

11-FEB-D-1

THE EXPEDITION TO CAR WITH SCOTT DOWNING AND TR TEAM TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS OF CONGOLESE REFUGEES FROM “OUT OF ASSA”

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2 Our overnight unscheduled stop at Werkok MCH as we awaited the permission to fly directly into Zemio from our re-fueling stops in Rumbeck to delay our arrival in CAR

3 Our takeoff day after a full day and two nights in Werkok to start up our delayed mission to Congolese refugees in CAR

4 An incredible stagger start toward CAR, with this text begun in an UDPF camp, as I am hosted by the African force in pursuit of the LRA Joseph Kony in hiding in this tropical bush, as I have had lunch with Comandante Stefano and between an MER-8 and an AN-2—the forty four year old aircraft that is a Soviet era biplane with painted sharks’ teeth as our near comic air carrier by UDPF, a wild ride between light machine guns in pickup truck through red dust roads ending in Naivasha Hotel in Yambio

5 An early start on a longer wait in Yambio at the Naivasha Hotel with the Governor of West Equatoria at breakfast, as we await the UDPF and a flight to Obo where we hope to end up after our three day wait to get into CAR as Jon waits with the Caravan to join us when permits clear

6 Back to the Ugandan UPDF air base at Nzara after a walking tour of the vibrant market of Yambio in awaiting the UPDF Air Force and a potential lift to Obo

7 Another day of waiting as we mobilize early to arrive at Nzara for near-empty UPDF MI-8 chopper flight to Obo air strip and mission station built by Russ Miller, Scott’s father-in-law, as every big organization (UPDF, UN, MSF, CAR government) temporizes as fifth day delay of help to refugees-- all organizations’ constituencies

8 Could it be worse? We get the good news that the CAR President and ministry in Bangui finally give verbal approval to our AIM Air flight into Zemio, but in the aftermath of last week’s elections and an incomplete cabinet appointment, and at work week’s end, no paper is typed and signed permitting our landing in Zemio; we had scrambled to load the plane, and now return for a third night in the Naivasha Hotel and a full week wasted in waiting; I hope to at least launder my clothes, but the hotel has run out of water; we now have to consider aborting the

mission and flying out to Entebbe and a return to Nairobi for our international connections to Chad and to USA

9 Can you believe? We are on safari! In Masai Mara! Flying in and immediately doing a game drive with Wesley, spotting elephants, Nyati, Topi and a myriad of antelope before returning to Kichwa Tembo Lodge for elegant dinner and a night drive among hippos along the Mara river—with more and better to come!

10 An incredible day of safari and flight seeing, with an early morning game drive with Wesley as our Land Rover driver, as we spot many lions, a cheetah and leopard kill of big impala ram, as lion drags zebra carcass to shade, then spot the Mara River crossing with well-fed crocodiles from the wildebeest crossings, and all the giraffes, Nyati and birdlife, before lunch at Kichwa Tembo Masai Mara; then takeoff by Caravan Cessna 208 to Nakuru in the Rift Valley to be charged by a black rhino and photo the white rhinos and millions of flamingoes and pelicans, and an evening in Savoro Lion Hill Lodge before turning in after elegant dinner and cultural dance show to prepare for our am game drive and return to Nairobi tomorrow

11 Awakening in Savoro Lion Hill Lodge overlooking Lake Nakuru, we launch our day with a full game drive with our driver Timothy, a swim in the pool surrounded by tropical birdlife, before our return trip to Nairobi and Mayfield guest house to complete our long AIM Air African Safari on natural history high notes after disappointment on the Congolese/CAR entry to help the Assa refugees, which followed the highly successful South Sudan missions in each venue and hoped for optimistic expectations: we fly from Nakuru to Wilson and meet connections at Mayfield Guest House

12 Follow-up notes from our concluding mission on the field from Sudan to Kenya to Ethiopia upon return

13 A final day in Nairobi to accomplish our wrap up with the preceding closing message from the South Sudan field (11-FEB-D-12) as we begin our long way back to Washington via Addis Ababa (Rome) to IAD

11-FEB-D-2

**OUR OVERNIGHT UNSCHEDULED STOP AT WERKOK MCH AS WE
AWAITED THE PERMISSION TO FLY DIRECTLY INTO ZEMIO FROM
OUR RE-FUELING STOPS IN RUMBECK TO DELAY OUR ARRIVAL IN
CAR**

FEBRUARY 22, 2011

Good morning from the familiar and comfortable setting of MCH in Werkok! We slept out in the open in our bug tents, after going to the local Werkok pond, where the “Jesus Film” was shown. This is a two hour film on DVD’s that had been dubbed into lip synch in one thousand of the world’s seven thousand languages. This one was in Dinka of the Bor variety, and there are several other Dinka dialects in which the movie has been dubbed as well. I took a couple of pictures of the crowd watching the film, based in the book of Luke with direct from the Scriptures. The movie stopped with pixelated break up periodically, but no one left as they all watched patiently as they made an effort to go through the story again from the front and fast forwarded to the act point of breakup.

We may have a bit more leisure than we would like for a slow morning start. The sat phone to CAR tells us the several people, including the British High Commissioner in the capital of Bangui are all working on our permit to land directly in Zemio, but the capital is two more time zones west and another number that counts is three thousand dollars more for our trip. It is going to be prohibitively expensive and time consuming to have to fly to Bangui to reverse to Zemio, which is what everyone else must do. Because of Wendy Atkins continued efforts, AIM Air is the one and only group to have permission to fly directly into Zemio, but that permit is good for only six months and needs renewing each six month interval. IT turns out that this was just a week ago, and now it is found out that the permit states what the CAR president has decreed—all incoming flights must come through the capital, and this “oversight” is the problem. So we have sent out a message which will have to go all the way to the CAR president this morning, and they are two hours later than we are. Conceivably, we could take off and start moving westward toward the Bangui capital, but divert to Zemio if the permission comes through. But, this would set a precedent for further AIM Air flights in which in the future all will be told—“See? You came through the capital as everyone else must! So from now on everyone will do just what everyone is required to do in the first instance!”

So, we are sipping coffee at too much leisure with the probability that we may have to go three thousand further dollars out of the way as flies are buzzing in our eyes. Meanwhile we are hearing stories of Chad and disasters I which most people there have been growing millet for

generations, but in the “Swamp” where Scott Downing lives at Am Timan –the staple of the food source. But, for four years the rains have failed. They then switched to corn and then the rains returned as normal and 100% of the corn crop was lost in a disaster of large financial and nutritional terms. I heard that the big park to the east of AM Timan is now given over to the South Africans for preservation of the wildlife and the minimal development of some accommodations. I am eager to get in there ever since Scott and Suze and family were the hosts for the NGS team which came into see “the largest and best kept isolated preserve of the original African wildlife left.” That had been formerly said of Ndoki in the CAR but is now likely to change since the poaching and predation by the LRA and other rebel groups who have camped out in the “preserve.””

We talked of the experience of Fred Mihm the UCSF anesthesiologist who was going to accompany me into AM Timan last trip three years ago as Chad blew up when the rebels took over the capital. He found himself hiding under school desks as the bombs went off in the capital before he was evacuated by French paratroopers and brought to Gabon before leaving Africa. I believe that was enough excitement for him on his first trip to Africa to hold him through the suspended plans of his next trips.

Gastone has been sent up to Ahti after five years at AmTiman so his rotation by the government is up. They have had fewer problems with the “strikes” that had paralyzed all government activities including the hospitals when I was there last time. The rebel forces have been coopted by being brought into the army, and the other parts of the opposition are going to field a candidate for the presidential elections next April but no one knows their names, so Isidry is likely to stay in power, with the military expansion he has purchased with the new oil wealth coming into Chad.

We are waiting a long time with no news as we expect Ajak to return from Bor about now probably just to say goodbye, and we will have to make a decision before noon on when to leave if we are going to be able to arrive into CAR—even though the sun will set later as we move westward. It is the little items like this glitch that can idle whole teams on the ground at some expense and foregone opportunity. But this allowed us a chance to speak to Tim Williams, the all-volunteer PCC Sudan Board Member of a group of 70 year olds who are trying to seek out an “ownership” of the MCH mission that can keep it going after US support is phased out for it to be supportable into a self-sustaining future. That is the component piece that seems to be available up front for the PiBor and network concept of a net that might be owned and operated locally, so that we are not constructing “ruins” in a distant place with no control on what happens to the product of all the good will and efforts of the donors.

Josh has improved and even ate a couple of pancakes for breakfast. We sat in the morning devotions and day planning session with the MCH team as they have all gone back to work and we are still sipping lemonade we have made from the powdered drink mix. We are burning up some productive time in what has been likely to be our highest surgical volume

component of the trip so far, and it may cut in to our plans of over flight of Assa and any “flightseeing” we might have tried along the way—such as the White Eared Kob Dry Season range and the Jonglei Canal remnant’s and the world’s largest digger. We have possibly been able to send out a series of emails with attachments of the PiBor Mission, and the hopes and plans for the next steps. We are now over two thirds through the African component parts of our Circumnavigation mission and it seems that all aspects of both Asian and African missions have gone well beyond even the high expectations that preceded our arrival. We will now try to “hit two more out of the park” on the next sequence in CAR---when, and if, we are allowed to takeoff for the CAR.

EX AFRIQUE SEMPRE VENI ALIQUID NOVI

The news is, we are here—in Werkok—in MCH—with bags packed and in the plane. This is Africa. There are in excess of eighty some cases listed for us to operate in Zemio and Obo in CAR. But a glitch involving a small phrase on a single sheet of *pro forma* letterhead renews the permit for AIM Air to land in CAR, but *only through the entrepot of the capital Bangui*, same as everyone else. There has been an exemption for AIM Air alone to go directly into Zemio after eth good work Wendy Atkins has been doing there, and the twice annual renewal reverted to the prior boiler plate of the president’s liking to get all air arrivals to enter through the capital where he has better control of their comings and goings. We may actually have to do that ourselves if the meeting which is supposed to convene today to get our exemption from this ruling is not here by tomorrow morning (they have a much longer business day than we since they are two time zones further west. They are not only about two time zones, but about five hundred miles in each direction from where we need to be and that translates to over a three thousand dollar surcharge and a half a day of lost productivity—like this one here on the ground in Werkok. But it may be bad for AIM Air for us to accede to their SOP, since the net request to land in Zemio might be greeted by the response to this precedent—“Why, you always fly in through the Capital Bangui as you did with the group on the last visit.”

We had thought that since circumstances change dramatically in this area of the world, we are now in a position to call either Old Fangak where Jill was insistent that we NOT visit this year since she wanted to have all the boats space that she had held onto in Old Fangak to escape to the other side of the river in response to the expected referendum violence. We could also go to visit Akobo where Michael Puit was supposed to be here with us in Werkok, but first had said he was the only one who could cover the emergencies at Akobo and second that he was then trapped by the Nuer Murle violence that happened earlier I our stay at Werkok. As quickly as it comes, it goes, since Rev. Oruzu had told me yesterday that the full truck of people an supplies had gone into Akobo last week and had no trouble. That means everyone is on edge since it is an on-again/off-again sequence of violence that appears almost random, and that is the remarkable thing about the Murle foreswearing violence with the Dinka Bor since our last year’s visit.

The word now is that we will continue to wait here in Werkok until tomorrow morning, and if there is no word from either Akobo or old Fangak (each of which are out of our way and will entail many extra miles and charges) we will get prepared for takeoff tomorrow morning now after another overnight in Werkok. Besides the meeting at presidential level which is likely to happen later today –too late for us to act upon it and get a chance to take off and land in daylight—there should be a separate meeting on AIM Air’s part as to whether they want us even at a surcharge we may be willing to pay to fly to Bangui which may set a precedent for all future flights into Zemio being routed through the capital of Bangui. We will know all of these returns by tomorrow morning.

Meanwhile, I had a chance to see part of the email traffic, replying to very little of it, but also seeing the blog of posts that Brittany has been putting up along with about six photos per posting which means that there are over two hundred photos of us in action on the TR web site including a blog form my running reports at www.teamrubiconusa.org. So, if any postings were missed or scrambled in their transmission from somewhat dicey connections, they might be reviewed on the TR blog site. It seems to be quite active, since as of this morning when a posting went up in thirteen minutes, there were eighteen responses that had contacted the blog site manager so apparently, our progress is being closely monitored.

I had got up early but not run since I did not want to miss the call to be ready to roll. Now it seems I might have been able to run and take the day off in many other activities as well other than standing by for an any minute call to move out. I should have been charged up and ready to roll as well as doing whatever would be useful here. We could be taking care of patients either here or anywhere along the “network” I had described as useful for the cause. But the parking of all this talent and assets on the ground including our own captive pilot and aircraft is too precious a resource to be left cooling its heels (or overheating its wings) on the duty baking of the airstrip, guarded by a patrol of small boys.

We are in a good place to be waiting, if any place is good to wait, and I am able to suck up about four liters of water each day without felling light headed as almost all of us are peeing little and once a day at most. It is really hot, and it is the kind of heat that has a humidity of about ten percent or less. I stepped into the shower, carrying my shirt to use as a towel, but never used it. The “sublimation” of any water happens about as fast as it did at PiBor following the “Waymool” which brought Saharan sand updrafting into the atmosphere to precipitate as an improbable roaring thunderstorm making an awesome tattoo on the pan roof of SALT at PiBor. John Sutter had posted a brief blurb after reading mine giving his impressions of the weather phenomenon that had so freaked out the team on that hot miserable dry night. Brittany had prayed for a breeze---and she reaped the whirlwind!

I am sitting now in the stupor of afternoon heat after having swapped stories with Jon Hildebrandt and with Tim Williams (like any good Dinka Bor around here, he has checked after the Calvin J-Series Lecture and is quite sure that we are related since one of his relatives, --his

grandfather's --Horton Mills--, and it was his sister that married a Geelhoed and subsequently lived in the Detroit side of Michigan. We have just reviewed addresses and I told him I lived in a tukul at 492 Hall Street and 1324 Fuller Ave SE before I moved to N Shiawassee Dr. SE. As a retired GR Police officer he knows each of the streets and houses, so it is exactly like comparing tukuls among the Dinka Bor. He learned all that from an aunt who furnished him this genealogic link after the Calvin J-Series Lecture raised the name to some prominence for connections to be made. Then I have caught up with Scott and current events in Chad. He is also seeking to get an MRI and had looked into getting one done in Entebbe while he was on the election weekend layover. He might have got it done for an MRI which had been arranged by phone to check in follow up on his cervical disc resection from the time he was trying to toss a spare tire on top of the Toyota Land Cruiser subsequently stolen by the rebels when they sacked Am Timan. HE had carried cash but needed to get an ATM to furnish him with the \$300 for the MRI and there were red flags all over the use of his card signaling that suspicious activity was being watched on attempts to access his account in Uganda!

It may be frustrating to have the team idled here for a single clause on a renewal letter, but it is a better place than most to be stranded, and it was a good thing that we had stopped for a day for Josh to take a day off after being our first casualty to GI Distress which has laid him low. Now he will be up to full strength when we get this bus in the air and start up for real. Also, I learned that the Covidien (the renamed Valley Surgical Labs) electrosurgery unit I had secured for AmTiman along with the Microscope was not being used since it was missing a grounding pad. That is tens of thousands of dollars of unusable great technology going begging for a few dollars in disposable but infinitely reusable grounding pads which are present in our container of supplies. We will try to find a few and send them back with Scott along with the presents for Scott carried 'Round the Globe to be on their way to Chad. He will be going back home to Chad and then after a week going to a cultural training program that was scheduled formerly in Turkey and now is re-sited in Budapest. So, we are all in an unusual interlude of leisure here with a lot of heavy forward progress on either side. We will get out some Chicken Soup for Josh's gut and for the Souls of the rest of us, and turn in early to prepare to fly in the morning—to a destination as yet unknown, by a route as yet to be determined. That is the beauty of a chartered aircraft at our disposal—"Now just where is it you folks would like to go?"

One of our interesting things happening on the runway yesterday on takeoff from PiBor was a man coming on the run as we were taxiing. He flagged us down in a long flowing robe and was that only obese man we have seen in this part of South Sudan and specifically the ONLY one in PiBor. We thought he might be some kind of government official announcing a new set of clearance papers we might need to file. He announced to us as we slowed down in an Arabic flavored accent "I want to go to Juba!" "We are not going to Juba" responded Jon and with our load already obviously quite at max, we started our takeoff roll.

On arrival in Bor on the good airstrip improved by the UN there, I saw a blur from one side of the run way on final touchdown, and a dik dik ran across in front of us clearing us by a safe margin. A pygmy antelope had cleared the bush on one side of the runway and had made it to the other faster than the final approach of a caravan Cessna 208. I am very glad he made it!

11-FEB-D-3

**OUR TAKEOFF DAY AFTER A FULL DAY AND TWO NIGHTS IN
WERKOK TO START UP OUR DELAYED MISSION TO CONGOLESE
REFUGEES IN CAR**

February 23, 2011

We are still at Werkok. The plan is to take off and get closer to CAR and gather up the calls and permits the closer we get to the border, but awaiting the contacts that have been made with multiple sources to clear the logjam on his ridiculously small glitch.

Two major events happened on our departure plans as we waited: one was the final tutorial and the wrap us session at Werkok led in all the important points by the Sudanese. The second was the vitriolic post to the TR Blog of a poison pen note accusing TR of being a crazy Paramilitary group of the Christina Right which was messing around in an area in which it had no business since a very well established and big NGO had already set up for many years that area and had those problems exclusively under its control. It was written by an MSF sympathizer who was obviously stung by the small and agile group coming in and rendering services for which there was a great need while a large and well-funded and supplied agony had done little detectable services for the Murle people in het assessment of those most closely able to judge that—the Murle health officers and representatives of the people themselves.

As an organization to “bear witness” the MSF had obviously been stung by our arrival at the request of the Murle community since they had great needs which were not being addressed. In the opinion of the District Commissioners, two paramount chiefs, seventy eight sub prefecture chiefs and the County Health officer Juono and most of all the Murle SALT community leader Bishop Oruzu had called upon me to help address unmet health needs, and even pledged to forgo valence and abstain from retaliation if they could get some hope of health care where none was apparent to them. These direct quotes from those closest on the ground may have been the greatest stinging rebuke to the complacency of the MSF which has the Murle and the matter of their health care under control, especially since they were evacuating all emergency cases to Juba r to Bor for management. This might even fly if it were not for the fact that I have seen the Bor facilities, and know that they are less well equipped than any other to handle the kinds of emergency surgical aid that MSF alleges to deliver by transfer of patients to them. Just how apparent this is to those in the community was made even more appetent late when the report from Dr. Ajak, and the Director of the Bor Hospital and the Governor whom he reported are very grateful for the arrival of our container and are coming in a body on Thursday to MCH to claim a donation since *Bor Hospital has no sutures!* This is the *referral center* to which MSF transfers

all patients needing operation! And this is the only service they can render since MSF leadership declines to allow any operations inside its rather commodious facilities and denies the opportunity of its very egger personnel to come to our group for such training. They have discharged their responsibilities with a claim that they have a limited mission and serve the people here within strictly narrow limits, which have been invisible to the leaders of the Murle which I have just cited. Rather than get angry at the Murle for blowing their cover, they have sent an inflammatory post to TR as the small and agile group who has actually come in to deliver services and also bear witness that this “”emperor has no clothes.” This must have stung all the way through Juba to Brussels and the exclusive right to cover and care for the people within this mandate and they have been identified as not addressing the needs of the Murle—even those they claim to be doing. Public health as in TB and STD’s and antenatal care are all community needs we found that have no resources among those we have treated. The chief of the PiBor County Health Department Juonon quoted as saying the needed services for the people within his official responsibilities are negligibly addressed by the large presence of MSF here. I was not the one to discover that—Rev Oruzu and the indigenous authorities were. But it is more politic to identify the small TR group as the party to attack rather than their alleged constituency.

A debate within our group was entered as to whether we should attempt to refute the arguments against us and our observations or to let the quoted testimony of the local authorities speak for themselves and have the MSF or UN show evidence otherwise than the representations to the outside world that they are addressing the needs of the Murle and indigenizing the care of the community which will be taking over from them when they pull out through training and equipping them—when no Sudanese are willing to go there, there are no Murle staff, and not only were we not allowed to use the facilities and help them in it, but the MMSF Country Director in Juba refused to allow any MSF personnel to participate in our tutorials or training even if it were done on our own and they were egger to do so from the MSF field personnel. No wonder the MSF directorship is upset. THEIR tightly controlled story about evacuating all emergencies for surgical care in Bor is a charade we are in a better position than they to see through since no one so “transported” has a chance of any treatment. This is simple denial of services, and especially those most urgently needed.

**DR. AJAK’S ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM BOR MEETINGS, THE
AMAZING PROGRESS IN PIBOR MURLE COLLABORATION
ALREADY AND THE ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE MCH
PERFORMANCE**

The final tutorial was led by Dr. Ajak and was an all Sudanese teaching Sudanese event except for a brief review by me of amblyopia in childhood to identify the “Squint” before the child is a toddler and using “occlusion” of the dominant eye” to strengthen the extra-ocular muscles of the lazy eye in order that the cortical suppressions of all images from that eye does

not lead to cortical blindness of a perfectly good eye which would occur by the age of ten and there would be no recovery of the blind eye

Then Dr. Ajak took over for the final report. Amazingly, he had purchased and packaged for delivery to the Murle the requested microscope so that their lab man can make the diagnoses of malaria and other tropical parasitic diseases. Just like that. A year of requesting and waiting was concluded in today's visit by answering this need, furnishing them the same kind of microscope and instructions as MCH has with its own lab man Simon. Second, they had requested a special vehicle with 4WD which was made available to them today. Third, the Jonglei MOH said it was not within his purview to furnish the transportation of the fifteen patients for operations we had aligned for MCH from PiBor but he would see that the Jonglei State ministry DID carry out the transport and carry down the fifteen patients and the three trainees as well as return with the patients after they have been operated in MCH and also carried back with the allocations of the resources for PiBor from the container.

That means that the collaboration is already underway and that the patients promised operations will really be done within the next weeks and the training will start then as well. The Minister of Health and Governor of Jonglei who apologized for missing our planned meeting when we went to the leprosy colony after he was detained, as well as the Medical Director of Bor Hospital thanked us sincerely for the training but above all the container and said they would be coming by to collect what they wanted most from the container which they said was the suture since *Bor Hospital had no suture!* Recall that this is the evacuation site to which all surgical emergencies are allegedly transferred by MSF—a charade at best on each end. I was wary of this since other donations seem to have “gone missing” into Bor and about \$135,000 in sutures is packed in the MCH store room and I do not wish to have very much of it sent to Bor as it seems much winds up in a black market as other materials have in the multiply arranged renovations of that facility which has never changed since the bombs that were dropped on it. So, an accounting will be kept of what they receive and what they use and how. No more will ever be given to them if they disappear without an accounting.

Dr. Ajak then gave the annual report of MCH which was an unusual year curtailed by the heavy rainy season that left the whole area flooded for five months. Ordinarily they would have seen 9,000 to 12,000 patients in a year, but it was down to 5,812 this year because no one could get to it during the rainy season. But among those patients were some highly unusual ones. First they made 31 deliveries, including triplets, diagnosed by the InterSon scan and one of them survived delivery. That is about a delivery every other week, and 110 operations, about two per week. One was a man in extremis with a retroperitoneal abscess which was drained under spinal anesthesia for a complete recovery

Outpatient DIAGNOSES IN ORDER OF FREQUENCY WERE:

1 Malaria

2 Acute Respiratory diseases

3 Diarrheas

4 Parasites

13 patients were HIV + of those slightly more who were tested. 5,732 lab tests were done since Simon arrived in February: 125 typhoid, 370 brucellosis, 61 giardiasis, 1,385 of the lab tests were positive.

There is NO nurse and NO midwife.

The referendum occurred—peacefully—and 98.83 % of South Sudanese voted for separation and secession against the Unity government.

I congratulated Dr. Ajak for not only the clinical care but also for the training leadership in the future CME in which I will be successively less involved. And Jacob and Ajak are together the leaders of the new initiatives to incorporate the Murle of PiBor and the Akobo hospital in their plans for help

MY ANTHROPOLOGIC NOTE ABOUT THE DIVISIONS AMONG THE SOUTH SUDANESE AND THE PEOPLE TO WHOM WE GO NEXT

Ethnicities I South Sudan:

- 1 Nilotic---Dinka, Nuer
- 2 Nilo-Hamitic---Murle
- 3 Sudanic--Azande

11-FEB-D-4

**AN INCREDIBLE STAGGER START TOWARD CAR, WITH THIS TEXT
BEGUN IN AN UDPF CAMP, AS I AM HOSTD BY THE AFRICAN
FORCE IN PURSUIT OF THE LRA JOSEPH KONY IN HIDING IN THIS
TROPICAL BUSH, AS I HAVE HAD LUNCH WITH COMANDANTE
STEFANO AND BETWEEN AN MER-8 AND AN AN-2—THE FORTY
FOUR YEAR OLD AIRCRAFT THAT IS A SOVIET ERA BIPLANE WITH
PAINTED SHARKS' TEETH AS OUR NEAR COMIC AIR CARRIER BY
UNDF, A WILD RIDE BETWEEN LIGHT MACHINE GUNS IN PICKUP
TRUCK THROUGH RED DUST ROADS ENDING IN NAIVASHA HOTEL
IN YAMBIO**

February 23, 2011

No one would believe where we are and what we are doing just now; I am in a tent in the military camp as a guest of Commandante Stefano—a burly fellow who is the chief of the camp here set up to pursue the Number One Bad Guy in all Africa—Joseph Kony—hiding out in the tropical bush all around us here in which his scattered guerillas are allegedly on their way to Darfur to join the forces of the GOS—an unusual alliance for a fellow who is claiming to be Messianic. The large unique vehicle that just rolled up is a Military mule with a machine mount on the top. The solders have all saluted us as they went out to set up a large tent next to the airstrip. It is an unusual setting for a lunch offered by the Commandant, who offers us tinned Argentina Corned Beef and tins of dried biscuits with bottled water. As we are here “our chariot awaits!” The options for aircraft? A forty four year old Soviet era Antonov AN-2 (fourteen generations before the current AN-16) and maintained by the Ugandan Air Force and flown by Ukrainians and registered in the Lithuania that gives its number “LY-12” for Lithuania.

Our alternative aircraft may be a large Soviet MER-8 helicopter. It just rolled up in a cloud of dust. The third—and it appears to be least likely—is our own 5Y-PAP (A Kenya registry) Caravan owned by AIM Air which so far has not received the clearance to land I Zemio, the small glitch in a single letter that has kept us two days and nights on the ground in Werkok and now has had us waiting in Rumbeck for hours, and now all afternoon in a border town air strip further west than Jon Hildebrandt has been so he is in unfamiliar country also, as we edge out of the barren Saharan sands of the Nile River floodplain, we are edging on into the rainforest of the Central Africa—the terrain I know of CAR and DRC and The Sudanese border—the territory for which Commandant Stefano is responsible. He said to us he knew a “church woman” once in Zemio, he was not sure whether Catholic or Protestant, but her name was..... I

asked “Did she ride around on a motorbike?” Yes, Wendy Atkins! Oh, tell her from me that her friend Stefano is wishing her well!

It is also the case that we have used up most of the batteries of most of the cell phones and sat phones is that all contacts have been used. The one man who might be most helpful is Ron Miller, Suze’s brother and the brother-in-law of Scott. Ron Miller went to school in RVA with both Jon and Scott and then was head of the US Army Africom at Kigali Rwanda who had organized sending the Rwandan Army up to Darfur. We have several phone numbers for Ron and have tried all of them and not yet connected since he seems to be on holiday. We have all the US State Department and US Marines contacts in Zemio and in Entebbe and in other places all of which are putting pressure on the three sources that can get us moving again—at Bangui in CAR capital where the cabinet meeting with the president of CAR in session is awaiting the clearance pears to be forwarded to us.

Next is the pressure on the UNDF through Africom to carry us in to Obo where Ambroise –our clinical officer who was moved for our first three days of operation, now as two full days have been used up sitting and waiting for clearances despite our visas for each person in CAR while the aircraft is not yet cleared. And then we are waiting on the Zemio contacts all of whom are absent. But we have talked with Suze to get to her brother; we have called Will McNulty to rally his US Marines and eh US State Department to get the medial team back to work. It is a shame to have all the equipment and personnel here on the runway in an aircraft that cannot be moved for a slip of paper and on the other side 82 cases who were preselected, and the personnel already in position to be trained by their absent leadership who are parked along the border watching Al Jazeera n the Commandant’s tent as an earthquake devastates New Zealand with over 75 deaths, as Libya explodes after the Tunisia/Egypt/Bahrain/Yemen and all other Arabic states are trying to prevent an overthrow by violent repression—can you believe/condemned as anti-democratic by Iran’s President Adanemajab. He is on laughing gas as he is condemning Miramar Qhadafi for the murder of his people which he had done just before. But, the world is upside down, and today I have lots of proof.

WESTWARD HO, HO HO, THROUGH RUMBECK TO NZARA

Our progress—or lack of it—can be marked by takeoffs and landings so far today to bring us to a Ugandan army camp for our latest wait and watch. We had breakfast and a testimonial sendoff from Werkok and MCH this morning, despite the lack of the final clearances as we hoped to get more information closer to each source—like the control “towers” often no more than a hand held cell phone by an army officer from some other nations (Kenyan Air Force, or Ugandan special Defense Force, or CAR defenses) So we left from WERK=06* 20.02N, and 031* 33.44E. Our sendoff was a valedictory as I encouraged them to continue the network of aid to the other tribes of their rivals and include PiBor and Akobo as well as the other sites where I have worked in South Sudan. As reported in the 11-FEB-D-3, Dr. Ajak had gone to see the Commissioners and Director as well as the Governor in Bor the day before and they all

expressed gratitude for the container that had been delivered to MCH and they wanted to come in and claim their share. What is it that the “referral center” to which MSF evacuates its “emergency cases” needs most? They have NO SUTURES! So this is the place that is going to be doing the operating according to the MSF mandate. I made sure that not ALL of those sutures which came from my basement were given over to Bor hospital since it would simply be throwing kerosene on the fire of corruption to have high value items added to their stock which has all vanished before. Then came the big event of the evening when a poison blog arrived on the TR site saying that the crazy group of a Christian Paramilitary band had disparaged the only people who knew what was going on and the only groups really helping the people—MSF and the UN—each of which were reported by the people who most know “They have done nothing to help our people and we expect them to be expelled without a trace of loss to us.” But our proudest moments were the last tutorials, which were 100% Sudanese teaching Sudanese, as 28 of the 32 topics we have recycled each year I have been here. It is not quite true that 100% were Sudanese input last night since I did warn them to find all the young children with “amblyopia” (“lazy eye” or “squint”) so that they would get cortical blindness to prevent a lifetime of diplopia (double vision.) We were congratulating both Dr. Ajak for the CME program he would delegate to all Sudanese next time and would take over the training of Elijah and the other trainees from PiBor here at MCH when *I will not even be here as they are being trained!*

Off we flew with all of them hoping for next year’s schedule to reach a new plain at a higher level. We flew west, across the large green oxbows of the Nile, the only giver of life in this otherwise barren land. It had also given death as it flooded everything during the last extreme rainy season. That which is remaining in the floodplain is the fertility that might support the Sudanese and much of Africa if they can only break their fixation on the cattle culture which has a worship of cattle as its focus and the reason it goes to war on a regular basis.

We flew an hour to Rumbeck, the capital of the Lakes District—puddles of the flooded Nile. RUMB= 06° 49.86 N and 029° 40.37 E. This is a time warp. It is like Loki II. It is a UN base which was the capital of all GOSS during the long period in which the GOS occupied Juba. The UN bulldozed main thoroughfares and re-enforced a good airstrip. They even built a control tower. We pulled up next to Three MER-8 Soviet helicopters wearing UN colors and next to a large WFP tent city with food sacks piled up high in tents. They did not want photos taken in the airport, but I did some from the hip shots. There is a “Rapid Impact Emergency program VIP Toilet” in the air strip with the price tag of it: \$40,000 US and next to it is another with the price tag was \$6,100 US which was the price for the rehabilitation of the VIP toilet just six months later when it was so trashed as to be unusable.

We were sitting in the shade, as two vehicles rolled in—a shiny white new Mercedes SUV, and then a Lexus from this year as an SUV—a \$100,000 car in America, and being driven by the profiteers off the UN largesse. The single source of excessive income in the Rumbeck airport is of course the UN and to prove that a DASH 8 came out of the sky marked WFP and

several well-dressed French speaking people came out of the plane to be driven away in the luxury vehicles. A lot of people are doing VERY WELL by DOING WELL. Even the guards here got international salaries of over a hundred dollars a day. When the war stopped the salaries dropped off and the Sudanese refused to work for anything less than what they had got before, so they brought in Kenyans for \$30 per day, which was still ten times higher than they could get at Kenya and they effectively “exported the salaries.” There are a lot of people involved in “Infrastructure Overhead—like that VIP toilet. Many people are living luxuriously off the miseries of the world and have every good reason to see it continue.

Off we go toward the edge of the forest and head into the landing strip of NZARA—familiar to both Scott and me as the name of the Swamp where we hunted outside Assa= ZARA. We made contact only when we were within ten miles of the hand held phone that the Ugandan military allowed us to land at NZARA. NZARA= 04* 38.02 N and 020* 16.20 E. And now we are here, watching Al Jazeera about Arabic repressive nation’s revolts as the group here is helping us get to the poor people suppressed by the LRA for which this military is armed, locked and loaded.

A WILD RIDE BETWEEN LIGHT MACHINE GUNS IN PICKUP TRUCK THROUGH RED DUST ROADS ENDING IN NAIVASHA HOTEL IN YAMBIO

Incredible! I have just arrived with the “Barbarossa” in a burgeoning border town capital of West Equatoria named Yambio. The ride we got came after a couple of hours waiting for the results of a meeting between the aforementioned British High Commissioner in Bangui CAR who finally caught up with the President of CAR to ask for permissions for our landings and he went to consult with his advisors. So, with little time before sunset, we decided to take advantage of our offer from Isaac Mwira the Ugandan executive officer who has taken Africom courses in Entebbe and is pro-America since the USA is eager to get Joseph Kony (see “The Sorcerer of the Nile”) and will not put “boots on the ground” but has arranged for PAI a State Department contract group to do all logistics to support this mission. For the one year of their encampment here at Nzara, there has been no acidity of the LRA here, but there are still small groups of the scatter LRA who are marauding as they had in Assa, and they are still on the hunt and detailed on a full-out mission to get him. Africom trailed twelve Guatemalan commandoes to go in and get him and none of them survived, which added to his Messianic credentials.

We got a pickup truck and a ride to Yambio—and what a ride!

I was in back between Ishmael and Ahton, each armed with 7.62 light machine guns with two hundred round drums. I hung on as I got pounded down the road and had to hang on over each big bump lest I be launched out of the pickup bed. A source of great mirth when we stopped I Yambio to check into the Naivasha Hotel was that I was completely covered in red dust, especially the red beard which Brittany could not stop laughing about.

YAMB=04* 35.35 N and 020* 23.95 E at elevation 2,220 feet at the Naivashu hotel.

SO, I got a dunking in the cold water shower before we had a Bell's lager and came to the Peace Bar and Restaurant for dinner. We watched as several big white SUV's rolled up and two officers with a variety of uniforms, but all carrying Czech SKS (the knock off of the AK 47's) hopped out with some fat cat who also emerged—a total of three such vehicles each populated by the single Big Man and a pair of motley armed men, to be the only ones other than us who are in the Naivashu Hotel. Remy and Elise, the bar and restaurant girls took care of us with a chicken and chips dinner, the fries being dunked in palm oil for that extra yellow look.

As we sat, the sun went down and a large grass fire was seen beyond the walls as the generator came on. I can see all around us at this 2200 feet elevation which keeps it from being as insufferably hot as it promises to be tomorrow if and when we get to Obo, most likely on the Russian Mer-8 chopper as Jon H stays with the Caravan and follows to pick us up when the delayed permission is finally granted. This has been a long and wasteful delay on the way to do a list of patents that has no doubt grown from when I knew it was 82 hernias for repair. Ambrose, our CO trainee had gone by road to Obo and was waiting for the past several days, and we have not been able to get a message to Wendy Atkins or to any other on the ground source to let them know about the trivial interruption in our forward progress, but this would already be apparent to them as they live in Africa.

I am now if not cool and clean (neither) at least not covered in red dust from the pickup truck ride on the dust road at the washboard eject speeds from Nzara to Yambio, and will next try to let you know if our Ugandan friends have arranged to fly us in to Obo by whatever means AN-2 or MER -8, either of which will be an exotic experience. As Josh Webster said to me today as he was hanging on to the speeding pickup truck bed lurching between light machine guns and a full stalk of bananas, "I wanted to say to you sooner or later, but I have always wanted to come to Africa and you have provided one hell of a ride!"

11-FEB-D-5

AN EARLY START ON A LONGER WAIT IN YAMBIO AT THE NAIVASHA HOTEL WITH THE GOVERNOR OF WEST EQUATORIA AT BREAKFAST, AS WE AWAIT THE UDPF AND A FLIGHT TO OBO WHERE WE HOPE TO END UP AFTER OUR THREE DAY WAIT TO GET INTO CAR AS JON WAITS WITH THE CARAVAN TO JOIN US WHEN PERMITS CLEAR

February 24, 2011

It is fairly far into the week of what we had hoped to be two sites of work in CAR as we left PiBor on Monday and it is already thursday as we have migrated slowly toward the CAR which has been our target for the patients with whom our CO-trainee Ambroise is waiting in Obo. Last night, there was the connection finally made to Ron Miller who was in a "Security 'Close'" for the last three days we had tried to reach him. I am familiar with this system as I was in the "Close" for a week at Massachusetts at MITRE when the DDirector Of national Intelligence had a month of conferencing with me there. I heard that he was simply making the phone call to the UDPF command in Kampala which ordered us to be taken on the MER-8 Soviet era chopper to Obo as soon as it flies, which I now learn will be this afternoon. That still leaves unresolved the matter of the airplane, with Jon Hildebrandt on the ground with the aircraft, which is both secure and also without fees since it is in a military base at Nzara, where the UDPF has now an even greater reason to cooperate with us, beyond Isaac Mwira's personal inclination. If orders from HQ were not enough, we had also invited them to come to us at the Naivasha Hotel last night. I was not out and about when they did so, since I was struggling with the laptop that had caused the entire product of my evening to go poof, which was then re-done in its entirety if not a cheerful repetition. They took full advantage of the open bar we had invited them to so that the amount of Bell's Lager comes up to almost the same as our hotel stay in several rooms. But, they will be picking us up in the same military pickup trucks later toward noon, for the same high speed rush down the wash board roads.

I wandered about before anyone got out of bed and saw the usual scene of African women bending over at more than 90° from the waist, sweeping out the dust of the air compound with a short broom made of a bundle of twigs. I just thought that it most closely resembles the broom that is the 'motorbike equivalent' for Harry Potter as the twin grandsons are riding it around the house in their "stupefying" contests they have absorbed from the Harry Potter DVD. As I watch them in their classic African boy form—e. g. our waitress Remy has the steatopygia and

breast accumulations of body fat leaving the rest of her lean frame free of any insulating body fat so that they can tolerate the high temperature baking that occurs each day at this time in the tropical dry season. The people here are adapted to this environment. And in Yambio at 686 meters elevation, there is also a bit of relief despite the 4* North latitude making us as close to Equatorial as we can get in a state named West Equatoria. We will not have the advantage of that bit of altitude when we arrive in Obo where it will be beastly hot from the moment of our arrival at a lower altitude in the same Equatorial climate. There are big trees in an amazing variety around me including very big and impressive mangoes. The mangoes are seen to be in two halves, since this is a “monoecious” tree—that is, both sexes are living “in the same house.” The female side of the tree may be in full flower as the male side of the tree is dormant, since they are out of phase so as not to self-fertilize. So the big trees are abundant in their species and varieties, but even the common mangoes are in different phases of their reproductive cycle, a perpetual harvest time of fruit bearing on the Equator.

We “broke bread with the Governors” this morning. THE only other guests in the Naivasha Hotel are the “Big Men” I had referred to in Feb-D-4—i. e. the corpulent elders who are wearing suits and ties in his tropical heat who came in with their white SUV’s and A/C. This morning, they are again dressed in a full business suit as we are a ragtag team already hot in the tropical weight shorts and tee shirts. They are coming to breakfast as the only others to have bread and jam and “chai” with a hard boiled egg which is our breakfast. It turns out that these are the two Governors of the two adjacent Equatorial states. I congratulated their Excellencies on a peaceful Referendum. I also did not envy their further progress through their day in full suit and tie as we are going to wait for our transport to Obo in CAR on the Soviet era MER-8, flown by our hosts, the Ugandan Air Force, to take us from Nzara, a joint military base inside the sovereign new state of GOSS funded by PAI, a State Department front for the US Army Africom to carry us into the sovereign state of CAR at Obo, no one’s idea of an international airport. In the sentence above, you may have detected that about six different transnational violations of norms of sovereignty have occurred in our plan for the day, while our aircraft the Kenyan registered Caravan 5-Y PAP is sitting in a military air base at Nzara since it does not have the official written invitation to make the short flight from here to Zemio—an eastern town in CAR which is not supposed to be the international entrepôts except for the AIM Air usual flights as a courtesy to Wendy Atkins for the development work she has been doing there. So, in one example, our team is being forwarded across ALL barriers of red tape and sovereignty since a common enemy has been identified—Joseph Kony and the LRA. It is the marauding of that group which has created all the refugees from the Congo (the sovereign state of the DRC—Democratic Republic of the Congo) that has brought us here in a civilian NGO aircraft which must adhere to all the more usual restrictions on sovereign state boundaries, so that Jon Hildebrandt must hold off until the last meeting of the cabinet in Bangui, the CAR capital, has released the usual clearance for him to land the Caravan that should be carrying us in Zemio, into which he might arrive just in time to pick us up after finishing whatever truncated work load we can manage in Obo. Got all that?

11-FEB-D-6

**BACK TO THE UGANDAN UDPF AIR BASE AT NZARA AFTER A
WALKING TOUR OF THE VIBRANT MARKET OF YAMBIO IN
AWAITING THE UDPF AIR FORCE AND A POTENTIAL LIFT TO OBO**

February 24, 2011

It may be prejudicial to have this alleged “paramilitary Christian organization” seen in the encampment of the Ugandan UDPF military in full uniform and surrounded by our armed guards and the trappings of the salutes and orders and the air field from which we hope soon to be greeting the archaic AN-2 which has allegedly taken off from Arua and is lumbering along the slow pace it has on its biplane wings to reach us, and then to be possibly airlifted to Obo courtesy of the UDPF.

We made an hour long market tour of the thriving business center of Yambio. We took a stroll down the dusty streets at did day like any other mad dog or Englishman at noon. I had loaded up the images and ready to see what was here and was to be further awaited and somewhat disappointed. The market is full of things for sale, even in small quantities, such as onions or a few greens, it is certainly more and “upmarket” from the barren grazed to the ground hard baked earth of Jonglei. The surrounding forest had made it cooler and the overcast of the clouds has made the temperature tolerable. We saw an open air meat market with the hunks of meat drying quickly in the air which has a humidity of less than 10%. It is a tour of the kind that shows all the things for sale or on the market here which has even got kiosks and then cement rental shopping spaces for the goods on display. Many were the kinds of luxuries that arrive from other places such as Scotch or jewels, or the batteries or bicycles, even new ones, with plastic wrap around them as import from Chan—a lot like Wal Mart!

There are heaps of dried and smoked fish that look like small catfish speared by the foragers here. It is also a place where a number of boys are standing in the hot sun and grinding millet in a small gasoline powered grinder mill. The flour that comes out is immediately swarmed over by bees. The millet flour has a basket that is taken to market and immediately the bees follow them there. We also see chunks of cassava for the Pondu and a ground-up cassava for flour and the kinds of “goterogens that can be ingested here at cheaper rates than in other parts of the Central Afirca.

The market seemed to be thriving and was teeming with purchasers which I had photographed as they pulled out the worn and dirty Sudanese pounds. I shot a lot of photos from the hip to show the markets and their variety, but then saw a blacksmith over charcoal which was being used to smelt metal. He is the first one who started calling out “Money Money” when he had seen Brittany take his photos. She was looking for cloth which was for sale right next to treadle powered tailors who could cut and make it into the kinds of clothing that the women are

wearing. There were further upmarket shops with ready to be made goods that seemed to be new and imported from wherever such stuff can be brought. We saw line up of bicycles, which even had the plastic wrappings around them. Under a very large hardwood tree, surrounded by the banyans in the embrace of the strangler fig what was already heavily invested in the coalescing banyans which were well on their way to making a “ghost tree” as the two kinds of leaves that were seen at the crown were being replaced with only one of them from the ficus.

I showed Brittany the irons, which are stuffed with hot charcoal and standing on the metal platform so keep from burning the clothing they are intended to iron. A lot of women are seen balancing large loads on their heads as little kids are also exercising the balancing act to carry water, and the bicycles and motorbikes whizzing by close to them without even disturbing the balance of their loads. I saw an indoor veggie market with a few baskets of fresh produce on the floor and a series of Miscellaneous shops filled with the kinds of “general store” items from batteries to spare tires to hardware. We stopped for purchase of a cold drink, and I bought pomegranate juice.

On the door of the shop from which we bought the juice is a series of full page newspaper headlines. One is “Black Blood Takes Over” and beneath it showing Barak Obama the “Youngest President in the World.” It showed Air Force One to show all the fancy stuff at his disposal and the F-16 fighter jets to provide air cover during the inaugural, and then a list of many other misquotes. It showed “Marine One” with the quote “President Obama gets into his multi-billion dollar helicopter.” Almost all the data that are printed are about ten percent true and the rest as hyperbole in someone’s imagination to make for a catch headline. I had made multiple photos of the news stories, and can check out the exaggerated stories of the excesses. The Africans had some good reason to be proud of the story of Barak Obama’s ascendancy, but he is hardly African, or especially not “African American”. He is an elitist who is representative of a CLASS of Americans to which many aspire here, but the helicopters do not come immediately to anyone who happens to be a representative of a color or a nationality or ethnicity, and they have a bit of trouble recognizing that—as many Americans do also.

We walked around the market seeing a vibrant and thriving environment which seems to be possible only with peace since this is the status of ordinary commerce before the desperation of strafing in the market places, killing lots of people engaging in nothing more sinister than trying to stay alive and advance their status even a little. I thought that this is what a good deal of the rest of Sudan aspires to as an endpoint, and is a light year or two distant from such market scenes as we might have seen in the impoverished and frightened marketers in PiBor only a scratch below the subsistence of the Bor Markets. It is also a better environment from the forests than the barren floodplains of the dry season.

**BACK TO THE NZARA CAMP AS WE ARE SITTING IN THE SHADE OF
THE COMMAND TENT WITH A GENERATOR SUPPORTED TV
SHOWING AL JAZERA, THE AWFUL DRAMA OF THE MEXICAN
MADE “NOVELLAS” AN NTV UGANDA REALITY SHOWS—THEN
FINALLY A GOLF SHOW**

Of all things, after insufferable novellas from Mexican Americans –overacting hyper drama that makes Bollywood look subtle—a golf show came on. It turns out the our advocate Isaac Mira is a golf champion in Uganda and could not carry his golf clubs here, but is an aficionado of the sport. We saw a little bit of soccer and an even smaller clip of cricket, but I have tried to tune out of the TV intrusion of a quite other world so as to be able to relate back to you this rather bizarre connection of a medical team idled by a small glitch with all functioning equipment and a very good aircraft at our disposal awaiting the same kinds of “Big Men” whom we saw at breakfast this morning as they are all holding conferences with essentially the title: “OK so the Referendum actually happened: Now What”

We have each of us either napped or read or typed but none can push any closer toward our goal which is frustratingly distant deplete all the pieces in place for our accomplishing our goals. We have missed no flights to Obo since none have gone. But, it is getting later as far as flying time as well as the various permits waited for a clearance to go—anywhere, closer to where we should be at work.

I will tune back in with you when something happens.

Something just did happen, but I did not go over to see it happen, as I have been there before. Zach did, and probably would not try again to see the MER-* takeoff in the dry season dust of the Nzara Airstrip. The big chopper fire up the turbo and then with eh big rotors turning, it kicked up a sandstorm of a brown cloud that obliterated Zach who was sitting in the middle of the cloud taking photographs of eh brown storm from the inside. It was likely that the photos would be the same if shot from the back of the pickup truck of the roadway behind us as we bounced along the road in the back of the pickup truck yesterday on our way to Yambio. The Chopper was on its way to Congo—the place from which the patients waiting for us in Obo and Zemio had been pushed out by the same LRA this military base is set up to restrain the evil scattered terrorist—relics of Joseph Kony’s deviltry.

**AN EVENT OF LARGE CONSEQUENCES—THE VIEW WE HAVE OF
WHAT THE RAIN SEASON MIGHT BE HERE AS A THUNDERSTORM
HITS AS A DELUGE**

And something very big did just happen—an unexpected and significant finding in the weather. We went back to the Commandante’s tent and sat with Lieutenant Mwria (Isaac) and

enjoyed his shade and bottled Ugandan water as we sat typing or reading or dosing awaiting the phone calls that kept on coming in but none with the clearance of the Bangui CAR President's' allowing the entry of the Cessna into Zemio. We finally got the military attaché on the phone that had been called by Ron Miller and he had obviously forgotten all that he had promised and had to be brought back up to speed. The AN-2 came in slowly from Arua and parked for the night since it is so slow it could not reach Obo by dark. In a cloud of dust the big Mi-8 chopper with the five crew of Ukrainian pilots left to go to Congo as a showering of dust was pelted all around the huge rotors of this big chopper. Then another sound was heard as we made the observation that we have not "missed" any flights to Obo, since none had gone in that direction and since we are all cleared to go, we would have been on one if it had left. The sound was of thunder.

A large line of dark clouds was moving in on us. I went out of the tent to see and a brisk hot wind was driven ahead of the front until we were pelted with as much dust and debris as the big MI-8 Russian built chopper had kicked up. The adjutant dropped the tent flaps as we knew what was coming next, and then it hit—hard.

The rain pelted down so hard that standing puddles were all around us in the hard packed and desiccated ground. Huge bomb craters are on each side of the tents here where the Khartoum government had bombed the air strip and the camp heavily when it was the SPLA base. The bomb craters are as much as twenty feet deep on either side of the tent and I had looked down into them as the rain began to pelt down hard almost immediately filling the bottoms of the craters with runoff. I ducked into the tent to hear the heavy drumming on the roof of a deluge. It could scarcely be seen through to the adjacent tukuls under thatch, tents and a third cover for this rain protection. It was our view of the rainy season. Almost immediately insects emerged, among the first were mosquitoes

We walked out into the fine drizzle that resulted an hour later after we had stood up under the slope of the tent roof, just as we always do in elk camp and push up on the underside of the sagging tent to spill the heavy collections of water in this case, and snow in the Maroon Bells. We stood out under the big MI-8 and at the call came in from the Ugandan Military Attaché who had been called by Ron Miller. Jon talked with him about me as the leader of the team and about Scott as the brother-in-law of the Ron Miller who had just spoken to him. He said there would be no fling today, but offered first thing in the morning. When the other lieutenant came by we asked him if we would be going to day. He replied immediately: "Yes, back to Yambio!"

Which we did. So, I am in the Naivasha Hotel just now in the exact same room as earlier on our second night here as we had spent a second night in Werkok blowing four days in leisure we had not counted on as the patients and trainees are awaiting us in two sites in CAR. We cannot let down the Congolese survivors of Assa, especially the encouragement of the Jean Marco ambitions for his daughters and the encouragement of Amboise. We will be in Obo CAR tomorrow and will await the further progress of Jon Hildebrandt to get to Zemio and then on to

pick us up with the Caravan now parked as fully functional and useless for a bit of bureaucratic obstruction. This is Africa—and now it is rainy season Africa even if only for a day.

A fellow came to see us tonight as we had dinner in the Peace Bar and Restaurant, His name is Manassas Zindi, and he is a special assistant to the Governor of West Equatoria with whom we had breakfast this morning. He has returned from a Catholic (Jesuit) college in Nairobi where he got his Masters in Peace studies. He uses Pazande and is encouraging peace among the Southern Sudan tribes and had been across the border and knows Ron Pontier well. His father was the Archbishop of the Anglican Church here in central Africa. He had a Coke with us before he left to have a dinner celebration with the Governor after Manassas also greeted the owner of the Naivasha Hotel his cousin. We were then left to see the TV on the wall over our dinner table broadcasting –what else? –American idol. I do not watch TV at home so this is my introduction to American reality TV culture in Yambio South Sudan. It should stay here and my TV can stay boxed up in the attic. This is the month that Ugandan TV is converted from analog to digital, and I have not made that switch as of yet!! Tonight with the rain continuing to drizzle outside my window, I will pull down the mosquito netting.

11-FEB-D-7

ANOTHER DAY OF WAITING AS WE MOBILIZE EARLY TO ARRIVE AT NZARA FOR NEAR-EMPTY UDPF MI-8 CHOPPER FLIGHT TO OBO AIR STRIP AND MISSION STATION BUILT BY RUSS MILLER, SCOTT'S FATHER-IN-LAW, AS EVERY BIG ORGANIZATION (UDPF, UN, MSF, CAR GOVERNMENT) TEMPORIZES AS FIFTH DAY DELAY OF REFUGEES ALL ORGANIZATIONS' CONSTITUENCIES

February 25, 2011

It is the fifth full day of standing and waiting in a bureaucratic delay of the kind that is tragic and also typical. For every big organization, the procedure is more important than the substance, since each component of the organization is covering its backside, and does not want to create any proactive waves, so any crisis that may be allegedly addressed is long since passed, and there is NO HOPE in major organizations finally getting around to taking ownership of eh problem that has flared and consumed all of the intended target aid recipients. Today, we are talking again to the Obo Commander who says he would be happy to help, but has no authority to allow us on the near empty MI-8 chopper that the Ukrainian pilot welcomed us to stack our stuff and come aboard with the three ton airlift capacity, and he had two passengers, named David and Warren, UDPF soldiers with their backpacks and AK-47's only. Everyone from all along the line, US Embassy Defense Attaché, the officers here including the Flight Operations controller Isaac Mira, and all the people from Ron Miller, Ron Pointier and all along the course of eh UDPF except the Obo Commander here has given permission for the UDPF helicopter to carry us to Obo. Ironically, the UDPF is here to care for the LRA refugee victims we are attempting to reach, but he says he could help us and then fee a court martial. We are all of us, from UN to US Army to UDPF to AIM Air to the Mission and the local church and pastors are all here for the refugees and their assistance, and we are here for that explicit purpose and cannot get there.

Who built the base the UDPF are using at Obo? Russ Miller, Suze's father, Scott's Fatter-i-law, and all the mission station that is now the HQ of the Commander of the OBO station of the UDPF means it is "all in the family." Yet, the first affirmative proactive act of his life can run his military career if it makes any waves that can come back to haunt him. So, like the enthusiastic reception we had from the local MSF I PiBor allegedly there to take care of the poor patients of PiBor whom they seem to have never met, to the UN at Rumbeck, who are fling in large teams of WFP personnel to feed the hungry masses—but make large overhead salaries for the internationals who came in carrying briefcases—and the UDPF are all here I their self-interest and not eager to jeopardize their cushy privileged salaries and life styles by doing

something and risking being out of regulation. So, here we are as the small and quick TR team, or even as me, a solo operator without a Board to report to and seek permission's for command we are being "assisted" by the official organizations which want to first make sure of the legality and the conformation of the regs on each subsystem before doing anything, and the whole list of the pre-operative selected patients go begging for care. Our equipment is packed in redundancy to treat and to train. Our team has been sitting for five days so it could respond in a flurry of activity that would be helpful. If you consider it, the Friday morning we woke up and went to PiBor to work until Monday afternoon was a short stay and huge expectations preceded it and the results of the mission were beyond even those hopes. It is conceivable that we could rescue this emission as we had that brief stay and we might be able to pull it off on a landing on the run for a fast forward mission.,

So, like "fish and visitors after three days" we are getting to reek in the nostrils of the UDPF command since we keep reappearing here in third encampment, and there is no progress on the single permit that counts—the AIM Air to Zemio or the UDPF AN-2 or the MI-8 into Obo—all of which are cleared and have been for twenty years but the specific single sheet of paper for this particular landing states we are only to enter through Bangui—an oversight that should have been corrected and has been brought to the attentions of the officials all around. But there are casualties in Somalia from pirates, there are hostilities between Obo and Zemio secondary to the LRA which is the reason both this camp is here, the foreign are fore is patrolling the three sovereign states through which we are traveling to help the refugees. All of this brings us to an expensive on-the-ground air charter with a team that is running out of stories to swap.

The next possibility is to fly all the way south to Entebbe using up all that fuel and tie in order to get on a UDPF flight from Entebbe to Obo, which is three hours closer to us here, but the US Army defense attaché and Ron Miller and the Africom fore's all have greater influence there than out here on the remote border of Sudan/CAR/DRC But, the moment we take off on this fuel-expensive diversion (somewhat like Scott Downing's 778 km ride from AmTIman to N'djamena to fly to Addis Ababa to fly to Entebbe to be picked up there to go with us to Werkok (his first ever entry into Sudan! To fly to Rumbeck and Nzara to wait with us for the same delay that has Wendy Atkins, Amboise and Jean Marco and all our friends in CAR refugeeed from Assa waiting and wondering why we have waffled out on our promises. It is kind of hard to explain to them—or to us.

INSTANT SPRING—THE OVERNIGHT RAINS HAVE CAUSED A BLOSSOMING OF ALL LIFE IN THE DRY LAND, AS I HAVE CONTINUED TO BE MAKING PLANSFOR OUR NEXT YEAR'S "RETURN ENGAGMENTS"

The new life in this military camp is springing forth as the dawn birdsong all of it rejuvenated by the overnight rain. The insects were almost instantly out and about in response to this first rain, and now the birds are warbling in their “bird party” feeding frenzies, as the flushers are spooking insects up out of the ground cover to the tree trunks where the gleaners (like shrikes) pick them off, and if they escape into the air the interceptors can catch them—like the “flycatchers.” (Moscraptors) The toads should be coming out of hiding places as the insects pile up often in a cone shaped pile under lights, and they lap up as much as they can hold. The snakes are the next day after the toads. I had witnessed the complete cycle of re-awakening once on entry into Nyankunde where I had stayed for a day awaiting an AIM Air flight into Assa to see the same pope whom I hope to meet their survivors, in response to my promise not to forget them after two decades absence. This would also be true for Scott Downing, but he has already witnessed many of these rainy seasons’ rejuvenations in his current post in Chad, adjacent to the big National Park—Zakouma.

We had talked in the air as we had made plans assuming this mission had already been conclude. Meaning, we would work ten days in South Sudan next year in the second or third week of January, beginning in Werkok then going on to PiBor and to Akobo, then a flight through Wau for refueling, and an entry into the eastern border directly into Am Timan. We will order four barrels of Jet A now to be trucked over it eh dry season, and then get to the mission postponed by our planned stop in Ndjamena to AmTiman when the rebels took over the capital and sacked AmTiman staling Scott’s Toyota Land Cruiser and computer and other items in searching for money as they went through AmTiman two years ago. I am past due.

But there was a prohibitive long fly around since the only legal way to enter Chad at that time was the capital Ndjamena where we would have to fly to an could not reach with a westward flying Caravan which would not have fuel enough or endurance to reach the capital and would have no permissions to land along eh way to refuel. That has just now changed. I learned that it is Scott’s landlord who has assumed a political role now and has given the permission to fly directly into the eastern border of Chad across Darfur to arrive in AmTiman for our postponed mission. It would take three barrels of Jet A to get there and back, and an extra barrel would allow us a half hour flight to go to a second site Haraz while we are in AmTiman to set up the clinic there. This would also allow us the chance to visit Zakouma as the holiday at the e conclusion of our work. We have made all such plans assuming we would have completed our work her in CAR for the Assa refugees. But, now, if we continue to be tripped up on the expensive technicalities that have interdicted our entry into CAR, we may have to schedule a complete repeat mission to this area of the world, and that would get expensive as well as lengthy in time.

I might be going east from this are to re-jig the Philippine mission if the MMI schedule of Tiboli at TECH around February 4, 2012 would meant the first week in Mindanao and then the second week in Palawan. If this is part of our next year’s “eastward circumnavigation” it is

getting a lot of competing claims for my return. This failure of our completing the mission in CAR for Assa refugees is a special claimant for our attentions beyond our ongoing work in South Sudan. We may be able to do a few days in CAR on the way back from the Chadian mission next year as a substitute for the days we are missing here now for the bureaucratic delay.

Word has just reached us that the meeting in Bangui has just joined all the ministry to discuss the options we have for getting in with the AIM Air plane to enter so there may be progress of the original plans while awaiting news from the Kampala commander over all the UDPF. So, we are not doing “nothing” but it is a lot of satellite phone time and charges as we are awaking for things to proceed on African schedules. . .

LATE AFTERNOON IN THE NZARA AIR BASE—STILL FIELDING PHONE CALLS REGARDING PENDING PERMITS

We have had our only major entertainment of the day after sitting and swapping stories now going on the third or fourth repetition of the stories that scored well on earlier tellings. The big moment of the day was the takeoff of the AN-2 with the Antonov carrying Commandante Stefano a Falstaff Ian fellow who is twice over ideal body weight and swings a swagger stick while laughing uproariously at almost every modestly humorous exchange. He is now flying to DRC from which our partisan had been refugeed, and on the return it is possible we Amy be flying overhead of Assa to see what is to be seen. But the AN-2 flew out with the biplane taking off and pulling right on takeoff over the MI-8 and a wing-wagging show for the video I made of this flying circus. We are impressed, that an aircraft older than each of us here except me is making such an agile jump up and off to carry on in its short takeoff and landings and slow flight to do jungle deliveries of people and material, and old Russia tool in the hands of the African troops running it.

The alleged bomb craters behind me are filing up with trash, and it seems that there are no trash barrels or other ways to control the random pollution that clusters around human settlement. In our rooms at the Naivasha Hotel in Yambio that were very nice plastic trash containers with a cover, and each were picked up and emptied into a wheelbarrow and wheeled out behind the Hotel in arae and the wheelbarrow tipped all the trash iota the environment. Case closed. Recycling completed.

We wait as we read, and I typed up as much as I could with the laptop battery holding its own if I limit spellchecking. But, we are now considering what will happen if and when the call is returned for the meeting we have been assured is being held next in Bangui to discuss our permit. It now seems likely that we will be going, if at all, on the AIM Air when it is opened to us, but the UDPF access assured us by a score of individuals has not yet allowed us to lift off. So, we will be here and we will tell you what it is that happens when it does.

11-FEB-D-8

COULD IT BE WORSE? WE GET THE GOOD NEWS THAT THE PRESIDENT AND MINISTRY IN BANGUI FINALLY GIVE VERBAL APPROVAL TO OUR AIM AIR FLIGHT INTO ZEMIO, BUT IN THE AFTERMATH OF LAST WEEK'S ELECTIONS AND AN INCOMPLETE CABINET APPOINTMENT, AND AT WORK WEEK'S END, NO PAPER IS TYPED AND SIGNED PERMITTING OUR LANDING IN ZEMIO; WE HAD SCRAMBLED TO LOAD THE PLANE, AND NOW RETURN FOR A THIRD NIGHT IN THE NAIVASHA HOTEL AND A FULL WEEK WASTED IN WAITING; I HOPE TO AT LEAST LAUNDER MY CLOTHES, BUT THE HOTEL HAS RUN OUT OF WATER; WE NOW HAVE TO CONSIDER ABORTING THE MISSION AND FLYING OUT TO ENTEBBE AND A RETURN TO NAIROBI FOR OUR INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS TO CHAD AND TO USA

February 26, Saturday, 2011

Two things became apparent as we scrambled at 3:30 PM on Friday to load the plane after tipping Isaac Mwira for his hospitality in furnishing us another Argentine tinned corned beef and biscuits luncheon: we would NOT be going to Obo by either the UPDF or AIM Air in any case since it seems that Ambroise who is set up as our trainee was going to be there by road, but he had heard about our incarceration here and had NOT gone to Obo but was still in Zemio. For that reason we have but one option if we are going at all—we are going with AIM Air to Zemio if we can get out at all, and the last word was that the ministry had met and the president had verbally approved our departure. We scrambled to load and pack the plane. But Jon wanted to hear the confirmation number of the approval, and be sure it was not just for this flight but a confirmation for all time that established the precedent that AIM Air would continue to furnish flights to its mission personnel into Zemio as the last twenty years had documented and would not have to go to the prohibitive time and expense of entering through the capital since an extra \$6,000 would mean that Wendy Atkins could never fly out of there. So it was said to be assured, and the president was sending the matter to the secretary to type it and he would sign it. But it is late on Friday of an unusual work week. No confirmation number, paper or signature appeared by the 5:15 PM time when we would have to be airborne in order to reach Zemio by dark—so, we reluctantly packed up the plane and one more time got the Naivasha Hotel shuttle to transport us back for a third night—now marking a full week of an idle team at great expense with a chartered plane grounded at the door of our CAR mission.

We returned to the sentimental welcome of the Naivasha waitresses and the owner of the hotel and also Manassas Zindu who had been at the party of the new governor and the new appointees of the new state in the new nation. We adjourned to the Resort hotel up the street to have dinner wince we exhausted the menu options here at the Naivasha. As we sat down the SUV holding the UPDF officers who had come to drink on our tab the first night were in the hotel and as the waitress Sheila brought us a second round of drinks, it appears that these were gifts from the UPDF officers! So, they seem as grateful for our prolonged visit as they had said, and as Isaac Mwira had said, he was “Ever so happy to have made connection with us and to be able to make plans to come to visit the USA and study to become the Air Traffic Controller that he hopes to become.”

I had big plans for walking fully clothed into the shower to launder all my clothes in which I have been baking each day. First bad news is that I am assigned a room without a bathroom or shower. Second bad news is that there is a shower down the hall, into which I sneaked with all the clothes that needed cleaning and got them all soaped up but then found there was no water at the time of the rinse cycle. Brittany had taken pity upon me and said I should use their shower so I tiptoed over to try to unlock the clumsy lock in these doorways with an armhole through which a deadbolt is released. I got all set for the shower I their room when I found it was the Naivasha Hotel itself that had no water. So, the only clothes I have are in a soapy wad as I type this. TAB= “That’s Africa, Baby!”

Our trip has been remarkably efficient, accomplishing more than cud be dreamed possible in Werkok and Bor, but then a miracle in PiBor which was beyond belief despite the noncooperation of the established Big NGO that is there and not doing the job; we could not have asked for a better response and results in PiBor Murle/Dinka outcome for further development. So, we may have been past due for the kinds of Glitches Africa can dispense so generously. And we have been stymied in full preparation for the CAR/Congo mission as we have been knocking on the border door for a full week, blocked by a nonsensical oversight on the part of the CAR government in transition, since they just had their elections last week and no one knows who or what is to be done.

Further, we are the “Test Case”—getting the CAR government to acknowledge that they had to resolve this policy of letting AIM Air fly into Zemio instead of diverting to the capitol and that was for ALL FLIGHTS for ALL TIME, and not just clearance for this fight this time. So, our long idle time on the ground in useless waiting with the UPDF has at least done that for future flights for AIM Air even if we are not going to be able to use this breakthrough in bureaucratic blockades. We are getting close now to the decision to abort the mission since Scott must be back in Entebbe to get his Air Ethiopia flight home to Chad before going on to Budapest for a cultural conference there for TEAM. The very appearance in Zemio would be such a boost to JM, Ambroise and to Wendy Atkins and the entire Azande refugees from DRC, that it would be worth it just to distribute gifts of supplies, that harmonica choir of seven matched harmonicas for their church services and money for JM’s daughters to study nursing and medicine since the

last cash I had left seems to have gone missing. But after a full week's delay, a fly by that costs a lot of funds for this mission is getting to be a judgment call. As much as I do not want them disappointed in thinking they have been forgotten, simply because of the arrogance and ignorance of a faraway disinterested government glitch, we also have to make our international connections to complete the circumnavigation. So, today is going to be decision day.

MORNING IN THE NAIVASHA HOTLE, STILL WAITING

I am sitting out in the drying sun to have the soaking wet clothes I had tried to rinse of their soap as water became available in the Naivasha Hotel down the hall in the “shower Stall”. I am typing among a few interested observers. One is a young serving girl who has been fixed on me and always welcomes us warmly upon our frequent return visits to the Naivasha Hotel, now getting to be too much of a habit. She tells me she wants to become an accountant, and hops to study—as all Africans everywhere seem to have for an ambition. Her name, furnished on a piece of paper along with a yahoo email address is Aniwasa Sepura Joseph Karaba.

The other recent arrivals are the political Big Men who have just driven up with their body guards with the same SKS automatic weapons that I could find if I rummaged in the back of my gunsafe. They are wearing black velvet sport coats in the tropical heat. It must be a burden to be a Big Man, since maintaining the image is a big sweat. They greeted me as I am obviously a Big Man also, despite the flip flops and the just washed clothes hanging around me to dry in the sun. I am literate, clearly, since I am typing in a laptop, and must be from some big international aid agency, since I am here and the leader of a team that pays me some deference. They cue in on that quickly and they wish me a good morning. They are all office holders or office seekers, and are here for the rally of newly elected governors that took place recently. It is that set of recent dry season elections that has most likely torpedoed our plans since all the wannabe officials in Bangui CAR are scrambling around trying to get a cabinet post on the newly elected government, and are lining up like good sycophants around Le Chef for handout sinecures, and no one wishes to make waves by signing a paper that is simply the continuance of policy that has held for over twenty years, namely one small NGO AIM flying directly from South Sudan into the Zemio air strip mission station rather than diverting many thousands of dollars westward through two more time zones (for which time change we are awaiting now, even though the likelihood of any elected or appointed official being at work on a Saturday morning, let alone a newly elected or not yet appointed official being in on a weekend is, well, vanishingly rare to ridiculous.) So we are still in the hopeful but shortly to be in the abort the mission stages of our week of waiting. You will know, so stay tuned!

LAST MINUTE CHANCES FOR A MIRACLE TO PULL OFF BEFORE THE INEVITABLE “ABORT THE MISSION”

Unbelievable!

Let me give you a follow-up on one of the Big Men who got into a big Black SUV to DRIVE to Juba, Why?? He was interested in his security. He apparently was one of the Big Men throughout the last decades who was always in the north among the Arabs betting that the outcome would go the way of the superior firepower. He is now returned with his black suit and big belly and is trying to see what the temperature of the area is now that the election went the other way, trying to sell the population here on the idea that he was a double agent. These subtleties are given to me by Manassas Zindu who works for the Governor of the new West Equatoria State. The population of the once large Equatoria was divided along language and tribal lines so that the West Equatoria has Azande and Moro. There is a Central and an Eastern Equatoria, as they had also divided the biggest state in the continent, Kordufan, into four pieces and also Darfur. So there is a scramble of new opportunities for politician Wannabes with the overall ruling party being the SPLM which is dominated by Dinka Bor. All this brought the three governors of Equatorial's three new states together to discuss options, and our man Manassas is a fresh graduate with a Master's degree from a Jesuit university in Nairobi even though his father was the Anglican Bishop of this area. So, he is eager to get back to Nairobi and will travel by air with us to Kisumu if the mission is aborted as it seems likely except for some miracle. Now wait for that to happen

We got the call. Mark, the British High Commissioner, went to the downtown offices in Bangui two time zones west so that we had to cool our heels at the Naivasha Hotel, and, of course no one was there. All permits have been agreed to for all time according to the ministers but there is no typed and signed letter with a confirmation number. We must abort the mission to Zemio disappointing all those Assa and DRC refugees who have been awaiting us.

A MIRACLE TOO LATE!

THE MISSION IS ABORTED FOR DRC REFUGEES IN CAR

We got a taxi—a battered Toyota Land Cruiser with a “Juju” spirit hanging from the rear view mirror inside, whereas all the outside mirrors were smashed with no glass anywhere. We hurtled down the road to return to the base of the UPDF. We pulled out the plugs from the aircraft and had Isaac Mwira come to wish us well with a message. The UPDF Commander in Entebbe had seen Ron Pointier. He had invited him to dinner. Ron said “No I am busy with the Assa refugees from the DRC and need to get there tonight.” THE UPDF Commander went along. He burst into tears. Now this is a tough Army Commander who has seen a lot, but these DRC refugees were shot up by the LRA with arms hacked off and a lot of atrocities—these were the patients awaiting us. The UPDF Commander sent orders to the UPDF Air strip at Nzara to give us all necessary aid immediately and fly us into Obo. The miracle arrived—too late!

We are on our way out. We have a two and a half hour flight to Entebbe where we are dropping Scott off early so he can get the MRI of his neck to check on the operation he had for a

cervical disc herniation. For that he needs US dollars in three \$100 bills printed since 2006. We had just three of those and now Scott can go to get his MRI at Entebbe before going back home.

What else happened? We flew over familiar territory for me and for Scott who bemoaned that he has waited nineteen years to return to Assa and/or the people of Assa, and now he will likely be an Old Man before that happens. I asked him “What’s an Old Man?” It is unfair that I have been to Assa since Scott has since he had lived there. But we flew over Rethy where Scott lived and where Suze was born and did a “flightseeing 360* turn around his homestead and school. We saw beneath us the Mungas and the “Footprints” and the Ituri Forest and the Dungu and Gambora Rivers and a lot of turf I recognize from the shield volcano of Central Africa from the Mountains of the Moon cooling lava.

We approached the modern airport of Entebbe through Uganda’s air space where we would meet Ron Pontier and I would transfer to him all the drugs, surgical equipment, Out of Assa books, the harmonicas and instruments for JM for the church choir and cash for the use of his daughters to go to nursing school.

And we are flying to Kisumu to get into Kenya for an overnight. Where? In Masai Mara! We are already packing a natural history safari guide so we might as well take full advantage of him! Here I go, back to work at last after a week of unwonted leisure!

It is hard for me to believe it, but we are going from the low point of our only disappointment in this trip, our failure to reach the Assa refugees in CAR, and heading into the high point of all my safaris—I will be a big game and bird guide in Masai Mara and in Nakuru in a luxury fly-in first class safari—our consolation prize which is a bit like heaven on earth in the African bush for me!

11-FEB-D-9

CAN YOU BELIEVE? WE ARE ON SAFARI! IN MASAI MARA!

FEBRUARY 26, 2011

Compared to where we started out this morning on the military air strip at Nzara surrounded by our friends of the UPDF, and with the simultaneous discouragement of having to pull the plug on the Aborted CAR mission, and the invitation to take full advantage of the UPDF facilities and aircraft to get us in—too late—we have had a long day, and rather all of it “up hill” in a crescendo of wonderful events.

Let's start with Entebbe, and airport almost of first world quality that I had remembered still riddled with the bullet holes of the Israeli rescue raid. I also remember a moth eaten collection of stuffed African animals on exhibit. None of that was apparent on our approach to the Peninsula into Lake Victoria on which Entebbe is located. A little further is the Nile Cabbage choked green river of the origins of the White Nile out of Victoria at Jinja. It was home to an ancient civilization, now submerged in its ruins and coincidentally also home to the Shah family, whose son Rikin I had carried in to Werkok and Old Fangak two trips ago. But, now we were on approach to our first view of modernity as represented by airliners and flush toilets and paved air strips. As we were on final approach the AIM Air DC-3 was loading with donors who were making a two week African trip to see orphanages they were sponsoring, on their way to Addis Ababa. If only we had known, we could have hustled Scott to get on board since he will be flying the later Air Ethiopia commercial flight to Addis to return to Chad. But this layover of a couple of days gets him to the MRI he would have had on entry but for the election weekend when almost everything was shut down and which the incumbent President Museveni won again. Scott needed to get US \$100 bills to get an MRI of his neck for the follow-up of his cervical disc operation, and on the incoming trip through Entebbe he could not get such bills from an ATM machine. We just happened to have three new bills (but not so new as to be 2011, which are also rejected) leaving me with a fist full of the remaining “Benjamins” I still had.

I resolved to pack up all the items I had inscribed for my friends from Assa, such as the Out of Assa book they have never seen and which contains their stories and pictures, the Nutrition article on the Goiter project in Assa, the items such as the matched harmonicas for the “church choir” led by JM, and then all the \$100 bills I could transfer directly through Ron Pontier who can cash them in regardless of their age at printing to fulfill the promises relayed to JM that I would support his daughters in nursing and medicine.

There were Emirates Airbuses, Air Ethiopia--the flight which Scott would take in three days-- and Air Uganda with the graceful crowned crane emblem of Uganda, and Russian Ilyushins and a number of other aircraft besides the AIM Air DC-3 on the pavement as I ran over to greet profusely apologetic Romeo Papa—the aircraft call for Ron Pontier. He said he had never in all his career as a missionary (recall that he is son of Russ Pontier and grew up at Assa before the Downings were there) ever seen such a tragic miscarriage of justice and humanitarian aid as the refusal of entry only two days after it would have been routine, for a mere typo glitch on the permit (we had photographed the impressive looking clearance papers of the last sets while we were in the air.) He is the one who would have been most adversely impacted if we had agreed to fly in through Bangui since that would have condemned all other AIM Air flights to an entry through the capital Bangui. We exchanged a few words of encouragement and he will carry all the items in for the team at Zemio including several thousand dollars' worth of surgical supplies and the drugs we had purchased in Nairobi, all left along with the promise of return mission with everyone honoring the obligation we have to treat the RC refugees since the refusal this time seemed so absurd to everyone.

To be sure of that, we have ordered four drums of Jet A to be delivered this dry season to AmTIman in Chad into which we can fly after ten days in Werkok/PiBor/Akobo next January and then with a charter with Jon Hildebrandt, fly in for refueling at Wau and direct entry into Am Timan, facilitated by Scott's landlord who is now politically well placed in Chadian government. This obviates the same big stumbling block we had encountered all of his week, since for the last five years I have tried to get into Chad at its Eastern border with Darfur, but the rules were to fly into the capital at N'djamena, out of range for the Caravan and prohibitively expensive by any means to turn around and fly several hours back east to AmTIman—exactly our same problem with Bangui and Zemio this week. Now, we can do the AmTIman mission again (interrupted last time when I had planned a repeat mission only to have the rebels take over and sack Scott's home and steal his Toyota just at the time I was arriving) and also make a side trip to Haras, as well as go to Zakouma, the large superb game reserve adjacent to AmTIman between Darfur and Chad which is now under the South African's management after the special NGS article that Scott had hosted, as they waited three weeks for "Photographic Permits."

We can then use three of those Jet A fuel barrels to be stashed in AmTIman to fly back to Zemio and to fulfill this year's pledge to help the Assa refugees and to train Ambroise and make a side trip with the Caravan to Obo, flying over the road interrupted this year by LRA sabotage. We could then fly out of Zemio on return via a big game safari akin to that which we are about to undergo on this trip as our "exit strategy".

ENTEB= 00* 02.51 N AND 032* 25.45 E at ALT=3,700 feet

After farewells to Scott and confirmation of these promises to him for Chad and to Ron Pontier for Zemio CAR return, we flew off to enter Kenyan air space and to immigrate via

Kisumu Air Field, now a much grown up spot since my transit through the border here on the surface in 1996 when I had come and gone through the KCMC I had only this July run past four times as I did the Kilimanjaro Marathon! The only running I have done here since the last in Werkok's daily morning runs was a quick and breathless hot run flat out on the Equator on the tarmac of Entebbe as I went back and forth from the plane to get money for JM to deliver to Ron Pontier at the Entebbe terminal.

KISUMU=00* 04.94 S AND 034* 44.26 E at 3,800 feet ALTITUDE

We arrived at Lake Victoria's southern boundaries after we flew across Africa's largest lake north to south Uganda across the length to the Kenyan Northern border. I watched the islands and their few fishing villages below as the locals went out after the huge Nile perch, which were feeding on the vegetarian tilapia, causing a florid eutrophication of Lake Victoria under threat of becoming an oxygen-less dead lake from introduced species.

Our Washington DC-purchased multi-entry visas were useful in facilitating our re-entry into Kenya and we got back on the Caravan for a thrill of "Flightseeing" as we were now officially "on holiday" and heading toward an unbelievable luxurious "Mau Forest". This high altitude rain forest is ideal for several reasons all of which have spelled doom for it. It is the breadbasket of Kenya and it is therefore subject to a lot of private (illegal) slash and burn "Swidden" agriculture. There has been a government crackdown on deforestation for the widespread practice of making charcoal by burning the woods and smothering it with sand to make a salable commodity for all the cooking braziers from Africa to much of the Middle East in Oman and its neighbors. Politicians vote for a ban on burning, but then distribute personal and private favors in granting permits to clear the forest---at least forty plumes of smoke could be seen eating into the greenery as we flew over the once vast forest. This is a common practice in African and elsewhere called quite simply= "corruption." And desertification of once verdant Afromontane ecosystems has made this area highly endangered.

Let's talk about that later. It is only now dawning on me---after a lifetime of safaris, I am about to fall into the most ideal set of safari excursions I have ever done (with the possible exception of the luxury safari into the South Luangwa Valley in Zambia at the conclusion of a hard-working Embangweni Malawi Surgical/Medical/Deaf School Mission, now a decade ago already.)

KICHWA TEMBO OF MASAI MARA !!!

We are about to have a premier luxury safari without the drudgery of an all-day drive over unpaved dust roads to be jolted about inside safari vans. The substitute will be a fly-in low level air recon of the superb Masai Mara!

And our reservations are for Kichwa Tembo= “Head of the Elephant”, a luxury camp one decorated by an enormous elephant skull that gave its name to the campsite overlooking a vast stretch of the Masai Mara, contiguous with the largest such ecosystem in all Africa in which I was on the other end only six months ago in Tanzania working my way up through Lake Manyara/Ngorongoro Crater/ Serengeti ---now having been on EACH END of the great Wildebeest Migration as the dry season has shifted at this Equatorial site and the huge herds of hoof stock have returned down from the treacherous Mara River crossing with its well fed population of large Nile crocodiles.

I have arrived! From the only major frustration of the trip—the week’s waiting in the futile attempt to get into eastern CAR to assist the Assa refugees, to the epitome of the African safari experience, in which I will serve as the Big Game and Bird Guide as Jon pilots us in and out---via Nakuru!

MARA= 01* 15.08 S AND 035* 00.53 E and ALT=1,607 meters

It is already wonderful past even my high expectations!

We flew low over the approach to the dirt strip at Kichwa Tembo to see our safari land rovers waiting for us with one of them featuring a red checked (Masai-robe-colored) table cloth spread over a collapsible camp table on which a tea and biscuit service awaited us with dried banana flakes. We made three circles to see the Zebra, topi and Cape buffalo scattered around the airstrip and to make enough noise overhead to hustle a few of the reluctant big game away from our landing site.

I had cautioned the team to be aware that it would be cold when the sun went down and it would be especially cold if I could talk them into a night drive when the modulating effect of water is lost in the dry season and a fifty degree Fahrenheit spread is possible from day to night. I had peeled off my light safari shirt and pulled out the long sleeve safari jacket and vest and my photojournalist vest with the binoculars and hat attached to it for just such a happy occasion as this one turned into. And, after hot chocolate, coffee (only an American would be so gauche!) or preferably “Chai” we were ready to literally drive off into the sunset. Our bags went in one of the rovers and we got into the other and I was commissioned to identify what we might encounter and describe the relationships to what else was around it. With pleasure!

It was 6:15 PM. On the Equator, that means we have little sunlight---but a very spectacular sunset! And a few foreground creatures that made those sunsets along the Mara River even more special, like a lone bull elephant waltzing right past us with his bulk as the “figure” for the Mara River bank’s sunset as the “Ground.”

Everywhere, we are surrounded by Tommies (Thompson’s gazelles.) Topi were here past counting—an elegant antelope with a “mud patch” on its flanks with a penchant for perching on

top of anthills and using its keen vision (better than most herbivores) to keep a look out for plains predators—principally lions here. Once, topi were Africa’s most numerous antelope, but they were hunted by parties of British “shooting parties” of titled lords and ladies and were decimated. They survived, however, which was not the fate of the second most numerous beasts of that era, the Quagga, with the last one of those on display at the British Museum of Natural History from whose hide they are trying to do a cloning to resurrect the species hunted to oblivion. I ran through herds of topi each morning last year in Werkok, but I collected none of them, even though I might want to have, and the largest collection of them at this date is right here in Masai Mara.

We encountered single big male Nyati. These *Bufo synceros khafir* are the big bad ugly bruisers of Cape Buffalo bulls. They are the ex-breeders now kicked out for being cantankerous has-beens and not at all in good humor. All the buffalo I saw on the first day were isolated big males, ideal trophies, since they are out of the breeding herd business and now have nothing to look forward to except a final fatal encounter with a lion or more likely, a pride of lions with the deadly lioness as their final interaction.

Two big male tuskers, each well into their fifties, gave us a ponderous looking over as they plodded their heavy way passing us, and silhouetted against the spectacular setting sun over the Mara River. It was a fitting conclusion as we pulled back in with the Rover to drive in through the gate of the Kichwa Tembo lodge and camp as I had already made arrangements for us to go out again immediately after our elegant dinner for a night drive.

I will tell you about the night drive in tomorrow’s 11-FEB-D-10, since now I will end with the elegance of our superb “safari tents” and the elegant dinner of five courses beginning with a pumpkin soup served by a series of waiters who had been introduced to us as we took our places around the “Braai” being guided to our places by rows of kerosene lanterns. There may have been as many as a thousand of them since they lined the pathways all the way back to our distant tents, which were equipped with flush toilets and hot showers. But, beware that you zip up tightly, since the grounds are teeming with wart hogs and pesky vervet monkeys which have a taste for the high life found in luxury tented safaris.

Our dinner was super. The ambience was wonderful. It would have been a good time to sit around the fire with a “sundowner”; but not for me. With jackets and advice distributed, we were off again, this time for the “night drive” to see the quite different life forms that are prowling about at night, with a “spotter” holding a million candlepower torch and our faith full driver ready to take us out again. I was the one who would cover the additional expenses since the morning and afternoon game drives were part of the inclusive package which also covered the lunch and dinner. And they were all good. But I will tell you more about that tomorrow as we will leave from the paradise of the Kichwa Tembo camp to...how can it get better?.....Lake

Nakuru to Savoro Lion Hill Lodge for our grande finale on this luxury safari in two of my favorite Kenyan Game Parks. Come on along---it gets still better!

11- FEB-D-10

AN INCREDIBLE DAY OF SAFARI AND FLIGHT SEEING, WITH AN EARLY MORNING GAME DRIVE WITH WESLEY AS OUR LAND ROVER DRIVER, AS WE SPOT MANY LIONS, A CHEETAH AND LEOPARD KILL OF BIG IMPALA RAM AS LION DRAGS ZEBRA CARCASS TO SHADE, THEN SPOT THE MARA RIVER CROSSING WITH WELL FED CROCILES FROM THE WILDEBEEST CROSSINGS, AND ALL THE GIRAFFES, NYATI AND BIRDLIFE, BEFORE LUNCH AT KICHWE TEMBO MASAI MARA; THEN TAKEOFF BY CARAVAN CESSNA 208 TO NAKURU IN THE RIFT VALLEY TO BE CHARGED BY A BLACK RHINO AND PHOTO THE WHITE RHINOS AND MILLIONS OF FLAMINGOES AND PELICANS, AND AN EVENING IN SAVORO LION HILL LODGE BEFORE TURNING IN AFTER ELEGANT DINNER AND CULTURAL DANCE SHOW TO PREPARE FOR OUR AM GAME DRIVE AND RETURN TO NAIROBI TOMORROW

February 27, 2011

Almost perfect!

I had an elegant dinner last night among the kerosene lanterns, and even had the cooks come out and do their shuffling dance to the beat of the drums. Quite apart from the can light in the open air giving the yoghurt based pumpkin soup as a starter course, we had several more courses which may have enticed us to spend the night dining and drinking except for an engagement which we had pressing for still more of the Masai Mara bush scene. After the grilled prawns and pork chop course, I was already gathering up the warmer clothes I would need. Wesley, our driver was awaiting us and we got ready to go with an armed guard packing a 375 taking his job seriously, since we would be driving out into the bush where hippos roam freely at night—and lots of them. Jon Hildebrandt explained to him that I was a hunter and had killed thirteen Cape buffalo over many years in the Congo, which our guard rather doubted. Our hardest working fellow was the one with the big spotting torch which showed a beam of light a long way and identified the light from the “retinal reflex” of many creatures hiding in the bush. Among these were the following:

BRIEF INVENTORY OF OUR NIGHT DRIVE OBSERVATIONS

Hippos—past counting; big ones, little ones along with big ones—the most dangerous combination—scarred old combatants, and all of them motoring along in their nocturnal grazing pattern, looking quite clumsy out of the water they had sat in polluting it all day, but clocked at forty miles per hour, I would not want to be in a position to try to outrun them.

Hyenas—quite a few of them; I had just given a short dissertation on the hyenas powerful jaws and how it cracked bones to eat the marrow and the bone spicules made old “Fisi’s” scat white, when we came upon a big hyena lying down in the open on the bare sand. As we got close to him, he stood up when a moth that had been activated by the powerful spotlight to swirl around him got toward the front side of the hyena and he whirled around in pursuit of this moth, snapping those big rows of teeth in the air until he caught the moth and swallowed it. So, this was an adequate demonstration that the big powerful bone-crushing jaws were quite up to the task of gnoshing on a moth!

Several furtive dik-diks were seen scampering through the bush; this smallest of the pygmy antelope are less than a mouthful for the big predators, but there are lots of smaller ones out there which would consider it tasty so it tried to stay out of the light. I was reminded of the time I was scuba diving on the Wreck of the Rhone, and came upon an octopus on a night dive, and several of us shined our flashlights on it. “Snap”! We then saw a few tentacles waving outside the jaws of a grouper which had been content to wait until the human hunters had illuminated his easy prey, and like Deer in the Headlights, the octopus under illumined observation never saw it coming. We may have contributed to a steep decline in the dik dik population if they had not taken matters into their own hoofs and bugged out of the light.

Rabbits—speaking of an herbivore prey species, were everywhere. These are genuine rabbits looking like Jackrabbits with somewhat smaller ears. They are not the odd creature known as a “Springhare” which is not really a rabbit and is found in Africa as well, but these were very large numerous and looking like they could support a whole food chain.

Crowned Plovers and Wattled Plovers seemed active t night. The nightjars were lying on the sand and would flush up in a fluttering flight. I once had encountered the ungainly pennant-winged nightjar as I was hunting in the bush near Zara Marsh at Assa and was amazed that this non aerodynamic bit of millinery on the wings did not disable flight in this unusual bird. These nightjars were more like those I had seen being flushed by the “Zorro” during the stormy night that I had the unusual ride through Mozambique over bombed out bridge repairs and into the track of the oncoming Ninja, as the nightjars kept flushing up from between the rails and splatting on the windshield like giant bugs.

Tommies—a lot of gazelles are standing in the clear at night and shivering in fear when the light strikes them, for reasons that they had hoped to be obscure in plain sight, with an ability to see around them without being seen.

Zebras—there were a few zebra standing about, with several mares and foals, prime targets for nocturnal prowlers.

Impala, of course; the ubiquitous antelope outbred their environmental carrying capacity, which is why many of them are found hanging in leopard “bait trees.”

Topi seemed wary even at night but a few of them were lying down resting comfortably as others were the designated sentries nearby for the night—perhaps they rotate the shifts.

We saw a Genet Cat, a small predator almost exclusively nocturnal.

Wart hogs—“Pumba” were kneeling and rooting in the ground for tubers and the little ones would go tootling off with their tails straight up in the air like semaphores.

Apparently the Masai Mara itself is different year to year, and in 2008 the rains flooded it and now there is enough dryness for fires to burn it.

That has been your “Short List” of the wildlife of note on the Night Drive, mainly entered into to see the same ecosystem in a different set of conditions, and to know the resident wildlife has to have a strategy for survival by night and by day.

RELATIONSHIPS: FEW ARE NEUTRAL, SOME ARE HELPFUL, AND OTHERS DOWNRIGHT PREDATORY!

And, now, for our foregone elegant breakfast at Kwicha Tembo Lodge, we had something far better in mind—and it was. We got up well before dawn with the promise of the “wake up call:” at tentside of “Ahly Moanin’ Chai.” I was already showered, packed and ready; having gone to the bar to get a charge into my camera batteries for what I had expected and hoped would be a super photographic day safari for the morning game drive. I was not disappointed.

I may have made well over a hundred (make that TWO hundred) Game Drives and have always learned something new in the bush, not content with just the spotting and naming of things but looking for their relationship to the environment which includes that of other animals around them as competition or commensals. Good examples are the cattle egrets that park in front of the Cape buffalo so that they can spear the grasshoppers flushed by the big beasts. The Nyati are happy with them since they can perch of the buffalo’s back and fly up alarmed at their sight of the potential threats the Nyati cannot see. He does not need acute vision since most of his life he is dwelling in eleven foot high elephant grass where sight is not a premium compared to his nose and ears. But the sharp eyed egrets can serve as the “DEW” (Distant Early Warning”) System.

The red billed and yellow billed oxpeckers or “Tick Birds” are likewise annoying little pests if they were consider only for their habit of crawling up and into the Nyati’s (or giraffes’) ears and eyes or under third wattles. But the big and cantankerous old Nyati approves of their being there since they are relieved of the ticks that the birds feed upon. It is like a big Grouper or other Reef Fish predator opening his mouth wide and letting the little “cleaner wrasses” in to pick their teeth and clean them of sea lice.

The commensal relationships out here are easy to see, and also the predator relationship to the moveable feast of the migrating wildebeest (the ground is littered with all that remains of the “gnus” that have made the trip north to and over the Mara River as the rains were falling in Kenya that had left Tanzania dry when I was last here six months ago; now that cycle has been reversed. We saw NO wildebeest—they are back down in the Serengeti, except for those skulls on the ground and the fat crocodiles with a smile in the Mara River. There are two other species of migrating hoof stock, the Grant’s Gazelles and the zebra. The lion are not far behind the leaders of the herbivores following moisture north. They follow just out of phase with a lead time for the herbivores and a lag time for the predators.

Of the herbivores, almost all antelope are browsers, with the exception of the gazelles, so that the gazelles (“Dorcas” of the Thompson’s or Grant’s species) are the antelope that hang out in the open grassland while their distant relatives like bushbuck or waterbuck have to hang in the bush. The forest or the bush give better cover for an ambush until the grasslands have grass grown to a level such as it can obscure a crouching lion with the “periscope” of its frontal binocular gaze atop its head while the rest of its powerful frame can slink along belly to the ground in the tall grasses.

For that reason, the Grant’s gazelles also migrate, but right at the edge of the grass growth, since they need the rains to feed the grasses to the point that they can crop it, but not so long as to maintain good cover for crouching predators. Even though they might be an easy feast for the gazelle, it would also be an easy feast for the lions who follow the grazers—zebras, wildebeest, gazelles, and buffalo, and occasionally get lucky and stumble into one of the browsers in the bush

A SUPER MORNING GAME DRIVE: STARTING SLOWLY BUT WITH A LION PRIDE, THEN A BIG MALE DRAGGING A ZEBRA CARCASS FROM THREE JACKALS INTO THE SHADE, THEN A CHEETAH IN THE GRASS, AND THEN “PIECE DE RESISITANCE!”—A MAGNIFICENT IMPALA RAM KILL BY A BIG TOM LEOPARD

It could not have been better as the morning unfolded, slowly at first, with a search for the usual thing almost every first-timer wants to see: “I wanna lion!” Well, we came upon the

first of these in a full pride with lots of cubs lying against the sunny side of a “kopje” from which they were looking out along the slopes at a big ornery male Nyati—not easy pickins’ even if he was alone. He was very aware of the lions since he had his big ears fanned toward them and his nose was snorkeling the wind from their direction—he had no fears of an attack in the grasses here since the grasses were high enough to graze but not so high as to conceal a crouching lion (=“Singapura”—which gave its name to a principle Far Easter City.) We watched as a group of land cruisers came around to observe the lions in the grass. A Toyota Land Cruiser got stuck—it had “high centered” itself on a rock as the Japanese tourists inside were standing up in the pop up top with a huge TV camera and telephoto lens as well as parabolic microphones. Perhaps they were amplifying the belly rumble of the hungry lions, but the sophisticated electronics might have picked up our stomachs growling since we came directly to do the Game Drive missing breakfast and did not want to “pass Go” to stop for ANYTHING while the action was “ON”.

The Toyota was stuck and despite rocking back and forth upsetting the balance of the big top heavy camera, it did not budge. Our driver came to the aid of theirs. We pushed the Toyota land cruiser with the front end of the diesel Land Rover, and got it off the rock. With a triumph of the same sort I had experienced when I climbed snowy cold Kala Patar pre-dawn with a Sherpa in Nepal, we beat out a grunting Japanese climber who had to stop to rest and blow for the thin air. I did not think my Sherpa had much English, but when we reached the top he looked down and cupped his hands and shouted through them “That’s for Pearl Harbor!” We could all laugh at that story as the big tie Japanese photographers were still bouncing back and forth in the Toyota after being pushed off the rocks by a British made vehicle with an all-American team inside it.

AND, NOW, IT GETS REMARKABLY “PICTURESQUE!”

I might have been hungry, but there was no stopping for breakfast when I was in the feeding frenzy of what I could almost see straight ahead on the dirt road after the “Ooloolaa” Gate. That name means “Zig Zag” and is the switchback loops on the road as it climbs. There were wire tailed mud swallows building their nests on the underside of Ooloolaa Gate, and Josh Webster our jumper from helicopters was getting really into the different birds he was spotting and trying to keep a list of them. I had promised him fifty species by the end of the day since I knew we would also go to Lake Nakuru, and ideal bird watching stage of our game park excursions. He not only got his fifty and added fifteen more beyond that, and had them all described and a weight estimate for each.)

And then we saw the sight you have to see on our videos and still images of the most remarkable breakfast going on in the bush. A pride of three lionesses were resting in the shade after having eaten their fill from a Zebra. The Zebra carcass was being guarded by a big male lion which had decided to drag the leftover carcass into the shade and away from the three black-

backed jackals who were edging in rather passively but quite impressively eager to snatch the kill from the “Lion’s Jaws.”

The big male lion with full mane was standing guard over the zebra carcass, and had a possessive paw on it as the sun was rising right over the assembly of predators and their deceased prey. The lion appeared restless, and did exactly as predicted. In a clumsy backward stride he picked up the zebra carcass in his jaws and backed away toward the shade stepping repeatedly on his load, which would jerk his head down, but not loosen his grip. As he backed away with the prize, the ladies of the lioness set, already arrayed in a linear gallery according to the shade of the only tree branch looked on impassively since their bellies were already swollen having fed on the front half of the zebra which was no doubt a night kill by one of them. As soon as the lion had backed up thirty meters, the jackals jumped up and came to the spot where the zebra had lain and scavenged bits of hide, a bone and slurped up blood. They were skittish looking to see the big male lion who feinted at them, but each participant knew he was not serious. He was not guarding scraps when he had a half carcass in his jaws.

Having secured the shade for himself and his half-eaten kill, with a swarm of flies buzzing around his eyes, he made a sleepy ponderous yawn and then his back legs gave out and he flopped down hard with half closed eyes—the portrait of a gluttonous “food coma.” It is “feast or famine” among us hunter-gatherers, and he had just had his just desserts, probably stolen from the lionesses of the pride who have to do the heavy killing, since they are faster, lither and at greater risk as they dodge the flailing hoofs in grasping for the throat. The bib boy, of course, moves in for the “Lion’s Share”—noblesse oblige!

We snapped away at this tableau in motion, and then drove a little way off to see a solitary cheetah peering through the tall grass, eyeing a group of gazelles, which were already standing in an arc according to the switch in the wind. The cheetah was still hunting as a feeder on grazers in tall grass, he was doing it by light of day, hoping to stalk under the cover of the tall grass close enough that the blinding wind sprint of the fastest land animal, propelled by the traction of its non-retractable claws (unique among the cat family), long supple spine, and highly leveraged forefoot—like the principle of the atlatl throwing stick for maximum acceleration. The gazelles have also lived on the plains all their short lives as well, however, and they stayed in the shorter grass, with a wary lookout upwind. The hungry cheetah kept on the lookout for an advantage from the short memory span of at least one or another of the gazelles. The cheetah is too small to take on the lions to snatch part of their kill, and is the most frequently robbed killer on the plains. That is because its sprint that is so fast is also short and anaerobic, so it must stop and breathe heavily while clenching the trachea of its prey to prevent their drawing their last breath. In that position, with every living creature on the plains alerted by the fast sprint and flailing take-down, the cheetah and its prize are now in a vulnerable position in which the fresh kill is now up for grabs among any of the bigger and more numerous predator/scavengers out there alerted by the action—hyenas being the most likely followed by lions. The cheetah is a

smaller cat than the lion or leopard and is no match for a pack of hyenas or even baboons, so must often give up its hard-won kill as it is panting breathlessly and not in a bargaining position when the opportunist come by.

In this panoply of wildlife in action, I had forgotten I was hungry, but the rest were eager to stop for breakfast, which was packed in a big hamper along with the collapsed camp table and other elegant accoutrements of the brunch on the plains. We were going to find the shade of a tree, when I looked ahead at an old dead snag and noticed that it had hoofs and horns dangling from it. We went over to check it out, and there was the remains of a leopard kill, dangling in the tree into which the powerful leopard, which can *climb trees* while dragging four times its body weight with its powerful muscles. That puts him out of the way of the other competition we just mentioned for the cheetah, and leaves only the vultures and baboons—the most hated competitor of the leopard—a mutual loathing which is shared by the baboon packs which will shriek in shrill cries if a leopard is around.

I recognized it immediately even though I do not have that much experience with this antelope but its horns are so distinctive that it was unmistakable—a reedbuck. The reedbuck's head and hooves were dangling with only the hide holding them together still suspended on the thorny branch. The leopard had eaten its fill and the other scavengers had not completed the job as yet, but a few more feedings by the vultures would finish the attachment the hide still had in the thorns and it would drop to the ground to get worked over by the remaining participants in their “entropy industry” further down the food chain. The jackals would no doubt quibble about the hide and bits, and hyenas carry off the hoofs and head to crush bones. But there is one more amazing scavenger still further down the food chain which we spotted as we passed a big male elephant all alone on the middle of the plains.

Behind the elephant were droppings. And already at one of these piles of dung was the upside down roller derby of the dung beetles, pushing their prize dung balls backwards with their hind feet. Ah, it don't get no better than this!

BIRDS AND BEASTS

As we cruised further for the “perfect site” for our idyllic breakfast we came upon a lone “Cordia tree.” It has a fruit with a hard shell surrounding a pulpy matrix in which the seeds are embedded in linear rows, making for an appearance of an artful hand grenade. As we went, we stoked Josh's new found interest by spotting a tawny eagle and a mature Battaleur eagle doing its tightrope balancing act on the thermals that were beginning to be more prominent s the mid-morning sun heated the air over the plains. Just for good measure, a black crested snake eagle was parked in a tree snag and also a lappet faced vulture in addition to the swarms of black vultures we could see soaring at an altitude below the Battaleur eagle. The pin-tailed Whydah and the fork-tailed Durango were also flying around at grass top levels and Josh was reveling in

it all with the first time in his life he was making a serious effort at identifying and collecting the species unique to this area. He was writing down a list and working his way toward the fifty species I had promised for today, saying that he would go over the top when we reached Lake Nakuru. He then identified the grey-backed fiscal, a bird in the fiscal family of shrikes. They are also called the “butcher bird” since they catch small lizards and impale them on thorns for disassembly as a side of beef might be broken down into choice parts.

We came close to the African crowned crane—the elegant looking black-crowned crane is the emblem of Uganda like the fish eagle is the emblem of Zimbabwe. We saw crowned plovers everywhere last night and they were still active by day.

A bird that looked like a small harrier was “stalled” in mid-air hovering as kingfishers do, and Wesley, who was mostly driving letting me do the wildlife natural history interpretation was asked to identify it. He thought it might be a lesser kestrel. We saw several such “hovercraft,” so it was not a “one off” behavior of a single specimen.

We spotted a hyena, sitting all alone in the grasslands almost the same behavior as we had seen last night on the night drive. The hyenas have a comical appearance when they get up and move and seem to sidle sideways. Like a camel, they throw out the two legs on the left side first and then alternate with the right side, making for a rocking loping gait that seems like it is rather inefficient. But, that is an underestimate since they are highly effective hunters and are not just scavengers, with the additional advantage that they cooperate in hunting packs. The supreme pack hunter here is the African Cape hunting Dog, but they are wide ranging creatures that have become endangered due to habitat loss. The Serengeti/Masai Mara is one reserve in which they are still found and the only place on earth where I have seen them. They are the “wolf pack” of Africa, but have been less successful as survivors than our North American Wolves.

THE PERFECT SITE FOR AN IDYLIC BRUNCH

We actually did have breakfast in the most perfect setting where we were in the shade of a bush which was previously used by a group of lions—right where we sat. Those lions (and we) must have the same exquisite taste in vantage points. We were watching a big bull elephant amble across the open plains right before our eyes. We would set out the camp table with a good repast of our portable brunch. I was hungry, but more than welcome to postpone it as long as we were seeing new sights. This was an ideal spot since we could do both at once. I took pictures of our Masai red table cover spread with good things as the bull elephant ambled by.

He stopped a couple of times to snorkel our presence which was hardly stealthy, since we were grouped around the squat Cordania tree, all alone in the vast African plain. Birds were swooping overhead and elephants ambling by as if this were the dawn of time for man on earth. The big bull pulled up clumps of grass and swatted them to clear the dust off the sheaves. This

big beast is named by its molars and cursed by its canines which were sought out as a carvable ornamental. But beyond the ivory question, its life limit of three score is set by its molars. “*Loxodonta africana*” grows two sets of big molars in a lifetime and is never going to get a third set. The enormous grinding wear and tear (consider it full time obligate “bruxism”) grinds down these molars and if the “Grinders cease because they are few” the big beast is out of the eating business. This large herbivore is an obligate consumer of lots of hay each day and whatever else it can push over to gnosh the canopy of trees, for a destructive example. That means it has to take in 5% of its body mass each day in low energy density foodstock, and it therefore cuts a wide swath through its environment, leaving a good life behind for the dung beetles of the world lower down the entropy chain. I watched as the big bull used its forefoot to hold down the roots and its trunk to tear off the top of a bunch of grass, and “just like mother taught him” he shook out the clump of grasses twice to raise a cloud of the sand and dust shaken off deliberately “playing with his food” so as to eke out a few more months on the grinding molars of the *Loxodonta* clan.

We were largely silent as we ate our bananas and yoghurt and chai and absorbed the primeval scene. African mourning doves announced their “Work Slowly” policy, as ring necked doves flitted by. It was good to be alive in the same spot recently vacated by a pride of lions which had the same exquisitely refined tastes in bunch cafes. I love this “cradle of life” harsh as it is often (always) with a transient beauty that has to be appreciated in an instant—the instant “now” in which these wildlife must live, since they individually have little history of value and can make no confident plans for any future, other than that which is apparent to all, hanging in the tree.

AND, WE ARE NOT “OVER” YET, SINCE THE BEST IS YET TO COME AS WE MAKE OUR NEXT AMAZING ENCOUNTERS!

We moved on after lunch and were in no hurry to scurry back to the haut civilization of the Kichwa Tembo Lodge, as I was the first to say to the repeated inquiries of Wesley. The best might be still to come! And, it was.

As we rounded a curve in the bumpy sand track we saw distant acacia thorn trees which appeared to be held up by the “flying buttresses” of a group of giraffes all clustered around them. The shimmering heat haze just off the grassy tops of the plains had made the tree trunks disappear and the only items visible were the canopy crown and the long necks and licking tongues of the giraffes, despite their size *delicately* stretching their raspy twenty four inch tongues along the branches around the thorns and licking the leaves off. It is hard to understand how any photosynthesis can take place after a half hour of a dozen giraffes all licking leaves off the acacia tree, but it still stands after they have browsed it deliberately. The acacia thorns that had evolved as a defense mechanism for the acacia tree had not counted on the giraffe’s long neck and the still more disproportionately long and skillful tongue.

An amazingly big old bull elephant trundled by. He was a “Hundred pounder”—the old big game classification for the weight of tusks, measuring the heft of the LESSER side. Ivory poaching had bumped off most of those old giants through the likes of Professional Hunters like Pandoro, who had bagged 120 pounders. But I had seen that “Four Tuskers” had actually been seen and were not rare—though most all the skulls I had seen were post-mortem. It is good to see such an old bull with such magnificent ivory which he should continue to wear rather than any Hong Kong jewelry carver.

And, then, we saw it. A big magnificent impala ram lying on its side next to some bushes, its belly ripped open and its distended cecum just now beginning to dry out. It was a trophy ram for anyone, but it was brought down by an even better one. A big Tom Leopard sat in the shade of the bushes waiting for the dust to settle.

The leopard was in no hurry, and was resting after a tussle with a well-armed ram. It might have been the herd ram just evicted by a nearby breeding herd by a new herd ram, and as such it had all the mass of a magnificent lyre shaped horns, but had been exhausted by keeping the ewes in line and chasing off potential suitors to the pint it could not eat and had to stay alert for competition and encroachment. This is the fitting end for a trophy, on each end of this event!

I snapped pictures of the huge head of the big tom as it was drowsy in the shade. It had no readily available tree to hang the impala as in the “bait trees” at the edge of the Mara River, about a kilometer away. Nothing small would approach the fresh kill as a prize to be scavenged, and there was no lion pride nearby taking note of this event. It was only we. I might have wanted to scavenge the magnificent lyre shaped horns, better than any in my trophy room. But, instead, I shot lots of images and video of the predator tom gloating in his success, and for the moment considering his aperitif.

Jon Hildebrandt has carried the curse of Jonah as far as leopards. He had claimed to be so many safaris where a leopard was hoped for, but not seen even if there were reported leopards in the area. That curse is now laid to rest. I have seen leopards and been quite close to several (see the web page and the “In the Jungle, the Silent Jungle, the Leopard Waits Tonight” essay) but this specimen was the best of any I have seen

We have scored three of the big cats in a single morning Game Drive! And, that is not all, nor is it over yet! We have all but rhino of the Big Five (and we will get both black and white rhino in Nakuru.) We were riding to the famed Mara River crossing, the “Rubicon” of the million wildebeest who are forced to decide to plunge across like lemmings since they have some primitive idea of what waits in the murky waters, much as did the Lost boys of Sudan in crossing into (and then back out again) Ethiopia.

There are no wildebeest visible here today. That is not quite true; there are residual parts of wildebeest bleaching in the sun. There are wildebeest skulls littering the landscape,

particularly here at the Mara river crossing. And as we get to the banks, we can look down and see them in their poikilothermic glory: the large ancient and well-fed Nile crocodiles that have had their annual Thanksgiving Feast.

The crocodiles are huge. They are also lying like logs in the sun doing their passive solar absorption, with wide gaping jaws. This is part thermoregulation and part invitation for the stalking birds and tick birds to come on in for the dental hygienist appointment. Even something with the minuscule brain of a primitive reptile would not be so uncouth as to snap closed the gaping jaws on a helpful pecking bird relieving it of foul detritus caught between impressive rows of grasping teeth. But, that may be the only opportunistic “friend” a Nile crocodile has. They can live quietly most of the year, but Manna from Heaven comes to them in high quantity when the wildebeest stand hesitantly at the side of the Mara River to decide if their long march north to follow the grasses that follow the rains has come to an end. For many of them, it has. But their fellow wildebeest behind them in the queue are no help, and the shoving and prodding get the first to jump (or was he pushed?) into the Mara River which is turbulent with many thrashing legs and quite a few snapping jaws.

We saw a half dozen of these prehistoric reptiles, leftovers from the days of dinosaurs, along the Mara river bank. We could see that there had been a large cave in along the bank where the huge procession of wildebeest had collapsed the banks in trying to run this gauntlet toward the promised land and back again from it, now in the Serengeti south where I had seen them last.

We saw other characteristic behaviors: we saw topi perched atop anthills looking over the terrain as sentries. We saw giraffes in family groupings, the adults able to stand out in the noon day sun but the younger ones having insufficient mass to surface ratio to keep form over heating in the hot sun so standing under their mothers or left in the tree shade nearby. We saw a very big pod of hippos, all contentedly snoring, grunting, or in a pushing contest with jaws agape to display their ivory tusks. It smells better on the photo than it does in person, since the roto rooter tail of the hippo is constantly on the “spin cycle” distributing watery diarrhea into the trees and bushes above our heads. Every once in a while a big male decides to threaten and gives our with the Grunting challenge that says back off. I remember from one of my first trips to Masai Mara tape recording it and my Father playing it at home in Grand Rapids. Even the neighbors could hear this grunting challenge and wondered what was going on!

A Czech-based NGO labeled Land Cruiser pulled up as we were standing at the Hippo Pool on the Mara River and a guard walked over carrying a rifle. I said “Lee Enfield 303?” And he said “Exactly.” This is the British Boer War rifle that still is abundant in Africa, even though the most abundant rifle by far is the indestructible AK-47—the original, including a big group made in 1947 and still as lethal as ever.

We stopped as a large matriarchal group of elephant came by with new born calves under foot. We let them pass gingerly as they eyed us far more suspiciously than if we were seeing the adults alone. One of the young ones appeared to be stumbling, and it was that one which got most of the attention. This is the ultimate in the “K-strategy” of reproduction in which the adult makes a very prolonged investment in intrauterine growth and development (twenty four months in gestation for the elephant, same as for its relative the rock hyrax) and then a prolonged period of dependency before maturation. This is in contrast to the “R-strategy” of reproduction in which millions of germ cells are released to fend for themselves—an example being coral reefs. We waited until they had all passed us on either side and were wary in making noises as they were the group most likely to cause trouble.

Oddly, ALL the buffalo I saw were cantankerous big old bulls, outcasts from the breeding herds which I saw only a few of later. It seems they were the ostracized ones, as the herds of prey and predators had come and gone, they were the “left behind”. Each had the magnificent ugliness and sheer brutality of every Cape buffalo I have ever shot. No one gets sentimental after killing a Nyati. They are huge and ornery with eh big frontal boss that is impenetrable and a wide spread flare of the horns usually crusted over with mud—something only a mother could love—and I seem to have that unique relationship with a number of the big uglies, as it is the highest “tonnage” of game meat I have dropped. “Nyati” for me is “Myama” (=Meat Animal.)

RELUCTANT RETURN TO A LUXURY LUNCH AT THE KICHWA TEMBO LODGE

All things, good and bad together, must come to an end, including this chapter of my “pick-up luxury safari in Masai Mara.” We were all the way past noon when I agreed, that, yes, we probably could return for lunch. And lunch was as elegant as dinner. There were distractions on the grounds all around us—warthogs were strolling within the tables and vervet monkeys were waiting for an incautious unguarded moment. Other distractions included a German team with a remote controlled helicopter carrying a camera that was supposed to be shooting game at a distance, but one of its engines was missing a part and had to be awaited at this remote location. Another distraction was a young French girl in short shorts who was moving from the poolside to the lunch, which was very good. Along with this distraction I had a guard come to me carrying a rifle. Of all things it is a .458, and I showed one of the cartridges to Josh as the bullet with which I had planned to safely stop Cape buffalo at Zara. Unfortunately, my 458 is in the gunsafe never having killed a buffalo with it as circumstances had changed.

I had, as you might detect, enjoyed my stay at Kichwa Tembo and the three Game Drives, but it is now time to pack up and go on to something still more! We will be flying out from Kichwa Tembo to Nakuru where we have made reservations in another superb luxury safari lodge Savoro Lion Hill Lodge. That means we will FLY out and over the premier game parks of

Kenya and enjoy each without the bone cracking long rides in vans over unpaved roads—a real luxury—and then transfers attention from the BEASTS to the BIRDS to complete the list I had promised Josh. I will be on the wing after checking out of Kichwa Tembo and promising an early return, perhaps with my own family of young naturalists, and will tell you more about the events of our special day as they further develop in the next series of safaris at Nakuru in 11-FEB-D-11.

Be there! It will be worth it in text, images and videos!

11-FEB-D-11

**AWAKENING IN SAVORO LION HILL LODGE OVERLOOKING LAKE
NAKURU WITH OUR DRIVER TIMOTHY, BEFORE OUR RETURN
TRIP TO NAIROBI AND MAYFIELD GUEST HOUSE TO COMPLETE
OUR LONG AIM AIR AFRICAN SAFARI ON NATURAL HISTORY HIGH
NOTES AFTER DISAPPOINTMENT ON THE CONGOLESE/CAR ENTRY
TO HELP THE SOUTH SUDAN MISSIONS IN EACH VENUE AND
HOPE FOR AND MEET CONNECTIONS AT MAYFIELD GUEST
HOUSE**

February 28, 2011

Are you ready to roll? Or fly? Or look out with me?

Let's start with the roll out from Kichwa Tembo at Masai Mara as we left the Lodge after an elegant lunch. We got into the vehicle having seen all we had planned to see, and then saw more. I spotted meerkats—the same mongoose family members I had seen in great comic numbers at the early morning runs at Werkok.

All along the morning we had seen the biggest of the antelope, the large twisthorn, Lord Darby's Eland, *Tragelaphus darbiensis*. This big antelope is a domesticatable species and is often used as a "host uterus" for implanting fertilized ova of endangered species, such as the Okapi project of the Cincinnati Zoo. By giving hormones to cycle the uterus into receptivity, the eland cow can be brought to estrus and an ovum implanted and it can then give birth to a radically different species as a way to replenish the endangered ones—as is true for the Okapi, the bizarre looking giraffe relative in the Ituri Forest. These big eland were at the airstrip, and were the first of two "twisthorn" ("Tragelaphus") we had seen today, the second being a good male specimen of *Tragelaphus scriptus*, the bush buck, like the several specimens I have in my Game room along with their bigger relative *Tragelaphus streptoceros*, the Greater Kudu.

We cautiously walked around to get the idea that they were better off not standing on the airstrip when this big bird named Cessna Caravan 208 would be whistling its way off the ground. Speaking of big birds, one incredible absence I had noted was that it would have been easy at any other time of my life to show Josh an ostrich for his big bird collection and for reasons unknown to me, I saw none. The big male Masai ostriches are often dancing and fanning and preening at this time of year and are hard to miss.

We loaded up our plane with the bags we had carried forward to Kwicha Tembo tented safari lodge and tipped Wesley our driver who had done good things for us. Wesley, it turns out,

comes from Tenwek, the site of the hospital which has been the base of operations of many of the medical volunteers who come to Africa since it is nearly up to the same standards as their home bases and they do not have to correct for any distortion in their usual standards. Over half of world medical mission volunteers come to Tenwek and Kijabe so most have never seen the rough Africa of which I have been a part. It turns out that Wesley has had many such volunteers come to ask for him as a guide and knows the kind of work I do in the reference we had to the Tenwek workplace of many of the repeat volunteers who come here.

We took off, the prop wash scattering the eland, topi and zebras, while a lone Cape buffalo stood his ground defiantly being whipped with the sandstorm of our prop. We flew up and over the Mau Escarpment, the main scarp of the Western Scarp of the Rift Valley. Burnett is the airstrip for Kijabe which is on the Eastern Scarp of the Rift. As we flew over the forest, we could see the spires of many fires representing the corruption of all those who have bribed officials to get permits for slash and burn clearing of the woodlands which is supposed to be illegal, but they are paying off the right people to get new “shambas” in forest clearings.

NAKURU= 00* 27.37 N and 036* 05.01 E at ALT= 1,809 meters

We swooped in low according to the call we had from a Dutchman who had just taken off warning us about Cape buffalo standing around on one end of the runway at Nakuru. We zoomed in to a low pass and they ambled off, not in a particular hurry, and turned to come back as we rolled to a stop—our welcoming troops to be reviewed on their parade grounds. As I got out of the plane I took photos of the buffalo at mid-distance and their dung at close-up under the wheels of the AIM Air caravan, landed in the middle of Afrik Vrai!

This is an upmarket landing since the airstrip is paved and a park guard is stationed here to help direct us. Jon called “Base Base, Juliet Hotel” and was speaking to the monitor of the calls since it is a Sunday afternoon and it is his wife who is the base controller.

We met our driver Timothy who has had a heavy day already. He was near the park entrance and was driving slowly when a black rhino charged out of the bush and bore down on the vehicle. He gunned it to get out of the way, stating he did not like interacting with cantankerous big game. We saw other antelope almost immediately after leaving the air strip and its zebras and Cape buffalo. They looked like a larger Tommie or a smaller Grant’s gazelle. It turns out that they are Tom/Grants, which are unique and only found here in Nakuru. They are a hybrid between Thompsons and Grants gazelles with some features of each, but are sterile hybrids, like mules. The population of gazelles would be insupportably high otherwise, since there are no cheetahs here in Nakuru. There are lions but they are often looking out for bigger prey. The sterile hybrid may be a natural birth control program!

We were driving along the edge of the lake to see a large population of birds in and near the lake when it was Brittany who called out: “Oh, look, a Rhino!” Look indeed. The rhino

was on a full out charge out of the bush on the side away from the lake and did not seem like he was going to stop for an explanation. Timothy gunned it and we rolled off in a cloud of dust. This is the second time today that Timothy has sustained a charge from a black rhino and he is not interested in another one. I asked what he had for breakfast today and urged him not to repeat the pancakes tomorrow.

Lake Nakuru is a park at an altitude of 1,759 meters or 5,769 feet and can get quite cool. It is 189 square kilometers. It is 56 kilometers from Nairobi and one of the more frequently visited parks in Kenya. It has a seventy five dollar admission fee in common with Nairobi National Park since it is conveniently accessible; the further afield one goes the admission fees drop. The lake level is very low just now and it is the height of the dry season. Over one third of the parks grassland burned in the last three days, and we passed still smoking char and ash. The lake is large but is only nine feet deep at its deepest. The shoreline is crusted with the salt since it is a Natron lake, with no outlet and the bowl of surrounding rift mountain scarp as inlets. Much of the animal life gathers around those inlets with fresh water going into the lake.

The principle residents inside the lake are brine shrimp and blue green algae. The pelicans that bond are team feeders on the brine shrimp and herd them like a purse seiner, and then dip their bills in unison, a balletic chorus which we watched many times as graceful as the flocks seems to feed itself, it is also quite comical at times.

There are lesser and greater flamingoes, and they have the “Flamingoes’ Smile” according to the title of the book I have by Stephen Jay Gould, which tells that their upside down smile is a design for their heads being hung upside down in their filter feeding position. The flamingoes are feeding principally on the algae and are filter feeders that make them appear somewhat silly as they stalk the very shallow water with inverted heads and the “smile on their beaks” right side up as their head is upside down. They have their pink color to their epaulets and chevrons which are otherwise whitish color to their plumage which changes with their diet. They have reversed articulating knees, so they cannot run, but do a little stilt dance in walking on the water to get enough speed to take off. Then they look like ill-fitting gymnasts as they try to walk in unison but then they can look graceful but skinny once air borne. The flash of the pink and black wing epaulets shows a distinctive pattern, with their long outstretched necks holding the ungainly knob of their head and its “inverted smile” in a Concorde takeoff position. When they are disturbed, they all strut off in unison as though they are going somewhere in a hurry, but then can just as abruptly turn back and repeat the process like a confused group of Japanese tourists following the wrong color umbrella of their tour guide. I had seen a “pink cloud” in Nakuru and the other natron lakes in Kenya and knew then that I was looking at a couple million flamingoes, which are about three quarters of the flamingoes in the world.

There are fewer flamingoes here just now. It is because the season had been so dry and the lake level dropping so low that it is too salty and the algae on which the flamingoes filter

feed has diminished. At a nearby Lake Natron, the concentration of salt got so great at a long dry season that the flamingoes had anklets of salt crust which prevented their taking off. There were efforts to try to break off the salt from the flamingo legs but it did not keep a large loss of flamingoes from happening since they were trapped by the brine that usually supports their feeding habits.

I asked Timothy what was his first language. It was English and he was born in the town of Nakuru 15 kms from the park. He is half Masai and half a mix of Kikuyu and Masai so he said “ I am Kenyan”. Not everyone identifies themselves as such, and I was here in the December 2008 civil war in which being Kikuyu was a lethal fault since there were altercations about the allocation of the presidency and premiership which led to vast numbers of Kenyans being burned out of Ibarra and Eldoret.

As we drove around the bend we spotted Colobus monkeys in the trees. These are the haughty creatures that are quite proud of their white beards. I know enough to not walk out under trees in which the Colobus monkeys are preening in the branches since they find it a challenge to have anyone with a white beard beneath them and the inevitable response is that they pee down on them, as it happened to a colleague in Ethiopia as I was on my way to Soddo.

“RHINO 101” A COURSE I HAVE GIVEN BEFORE

There is essentially no color difference between white and black rhinos. “This is the new Africa, there are no such differences anymore!” Actually the White Rhino is not White but *Weit*, in Afrikaans which means “Wide.” So it is the “Wide Lipped Rhino which by definition is a grazer. It is often out in the open plains in larger groups and can even be domesticated. It is larger and more docile, and has its baby in the front when in motion. The black rhino is solitary and lives in cover such as forest or bush. It is unpredictable and makes charges (just ask Timothy from twice today already!) It has a prehensile snout and is a browser. It has its offspring behind it—just like a black African woman versus the White who pushes her baby in a pram in front. The two both have horns coveted for Omani daggers but a new ruling allows it to be made of the horn of any dangerous animal so a Cape Buffalo horn will do as well.

I was here over thirty years ago in the introduction of South African White Rhinos to Nakuru, so I saw the beginnings of that southern Hemisphere species being brought up to the Equator and now they outnumber the black rhino natives here in this park.

We saw big game along the lake shore, like the white rhinos—with the baby suitably in front, and the tick birds working over both mother and daughter, and we saw hippos in the fresh water of the lake inlet, but mostly what this park is good for is the collection of birds which are numerous and varied. Again, there were no ostriches for reasons no one can explain. But we made a rather long list for Josh to go home and work into a Life List.

SAVORO LION HILL LODGE, NAKURU PARK

We pulled into the Savoro Lion Hill Lodge and were given a scented towel by a costumed Masai Moran and we got our respective rooms. It is as elegant as the Kwicha Tembo Lodge but up on a hill overlooking the lake. As soon as I got the items to my room I took the first hot shower of my long stay, and then came down to a professional group of “Booty Shaking” dancers who offered their CD at the end of their performances as a “braai” fire and barbecue were I progress. Dinner was still more elegant than at Kwicha Tembo with abundant choices and fresh fruits and a special table of Indian bread and Asian specialties.

One of the items on our buffet was the “tree tomato” which I had only recently been introduced to in Cuenca Ecuador. It is a tasty fruit with a pulp around seeds in a hard shell fruit not at all what its name might suggest. The elegant buffet was served to us rather alone since it was not the “high season” for Nakuru park but very attentive wait staff and a good menu selection with short order chefs to special order anything that would all be included. It was a good resort retreat.

OUR LAKE NAKURU GAME DRIVES AND VIEWING BEFORE WE DEPART WITH THE CARAVAN TO RETURN TO NAIROBI WILSON FIELD OVER LONGENOT CRATER

The morning Game Drive would occur when Timothy drove over from Nakuru town after we had the special breakfast buffet. The breakfast was perhaps the most elegant spread yet, beginning with the mango lassi. The next course was Wimbi Porridge. The Wimbi is millet which is often allowed to ferment for an added floor. The variety and good things of breakfast were matched by the scene around us. The birdsong was great and had a lot of occasion to see the songsters. The harsh calls of the Hadeedah Ibis had been my wakeup call. We set out to make our game drive through the recently burned (and in some places still burning) grasslands. Timothy had said he had a surprise for us when he had driven in from Nakuru town to pick us up in the morning. We saw his surprise almost immediately.

In the scorched earth of the fired over grasslands the warm black ash had five tawny figures stretched out as though on a heated car seat. Five lions were just sitting on the burned over earth as we drove up to them. The fire did not “jump the road” and on one side was the dry grassland and on the other was the scorched earth where the lions seemed to prefer to be. We could watch as they considered this their own personal sauna, as they gazed across the road at potential prey in the grasslands.

We saw an Augur Buzzard perched in a tree over the burn. The name is an injustice to this great looking raptor.

A Common Waterbuck, different from the Defassa waterbuck, since the latter has a white rim around its muzzle, was sitting in the burn char as contentedly as had the lions. He simply stared. A little later we saw another waterbuck with a grossly misshapen horn that appeared to be recurved down into its face and was threatening his eye.

We watched Nyati with a thick cake of mud covering them looking for all the world like a spa treatment had given them the mud pack as an attempt to improve their facial beauty. Fat chance!

We spotted some specific birds for Josh's list. The anteater chat. Then with the mewing cries I associate with ospreys, we saw a tree full of African Fish Eagles. They are a magnificent raptor and are the national bird of Zimbabwe. We spotted many Egyptian geese and a few shell ducks. We saw the old man "Undertaker Bird" the Marabou storks, which often hang around dead things to clean up the environment by eating only the most repulsive dead things.

We saw a large bachelor herd of impala, and saw their sparring as they continue a year-round attempt to get their brief chance at being the herd ram, for the breeding rights to a family, however much a headache it gives and however quickly they are picked off from that tenuous perch. They might check to see what had befallen that magnificent impala ram I saw disemboweled yesterday, as it was quite probably just coming off a high point of its own in being "King of the Hill".

We drove around to the far side of the lake where we could get out and walk along the salt encrusted margin of the lake. There were the Senegalese toucan. The chestnut bee-eater. There were unmoulted yellow bill storks, along with the mature members of the same species, who, when disturbed, all took off leaving the unmoulted and therefore not certified as airworthy, stood looking in helpless confusion until the yellow bill adults flew back after the false alarm. The alarm was from a baboon sitting in a tree that jumped down because of us and he was not at all interested in them. This is at the same site where I had once before seen a baboon chasing off into the lake and dragging back a flamingo by one wing, so I guess there was genuine reason to fear.

There were black winged stilts, Blacksmith lover. And the Cliff Chat. This last one took us a long time and a lot of description to nail down the identification, but after we did, we saw it in numerous places along our route up to the heights of the baboon cliff lookout. When I got up there I had told everyone they might meet the nearest relative of the elephant the rock hyrax, and as we got to look down from the cliffs, found none there at first. Later they showed up as I was photographing the orange head lizard that was doing solar orientation exercises. The rock hyrax, or cony, is a small furry creature that makes little yipping noises and has a small proboscis. But the common feature with elephants is the twenty four month gestation, which puts them up near the top in the K-strategy for reproductive success.

At the altitude of 1,833 meters of the baboon cliffs, we could look down with binoculars and see the zebras, always walking in a single file in a straight line depending on their unusual camouflage to bolt and give a stereoscopic headache to any predator trying to zero in on them. Each Zebra colt has a special “fingerprint” to their black and white coat design which is why their mares can recognize their offspring instantly. One of the zebras got to a spot in the dust and began rolling in it so as to dust himself over. None of the others felt so moved as they came up to him in single file and just passed him at his dustbath. Each is equipped with a long tailed fly swatter and uses it much as horses do. One young colt appeared to have a mousse styled gel in its mane since it had clumps of Mohawk sticking it straight up. They have never been domesticated despite many attempts to do so. The KiSwahili term for them is “punda milie” or “striped donkey.”

We came to a gaint hammerkopf nest with an entrance under the straw thatched large nest. It is a lot of work making a nest like this, so it seems that hammerkopf is an unwitting host for a lot of parasite nesters. These include the cuckoos that are always into a surrogate parent for their offspring and even Egyptian geese. Just as we had checked this one out a hoopoe, big as life stopped and posed on a branch for us before flying up and *into* the hammerkopf nest! Add one more species into the parasitic nesting category!!

All of our good things are now coming to an end and we decided to retire back at the Savoro Loin Hill Lodge and take advantage of our early return and make a dip in the pool. I wrote a couple of my last cards “Out of Africa” here and took a short dip before going up to pack up and enjoy a great lunch as our farewell to the safari life. Timothy came to pick us up and drive us to the 5-Y PAP as we loaded up. I got into the right seat that I know my first grandson Andrew William would so enjoy. He will have his pilot’s license long before his driver’s license. He needs to be with me as his father does as well to start out the clinical skills on our multiple tutorials and practical firsts—each of the “firemen” with me have done spinal anesthetics and operated, it may now be time for the first “policemen” to do the same as he shifts careers to go into this nursing profession full time.

We took off from the air strip with Cape buffalo looking on. We climbed up over the scarp and could then look down into the geologic history of the Great Rift Valley. I was especially intrigued to see the side spillways of the Longenot volcanic crater, which seemed to be more fertile than the other areas of the Rift Valley terrain around the raised spill zone where eh lava had cooled and congealed several hundred feet higher than the areas around it. I could look right down and into the near perfect bowl of the Longenot Crater as we flew over it. It is an interesting part of the geologic world as well as the Natural History Bonanza that is the Great Rift!

We zeroed in on civilization as represented by traffic lights and air traffic controllers and beacons and paved runways as we approached Wilson Field. We had called in advance and had

loitered so we had recalled Mayfield and told them we would be somewhat later than estimated upon arrival. Subsequently WE were the ones to wait as they mobilized the van to pick us up. That is when I could take stock of what was around me at Wilson Field. There are big shiny new planes and twin engine transports. These belong to the drug traffickers, the Khat dealers who export out the biggest cash crop from Kenya to Somalia and other Middle Eastern areas—the barely legal Khat that has so devastated Djibouti that no one there can even function after about ten AM since they are Khat stoned. That was certainly the biggest seller on the streets when I was in Hargeisa and the one thing responsible for the absenteeism of the nursing staff. These Kenyans are RICH. A pair of them came into Wilson Field driving new Mercedes and parked next to each other admiring how their shiny cars wear a few months newer than his shiny new car. They got out dressed in suits. They had trophy women with furs dripping off them and a lot of jewelry. They stood next to me. I am grubby and dirty from weeks in the bush. It is true I have been to school, but it is not immediately apparent on looking at the group of us, and like a high school class aligned on the platform, pick out one “Who is the most likely to succeed?” As I say at the conclusion of each of these trips: “One of these is the real world; I leave it to you to decide which it is.”

We made it back to Mayfield and settled in collecting our left luggage and sorting out the items to be left and which to be packed for tomorrow. I will meet with Jon Hildebrandt later tonight and have him join me for dinner as I pay the AIM Air bill he will give me then. We will also work out dates and times for next year’s excursion with his cousin Scott and our Sudan/Chad/CAR missions to continue from where we have left off this year. I am immediately surrounded by people whose names sound like a litany of the founders including Jeannie (Pontier) Morse who grew up in Assa and cannot believe she has met someone who even knows where it is. Dan Reid and a small group of nurses are here having made a very brief trip to Duk Payuel expecting riots and worse after the referendum they put an embargo on all visits, and I was the one who wound up teaching their chief clinical officer Juma for the weeks past in Werkok.

Jamie Staples, wife of an AIM Air pilot who is picking up our Entebbe Caravan that Jon just brought back to the AIM Air hangar and flying on with it tonight, will be meeting with me tomorrow morning for AIM Air on Field Media and writing up the stories of my missions in Sudan and elsewhere. The TR group wanted to go out tonight to have a dinner more like they will be getting back into so I recommended the Osteria the Italian place I had taken our team six years ago from South Sudan and found out it was Duc Minh Vo’s thirtieth birthday, and the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of Saigon—not at all a coincidence since he was the last person out of Saigon. He was later my GWU medical student and now is finishing as a surgery resident at UC Davis. That TR group went to repeat the magic of that homecoming visit to that restaurant as I went to dinner with Jon and Jeannie in Mayfield. Jeanine said “Did you give the January

Series Lecture at Calvin? We have a relative named Glenn Weaver who is a professor at Calvin College!”

I am about to learn more by trying to re-connect with the emails I have been out of touch with for two months. Apparently all these connections may be known to someone other than I but I am in the “Re-Entry process “effective right now, so I will start trying to tie up the summary thoughts on a trip well taken. Any good trip, of course, takes you. So, this was the trip that took me, “Round the Globe.” With one exception, and that is the arbitrary glitch of admission into the ZemiO site of CAR, it was successful beyond the wildest of hopes and dreams of many or most who participated. I am included as one of those.

11-FEB-D-12

**FOLLOW-UP NOTES FROM OUR CONCLUDING MISSION ON THE FIELD
FROM SUDAN TO KENYA TO ETHIOPIA UPON RETURN**

Wonderful!

--nearly passing all descriptions of the superb ending of our "Flightseeing" Super Safari!

It came after the only disappointment of the entire Circumnavigation-11 missions' series, when all of us as covered with permits to enter and stay in CAR were not able to enter because there was an interval in the six months' renewal permit for the Cessna Caravan 208 we had chartered and its regular renewal, so we could not fly into Zemio to assist the Assa refugees as we had hoped after a week's wait with the UPDF (Ugandan Peoples' Defense Force) who are an international all-African force commissioned to capture LRA Joseph Kony--Africa's current on-the-run "Bad Guy" who had so savagely mutilated the population of our concern.

We flew out of the Nzara military Air Field on the West Equatoria border and landed in Entebbe, where we said goodbye to Scott Downing, returning to Chad, transferred all the surgical and drug supplies and personal support materials through Ron Pontier, the AIM Air pilot there who will distribute the aid to Ambroise the clinical officer we had hoped to train in Zemio and Obo and to Wendy Atkins the long term missionary leader there and to Jean Marco, above all, my long time friend from "Out of Assa" --the title of the book he now has inscribed to him along with the cash support to have his daughters pursue the nursing and medicine we had hoped to help train them in as well.

We now have made a complete plan for next year that includes a Westward Circumnavigation-12 which will start in the second week in January and go to Werkok/Bor/PiBor (we are working on the renovation of the hospital there in the interval) and also Akobo.

We will then fly westward through Wau with Jon Hildebrandt and a chartered Cessna Caravan 208 for a full week in AmTiman Chad and a side trip to a clinic in Haraz. This is made possible now whereas it was impossible before because--like the requirement to enter through Bangui the CAR capital to fly an additional \$6,000 reverse eastward, we could not do this with the "endurance" needed in adequate fuel and payload requirements. Scott's landlord in Eastern Chad is now politically connected to clear us into AmTiman from over Darfur, entering Chad from the east foregoing the unsustainable trip to the capital N'djamena.

Then we would return via Zemio CAR (since the permit has ironically been renewed--but could not be delivered to us because it was the weekend and the newly elected CAR government had not yet got its act together for the twentieth year of renewals. We can then operate in Obo and Zemio and help our Assa refugees further.

The good news from PiBor is attached--our post-op and medically treated large patient volume is doing

well, and the fifteen pre-op patients to be operated on in Werkok MCH (Murle in a Dinka/Bor stronghold!) are on their way as you see from the attached messages from Ajak and Rev. Oruzu.

The full container load of supplies we received while here in Jonglei is allocated for each (tribal) group and is being distributed from MCH Werkok to those in need, including Bor, PiBor, Duk Payuel, Akobo, and Upper Nile.

I have just arrived this moment in Mayfield at Nairobi, and, of course, met all those coming and going--one of which by happenstance turns out to be Jeanie Morris--Ron Pontier's sister (!) who grew up in Assa and can hardly believe that anyone might know where Assa was--let alone having written a book about it!

Our Chartered Caravan return through the superb safaris of Masai Mara at Kichwe Tembo and Lake Nakuru are a feast of visual memories you may be able to share in images and videos I will make available later.

Tomorrow, we clear our pharmacy purchases here in Nairobi and settle up all our accounts including the air charter and I will be interviewed by AIM Media for contributing anything they might find useful from the South Sudan successes and future plans based in all the repeated history of all my Missions in this part of the world, along with the "Gifts from the Poor" forthcoming release.

It has been a thoroughly wonderful --long, long run, but we are all in it for the long, long and longer run!

Cheers! [as we "Round the Bend" on the Final Third of the Global Girdle via Addis Ababa!]

GWG

Dear Drs. Glenn, John and Team Rubicon,

I would like to transmit our thankfulness for Job well done in Werkok and Pibor for the last 2 weeks. Werkok community, patients and the trainees from Panyagor, Duk Payual and Werkok who demonstrated their interest in learning new skills in several areas under the instruction of Dr. Glenn and Sudanese teaching Sudanese program of Continue Medical Education networking. Has showed that our medical staffs have reached another higher level in their surgical skills and clinical judgment. our five work site shall be equipped soon with the supplies we received from you, the following counties (Panyagor, Duk Payual, Werkok, Pibor, Bor civil hospital) will come to pick up their medical supplies donated by Team Rubicon and Dr. Glenn.

Lastly, Pibor community is really blessed for the arrival of our team led by Dr. Glenn. We are really overwhelmed about the need in Pibor, these people are the most marginalized of the marginalized of Southern Sudan because there is no access to health care services, zero infrastructure, no running water, and imagine a lot of disease over here in Pibor such as : PTB, Malaria, intestinal parasites, STD, tape worm, brucellosis, typhoid fever, hernias, hepatitis A,B, PID, UTI, PUD, acute diarrheal infections, water born disease, malnutrition, They are lacking of medicines, even qualified medical staffs are lacking. MSF it's mandate is an emergency medicine, zero surgical procedures been done here at all,

woman with obstetric labor can loss her life, ectopic pregnancy or acute appendicitis can loss their lives. We asked MsF staff to give us a room in their facility to operate some of the Murle patients that had been screened for surgery. MsF country director in Juba Mr. Rob Mulder refused, possibly due to their scope of practice contract. However, we went back and created another alternative for our surgeries. During our 4 days here in Pibor We treated 2,500 patients and 5 surgeries done and We referred more than 20 surgical cases to Werkok hospital for further operation. We are the first team started operating in Pibor ever. These people are still living in primitive live, we need to rescue them. Their biggest request is to repair “Lakurnyang Missionary Hospital in Pibor” and bring qualify medical personnel to help them. it’s one of their dream to become reality soon in the nearest future.

We are very grateful to Dr. Glenn and Team Rubicon for helping our people for the last 2 weeks on “Mission to Heal” and for Peace Initiative program between Dinka Bor, Nuer and Murle this is a unique program that will enhance the lives of our people through medical work and skills changes, networking between doctors from different tribes of Jonglei State.

Blessings,

Dr. Ajak Abraham Kuchkon
Chief Medical Officer
Werkok Hospital (MCH

11-FEB-D-13

**A FINAL DAY IN NAIROBI TO ACCOMPLISH OUR WRAP UP WITH
THE PRECEDING CLOSING MESSAGE FROM THE SOUTH SUDAN
FIELD (11-FEB-D-12) AS WE BEGIN OUR LONG WAY BACK TO
WASHINGTON VIA ADDIS ABABA (ROME) TO IAD**

March 1-2, 2011

I am quite sure that one of these is the real world. I will have to let you and others decide which.

I am in “Cloud Nine”—the First Class of the Sheba Club—the first class of Ethiopian Airlines on a brand new 727-300, probably ordered as they awaited their delivery of the delayed Dreamliner 787. Boeing’s most successful commercial jet airliner in history has almost a thousand orders but is at least three years behind delivery, since they are trying to do what every modern organization does. Involve everyone in the production of the most successful product in airline history. SO, “how do you get everyone in on the action and still get some action?”

Suppliers and quality control have been the problem, and have kept the airliner from flying. If it did, I might be making the flight back from Addis direct to IAD without the re-fueling stop in Rome at the outside taxi way so no one gets to a gate for an illegal international stop in Italy. But, I have hardly any complaint, since I am being feted to first class feast on this Cloud Nine after having an amazing morning in Mayfield Guest house as I was interviewed by Jamie Staples of AIM On Field Media and then made two amazing connections with people who have an interest in places I have been and worked in Africa.

One you already know by name, Jeannie Morse, whose maiden name is Pontier who grew up at Assa. She spent the night and read Gifts from the Poor through in a single sitting, and then worked on the Out of Assa which I inscribed to her. She wanted to introduce her husband to me and as he was flying in from the Sindh Valley in the Pakistani border with India where he works with the Atchey speaking peoples, he would come in all fatigued at mid-morning when I was being interviewed by Jami Staples of AIM-On Filed Media. They were going to Kijabe this morning and would be back later in the week, so she would pick up Out of Assa when she returned later at the front desk, so that I might show the two books to AIM Media. The new on field Director for AIM Air is Dale Hamilton, who is having a reception party on Friday so she is hoping to be able to present him with the Gifts from the Poor which I inscribed to AIM Air.

The second is a woman I met almost casually at lunch. Her name is Kris Klebs and she was working in Nampula Mozambique for New Tribes Mission. This is also the group with which Martin and Gracia Barnham, who were martyred and injured by Abu Sayef, respectively when I first came to Philippines. When I heard that, I gave the story of the wild ride that Ivo

Garrido and I had by “Zorro” out of Lichinga by road and then on the rail test car to the bombed out rail bridges by the Bruxism noisy railway engineer heading into the path of the oncoming “Ninja, But then I remembered a mutual friend in Nampula—Dr. Charles Woodrow. I told of the story in which he had a “Technicos Cirugicos” operating with him on hernia repairs and the local Doctor who was very jealous had him evicted. He was packed up and sitting on the packing cases in the airport when I was accidentally in the Minister of Health’s office in Maputo where the MOH was thanking me for the work I had done and had said “If there is anything I can do for you.....

Immediately I replied “Yes, there is.” We had just intercepted the partial phone call before it was cut off that Charles Woodrow was in the airport being evicted and the MOH reversed that decision immediately and granted his permit to build a new hospital rather than just having him work in Hospital Maurare—in which he was operating in the choir loft of a church abandoned since the revolution. Only later had I heard through Michael, that Charles Woodrow was an air force retiree, and he had a support group of friends in San Antonito who had heard of the crisis and had organized a prayer group meeting around the clock to support him in this critical eviction, saying ““Only some miracle would keep the work there from being terminated”—at the very moment I just happened to be in the MOH office oblivious of all the high drama that had been happening to our friend with whom I had operated in Nampula.

She knows Charles Woodrow and he is nearing completion on the hospital. I have lost him off the email screen, and asked her to relay my card and a message. I have been trying to get him to Toledo for the Medical Mission Hall of Fame. Now, that connection has been established.

All of the morning that was not devoted to attempting re-trying to send an email with the 11-FB-D-12 wrap up of the African missions (the emails could not send out more than a couple of addressees and if more were attempted, it simply vanished) and as I was struggling with the re-sending of what I could from Mayfield the planned arrival of Jami Staples concurred.

She and her husband had gone to JAARS (Jungle Aviation and Radio Service—a subgroup supporting Wycliffe and SIL predominantly in South America and Papua New Guinea and based in North Carolina) were joining AIM as her husband was multi engine rated already as a pilot, and they intend to have him flying the DC-3. He is the one who had picked up the AIM Air Cessna 208 Caravan we had just flown in yesterday from the Entebbe base it has there (the 5Y-PAP) and he had returned it as an AIM Air trainee in order to log in some night time flying hours. She had a tape recorder and asked me to tell the story of the South Sudan: “Masson to Heal” peace initiative between Dinka and Murle, and our recent trip and its successes in South Sudan. I also told her of the permit glitches that had kept us from going in to CAR and she and all of AIM Air are grateful for our not fling on to Bangui establishing a very expensive precedent for all subsequent flights into CAR making each prohibitively expensive by extending them several thousand dollars each way.

Jamie might have got more than she bargained for as I filled up her recorder with a good deal of information she had an acquaintance with but never an integrated program around it. She then loaded all my organized photos from the Sudan and the CAR waiting game, all the photo images I had uploaded and organized—as I did NOT as yet for the safari pictures which are irrelevant for the AIM Air purposes. She also stored all the videos of the mission in central Africa and will work on them into a story and send it to me for here IAM newsletter outlets. She is excited about the idea that National Geographic is interested in joining me for the pursuit of the overall Mission to Heal theme and will follow up on that with Wendy Atkins as well, who was at first fearful of the exposure, but now knows that is the only way the UN and other agencies will be attracted to aid the refugee groups in CAR and DRC.

We were packed out of the room, as John was down and out and the others went shopping as well as paying the Pharmacy bill which was simply put on the cuff as we scooped and ran at departure in short notice. There was a whole lineup of people eager to see and talk with us at departure, as always from the mixing of those in transit through the Mayfield Guest House. One group was Dan Reid who had been to Duk Payuel for only two days saying he was there for administrative purposes and not to deliver any clinical care. He had a nurse from Vancouver and one from Syracuse, each of them first timers in Africa and eager to take on a long term, talking about Moody Bible Institute and other new career pathways opening to them. I said farewell to Jeanne (Pontier) Morse and to Kris Klebs who will be talking with Charles Woodrow, and we got our stuff packed in the AIM Serve van to Kenyatta.

The next stories are all about Cloud Nine. I offered the seat to whomever had a need for it and although eager to try it out, the group did recognize that it was my hundred thousand seat miles on Air Ethiopia paying for the upgrade, so I sat in the Cloud Nine. I did manage to get John Sutter and Brittany into the Addis Cloud Nine lounge as I went looking for purchase of Ethiopian postage stamps, but when I tried to get Josh in, the agents bounced him, so two of my “guests” were in and two were out, as we joined the queue to go through one last security check for the guards to remove any last items from my bags, which now includes a kilo of redolent coffee beans wrapped in plastic

I marked ADDIS at 08° 39.07 N and 038° 47.75 E and at altitude 2,271 meters. This completes my GPS mapping of all the circumnavigation and its key points ‘round the globe westward as I have done it this year, with the pans already in place for “Circ-12” Eastward in January of 2012 to include S Sudan, Chad and CAR before going on to Philippines in Mindanao and Palawan.

I feel anti-social in each of the major “thirds” of the globe as I am westward bound since it is always dark over the Pacific (part I) and across the Middle East (Part II) and across the Atlantic “Out of Africa via Rome” (part III) ---and it would require me to have an overhead light on while people are trying to sleep in the full recliners on this Cloud Nine first class berth. But it is now getting to the end of the Six hours from Addis to Rome and nine and a half hours from

Rome to IAD on this 777 so I will try to ring this bell to closure as the first rays of the sun we have been chasing in its sett.

It was Zack who had calculated that they had made twenty takeoffs and landings in 27 days on their “half trip” For me, that would be longer in time but another dozen flights and even more brutal van rides as in Northern Luzon, or to Bor from Werkok. “Life on the Go” has meaning defined by what it is that you might be doing when at Point B—and the next points down stream, not just in the perpetual motion machine. I believe that going through the motions, and the expense, and the time and the considerable efforts was all worth it as we count up the reward from those who have been encouraged and enhanced in their capabilities by our missions. As in any good race, it is not the finish line that defines them but the running along the course and its purposes.

This one worked and was worth it!