner, then to bed. I am light-headed and lose my balance easily. Brushed my teeth and used a wipe to clean up. Leaves my hair pretty dirty. I have only used two pairs of socks so far, but they both ended up filthy. I am very pleased that Brother Bri is a big hit with everyone. No real highlights on the walk today - saw a "family" of Pokot who wanted us to "pay" for the right to be on "their" land. Amanda traded them some snuff, and they let us in. Several very good photos taken. I hope my camera does well. Bri's is broken. Also saw a guy sitting in the middle of nowhere reading. He barely acknowledged us. Probably a long day tomorrow walking on the flatlands - maybe 20 miles.

Spent part of the day talking with Amanda trying to understand how the property laws in Kenya work. Clearly, people have personal property. Also, there are "ranches" that are blocked off as someone's real property, but who "owns" all the other property? The Kenyan government? I don't think so? The Pokot Tribe? If so, who?

Saturday, August 21 - Day 3

Long, hot walk through Pokot country. Saw lots of locals dressed up to go to a ceremony equivalent to a Bar Mitzvah. They were friendly. It was very hot all day.

The local chief of the area met up with us on his motorcycle then came to our camp. His name is David Todok.

He joins us as we sit and drink tea. He asks what we all do for a living. When he gets to me, I say, with some self-importance, "I am an attorney, an advocate (knowing that Kenyans call lawyers who go to court "advocates.")" Todok looks me over and says, "You are a diverter of the truth. You take what is true and make it false, and you take what is false and make it true." The other five laugh hysterically as I sputter that I am not like that. Todok is smiling. I say, "I came all the way to remote Kenya for another lawyer joke."

Later, Todok and I talk alone for over an hour. He is 51 years old; has three wives and 15 children and is paying for four to go to school. He says it is killing him. We share a laugh since I too know the pain of hefty school tuitions. He explains that he had a very bad experience where a lawyer successfully defended a police officer who shot a friend of his. We also talk about how poor and left behind the Pokot people are, and he tells me that the reason the Pokot and Turkana are always fighting is that both are poor, and when either steal goats and cows from the other, a war results.

I continue to feel tired in all the normal ways plus my head gets very light when I lay down, and I am out of balance when I stand. My bowels have been very regular - probably because of all the Cliff Bars and Power Bars and other grains. At the end of each day, we all feel like we can't move anymore. The next morning, we feel much

better. I have not drunk beer, but a little wine at dinner only. Good choice. I am also going to start taking some rehydrant or Gatorade powder in my water.

Sunday, August 22 - Day 4

It rained all night, and my tent stayed dry, although when I took it down there was water on the bottom and on my pad. When I stood up, I felt very light-headed, and it did not go away. I also felt sick to my stomach. I defecated and drank rehydrant and felt well enough to start up. The walk was very hilly – with changes of elevation up to 1,500 feet at a stretch. It was cloudy and not hot, but very humid. I sweated through my shirt, underwear and pants. It was pouring off of me. Brian gave me another rehydrant, then Josh gave me a pill to put in my camel pack. I continued to sweat profusely, but went through several liters of water and felt weak. We walked 26 kilometers, about 15 miles, in five hours of pretty much continuous walking. It was very hard. The hardest day yet for me. Bri was out front like he was enjoying it – a very impressive performance. Dave Brooks is unbelievably steady; Winnie is an inspiration with her MD and her cane; Michael just toughs it out and Josh was strong early and faded a bit later. I told Brooks and Farley that I am the biggest princess on this walk so far.

We stopped a little after 1:00, having set out at 7:15. We arrived at a Catholic Mission where a young nun named Rebecca lives, with a priest named Father Sean. Neither was present, but we decided to settle in. We are up on a hill with amazing vistas in all directions. The local Pokot people come and just sit and stare at us. Two old guys lay down by the fire. One old lady and two young girls just sit near the trees and gawk. I walked around with my shirt off for an hour or so, and the Pokots thought that was very funny.

The food continues to be very good. We had tea at 4:00 and will have dinner later. The seven camel guys are Bara Bara (means road, because he was born on the road), Mohamed, Lari, Daniel, Kamal (the cook), Moses and one guy who changed his name, Unbogo.

Monday, August 23 – Day 5

I guess Patrick returns to Hampden Sydney College today or tomorrow. I tried to call Jean and Pat on the satellite phone but only left messages. Here in Kenya, I woke early and defecated then had rapid diarrhea within 20 minutes. I then drank some rehydrant, but I did not dilute it enough – which probably explains why I puked 20 minutes after drinking it. After vomiting, I felt surprisingly good and had my easiest day yet. We walked almost 20 miles mostly in a lugga (mostly dry river bed) of the Tirioko River and now are camped at the Laroket River. The site is not ideal for our tents, but there is a pool of water nearby, and we were able to wash clothes for the first time. There were innumerable rocks on the walk, and they really wear out your feet. Brooks has diarrhea; Winnie did well; Farley is the same; Bri and Josh had more trouble today than yesterday, not like me at all.

Couple of Things:

Camp – Amanda picks the spot; the camel guys unload and start a fire and then tea in 15 minutes. We set up our tents – hardest thing all day because we are tired and irritable. I especially don't like it. Today was the best I felt. We ate pasta salad, tomato, guacamole. It was great.

The Camels – are unbelievable. As tall as twelve feet tall. Long necks. Pouty model lips. Trained well. Strong. True beasts of burden. Each one has its own personality. Three feet on the ground when they walk.

The Pokot – Very primitive – maybe the most primitive tribe in Kenya. Not touched much by the western world. Today, though, we saw a guy with an AK-47 over his shoulder. Most of the others looked like they could have lived 400 years ago.

Amanda – Indomitable spirit. Service oriented. Selfless. Hardest working, toughest woman I have ever met. Alternates flip flops with walking shoes. Good cheer and good sense of humor. Good cook.

The Seven Plagues

Starting with rain (Plague 1) soaking my tent the night before the first day, I have felt like we (and especially me) the first five days have been visited by the Seven Biblical Plagues.

Unbeknownst to me the second plague, low electrolytes, starting affecting me toward the end of the first day. When I would lie down, it felt like all the fluids in my body rushed to my head. The third plague was the high wind that first night. It kept me awake and made me fear that my tent would blow away. The fourth plague was the heat at the end of the second day, which led to more dehydration and low electrolytes. The fifth plague was a double – thick mud and mountain terrain on Day 4. I thought I would not make it. The sixth plague the morning of Day 5 was diarrhea followed shortly by the seventh plague, vomiting. After I vomited the morning of Day 5, I felt better and I have felt fine since.

The Seven Plagues!!

Tuesday, August 24 – Day 6

Best I felt in the morning all trip. Long walks through a river – around 20 crossings. All our shoes got wet. Hot spot on my left big toe.

“What are the women for?”

Lots of Pokot in camp. Little kids with lollies. Old drunk guy laughing. Made it to the Kerio River, but it is too high so we are having to re-route ourselves.

Wednesday, August 25 – Day 7

Up early. Longest walk so far. 20 miles. Finally spoke to Jean. “Good, that makes up for the first three days.” Farley really pushed. Again, at the end, he pushed despite some pretty tired people – especially Winnie.

Did not see much. We all took showers. Used Dick’s shower – not me but others.

Thursday, August 26 – Day 8

Walked 15 miles much slower. Stopped near a stream. Soaked in some rushing water. Very hot early. Now it is raining. Pokot locals came to camp and danced. Our camel guys joined in, then so did we. Fun and funny. More conversation with me with local assistant chiefs. They know David Todok, the head chief with the motorcycle. I have some clothes on the line getting soaked but enough dry clothes to make it two more days. I hope it stops raining. We have not had dinner yet but I am not that hungry.

I spoke to Ivan from Arid Adventures, and Bri and I are booked for three days on the Masai Mara to see animals. It will be expensive but worth it. We will have to wire Ivan the money.

Friday, August 27 – Day 9

Up early and off at a faster pace. The weather was cloudy and cool and a little muggy. Around 1:00, it started raining hard; we kept walking. Everything got wet, and Farley’s pack and mine were covered with mud when a camel fell. Bri thought it hilarious.

David Todok caught up with us and gave me a present, with a little presentation, saying “You must bring this with you when you return.” Tonight Moses bought a goat (I helped with 100 KSH), and the guys gave it a kill; drank the blood and then cooked it up. Bri, Farley and I ate liver, kidney, heart, tongue and brains as well as some regular meat.

Got 15 miles in today in tough conditions at the end of the day.

Plagues 1 (rain) and 5 (mud) hit us today. The mud though was slick as snot.

Also, saw a camel throw a white parasite about two inches long out of its nose – disgusting!

Saturday, August 28 – Day 10

Broke camp at 7:15 and headed uphill. Got in some thick brush with slow going. Finally broke free and the sun got hot and we walked a total of 12 miles. Michael announced, “You have completed a Proper Walk.” Hugs all around – a very fine feeling of accomplishment. Called Jean and was glad to hear her voice.

Set up camp, ate and napped. Woke up to about 15 locals looking in at me and Farley in our underwear. An ambulance came by and I said, "I called that ambulance seven days ago." John, Amanda's husband, arrived at about 5:00 with ICE COLD BEER. I drank two 20 oz. Tuskers straight down. I had prepared by drinking some rehydrants. We ate a dinner of goat (burnt ends), ratatoue and mashed potatoes. Finally, we smoked the box of Macanudo Golds that John had been carrying. Each cigar was contained in an individual glass cylinder inside the box.

The Story of 2 Dogs

Around mid-day on Day 1, as we were just entering the mountain phase that involved some use of machetes by the Kenyans to clear the trail, a small brown, black and white Kenyan female mutt approached our group. Dave Brooks began petting her. Winnie removed a barbed wire collar that had been tightly placed on her neck. The little bitch followed us for the next nine days. At first, we called her Dave Brooks after her savior, but within a day or two the camel guys labeled her Safari. By the second day, a small white-with-some-brown male Kenyan mutt starting following Safari everywhere – never leaving her side – or more accurately, her behind. It became clear that Safari was in heat and this second dog – at first labeled Mount Safari but later re-christened Muize (Swahili for thief) – licked Safari's hind parts and even drank her piss. Safari growled 90% of the time at the attention, but Muize wore her down and eventually had more successful amorous efforts. Numerous times, Muize would mount Safari only to be brushed off by Winnie or one of the others. I took the position that if we were going to let the dogs accompany us, we should not stand in the way of nature. Muize could be seen several times a day with his little red pecker out humping the air. After about three days of constant attention, Muize suddenly lost interest in Safari as a mate, and the two just followed along with us separately. By the end, we were all feeding both of them. I fed Muize more frequently, because he was ignored more initially and because he was so skinny. He had to have worms.

Sunday, August 29 – Day 11

We awoke later than usual and had a fairly leisurely morning drinking Chai and eating the fat man's breakfast of scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage and friend tomatoes with bread and cheese – quite a difference from standing around eating granola and fruit.

The river 17 kilometers away is up, so James and Jackson cannot get to us. We pile all our baggage and four of us (me, Mike, David and Josh) in the back of John's truck and he takes us to the river crossing. Before we leave, there are photos taken of all of us, Amanda, the seven camel guys and our guide in Proper Walk T-shirts. We tip the camel guys an extra 1,000 KSH each and tip the guide 1,000 KSH total. He threw his hands up in the air he was so happy. Winnie also diagnosed him with worms from wounds on his legs and gave him medicine. I hope he takes it. We try to get rid of Safari and Muize by sending them off with the camel guys when they head out, but both dogs return. Now

they will ride to Old Maisor in the vehicle with John, Amanda and Kamal. John is not happy.

Jackson is our driver to Masai Mara and for the next three days. He is a real pro. Mike has us stay together until Nakuru but eventually we part ways with hugs all around. It is five hours from Nakuru to Masai Mara, and we end up speeding over unpaved roads the last one and one-half hours. We get to the gate, and the “guards” tell Jackson that we owe \$60 to get in. Our bill from the Ilkilinea Lodge (Tent Camp) says that the Conservancy Fees for three days have already been paid. Somehow Jackson convinces them to let us in. We end up driving through the Mara in the dark. A huge giraffe crosses the road in front of our car. We get to the camp finally in the dark – with no signs or lights to show the way. Jackson is amazing.

The tent is great. Hot shower. Electricity. All the comforts of home. Ivan treated us right and fronted the money.

Monday, August 30

Up pretty early. Disappointing coffee. Game drive. See a pride of lions – one male slinking away; another with the pride; three or four large females and probably five – six cubs. There are three kills, and we watch the family eat one. Very close. Later, we see elephants, impalas, buffalo, crocodile, 50 hippos (out of the car).

Afternoon game drive, we see nine giraffe (close), three cheetahs (close), 12 elephants (close); baboons; Thompson’s gazelles, wilde beasts. Now we are looking for leopard and rhino. Jackson is a great guide.

Tuesday, August 31

The morning game drive was focused on finding a leopard. We saw first a pride of lions, all walking more or less single file away from a place where they had been sitting. When the group was gone, we noted a large female left behind. She walked into an open space and began growling fairly loudly in all directions. Only then did we notice another lion – this one a cub – about a kilometer away. As the mother kept “braying” the cub started to run. Eventually, they were on either side of a stand of shrubs. They walked toward each other and literally fell into each other’s arms, rolling in the grass. Reunited. The two then walked a crooked line to where the rest of the pride was located. We later encountered a young cub on his own. He had some wounds in his side. He may be doomed.

Later, we saw a group of vehicles congregated a couple of kilometers from us. On the way to see what was up, we saw two hippos out of the water feeding. As we approached the cars, we saw her – a leopard. We joined the group of vehicles around her (eventually, there were about 12 vehicles). She exited the stand of trees and walked within two feet of our vehicle. Bri took numerous photos. We were very lucky. Jackson said that in 26

years of driving people to the Mara, he has never been so close to a leopard. Great morning drive. Now for a rhino!!!

I slept for two hours after the morning drive. Then lunch, then some reading and writing. Now for the afternoon drive.

Indeed, in the afternoon, we found a rhino. It was across the way, but we watched it for a good 10 minutes before it lost itself in some thick brush. We saw the Big 5.

The Kenyan Concept of “Just There”

Throughout our stay in Kenya but especially during the Walk, we encountered the Kenyan concept of “Just There.” If you ask a Kenyan how far away something is, rather than giving you an estimate of distance in kilometers or of the time it will take to get there using your current means of travel, the Kenyan will frequently say, “It is just there.” It could be one minute or one kilometer or 30 minutes or 30 miles away.

On a similar note, if you ask a Kenyan more directly when you will arrive at a specific destination and he says 10 minutes, you should double or triple the estimate. The Kenyans know you want the destination to be close, and they want you to be pleased, so they estimate very low. I’m just saying. . . .

September 1, 2010 into September 2, 2010

We arise at Ilkilinea Tent Camp at 7:00 and are packed and on the road after a Spanish omelet breakfast by 8:30. We drive through the park and have a female and male lion walk within five feet of our vehicle. We drive from 8:30 until 3:30 stopping only to get gas and coffee; to “check the tires” (code for taking a piss); and then actually to change two tires on the rear of the Range Rover that had worn through until the steel belts were sticking out.

No issues flying from Nairobi through Addis Ababa (this time we were set free inside the airport) all the way to Rome, where we again stopped. Both Bri and I slept some. The plan, though, is to take Tylenol PM and try to sleep most of the eight hours from Rome to Dulles and wake up Thursday morning in the U.S. as if we were on that schedule. We shall see.

We arrive at Dulles on time; take a cab to the Embassy Suites, where Kathy and Bri’s three dogs are waiting. I then drive home to Richmond, arriving at noon – precisely 36 hours after waking up at Masai Mara the previous day. Made it.