

Proper Walk 2010
August

Wednesday 11 August 2010 Louisa VA

I am up very early – 4:30AM – anxious and eager about the journey that starts today. Long swim in the pond prior to heading to Elk Hill helps relieve some of the anxiety. The staff have a bon voyage party for Joshua and me, which is very nice. Large greeting card from all the staff and kids wishing us a safe trip is posted on the wall. I head home at lunch to repack (3rd time) and meet David Brooks who is driving us up to the Holiday Inn in Leesburg for the night. My duffle bag (“the Base Camp”) is way too heavy – maybe close 100 lbs(?). Ethiopian Air limits to 70lbs – so I am not sure what to do. We’ll head to Dulles early tomorrow morning.

Thursday 12 August 2010 Leesburg VA

We catch the Holiday Inn Shuttle to Dulles at 8AM for our 10:15 Ethiopian Air Flight to Addis Abba. Checking our bags at Dulles the scale is broken, which bodes well for my over weight duffle. The flight leaves 1:15 min. late. I have an empty seat next to me which works well for stretching out. Dave is not as fortunate - he sits next to a hyper active girl about 10 years old who is constantly moving about. We stop in Rome for fuel and then head south to Addis. It becomes obvious that due to our late departure in Wash DC we will miss our connecting flight from Addis to Nairobi. We arrive and head to a gate – realizing that the connecting flight is the same plane we were just on. No worries.

Friday 13 August 2010

We arrive in NBI two hours late. Concorde Travel, who I contract with for transportation in Nairobi, is not there to pick us up (bad start) so we hire a taxi. The driver, Joseph, takes us to the Kenya Continental Hotel in Westlands. Joseph has really bad American music playing in his taxi. I ask him in Swahili to put on some Kenyan music. He gets a big smile and reached into his CD collection, puts in a CD – The Best of Dolly Parton. Obviously, my Swahili needs some work. Brooks and I check into the Kenya Continental, which is a place Lee and I have stayed since the 1980s. We take a short break. Joseph waits and then drives us around Nairobi as we need to pick up some supplies, get our Flying Docs evac credentials and check in to make sure Concorde picks up David, Brian and Joshua tomorrow. We have dinner at the Indian Restaurant, which is right down the road from the KC.

Saturday 14 August 2010

The Corrigan Brothers and Joshua arrive via Concorde (and Purity) at 2PM. They are in good spirits and excited to be in Africa. We get them checked in and allow some down time to recoup. Brooks leads them over to the Serit Center for some shopping and sightseeing. Back to the Beer Gardens at the KC for roasted goat, chicken, ugali, chips and a veggie platter from the Italian joint next door. Two man band plays in the Garden.

I join in on my harp for a rendition of Malika – always a fan favorite. David and Brian C and Brooks head to bed. Joshua and I stay up and enjoy the music.

Sunday 15 August 2010

We have the usual breakfast at Kenya Continental of Spanish omelet, sausage, papaya and lots of coffee. The two vehicles leased from Arid Adventures arrive at 9:30, an hour early – very un Kenyan like. Our divers are Jackson, who was with us last year and James, a new guy. We leave the KC at 10:15 and head south on the Mombassa Road towards Kiboko and Makindu. James' vehicle is SLOW and continually falling behind. I later learn from D. Corrigan that James is really tentative and does not want to pass vehicles, which is essential on that road.

We take a break at Emali for samosas and a beverage and then on to Hunters Lodge. The folks at Hunters show me the rooms and each has something wrong – no net, no key to the balcony, toilet out of order. We finally sort out 3 rooms that function – Brooks, Joshua and me on the ground floor with the Corrigan boys upstairs. Everyone chills some – the Corrigan boys go for a Walk down the dirt road towards the Kiboko Research Station. Joshua wants to do some fishing in the spring so he heads over to the little village of Kiboko to look for fishing stuff. When the Corrigan Brothers return they tell me that they saw Joshua getting on the back of a motorcycle. I'm thinking.... Shit, where will he end up? I start to head over to Kiboko when I see Joshua walking into Hunters Lodge. The motorcycle wouldn't go – the guy was taking him to Makindu to look for fishing stuff. I strongly advise Joshua not to go off by himself without consulting me and he accepts the feedback willingly. He later tries to catch a fish with dental floss, a safety pin and a large slug. No luck, but great amusement.

Later, we spend some time talking Walk logistics and expectations. Good dinner - chicken for Brother Bri and me – Beef steak for David C and Brooks – veggies for Joshua. Everyone crashes early. I sit up on the front porch enjoying the half moon rise over the springs and acacia trees. Hunters Lodge is one of my favorite spots in the world.

Monday 16 August 2010

Good breakfast – as usual at Hunters - at 7:30AM. We pack up and head out to the Kiboko Research Station at 9AM. I speak with the askari (guard) at the gate and explain that we want to climb Mt. Mielu. It's a very steep accent up the extinct volcano (3,743 ft). When I was first in Peace Corps I lived right next to Mielu and would climb it often. We climb 700 ft in about a half mile. On clear days you can see Mt. Kilimanjaro - which is about 60 miles away - but unfortunately it's too hazy to see it. David C has been up on Mielu twice now (2007) and has yet to see the giant mountain. I think he doubts its really there. Walking down Mielu is the most challenging part as it is very steep on loose small rocks – scree. David C, Joshua and I all take falls on the way down. No major injuries.

We head to Makindu and the Sikh Temple where we will be spending the night. Winnie, the final member of the Walk team, is waiting for us. We walk over to MCC and are

greeted by kids, staff and guardians. My old friends and neighbors from Peace Corps days - Mary and Rose Kilonzo – are waiting for us. After introductions and a tour of the facility and grounds (we meet the new cows – named Oregon and Virginia) we are seated for the ceremony, which includes lots of speeches, poems, songs and dancing. I give my speech in Ki Swahili, which seems to go over well with all.

Following the ceremony we have goat and rice. Joshua breaks his 17 year vegetarian regiment with a bite of goat. Later, he gets into a football (soccer) game with the kids running around holding on to his camera and trying to kick the ball. We head back to the Temple after a stop for Tuskers. I spend some time with Mary and Rose. I give Mary a check for her son's secondary school fees and a small "push" for Mary and Rose. Lee sent gifts for both Mary and Rose, which they seem to appreciate. They always ask "Habari Mrs. Lee?" Back at the Temple we have the usual veggie dinner (with all heads covered) with Makindu friends and then retire to our rooms to organize and journal. Everyone is very excited and tired.

Tuesday 17 August 2010

Long haul day as we drive from Makindu to Lake Baringo. Leave the temple at 8:30am and head up through Nairobi. Tire puncture slows down Jackson's vehicle. We regroup in Naivasha for lunch. We make a quick stop in Nakuru to see Ivan (who owns Aird Adventures) and his parents Robin and Jessica who have helped with previous Walk logistics. Ivan is also organizing a trip post Walk to the Mara for the Corrigan boys. Good guy, Ivan.

We cross the Equator and arrive at Roberts Camp on Lake Baringo at dusk. It's raining so we opt for the 6 person cottage. We have a sundowner by the Lake, looking for hippo and crocs, which we are warned by a sign that they are, indeed, dangerous. We have dinner at the Thirty Goat (which becomes one of my nicknames). Back at the cottage, one of the beds is a Queen so Winnie gets that leaving two rooms with 4 single beds. So, I sleep on a couch on the porch using my pop up mosquito net. A few beverages and tunes on the front porch before all retire. The porch couch is not bad...the hippos grunting loudly throughout the night makes sleep hard to find.

Wednesday 18 August 2010

We have a hearty breakfast at the Thirsty Goat and head out to Walk start. It takes 4 ½ hrs. to drive 70 KM (43.5 miles). Really rough, rocky, washed out roads with very steep inclines. Very slow going. We arrive at Camp Moran at 1:30PM to find our camels, camel guys, John, Amanda and a British friend of theirs, Betty. The camel guys are: Bara Bara, Daniel, Mosses, Mohamed, Kamau, and Mbogo. After intros and some discussion, Brooks instructs the rookies on proper tent pitching, which is important as it looks like it could rain. Moran camp is at N01*08.480' E035*54.980' so we are just N. of the Equator. Elevation at 4600 ft. Late afternoon rain points out tent pitching flaws. We spend the rest of the evening playing some Frisbee, Tuskers, chai, dinner and bed.

Thursday 19 August 2010 Proper Walk DAY 1

It rains most of the night – resulting in the realization that there are still some flaws in the tent pitching process. We pack up wet, which is never fun, hoping to dry out at our next camp later in the day. After breakfast of fruit, cereal, and thick cookie like biscuits, we say kwaheri to John and Betty. Six Americans, eight Africans and 18 camels take the first step of Proper Walk 2010 at 6:35 AM. The initial pace is probably too fast as it has been historically on the previous 4 Walks but everyone is jazzed and raring to go! The terrain is fairly flat for the first several miles but as we get into the Tiati Mountains the going gets hard and slow. We descend down a very steep overgrown path, which Amanda says is an old smugglers trail. The camel guys use pangas (machetes) to cut away tree limbs allowing our camels – loaded with gear, water and food – to get through. A lot of stops and gos – twende na simama. After about 12+ miles at 2:30 pm Amanda (and Bro Bri) find an amazing camp on a knoll overlooking the beautiful Tiati Mountains and valleys. The camp is called Chewoi, located at N01*14.150' E035* 57.119'. We are at an altitude of 4,889ft.

Several Pokot folks hang out and observe us. We also now have a dog – named “David Brooks, the Dog” following us. David Brooks, the man, showed the dog some affection on a break earlier in the day and Winnie removed a tight wire collar from the dog’s neck and DB the Dog took an instant liking to us. The dog was living at a Catholic Mission we passed and apparently was fed by the folks there. We have high tea, along with sandwiches – which helps D. Corrigan get out of his tent. He is very tired. Later we dine on spaghetti and veggies. Amanda also breaks out a box of red wine, which is enjoyed by all. After dinner, Joshua and I head over and play some music with the camel guys. They seemed to really enjoy the music.

Friday 20 August 2010 Proper Walk Day 2

We are all up at 4:30 am to pack, then usual breakfast. I find an old mzee who says he knows the mission where we had found DB the Dog. I pay him 100 Kenya Shillings (\$1.25) to take the dog back. We fashion a leash and put it around DB the Dog’s neck. The dog goes nuts, yelping and jumping around like a maniac. We head out, trying not to notice the dog’s pleas to get free. Within 2 minutes the dog has chewed through the leash and is back with us. I get the 100 shillings back from the old guy and figure the dog is on its own. A few minutes later a young boy – referred to by the mzee - shows up with another harness like leash and puts it around the dog’s torso. I give him the 100 shillings and he assures me that he knows where the mission is. The dog again goes nuts and we walk on.

Within 20 minutes David Brooks the Dog is back at our side. At this point the camel guys rename her as Safari – Journey in Swahili. She walks with us for the next 9 days and about 145 miles! She is also in heat and we are quickly joined by a male dog we name Mount Safari but later changed to Mwizi, which means Thief in Swahili due to his

tendency to steal foodstuffs from the Kitchen tent. Safari and Mwizi become members of the Proper Walk 2010 Team. We all end up really enjoying their company.

Day 2 was tough. After a brief uphill slog we start down a very rugged smuggler's trail - lots of panga works, lots of stops and starts, lots of rocks to walk on and to sit on. It takes us 6 ½ hours to go 2 ½ miles. At one point we walk past a Pokot guy dressed in a shuka, sitting on a rock, reading a book. He has little interest in us. Once down the side of the mountain and around several other mountains we reach a relatively flat area and really hit it, walking probably close to 4 miles an hour we make up some ground and end up walking about 13 miles. We camp on the Kapunyany River at N 01° 14.878' E 035° 53.418' Elevation at 3,787ft. Usual Pokot observers around camp - lots of Obama shirts and hats.. High tea, chai, wine, Tuskers and dinner before tent time.

Saturday 21 August 2010 Proper Walk Day 3

We walk 16 miles today – long walk though Pokot country and it is really hot. I really struggle at the end of the day – exhausted and dehydrated. A rehydrant really helps revive me. We see a lot of Pokot people all dressed up heading to a circumcision ceremony - men with ostrich feathers in their hats and women with large neck rings. We also meet the local Chief David Tadok who provides us with a local guide – Menno. The Chief has a motorcycle and visits us later in camp. He tells D. Corrigan that David is a “truth diverter” after learning of his occupation. We all get a great laugh out of that one. DC later states he had to come all the way to Kenya to hear another lawyer joke. Tadok says we are very welcomed because we “brought the rains”. Our camp is along a river with a couple water holes, which allows us to take a bath and wash some clothes. It starts raining again while I am bathing...oh well. The rain is refreshing. Camp is located at N. 01° 22.485' E.035° 50.671' Elevation: 3,592ft.

Sunday 22 August 2010 Proper Walk Day 4

In the morning D. Corrigan tells me he is feeling lightheaded and not well. Winnie gives him a rehydrant and we both commit to keeping an eye on him. The trek today was very challenging – up hill with very steep pitches. DC is sweating more than usual – he is completely soaked. I try to check on him every so often. I am taking *way points* on the GPS, which provides short breaks. I also call for longer breaks every 2-2 ½ hours. Brian Corrigan is leading the effort – he is impressive with his endurance and stamina.

The up hill walking is tough but the down hill really makes my knees scream. We walk 16 miles to a Catholic Mission called Ruto. Its at N01° 26.078' E035° 56.284' and at an elevation of 4,588ft. When we arrive David C lays out spread eagle on a bonda porch, completely exhausted. I lay down right next to him as I am worn out and I also want to figure out how he is doing. He tells Brooks and me that he is the “biggest princess” on the Walk. There is no one but the local Pokot at the mission. Joshua gifts a very old, partially blind woman with a Native American headdress. She is thrilled to receive it and does a little dance of joy. The mission is in a beautiful spot – on a hill with a 360° view of the surrounding Tiatu Mountains. Joshua plays his band Antero's music for the camel guys over his MP3 player. They all really enjoy the music and can tell Joshua's voice.

Monday 23 August Proper Walk Day 5

The usual morning ritual starts at 5AM - consists of everyone packing up their tent and kits to load on the camels, followed by breakfast and a reminder to take the anti Malarial – MALARONE! David C tells me that he had explosive diarrhea during the night and is not feeling well. Later he walks away from breakfast and vomits. I start thinking about possible contingencies if DC is too sick to Walk – ride a camel or stay at Ruto an extra day. Winnie comes over and observes DC who is feeling a lot better following his purge. We decide to walk on and leave Ruto at 6:45A. Long trek down the Tirioko River through acacia bush and thorn trees. We see some very primitive Pokot living in the valley. We walk 31 KM or about 20 miles, trying to find a suitable camp site. Amanda finally finds a site that at first seems impossible. We clear rocks and cut acacia limbs out to carve out tent space. Amanda sets up our dinning area at the end of the camp with a view of the Loriket River, which is at N01*30.008' and E 035*51.352' – altitude of 3,310ft. Amanda and I hear a hyena yelp in the distance, which I later point out to Joshua, which gets him jazzed. Joshua takes a bath and is viewed by several Pokot. Later Amanda tells us that if the Pokot:
see a mzungu (white person) it provides an hour of talk
talk to a mzungu it provides a day of talk
see a naked mzungu it provides a month of talk.

Before dinner a Pokot guy wanders into camp with an AK47. He leaves but later returns with about 7 other guys. They want to take our camels. Menno – our Pokot guide who was provided by Chief Tadok – tells them that if they take our camels the Chief will be very angry and they will be in trouble. They leave without camels. Amanda and I agree to tell the other walkers about this at the end of the Walk.

Tuesday 24 August Proper Walk Day 6

Today we walked about 15 miles – crossing the Chesaran River many times. At first we tried to walk on rocks – which were plentiful – but we quickly gave up and slogged through in the water. We see a lot of Pokot along the river – all very interested in the camel/mzungu parade. The water walking is tough but the rock walking is tougher. Rocks line the river on both sides. The rocks are the size of oranges to watermelons. They provide great ankle and knee twisting opportunities. We finally come out of the river and head up through bush land to the Kerio River, where we camp. N01*32.661' E035*46.223' – 2,628FT in elevation. Amanda warns us about crocodiles and scorpions.

Lots of Pokot observers in camp including two guys in Obama shirts and hats. I start talking to them in Swahili about Obama and they haven't got a clue who he is or what I am talking about. We play Frisbee with some kids and sit down for dinner. An older guy comes in and just sits in the middle of our camp. He offers us shillings to stay an extra day. We are trying to figure what's up with that? We decide to get out of camp very early the next morn.

Wednesday 25 August Proper Walk Day 7

We are out of camp by 6:30 and retracing some of our route from yesterday. The Kerio is too flooded to walk down so we head back NW. towards the Ngaleya Lugga. We hit it pretty hard as we need to get some mileage in today. At one point we see a motorcycle with 4 guys on it. Later the bike comes flying by us and a traditional Pokot stool hanging off the side of the bike clips me on the butt. It hurts some and really pisses me off. The guys come back to retrieve their stool. I tell them in Swahili that the stool is now mine and to slow down. They smile, grab the stool and take off.

We really push out the last 4-5 miles. Everyone is completely exhausted. Menno and our other Pokot guide assure me that the Ngaleya Lugga has water and is a good spot to camp. I check with the other walkers who are tired and receive mixed responses as to pushing on. I decide to move on. We somewhat stagger into camp after 22 miles. Camp is at N01*20.960' E035* 45.945. 3,237 ft. in elevation. There is water in the river but it is too scary looking to get into. My knees are aching.

Thursday 26 August Proper Walk Day 8

We are back on the Kapunyany River – walked 15 miles. We walked through Ngoron Village, which is the home of Menno. His 3rd wife and child greet us and we stop to visit with her for a few minutes. Lots of folks follow us through the outskirts of town. We cross and camp on the River – rest, bathe, nap some. A group of Pokot men and women come to dance and sing. All of the camel guys and wazungu join in on the dance. Mwizi – the dog – is very protective of our camp. He is growling and aggressive towards the dogs that have arrived with the Pokot dancers.

Right after the dancing it starts to rain so we tighten up the tent flys and all go to the large kitchen tent to eat dinner – stuffed bell peppers. I head out in the rain to get the GPS device and my journal and notice that David Corrigan's tent fly needs tightening. As I bend down to tighten up I see a scorpion scurrying close to his tent. I smash the scorpion with my shoe. Upon return I tell the group about the scorpion – they all seem to doubt my veracity.

Friday 27 August Proper Walk Day 9

It rained through the night again. I think now we have had 5 out of the 8 nights with rain. It has not rained much during the day but it does rain hard today while we are walking, which make the black cotton soil very slick – it's like ice. David C and I are in the back of the group laughing at our inability to do anything other than shuttle along very slowly. At one point Menno our guide runs by us on the same "ice" where David and I are struggling. He leaves barely a trace of a footprint. DC and I laugh out loud. We stop briefly to consider a camp in the rain but decide to push on, which ends up being a good decision as the rain eventually stops and the sun comes out.

One of the camels takes a spill in the mud and completely covers David C and my packs. This provides a great humor break for all, especially Brian. Pictures of the camel, mud

covered packs and me provide documentation. Amanda – as always – finds a good spot to camp. We quickly set up tents and try to dry out. I take a tool and scrape off the mud from my pack and then wash it off with water, which gets it to an acceptable condition. Camp is at N01*03.445 E035*53.796 elevation at 3,402Ft. We walked 15 miles today.

The camel guys buy a goat. Joshua and David C observe the goat slaughter. Brian, David C and I eat some of the heart, liver, tongue, and brain. The roast goat is delicious.

Saturday 28 August Proper Walk Day 10

Last day of the Proper Walk. Similar to the last 4 Walks -- Day 10 is tough. I think its because everyone feels like its almost over and then you have to walk a long way. We again walk through some very bushy terrain where the camel guys have to cut trees limbs to get the camels through. Lots of stops and goes again and some elevation changes. My legs get scrapped up from the thorns. We end up at a spot called Koseiti which is located at N00*56.710' E035*55.675'. Elevation at 3,429. We walked 12 miles at which point I proclaim that the Proper walk 2010 is done! All hug and celebrate. I am feeling very exhausted and overcome with the emotion of accomplishment. We set up camp and relax. David C and I nap in our tents and wake up to several Pokot watching us.

John Perrett shows up in his truck with ice cold beer, which fulfills David C's wishes. We have a wonderful dinner. Later in the evening Joshua and I play some music around the fire with John, David C and Amanda.

Epilog

Now back in Nairobi at the Kenya Continental Hotel. David and Brian Corrigan split to go to the Mara the day after the Walk ended. Joshua, David B, Winnie and I rode back to NBI with James in the Land Rover. Brooks, Joshua and I are spending 2 days getting our clothes washed and resting. We will be heading up to Nanyuki to visit Peter Wathitu at the Daraja School (formerly the Baraka School) and then over to Ol Maisor to spend two days with Amanda and John.

The 5th edition of the Proper Walk was great – 155 miles in 10 days. It rained a lot – 7 days. We have raised \$60,000 and hope to get to \$80,000 by the end of the year. I need to offer many thanks to Amanda and John Perrett for all their logistical support, participation and friendship. The 2010 Walkers – David and Brian Corrigan, David Brooks, Joshua Dowell and Winnie Barron were all hardy walkers and all had very positive attitudes. There was no drama and no whining (rule #1). This was an easy Walk to lead. Thanks to all of the Walkers!

