

A SOLITARY JOURNEY

Adventures in Africa

How I longed to have a farm at the foot of the Ngong Hills in Africa. Meryl's words but my dreams as well. Then I could say "shoo shoo, it's my Limoges." Childhood fantasies rarely realized. Children dreaming foolish dreams of wild cats that curled up beside you on overstuffed chairs and big black panthers in the backyard tethered to trees with tiny leather leashes.

The African dream has been running in my blood ever since I was a small girl. At last that dream is a reality and Africa is within my grasp. In but a few days I shall embark on the adventure of my lifetime. Always the adventurer, slightly inflexible at this point in my life I have chosen to make a trip alone into the regions of Africa on safari. Dreams of panthers all but shattered, I now see spots in my dreams.

I returned to New York on September 6, 1996 feeling an attitude of great gratitude that I was fortunate enough to experience the magic that is Africa. It is with this feeling that I share so much of myself and my trip.

Tuesday August 6, 1996. And so it begins. The adventure of my life. Actually, a lifetime in the making, six months in the actual planning. Today I felt very disconnected. It was almost like I was free falling from a plane and waiting in vain for my chute to open. The boys were noticeably distraught yesterday when I left. Winno didn't stay with me in the morning when I readied myself. I missed his bulging eyes and snoring. In the middle of the night, Dakota was sitting at the end of the bed staring. He walked the edge of the bed to my arms and snuggled. His cat like demeanor only offers this behavior in the morning. He suspects that I'm leaving. The suitcases do it every time.

Now I embark on the adventure--alone. Slightly nervous, but all is all great. When I disembark in Athens, I will be #5 for the purposes of Clemis and Carol's pick up. How sweet they are shepherding me in Athens Wednesday means great moussaka.

Mom, / feel your presence here with me. Please don't leave me. / need to spend some quality time with you now, today After all, / miss you. / see you easily You are here.

My mind turns to Arlene. Friend of some standing, 25 plus years, I applaud their impending marriage. Bravo. They have the courage to stand tall. I couldn't do it. I travel to Africa risking all, life and limb I suppose, but would not risk saying I like women. What does that say about who I am, what's important and standing up for what one believes in?

Aside: My knee is like a giant toothache that has captivated my entire muscle structure. Fine beginning. I am propped up with airline pillows. Two relafan, 4 wines. Too many hours to go. Better take some magic melatonin.

Sleep, airline style. My body has been transposed into a series of pretzels carelessly strewn about. Thoughts of Flight 800 permeate my mind. Did they feed them first, fill them with liquor. Was it sudden? My mind races with the anticipation of what lies ahead.

Wednesday August 7, 1996 Athens, Greece

It seems as if age takes a toll. My body is tired. Each cell yearns for sleep. Years ago, I didn't need a rest when I traveled. No jet lag. Today my pores ache! That knee is throbbing. Oh well, I can't let that deter me. I'm off on an adventure of a lifetime. Down the yellow brick road in my ruby socks....once I've had a few winks.

The other day I used the term disconnected while describing my feelings. Today I found myself feeling the same., The flight over seemed like an almost desperate desire to verbally connect with people. To speak to others; know them; have them relate; be interested in me. Standing before the mirror in my hotel room on this first day, I yearn to hear the voice of one I love. Who might that be? To see my dogs. Already? Surely this does not mean I don't wish to travel alone. I've felt this way before, it seems, but I have never examined it so microscopically.

Tollis, Clemis' nephew called. He waited at the airport for two hours. Oh well. He said that everyone commented on the number 5. Everyone except me, who obviously failed to see it! Today we went for lunch. Tonight we will go the the sea for a meal of fresh fish, Tomorrow, I have asked to go and visit Clemis' 85 year old mother and 87 year old dad in Nafpaxtos, a Seaport Village about 2 1/2 hours from Athens. I thought of my Mom in a loving light. Tollis' mother lives there too. The Acropolis for the second or is it the third time pales before this opportunity.

Thursday August 8, 1996 4:00AM Athens, Greece

So much for sleep. I can't anymore. My body cried for repair yesterday. This morning I feel nearly human once more. Sitting in bed munching on a tootsie roll, horrifying thought, but I need to wake up all cells early.

From now on my mornings need to begin very early game drives soon....and end early in the evening. So wake up and get ready.

My leg is challenging my ability to sleep. I think I may have found a comfortable spot. I climbed the mountain in Machu Pichu with this malady, so why not Kilimanjaro. Only joking, but perhaps not, In a few hours we leave to visit Mother Clemis.

Lunch in Nafpaxtos with Helen and Bob Lascaris and Voula, Tollis' mother and Nikos his brother. We sat, wind gently shifting the blue waves eating by the sea. I met !ma, Tollis' girlfriend! Tonight, I sleep. The trip just begins tomorrow.

Tonight I dined on the rooftop of the hotel. The hill on which the Acropolis stands was lit like a jewel against the dusky gray sky. On either side a ruin spiraled up toward the heavens. I sat and people watched as streams of vacant eyed couples dribbled by. I blessed my aloneness instead of compromise.. Indeed! The adventure begins.

Friday August 9, 1996 Athens, Greece

Morning begins several steps out of synch. The zipper on my carry on bag (new) has a big chunk out of the center lost teeth. Not fixable! Safety pins respond to the mini emergency. Also I have contracted a cold. Redoxan and Biaxin. Ten hours on the plane. No nose spray. What a bummer! Oh well. I will knock this out by tomorrow. I will not be disabled or derailed by a mere cold! We land in Joberg in less than 2 hours.

Sidwell picked me up. I am going to Soweto with he and his wife and then to a birthday party. Sidwell and Aaron met me at the airport. They have been friends for over 35 years. On the way to my hotel they told me of their life in Africa before Mandela became President. They shared stories of studying by candlelight....no electricity until a mere ten years ago. No running water. Working all day, studying all night. Documents required in order to move about.

Black busses, white busses, black restaurants, white restaurants. I wouldn't have come here then.

Saturday August 10, 1996 Joberg, late night

I didn't sleep at all last night. I have this nasty cold.. I feel as though I have been made into road kill. I do know that this too shall pass.

Today on my outing to Soweto, I saw hopelessness. Johannesburg is indeed a city of contrast. Soweto with its divided sections. Indian, Colored and Black, settlements of clapboard lean to's with trash all over. Unemployment is rampant. The old government deprived the blacks of all rights but conversely gave rights to the Indians. Contrasting this unbelievable situation are the wealthy South Africans. It is truly amazing. The US dollar goes far enough here to allow a fantastic lifestyle. I think we are so very limited in our experiences. Last night I enjoyed a fabulous meal of seafood with Bill Harris and his wife Theresa.. I had such a horrid cold and was so very sick. They were just great and took me to the local pharmacy filling me full of African medication. Thank God for them. I stocked up on Kleenex, Vitamin C, cough drops and the like for my sojourn into the bush tomorrow.

Sunday August 11, 1996

On my way to Zimbabwe. God was good to me. I could have been seated next to some computer nerd or a lady with a baby. Instead, I got some Italian stud and what I think was his lover. So, I guess that's where all the great looking guys are these days. He reminded me of Mace.

Arrived at liana Lodge. My arrival was unheralded by any particular event or events save for the gaggle of banded mongoose that paraded past my windows. I announced the citing in my first post cards from the bush, as my first animal siting. As the days went on it hardly seemed worth an honorable mention as sitings go. If I had one wish at this particular moment it would be that I didn't feel so sick. But the good news is that I will not give way to this sickness or to hurt my trip in any way. I settled into my room as a large family of baboons sauntered by. Several approached my window fearlessly. I'm brave, but quickly closed my window.

Walked to the open marketplace with all its excitement. There I bought a pair of masks and several stone pieces, one of which I promptly dropped. The people of Zimbabwe are very friendly, polite and helpful. I am overdosing on Biaxin and vitamins so that I can feel better.

At 3:30PM I was picked up for my helicopter ride. Boarding the 6 seater I donned a mic and earphones, just like a real pilot as we lifted off and soared like a giant bird towards Victoria Falls. Now I experienced my first real animal sightings, though even these would certainly pale as my trip continued.

From our birdlike vantage point I could see tiny figures of elephant herds, zebra and a raft of hippos lazing in the Zambezie River, and giraffes, babies and moms. They appeared taller than tall, even from the air. Hard to shoot from the copter although I made a valiant attempt as my hand and the camera shook. The blades from the copter cut through the air sharply as we headed towards one of the wonders of the world, Victoria Falls. My first thoughts were my God what an amazing site. My body was frozen as I watched a rainbow dance across the entire width of the falls. It's thundering girth pours into a narrow rocky gorge causing the water to rise like smoke and creates an almost surreal picture. The mist hangs like a cloud over the rocks while brilliantly colored rainbows shift from side to side in a magical dance: I feel unbelievably fortunate. What a gift to have given myself. I shall pray that my overall health improves tomorrow.

The silence of an African night. Lights are automatically turning on and off outside. Each moment I am up from my bed to peek out and see who or what was there. So far the only presence was a lone wart hog. Scary site.

Monday August 12, 1996 Zimbabwe Victoria Falls

How I love Africa! It is truly a paradise. The feeling one has when standing in an open air vehicle, watching the zebra stare you down or the sable dine on grass. It is truly amazing. I decided to jump right in and go on my first game drive. I arranged for it through the liana. I left early, by someone's standards that is. Early, as my trip progressed was 6:00am. Early here at this moment in time was 8:30 am.

I took the catbird seat in an open air Land Cruiser and off we went During the first hour I spotted Kudu, Quarry Busters, Zebra, Sable and a few cute Wart Hogs. Africa is a place I will return to . The parched dry heat of the African sun is not a deterrent to every minute being filled with a new experience. Standing in the open vehicle, the hot sun beating down on meno hat of course...,the wind whipping across my face and hair as I watched zebra and sable grazing on the open grasslands.

I returned to the liana, spent but still feeling incredible. Kim gave me a homemade sandbag so that I could stabilize my camera. Unfortunately hands shake while shooting. What a Godsend. Kim was going back to Dallas Texas after spending three weeks in this paradise. She was lamenting about her return. I know that I will be feeling the same in what will seem like an instant.

returned to the marketplace once again. There is so very much to see, so much that I want. I think it is a pity that I only have two hands. I bought some wonderful passport masks! Decided that I wanted to get a special gift for someone. The definition of a gift is something that the other person will want, that you give freely, no strings and no expectations. Passport masks are all one of a kind depicting the different tribes. They were made in a village in West Africa called I believe Grodin. The warriors wear them on their arm to tell all what tribe they belong to. Since I fell in love with the masks I bought eight of them, each one unique to itself.

stopped at the liana to pick up my camera and head to Victoria Falls on foot. Of course as the Queen of bad directions, I went a mile or so in the dust out of my way. It was worth it though! Every speck of dust I swallowed. A wonder of nature. The mist rising up like clouds to spray my parched face. Water thundering from every direction into a narrow gorge like a hungry open mouth below. Double rainbows one following the same pathway between two sheer rocks glistening with fine mist. I shot over and over until the film ran out. Breathtaking site. On the way back to the lodge, a family of baboons were lunching by the road. As I stooped and shot a photo of one baboon who was sitting in the street with his feet on the curb in some water, he turned and headed towards me.

I moved out of his way as quickly as lightning. This is not the zoo. There are no fences, wires or gates between you and lions, cheetah, elephant, giraffe, hippo, crocodile. Nothing is between you and the animals, not even your Calvin's. This is day two. I dread the last day already as I know I am not going to want to leave here.

Clive picked me up in a smartly appointed Land Cruiser that screamed Kandahar Safaris from both sides. I was number one in what I was told would be a party of 10. A family of six (horror of horrors), a couple and perhaps salvation, a single guy. Well, there is a God. At first I was wondering what cruel trick of fate this was. A family of six indeed! Screaming kids, four of them no doubt. Oh what had I done to deserve this. We picked up the couple, they hailed from Canada and were very nice. Then we made our second stop and the family jumped on. A lawyer from London, his wife and four incredibly well traveled children. The youngest Sarah, was about 8 or 9 and had absolutely no fear at all. Then the single guy swung onto the Land Cruiser. Allah is good. A 42 year old single actor from Hollywood, can you believe? Just finished shooting a picture in Sun City. Oh well, it was a tough job, but someone had to draw duty. So our happy group motored down the dusty road towards the campsite, which was set up alongside the Zambezie River.

While motoring along we had the dubious distinction of being charged by a young male elephant who was quite irritated that we had stopped to watch he and the rest of the herd dine on some branches. We thought little of it until a few minutes later, when we looked behind us and saw the elephant running after our vehicle. What a sight.

We also saw our first lion hiding in the tall grass with two cubs. As the African sun began to sink into the night, I was overwhelmed by Africa and its beauty.

The campsite consists of several tents, a bath tent (that is a bush shower) and a medical toilet tent. A dining table has been placed with lovely candles in the center. By the time we arrived the group that was preparing to depart had already been seated for dinner. We just slid in and shared our stories of being charged by elephant with a much more seasoned group.

Robert walked me back to my tent, which I refused to share, gave me some fleeting instructions on keeping warm and left. Unfortunately, I had no idea that a sleeping bag was on top of my bed and therefore nearly froze to death alongside the river that fateful night. All night I wondered what would be done if I ended up with pneumonia on this trip. I reasoned that it would be easier to treat than a plain old cold. The sounds of Africa gently wafted in the backdrop of the rushing river. I couldn't sleep at all. Hippos cried out for their babies, snorting as they made their way up the river banks to graze on the grass; birds sang, calling to their families; an eternity of nighttime surrounded me.

The African sky at night is a blanket filled with stars. So many stars that the entire sky appears almost white. The thick and luscious Milky Way forms a wide pathway that cuts across the sky like a machete. The severe black background of night held diamonds by the millions for us to gaze upon for hours on end. It was overwhelming. All I could think about was canoeing in the morning. I had no preconceived idea about what to expect, but I wasn't expecting what I got. Therein my newest phrases. Expect the unexpected and never expect anything. Absolutely two phrases in synch.

Tuesday August 13, 1996 Canoe Safari 7:00 am

Today is the dugout canoe safari. I'm really not sure what that is. I sort of have this vision of Venice, with a ruggedly handsome Adonis rowing me down some peaceful river. The hippos were snorting in the background of the beautiful Zambezie as off we go to the mouth of the river. Well, imagine my surprise when I am handed a smart little purple lifejacket and a canoe paddle and given instructions on how I am canoeing 26 mile& Yes you heard correctly, 26 miles. Just as I was recovering from that shock, I heard the words rapids. They were sandwiched in between a sentence that began, "The first two rapids come one right after the other" First two. I couldn't believe my ears. First two. I repeated the words again like someone incapable of a basic understanding of the English language. Those words were followed by "After the second rapid take care to veer to the left as there is a large rock in the center." Rock in the center....veer to the left. I was still reeling from the word RAPIDS.

My head was pounding. The heat of the morning sun was beating down on my bare uncapped head. The combination of the malaria medication and the antibiotic were making me very sick. On top of that, I hadn't signed up for a 26 mile canoe trip over rapids with me as the canoe person. Whoa, hold everything, stop the presses, I need a time out.

I looked around and carefully weighed my options. I could cry like a sniveling Princess and whine and wail that I could not, would not, should not ruin my hands by using that canoe paddle. But then here was this 8 year old jumping into the canoe in front of me. Oh my word, how humiliating! Then there was my canoe partner, Robert. Oh, how would this act look! I could never live it down. Besides the options were slim to none. There wasn't even a car to take me back to the campsite. That left walking or swimming, both of which I vetoed immediately. With that in mind I donned my purple vest, grabbed up the paddle and took my place in the front of the canoe with Robert seated behind me. *David you are right this is a dangerous trip!* In practice mode with my canoe paddle and hardly comfortable when Robert yells, hippo! Clive screams for us to paddle and by the look on his face he means "for your life." This it turns out is exactly what we were doing, paddling for our lives.

You see, the hippo was at the shore and spotted us. A human sighting! Since hippos feel threatened when they are not in deep water, their sole purpose becomes getting to deep water. Anything between them and deep water can be in deep trouble. The hippo submerged, to rise again somewhere in the river. While paddling for my life I took an enormous chunk of skin out of my right hand. Sad but true, this medical emergency occurred during the first ten minutes of my canoeing. By the time we had outrun and outmaneuvered the hippo, I had nearly forgotten how frightened I was of the R word.... Rapids.

As Robert screamed for me to paddle, I used my feet as anchors on the inside of this little rubber boat and slammed the paddles into the water as we were tossed around like rag dolls. It was all I could do to remember that we needed to veer to the left to avoid being squashed like two bugs against the large boulder that loomed out of the white water. Rapid number three was the worst. It was during this foray that I nearly parted with my Armani glasses as the boat leapt towards the heavens, abusing our bodies on the way down. During rapids four and five I succumbed to pressure from Robert and gave him my glasses to hold for safekeeping.

I can't say that I was displeased when the Clive announced the finish of the final rapid and called for smooth canoeing from that point forward. Unfortunately, he failed to mention the new wrinkle in our smooth sailing trip. Hippos and crocodiles...hippos and crocodiles.

So as we made our way blissfully down the river, suddenly right in front of our boats were both species amply represented. A 14' crocodile sunbathing about 20' from the shore in the water and a raft of hippos about 30' from the crocodile. We dragged the boats out of the water and stood watching. I suggested that we walk the boats past the crocodile and hippos. I thought that was the best approach given all the facts. Clive said, back in the water. What! This is insanity! No way!

So back in the water went our boat. Clive instructed us to stay close to the shore. Oh no, I thought I don't want to stay close to the shore, I'd much rather just canoe right out to the middle and get eaten by a crocodile. Sure, I'll stay by the shore. How about on the shore, like on the land. What about that Clive old boy? Oh well. Robert seemed very certain about all of it, so I gave up control grabbed onto some brush along the water and prayed silently. The thought that crossed my mind at that moment was that I was too old for this, I should be home gardening. I detached from that thought immediately. We made it.

Further down the river we stopped for lunch. I fell asleep on the side of one of the canoes. Not the most comfortable place but when every cell of ones body is exhausted than anyplace becomes comfortable. We pushed off into the river once again, only another 10 more miles to go. I couldn't believe it. Ten miles, it might as well have been 10,000 miles! My fingers were bloody and they were throbbing. The bandages had fallen off exposing a large raw area nearly 1/2" deep. My nose was stuffed, my head was pounding like someone was inside with a jackhammer trying in vain to get out. But I trudged forward.

Suddenly about 200' in front of our boat a male elephant strolls into the water. Clive called to us to stop canoeing. By this point in our trip we looked like a finely tuned precision Olympic team. Stroke, stroke, stroke. We stopped, but our boats continued to drift. They wafted and waned until they came to rest a few feet from the elephant, who was now up to his proverbial ears in water. We sat quietly as he surveyed his territory. Their eyesight is not so great, so hard as it was to imagine he failed to see five rubber canoes bobbing in front of him. Finally, once we were absolutely certain that he would overturn our flimsy rubber canoes with his bulk he turned and marched across the river behind us.

Truly a day of sighs of relief. A was dark when we paddled into the campsite. The sounds of silence were deafening. My hands were bloody and cut, my body exhausted beyond mere physical tiredness; the entire surface of my skin ached; but I did it. I didn't think I could do it but I did it! Bully for me!

In order to fully understand the experience of today and of Africa in general I think it is important to understand and accept that every day, every moment one is at risk. At risk from the elements, the hot African sun which parches and dries you; the animals which at best are very unpredictable. Each day is a new experience because one can never be certain of what will happen, ever. A guide with years of experience cannot second guess a hippo or a lion.

You can only do what you may and hope that your experience guides you correctly. If not, you die or are hurt according to the law. You may be viewing a herd of elephant from 100' one day and all seems fine. They could be playing in the water or bathing or feeding. One day a young male decides to assert himself and charges. One never knows. This is not the E ride at Disneyland where the guide whips out a rifle and shoots a fake hippo. The sounds of hippos emerge from the river. The power of the bubbles, the rush of the water, little ears wiggling. There you are in a two person rubber canoe in the middle of the Zambezie river and the hippos suddenly disappear. There could be a raft of 10 or 12 hippos and they just might reappear right under your canoe. Hippos cause more carnage than any other animal in Africa. What a comforting thought that is!

Africa lets you know it's power It's ability to control absolutely. Africa is the dominator in all ways. The country and its inhabitants own you and your life. If you leave Africa, it is because Africa has allowed you to leave.

Wednesday August 14, 1996 Still on the river

Awoke this morning feeling great. The early morning sun danced along the waters of the river. The deafening sound of water rushing over rocks filled my nights sleep. I was serene. Small birds sang sweetly to one another.

We headed back towards Victoria Falls so that Patrick could pick me up. The rest of the group, without the Canadian couple, stayed on the river. I couldn't have canoed another inch.

I did some last minute shopping before Patrick picked me up. He looks the part of the consummate adventurer, beard and safari hat, rugged looking. Heather was already in camp waiting for us. We drove into Botswana passing two Passport Control centers where hoards of tourists spilled out onto the ground ready for their "safari." The hot African sun beat down as Patrick drives us into the Chobe Game Reserve in Botswana. The fine silt holds onto my face. I feel as if I need water all over my body. We see a herd of elephants bathing in the mud.

Fifty or so hippo lie in a pod on the shore. I can't believe how they amble up roads to munch the grass. Sometimes they travel up to three miles at night! Frightening thought, coming upon a hippo in the dark. He's on his way to the water and you are on your way from the water. You are now between hippo and safety. The rest is hippo lunacy. Three giraffe nibble some leaves and a herd of sable dart from the watering hole across the highway. Dirt, dust, rocks, no road that's paved. Finally we arrive in camp. The dining tent is lovely, all set for lunch with beautiful linen napkins, wine sits in a bottle on a tiny table.

My tent is sweet and the bathroom has been placed right behind it. I feel the need for a shower. Hot water is placed in a large canister above the tented bush shower. I look up at the sky. Nothing between me and Africa now, just air. This is heaven. I went for an evening game drive. It was beyond belief. The light purple sky of an African sunset became the backdrop for a herd of elephant eating and bathing in the Chobe River. I am one hour into the Reserve. Nothing here but dirt roads, rocks and brush. No contact with anyone for the next 10 days, except for Patrick and Heather.

Close encounter with a female lion. Soon others were all around. My adrenaline is rushing. This is like nothing I have ever experienced. I have never felt like this in my life. What a rush. A wild dog begins to chase a pack of antelope. Wild dog is very rare. This turns out to be the only one I will see on my trip. We leave the park in a hurry as we need to get out before 6:30PM. A herd of Cape Buffalo is in the area. Perhaps they will visit us tonight.

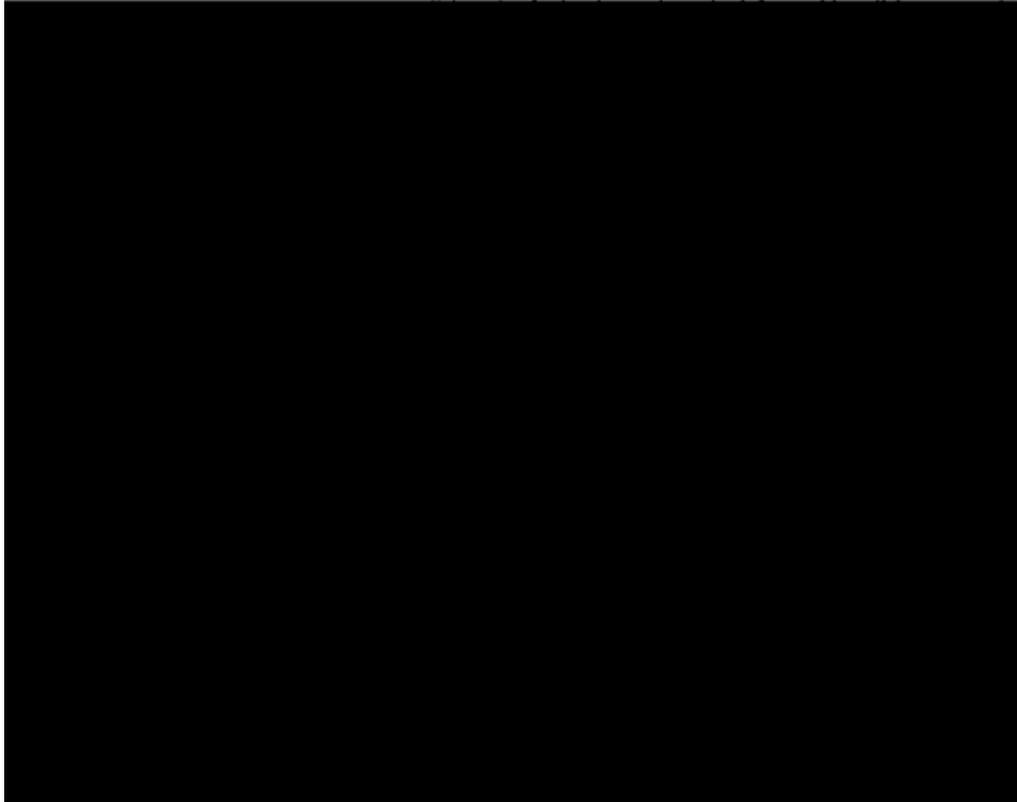
Thursday August 15, 1996 Chobe Game Reserve

The African night is a melody. A cacophony of the roar of lions, sweet melodious birds calling out, the trumpeting of the elephant. A continuous flow. Looking up through the open netting of my tent at the blanket of stars that fill the midnight sky.

Something is in the camp. Some animal is near my tent. I dare not go to the lieu for fear I shall meet a lion face on with only my flashlight and the African moon between us. So I shall be very still until the morning. The sun is up in the sky in various hues of orange, purple, red. Unbelievable. We are going on a game drive.

Just returned from our 6:30am drive. Our campsite is in a remote area of Chobe Game Reserve. A dining tent in the middle, a kitchen tent, my tent with a lieu and shower tent. It's awesome, out in the middle of a Game Reserve. I only see people, other than Heather, Patrick and our staff when I have the misfortune of spotting a truckload of tourists.

The delicate balance of nature is amazing. I know it, but hardly think of it. Survival of the fittest. There can be no interference of any kind or in any way. It is legal to kill elephants in many African countries.



We have just finished breakfast and are waiting to refuel before heading out. I realize how little I enjoy traveling with other people. I suppose I have become a bit inflexible. I want to do what I want to do. I suppose I would make some allowance for a special person.

Sharing the experience with oneself, truly experiencing that special moment totally and completely enables you to share with another. I can therefore share my African experience with anyone I choose. They will enjoy through my total saturation of the moment. Patrick has just strung up some wire and such. He is trying to get through to Maun by short wave. Remote, yes remote. The only people here, Patrick, Heather, myself and the staff. The wind blowing gently through the trees, leaves rustling, dry leaves taking flight then crash landing. The flaps on my tent slapping the sides. The sound of the wind. The noise of the truck as it refuels. Native tongue spoken here and there. A few birds in the backdrop and a resounding stillness. Quiet. The sound of my own breathing.

The cut on my hand is not healing. Injured canoeing, lost a chunk of skin off my right thumb. It hurts. I am using my new first aid kit bandages and such. At least my cold is better, although I still sound horrid. We are going to the Chobe Lodge to try and book the boat trip on the river today.

I have officially given up on doing anything with my hair. It was a nice thought but quite impossible. Last night in the bucket shower, I just wet it. AD day today I poured water onto it, brushed it back, slick with a tie on it and covered it with a baseball cap. That certainly will have to do until I arrive back in Johannesburg one week from Saturday. I actually saw civilization today at Chobe Game Lodge. It must be something like the Mt. Kenya Safari Club I think. The thought crossed my mind that I should cancel that. I'm not totally sure of all that Africa is, but it is not the Mt. Kenya Safari Club.

It's hot, parched, dry. Green patches spring up around cool pools of water. Trees show their winter coats without leaves. Yes hot as it is it is winter here. We drive over rock and dirt roads vehicle going airborne, equipment jumping for the sky. Nothing is paved, just potholes, dirt, silt. African soil, hot from the days burning rays. Sun beating down, drying you out. I'm surprised that any cold can survive this African sun for more than one day. But I'm not tired. I can't get enough of the animals. They are so majestic. A giraffe peeked over some tall shrubs as I frantically snapped away. They are so very sweet, so very amusing. I will never tire of watching them. Each day is so very exciting. I can't say that I miss the office or work in the least.

It's evening. I am writing by kerosene lantern. The African winds are blowing gently across our site. Heather is in the open kitchen tent cooking. The scents of her culinary delights fill the air. Something with prune and port. Creamed potatoes and homemade soup.

As I took a bush shower, the warm water running over my silt covered body I thought of how lucky I am to be here. I thought of how I would like to share this with someone special.

This experience called Africa. I have thought of nothing else save the majesty of this trip. I worry, not about business and in effect have thought precious little about it at all.

I have really in all honesty given it and all around it except Mitch, only fleeting and meaningless thought since I arrived. I have however spent time imagining sharing the Africa I am seeing with someone special .

This evening's game drive was astounding. I sighted my first zebra in Chobe. Two skittish zebra anxious to flee my camera's eye. I saw them twice today and got back end views of them as they fled. Curious giraffe watched me watching them. I find all of that very amusing. More often than not as I focus in on the animals, they stop and all begin looking at me. I wonder what they are thinking. One becomes spoiled with the animals in Africa. The very first day in Zimbabwe I marveled at my sighting of a one wart hog, a family of banded mongoose and some baboons. I now pass with some degree of disregard herds of impala, unless a spectacular male or two are present.

Wart hogs in practically all cases and baboons save for the rather precocious one in the tree by himself today. He flashed as he sat in a tree with a fish eagle. Then he climbed to the top and balanced himself precariously on the dry branches above. We were nervous for him.

This evening's drive we saw a pride of lion majestically posing on the side of the road. There were six, all tawny, fading nicely into the African sands. They yawned and moved with planned laziness. It appeared that they had eaten and were certainly sated for today. As I shot and shot lion after lion we discussed the plight of the seventh lion, who seemed to be missing. Could she be dead, wounded? One had been in a fight with a buffalo, earlier in the week. Suddenly she appeared, walked to an open spot and lay down. As my camera eye was focused one of the lions rose and assumed the stalking position. In the distance about 300 yards away several impala were dining on leaves. They did not sense danger. The lion moved swiftly and quietly to the trees behind the pride and disappeared. We waited - Impala dined and all was well.

Suddenly the seventh lion rose assumed the stalk position and crept towards the dining Impala. I climbed back over the seat for a better view. Of course at this very moment my 36 roll film was at 35. I shot (photographically of course) a lion staring, pressed the rewind, the sound of it like a jackhammer, in the stillness of Africa and popped in a new roll. The lion moved to within 15' of the impala. He waited, I waited binoculars focused. The rest of the pride looked on in an almost careless disregard.

Then an Impala looked up, a female lion, one of the pride, walked careless behind the crouching male and strolled across the dirt road. She had cubs and they were waiting. The lion paused, the Impala ran, and adrenaline stopped. All in a heartbeat. We returned to camp. As a sidenote, the stalker was the wounded lion. His wounds to the back right haunch were not serious.

Friday August 16, 1996 Chobe Game Reserve

Lying in my tent in the black African night, my two lamps have been darkened by the winds and the only light is from the stars and a dying campfire. The sound of owls and other assorted animals echo with a deafening pitch across the still Savannah. I can hear each leaf as it rustles under the arms of the gentle winds. A grass fire burns in wild abandon on the Namibian horizon. I sleep, for at 6:00 am we rise for the early morning drive., The tall dried grassy plains are still in the early morning sunrise. Slowly we moved over the rocky dirt pathways, eyes sharp, looking watching for signs of wild life. Suddenly to our right down a bank by water, we saw her. A single female drinking water surrounded by her three cubs. The cubs were playful as two jumped the mother. Then as we watched from above, they began to play together tirelessly. The female and her brood crossed the road directly in front of us and on into the bush.

I have long since given up on my hair and nails. All of my nails are broken. My hands are cut and scraped, my body bruised, my nose red and raw from blowing and my hair, well let's just say I just stick my head under the shower pull my hair back and slap a baseball cap onto my head.

Later this morning we watched as a huge elephant herd cross the river. They made their way onto the banks and cross directly in front of our vehicle single file. A baby put on a show for me rolling around in a dust bowl then getting stuck and needing help from it's Mother. My film went out, again. I panicked, forgot how to rewind and lost a Kodak moment. Later I was redeemed when I spotted a group of three females and babies. Three of the babies were sleeping on the ground while Mom stood guard. This is a very unusual sighting. My camera worked perfectly. I remembered some declaration I had made prior to my heading for Africa. I think it was something about not wanting to get caught up with my camera, and miss the experience. The camera captures the experience so that you have it with you always.

Drove to Kasane for supplies today. This will be our afternoon drive as we are going on the Chobe River for animal viewing at 4:30PM. So here we go to post my cards and we spot a large herd of hippos lying on the river banks lazily taking a sunbathe. On the opposite shore closest to us several large elephant rolled in the mud then dusted off with the sand. A baby elephant got stuck in the mud and struggled to get out. Suddenly from across the road a lion walked to the water, then another crossed in front of our vehicle. They hunched over the water and drank while crocodiles sunned on the river bank.

The balance of nature, very delicate indeed. We drove to the high road where the fresh kill of a baby elephant could be seen on the road side below us. It had been killed earlier and dragged to a small clearing where the three lions were feeding. They will return to feed when it cools down. In the meantime they made their way past us, faces bloodied to drink some water. On one hand I wanted to see them feed, on the other the baby elephants are so cute it made me a bit sad. One cannot interfere. Africa is the law. All things happen for reasons beyond our scope. We must accept the laws of nature.

We're going to lunch then rest, I need that, then off to Chobe Lodge for the river cruise. This morning I ran into the two Italians I had met at Victoria Falls Wednesday, no it was Monday morning. I can't get away with anything, anywhere. Frankly, I don't want to. The cruise was very touristy. We, Patrick and I met a girl, Mandy from London. It turns out she is a stewardess for Mohammed al Rashid, the mega zillionaire. Now ex- husband of the infamous Mouna, of late toast of New York. From his post as financial advisor to the Saudi King he surveys his 355' yacht, Gulfstream Jet, crew of four. Unfortunately, she was a prisoner! She escaped. I think I would like to know her if only to meet someone so strong of principle.

Sunset was lovely. Italian contingent on board. Amazing how I put up walls against people, I wonder why. I watched as two giraffe darted across the moonlight sky. Just took a shower, a bush shower. It is enclosed on three sides, a large can hangs overhead with a shower head and turn valve. The sky above is pitch in color and blanketed with stars. The African night is mild and a slight breeze rustles the leaves in the trees above. A lion roars. Birds call out. I turn the valve and perfect warm water sprays onto my body. I stand there for what seems like forever, looking at the sky, thinking how lucky I am, contemplating what I should care about, where I should be right now. I feel so relaxed right now, I can't believe it. The water runs over my naked body.

This is Africa. It is not the Mt. Kenya Safari Club or Chobe Game Lodge with tiled baths and CNN. I have that and all of its woes in New York. I came here to experience Africa, and I am.

Saturday, August 17, 1996 40 miles of bad road Sevuti style

It's 6:00am and we are breaking camp to move to Savuti Game Reserve. Last night the stillness of the dark star studded sky was broken frequently by the roar of my lions and the trumpeting of the elephants. I thought sadly of the baby elephant who became food for the lions, then let it go to the balance of nature. Birds all varieties are singing and calling. We are heading out for an early drive to check on our lions, then we begin our six hours to Savuti.

I'm thinking a lot about relationships and what should be consistent with a healthy one. I have made some decisions about what is important in the framework of a relationship. Any relationship. A synergistic relationship to be exact. Synergistic is a word that David uses and I have begun to like that word a lot, it says so much. So during this six hours of hard road I define that relationship for me. The harmony of relationships those common threads that weave a real relationship together. To begin with it needs to be a place where you can fully and freely express who and what you are at all times, safely. Second it should be a place where you are empowered, encouraged, enabled, and inspired to reach your highest potential for growth and greatness; live your life to the fullest; and realize all of your dreams. Third, it should be a sanctuary for appreciation, admiration and respect. A feel good place. Sounds like the right place for me to be. Sounds like I could use some work on number three with Mitch.

So our game viewing was not great, but the thought processes were stupendous. Just narrowly missed a lioness and cubs. This is not an exact science. I must learn an important animal lesson, patience. The Savannah is wide open and dotted with brush and tall nutria colored grass.

A perfect set of camouflage for all wild animals. Giraffe tucked between two trees; lions nestled behind tall grass. You stare at the horizons and suddenly a herd of elephants appear. You allow the eye to wander for a moment and like a Copperfield magic trick, the herd disappears as they drop into a tall grass filled gorge. Moments later in another location they rise tall and proud like a herd of Phoenix rising from the dry Savannah grasses.

We are on our way to Savuti. We are now traveling on a one lane sand road. There is nothing between Kasane, the last outpost and Sevuti. We just passed the last village, a grouping of thatched roof huts by the roadside. A traditional store with crafts in the middle where I selected a woven basket type bag. The silence of our campsite with all it's animal sounds is loud by comparison. There is nothing out here save for a slight breeze and the distant very distant minor sound of a single vehicle of some sort. It is probably our truck with all the supplies. Other than that, we just ride the roller coaster sand road for another two hours before we truck back into Chobe Game Park.

We are up to our asses in sand in the middle of nowhere. This is the road to somewhere although it looks like a road to nowhere. Suddenly rising before us like a huge green dragon is our supply truck. It's stuck in the sand. No accurate word on what is happening. If you do have the unfortunate luck to get stuck the good news is that one or two cars travel this way each day. The truck has overheated and blown its water.

I am being summarily surrounded by Manapali flies. They are little, horrid and seem to be as abundant as the grasses of the Savannah. I have taken my tiny Calvin Klein shirt and placed it like a CK mosquito netting on top of my baseball cap to keep the flies out of my eyes and ears. A truck is stuck now ahead of us so we must drive off the road, so to speak, and forage through the brush. This is literal. So as we are driving through and over the brush and small trees following our supply truck, me swatting little flies, the fire extinguisher in the supply truck goes off and sends all of the staff scattering. All that behind us, we set up a picnic by a mud hole about one hour from our final destination. I wanted adventure. I got adventure.

This is not for princesses or the faint of heart. It's nearly 4:00pm and we are here. Every single inch of me is covered in a fine African dust. Savuti has no water. It had water at one time and several companies put up tented camps to accommodate tourists. Then the water dried up so the Government fills three water holes to keep the animals and tourists coming. We went to one of the watering holes and saw four lions. I took great shots of them drinking. They were reflecting their strong tawny bodies in the water beneath them. Majestic creatures, I never tire of watching them. Our campsite is remote. I use this term and now qualify the word remote. Sevuti is remote. Its accessibility is by an off road sand type stretch...i.100 miles of this...fine sand, deep at times. Accessible only by 4wd. So getting here is not particularly easy.

There are three lodges a term for set up campsites in one case, Lloyds or two other hotel type accommodations. There are five private campsites like mine. Our site is at least seven to ten miles from anyone or anything. As I walk in our cleared site, the sound of the dry Savannah grass echoes miles to the next site of civilization no doubt. All one can hear are some birds, the staff chopping firewood, my breathing and turning the pages in this book. Never have I known such silence except when I went into a retreat of silence, self imposed in Montecito, California. The fire smells pungent and I can hardly wait to get into my bush shower and wash off this layer of sand.

The smells of Heather's cooking hit my nostrils like a speeding train. Suddenly I am ravenous. All thoughts of dirt and dust are gone. Washed away by the fixation of one of Heather's great bush meals cooked over an open fire. For a moment I imagined someone special sitting here khaki shorts, enjoying a glass of wine with me by the fire on this balmy African night. Our vehicles stand before me, no longer dusty dirty hulls, they are giant black Cyclops silhouetted against the navy blue sky and lit by the Man in the Moon.

If I make a wish, will it come true or is that only true if you catch a lady bug and tell her to fly away and she does; or when you wish on a shooting star as it rockets across the sky. I will wish on this sliver of a moon hovering over my fire in Africa.

Sunday August 18, 1996 Sevuti Game Reserve

Africa is not for the faint of heart or weak of spirit. It challenges you every moment of every day. Never allow yourself to become complacent because in that instant you will be jolted back to the reality of Africa. To its hold over you and its omnipotent power. You are merely a mortal in a world where the rules are no longer yours. I went to sleep last night an upset stomach to the voice of Nana. I was awakened by the trumpeting of elephants and a noise. I later found that was a hyena fussing around in the kitchen. I had my spot on once or twice in the night but failed to turn anything up. Patrick is worried I might be dehydrated. That is another word for Med Vac. So I am drinking more water, instantly. I was surprised at his seeming lack of concern for my health as I struggled valiantly to overcome my cold.

We spotted some giraffe and I got some great shots of lion as a pride lazed about in some tall grass. Two males finally stepped out of the shadows and permitted me to canonize them on film. Regal and majestic they crossed the road like the kings that they are. Water is pumped into Sevuti since it's dry like a desert and a very difficult terrain. The sand is deep at times. Your insides rock from even the shortest of trips. Tracking leopard on this am game drive when we forgot my rule #1 and became complacent. I did and as we drove through the deep brush I got whacked in the face with a branch. It hit me clean across the mouth, narrowly missing my nose and eyes. One inch higher and it surely would have broken my nose. I applied a small plastic bottle of water that had been in the cooler, bottle and all to the smacked area. The coolness helped and I trust I won't have the proverbial fat lip.

Sighted a pack of scattered silver backed jackals by a small watering hole. Through my camera's eyes I watched as the jackal chased and caught a bird. Ever now the sequence shooter, I was able to get some interesting shots, I think. Africa is changing me. I see it already in how I have been thinking, analyzing. I feel as though I will be less concerned about problems than ever before. Also, I have an attitude about honesty and being forthright that I will use. If it is meant to be than surely it will be done.

There is a saying in Africa, AWA. That means, Africa Wins Again. That is very true. You are the minority player here. Humbled by the elements and the animals. Or you should be anyway. I am very proud of myself. This is really a major accomplishment.

Dealing with Africa, remote Africa alone. People, men and women can and do suffer so dramatically from the isolation and the danger that they can't cope with it and must leave. Generally, they are MedVacd out.

After all you are in a sense invading their turf. Anything can and does happen and there you are. You must then sort things out in an orderly way.

I have just defined Synergistic Relationship, which is the basis for what I must have to bake the cake called relationship. Africa makes you think. It is about survival. It is about growth. It is about what's important. Life and death. Africa really does take one back to basics. I have done more thinking of an analytical type in these past days than I have done in years. I must have a Synergistic Relationship first. This has absolutely nothing to do with harmony of a sexual nature or those other ingredients necessary for a good solid relationship. These are the building blocks, the structure, the foundation. On top of this you add your structure, but it will not stand on sand. These are the steel pylons for a relationship for me at this stage of my life.

Just before lunch we sighted a chorus line of ostrich, six of them prancing along like a gangly group of young chorus girls. A family portrait of giraffe wide eyed with lashes curled up. So cute!

The land is so parched and dry that your breathing gets shallow. The heat is with us today in waves, although the nights and mornings have been a bit chilly. The other night I thought it was raining, but it was merely the sound of the insects bodies slamming into my tent from the inside.

The air seems very thick this afternoon. Even the breeze isn't really moving it. I had my first Wildebeest sighting. I thought mirror mirror on the wall. They are very ugly, like bits and pieces of all animals. I am resting until 4:30 when we go out again. Tomorrow, we leave for Moremi. The lack of water in this area makes it very different. There are few baby anythings in Savuti. Male dominated herds. All male elephants. Still no leopard or cheetah or rhino, but perhaps in Tanzania.

Africa is really making me look at myself. At relationships. Synergistic applies to all relationships. We tend to place far too much emphasis on the sexual aspect. That can begin the relationship and it can destroy it. Sex subverts synergy because somehow sex implies ownership. It should be a harmonious supplement to a synergistic relationship. Instead people forget the synergy and begin to stake claim in the life of the other smashing dreams and hopes, denying pleasures and subjugating a person to them.

As in the case of the old relationship, the deprivation of one's dreams creates fear and anger and eventually drives a person away. It frightened me.

The sunsets in Africa are fantastic. Tonight a herd of elephant were backlit by a purple African sky. They were perfectly silhouetted in the magnificence of the sky. A tree outlined behind them with it's branches reaching to the heavens. One large male took his trunk and pulled his ear forward and gave it a scratch. Just goes to show the versatility of a good trunk.

Tomorrow we break camp and go to Moremi Game Reserve. It will be Monday evening or late day when we arrive. This is my last leg with Heather and Patrick. Then they stick me on a plane to Kugana Lodge on Thursday. Saturday I will go to the Rosebank. Sometime in between I shall make contact with my dearest Mitch. On Sunday I head North to Nairobi.

Monday August 19, 1996 40 more miles of bad road Moremi style

We have broken camp and are making an early morning drive looking for the lioness and her cubs. I find the nights here unusual. The contrast that is Africa. Days are hot, mornings and evenings a bit of a nip in the air. The deafening silence of night where few animals call to each other. A few lions and elephant. Now birds call regularly. I noticed the animals at night were more vocal in Chobe. I feel good. I still sound terrible.

Last night we were visited by the hyena. Midnight, a pan overturns. I, flashlight in hand move quickly to the opening of the tent. There less than 25' away was a hyena. He ran off. His eyes were like two bright coals, his body hunched. It was very excit p 9 I couldn't fall back to sleep for hours. The wind in the trees sounded like lions in the camp, so I lie awake with the covers pulled tightly around me.

This is the last leg of my trip with the Penstones. I shall miss them. This experience certainly does separate the men from the boys. Africa takes you and makes you look at yourself. It tames you. It is not tame. Far from it, but it tames you. The heat of the African sun beating down through the open windows of the oversized 4wd vehicle. All the vehicle is open to allow easy game viewing. A fine brown sand covers every part of your body. It slips over your clothes like a sheet. What you put on clean in the morning will certainly resemble a bag lady's clothing by sundown.

Africa gives so much to you. Not in the traditional materialistic sense of giving. It gives you back yourself. A sense of purpose, revalued values, a look inside the outside to examine what's there. An autopsy of the soul. As you stand under the water, the African sky above, it washes the sand from your body but leaves you with new thoughts, profound hopefully.

The trip to Moremi is long. One learns the art of patience here. Animals have incredible patience. They must to live, to survive. So we make our way for nearly six hours over sand, one lane, deep sand, rocks, trees, through flood waters 1 112' high in the Okavango Delta. Past zebra, giraffe, eles, ostrich, a chorus line of them, wildebeest, steenbuck, no lions, two flat tires. During this time you realize that it is what it is. No point in getting upset. This is it. Relax. Use the time wisely. Don't waste it foolishly by being upset. So I thought of my relationships once again and the synergy of them, or lack of it.

Our campsite is in Paradise Pools and it is Paradise. On the Okavango River. Reeds reaching for the heavens. I can hear the staff breaking up the firewood now. Pods *are* falling *from the* trees; a herd of buffalo *are loitering* about Y2 mile *from here*. That means lions are near. There is no one else around for many miles. I have seen no store, no petrol station, nothing for days now except for the tiny gift store in Savuti that had two postcards, a few tee shirts and hats and is for the 16 guests who stay at the lodge.

Remote is not a word I use lightly here. I did see Mandy for a second as we were making our way here. She was at the "airstrip" a cleared area for 5 seater planes, with two people waiting for a plane to land. She's staying in Moremi at one of the camps, but I will not see her again. You are not allowed to drive anywhere after 6:30PM or before 6:30 AM. This obviously is for the protection of everyone. There are no ropes, no boundaries here. Just open land filled with wild animals.

Nothing disturbs the balance of nature. Animals kill other animals to live. Eles (short for elephants) my little nickname I'm afraid, knock over trees all of the time. It is like a forest of twisted and broken limbs. When a tree falls across a "road" (for the purposes of this a road is deemed to be made of rock, sand or silt, 5' wide or less and has large hills and valleys in it along with gaping holes and water and trees or tree parts. No one moves the fallen trees. A vehicle just drives around it and makes a new pathway through the sand and brush. I have a love affair going on with this place. Africa is in my blood. I know that my life will never be the same again.

Tuesday August 20, 1996 Moremi Game Reserve

All night the lions roared around camp. The hippos ambled about nosily and I fell asleep to the sounds of Nana once again waking in the early morning perhaps 2:00am to the symphony a cacophonous melody of millions of frogs, assorted birds, hippos and lions. I could hardly sleep my excitement at waking and game driving was so great. At 6:30AM we left and couldn't find the lions straight off. Got very close to a large herd of Cape Buffalo. They are very aggressive and dangerous and a wounded one will back track and ambush you. I could count the lashes on one.

Saw a small pride of lions two females and four cubs sleeping on an anthill. They are so magnificent.. The way the sun plays with their coats and glints off of their tawny bodies. Also sighted two lions walking in the bush near the airstrip. Truly sightings are like finding a needle in a haystack.

We sighted a raft of aggressive hippos mouth to mouth, reed to reed struggling for something. It was so unusual them active and not just lying in a pod on the banks of the river or floating aimlessly in a raft sunning themselves. A small group of zebra moved their beautifully marked bodies across the road. Several gangly giraffe nibbled succulent leaves from the tali trees. We watched. Moremi is filled with water. Interestingly that abundance of water gives the animals more choice and makes it more difficult to sight them. It goes directly back to my new found philosophy. Expect the unexpected and never expect anything!

So in Savuti I was mildly disappointed with the lack of water and seeming lack of animals. In Moremi, the abundance of animals made the sightings fewer and further between. So it just accentuates how little I know!

Our vehicle was called upon to double as a canoe, which it handled quite well given its bulk. As we employed every inch of our 4wd capabilities motoring through deep, watery marshes, water seeped into the vehicle and flooded the back where I was seated. Just another morning in the bush!

The dust is thick. The mornings are chilly and I am hopelessly addicted to Africa. My hair is a mess, hidden carelessly under a baseball cap. My nails are totally broken. My hands are cut and chapped, my skin scuffed and dry. My clothing is more than dirty. Filthy. Whites are to be thrown away for they will never be white again. But I don't care. All I want to do is to see more animals. Even nine hours a day isn't enough. I am insatiable. I do miss Mitch and Greg and of course my boys. But on the plus side, I have not experienced one moment of stress since I arrived in Africa and I am not concerned about anything.

Today we took Patrick's boat, a small motorized little number into what surely resembles the Florida Everglades. Tall yellow reeds, narrow winding watery passageways threading around tiny crocodiles. We sighted the very rare sitatunga, a webbed footed animal that resembles a small antelope. They have webbing between their hooves so that they can navigate through the reeds. Also spotted one lone hippo blowing bubbles. We cruised the channels before landing at a remote area. Patrick checked for Lion or Cape Buffalo first then we disembarked. It seems that several months earlier a Cape Buffalo had charged and mauled two clients as they were on their way to a picnic.

We were on our way to a picnic, so I was all ears! The 22 year old son had lagged behind as Patrick and the group moved around the Cape Buffalo to the other side of the island. Just as the young man was preparing to take a close up of the Cape Buffalo, it charged goring the boy. His father ran to save him and was thrown 50' into the air. Both lived but were MedVacd out immediately.

We were spared this event, as there were no animals that we could see in our picnic area that day. Heather set up a lovely little table and chairs, It was so very Out of Africa. All that was missing was Mozart! After lunch we threaded our way back through a maze of water and reeds. Earlier that morning our truck became embedded in quicksand like mud that glued us to the marsh water. It took the entire staff and many branches, as well as rocking, pushing and pulling before we were freed. So far our record is two flats and one mud bath.

The rumor mill says that there have been three leopard sightings today. Oh well, at least that means that they are here. I am once again thinking about cancellation of the Mt. Kenya Safari Club. It's just too much for too little. An extra plane, more driving. For what? To sit on a verandah with a bunch of tourists sipping Martini's and staring at a watering hole. I don't think so.

It was parched and hot on the evening drive. Right out of the campsite we had our third flat tire. This occurred just as I sighted a bushbuck splashed with sunlight standing directly in front of me begging for a photo. I scrambled, he scrambled, the tire blew out and there we sat, no picture and no tire. I discovered that my sunshield is missing. I trust it won't impact my photos.

Wednesday, August 21, 1996 Moremi

I slept soundly for the first time. Fell asleep to the sounds of Nana. What romantic music. What a coincidence that Nana and Belafonte are David's favorite singers.

Africa is the great teacher and the great leveler. You are not in control in Africa. You must relinquish all controls and just go with the ebb and flow, I am learning so much about life. Every sighting, every encounter with an animal opens the door to an opportunity for a new experience. Each experience is different. This goes for people as well. Expect the unexpected. Never expect anything. I am learning patience. Go with the flow. I examined the synergy of my relationship with Mitch. How he enabled, encouraged, empowered and inspired me to live this trip, my dream and how much I appreciate, admire and respect him. I must tell him this more often.

Today was windy and chilly and our animal sightings were sparse this morning. I thought about getting jaded and how I must experience all parts of Africa with equal enthusiasm. The sighting of wildlife is not an exact science.

Each sighting is unique unto itself. A warthog intent upon removing some unknown item from the ground less than 10' from our truck provided me with a great photo opportunity this morning

The African motto I have coined, expect the unexpected and never expect anything. With that in mind this afternoon, I began to peel off layers of clothing left over from the windy morning drive, when we sighted a 3' tree monitor scurrying down a sandy road. He paused, pretended he was a log. He couldn't fool me though and I quickly saw that he was a tree monitor pretending to be a log. Later that afternoon we ran into Pavarotti, an errant but dangerous hippo who has staked out his munching territory right adjacent to the tiny store near the boat channels. There he was fat and sassy munching the grass down as we came to photograph him. Since hippos are either in water or in pods beached like giant tubs, seeing one ambulatory and dining was a treat.

Today we had our fourth flat tire. I am now an old hand at this and lazily watched the crocodiles bask at the side of the croc pools while Patrick changed the tire. On our way back to camp we sighted a lovely family of giraffe. The baby who had apparently injured one of its legs was initially lying down. After giving us all angles of their glorious rangy bodies and posing for some glamour shots they sauntered off to find some more tasty morsels. The baby had quite a limp but showed no signs of being mauled.

Earlier in the day we passed a small group of people with guide. Two women, gold earrings, outfits with creases, smart pith helmets, hair recently done! I marveled how they must have just arrived from Mt. Kenya Safari Club after a week of sipping martinis on the verandah.

A few days in Botswana will change all of that. Africa will level that quickly. In the bush, the control is with Africa. One doesn't even have the choice of whether to give up control or not. It is taken from you. Slipped out of your hands like the reigns of a wild horse. You cease to make choices. They are made for you. You are humbled. You are leveled. You do look at life differently than ever before. If you don't, it is only because you have isolated yourself in one of the "resorts" and have not really touched the soil or are so blinded with your own false sense of importance that you are unable and unwilling to open up to the power and magnificence that is Africa,

At dinner this evening after a disappointing array of sightings, Africa had swallowed the animals today, I realized once again to never expect anything. We had forgotten that for a moment and were motoring along the sandy road when suddenly, there was a loud sound as the vehicle screeched to a halt and to our right a large male elephant was just on his way out from behind a bush across the road.

The vehicle lunged and stopped, the elephant trumpeted, ears flailing like large wings and ran the other way. The results would have been quite disastrous had the elephant collided with our vehicle. I don't know who was more frightened.

During dinner, Heather and Patrick toasted my successfully completing the overland safari. It they had a bet that I would be MedVac'd out. So with my stuffy nose and cold I seemed like the perfect candidate, obviously. They said that everything else was going to be too tame and that I am tough. Well, bully for me again! Mom used to say that, bully for you, big deal. I certainly could have let myself down and quit, the cold has followed me every day. But that isn't me. Again a cacophony of sounds, lions who magically reappear at night, still in hiding but very vocal, hippos and their oinking and sputtering. I imagined a pod of hippos ambling along the road and night and laughed to myself.

The wind was whipping up last night as it shouted goodbye. Leaves sounded like lions and I was up and down all night looking to sight something big. Nothing occurred Today I fly to Kugana for a few days.

Thursday August 22, 1996 Okavango Delta Botswana

The Penstones vehicle has broken down. This at the most inappropriate moment. Another African lesson in patience. This one well learned. Some major gear broke as we were doing our early morning game drive to the airstrip. Yes the airstrip as in airplane to Kugana. My luggage, all six boxes and bags in the back were to arrive in Maun on Saturday with one of the Penstones employees who was also bringing my ticket. So here we are broken down on a sandy road at 9:00 am with my plane taking off in about an hour. Me who is always hours early at the airport and never trusts anyone with my luggage. As luck would have it we were chugging and banging down the road and came upon two vehicles with a few tourists in them. They had been bird watching, imagine, bird watching and they sighted the elusive leopard. I had searched for days, up and down, in trees on the ground, everywhere and alas no leopard. So here are these tourists looking for birds and a leopard walks down out of the tree and sits in front them posing. Here we come, wheezing and choking and our vehicle crashes to a halt five feet from them and of course the leopard takes a powder. They were not happy needless to day.

So Heather and I waited while Patrick went to fetch back up troops to take me to the airstrip. I resisted the overwhelming urge to ask about the delivery of my luggage knowing that the real words were Hakuna Matata. No problem! Indeed, troops arrived and carted me to the airstrip in ample time to catch me tiny plane to Kugana. While waiting a herd of eles passed behind us. As I hear it told many times the eles must be "shooed" off of the airstrip. Exciting prospect!

All the pilots look like they emanated from Central Casting. Tall, good looking, great hair. Daddy is going to take me flying. Flying at 500' was really a thrill as you could easily watch herds of animals moving from place to place.

Arrived in Kugana and I was picked up in a small but sturdy boat. Shuttle service ala Kugana to the Lodge. My God this is a slice of heaven. Betsey was right. I am sitting in my A frame chalet looking out to the water. Birds flying right in front of my five netted windows. The silence I have known for nine days is no more as I have entered civilization. People voices in the background. Although I must say the isolation of the bush does make you yearn for some human contact. Everything is on generator and battery power so the hair dryer is out, still. No electricity. But, a real shower. No moon and stars above, real running water, in a sink and a real bed. The thatching of the chalet and the reeds it is built of are charming. It is very romantic. How I should like to share this with someone special. A resident hippo lives behind the next chalet, so I have been warned not to stray far from the camp and lodge., Being in the bush for ten days, I wouldn't stray.

I went on a macoro ride today. This is actually what I thought my canoe trip on the Zambezie River would be like. A tall canoe man with a long pole, sort of like being in Venice. It's all couples here. It's okay. This place is very peaceful. I don't really want to do the game walks. It's a bit tame, after my experience. But I did it today. Took a boat ride to a macoro and then did a 3 miles walk among the tall grasses where lions and giraffe, eles and leechwa frequent. Crazy you say. Yes indeed.

Friday August 23, 1996 Okavango Delta, Kugana Lodge

Kugana Lodge is just the perfect spot for the next days. I need a rest. My body is thirsty for the hot shower and a real bed., It's amazing what we take for granted. No lights here during the day. The generator only operates at certain hours. I am sitting outside, having just finished breakfast. Believe it or not, I ate eggs. A red letter day indeed. They tasted different.

The deep blue water of the Delta ripples before me gently as the wind pushes it from East to West and then whips around and moves it back making tiny waves. There is a chill in the air and I have layered shirt upon shirt topping the ensemble off with that sac jac that someone gave me. It has come in handy.

Across the Delta as far as my eye can see are tall reeds which provide excellent camouflage for the resident wildlife. This is a real departure from the isolation I have experienced over the past two weeks. Although this morning I am the only one remaining here at the Lodge except for the staff as the other guests have boarded motorboats and are going to bird watch. Since this is my vacation I have that what I need is a day of rest and relaxation.

Reading, writing and reflection on what is important and what is not. Tomorrow, I leave here for Maun then on to Joberg. Sunday its north to Nairobi for an entirely new set of experiences.

Last night about 1:00am I head a cry, the voice of emergency. The resident elephant, unwanted of course, had breached the electric wire and was dining on trees by the dining area. Fitting. This morning, there were branches lying on the ground and huge elephant tracks all around. I wish I had seen it. Spending time alone, precious moments just listening with every cell, every pore. Thinking. The quiet of your own breathing. An echo of your thoughts shattering the stillness of this Delta when all the guests are tucked away. It's been a long time since I have experienced this peace. This study of self. I have been dining with two other couples, a German couple Doris and Gaylord from Munich. She is young and very pretty with ice blue eyes and flaxen hair past her shoulders. Her skin is clear like fine porcelain, her body tight and lithe like an impala. He is tall and good looking with a strong forceful bone structure. His smile is dazzling. The other couple Sarah and Dennis are from New Zealand. She is slender and plain with short brown hair that remains windblown. No makeup but no support for that look. He is an investment banker. They have four children.

Decided to do the late day boat ride and game walk to Sausage Island with Gaylord and Dodis, not Doris. Camera bag in hand we boated out first spotting numerous crocs of assorted sizes all the while wondering how we could have been in those channels yesterday in a macoro, which is a flimsy long canoe. Out of the boat and on foot through the high thick yellow reeds and pampas we left our footprints, five sets in the hot African Sun. Sausage Island is named because of the Sausage Tree, a tree with pods long and fat that hang down off the vines like sausages in a deli. And we saw birds, more birds, beautiful birds and there I am trudging through the tall grass, nearly bored to tears, wishing I had stayed at the Lodge wheni expect the unexpectedan elephant in the distance.

So now I am awake as we begin to track the elephant, on foot. Now I want to interject the fact that no one was armed on this tiny expedition. The five of us on foot and no gun or knife among us save for my Swiss Army Knife. We track the elephant through the tall and yellowed grass of the Savannah, wild animal camaflogue. Then, there he is no more than 150' in front of us. I climb a tall gray ant hill and begin to photograph him. My adrenaline was pumping. I was a little nervous as he was a young male and they are known to be a bit aggressive. We finished and began to move downwind from him so that he wouldn't smell us.

Trekking around I took photos of Gaylord and Dodis as they walked in front of me through the high grass. I turned to Claire and said how amusing it was that animals could be anywhere in the grass and how blissfully we were just walking through it when everyone suddenly stopped. Words choked over the first three adventurers stopped dead in their tracks. Lion, lion, lion passed down the line of statues. I thought it was a joke. I picked up my binoculars and sure enough less than 100' in front of us under a tree was a male lion watching us.

Frozen in fear the five unarmed adventurers stood locked in time praying silently. The unarmed guide warned us not to move. Actually, earlier in the day over breakfast we had discussed the proper behavior should one meet up with a lion in the bush. The Lodge manager related how he practiced every night, visualizing his stance of courage should a lion ever approach. He kept us mesmerized with tales of do's and don'ts. One should never run, as you will be perceived as game. Never look a lion directly in the eye, for that will be perceived as a challenge to be met with lion courage; never look away from the lion, as that will be perceived as a lack of respect. With those never's in mind I stood glued in fear to a spot in the middle of nowhere on Sausage Island thinking that I should be gardening.

Instinctively I knew that if I were faced, unpracticed, with a charging lion, I would fail to remember the hurried lessons over breakfast. I watched through my binoculars as the male's eyes pierced our very souls. I had to take a picture of this, perhaps my last I mused. But once the camera was focused, I realized that my auto focus makes a beeping sound that at that moment I was sure could be heard all over the Island, I changed my mind. The stillness was overwhelming. All that I could hear was the sound of the tall dried Savannah grasses rustling in the wind and an occasional bird calling out some news. I lifted my binoculars once again and to my horror a second male lion's head lifted from the grassy hill. My breathing became more accentuated and much heavier. I thought of the three don'ts. I thought of being eaten by lions. I couldn't believe I was out there, so vulnerable, so alone, so ill prepared. But I was!

As our guide continued his diatribe about not moving, and I kept thinking, okay as long as the lions stay put, one lion began to walk towards our frozen bodies. My first thoughts were "Oh my God." My breathing accelerated to epic proportions and I felt like I was nearly hyperventilating. As quickly as he had moved in our direction, without warning the lion turned and headed away from us. Then the second lion got up and followed. They moved about 100' further out in the grass and waited, watching their potential prey.

The five of us continued to do nothing but breathe, barely. After what seemed like an eternity, they moved further away into the tawny grasses and we were able to move quickly and quietly towards our boat.

The experience left me on an adrenaline high that has lasted, albeit in the background slightly, for nearly a month. It was truly the most frightening experience I have every known. I was certainly closer to the animals than that encounter, but never stripped so bare, so vulnerable, so open to anything and everything that I felt fear to my core.

Expect the unexpected and never expect anything! Words of wisdom surely!

Saturday August 24, 1996 Xugana Lodge Okavango Delta

I am awake and ready listening to Nana, the White Rose of Athens, someone told me. I'm gong to definitely need a new Falling in Love Again. It's been played so very much. Darkness wraps itself around this lodge like a big black blanket. It wraps us tightly as if keeping all harm away. I can't wait to accelerate into Phase Two of my trip. Punctuated by tonight at the charming Rosebank, I will have a hairdryer and a phone. Two things I have not seen or heard in two weeks. I guess I recognize that we can do without anything like that. The sounds of hippo, Cassidy as in Hopalong I suppose, resonated all night. I have yet to see his fat body.

Transiting through Gaberon to Joberg. Controlled chaos in Mao. One learns to let go, release, no controls. I've grown used to being more solitary and making good and constructive use of my time. Somehow everything works like a finely tuned piece of machinery. Even when something breaks, everything ends up working out okay. A sea of faces as unique as snowflakes. Light and dark, old and young in a melange of polyester and cotton. No smells in the air save for the dryness. I've stopped really feeling the heat.

Sunday August 25, 1996 Johannesburg

I came in the door of the hotel Saturday evening around 7:30 PM. My body was tired, my clothes covered with a fine African silt. My hair straight, dry and flat under my DKNY black cap. I felt the overwhelming desire to speak to a few people in the USA. So I did. It felt wonderful hearing the voices of special people.

I am on my way to Nairobi now. A four hour flight, then a four hour drive to Aruscha Tanzania. I want to make this trip next year. No matter what.

Kenya, Nairobi.

No one is quite certain which carousel the p 6Xare to arrive on. All of the monitors are now gaping holes surrounded by a metal frame. They look like open toothless mouths over each baggage beltway.

One bears a sign wet paint. I can't help but wonder where as the belt is comprised of rubber. So I wait. The front wheels on my airport cart collapse, so I hurry to find another climbing in and around boxes like a little mouse. A flight has arrived from Bombay with more luggage than three planes. I wonder what they could be bringing in from Bombay. Mother Theresa is dying in some hospital.. The very thought saddens and depresses me. 86 years young on Tuesday and an angel on this earth.

Leonard was right there with a sign that said Georgene. Soon we were off and on our way. Along a narrow road. I thought well of this road as it was not sand or dirt but tar, that is until we bottomed on the first major pothole. I was delighted to watch the Masai men, women and children as they tended to cattle, made their way from village to home or stood by the roadside. As the African sun set with it's hues of yellow, purple and red, the sky looked like a watercolor painting the trees silhouetted like patchwork against the tawny backdrop of drying yellow cornfields. As it darkened and the $\frac{3}{4}$ moon rose like a face in the sky, it sent light down to the pitch black streets.

I marveled at the tiny figures, heads loaded with bags of commodities as they made their way along the darkened dirt path or on the road. Cars sped along this barely two car width tar road. Bright lights double barreling or single light, confusing barely keeping wheels on the road and out of the dirt and rock ditch that runs parallel to it. Wild bumping over potholes strewn like feed for hungry animals. Mr. Toad's Wild Ride. The radio played interference with a quaint backdrop of African music. The driver didn't notice. I thought of listening to Heaven and Paradise when the radio station was flipping between weak channels and just trying to hear barely. The radio is now all interference. The driver still doesn't know.

The purple sky outlines the mountains on a canvas called the Universe. The driver shuts off the radio.. We arrive at the Mountain Lodge. I thought I had stepped into Hansel and Grethels cottage. Grounds that are like paradise with the scent of Jasmine and Camilla filling one's nostrils. Green plants, flowers, green and stately sausage trees with vines that gnarl like withered tusks and sausages that hang in deli like splendor. Groups of six splendid vine covered thatched three little pig huts with stone floors and a tiny stream running in front. I thought of how wonderful it would be to be able to enjoy the romance of this amazing place. Dinner in the glass enclosed dining room was wonderful. Tomorrow I will be picked up at 8:30 am and go to Ngongoro crater with my guide. I love this place.

Monday August 26, 1996 Aruscha Tanzania

Oh my God. I opened the curtains in this cute round little but and there are beautiful flowers around, gorgeous green sloping small hilly parts with big trees and to the left, a lake. God what majesty to wake up to in the morning.

My little beds, two of them have an elaborate tie back overhead, slide around floor to ceiling mosquito net which surrounds you like a big cocoon. I left it tied back. I hear dogs, howling. No hippos or lions here. Looking up the entire pointed round roof is thatched. I think I am truly in a Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale. This is so cute. I can't tell you how much I love Africa.

My new phrase seems to be "My God". I am in awe of this extraordinary place. It takes my breath away and so my love affair with Africa has begun. Never in my life have I felt such overwhelming joy, such happiness such excitement at just being, doing anything. My entire being is alive with a joy I have known only on occasion in my life. I feel as though I just won the lottery. My body is alive with an energy. Africa and I have a relationship, a synergistic one.

I am sitting on a wooden rocker in a sun room at Sopa (hello to Masai men) Lodge on the rim of the crater. It's 4:30PM on Monday. The curved expanse of windows allows me a full and breathtaking view of the crater. A Masai Chief greeted us at the door on our arrival. The drive here over dirt, rock and an occasional tar road took us six hours. The incredible landscape was dotted along the way with the colorful Masai men, women and children.

There are Kenyan Masai and Tanzanian Masai. Villages built by Kenyan Masai are down several feet in a round circle with brush which covers the outside of the circle, so that from a distance the tiny Masai village appears to be low lying brush. The Masai don't like to be photographed without permission. One pays for this privilege as then the Masai feel as if it doesn't take away their spirit.

At the Kenyan border several Masai women hawk curios and art and have become somewhat of an industry. I recalled the words of some people at the Nairobi airport regarding the reluctance of the Masai to have their spirits removed, and how commercial they had become. I didn't see it that way at all, In fact I was quite moved by the Masai and their ways. Obviously it flies in the face of all humanity to stalk and photograph people as if they were animals. They must maintain a certain dignity. I noticed with amazement that the Masai have become objects to be viewed with curiosity and that most people do not honor their wishes. That doesn't speak well of tourists in my opinion.

Tanzania is an agricultural paradise. Fields of honey colored wheat stretch across gentle sloping hills. The gravelas robustis (spelling questionable) is a tree that is planted to increase the fertility of the and, with is a rich terra cotta color. The trees are planted abundantly and underneath them coffee grows in rich red beans on full green plants.

Rice, which is delicious beyond any I have ever tasted; corn. A fruit called the Custard Apple, that has a funny green outside shell and large black seeds inside a fruit that is incredible and tastes like that/apple one could imagine.

We also tried the red banana, a small reddish banana that tastes like no other banana that I have ever eaten. Serene and beautiful, we dined at Gibbs Farm near the entrance to Ngorongoro. A tiny spot of heaven tucked inside magnificent flowers and trees on the top of a hill overlooking coffee plantations.

The Lodge is charming and quaint and served us a delicious lunch. I met Margret Mousse and her husband Robert a writer. She works for Sotheby's selling client art. I will call her on my return.

I have made a life decision. One should do that which makes them happy. I have only discovered several areas of passion in my life. Things that I can do, without regard to time or sacrifice. One is to write. I love my writing which is why I will retire and write within two years. The second I now know is Africa. I must spend time here as I love it beyond words. I love the feeling, energy, country, animals, colors, art. I love the people their warmth, their kindness, their truth. I have begun by promising myself two months a year in Africa.

Two trips per year. I am working with Haguy my guide to determine my first trip of one month. I think it will be June for the migration of the Wildebeest. Two herds broken off. February is when I would have to arrive for the full herd migration. My only question is can I wait until June. I have never felt like this. The dirt, rough roads, no electricity, (a hairdryer here, wow!) I don't feel any sense of sacrifice and I am willing, anxious to sacrifice to come here and spend time. Africa has forever changed my life. Some people love golf, tennis, others are card players. I am hopelessly addicted to Africa and happy about it.. I will not give Africa up for anyone or anything. It is as passionate a pursuit as my writing.

August 27, 1996 Ngorongoro Crater Tanzania

We began our game drive at 6:30 am into the most magnificent place I have ever seen. Huge pillows of clouds fall over the top of this crater like spectacular water falls that span 100 miles wide in a 180 degree curve. They cascade down the inside of the crater in an almost surreal fashion. Giant Acacia trees with their flat tops loom in the distance.

In the scope of my trip, this day proves to be the most incredible of my trip so far, although each day has been magical. We sight three rhino in the distance. I couldn't believe my eyes as they ambled along single file like prehistoric dots through the tawny colored grass. Two adults and one baby. Even my 300 mm lens couldn't capture these incredible sights. We waited with the patience of Job for them to come into range so that they could appear a then just tiny smudges on the landscape. Their response to my patience was to lie down and disappear in the grassy plains.

Pit stops are the restrooms of Africa. In short, there are no tiny rest stops or portable commodes anywhere, so the land and all of its predators and residents becomes your wide open restroom. I spotted a group of innocuous looking rocks that seemed to provide proper cover from my guide and any wandering Masai warriors. As we approached, a mother lion sauntered from behind the rocks followed by three tiny cubs. Close encounters of the first kind for certain. I needless to say, postponed my pit stop, a common occurrence.

Mother looked around, allowed her babies to play in the rocks for a moment or two and then after they had gone back into hiding behind the rocks, Mother joined two other females to go hunting. We followed the three until they disappeared off of the road and away from our prying eyes. I wondered what might have happened were 1 few minutes later and came upon the cubs alone. Frightening thought as Mother was not far from the scene. Haguy said the cubs were only about three weeks old.

We located six young male lions gathered together. A rare sight indeed as young males don't usually "hang out" together. One posed lazily as I came within feet of his open mouth. I was so close that I needed to back off of the 300 mm lens to get his head in the camera! After I counted all of his eyelashes we moved our vehicle about 100 feet away and watched as young males and females piled on top of one another for a little rest by the water. I realized once again why I dislike tourists so very much. A small car full of them actually meowed at the lions loudly as I watched, attempting to photograph them. Their car engine banged loudly and they meowed over it! We relocated our vehicle back to the two young males on the mound.

Amazing as it may seem, all of the sightings in Ngorngoro took place during one long day, 12 hours! I needed more time.

A large area of water proved majestic and a backdrop for a herd of wildebeest and zebras as they mingled together. Flamingos, thousands of them framed by the clouds that fell into the crater.

Gazelles played wildly and three spotted hyenas came out and posed for me. By now it was time for lunch! We found a fantastic fig tree whose branches grow up and then down like roots, dropping into the ground nearby and forming another tree. Hard to imagine but what looked like four giant trees at least 50' in diameter, was only one tree whose girth measured 300' at least. What a sight. The limbs hung like vines down to the ground. I tried to eat my lunch as two curious guinea fowl gathered around to join me. At one point the male actually grabbed a piece of quiche right out of my hand. It was so funny. We stayed their watching the birds for a short time and then headed out to find more animals. After all, that is why I **was** there.

No sooner had we started out then we came across three 8 month old lion cubs sleeping in a fallen tree. It was so unbelievabiei It was probably about 100' long and 5' up off of the ground, a huge gnarly trunk. The three treated us to some lion cub antics and some great shots. Then more rhino in the distance. We moved quickly to try and follow but again they eluded us. I had already made peace with the fact that a sighting is a sighting. No where does it say that I need to count eyelashes for it to be a sighting! So, I had already seen black rhino. I had photographed them, even though they appeared as tiny horned dots in the background, I felt confident that I could convince any one that these were indeed the elusive and endangered black rhino. We began tracking a single black male who we thought would cross our path. At least he came close enough that I had a few photos of what was definitely a rhino in the distance. Hooray for me. He failed however to cross our path and went in the opposite direction.

While in hot pursuit we came upon two female lions with three little cubs right by the side of the road. Several cars were already there and one of the females was actually lying in the shade of the ranger's vehicle with a cub. Two of the cubs were a few months old and one was very small, perhaps only a few weeks. Suddenly the two females decided to relocate to another vehicle's shade about 30' away. I watched as the two older cubs follow the mothers. The baby stayed hidden in the bush, then ventured out wailing plaintively looking for its mother. My camera was on overload as I shot this most incredible sequence. The older cubs heard the baby and started back to investigate. The mother was obviously irritated and in a bit of a tiff that her baby was not acting like a lion. Suddenly she let out a roar and sat down front legs spread in an obviously irritated manner. The baby came running out wailing as he ran, accepted a kiss and rubbed against her front legs. All was forgiven. It was so sweet. The other two babies just sat and looked on.

As we moved away we found four rhino, three adults and one baby. We waited patiently, head and body totally out of the vehicle as they slowly ambled toward the road.

I had everything crossed and doubled that they would get close. In the meantime I kept snapping. Finally, these unbelievable creatures lumbered over and crossed the road right in front of our vehicle. I kept saying, "oh my God" as the four prehistoric nearly extinct animals crossed the road. My heart was pounding with excitement. I feel as if I have just won the lottery. But actually that is how I have felt since I arrived.

On our way back to the lodge, we passed the two female lions with the three cubs again. This time they were both sound asleep. One upside down on her back and the other half on the roadway and the other half in the brush. The babies were hiding in the brush. The sun was setting and the crater serene. We stopped by a Masai boma, village. I wanted to photograph them but the warriors were not there. I was suddenly surrounded by children. I gave them barrettes candy and gum. What a day. What an adventure.

August 29, 1996 Nairobi

I wrote nothing yesterday as I was under the weather and traveling for over 11 hours. There I was, not feeling 100%, traveling over roads that Baja vehicles would be timid to use. Ruts, potholes, rivers of ruts, dirt, rocks, Masai children, young warriors with their wooden collars and more ruts. Eleven hours to Nairobi. When I arrived at the Norfolk wishing like hell I could telephone out, I couldn't get a telephone line in my room! Disappointment stress.,

Hopped on a small plane bound for the Mara River Camp. Once again my exterior being is at odds. I'm baseball capped and without nails. So be it. A vehicle picked me up at the airstrip a couple from England who went to the airstrip to see off some friends. On our way to the camp we sighted three cheetah. My first Cheetah sighting Yes, Yes, Yes. Also saw my very first leopard and cub. A magnificent leopard and her cub. It was late but I took pictures anyway. Just before we arrived at camp we saw a female cheetah with two babies hidden in the tall grass, rain falling all over them.

I made arrangements to have my own car and driver for an additional sum of money, \$520 additional dollars. On Saturday I go hot air ballooning. I can tell already that the silence here is totally unlike what I have experienced on the rest of my Safari. I am told that there is 11)(one week old hippo here. I can't wait. Tomorrow I will go with David and Sylvia, the English couple on the game drive. We will start off at 6:30 am.

Friday August 30, 1996

The morning started off with a bang. Mother Cheetah and her two tiny babies were posing for us in the grass. The mother was so unbelievable. Beautiful with dark spots against her creamy skin.

The babies have light spots and look like little balls of fur with big eyes. So very cute. Then in the afternoon I was feeling quite poorly actually and decided to nap. I am into one month of Africa and everything seems to be catching up with me. I'm ready to go home. The couple I am with today in the vehicle are leaving tomorrow. They are very sweet indeed so I rose to the occasion and went game driving. I think I have done nearly 200 hours of game drives.

What exciting stuff. Today we sighted a leopard cub lying on a rock. What a sight as its magnificence was hit by the rays of sun as it dangled its body over several large boulders. When the traffic became unbearable, we went elsewhere and found a pride of lions, 24 in all. Sixteen cubs and eight mothers of all ages. What a treat to watch them play as the African sun was setting on the horizon. The cubs were adorable.

The evening at Mara River Club gave us the pleasure of watching a group of Masai women and men dancing in full dress. It was fantastic to watch as the Masai men literally flew in the air with absolute precision on one legged leaps. They went straight up as if propelled by a rocket. Each in traditional Masai dress with ceremonial jewelry used for weddings and circumcisions. Later I bought some pieces to take home with

e. I will give a collar to Bree, a little memento of Masai wedding ceremony. Tomorrow, I am going hot air ballooning.

Saturday August 31, 1996

I was so excited last night that I could barely sleep. Today is my hot air balloon day. Up the blackest of black nights at 4:30 am.. The sleep is still in my eyes. I threw on 20 layers of clothing, looking very much like the Pillsbury Doughboy. At 5:15 am I was picked up...it was still like pitch outside, It wasn't so dark that I failed to see the large hippo, eyes shining, ambling to the water. I was told that the road was rough, but at that early hour I was ill prepared for vehicle rock climbing. I don't really think a road exists between Mara River Club and Little Governors Camp where my balloon lies flat waiting for me arrival.

I still wasn't feeling 100%, so I lost my stomach at least three or four times over a road that qualified as about 12 kilometers of the worst road I have ever seen. Actually, not seen. We arrived with me and my stomach, thank God, in the dark of the African morning. On arrival I met two nice couples June and Kenny and Phyllis and her husband Herb. So the balloons were laid out and inflated. They are very big. We climbed inside, twelve of us in my balloon. The captain, a cute pilot named Mark lit the fuel, a burst of flame filled the balloon and we began to rise. How magnificent to see the world as a bird. To fly free atop the trees, Around the world in 80 days.

Every few minutes the flame would shoot up again to take us higher as we soared into the rising sun. From our vantage point we could see a small family of giraffe. They stopped and watched as these curious birds of yellow, orange, red, blue and green flew by making funny noises. We must have looked very strange. Three big birds. The light stayed in the sky like dancers moving in and out of the clouds skillfully. Such beauty every place you look! What magnificence! Landing is the fun part. First you need to get rid of any items that could hit you in the face. This includes cameras, binoculars, and the like. You must place all of that paraphernalia under your feet, sit on a little bench with your back to the lands and hold onto the ropes. You hit the ground as they say, running, or bouncing. You drag over the ground like a ride in an amusement park over ant hills or aardvark hills and the like until the basket flips totally back and you slide like a pancake to a stop. Then the bottom three climb out backwards, then the top three. Interesting! Exciting! Worth every cent,

Then comes the champagne breakfast of things that I never eat, that I ate. You know like bacon, whoa with 50 grams of fat, baked beans, sauteed mushrooms, cheese. All the good stuff. Then we boarded a vehicle for the drive back to our camps. They already have the message that I am anti tourists so I am given a car and driver of my own. Hakuna matata. When I say I dislike tourists I rather mean the ones who are loud, call lions kitty kitty, are inconsiderate, put people in pictures with lions, rhinos, elephants behind, like who cares. One does not go to Africa to see a picture of Aunt Mabel in a car with the ears of an elephant flapping in the background.

On our way back to camp we saw two male lions with an early morning zebra kill. They were so very full they couldn't move. They just laid there hyperventilating. It was quite a sight to behold, these two males with their stomachs stretched beyond reason, zebra between them, flies on their fur, breathing heavy. The road back to camp was the same horrid barely passable road. My stomach heaved 7X and down as we traversed the boulders, ant hills and aardvark mounds. Nineteen new people arrived today! I am certainly not totally impossible however I was going to pass on my game run today because I had to share the vehicle. The desk culled a very cute couple, friends of the owners. Her name is Ruth and she is from the Philippines and quite beautiful. Her boyfriend is from London but living in the Philippines. So I will be going out after all. I need a cat fix.

Eureka! I have also realized that I think I can make money doing what I love to do. So what is that you ask? I love the zoo, I love wild animals, I love to write and I love Africa. Africa has wild animals. I will test my theory on my return by putting an article together about my trip along with a few dozen excellent photos from what I have shot. This is really not about making money, but about being true to me. Imagine, being able to return to Africa, photograph animals, write about it, write it off and maybe even get paid. Great! I'm tired and ready for some rest.

Sunday September 1, 1996 Mara River Club Masai Mara

What a glorious day this is. Each day in this magical place is a miracle. Today I have my own car and driver. This morning we located a herd of elephant with one tiny little baby. This little one is so small, perhaps a month old at most. He is so totally uncoordinated that the other day, when I first sighted him he tripped over his own feet! Today he was trying to pull up some grass but ended up putting a trunkful of air in his mouth.

He is so cute. At one point he was trying to be like Mom and was attempting to pick up a branch and eat the leaves. He just couldn't do it. He would struggle to pull it up then drop it just as it looked like mission accomplished. Then he tried to reach up to the trees to pull branches down. What a sight that was as he tried to balance on two feet and reach and yank. He just couldn't quite get the entire coordinated action together. I just couldn't leave.

Today is also very important as I received a gift from Ester a Masai woman. I made a friend, a Masai boy of 11 named Simeul, and I have finally realized what I want to do with the rest of my life. I have a love affair with Africa. I want to film animals all day and I never tire of them. I love them. I have never felt so incredible in my life. Africa is in my blood.

I spent most of this morning watching the mother Cheetah and her cubs. They are just incredible. At one point I accidentally dropped my Armani sunglasses and they fell to the ground outside my vehicle. The cubs n playing under the car and in an instant one cub was out, spotted my glasses and like any child had them in his mouth. My favorite glasses were about to disappear. We opened the car door and frightened the babies away. Fortunately, my glasses were left behind, with tiny cheetah teeth marks on one side. The mother is so magnificent, posing in the African sun or under one of the many shade trees. She instinctively knows her position, her beauty unexcelled, her ability to captivate and she uses all of her feminine wiles to capture the awestruck audience. Seated proudly under a tree, she turns just so as the morning sun cascades over her beautifully patterned body. It was almost like watching a runway model pose for a shoot. Turning, stopping, turning once more to enable the insatiable mob of photographers to capture her every move. All the while she remained vigilante to danger and the safety of her cubs. I was impressed with her skills as a mother. I became one of the horde of insatiable photographers searching her out each moment of the day, and feeling a bit disappointed when she failed to materialize in spite of my understanding of "expect the unexpected and never expect anything."

Monday September 2, 1996 Mara River Club

The day before my departure. Oh my, I don't think I can reenter. I got up at 5:00am. This is truly my passion. We immediately began our morning search in the brisk coldness of a 6:00am African day, for the cheetah and her cubs. It was dark as we started our search and the early morning sun soon started to rise turning the black sky into a rainbow of intense purples, oranges, yellows and reds. A small herd of elephants are silhouetted in the foreground of these mystical colors. Two babies are in this herd, not just the one that I saw the other day. I tried to get the amazing shot of the Mom and the tiny babies but both cameras failed to respond. Onward!

We located the cubs after a stretch of cheetah hunting. They were resplendent, postured majestically against the early morning sun. The cubs were really playful this morning and ended up see sawing on a piece of wood. They are a riot. They did this balancing act on the wood with one falling off then climbing up to repeat the process again and again. I have spent hours and hours just watching these magnificent animals as my film will show. I never thought that I would derive such unbelievable pleasure from sitting on the top of an open Land Rover in a pair of jeans and layers of cotton shirts with a camera glued to my eye.

It started raining early today and when that happens in the Mara what I laughingly refer to as a road turns into a sinkhole of blacker than black tar like wet, oozing mud. Vehicles then slide and splatter this ink black goo in every direction. Getting stuck is a normal procedure for even the most sturdy of vehicles. Oh well, hakuna matata. I met Jonathan Scott and Frans Lanting, both world class wildlife photographers. I met Jonathan Scott while on cheetah watch alongside the BBC who was filming still in the Mara. He has written a number of books on big cats. I have much to learn but I feel like I am really on course with what I am to do. I see Wild Africa Enterprises specializing in the unusual in photography and in museum quality African antiquities. This feels right, and it's not about money. I'm currently writing in the dark, as there is no light in the tent until 5:00pm.

Today I exercised my new African found patience as I waited for three hours for a leopard mom to fetch her cub. The leopard cub lay in some tall grass several hundred feet from me. Unfortunately, I became the leopard police, repeatedly telling drivers not to drive up over the baby. As a result of my traffic directing and patience, at 6:10pm there was a high pitched chirp from a field of tall grass about 300 yards from where we were stationed. The baby leaped from it's hiding place in the grass and ran down to its' mother, who stood in all her splendor waiting. We hurried to relocate as the darkness that is Africa threatened to envelop us totally. Only twenty minutes remained before we would be required to be back in our camps.

As we rushed to the new site we nearly removed a thorny Acacia tree. We were rewarded as the Mother leopard and her baby romped in a tree ten feet from where I sat. The baby fell from the tree, climbed back up again and again, pulling on its Mother's tail over and over. As they moved we followed. The Mother took a place on top of an ant hill while the baby walked curiously around looking at the giant Cyclops type vehicles. He approached the front of my vehicle and as he did, my film went out! I pressed the rewind button and the whirring noise caught his attention. He started to walk towards me alongside the Rover. At one point he looked directly at me and meowed! I couldn't believe it. I was so excited trying to take photos, that things began to fly out of my camera bag including an unstamped written postcard. The card sailed off and landed face up directly in front of the baby! Then he looked up at me, turned and began to stalk his Mother who was seated quite majestically on the top of the ant hill. The African sunset was stolen by dusk and the only people left filming were the BBC.

Tuesday September 3, 1996 Masai Mara

I was wide awake at 5:00am. Boy, do I love my holiday. I feel an animal fix is in order. Off we go to find the Cheetah and her cubs. I hope I hope. I just love traveling solo. Every decision is a unilateral one and in most cases when I look around at people, I find the thought of spending any time with them, quality real time a horrifying one at best. They are really boring.

The game run this morning netted us zero in the cheetah department, but a set of mating lions. They wailed and followed each other mating behind bushes and hills. We of course remained a respectful distance behind so that they could just be. Earlier today as the sun rose I watched a lone male cape buffalo dining in a setting from Central Casting. A field of light grass topped with acres of dark dark forever green acacias and a blue sky. The buffalo had a superb starling perched on its head. He munched breakfast warily, watching us from one eye. At one point I cautioned Francis to start the car as the Buffalo looked as if he was tired of our prying eyes. Still nothing. Cape Buffalo ambush and Xwithout provocation. Fortunately we suffered no attacks. My CD of Nana is nearly worn out. I go to sleep listening to the rich resonance of her voice.. I am on my way to a Masai village to spend some time. I have a little friend here now. His name is Simuel. He is 11 years old and a very clever boy. He is well spoken in spite of the fact that he does not attend school. I met Simuel a few days ago as I was passing out gum and candy on the road leading up to the Mara River Camp. Once I arrived at the village I found out that Simuel cannot go to school because his family does not have the money. I have promised to send him to school and made an arrangement with his mother and father to prepay the first year. Ester acted as my guide within the village.

Each home in the village is made of cow dung and wood from the trees. The Masai tend to their cattle and the women, at least some of them augment their income by making incredible jewelry. I had purchased some of this jewelry from Ester earlier in the week.

I was invited into Ester's home and this was quite an experience. The Masai home is a small round dwelling, dirt flooring, a place in the entry for small calves and one round room in the center. On each side of the room is a built in bed and in between in a place to cook. When I entered her home I experienced darkness for the first time in my life. Ester held her hand out to guide me around the calving area into the small interior room that served as bedroom, dining room, living room for a family of seven! She guided me to the bed/couch on one side and I sat flanked on both sides by Ester, her daughter, some neighbors.

The other bed/couch held her son Steven, Simuel, Pilot, Denis and several other "curious" friends. Steven interpreted as they gifted me with bracelets and a special wooden item for Greg. I was very taken by this gracious gesture. A difference in their lives is made with only a few hundred dollars a year! Ester lit a candle in the cook area where the open fire sits. They eat all around this small round structure. Later I walked around outside and took pictures of the children. Many of the children seemed to need medical attention, although that was the opinion of a mother who hates to see a runny nose.

I have committed to send a package to Simuel with books and baseball caps for he and his friends and a watch for Ester. I watched closely as the Masai women made jewelry with no pattern except in the head. What a task! My departure was marked with a lot of hugging and tearful goodbyes. Simuel was quite unhappy. He wanted to join me in America.

What an experience! I arrived airstrip early and waited. Small planes have it all over the big jets with their compulsory tidy airstrips, departure times, luggage problems. Here you drive right on to the strip, to the plane, throw your own bag onto it, check to see if you are on the list, climb aboard and take a seat. No mess, no fuss, no lost luggage, and bumpity bumpity bump off you go. Landing is pretty much the same, reversed of course. Luggage is pulled off, put on one by one on a cart, you know it's their because you put it aboard. It's emptied in front of you and off you go.

Wednesday September 4, 1996 Nairobi

The teeming bustling city of Nairobi. Something I don't like about it. I don't like the hotel. They can't seem to get things right. Oh well, this is Kansas Dorothy. I am going to the home of Karen Blixen and also to the Giraffe hostel of sorts.

Karen Blixen's home surprised me as I named for the first time that she was quite an accomplished artist. The section where she lived is very white and wealthy. Then I went to the giraffe center where you can actually feed the long necked wonders. They have incredibly long tongues which they unroll and they sloppily slurp in the pressed rice treats. Well talk about close. This was tongue to cheek close. It was fabulous!

While in Nairobi I dined once at the Carnivore a famous restaurant where you can enjoy wild animal delicacies. So I was photographing the ostrich and crocodile just the other day, and they were on my plate last night. The animals used apparently come from the Game Park next to the restaurant which has some type of program. I preferred the plain meat to the doe eyed wild animals.

I can't believe that I'm really leaving. This day has come so very quickly I don't want to leave Africa. My trip to the airport was uneventful at best and I deeply regretted having to make R. As I boarded my flight I vowed to return to this magical paradise and spend two months each year soaking up every single bit of Africa. I loved it all. Thank you for sharing your incredible country with me.